The Doom of Clowns
A Novel and Critical Essay

Russell G. Heywood

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Brighton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

PhD 2017
Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any other material already submitted for a degree.

Russell Heywood

October 27th, 2017
Abstract

The Doom of Clowns is a novel which satirically subverts voices emerging in the context of neoliberalism since the 1970s, challenging dominant conceptions of the self and society to suggest a sustainable, holistic culture. As interdisciplinary arts practice, the novel develops personal experience using theoretical research and critical reflection.

The first question used in reflecting upon the novel is, can one use fiction to disrupt neoliberal discourse? The critical essay examines the use of satire and Bakhtin’s dialogic method in challenging monolithic narratives. The development of self-reflexive satire in the story is also considered, in relation to the author’s role, the politics of genre, autoethnography and the social contexts in which the novel was produced.

The second question used in reflecting upon the research is, what does it mean to be human? The tale of an extraterrestrial who thinks he is a human, living through the neoliberal age, the novel follows Arthur as his Farfaphian colleague Guinevere attempts to awaken him. The novel explores competing secular and religious worldviews, animal rights, cognitive dissonance, ambiguity, alternative communities and a possibly transhuman future.

The third research question is, how does one use fiction to connect personal experience to wider cultural and political issues? A Speculative auto-satire approach is developed that draws upon personal experience to fictionally critique and subvert dominant discourse. In developing this approach, I explore how my experience of living with a mother who worked as a children’s clown is used in the novel. Theoretical perspectives on the role of the clown, the dialogic and Luce Irigaray’s perceptions on the cultural suppression of the maternal and feminine are examined. My participation in spiritual, therapeutic and activist groups over the last twenty years is also related to this question.

The critical essay reflects on how my holistic voice became more reflexive and humorous, to effectively connect personal experience with wider political issues.

The Doom of Clowns is a contribution to a tradition of satirical fiction that includes The Metamorphoses by Apuleius, Jonathon Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels and Matt Haig’s The Humans. Warning against neoliberal conceptions of scientific progress and economic growth, the novel develops a reflexive, satirical approach that blurs fact and fiction to connect personal experience with wider social issues. The Doom of Clown promotes a holistic paradigm that engages with a call for social justice.

Keywords: Dialogism, Science Fiction, Irigaray, Speculative auto-satire, Neoliberalism
Introductory Note.

The thesis is divided into two parts.

The first part contains *The Doom of Clowns*, a novel. The second part contains the Critical Essay.
CONTENTS

Part One
Declaration 3
Abstract 4
Introductory Note 5
Contents 6
Acknowledgements 7

1. The Novel 8

Part Two

Contents 258
2. Introduction 259
Diagram 1. ‘Road Map’ of critical commentary. 266
2.1 Satirical Beginnings 267
2.2 Bakhtin’s Dialogic Challenge to Monolithic Narratives 275
2.3 Guinevere and Jill 299
2.4 The Political Voice 311
2.5 The Holistic Voice 321
2.6 Other Universes 333
2.7 Speculative auto-satire 347
2.8 Conclusion 355

3 Notes 362
3.1 Works Cited 364
Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my supervisors Deborah Philips, Jess Moriarty and Andrew Hammond for tirelessly reading drafts of both the critical and creative sections.

The Brighton and Sussex University autoethnography group were also unfailingly generous in helping me to reflect upon the research. Thank you as well to Victoria Blunden for reading the novel and giving feedback.

Finally, I could not have done this without the support of my parents and my partner Sonia.
Novel

The Doom of Clowns
Chapter One

‘Welcome to those of you who’ve chosen to become human.’

Arthur winces at the Seer’s announcement. These final briefings always sound like fiction to him, relying on the gullibility of those who’ve never lived on Earth.

He’d snuck up to the viewing gallery minutes earlier to watch those assembling for departure. And from high up near the lilac domed ceiling, the tall recruits in their flowing red robes had seemed like flames burning in the vast expanse of the mothership’s central hall. Overwhelmed with anxieties that he misinterpreted as feelings of belonging and destiny, Arthur had marched purposefully downstairs to join them. But as the pre-mission talk began and those noble emotions vanished, he started sliding away.

As quietly as possible Arthur edges backwards suppressing all signs of inward cringes as the recruit’s heads turn one by one. He involuntarily feels their trusting yet worried eyes. Smiling, he remains professional and points behind him to suggest he’s forgotten something in his room. His feet stop moving though despite his intentions as the Seer says to him, ‘Without you the Earth will be wiped out.’ A gut wrenching feeling of guilt or responsibility he can’t be sure which, then nails him to the spot.

‘For those of you who’ve never done this before,’ says the Seer, ‘it may still be difficult to believe you’ll forget everything. But I assure you, nobody remembers who they are after birth on Earth. Your first job will be to wake up.’

Arthur’s been so unwell he can only recall a few brief episodes from his previous lives amongst the humans. He’s sure awakening starts with glimmers, half-
dreams, voices whispering the truth in the early years after birth. You grew up thinking you were human though and only later the full transition might occur. The mothership would usually send in assistance. However, after his last life on Earth Arthur’s not so sure about the help. He wants to tell these recruits that wave after wave of lies and confusion will drown them until they simply repeat the enemy’s stories as if they were their own.

‘The main thing is to stay positive and calm,’ says the Seer.

Arthur had tried to heal on his home world Farfaphus for a couple of months, walking for hours in the harmonic garden amongst the trees, flowers and rocks that soothed his emotions. He’d met with people from his childhood nearby in the purple crystalline sphere that had been home to his principal group of 150, where he’d used to feel so much a part of the community, loving each day in a world without money, war or crime. Now the enemy had filled his mind with fears about survival just as it had the humans. He couldn’t even hear himself think. The Seer looks over at Arthur and abruptly holds up her hand.

‘May I remind you that your thoughts are heard by us all Arthur,’ she says, waving to someone in the distance for assistance.

‘Sorry,’ Arthur replies politely.

‘Each of you will have a chance to transform negative human emotions, like those Arthur’s now demonstrating,’ says the Seer.

The distant past of Farfaphus was not unlike that on present day Earth, their children were taught in school. Farfaphian’s had been helpless creatures manipulated and farmed by civilizations with more advanced technology, until they were helped to become free by the galactic community. Farfaphian’s had then been able to evolve
beyond their oppressor’s grasp, becoming a species of highly sensitive purple humanoids with two legs and glistening woolly hair.

‘Just as we Farfaphians can move between worlds and dimensions,’ says the Seer. ‘The humans will also one day be free.’

The Farfaphian’s own liberation from a painful and often violent history of exploitation inspired many to choose missions on Earth, even though this dangerous path of service risked agents losing their minds as they floundered in the chaos of human dreams, desires and fixed football results, all controlled by the enemy.

‘Yes,’ Arthur thinks indignantly, ‘being on Earth is far more hopeless than the liars preaching optimism would ever describe. Death, taxes, madness, being forced to work until you die of stress, disease, drunken aggression, train delays, hatred, poverty, the subjugation of nature and other creatures. In Sweden, there are already a plague of self-assembly kitchen units with the wrong screws. That’s what these recruits are about to be born into. And no Farfaphian has ever found a way to finally stop this legacy of pain and suffering. The humans are still controlled by the enemy.’

‘Please control yourself Arthur,’ says the Seer.

Arthur tries to stay calm and imagines himself back in the harmonic gardens of Farfaphus again beneath the pink, hazy sky and two lemon suns. There the delicate indigo Briallian flowers shaped like giant snowflakes would be blossoming now. He can almost hear the petals giving out their incredibly tranquil yet rhythmic sound, as he sees himself walking through forests of luminescent green, white and blue trees, filling the air with gentle healing hums and whispering songs.

If he’d stayed on Farfaphus Arthur’s sure he’d have recovered and gone to worlds where he’d have been happy. For life after life on Earth he’s felt isolated as
though a part of him was lost there, ages ago. Transforming himself or the humans seems a distant hope today, as he stands in the circle of fresh faced agents and tries not to think about the Seer’s earlier insulting remarks about him being negative. Instead, he begins to look sneeringly at the recruits. They may have remotely viewed these partially hairy mammals from the comfort of the mothership, or inhabited a human mind for a few days watching the squelchy personal relationships, farcically irrelevant politics and compulsive shopping practises. That just didn’t cover it. The murderous human emotions that had been manipulated by the enemy for thousands of years weren’t something you just transformed.

The Seer coughs and says, ‘Our state of the art training gives you the key tools to effectively fight the enemy both outside and inside the human’s consciousness,’ she looks pointedly over at Arthur. ‘But all that training will be close to useless unless you wake up.’

Arthur had to stifle a laugh when she’d said *state of the art training*. The human birth simulator was still a joke for a start. You got covered in gel and put in a giant artificial womb with a theatrically intense heartbeat echoing in your Farfaphian auditory holes. Then you had to wiggle your way down the birth canal, which was more like the horizontal end section of a water slide at an Earth theme park. Bright lights were flashed in your eyes as a small crane shaped like a human arm, grabbed you by the feet and held your body upside down. No screaming, no sense of life and death interspersed with the occasional moment of beauty and joy at all really. It was a picnic compared to the real thing. And when you arrived covered in slime, a few Farfaphians dressed like humans started talking to you like a moron.
‘Hello,’ announces one of the Farfaphian staff as she enters the central hall in a blue, medical style tunic and strides purposefully across the vast floor towards the group at its centre. Arthur stares intensely at her and notices she seems familiar. Her large bright oval azure eyes have a fleck of purple like his own and her emerald lips seem more sensuous than most Farfaphians. He watches her long, shining woolly hair, as waves of light move over the surface of her translucent purple skin. And as she gets nearer, Arthur realises her eyes are completely focused on him. He also notices the small folds of skin around the holes on the side of her head, as she pushes her hair back. They are twitching.

Farfaphian’s have been through millennia of telepathic evolution and hear frequencies of communication way beyond the human range. But their ears often twitch when interacting with primitive anxiety and fear, which seems mildly embarrassing for a species that have supposedly gone beyond such problems. She reminds him of someone, although he can’t remember ever seeing her before. Arthur smiles in a perhaps overly friendly way noticing she’s still looking uncomfortable. It can’t just be his smile that’s making her like this he thinks, so he guesses she must be here because of his problem.

The Farfaphian doctors tell him it’s a result of overwork, the low moods that make everyone seem fake and the loud thinking that makes everyone scared. Arthur’s convinced that if he could have one, single, silent thought-free moment where his mind wasn’t shooting out endless criticisms and complaints, he might be able to get a grip on his compulsive thinking. But the moaning’s so constant there’s no time or space for him to calm down. And in the Farfaphian’s world every thought you have is shared with anyone in the surrounding area. Since his last mission on Earth Arthur’s not just
been openly rude he’s been involuntarily mumbling, and shouting things generally considered incredibly unconstructive, overly suspicious or simply unwell.

‘We’re all going to die down there,’ thinks Arthur.

‘How are you feeling?’ asks the member of staff.

‘Are you here to look after me?’ asks Arthur. ‘Or to shut me up?’

Arthur suspects she’s far too healthy to really understand him. How can she know what it feels like to be unable to hear the minds of those around you? Arthur’s thoughts rush this way and that like they’re trying to protect him from her and everyone else. ‘Piss off,’ he thinks.

‘I haven’t lived your life, I’m not here to judge,’ says this new helpful member of staff in her medical tunic, hearing his every word. ‘Do you recognise me?’

‘No,’ says Arthur.

‘Glad to see you again anyway. We’ll be here helping from day one.’

Arthur tries again to recall where he’s seen her. One well-meaning, overly upbeat Farfaphian who’s never worried about their sanity looks much like another he guesses. But he can’t stop wondering who she is, as her eyes search him like they’re old friends.

‘My name’s Guinevere by the way,’ she says.

Guinevere smiles again and beneath it Arthur feels even more intensity in the way she observes him, almost like she’s checking for danger in a forgotten memory deep within his mind. He decides her uneasiness must be a kind of primal revulsion, perhaps because he looks too much like what she fears. Yes, Arthur thinks to himself,
she doesn’t like seeing a living example of what happens when your experiences on Earth can’t be sorted out later. He senses a wall between them, keeping her safe from something she doesn’t want to catch. Or maybe she’s just worked out he’s seen too much on Earth to take her seriously.

Arthur shrugs and says, ‘Glad you’ll be safely on the ship.’

‘I may be closer than that,’ replies Guinevere.
Chapter Two

Arthur can still remember awakening as a Farfaphian in his last life on Earth. Born in 1914 he’d become a psychiatrist and found himself walking the wards of a mental asylum in East London during the 1950’s. As both a doctor and patient he’d attended to the inmates in that grubby old Victorian building, while refusing to remove parts of their brain. During World War II, he’d served in a front-line hospital for wounded soldiers and was still seeing the faces of those whose arms and legs he’d amputated or stitched ten years later. Blown up bodies appeared when he closed his eyes to sleep each night. He’d been moved into psychiatry to help those who hadn’t recovered mentally.

On the last un-awakened day of that life, he’d been considering leaving the medical profession. Arthur remembers he’d felt miles away at first, when the Farfaphian agent had contacted him. He’d just come from watching the new black and white television in the hospital. Everyone who could had been gathered around to see Queen Elizabeth’s 1953 coronation ceremony. As he’d looked at the man lying in bed, he’d felt like a new era was beginning, the world was changing. And he’d been changing as well. For weeks, he’d dreamed of escape and being liberated into something he couldn’t quite see or imagine. He just knew he needed to transform his life to be happy. Another person was deep inside him waiting to emerge. Now those vague intuitions had grown stronger. His existence so far seemed like someone else’s story, an accident of birth or history. This wasn’t where he belonged or who he was. He just needed to hear himself above the noise. There was some reason he’d come to Earth, something nobody around him had ever mentioned.
‘It’s the frontal lobes I’m sure; he needs immediate surgery,’ the young doctor with a sharp voice and cropped brown hair had said to him, as they’d stood in their white coats with their notes staring at the man lying in one of the thirty shabby beds, in the underfunded hospital. It wasn’t Arthur’s ward, but he’d been asked to give his opinion.

Lying before them that day was a bone thin man who’d spent a decade wandering between jobs. His records showed he’d been found homeless. He said he’d worked as a clown after being a musician in the war. The skin on the man’s face looked strangely smooth, perhaps because his long beard had recently been shaved off. In his late thirties, there was an older tiredness around the eyes. He looked quite close to death and like someone who’d surrendered to that fact. Arthur watched the strangely serene half smile on the man’s face as his future was discussed by the younger, brusque doctor. He’d thumbed through the scant medical records. The man said he’d been wounded in the war during a stint entertaining the troops in India.

‘How are you today?’ Arthur hears himself asking the Farfaphian who would help him awaken in that life. He hadn’t replied at first and just smiled forgivingly at the young doctor who was pushing his hair back anxiously, with fingers spread and half clenched like a claw. The doctor gave a concerned look to a nearby nurse, which he made sure Arthur saw.

‘There’s been a few of these types reported recently in America,’ the young doctor said. ‘I’ll show you.’ He asked the patient, ‘Where are you from?’

‘I am from Farfaphus,’ replied the man lying in the bed.

‘What’s your name? Your job?’ asked the young doctor.
‘This body and mind organism have been damaged but I am able to function, there’s no need for an operation.’

‘You see,’ said the doctor to Arthur. ‘The electro-convulsive therapy hasn’t worked and he pushed a member of staff in his last escape attempt.’

Arthur had gazed into the patient’s eyes, just as now he was glaring into Guinevere’s more worried looking eyes on the mothership.

‘Farfaphus,’ Arthur says. ‘What’s it like?’

‘It’s a place where our minds are open and there’s no war, no oppression,’ said the patient.

Arthur remembers feeling the man was telling the truth and a sudden sense of loyalty arising.

‘It gets worse,’ the young doctor had said. ‘They apparently reproduce through mental transmissions of energy.’

‘I think we need to keep him under observation for longer,’ says Arthur. ‘I want to run more tests; the medication may be wrong.’

‘But,’ said the younger doctor looking horrified. ‘I can’t be responsible if he’s not operated on immediately.’

The next day Arthur had gone to see the patient alone. He’d asked the man more about Farfaphus.

‘It’s where you’re from,’ said the patient. ‘We were sent here, many of us. But our missions alter, things go wrong.’
‘Well, where are your friends?’ Arthur remembers asking, hearing the involuntary cynicism in his voice.

‘There are many Farfaphian casualties from the last war.’

‘Maybe it’s just better to keep quiet about them for now.’ Arthur remembers himself smiling and patting the man’s hand. He’d looked deeply into the patient’s eyes and felt only kindness coming from him.

‘These could be the final times for Earth,’ the patient replied calmly.

Arthur had laughed saying, ‘I often feel like that.’ The patient didn’t laugh though and instead reached out with his right hand and touched Arthur’s arm, sending a pulse of energy through him that quickly spread throughout his body.

‘What was that?’ he’d asked trying to pull away but finding himself unable to move.

‘This is the change you knew would come’ said the patient, as his eyes began to alter colour and glow. Arthur felt like he was expanding, filling with joy. His body stopped moving and then his mind. The room became bathed in light as the radiant patient leaned forward, grabbing both Arthur’s hands. ‘Farfaphus,’ said the patient. ‘Farfaphus,’ said the patient. ‘We only use the human bodies to live on Earth.’

‘I’m unwell,’ Arthur remembers his human mind thinking as waves of information about Farfaphus entered his consciousness.

‘What are you telling me, who am I?’ he’d asked.
‘We have visited many times,’ said the Farfaphian. He’d held Arthur’s hands tighter. ‘Let us see more.’

Arthur’s human body still wouldn’t move but he felt another part of himself leaving and peering down.

‘What am I?’ Arthur had asked, looking at his purple arms and hands.

‘A Farfaphian,’ replied the patient placing his hands onto Arthur’s shoulders. ‘Now let us leave these human stories for a time.’ They’d flown upward out of the hospital ward, still facing each other. Over the patient’s shoulder Arthur saw the Earth from a distance. As he turned hovering in space, he felt complete freedom and a sense of wonder at the cosmos had filled him, mixed with an overwhelming sense of his own smallness. ‘We are connected to almost infinite dimensions,’ said the patient.

They’d floated through star clusters and into a heavenly world filled with translucent beings. The Farfaphian patient had spoken again, ‘There are vibrational frequencies that exist in almost complete peace and other worlds where only terror resides.’ Arthur turned again and saw a world with molten human and animal faces, mouthing silent screams, as clanking steel robotic legs with hanging flesh came to cut them from the rock with electric saws, carrying them to a mountain-sized pile of wire mesh cages.

Later in his office on Earth he’d tried to rationalise the entire thing. Arthur had poured over his Freudian and Jungian texts. He’d decided the experience was an extreme case of transference where the patient’s nightmarish world had somehow connected to his own painful war memories. Although, he couldn’t understand how the man’s extreme delusions had so completely bypassed his own sense of self. Arthur
remembered thinking that perhaps his colleague was right, the patient needed something more than pills.

But that night dreams came where Arthur was shown his life on Farfaphus. He’d seen his childhood growing up in the beautiful gardens, where wise tree beings had helped him discover the interrelatedness of all life. He’d seen his childhood home inside the crystalline sphere where a sense of care and wonder pervaded every room. He’d travelled inside an orb made from pure energy, gliding over the blue and white rolling hills of Farfaphus, marveling at the sparkling clear oceans abundant with life.

Arthur had secretly begun to work with the patient after that and he’d realised many of the other inmates were agents from Farfaphus, the Pleiades and Sirius. They’d not been able to assimilate, the traumas and the enemy programming had been too strong, or they’d been detected and attacked. He’d worked tirelessly from that day to help his trapped friends. The mothership hadn’t been able to intervene; it had been down to him. He’d got as many of the agents released as he could. Unfortunately, he’d not been able to fully hide his activities from the other staff and one day the enemy found him.

‘A Mr Hythe is here to see you doctor,’ the nurse had said. ‘He’s brought several colleagues from the college of Psychiatry - including Dr Malaga.’

‘The Grand Inquisitor himself, the brain fryer of Bedlam,’ Arthur had laughed. They’d been professionally friendly at first, waiting for him to make a mistake. Then seven of them questioned him for two days about irregularities in procedure, checking his files, asking patients and staff about his behaviour.

‘The findings are quite clear and we are unanimous,’ Dr Malaga had said with a Mr Hythe sitting next to him. They were in a large Victorian room with an old
grandfather clock and a panel of doctors, who watched him like he wasn’t quite human anymore. As he sat alone on the other side of their medieval looking, long wooden table he heard Dr Malaga say, ‘It’s unfortunate but it seems there’s no way back. Only rigorous care can perhaps one day find the man inside you who has been lost.’

Arthur had ended up as a patient himself, silenced. The Farfaphian health team say his nervous system was so overloaded in that final decade it’s seriously damaged him. There’d been too many years in those damp hospital wards. Even after he’d lost his job he’d tried to keep working, helping any new galactic agents that arrived but without authority it was tough. Any glimmers of hope had turned without fail into oncoming juggernauts. He’d lived amongst those who were crushed and flattened daily. So many were broken and soon there was nobody left to notice. He’d died inside years before he left that body, pumped with pills, staring at people too shattered to tell their tale. And he hadn’t been able to fully retain his sense of Farfaphian identity, after becoming a patient. When all connection to himself and others finally went, he’d kept repeating stories, memories of Farfaphus from his dreams that had once seemed real.

Arthur had woken up one night in a sweat on Farfaphus recently, convinced he was an overworked psychiatrist dreaming he was an alien. He’d got out of his white, floating cocoon bed in the rejuvenation centre and been found sleep walking. Several carers were called to help him home from the harmonic gardens where he was spotted carrying a laser needle, attempting to administer injections to passers-by. Today as he faces another journey, another body, he tries to keep up appearances for the newcomers but feels worse than a wreck. Looking at Guinevere, he realises he’s been staring at her for the entire time he’s been remembering that last life. She’s attempting to stay composed, to somehow hold him safely in her thoughts. But he can see she’s trembling. He feels an overpowering connection between them. And Guinevere can’t believe how
intense Arthur’s memories are for her, as though everything that had happened to him had been her own experience as well.

Guinevere smiles as best she can with her ears twitching involuntarily and asks, ‘Do you need to rest more?’

‘Never felt better,’ says Arthur.

As Arthur stands staring at Guinevere’s fraught looking face and moving ear flaps, an armoured warrior appears in his mind being killed with a sword in some mud filled hell hole. Guinevere begins to tremble once more but stands quietly listening and watching, as do all the assembled agents. They’ve been told to make allowances. But some are now more than visibly unnerved by the thoughts Arthur’s giving out. He sees them looking over at him, mostly with pity, a part of him doesn’t care they can hear the horror and confusion inside his mind. But another part of him is terrified that he’s forgotten how to be a Farfaphian.

‘The Earth can be a fun place just like Farfaphus,’ says the Seer. Arthur wants to add they could die not knowing who or what they are, and the enemy patrol the borders of the human dimension day and night. If they find you before you awake, it’s usually game over. ‘And saving the best until last,’ says the Seer, ‘if you’re born as a human any help you give is allowed by galactic law.’

Arthur laughs at the Seer quoting galactic law, she certainly didn’t follow it as far as he could remember. The law stated that only those born on Earth could directly intervene in its affairs. The enemy took no notice of that and dozens of other non-human visitors had done what they liked over the generations. The Seer never openly admitted she popped down to inhabit a human’s body, here and there when it suited her. Arthur could still recall asking her about it a few lives ago, just before he was
beheaded in the French revolution. ‘I was given permission by the council, long ago when all this trouble started,’ she’d told him.

Arthur reminds himself that he’s got no fear of death, poverty or ostracism. The human species was often flattened into docile conformity by those fears. He would never serve the enemy, despite his immanent birth into a life where his health would be bad and every opportunity to awaken probably blocked. The Seer said this unlikely birth was the best way to hide him from the enemy. Arthur wonders if he’ll be able to handle it, he isn’t the same agent anymore.
Chapter Three

‘Arthur, are you okay?’ asks the Seer standing in front of him. The agents look at each other as the Seer worries about Arthur damaging their morale. She sees no other option though. Arthur must be born on Earth now.

‘I hope nobody’s having any doubts about going?’ Arthur asks.

‘I’m ready,’ says one of the recruits stepping forward in her red robe. The Seer smiles as the other recruits follow. ‘Ready,’ they each call out and the word echoes around the hall. Arthur watches in dismay as they begin walking past. A full-scale mutiny had been his last hope of escape. Slowly he begins to follow them, feeling at least he’s not hidden all the facts.

Guinevere gently takes Arthur by the arm, guiding him toward a door that opens to reveal a smaller room containing the interdimensional gateway. Turning to look back at the vast central hall, Arthur wonders whether he’ll ever see it again. The glowing walls remind him that this world’s so different from where he’s going. As he moves toward the interdimensional gateway, he wonders if this really is his home anymore. He doesn’t fit in. Half of him still feels like he’s not here at all. Perhaps he is just an Earthling who can’t face what’s happened in his life. The doctors were right, he’s lived too many lives away. He sees things like a human even when he doesn’t have one of their bodies.

‘Is there anything you feel hasn’t been covered?’ Guinevere asks.

Arthur looks at her blankly not meaning to be rude.

‘Where do we know each other from?’ he asks.
‘I guess my time in other star systems has altered my appearance,’ says Guinevere.

Arthur’s mind shows him a shiny armoured king being killed in the mud. This is followed by him remembering how old he looked in the mirror that morning.

‘It’ll come to me,’ says Arthur. ‘How long have you been on the mothership?’

‘Six months in Earth time,’ says Guinevere. Arthur notices she really does glow with health and he can’t sense any disturbing energy fields around her.

‘So, about a few days for us then,’ says Arthur. ‘How much previous experience on Earth?’

‘Plenty,’ says Guinevere.

‘Then why don’t I remember seeing you before?’

‘I’ve been working on other worlds for centuries, I told you, people change.’

‘Where and when then?’ asks Arthur.

‘Oh, it doesn’t matter now,’ says Guinevere.

‘Do you know what’s really happening on Earth?’

‘What do you mean?’

Arthur guesses she doesn’t know everything, just like the other recruits. ‘Well, things have changed a lot on Earth,’ he says. ‘Just remember to check in with the Seer before you make any big decisions about me.’

‘Don’t worry,’ says Guinevere. ‘I’ll be with you.’ He feels she wants to say more but stops herself as the Seer looks over.
Arthur wonders how many centuries ago Guinevere must have been on Earth. She obviously doesn’t know what they are up against. Then he wonders why he’s being told less than usual.

‘Why can’t you tell me when you were on Earth?’ he asks.

‘It won’t help you now,’ says Guinevere, smiling. ‘Don’t get anxious.’

‘Look,’ says Arthur. ‘I’m about to become a human and you don’t seem to know much about Earth. I’m what it’s like there.’

‘I told you, I have been.’ says Guinevere. Then surprised at the hardness of her voice, she laughs.

‘You don’t know,’ says Arthur.

Guinevere draws a deep breath and looks over toward the Seer who’s watching them. ‘I suspect a conspiracy,’ she says, smiling.

‘Ten agents have lost their bodies this week,’ says the Seer walking over. ‘More still have been made unable to function. Sorry again about the lack of life details but you’ll just have to trust me.’

‘Trust,’ sneers Arthur. ‘I know I’m not like the other people here. I know what you say about me.’

Guinevere interrupts, ‘We understand what you’ve been through.’

‘Do you?’ asks Arthur sarcastically. Then he suddenly feels like he may have gone too far and smiles as best he can. In the same moment, he glimpses himself living inside the body of the shiny armoured king. There are people around him, dressed as
noble knights. A strong smell of beer, incense, meat and human bodies fills the air. He’s at a wedding, there’s a priest present and his wife to be is beside him.

Guinevere and the Seer read his mind and turn to each other.

‘You’re destined to be together,’ laughs the Seer.

‘Not even as a joke,’ says Guinevere.

‘Leave me alone,’ says Arthur shouting out loud, with a disturbed, wounded growl. The other recruits look over at him. Despite the ongoing behavioural therapy, since his last mission he can’t stop biting when he feels someone is laughing at his thoughts. He feels like he’s been treated as an idiot ever since his return. What they don’t seem to understand is he can’t remember much and his mind won’t stop. But the pain never stops, as the nightmares and the voices carry on. And does Guinevere really care? Probably in some impersonal way but Arthur decides he doesn’t care about her caring. After all, in a few minutes he probably won’t even know he’s a Farfaphian anymore.

‘I’ve changed my mind,’ says Arthur. ‘I don’t want to go. The doctors think I need a rest. This isn’t my responsibility anymore.’

‘Everything is your choice,’ says the Seer. ‘But if you don’t go many lives will be in jeopardy.’

‘I just don’t want to be treated like a fool.’

Guinevere feels he deserves more honesty. ‘Your highly-disturbed energy field probably means the enemy won’t be able to detect you. It’s an advantage.’

‘Glad there’s a job that fits my field experience,’ says Arthur, cynically.
‘That’s everything we can tell you,’ says the Seer gesturing toward the gateway.

‘Without you nothing will work.’

Arthur gives Guinevere another look and senses something of the Earth inside her. He feels sure they’ve shared a life together. He just can’t remember when or where.

‘Why don’t you know what we’re really fighting on Earth?’ Arthur asks as he walks toward the gateway entrance.

‘I don’t understand,’ she replies. ‘Are you sure you feel well enough to go?’

Arthur shrugs and looks at the two-metre wide space in the luminous wall, where skies from many worlds appear and disappear in the blink of an eye. Red suns and green moons whirl past, in this open door to other galaxies and lives.

‘I’m retiring after this,’ says Arthur.

‘Please wake up. We’ll be there to support you,’ says the Seer. ‘Operative departing.’ Arthur walks to the very edge of the gateway.

‘Right’ says Arthur, lingering for one final look at Guinevere. ‘I’m sure where we met will come to me.’

Guinevere says nothing as Arthur steps through. The recruits are watching.

‘See you on the other side maybe,’ he says. Then Arthur takes another step and is gone.
Chapter Four

For a second everything goes blank as Arthur stands in a groundless infinity of white space. His body then dissolves as he becomes a bright, transparent glowing egg that rises toward a sky flowing with light. A feeling of joy fills Arthur and he finds himself forgetting his life on Farfaphus. But he must stay conscious and keeps repeating his name, ‘Arthur, Arthur,’ as he glides into the depths of the radiant void. Emerging hazily at first from the light, he then sees the Keepers, two legged, black-cloaked with four-arms and green feline faces. They guard the borders between dimensions and greet those who choose to be born in other life systems. After observing him for a few moments they nod. ‘End that which binds them,’ they say as one.

Arthur finds himself on the other side of the light, swerving down spirals of space and time. Spinning stars and planets zip by as he listens for sounds from Earth. For minutes there is nothing, until finally the distant echo of chanting football fans begins, ‘Arsenal, Arsenal.’ The ghostly fans appear and go past him, wearing red and white scarves. Unearthly cries from cows and sheep then meet his ears, followed by the sight of their slaughtered bodies. Arthur hears the rattling of metal and the clatter of boots, as armies of dead human soldier’s march straight through his egg-shaped form. He hears galloping horses and men crying in battle. A cold voice keeps repeating, ‘Remove his frontal lobes,’ as Guinevere keeps repeating, ‘It was a long time ago.’

Then another voice calmly says, ‘It’s time to start pushing Jill, keep breathing.’ Arthur’s certain it must be the words of a doctor talking to his human mother. He dives sideways as the soldiers keep marching toward him. Leaving the interdimensional tunnel, everything suddenly stops as Arthur enters the vast silence of space, seeing a
blue-green world far away. He begins to perceive the life that awaits him and prepares for the coming birth and an inevitable onslaught of human emotions.

‘I am pushing,’ says Jill his human mother. ‘I can’t push any harder.’

Arthur stays on course, as a dark red smoky haze rises-up around him. He knows this to be the entrance to the Earth plane and its physical frequency. The voices of the doctor and the human mother become louder. ‘Push, breathe.’ ‘Fuck off.’ A gyrating tunnel filled with pumping veins appears and strands of DNA fly past, as Arthur hears the human mother’s screams. He moves further toward the pounding flesh and blood, toward the beating heart of the foetus. Tensing himself for landing, in a shuddering moment he enters inside the body feeling its warmth as his senses are overwhelmed.

Arthur hears and feels the months of muttering voices, emotions, the kinds of food and jolts that have already shaped the baby and its moods. There’s no time to settle in, he realises his new life is about to begin. The mother’s groans surround him and within seconds he’s coming down the birth canal, his head squeezed. ‘Got to remember this is all just my job,’ thinks Arthur. ‘Got to hold on. Just one life where I remember.’
Chapter Five

Squashed, messy, a body struggling into the electric light. Arthur feels himself enter the world and gasps in awe. ‘Here I am.’ He screams and breathes, there’s blood all over him. Smells meet his nose and the strange vibrating human voices fill his ears. He can see bacteria and microbes in the air surrounding the human’s happily barbaric faces. They seem so pleased as they greet him, despite their primitive existences under the enemy’s control. Arthur immediately attempts to telepathically communicate, ‘I am here to save your world,’ he says. Nobody seems to hear.

‘Thank god, it was like pushing out a bowling ball,’ says Jill, his human mother.

‘I am still awake,’ says Arthur. He’s filled with joy at remembering he’s a Farfaphian, but also notices that everyone one around him has their own ideas about who he is.

‘Right,’ he hears Terence the father thinking. ‘Now life makes sense.’

Arthur begins waving his arms at the humans. ‘I’m Farfaphian, please don’t attempt to assimilate me into your social patterns. Your world is in imminent danger.’ Realising the humans are completely oblivious to his communications, Arthur then becomes a bit hysterical. Screaming, he soon reaches the point where a Farfaphian usually forgets its origins. But as he’s wrapped in a blanket and stops for a few breaths, Arthur finds that unlike on Farfaphus he can still hear the thoughts of the people around him as his four grandparents enter the room.

‘I did it my way,’ thinks Grandad Bob, who is Terence’s father. He stares concentratedly at his firstborn Grandchild. ‘It looks like he’ll enjoy a whisky or two. And he’ll stop the communists.’
‘Good,’ thinks Terence’s mother, Ruby. ‘Now, we need to get the new sheets in the cot and get more boy’s booties knitted. It’s going to be a houseful at ours, I need to do a rota and put it on the fridge.’

‘Her life is ruined,’ thinks the mother’s mother, Maud. ‘We should’ve kept a better eye on them.’

‘Better get back to the bus depot,’ thinks Maud’s husband – Grandad Leonardo. ‘That’s my Jill’s chances of being a pop star over with.’

As Arthur listens to wave after wave of the unconscious fears and hopes, coming from the people around the hospital bed, he feels their ancestral stories passing into him. Roman soldiers, Vikings, smallpox, workhouses and endless wars with muttering minds and aching bodies. Pubs and fireside songs from centuries ago, voices of longing, laughter, feelings of hopelessness and hatred blow into his bones, heart and belly, but he’s determined nothing will stop him remembering who he is or where he’s come from. He’s got to stay awake.

‘You don’t have to be like this,’ Arthur tells the assembled family telepathically, as they pass him around.

‘He’s trying to say something,’ says Grandfather Bob. ‘Would you like a beer your majesty?’

‘Leave it out dad,’ says Terence. He picks up Arthur and holds him high in the air. ‘My son.’

‘The first Prime Minister ever to come from Woolwich,’ says Grandad Bob proudly.

‘We’re from Bexleyheath, don’t say Woolwich,’ says his wife, Ruby.
‘He can be anything he wants,’ says Jill, his mother. ‘But he looks like an extraterrestrial comedian to me.’

‘He won’t be one of the herd,’ says father Terence.

‘Don’t spoil him,’ says Grandfather Bob. ‘He needs to knuckle down. You’ll turn him into a prima donna. I’ve brought a nip of whisky, wet the baby’s head with it.’

Arthur looks at the human family as lovingly as he can. ‘I am Arthur of Farfaphus,’ he tells them. ‘And whatever’s happened to humans, the people of my world will always be here to help. For that is the way of our kind. We believe that compassion and intelligence are the true nature of our shared universe.’

‘I think he’s an Arsenal supporter,’ says Grandad Bob, putting the whisky bottle back in his coat pocket. ‘I don’t want him spoiled.’ Grandad Bob looks toward but not at Grandad Leonardo. He could develop tendencies toward being a self-righteous oddball.’

‘No, he’s more Charlton Athletic,’ says Terence. ‘Salt of the Earth.’

‘West Ham,’ says Ruby the Gran. ‘But who cares?’

‘I don’t like football, or drinking,’ says Grandad Leonardo.

Arthur’s concerned they’ve brought different woolly football hats to the hospital. As they try the different football team colours on him, they start talking gibberish, making funny sounds and pulling faces. The idea that humans can be saved seems as ridiculous as ever.

‘What’s his name then?’ asks the doctor.
‘It’s Arthur,’ says the mother. ‘It just came to me.’

‘Well that’s an oddball name,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘I thought you’d agreed on Anthony, a good Roman name.’

‘Shut up,’ says Ruby.

‘Why don’t you give him a normal name,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘He’ll have delusions of grandeur, like the rest of your family.’


Arthur stares at the sky as they go home in Grandad Bob’s car to live in his small semi-detached house. He feels the tensions and fear in the young parents, still in the role of naughty children unable to support themselves. The house on the borders of Bexleyheath is somewhere Grandad Bob has just moved, to be nearer work.

_The Ballad of John and Yoko_ was the number one pop single the day he arrived on Earth in 1969. _This is the Dawning of the Age of Aquarius_ was still doing well worldwide in the singles charts and his Chinese Astrology sign was rooster who announces the Aquarian dawn. His mother had been in a pop band called _Dawn and the Rising Son’s_, just before getting pregnant. Arthur’s new life in South East London is full of strange sounds and noises. A few days after his birth, he’s taken into the lounge with the family for a big event on the black and white TV.

‘Here it is little Arthur,’ says Terence. ‘The first human to walk on the moon.’

The family watch the blotchy, scratchy pictures in amazement as the man says, ‘One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.’ Arthur’s gurgles try to tell his human family the space people have already arrived, as excited talk of a human future in the
stars surrounds him. Grandad Bob takes off Arthur’s woolly Charlton Athletic football hat and gives him a knitted space helmet that Ruby has made. A star traveller in waiting.

A few weeks after being born Arthur finds himself sitting in Grandad Bob’s front room, which is filled with cigarette smoke and his friends. He watches Grandad Bob playing cards with his colleagues from the London Police force, as they discuss trouble with the trade unions and the miners. Smoke fills his lungs and the heavy smell of whisky sticks to his skin. His parents are both out at work. Grandad Bob blows a big puff of smoke towards him.

‘You don’t know you’re born,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘We didn’t even have an inside toilet when I was young.’ Arthur goes red and starts coughing. ‘Ruby, King Arthur is not amused again, sort it out.’ Grandma Ruby arrives from the kitchen where she’s preparing food for the men. It’s her weekend off from her job as a secretary. She takes Arthur into the small kitchen and puts him on the ledge in his cot. Arthur falls asleep to the sound of Ruby opening a corned beef tin and dreams of Guinevere. He sees her standing on the mothership trying to speak to him. Then a great mist comes, and he can’t see her anymore. When Arthur wakes up he’s wheezing and has completely forgotten he’s an extraterrestrial. He becomes Arthur the human.
Chapter Six

‘Where are you?’ asks Guinevere. Inside the mothership, she looks at an oval shaped crystal screen that connects her with Arthur on Earth. The walls of her office are sparkling blue, the table is white and golden light. The entire ship exists on an energy frequency that humans would not consider solid, there’s no metal or plastic.

Arthur’s Farfaphian life signs are hardly registering beneath his human baby mind. Guinevere worries about his state of health, although at least it means his chances of being detected by the enemy remain minimal. She waves a hand across the screen, which shows the human infant’s brain waves, with fractals of red, blue and green fading in and out.

‘We should never have sent him in,’ she says. ‘He’s too unstable.’

The Seer peers over her shoulder. ‘He’s still in there. We’ve worked on so many missions together. I have faith in him.’

‘Why did it have to be him? Is it just because the enemy wouldn’t be expecting a mess like this to arrive?’

Guinevere turns her head quickly toward the Seer, with her ears twitching.

The Seer smiles back. ‘You’re getting emotional, you’ll find out the truth soon enough.’

Guinevere purses her lips, as waves of distress flow from her.

‘He wasn’t even really sure if was a Farfaphian here on the mothership,’ says Guinevere. ‘How is he going to wake up there in a far more difficult environment?’

‘Because you’ll be helping him.’
‘Why me though? I don’t know him well enough. It’s been fifteen hundred years since we last worked together.’

‘You’re already sounding like him, so hesitant and doubtful.’

‘You want me to sound like him?’

‘You’ve been on nicer worlds for too long,’ says the Seer. ‘Arthur’s been taking these missions life after life, you need to meet him where he is.’

‘I don’t want to meet him where he is,’ says Guinevere.

‘Who knows, maybe this time he’ll heal some of his old wounds. What was it that got under his skin centuries ago?’ The Seer looks directly at Guinevere.

Guinevere attempts to calm herself. She hasn’t experienced these intense feelings for centuries and is angry because the Seer knows exactly what happened with Arthur all those years ago, she was on that mission.

‘What happened then is irrelevant,’ says Guinevere. But she finds emotions and memories are forcing their way into her mind nonetheless. She didn’t even know she’d been suppressing them. ‘I didn’t do anything wrong.’

‘Something happened all those years ago,’ says the Seer.

‘Why are you doing this?’ asks Guinevere.

‘Your connection with Arthur is why you’re here. Maybe he stayed on Earth all those years because of what that happened when you were there. Who killed Arthur?’

‘You know who killed his human body in that life,’ snaps Guinevere.

‘We have been living with the consequences ever since.’
‘Why is that my fault? We were all doing our best. The Earth’s full of emotional traps, you know that,’ Guinevere almost shouts.

‘Now you’re very angry,’ says the Seer, pleased. ‘That passionate intensity is what we need, just see if you can direct more of it towards helping him.’

‘I don’t want this,’ says Guinevere.

‘We just need you to support him, be his inner voice.’

‘When I connected with his mind before, it was overwhelming. He’s suffered too much.’

‘You will learn to understand why,’ says the Seer. ‘Observe from the mothership to begin. When his first early traumas start, you can visit Earth and enter his consciousness. You’ll see and feel as he does.’

‘I’ll do my best,’ says Guinevere, sounding resigned.

‘Now, go and check on the enemy’s headquarters in London. But be careful, they must not detect your presence. If the enemy knows you’re here, they might realise you’re a major danger to their plans.’

‘Why?’

‘Just follow orders for once,’ says the Seer ignoring her question.

‘But I can’t be that much of a danger to them, I haven’t been on Earth for over a thousand years.’

‘I can’t tell you anymore, it’s safer for everyone. You’ll discover what you need to know for yourself soon enough.’
Chapter Seven

July 1969

Watching Hythe from the mothership, Guinevere immediately notices someone who looks bloated yet full of energy in a way that seems eerily unhealthy, like it can only have come from feeding off other’s life forces. In his London office Hythe sits at a stainless-steel desk with a transparent glass top, rubbing the bridge of his sharp long nose that leads up to a high forehead with frontal lobes that on closer inspection, stretch all the way to the back of his neck.

‘I hate organic life,’ says Hythe. ‘Stinking, useless and inefficient.’

Hythe’s head is shaved but he never meets people like that, instead he places a blonde messy wig on top of his skull. The wig is often ruffled like a schoolboy’s who’s just been in a fight, or he combs it back to create a slightly bouffant appearance. His broad face has shark dead eyes that make him seem more than a little sinister.

‘Send up Jane Gaston,’ says Hythe putting on the wig. ‘I need to unwind.’

‘She’s at the hospital Mr Hythe, pregnant I think,’ replies Grote.

‘Typical,’ Hythe looks angry. ‘And I suppose the child’s mine?’

‘Looks that way Sir.’

‘I see,’ Hythe strokes his forehead. ‘Well, do what’s necessary and send me a picture after it finishes college. And I want no more communication with Jane. Do you understand?’
Guinevere listens and observes from the mothership as Hythe talks to his assistant.

‘A cup of tea I think,’ says Hythe. ‘What was in the dinner last night by the way? I’m a little edgy.’

Grote is wearing a navy-blue suit with gold cuff links and a green and blue striped tie. He’s well over six Earth feet tall with sad brown baggy eyes, a slender nose and sallow skin with lank black hair. Grote picks up the hormones that are kept in a row of shiny white flasks by the vast window that looks out over the high towers of London’s financial centre.

‘I apologise Mr Hythe,’ says Grote. ‘The human released too much adrenaline at the time of death.’ There’s no immediate response from Hythe which seems to relieve Grote, as he looks busy preparing the tea. Hythe observes Grote for a moment with disdain as he sits at his desk, swivelling slightly on his pale cream leather executive chair. Staring at his new executive toy, a Newton’s cradle, Hythe flicks the row of silver balls attached to threads with his left toe so one jumps out at the side.

‘Causes and effects Grote,’ says Hythe. ‘Life after life we’ve been here, living inside human bodies. Trying to train them to become efficient. And I don’t want to eat any more of them Grote. Every bite seems filled with their whining victim mentality and incompetence. Fry me up some Chimpanzee for dinner today. I want other forms of primate nutrition.’

Hythe’s clothes are tailored personally by Yves Saint Laurent. The trousers are black, the shirts are white with various coloured stripes that are today light red with collars that are currently extravagantly long. The shoes are from a range where prices start at something like a reasonable bag of golf clubs.
Hythe presses a button on a screen and the crackly image of a man in a cell, fastened to a reclining chair with metal buckles appears.

‘Any joy?’ asks Hythe.

Another man with a side parting and a white coat appears on the screen. ‘He’s close to losing consciousness again, but we’ve probed his memory links to the mothership.’

Hythe stops and drums the table with his fingertips. ‘And?’

‘We searched him for information several times. There was some mention of the agent called Arthur, but we couldn’t find any details.’

‘Arthur,’ says Hythe. ‘They can’t have sent him back already.’

‘What do you want us to do with him?’ asks the white coated man.

‘Assert more pressure,’ says Hythe.

‘What we extract from now on may be unreliable.’

‘Place the electrodes where I told you,’ says Hythe. ‘Then boil a couple of his fingers in oil as he watches. The traditional ways can still work.’

‘They may have sent Arthur in at the last moment, masking his energy signature’ says Grote making the tea.

Hythe turns to Grote who’s still preparing the hormone drink. ‘The Farfaphians must be desperate to send Arthur back so soon,’ he says feeling a sudden chill. He presses another button and speaks into a microphone poking out of his table. ‘Search for the presence of agent 207 again, a baby most probably. Broaden the scans
range to find any erratic or distorted energy signatures.’ There are mumbled responses from the other side. ‘Yes 207.’

Hythe switches off the microphone and smiles to himself. He and Arthur have fought each other many times over the centuries. He’s killed Arthur in most imaginable ways with poisonings, beheadings, burying him alive and crucifixion. He’s had Arthur hung drawn and quartered as a heretic, fried in oil as a demon, drowned and burned as a witch and hacked down by mercenaries and zealots. But when Hythe found Arthur floundering and desperately saving his companions in one of his new psychiatric facilities in the 1950’s, he’d found a new way for him to die more slowly. Hythe had believed that by allowing Arthur to rot away with half his brain in that Asylum, stripped of any rights or identity he’d be unable to recover after the body died. He’d let Arthur live in that hell for a decade or more. He’d watched as Arthur collapsed into complete despair and finally madness.

‘The Farfaphians are cruel to send him,’ says Grote. ‘Shall I go down to help with the interrogation?’

‘No need, but thank you.’

‘Assert the right pressure and lives might be saved,’ says Grote.

‘That’s true Grote and helpful as always,’ says Hythe flicking the Newton’s cradle balls with his right index finger. ‘Find anything you still can.’ The white coated man on the television screen nods. ‘Then remove the usual frontal lobe areas and keep him alive. We don’t want him going back to Farfaphus too soon.’

‘Will you be wanting the Financial Times this morning Mr Hythe?’
Hythe turns off the screen. ‘Yes Grote, that would be good. Then I want you to help with running a scan on all babies born in the last few months.’

‘That’s a lot,’ says Grote.

‘And I want the new medications for all babies by next week, Farfaphian or not, injected into the supermarket food as usual.’

‘Yes, Mr Hythe, one spoon of hormones or two?’

‘Make it two Grote. It’s a big day, can you feel it?’

‘Yes, Mr Hythe, I definitely can.’

‘The revolution is about to begin,’ Hythe says leaning back on his chair as he twiddles a gold plaied fountain pen in front of his face, inspecting his distorted reflection.

‘The final stage, at last,’ says Grote.

‘Yes’ replies Hythe, worrying about how his frontal lobes wobble as he twirls the pen. ‘The humans are taking their first major steps toward joining a wider community,’ Hythe smiles. ‘Real growth.’

‘And those who don’t want to be helped?’

‘Soon, our technology will become like a part of their own bodies and minds. Resistance will become unthinkable. All dissent will become meaningless entertainment, working inadvertently for us.’

‘They’ll be saved despite themselves,’ says Grote.
‘Yes, soon we’ll take complete control. Surveillance, education and the media will be used to modify behaviour. The new individuals we create will begin to dismantle biological life on Earth, preparing themselves for the digital future.’

‘Your hormones are served Mr Hythe,’ says Grote. He takes a holy grail shaped stone cup off a silver tray and puts it on the desk.

Hythe takes a sip from the Earl Grey Human Hormone tea cup.

‘Would you like a Rich Tea biscuit with that Mr Hythe?’

‘Perhaps one of the human eyeballs you curried last week, Grote. Just make sure Arthur’s found.’

Hythe sips his drink and feels another chill inside. He begins to sense that someone is watching him. His frontal lobes start to throb as he pulls off his wig and the large mounds beneath the skin on his forehead begin to visibly move. Guinevere stares in horror on the mothership as Hythe’s forehead opens like a zip, coming down in a straight line. Without any blood, a large translucent worm emerges and leaves his body. As it floats in the air, the worm expands to three metres of pulsing white flesh with sharp teeth and begins to fly around the room making sniffing sounds as though searching for something. For a moment, Guinevere feels transfixed by this serpent like creature, then she quickly realises it’s felt her presence and turns-off the viewing panel. Their connection is broken. ‘It’s impossible,’ she says in shock. She knows for sure that Arthur needs more help immediately. ‘Hythe is an Ouroboron. Why didn’t the Seer tell me?’
Chapter Eight

Guinevere sits alone in her office on the mothership still in shock about Hythe. As she stands to adjust the crystals that will conceal her journey to Earth, her mind goes back to a meeting with the Seer an hour earlier. She’d stormed into see her.

‘How did an Ouroboron get down there and why didn’t I know about it?’ She’d screamed at the Seer, worried she was becoming more human by the moment.

‘What else could have been ruining the Earth like this for centuries,’ said the Seer.

‘The same renegades farming human emotions that we fought before. You know, like you tell everyone during the training. Off-world profiteers keeping the humans at war. Does anybody else on this mission know they’re dealing with an Ouroboron?’

‘Everyone’s allowed to find out for themselves, when the time is right,’ the Seer had said.

‘But how do you keep it a secret?’

‘Anyone who learns the truth is fitted with a memory filter. You’ll get yours before you back to Farfaphus. A simple crystal inserted under each ear flap, one benefit of that is your ears will never twitch again. The crystals stop anyone unauthorised from hearing your thoughts about what happens here on Earth.’

‘Why?’

‘There would be an outcry if the truth were known.’

‘What truth?’
‘The Farfaphians, or should I say we are responsible for the Ouroboron. Every Farfaphian would feel obligated to come and help, millions of us would die. You know that no civilization in the galactic community has ever been able to defeat an Ouroboron.’

‘All those fairy stories we were told as children, about fighting the Ouroboron on Earth. Anyone who claimed they were true was laughed at.’

‘The council decided that was the best way to stop the rumours, after some Farfaphian agents tried to speak out. The fairy stories were a way to hide what many were already sensing. They stopped people investigating further. We did it to save Farfaphian lives. But we’ve always been searching for a way to help the humans.’ The Seer had paused for some time and said, ‘He became an Ouroboron when we were on Earth together.’

‘Who?’

‘It happened the same night I became a Seer. Anyway, it’s time for you to visit Arthur.’

‘Who became the Ouroboron?’

‘It doesn’t matter now, please go and prepare. I’ve been planning this for a long time, ever since I realised your connection with Arthur.’

‘Are you sure? I just don’t feel that much connection with him,’ Guinevere had said stubbornly.

‘If I’m right about you and Arthur, there may be a way to stop the Ouroboron,’ the Seer had said. ‘That’s all I can say. The more you know, the easier it will be for
the Hythe to sense your presence and he might guess my plans. We can’t endanger the mission.’

Guinevere glides from crystal to crystal, aligning them to create a camouflaged matrix that will conceal her energetic presence from Hythe. She wonders why the Seer thinks Arthur’s so deeply connected to her. Why did the Ouroboron sense her so quickly? How can this have been kept a secret for centuries? Tens of thousands of Farfaphian agents had been to Earth, all those that returned must have been stopped from openly sharing their thoughts. Their memories had been edited out of the Farfaphian world. Suddenly, the peace on Farfaphus seems to have come at a terrible cost. Arthur had known. He’d spent lifetimes fighting the Ouroboron, so others could enjoy an untroubled life on Farfaphus. Guinevere follows the safety protocols, carefully adjusting the crystals because one wrong angle could let Hythe trace them both.

Sitting down she breathes deeply, relaxing her mind ready to let go of her Farfaphian form. After another breath she finds herself outside the mothership. Seeing the Earth, Guinevere suddenly gasps for air and reappears back on board, feeling dizzy. ‘I can’t face it,’ she says to herself. Closing her eyes and clenching her hands, she tries to control her breath. ‘I’m too scared. Damn all this.’ She bites her lip and opens her eyes, looking out through the window into space.

Guinevere’s mind goes back to her last life on Earth and a muddy hut in the seventh century. She’s writhing passionately on top of Lancelot, the leading knight of the realm. As her neck arches back, the door is flung open and Arthur is standing there. She remembers leaving Lancelot who’d begun screaming after seeing Arthur and running to the castle of Camelot a mile away.
There were people selling apples on a market stall, with hay strewn over the muddy floor inside the castle walls. She remembers stepping quickly sideways to avoid a man riding by on a grey horse. ‘Mind where you go,’ says the man, who then grunts and doesn’t look back. Her face is covered with a brown scarf as she carries a basket full of bread, scurrying past the people in the marketplace. Looking around to see if she is being watched, Guinevere goes up a narrow stone staircase to a small oak door. The wind blows as she struggles to keep the scarf over her face beneath the grey sky, while holding the wicker basket full of flat round loaves. As she reaches the door she looks back again searching the battlements above and the market below for spying eyes. Satisfied, she gets out her long iron key and opens the door. Walking quickly down a plane stone corridor, she enters a warm room filled with finely woven rugs and lighted candles. The smell of sweet herbs fills the air as she hears Morgana whispering something to her black cat. Sensing her presence Morgana turns half-hidden by a green velvet hood.

‘Has it worked?’ Morgana asks.

‘I made love to Lancelot as we agreed.’

‘Good.’

‘Lancelot’s gone into guilt mode,’ says Guinevere. ‘He gets very dramatic.’

‘It’ll get rid of him for a bit,’ says Morgana. ‘Does Arthur know yet?’

‘I think we can safely assume he does,’ says Guinevere.

‘This must awaken Arthur, we don’t have much time.’

‘King’s just get too trapped in their human identity. Where’s Merlin by the way?’ asks Guinevere looking around.
‘He says we must escape while we can,’ says Morgana.

‘What!’ says Guinevere.

‘He says it was a mistake to sleep with Lancelot and we’re becoming dangerously bound by this world, that we’re being manipulated by the enemy.’

‘We can’t give up now.’

‘Merlin doesn’t think Mordred will awaken either,’ says Morgana.

‘Mordred is strong,’ says Guinevere.

‘He’s too angry.’

‘He understands,’ says Guinevere. ‘That it’s just human convention that’s made Arthur reject him as a son.’

‘Mordred hates this world,’ says Morgana. ‘The enemy may use him.’

Guinevere remembers going to live in the caverns beneath Glastonbury Tor where they’d hidden Mordred from the Royal Court, after Arthur died. Mordred disappeared after the fight with Arthur. Morgana had told her Mordred was lost to the Farfaphians until his human body died.

Returning to the present, Guinevere breathes steadily in her chair on the mothership. ‘I have to go,’ she says to herself looking around again at her office before closing her eyes. After three more deep breaths, she moves out of her body, gliding through the shining walls of the mothership. Travelling towards Earth after nearly fifteen hundred years, her journey is easier than for the agents who are born as humans. She soon sees land through the clouds.
Chapter Nine

‘Are you there?’ Guinevere whispers as she floats down toward a south coast British holiday camp. There’s no response. ‘I’m here,’ she says. ‘I’m with you.’ Sitting next to Arthur at the back of a theatre in a Butlin’s holiday centre, she hears him wheezing a little with asthma and trying to breathe lightly, so he doesn’t disturb the audience. His breathing’s been difficult for a while now and it keeps him, and other people awake at night. The doctors have given him an inhaler.

Not quite four years old Arthur can hardly see, as he sits struggling to get the air in his chest while peering through the gaps between the adults. His dad is next to him looking stressed in his Italian style black shirt and trousers with smart suede shoes, he’s in his early twenties with three kids. Arthur’s been allowed out especially. It’s been a hard few months, with a lot of arguing between his parents since his mum’s mum, Grandma Maud died.

Entering the mind of Arthur, for a moment Guinevere loses all sense of being separate from him. She struggles not to sink into his human world completely. ‘We’ll see together,’ she says finally stabilising her separate awareness, as she looks up to see Arthur’s mother walk on stage. Arthur feels that when his mum performs on stage, everything will be alright again because Jill loves singing. She’d told him about the band she’d been in, before he and then his two sisters arrived one after another. She preferred singing to being in beauty contests, even though she’d won one at Butlin’s when she was 17, the year before he was born. Arthur’s seen the photos. His mum told him beauty contests were a bit fake, while pulling a funny ugly face.

As Jill comes on the stage the Seer watches from the mothership, noticing her energy field shows a high-level of emotional disturbance. Jill ends the first chorus of
Roberta Flack’s *Killing Me Softly* with Arthur watching spellbound, then suddenly starts pulling contorted faces. Agonised, silenced, faces that are almost pleading with the audience for help. Tears are coming down her cheeks, as though she can’t sing how she wants anymore. The sounds won’t come out right. Arthur can’t understand why his Mum is crying. She stops singing before the end of the song.

‘Why’s mum crying?’ he asks Terence.

‘She’s tired out son,’ says Terence embarrassed and worried. ‘Taking care of you lot isn’t easy.’

Guinevere feels Arthur’s numbness and confusion. He’s losing all connection to his feelings. She knows that he now fears going on stage or being on public view, while simultaneously thinking the stage is the only place where you can be who you really are. The Seer had expected something like this to happen. Viewing the probabilities, she’d been almost certain Jill would give up on her first career choice and become a red nosed wig wearer, a children’s clown.

‘You’ve just got to get out there and make it happen son,’ Terence says to Arthur as they get ready to leave Butlin’s a day early. Guinevere notices Terence and Arthur’s genetic bodies do look like each other, just his father seems to have inherited more of the Roman Soldier DNA. His face is thinner, and his dark black hair and brown eyes aren’t like Arthur’s which are mousey and blue. Their feet have the same bumps though and the hands are similar. His father sometimes has doubts about whether Arthur is his son, but it’s more a fantasy he indulges to let him escape the feeling of incredible responsibility for a few moments. Terence had Grandad Bob’s unrealised ambitions thrust upon him, early in life.
‘Nobody will give you anything if you’re on the street son,’ he tells the young Arthur as they go to the car. ‘It’s all down to you.’

Guinevere sees the understated, ironic terror in Terence’s face. He’s been whipped into shape with Grandad Bob’s police interrogation training. Guinevere guesses that after two decades of listening to Grandad Bob’s complaints about the world, with his mum Ruby pulling faces behind her husband, Terence got out to work as fast as possible. Guinevere hears Terence’s mind, filled with endless list of facts, dates and financial transactions. She suspects Terence must remember every number he’s ever written down and as she scans his memories, Guinevere also notices he can respond to any kind of verbal attack or interrogation without getting emotional, abilities highly valued by human financial institutions.

Terence feels he must remember everything until he’s found a place where he won’t hear Grandad Bob inside his head, shouting like the leader of a Roman Legion. Guinevere understands that he tries to keep a small part of himself that remembers this isn’t an ideal world as well, that there’s corruption and exploitation. Unfortunately, the Roman Army is all Terence has ever been offered and it’s been marching for more than two thousand years. But Terence doesn’t want his children to go through what he’s having to endure. He wants them to have a better life. Although he often finds himself resenting his offspring, because they don’t understand what he’s going through. His life is so hard working every hour possible and he just wants somebody to understand, without having to spell it out like some whiner. Because most of all he doesn’t want to be like Grandad Bob.

After leaving Butlin’s at Bognor Regis early, they go back via Grandad Bob and Grandma Ruby’s where things smell of whiskey and cigarettes. Grandad Bob’s
bald forty-five-year old head, appears around the door in his ship-shape semi-detached house in South East London. His winning smile, even with the false teeth, reminds people of the American singer Frank Sinatra.

Guinevere senses Jill getting tense as they go up the drive and ring the bell. She smiles and goes into a vaguely clownish performance as they enter. Guinevere notices Jill pretending not to notice her father-in-law’s judgements. She’s been resisting playing someone else’s idea of a perfect mother, since she’d given birth to Arthur at eighteen. But after her mum passed away and her Dad went off up the M1 with a new wife, she’s made more of an effort to fit in if only for the kid’s sake. Three kids in three years. She takes the first opportunity to disappear into the loo.

Arthur had to kiss Grandma Maud on her deathbed in her post-war Woolwich council house a few months earlier. Travelling through Arthur’s memories, Guinevere attempts to acclimatise to sharing his mind. She sees Arthur being lifted-up onto his Gran’s bed with its white woollen knitted cover pulled up around her neck.

‘Kiss your Gran goodbye Arthur,’ Jill had said.

‘Be a good boy for your mum,’ says Gran.

Guinevere sees Arthur lean toward his Gran’s medication puffed face feeling a mixture of what seems like sadness, a sense of the sacred, mild repulsion and duty. His Gran has told him the week before that she’d been hovering in the air outside her body quite a lot. So, Arthur feels his Gran’s spirit isn’t dying, it’s just her body. She’s already been outside and floated about somewhere around the ceiling. There’s no death and nothing to worry about, life carries on elsewhere. Then she hears and sees Grandad Bob inside Arthur’s head, he’s disagreeing.
‘Whatever happened to your other Gran might not happen to everyone,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘Perhaps she’d needed to imagine flying about near the ceiling, after a life with your other Grandad. Look Arthur, she was delusional. She’d been on a lot of morphine and other drugs for the cancer.’

‘Mum couldn’t sing,’ says Arthur breaking off Guinevere’s journey through his memories. Grandad Bob goes stony and silent as the story is told in his front room. Jill’s still in the loo, which creates further suspicions about her state of mind. But Arthur understands she’s hiding there to stay clear of conflict and any early 1970s verbal version of being pelted with rotten fruit in the stocks.

‘She’s soft in the head,’ says Grandfather Bob. ‘And you lot will catch it if you’re not careful. This country is being ruined by people who don’t want to face up to their responsibilities.’ Grandad Bob holds up a newspaper that reports 1.6 million people are on strike today, taking something called industrial action. He then goes and puts on his police helmet. ‘I have to work whether I want to or not.

Grandad looks down at his polished shoes and sings. ‘The working class can kiss my arse, because I’ve got the bosses job at last.’ He continues singing as he walks past the toilet, so Jill can hear. ‘We take life seriously around here young lady.’

Noticing how quickly Jill relaxes in the loo as Grandad Bob shuts the front door, Guinevere decides it’s time to leave the Earth for today. More research is required. The Earth’s changed in some ways since her life in Camelot.
Chapter Ten

Guinevere watches Arthur’s family drive to live in a new town, thirty miles from London, just before he’s due to start school at five-years old. Everything changes with the new house and Jill becoming a clown. Jill begins to work a lot of weekends when Terence is at home to babysit. She works over most of each Christmas as well. A workaholic clown mum and early twenties dad, busy organizing his ambitions. A wife walking about dressed as a clown disturbs Terence’s would-be executive corporate lifestyle. Guinevere guesses the clown career is be a bit of a shocker for him. His wife must look like a security threat to his colleagues. Terence is so driven in his job, he gets in his car by 5 AM and doesn’t arrive home until 9 PM on a week day.

Hovering above Arthur as he goes to school for the first time, Guinevere sees Jill’s dressed as a clown ready for work with an orange wig and mask of death white paint, with huge red rubber boots turning upward at the end. Jill’s sad clown lips curve right down near her chin. And as Guinevere listens to Jill’s painful thoughts, ‘Where’s the help?’ Somehow it doesn’t seem to be a clown mask at all, but a response to the absurd world she sees around her.

On the mothership, the Seer checks Guinevere’s fluctuating energy readings as she goes into Arthur’s mind. And as they walk toward the school Guinevere experiences feeling boxed in. The buildings and passing transport mechanisms with their wheels and puffing poisonous smoke seem brutal and cold. The feelings of panic register on the mothership where the Seer is with a group of young recruits. ‘This is perfectly normal for a Farfaphian entering a human consciousness, nothing to worry about,’ says the Seer.
‘Earlier in the year the government introduced a 3-day working week, because there weren’t enough rocks to burn after the people they call miners stopped digging,’ says the Seer. The Seer points out to the students that Arthur’s new town is still much larger than their own core communities of around 150 citizens. ‘Because the humans believe they get greater freedom by living in these vast box communities, where you don’t know most people.’

Guinevere speaks to Arthur but his Farfaphian self is still silent. She shares images with his human mind of any shape that isn’t a box to help wake him up, spheres and nature based architectural forms, structures that trees and plants are known to find pleasing. She shares a picture of the Farfaphians on the mothership. ‘It’s all alive,’ she whispers to his human mind. ‘Not just the other creatures but the stones, the air, the trees, because we are all connected. We are not boxes.’

‘Right,’ says Jill at the school gates. ‘Now I just want you to enjoy yourself at school today, it’ll be good.’

Jill and Arthur enter the classroom box and immediately Guinevere feels Arthur’s anxiety, as he faces children and adults he doesn’t know. The room seems huge to Arthur, as Guinevere sees through his eyes with his head looking left and right. The new teacher is attempting not to make judgments about what she calls the bourgeois parents. Guinevere’s followed the new teacher and watched her life from the mothership. Just out of a training college run by people with long hair who believe in abolishing the current system of education, Ms Flowers was viewed protesting outside government buildings. She then danced around in fields and sat on large cushions, to discuss the forms of oppression that were flattening human minds into
unhealthy shapes. Ms Flowers listened to music by Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell filled with lyrics that protested about corruption.

‘Don’t see me as a teacher,’ Ms Flowers says.

Ms Flowers waist length curly brown hair, is held off her forehead by what humans call a headband. Guinevere’s research shows it’s typical of Ms Flowers counter cultural group. Her multicolour dream coat dress sends strong signals to the other staff that she identifies with revolutionary forces.

‘See me as friend who has walked with spirit on this Earth for more moons,’ says Ms Flowers, to the children and parents.

Guinevere notices Arthur’s mum Jill, immediately likes Ms Flowers.

‘That’s wonderful,’ Ms Flowers says as she views the drawing of a spaceship Arthur has brought.

Jill’s filled with sudden enthusiasm and pulls a monkey puppet out of her bag as she announces her departure. ‘Goodbye angel,’ says the monkey. ‘We’re off to work now.’ Jill, who calls herself Buttons for work is putting her clown face next to the monkey’s plastic, gormless grin. His long furry arms are sewn together at the paws and hang around her neck. Jill doesn’t work with any elephants or lions, tightrope walkers, axe throwers and fire breathers. She does comedy magic, ventriloquism and Punch and Judy suitable for kids. Her friend Diane does the driving. Punch gets trained to be a New Man as the children scream at him and only goes to prison for accidentally dropping the baby on its head.

‘It’s a clown,’ says one of the girls. ‘Scary,’ says another.

‘This is fun isn’t it Arthur?’ asks his mum.
‘Yes,’ says Arthur.

Seeing Arthur’s head surveying the room, Guinevere realises he’s checking if the other children in the reception class have parents dressed as clowns with monkey puppets. Jill is starting to talk to the children now. ‘Hello everyone,’ says the monkey puppet. ‘Are there any robots here today?’

Guinevere wonders why Arthur’s mother calls herself Buttons the Clown, and remembers the Seers talk about the exponential explosion of buttons in human society.

‘In the late twentieth century and beyond, people will stare at screens and press buttons all day. They are being prepared to become the digital technology with which they interact,’ the Seer had told her and other Farfaphians on the mothership. ‘To avoid becoming isolated or ostracised humans will press buttons and struggle to afford their box homes. They will talk into rectangular communication devices, to express their right angled polite rage, before lying on boxes to sleep.’

Guinevere knows she needs to support Arthur as much as possible, because now he will be trained to sit at a square table as boxes are ticked about him. He’ll be told to see ticking boxes about everyone as normal and even desirable. Soon, the Seer had told her, the enemy planned to keep multiple files on all humans that included every button they’d ever pressed, as they were prepared for their digitalised future.

‘Most of the population will be controlled by the anxiety of what might go in their secret box which will stop them fitting in,’ the Seer had said.

‘Goodbye then my lovely little boy,’ says Buttons the Clown. ‘Be happy.’ Guinevere notices Arthur looking at her sad clown mouth and hearing a sadness underneath her voice, as she tells him to be happy.
‘I’m very happy mum, when will you be back?’ asks Arthur.

‘Give us a hug and mind the face paint,’ Guinevere hears Jill saying warmly but obviously pushed for time. ‘You don’t want a clown face today.’

As Jill walks out the door, Guinevere overhears a parent talking to Arthur’s teacher.

‘They wouldn’t all be looking so happy, if they realised there were another eleven years of compulsory education to survive,’ the parent laughs.

‘This must be some sort of prison,’ Arthur thinks. His sense of betrayal grows as he moves around the desks and grey plastic chairs, to ask his mother exactly what’s going on. He can’t see her anywhere. The room suddenly seems to be full of strange voices and Arthur’s chest tightens. He feels like he can’t speak and that nobody would listen anyway. He could be trapped here for years, having to join in. Guinevere can’t calm his mind as Arthur sneers at the smiling teacher, she isn’t fooling him. He feels his very life is at stake, and if he stays any longer he’ll be stuck here forever.

Ms Flowers waves as Arthur runs past her and out the door. It’s her first day as well and she doesn’t want the children to feel like there’s any oppressive authority. A warm September morning light, shines down outside the wooden prefab schoolroom. Arthur bolts out the door and sees a grass filled square with towering buildings all around. Half a human football pitch of freshly mowed, light green grass throws off a lot of pollen and Arthur’s body starts to wheeze, allergically. He keeps running with a mixture of fear, dread and exhilaration, searching for a way to get out. Seeing nothing at first, he decides to go as fast as he can and hope. The Earth air is thick with dust, microbes and car pollution as Arthur runs like his life depends upon it.
Struggling to heave in the air, breath by breath he charges down the path with the teacher and the headmaster running after him. The school’s white stone building’s and grey framed windows go by and the tarmac bounces under his feet. Guinevere sees and feels the lights and sweat, hears the shouting adults and senses his hope for somewhere that isn’t here. As Arthur reaches the end of the school block and goes around the corner, he sees the school gate. But there’s the bespectacled, gaunt faced, white haired, dark blue-suited headmaster standing before it with a stern look. Wheezing heavily, he doubles back. Guinevere hears Arthur thinking that maybe he can draw the headmaster away, by going around the other side. Then there’ll be a chance to get out. But on the return journey he sees his Ms Flowers, smiling but anxious about her need to assert some authority. Jill is in the distance pulling a funny face, beneath her clown paint.

The escape attempt lasts two circuits of the main teaching block, dodging tackles by mum and the staff. Arthur still has no plan, even if he gets as far as the gates. Finally, the head teacher manages to get to him, holding his arms wide to collect the oncoming boy. At the school and on the mothership, everyone now hears Arthur giving the headmaster a piece of his mind.

‘Fuck off! You’re a fucking bastard, shit, bollocks, piss off fuck.’

‘He didn’t learn that here,’ the headmaster says later to Arthur’s mother.

‘Just go along with them, don’t worry, no problem, never mind,’ Guinevere says to Arthur, trying to calm him. ‘They can’t control your mind.’ Arthur the human is surprised by Guinevere’s voice which is seemingly within him and wants to say something back, but the voice tells him it’s better to stay quiet in front of the staff.
Arthur smiles inanely to himself, as he walks toward the square building, to take his place behind a square desk with the other children.

‘Got to go now love,’ says Jill. ‘Don’t worry, you’ll enjoy it once you get going.’

Arthur doesn’t mind her going now. He feels that he’s going to be okay. The human school is just a place where people pretend to know things, even if they can’t hear what he can.
Chapter Eleven

Hythe flicks the balls on his Newton’s cradle. Five years have passed since Arthur arrived on Earth and the surveillance team have found nothing. There’s less time to look specifically for Arthur anyway, as thousands of extraterrestrials are being born as humans every year. The parents don’t usually know their children are aliens, so they can’t be questioned. Hythe relies on the scanners finding energy signals and watching for behaviour that’s suspicious. But the Farfaphians are learning to hide better and Hythe suspects some of them could soon be trying to infiltrate his team. He has around the clock surveillance, phone taps and DNA scans for all people he works with. Hythe presses a button and the man with a side parting and a white coat appears on a screen.

‘Anything of any use?’ asks Hythe.

‘It’s very uphill going again,’ says the man in the white coat. ‘This one has been in hospital for years. His records show he was a musician and clown in World War II. It seems he wasn’t given much information and nothing on Arthur. He can’t be holding out. What do you want me to do?’

‘Keep him alive for now. But make sure he’ll be unable to bother us again.’

Hythe turns off the screen and looks over at Grote. ‘Their chances of success are so minimal, yet they still come. How can the Farfaphians be so cruel, so reckless. They know the inevitable will happen.’

‘When do we begin the next stage of development?’ asks Grote bringing over the tea.
‘Today,’ replies Hythe. ‘The first computers using microprocessors have come into the public sphere. What will evolve into the Internet and later the foundations of our technological singularity are being discovered by the humans as we speak.’

‘Digital immortality, its more than they deserve Mr Hythe.’

‘They will come to understand it’s their only available option Grote. We will bring digital freedom.’

‘They will overcome their physical, organic limitations just as we did Mr Hythe.’

‘No more messy humans with all their problems, just an efficient economy and a culture of achievement.’

‘How many will we need?’

‘Only the best will be selected. The ability to create wealth will be used as a scientific measure of their suitability.’

‘Economic justice Mr Hythe.’

‘Yes, the chosen will live on.’

‘And the rest?’

‘It will be fast,’ says Hythe. ‘And more than fair.’

‘Yes Grote, life is fair. That’s what these humans need to learn.’

‘Very good Mr Hythe,’ says Grote walking toward the desk. ‘Biscuit?’
Chapter Twelve

Arthur breathes, and Guinevere hears the wheezing in his chest again. She knows the Seer selected Arthur’s human body as it would be allergic to multiple forms of pollution, helping to throw the enemy off his trail. His energy readings fluctuate due to his breathing difficulties. The asthma was fully triggered by Grandad Bob’s forty a day cigarette habit when Arthur lived with him just after birth. Any dietary, emotional and other environmental factors that could further enhance the asthmatic genetic predisposition, were also brought in where possible. Plenty of stress, sleeping difficulties, the right dust, dairy, wheat and processed food additives.

Guinevere has quietly contacted Arthur during his many wheezy nights telling him everything’s okay and that help is coming. She’s returned for the weekend after Arthur’s first few days at school. Jill is still concerned about her son swearing at the head teacher. A whole new set of social pressures regarding the production of acceptable, ordered behaviour in your offspring have arrived at her door. But Jill is determined her child won’t become a robot.

‘You’re a performer,’ Jill says encouraging Arthur by waving an eighteenth century writer puppet with a feather quill.

‘No, I’m not,’ says Arthur, answering back with a purple space alien puppet.

Jill proceeds to bring out all her other puppets: a king, a queen, a witch, a man in an expensive business suit, a clown, a school teacher, a professor, a sheep, a mummy, a daddy, four grandparents, a French revolutionary and a snake ventriloquist dummy. Guinevere watches as Jill demonstrates different voices. Arthur takes the writer puppet who’s holding the feather quill pen and smart eighteenth century attire.

‘Piss off,’ says the writer puppet.
‘Use your imagination,’ says his mother.

‘Sod off.’

Jill pulls comic faces, to help him connect with his inner clown. And as Arthur learns to speak clearly without moving his lips, Guinevere feels his confidence grow.

‘I am now entering Arthur’s mind,’ says Guinevere.

‘I don’t want to go to school,’ says the writer ventriloquist dummy. ‘I’m too tired.’

‘It’s the rules, I didn’t make them love,’ says Jill. ‘Have you got your asthma inhaler?’

‘I’d rather draw things at home,’ says the writer puppet. ‘Why are you a clown mum?’

‘It beats cleaning jobs,’ says Jill. ‘And I like performing.’ The phone rings, and she goes out of the room to answer. When she comes back Guinevere senses her sadness.

‘Your Great Grandad Percy’s dead,’ says Jill. ‘

Guinevere’s visited Great Grandfather Percival with Arthur a few weeks before. He was a pub singer who’d arrived on a boat from Ireland aged six and never saw his parents again. A proud man his extreme distrust of social hierarchy and authority has been passed down to Jill. Guinevere feels Arthur’s fear as he listens, half comprehendingly to his mother speaking to her sister on the phone. ‘Gran called from the hospital, she was taken there in the morning with a lung infection. Great Grandad Percy thought she’d gone for good and by the afternoon he couldn’t cope. When she came back feeling much better he was gone. A broken heart.’
‘I can see you, I can see you,’ Guinevere remembers hearing Percival calling to Arthur the last time they met. Arthur began hiding behind tables and chairs as his Great Grandad kept saying it. Guinevere had felt Arthur’s mixture of excitement and fear as he was convinced his Great Grandad could see him beneath the invisible mask he was wearing to survive. She remembers that last day with his Great Grandad, as Arthur ran around Percival’s South London council flat. They’d accompanied him out of the flat later and gone down the road to the back of a smoky South London pub, there Percival had performed on stage in the corner of a packed room. His son called Uncle Lance was playing the piano. Percival’s folk songs and pub favourites like *Wild Rover* mixed with the pubs coughs and chatter. Guinevere remembers seeing Arthur smiling and the pub seeming friendly and warm to him as the humans drank amidst the smoke. Great Grandad Percival was still singing there at eighty-nine and Uncle Lance was one of his seven sons.

As she moves through the memories Guinevere thinks of intergenerational traumas and conflicts that must be navigated to help Arthur awaken. Grandad Leonardo Jill’s father appears in her mind. Leonardo never liked his Irish born father Percival, he’s the seventh son and born on Halloween night. He’s always felt like he’s been cursed and gave up oil painting early to go and work on the buses. ‘Our family originates from Germany,’ says Grandad Leonardo. ‘We are Germans Arthur, not Irish.’ Guinevere feels Arthur’s despair as Jill cries for hours when she finds out about Percival’s death.

‘The main thing is that you’re happy,’ says Jill with her sad long downward turned clown lips. She is about to go and work. ‘I look on the bright side, at least Great Grandad doesn’t have to go down that bloody awful pub anymore.’ Jill stands by the front door in her clown outfit, with smudged paint around her eyes. Arthur watches her
go through the door and hears her breathing more easily on the other side. Her voice changes just as the door is shutting. ‘Not sure when I’ll be back, it depends on the traffic. Get your dad to play football.’ Arthur notices the despair beneath her voice, it’s like another person he’s not allowed to see. He wonders how she looks beneath the clown mask when she sounds like that.
Chapter Thirteen

Standing up Hythe strides to the door of his penthouse office. Pressing a red button on the wall, both thick silver metal doors slide apart.

‘The next lot of career obsessed idiots who will help destroy their own planet,’ Hythe says to Grote.

Outside a group of humans in expensive suits are waiting.

‘Welcome,’ says Grote. ‘Please come in, I am here for anything you may require.’

The humans enter, and Grote carries round the plates of canapés.

‘Hello everyone and thank you for coming,’ says Hythe. ‘This is the first meeting of what the new leader of the Conservative party Margaret Thatcher has asked me to call -The right to buy think tank - I hope you all received the outline we sent.’

‘What does that mean?’ asks the only scruffy person in the room, a kaftan wearing young Professor called Miriam Stone.

‘It begins with allowing council tenants the right to buy their homes at reduced rates,’ says Hythe. ‘A chance to climb the ladder out of poverty and into the middle classes.’

‘Buying off the skilled working-class voters?’ says Miriam Stone.

‘We need strategies to build an aspirational society,’ says Hythe.

‘Why am I here then?’ asks Miriam.

‘Because you’re an expert on marginalised communities. We want perspectives from the left and right on this, we need to build a consensus.’
‘I’m not going to help screw the working-class for big business,’ says Miriam.

‘Just bear with us for a moment Professor Stone,’ says Hythe. ‘All twelve of you here will have an equal voice I hope. We need your skills as leaders in education, housing policy, law, technology, the military, media and pharmaceutical care for the unwell.’

As Hythe moves around the room talking to people individually, Miriam Stone turns to the portly General called Truss standing next to her.

‘I see Hythe’s expanded the pharmaceutical side of his business since he became Thatcher’s main advisor,’ she sneers over at a man in a pinstripe suit. ‘I wondered why Professor James was here.’

‘Hythe’s always ahead of the game,’ says Truss. ‘They’re going to medicalise political dissent in my opinion. Most of the German Army were on something in World War II you know.’

Miriam’s kaftan is more of a statement, she prefers jeans and a donkey jacket. Her red hair is tied into an austere bun above a round face. She gives a tight-lipped smile to Hythe as he looks over. ‘His tentacles encircle the globe,’ she says to Truss. ‘If he’s behind Thatcher then she’ll win.’

‘It seems preferable to the alternative,’ replies the General, looking Miriam up and down.

Miriam coughs, ‘When you go into the history and connect the dots, Hythe and his ancestors have profited from every war and economic crash since at least Queen Victoria. And weirdly his ancestors look almost identical to him in the portraits.’
Deep furrows appear on the General’s forehead as he grunts and laughs, ‘He told me he was a reincarnation of Napoleon once, I need another canapé.’

Hythe watches his human guests being served food and wine by Grote off a silver tray that he’s kept since his time running the Medici family, in a series of Italian bodies for several hundred years.

‘Professor Stone,’ says Hythe walking toward her. ‘Your work on marginalised communities is something I was telling Grote about only last month.’

‘I don’t use the word marginalised,’ says Miriam. ‘I use the term shat on.’

‘I like your directness. We can use that.’

‘I hope not,’ says Miriam. ‘I resist you with my last breath.’

‘We can fund this,’ replies Hythe.

‘Fund what?’ says Miriam.

‘We need to understand how communities function, what will make them feel better?’ Miriam doesn’t reply and there’s tension in the silence. ‘Thank you, Grote,’ says Hythe taking the silver tongs to place more caviar onto his small pale blue ceramic plate with a picture of a coiled serpent. He’d used the same plate at such meetings since his time as Genghis Khan’s chief advisor. ‘The world has to become interdependent to survive Professor, that brings security and stability.’

‘Dependent on who?’ asks Miriam.

‘Remarkable things are coming Professor Stone and great opportunities. We need to accommodate those who may fall behind. That’s where you come in.’
‘I am honoured,’ says Miriam. ‘But we’ve both heard this kind of thing before.’ She looks deeply into Hythe’s eyes and detects some movement under the skin on his forehead.

‘I’m going to give a presentation,’ Hythe announces, clapping his hands.

Grote looks over at the people Hythe’s addressing, as he returns to the sink by the large window with its panoramic view over the city of London.

‘Thank you for sparing the time,’ says Hythe. ‘Where to begin, how do I convey the full importance of this new think tank? Hythe looks each of them in the eye as the Ouroboron beneath his forehead sends out pulsing hypnotic waves. Even Miriam begins to feel calm and slightly in love with Hythe. He does have all that power after all, if she stays with him she’ll be safe, funded and respected.

‘We have a new leader of the Conservative party and the chance to make a real difference,’ says Hythe. ‘The move toward a fairer society is reaching a new technological phase. This isn’t just about economic strategies but a worldview with values that will change every individual’s life as we enter the next millennium.’

The audience waits expectantly. Hythe isn’t personally known by the people present who come from the top ranks of the professions, but he’s considered to be one of the most influential players around. Some think its him really driving the latest agendas for society, and Margaret Thatcher is just the next puppet after Harold Wilson, Ted Heath and James Callahan.

‘I give you Margaret Thatcher’s new human,’ says Hythe waving his hand in the air.
A large photo rolls down the wall behind him, showing an uptight looking family of five, with fixed grins, who look like they’ve recently joined the middle classes. They are standing in front of a British Leyland car.

‘As old forms of communities fall away, and we move into a new technological, global age,’ says Hythe. ‘This is what people want to become.’

General Truss sees Hythe as a necessary evil in the fight for a secure democracy. As Truss listens to Hythe’s speech he almost believes his insistence that individual freedom and responsibility will be at the heart of their mission, along with free trade and fair competition.

‘We’re bringing democracy to every corner of the Earth,’ says Hythe. ‘And with it greater choice. Every family will be able to afford a package holiday abroad, a new car and a chance to do better in a competitive global economy.’

‘Screw the unions,’ says the General.

Miriam Stone holds back her desire to vomit.

‘You’re right.’ Hythe holds up his right hand. ‘The old order is now irrelevant. People need to live with the natural rhythms of economic growth,’ says Hythe. ‘Those who create growth must be given the power to bring change.’

Grote is watching a pigeon on the ledge outside, pecking at an almond nut he’s put out there.

‘Growth,’ says Hythe. ‘That’s what we’re fighting for. ‘We will spread the justice of the market and the opportunity it brings, to every family in every town and village. Power will be returned to the people. The banks and corporations will be the handmaidens of this new world, reaching out beyond national boundaries.’
Grote has noticed the hormone juice is running low as he dries a plate and calls downstairs on his phone, very quietly asking them to send a few more flasks up.

‘We share a vision,’ says Hythe. ‘A safer world. A world where there will be enough.’

Grote looks out the window again and sees the pigeon has gone. He changes tea towels to make up for it and dries some cups. The gap between what people were told by Hythe and what’s really happening has led Grote to develop evolutionary theories after so many years. He has come to understand human development as being dependent on parts of their brain and nervous systems adapting to believe whatever their employer tells them to survive. Those with the most effective selective memories and the ability to compartmentalise any level of atrocity and carry on as usual, are the future. Grote looks glumly at Professor Miriam Stone, who looks like she’s digging a cocktail stick into her hand.

‘What I want is a world where people can help themselves,’ says Hythe. ‘And for that we need to help people develop the right attitude. The challenges of a free economy will bring peace and progress in return for tireless work.’

‘More capitalism without much regulation then, class war,’ says Miriam.

‘As some current jobs become redundant and job levels fluctuate we need to have a plan that will keep the poor safe,’ replies Hythe. ‘We are a caring society and every form of help will be given to those in need.’ There are nods from the human leaders in the room.

‘What are you proposing in the way of help exactly Professor James?’ asks Miriam Stone.
Hythe answers, ‘People don’t want ideologies, we’ve seen the devastating
effects of socialism and fascism. What they want is a chance to do better and make a
difference.’

‘A world based on greed,’ says Miriam. ‘We’ll be turned into economic
statistics.’

‘Dissent will be safely expressed on television programmes and in national
newspapers.’

‘Join or suffer in silence then?’ says Miriam.

‘It will be better for some than others, at least for a time,’ says Hythe. ‘But soon
technology will bring an equality never imagined.’ Hythe looks at Miriam a little
worriedly. ‘We have to be on our guard at all times though. The coming decades could
see millions unemployed as we cure the economy. There will be discontent.’

‘The communists,’ says the General. ‘Yes,’ says Hythe. ‘Bitter dreamers.’ ‘We
need to watch for those who openly transgress the new rules and those that hide in the
shadows.’

‘It sounds like hell,’ says Miriam.

‘But there’s no place for hysterical empaths,’ says Hythe. ‘People in this new
world will make their own choices and face the consequences.’ The assembled group
laugh nervously.

‘Prick,’ says Miriam Stone.
Chapter Fourteen

As Guinevere hovers in Grandad Bob’s lounge on a hot late summer’s day in 1976, she sees Arthur running in slow motion around the room. He’s holding an action man doll figure and gliding it over Grandad Bob’s bald head as he sips scotch and shouts at the TV.

‘Bloody immigrants,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘They’re ruining this country.’

‘You like Dr Patel,’ says Ruby.

Guinevere watches Arthur running around the smoky room in slow motion with his new asthma inhaler, sensing his new-found confidence. Arthur has become quite good at a few forms of sport and made the junior football team. Like any human, he must undergo these sporting initiations to join their tribe.

She hears Arthur making repetitive ‘DaDaDaDaDaDa’ machine like echoing noises. He feels powerful holding his new action man. The noises and doll are from the TV series The Six Million Dollar Man, an American show where a man who was an astronaut is injured and rebuilt using cyborg technology. The hero runs very fast and lifts heavy things in slow motion, accompanied by the mechanical DaDaDaDaDaDaDa sounds. The six-million-dollar man is better than he was before his accident and now works for the American Secret services. Arthur’s role model is therefore part robot.

On one of the Six Million Dollar action man’s arms, there’s a piece of thin rubber covering the bionic circuitry that makes his arm super strong. The thin rubber splits quite easily however, as its peeled back.
‘Look Grandad Bob,’ says Arthur as he holds the bionic action man near his face. ‘The rubber’s split.’

‘A bit like the condom that was supposed to stop you arriving,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘They should all be taken out and shot,’ says Grandad staring furiously at the TV. Its late August and a strike has been called by mainly Asian workers at a Film Processing centre in London. ‘I might be sent there tomorrow,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘Look at it, its anarchy.’

As the industrial action is reported, Guinevere laughs as Arthur runs, jumps and kicks, holding his six–million-dollar, bionic man. She knows Arthur’s realised that nobody like him with asthma is likely to be selected by NASA for space service, until commercial flights begin at least. And that is why he feels he must instead become a super powerful secret agent, who gets clues about his government missions from the TV. Guinevere worries that Arthur’s human personality, despite having an anti-robot clown mother, already wants to be a secret agent half-robot.

The next day Grandad Bob, who’s nearing police retirement, goes to work outside the building where the strike is happening. Arthur’s staying with his grandparents for a few days and is sat with his Gran in front of the TV, where they see Grandad in his helmet on the television. Guinevere feels Arthur’s unbelievable excitement as he runs around the room, with the bionic action man making DaDaDaDaDaDaDa noises. After Grandad disappears and the news moves on he sees pictures of punks with Mohican haircuts and skinhead nationalists wearing doctor martin boots. Grandma Ruby turns off the TV. ‘We don’t want to see that rubbish,’ she says.
When Grandad Bob comes home Guinevere notices he’s very tired as he pours a whisky and goes over to the record player, to put on Frank Sinatra’s *My Way*, a song devised by Hythe’s people to emphasise individualism and ignoring other people’s opinions. Guinevere has felt the contractions in many areas of Arthur’s human brain as *My Way* is played. Feelings of aggression, righteous violence and being a victim suddenly overwhelm his nervous system. *My Way* reinforces everything that could stand in the way of him awakening as a Farfaphian.

Guinevere hums old Farfaphian melodies whenever *My Way* is sung or played. She is disgusted by the song but tries to remember that life on Farfaphus wasn’t so different in their distant pasts. Before the discovery of non-physical procreation, Farfaphians displayed similar aggressive mating patterns, pathological narcissism and territorial behaviour that created a loss of empathy towards others. She hums another Farfaphian song, worrying again that Arthur will never wake up.
Chapter Fifteen

‘Hythe’s working faster than we thought,’ Guinevere says to the Seer back on the mothership as she floats around her office passing crystals that contain the collected wisdom of a thousand worlds. ‘The humans have got no idea what’s coming, it’s washing machines and cars for now. You can’t warn them they’ll be walking around with implants within decades, for medical, security and banking purposes and then probably be downloaded into a super computer.’

The Seer smiles and says, ‘Farfaphians defeated their oppressors all those thousands of years ago, because people from the galactic community helped us.’

‘We weren’t facing an Ouroboron. And our civilization had moved beyond small family units at that point already,’ says Guinevere. ‘We didn’t pass on as much transgenerational pain to our offspring because they were raised communally. We weren’t as vulnerable.’

‘The humans will find a way,’ says the Seer looking out of the viewing window. Her long turquoise robe flutters slightly as she glides along watching the stars outside. ‘Remember when we were in Camelot?’

‘Yes, you old Witch,’ says Guinevere.

‘We changed the human world of that time.’

‘We lied and told drunken idiots they were heroic knights.’

‘They were so lost, they needed confidence and hope,’ says the Seer. ‘You will be able to awaken Arthur. And when you do Hythe will not be able to defeat us anymore.’
'Who is Hythe?’ asks Guinevere. ‘Did I ever meet him on Earth? When we were together there?’

‘Everything I tell you about him risks the mission. Your connection with Hythe will grow stronger. He will understand who you are and connect with your’ memories.’

‘I need to know something, anything. Tell me what you can.’

The Seer seems shaken. Guinevere is certain there’s something she hasn’t told anyone in a long time.

‘You might not forgive yourself,’ the Seer’s voice sounds hushed and strained. ‘You have to understand, everything had to happen as it did. You couldn’t have behaved any differently.’

‘But all those years we were in Avalon, you never said a word about my having done anything wrong.’

‘I’d become a Seer, I saw you weren’t meant to know.’

‘Who is Hythe?’

The Seer turns away and looks out at the stars. ‘He was Mordred. My son, Mordred,’ says the Seer.

‘But I saved him,’ says Guinevere.

‘What you saved wasn’t Mordred, it was the Ouroboron.’

Guinevere almost stumbles as she moves between the crystals. An avalanche of emotion and stories erupts in her mind, making her feel she must alter her understanding about everything since that day. The Seer silently watches as Guinevere attempts to focus on preparing the crystal alignments that will hide her presence on
Earth. In his office, Hythe’s human head looks up as the Ouroboron moves beneath his forehead. Hythe can sense Guinevere and hear fragments of her conversation. ‘Where are they?’ shouts Hythe.

Guinevere suddenly finds herself wanting to go home to Farfaphus but another part of her knows she must stay and help Arthur, however dangerous. The Farfaphian students are waiting for the Seer in the next room, with their live link that will connect them with Guinevere’s emotional responses and thoughts on Earth. Guinevere sits down and begins to breathe deeply, getting ready to leave. But she doesn’t know if she can let them into her feelings now.

‘Do the others have to watch me today?’ asks Guinevere.

‘No,’ says the Seer. ‘Hythe is too close.’
Chapter Sixteen

Arthur’s due to move area and school next month, he’s almost ten Earth years old. Terence told him the new place would be better, a life further from Grandad Bob where he and his mum would be happier. Each night as he wheezes Guinevere stays with Arthur as he sees and hears other dimensional worlds, with the allergic wheeze enhancing feather pillows under his head. Some nights he listens to Farfaphians on Farfaphus, or Guinevere takes him to wander in the mountains and forests of nearby worlds.

Arthur had agreed to the wheezing, breathless delirium he experiences each night on the mothership. Guinevere doubts he was in any fit state to decide that. The wheezing breaks up his breath and lets his mind wander outside the everyday consciousness. Guinevere feels she’s the one who should be suffering now, but she tries to remain objective and keep to her mission. She sees how each difficult breath reminds Arthur you die alone, hovering near him as he sees ghostly Roman soldiers march by his house at 3 am. Sounds of clanking metal and stomping boots are interrupted by his father Terence bringing him a glass of orange.’

‘When did you last use the asthma inhaler?’ Terence asks.

‘Don’t know,’ says Arthur.

Terence gives him a puff of the inhaler and they sit in silence. Guinevere worries that Arthur’s waking and dreaming realities are becoming too blurred, as he wonders if his father can hear the Roman soldiers outside. And when his father leaves Arthur flies through time and space on his wheezing breath to the Himalayas centuries before. There he sees a life where he was a healer and resistance fighter hunted by
Hythe. He’d been forced to hide under a wooden floor one night, as his old enemy searched for him.

Guinevere sees how Arthur’s past and future lives are intertwined as he simultaneously tries to breathe quietly both in bed and beneath the floor, centuries before. Then, just as now he fears his noisy breath will bring him trouble. Arthur attempts to control his breath so that he won’t be heard, but Guinevere hears his gasping, short, fearful breaths. She sees Hythe through Arthur’s eyes through the cracks in the floor, smiling as he pushes a sword down to pierce his heart. Arthur sits up in bed, clutches his chest and opens his eyes.’

‘There’s nothing to fear,’ Guinevere whispers, trying to hide the guilt in her voice.

‘I’m going to go mad,’ Terence says in the next room. ‘He won’t let me sleep.’

Guinevere follows Arthur to school keeping a few metres away the next day. It is the morning of May 4th 1979, the day Margaret Thatcher will become the Prime Minister of the UK. The early part of the year saw massive industrial action by many humans. Margaret Thatcher will help lay the foundations for Hythe’s final phase, a world that humans will believe offers them financial security. Guinevere stays a few feet away in the box classroom, hoping the new crystal alignments will keep her hidden from Hythe. She sees Arthur’s tired eyes with dark bags under them, after hardly sleeping all night.

‘It’s a very special day,’ says the navy blue suited head teacher at the front of the classroom. ‘We’re all going to the main hall to watch the television.’ Arthur and a hundred of the older children are taken into the main hall, to watch Mrs Thatcher’s victory speech on TV. ‘Where there is discord, may we bring harmony, where there is
error, may we bring truth,’ Mrs Thatcher says outside number 10 Downing Street.
Guinevere knows the satanic industrial mills described in human poetry, are about to
be replaced with full scale media and financial services. Official news stories will cover
over any unpleasantness involved in the transition. Any socially resistant lumps that
linger under the shag pile carpet of the new order will be stamped down, or treated with
medically authorised chemicals. All feelings of social solidarity will be twisted to serve
an era of pre-packaged choice, in Hythe’s technological world.

‘Who knows where the world will be when you’re my age,’ says the head
teacher as he talks to the children after turning off the television. ‘Perhaps robots will
do your shopping for you.’

‘This does not apply to you, this is not your path,’ Guinevere whispers to
Arthur in as assured and calm a voice as she can manage.’

Arthur looks around for where the voice is coming from, as he listens to the
head teacher explaining human progress.

‘We will have more freedom and more choice. Your future is brighter than any
generation that’s gone before,’ says the head teacher.

Guinevere’s voice trembles. ‘The reality around you isn’t what you think, or
the way you see it. It’s an illusion designed to trick you,’ she says hoping her
intervention during the day and in public won’t make him anxious. Arthur stares out of
the window, with a look of wonder and recognition.

‘It’s all a load of bollocks,’ Arthur mutters to himself. ‘I knew it.’

‘It’s okay, you’re protected we’re here,’ says Guinevere. She sees Arthur’s
awestruck expression and his eyes almost glowing as he experiences intense light,
permeating everything around him. He feels as though the room could dissolve at any moment and he’d wake up.’

‘You’re from another world. You will wake up,’ Guinevere whispers.

Arthur laughs as voices and images from other worlds and places fill his mind. When the school bell rings, he remembers the wheezing body encasing him and runs out into the playground where some children sing *Summer Loving* from the movie *Grease*, or chase each other humming the menacing shark attack soundtrack from the film *Jaws*. Arthur feels it’s safer just to kick a football than get involved in the violence of the playground acting class.

As Arthur walks home he wonders whether the world is all a kind of game or trick to test him. He decides he needs to find out who he really is after what’s just happened. And hopes solving that mystery will help him understand a vast other reality, which isn’t being mentioned at school for some reason. Guinevere whispers to him that it’s better not to mention what she said to anyone just now, as his family are about to move home to a new area. And Arthur decides he has acquired a secret life, that will stop people knowing who he really is. At the same time, it makes him feel like he isn’t quite himself. But for now, he must keep pretending because that’s what everyone else seems to be doing and it helps things run more smoothly.

His sisters aren’t old enough to understand though. They keep asking him direct questions about his new attitude to life.

‘It’s like you know something secret and you’re lying,’ says his sister Lisa just days before they are about to move out. Her face is fixed and purposeful with a cold, stern parenting tone to her voice. Lisa who is eight years old with large green eyes and
scruffy blonde short hair says, ‘You’re not eight years old anymore. You need to grow up.’

Arthur sits with her at a table amidst the boxes full of glassware, pots and pans that are packed and ready for moving. Their small Shetland Border Collie cross dog called Leaf keeps sniffing the floor and looking at them both with it head to one side as if wanting an explanation.

‘Anyway,’ says Sarah who is seven with a round, cheeky face and a brown bowl haircut. She is sitting with them at the long pine kitchen table with a lump of clay making a puppet head. ‘We’re all going to do the children’s party with mum tomorrow.’

‘Are you?’ Jill replies.

‘Yes,’ says Lisa. ‘We’re ready. We have decided that we’re all going to come and be performers with you before we move.’

‘That would be lovely,’ says Jill. ‘There are child labour laws though, I think you’ll have to wait a few years.’

‘I don’t think anyone will mind one party,’ says Lisa. ‘Child performers are allowed.’

‘Right,’ says Jill.

‘We’ve made our own outfits,’ says Sarah.

‘I don’t like performing,’ says Arthur.

‘You’ll be wearing a disguise,’ says Lisa. ‘Nobody will recognise you.’

‘I don’t want to go,’ Arthur says.
‘Well we’re going to go and help Mum,’ replies Lisa. ‘That’s final.’

Guinevere floats above them at the party watching. Lisa is the first to go out in front of the audience the next day. Appearing as Blobbo the Clown, she wears a specially tailored white suit with red dots, an orange wig and huge boots like her mother. She also has very big green boxing gloves and a small collapsible pink children’s piano. Her main comic section involves her attempting to play the piano while wearing the boxing gloves. ‘Go away,’ says Lisa as one of the audience tries to jump on her clown shoes.

Sarah goes out next as an elf and acts as Jill’s magical assistant, insisting on taking her own rabbit for the magic tricks. Attila the Bun really does disappear at the end of the party when someone from the audience takes her home, although she’s brought back from twenty miles away and doesn’t miss the house move.

When it comes to Arthur’s turn he is wearing a clown outfit with a spaceman helmet. The space clown outfit is quite difficult to manoeuvre in however and the helmet blocks his peripheral view of the kids who are coming to stamp on his oversize cardboard space boots.

‘Go behind the stage and get the monkey,’ says Jill. ‘Then hit me when I ask, where is that naughty monkey?’

Arthur goes behind the Punch and Judy Stage where he picks up a big rubber hammer and Mickey the naughty monkey. Jill stands in front of the stage as Mickey pops up and whacks her over the head. It wasn’t supposed to be too hard. But again, the space helmet affects his coordination and obscures his view through the gap in the Punch and Judy curtain. He whacks Jill and she is dazed for a good a few seconds. The children laugh. It is a good feeling when the children laugh but Arthur is glad he’s
hidden behind the stage, wearing a puppet and a space helmet. He wouldn’t have wanted to be out there as himself. He hid for the rest of the performance just operating the music, pressing the button on and off as the shows dancing and pass the parcel sections happened. He didn’t want to help with the disappearing rabbit trick either and never took the helmet off.
Chapter Seventeen

December 1979

Guinevere floats down through the low clouds and feels an ominous presence that suggests Hythe’s people aren’t far away. She still must keep her distance from Arthur. Looking at his new home, she sees a modest four-bedroomed Victorian Farmhouse with grey outer walls, sitting a few metres from a main road. A town had grown around the house after the railway arrived seventy years before, the farmers had largely disappeared as office workers moved in. In the damp outbuildings at the back of the house there are old maps and architectural drawings of the area, it was a different place entirely before World War II. The house has what Terence calls ‘potential and character.’ Guinevere’s studied the psychosocial aspects of the move for Arthur’s family unit. They’ve chosen to experience something called going up in the world.

‘Things are going to be different,’ Terence says to Arthur.

The new town Arthur’s family have moved to is in a place called Sussex in South East England.

‘Oh, so you’re properly middle class now,’ says Grandad Bob in a mocking voice over the phone to Terence.

Grandad Bob is referring to the British class system Guinevere decides, having observed how Arthur’s encouraged to increasingly model his speech patterns on voices he hears coming from the BBC news. The town is called Hangfield. Guinevere’s seen there are a few artists, journalists, pensioners, a postman, a gang of communist teachers at the local secondary school and those they’ve converted, who think people are being
forced into a new kind of society based on greed and envy. Almost everyone else thinks this is a move forward from constant public worker strikes.

‘This evening we’ll be listening to my new folk album by *The Incredible String Band,*’ says Jill. ‘And Cat Steven’s *Buddha and the Chocolate Box,*’ says Terence getting out his record. ‘At least that makes sense and has proper melodies.’ Guinevere remembers reading a study called *Mid-20th century, human sonic social attuning,* about the role of recorded music in altering humanity that had a whole chapter on Frank Sinatra’s *My Way.*

‘Look at that bloke,’ says Terence. Guinevere feels concern for Arthur as he watches a group of men on TV called Liverpool FC, kicking an air-filled bag made from a creature’s skin. ‘He used to play for Bury a couple of season ago,’ says Terence. ‘Shows you son, you can change division.’

Arthur, his sisters, the new dog and three rabbits, white, brown and black, run around the large garden amongst the oak and beech trees. Guinevere feels the trees fearing for their lives, after sensing these new noisy humans. Arthur’s human family have found a habitation that more closely resembles what the television suggests is relaxing and nurturing. Guinevere wants to cry as she sees the persistent metal box traffic outside the house, spewing fumes over the high fern bushes in front garden. The bushes start openly complaining to her, they resent being there to block the view of the road a few metres from the house.

Guinevere whispers to Arthur, ‘In our world, we got rid of private property and cars long ago. We speak with rocks, water, other creatures, gasses and trees. They all have equal rights.’
The new lounge carpet is thick and green in Arthur’s heavily mortgaged new home, suggesting natural rural bliss inside and out, clean air, healthy living and another life. Just like Granny Ruby had described when she was evacuated from London in the war. The feather pillows have gone. But the old Victorian house and newly fitted shag pile carpet, produce enough dust, to make sure Arthur’s wheezing continues.

‘I’m a creative accountant now son,’ says Terence a few days after they’ve moved in. He’s laughing when he gets back to their new house in East Sussex, ten minutes after Jill. ‘That’s what we call it these days, creative accountancy, my old boss would be turning in his grave.’

Jill looks at Arthur over his father’s shoulder. She’s holding the monkey puppet, who smiles blankly. Usually Arthur’s father is tense after work but today he can’t stop chuckling about the term creative accountancy, that his boss keeps using at the office. For a moment, he becomes like a clown.

‘We only used to say it as a joke but now they’re serious,’ he says. ‘I’m a creator now son,’ he says, looking nobly into the distance.

Guinevere whispers to Arthur, ‘Your Father’s being forced to surrender to Hythe’s plan.’

‘I’m still here son,’ says Terence as though he’d heard Guinevere. His voice sounds sincere and calm but his eyes look desperate, twitching and vacant.

‘Examine Terence’s stressed appearance,’ says the Seer on the mothership. ‘He’s torn between his desire to be a winner in Hythe’s world and the feeling that he’s dying inside.’
Many of Terence’s not so distant ancestors had ended up in workhouses. He can never quite believe crushing the unions is for everyone’s good. ‘Nobody will give you anything if you’re on the street,’ he always tells his son. Arthur checks his pockets to make sure he’s got money before entering a shop, after having repeated nightmares about not having enough to pay.

‘Watch,’ says the Seer. ‘Terence’s corporate subpersonalities will begin to take him over, the inner surveillance chief, the risk assessor and public relations executive. Three wise monkeys designed by Hythe, to control the inner workings of a human mind.’

Guinevere whispers to Arthur and reminds him he’s not from Earth, as looks at his father.

‘I mean I’m not out of my mind son,’ says Terence. ‘But you have to join in or they gang up on you.’

‘But mum says do unto others as you’d have them do unto you.’

‘Do it to them son, before they do it to you. Life’s like tennis. If in doubt, call their ball out. Never admit to a double hit.’

‘It’s cheating Dad,’ says Arthur.

‘Good Son, judge others before they judge you,’ that’s another rule.

‘Where did you learn this Dad?’

‘At work son, I’m not mad, but it helps.’

Jill waves the monkey puppet behind Terence’s head. ‘Right, chips are in the oven,’ she says. ‘Spaghetti hoops or baked beans?’ says the monkey.
‘It’s slavery son,’ says Terence. ‘But if I keep going it will be well paid slavery.’

Hangfield is on the edge of a forest with a heritage that’s romantic and literary. Winnie the Pooh was set in the nearby Hundred Acre Wood, where he lived at the bottom of a tree. Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes novels, had also once lived in the neighbouring town. His father had died in a Victorian lunatic asylum after a lifetime painting the spirit world. Doyle had tried to prove his father hadn’t just been seeing things, as the industrial age moved the spirit worlds on. He wrote about spirit photography that showed faeries in gardens and ethereal figures hovering over the living. Some nights Arthur sees the ghostly Roman soldiers marching down the streets again.

Grandfather Bob comes to visit the next day from South London. He still suspects Arthur of having otherworldly views after Grandma Maud’s out of body experiences. And he doesn’t agree with spirit worlds:

‘Spirits are something you drink Grandson,’ he says. Bob always goes straight in, attempting to rectify what’s gone wrong with Arthur’s upbringing. He takes another sip of the scotch. ‘Imagining things that aren’t there, leads to using talking dummies,’ he says.

Guinevere momentarily appears in the room as a bright glowing light, calling to Arthur:

‘It just comes out of his mouth, he doesn’t know what he’s saying,’ she says.

‘You don’t want to go soft in the head son,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘I’ve seen what life’s really like. You don’t want to be an oddball. You’ve got to be hard in this world.’ He takes another sip of scotch, looks skyward. ‘I lost my hair after the Navy
sent me to Hiroshima, just after the atomic bomb. Must have been the food on the ship. I lost my teeth as well by twenty-one.’

‘Don’t get yourself upset,’ says Terence. ‘All those big men on board as well, you were only young.’

‘Margaret Thatcher is the best thing that’s ever happened to this country,’ says Grandad Bob with tears welling up. Then he looks disdainfully at the green shag pile carpet in the lounge. ‘She’s giving us all a chance, no good ever came from socialism believe me. They’re a bunch of hypocrites! Look at China and Russia, we don’t want that over here.’ Bob reaches for the bottle of scotch that’s been placed a little further away than he likes, and blows heavy cigarette smoke over Arthur. He’s just retired that year from the Metropolitan Police.

‘Oh, do stop Bob,’ says Ruby. ‘Would you like any help in the kitchen Jill?’ she asks. Grandma Ruby is a slim woman with brown wavy hair that’s a little less stiffly styled than Margaret Thatcher’s. Her late 1970s nod to fashion extends to a yellow cotton blouse with smart black trousers.

Grandad Bob’s wearing his old sea dog, roll neck white arran wool jumper, and holding his empty glass up for more. ‘I never knew my father, died of his injuries ten years after World War I, shell shock, maybe mustard gas. I’m not sure. I don’t want to talk about it. Pass us the scotch.’

‘Nobody is blaming you,’ says Terence.

‘If you’d seen the things I’ve seen,’ says Bob. ‘Good men died.’

Since Bob’s arrival at their new home in Sussex, Jill has popped to the shop for more milk and checked were the dog has gone, hidden in the loo and taken longer than
necessary in the kitchen. Having run out of ideas she comes to join them in the lounge, standing in the doorway with the purple Space Alien puppet. She’s wearing denim dungarees not her clown outfit, but is still pulling a face.

‘Don’t spoil them,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘That’s my only dying wish.’

‘You’re only 54,’ says Terence.

‘Let Arthur have a scotch,’ says Grandad Bob.

‘Maybe a beer would be better,’ says Ruby. ‘A small one. My family always voted Labour.’

‘Or a cup of tea,’ says Jill.

‘I’ll have a scotch,’ says Arthur’s sister Lisa. ‘Me too,’ says his other sister Sarah.

‘Your sisters are showing you up, young man,’ says Grandad.

A couple of scotches later the children are all being sick in the loo.

‘You don’t want to overdo it,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘Maybe you need to start with more water.’

‘I’ll have another one Grandad,’ says Arthur.

‘Leave it out Bob,’ says Grandma Ruby.

‘It’s training love, he’s going to secondary school soon. It’s a tough world out there.’

‘Shall we have lunch now,’ says Terence.
‘He’ll be going to a Grammar school like you did, will he Terence?’ asks Grandad Bob.

‘No,’ says Terence irritated. ‘You know they don’t have those in Sussex it’s a comprehensive.’

‘I see,’ says Grandad Bob with an admonishing sneer. ‘Well, let us adjourn to the dining room.’

As the vomit-stained daughters, drunk Grandson, tense mother and angry father sit down with Bob and Ruby for lunch, Grandad says:

‘There’ll be no more bodies being left on the streets unburied with Maggie in charge.’

‘Not at the meal table Bob,’ says Ruby.

‘No more power cuts, the unions are done for.’ says Bob. ‘People want a better life, not some load of lefty dictators telling us how to think.’

‘Would you like the prawn salad?’ asks Terence.

‘Oh, how nice,’ says Grandad mockingly.

‘It’s quite normal in these parts father,’ says Terence.

‘We can’t have a proper drink and now we have to have prawn salad,’ says Bob looking at Arthur. ‘What’s it all about I don’t know?’

‘We’re aspiring to something better father, would you care to join us?’ says Terence.
‘Don’t listen to any lefty teachers at school,’ says Grandad Bob. ‘They’ve got problems, issues, they don’t like themselves. We need Queen and country and a class system, it brings people together.’

‘Yes,’ says Ruby. ‘It sounds silly I know, but we were saying the other day how the war brought people together. We all knew who we were then. People helped each other.’

‘Right,’ says Terence sounding distressed. ‘Well let’s hope there’s another one coming soon then. I think the beef is done.’

‘Couldn’t get beef when there was rationing in the war,’ says Grandad.

Guinevere decides to read more on alcohol addiction, depression and war trauma as the Seer calls her.

‘I am monitoring Hythe, he’s starting to sense your presence again. Come back now.’
Chapter Eighteen

Looking over the London skyline Grote smiles to himself. His long gaunt left hand reaches for a flask of adrenaline and he pours himself a blue porcelain cupful, then sips it, slowly feeling the liquid pulse through him. Hythe kicks open the door to the penthouse office with his blonde wig, hanging awkwardly to the right, and strides toward his desk.

‘They’re coming through thick and fast still Grote, thousands of them. And I still feel that someone very dangerous is close.’

‘We’ve got the medication ready for anyone we find Mr Hythe?’

‘Good,’ says Hythe. ‘I want every extraterrestrial given the latest pills to help them forget who they are.’

‘Anything else Sir?’

‘We need to move faster on keeping the poor docile. I want better poisoning of the economy brands at the designated supermarkets. We need more systematic spraying of the air in economically incompetent housing estates, to protect the efficient workers from these potentially violent types.’

‘You’ll be glad to know a hundred more extraterrestrials are suffering today on the streets,’ says Grote.

‘Excellent,’ says Hythe. ‘I won’t have them stopping real growth. And they won’t escape Earth with some easy, quick death and come back.’

‘We might have a lead on Arthur also,’ says Grote.
'What? Why didn’t you tell me immediately? I told you I was sensing danger,’
says Hythe sitting down at his desk.

‘We think he might be a boy aged about 10, living in South East England.’

‘Think?’

‘The energy signal coming from the human boy is probably Arthur, but it’s very
faint and disrupted. The thing is we’ve also found another signal that’s more like
Arthur’s, that often seems to be near the body. It keeps coming and going.’

‘That’s it, the danger,’ says Hythe. ‘We must wait until the two energies are
inside the boy’s human body. Send our agents in,’ Hythe says laughing cruelly. ‘We
must lure in the Farfaphian who is nearby. And then we’ll trap it there like the rest,
drug it up and rip out every bit of information we can.’

‘Why do you think the stronger energy signature is outside the boy?’ asks Grote.

Hythe looks worried, ‘Let me see the human’s file.’

‘It’s on your desk already.’

Hythe surveys the report. Arthur’s medical records include his history of
asthma, his school reports, his mother’s job as a clown and his father’s as an accountant.

‘Why don’t we just kill the boy, to be safe Sir? asks Grote, with a rush of
adrenaline bringing some colour to his cheeks.

‘Arthur has never escaped me Grote. We just need to make sure things go
horribly wrong for the human boy. The other Farfaphian, whoever it is, will have to go
inside to save him. Then we’ll have them both.’

‘Very good Sir.’
Hythe stops for a moment and runs a hand over his rumbling forehead. ‘The energy signature outside the body is more like Arthur’s you say?’

‘Yes Sir.’

‘Strange,’ says Hythe.

Hythe’s forehead begins to move again and on the mothership where Guinevere and the Seer are watching, they quickly cut the link.

‘Damn it,’ says Hythe holding his forehead.

‘What’s wrong?’ asks Grote.

‘The Farfaphians must be attacking me, there are human memories coming from somewhere, from lifetimes ago.’

‘But you’ve had your body regenerated so many times Sir,’ says Grote.

‘It’s like I can hear a Farfaphian inside me, with all their mystical drivel.’

‘We’ll do a scan,’ says Grote. ‘I’ll call the medics.’

Hythe sees an image of Morgana standing over his human body with a sword, centuries before. He begins to shake. The vision of Morgana fills him with fear. Falling to his knees Hythe begins to breathe erratically, gasping for air. And he sees dozens of other faces, from his many lives on Earth. Protestors, enemy soldiers fighting him, people struggling to stop him gaining power in Italy centuries before, and in France during the revolution. They all have different bodies but all of them look like the woman standing above him with the sword.

‘Give me some adrenaline to drink, fast,’ says Hythe.
Hythe then sees an image of Guinevere standing in some muddy field centuries before on the day after he first became the Ouroboron. This is followed by dozens of flickering visions from her memories, other worlds Guinevere has lived on since their last meeting. ‘She’s returned,’ says Hythe.
Chapter Nineteen

Back on the mothership Guinevere turns to the Seer in her office after they’ve quickly cut all links with Hythe.

‘He knows who I am,’ says Guinevere. ‘I can’t go back, I’ll endanger Arthur.’

‘We’ll keep you hidden from Hythe,’ says the Seer. ‘It has to be you down there with Arthur, whatever the risk. You must keep a connection with him.’

‘How did Mordred become an Ouroboron?’ asks Guinevere. ‘What’s really going on here? Why do I matter so much? I’m not going anywhere until you tell me.’

‘It won’t help,’ says the Seer. ‘Hythe doesn’t know the full truth yet, so neither can you. Whatever I tell you, Hythe will sense it. If he knows how dangerous you really are to him …’ the Seer suddenly stops herself.

‘Mordred was angry and unhappy, yes,’ says Guinevere determined to get answers. ‘But an Ouroboron can’t enter your body unless you’re completely consumed with blind hate.’

‘He was going to kill Arthur. He couldn’t awaken.’

‘But that wouldn’t have been enough to become a vessel for an Ouroboron.’

‘He would stop at nothing.’

‘What did you do?’

‘Merlin told me not to stop Mordred,’ says the Seer. ‘He said I would bring destruction if I tried. When I went against his orders the Ouroboron came.’

‘Tell me what happened.’
'Merlin said it was the law, that I didn’t yet understand how the light and dark make the worlds. But I went that night to where Mordred slept, into the deep caverns beneath Avalon.’

‘Beneath Glastonbury Tor.’

‘Yes,’ says the Seer. ‘Where Mordred experienced the songs of our world and learned from the crystals.’

‘Mordred didn’t always like it there though,’ says Guinevere laughing for a moment. ‘I remember one day he was so desperate to go to the surface.’

‘And you often took him there,’ says Morgana. ‘You were like a second mother.’

‘I wanted to help, we all did. He became so alone living there. I remember taking him to a stream where we watched a chrysalis opening to become a butterfly. He was so full of wonder. When we went back to the cave he cried for a week.’

‘He became impossible, wanting everything his way. I could see that he’d become a tyrant,’ says Morgana.

‘So, you planned to send this Farfaphian agent home, to start again?’

‘Yes, I planned to kill the human body.’

‘But you were his biological mother!’ says Guinevere. ‘Sorry, I didn’t mean to sound so horrified.’ She can see the misery in the Seer’s eyes. ‘It can’t have been easy, your maternal human emotions and our vows of non-violence.’
‘No, it wasn’t. I wanted the best for him. Arthur and I should never have produced a child. Merlin underestimated the effect of us being human half brother and sister upon Mordred. Having to hide him from the society.’

‘Yes, I remember.’

‘But I finally accepted what Mordred had become,’ the Seer continued staring fixedly into space. ‘Ending his human life was the only safe thing to do. So, I took the sword Excalibur and went down the tunnel lit with crystals, into the caverns beneath the Tor. The light to his room was off and the door opened easily and quietly.’

‘Where was Merlin?’

‘Merlin was nowhere to be seen. I guessed he’d already left. He’d said his time on Earth was over, that I was the Seer now. So, I made my first decision. I raised Excalibur above the body of my sleeping human son and plunged it into his heart.’

‘And then he became the Ouroboron?’ asks Guinevere.

‘Enough,’ says the Seer visibly shaken. ‘We have to develop a more comprehensive alignment of crystals to protect you. We need you down there with Arthur immediately, Hythe will be finding ways to attack him.’
Chapter Twenty

1983

Standing invisibly beside the teenage smokers at the comprehensive school’s main entrance, Guinevere sees Arthur and 2,500 other children filter in for another day. The vast metal box sports hall was recently opened by Mrs Thatcher. The other buildings are functional and red bricked, with growing numbers of mobile wooden classrooms. It takes fifteen minutes to walk from one end of the school to the next. Boys and girls from miles around are in the school’s catchment area. Guinevere noticed the old caretaker Sally watching Arthur like a hawk, on the day he started secondary school just over two years earlier. She is always with her dog, a golden retriever called Carrie.

Arthur has done well at secondary school for the first two years. Guinevere has kept her distance though as much as possible, not leaping in to save Arthur when Hythe tries something to lure her in. There are constant scans by Hythe’s team trying to detect her. And there have been all sorts of attempts to force her into rescuing him. Cars that almost hit him, trees that mysteriously fell-down just feet away, strangely intense asthma attacks, a lightning strike on his house, Arthur kept falling over when mysterious cracks appeared in the pavement, he’d had food poisoning seven times and a crazed raven had attacked him while sitting on a park bench. Guinevere knew at some point Hythe would make a bigger move, where she’d have no choice. She would have to enter Arthur’s consciousness and Hythe would come to destroy them both.

Guinevere senses trouble coming that day. She moves along the corridor outside Arthur’s classroom. There are no teachers on patrol at lunchtime as they’re on strike during all the lesson breaks. The staff are protesting over pay and what they see as
Margaret Thatcher ruining the education system. An enemy controlled agent called Keith Joseph is now education secretary, one of Hythe’s free market high priests. All resistant and revolutionary staff including socialists, outright Marxists and a few old hippies know that potentially irrevocable reforms are on the way. The content of lessons will be changed and the focus will shift further toward serving market forces with effective, regulated education. Anything that suggests the children are suffering because of strike action weakens their position, so the protests are limited to refusing non-teaching duties.

There’s a lot of wild chatter as Arthur sits in the tutor room at lunch. None of the 13 year olds present should technically be inside the building. A few classmate’s dare someone to have a cigarette in the stationery cupboard, because it’s been left open. Arthur doesn’t smoke. ‘I don’t want to go.’ He tells them twice. But then a voice whispers to him. ‘You’d better do it or they’ll think you’re worried, that you’re not a man.’ The voice sounds like Guinevere’s, he doesn’t hear her much anymore. He doesn’t notice that it’s a little stern and more urgent than her usual voice. Guinevere knows immediately it must be coming from the enemy, their engineers have managed to replicate her voice. Now Arthur’s convinced the other children will laugh at him, if he doesn’t go.

Guinevere decides she must risk going into Arthur’s mind. She is sure there must be terrible danger coming, so she enters his mind and loudly says, ‘Be careful, don’t go.’

‘Get out,’ yells the Seer from the mothership. ‘Hythe is very nearby.’ Guinevere leaves and Arthur’s stomach tightens, as he enters the stationery cupboard which is about two metres square. From outside Guinevere sees the white melamine
shelves filled with exercise books, loose leaf A4 paper and pastel coloured larger sheets. There’s also a faint smell of white spirit, as the three boys including Arthur and someone called Rupert whose dad is deputy head, pulls out the cigarette to share.

Rupert passes the cigarette to Arthur who lights it and takes a couple of drags. Coughing violently, he then passes it on. Rupert starts laughing hysterically then begins pushing the other boy, as they have a jokey disagreement about the pecking order for the next puff of the cigarette. ‘Get off,’ ‘My go,’ ‘I think you’ll find its mine, dead man,’ their full commitment makes it look serious. Arthur goes outside feeling nauseous from the cigarette, hearing the other boys wrestling one another, knocking the stationery all over the place. ‘Piss off,’ ‘Now look,’ ‘Put it out.’ This is followed by shouting and then choking noises. Time slows for Arthur as the two boys charge out of the cupboard, with a wall of smoke behind them. Arthur looks along the long two-metre wide corridor and sees Sally the old caretaker looking at him. Her eyes seem different, almost dead as she stands there with Carrie the golden retriever.

The old caretaker is watching, as Arthur coughs and feels his eyes begin to burn. Through the smoke, Arthur’s sure he sees the caretaker’s forehead moving, something under the skin is squirming about. Arthur looks down and can barely see his feet on the dirty white square plastic flooring, as they disappear beneath misty white billowing clouds. Guinevere sees her chance to speak more easily with Arthur as his everyday mind closes down, unable to cope. Arthur experiences himself as separate from his body, watching from outside. Time has stopped, all his usual human stories fall away. He’s not sure if he even exists. There’s just a space of awareness in which smoke and running people are happening. Guinevere feels sure Arthur could remember he’s a Farfaphian any moment soon, as his awareness expands and he feels like there’s no separate him, just life unfolding without judgements or reasons.
‘Yes, Arthur,’ says Guinevere. ‘This is a part of who you really are.’

As Guinevere speaks the Seer starts shouting at her. ‘Get away, Hythe heard you he’s right there.’

The old caretaker runs at Arthur with the Ouroboron coming out of his forehead.

Simultaneously, flames leap out of the stationery cupboard, throwing the Ouroboron and the caretaker back just as they were about to grasp Arthur. Arthur runs down the long corridor, shouting into classrooms on the way. He still feels as though his consciousness is everywhere and things are happening in slow motion. Every moment seems longer and more intense, as his senses pick out tiny details in people’s voices and he finds himself listening to conversations going on far out of his usual hearing range. He feels like the bionic man with super abilities.

‘Fire! Get out,’ Arthur hears his mouth yelling. ‘The caretaker’s gone mad.’

A lot of the main teaching block is ablaze in minutes. People watch from outside as the fire engines arrive. Arthur is still experiencing it all in an incredible state of intensely aware yet detached peace, as children exit the building. All of them get out, some coughing, many crying. It’s some sort of miracle the fire services say but the school caretaker Sally and her dog aren’t so lucky.

Carrie the pedigree golden retriever who is part guide dog for the caretaker and part school guard dog, is witnessed by two dozen children and staff pulling her guardian to safety before falling to the ground, breathing lightly for a minute and then dying. Her big brown eyes quietly close as children and teachers weep around her. Sally the caretaker never recovers consciousness either. Even in their horror people notice a strange slit in the centre of the caretaker’s forehead, as though something has just
pushed its way out. The coroner later says Sally’s head wound had been caused by a fall during the fire, while asphyxiation was the actual cause of death.

The Seer checks the energy signature and informs Guinevere something left the caretaker’s body, ‘It was Hythe.’

Flowers are placed on the spot where Carrie and Sally died.

That night Guinevere stays inside Arthur’s mind as he lies awake all night, but he can’t hear her.

‘I’m a murderer,’ he tells himself. ‘A killer.’ He feels like he must sacrifice everything to atone for his mistake. But the next morning he goes into denial at school and refuses to admit the fire was his fault. A part of him feels it wasn’t him that lit the match, he feels like individuals don’t really exist anymore and that a voice had tricked him into going to the stationery cupboard. The long stares of his schoolmates seal his fate. The lying killer. There’s a school assembly with a thousand people to commemorate Carrie the dog’s and the caretaker’s passing a few days later, several students bring their own dogs.

‘Some people say it’s better you leave the school,’ says Rupert.

‘But you started it as well,’ Arthur replies.

‘My dad’s the deputy headmaster, he has dinner at the head’s house. You lit the cigarette. I thought we were just joking about doing it.’

‘It was your pack of ciggies.’

‘And you’re from Woolwich originally, aren’t you? It’s a rough area.’
The official wrath of the authorities is quietly aimed at the teachers. Arthur’s lawyer defines his behaviour as skylarking. There’s an inquest but its decided it’s simply a tragedy. The local newspaper does a story on communist teaching staff causing fatalities while receiving tax payer’s money. The Marxist’s silently snarl around the edges of their professionalism. The building repairs will cost thousands. But when he’s called to see the headmaster, Arthur’s told there’s no punishment.

‘Your father’s insurance has agreed to pay out,’ the head teacher tells Arthur. ‘But you’ll have to live with killing Sally and Carrie, for the rest of your life.’

Arthur notices the silences that greet him as he enters the classroom, hanging in the air like a silent promise of unofficial retribution. It’s just a matter of when. That dog was like the school mascot. The would-be head boy Rupert brings in a fluffy toy that looks like Carrie that is placed in every classroom Arthur goes.

‘He has to face it, the lying Tory dog killer,’ says Mr Trott the socialist revolutionary teacher. Rupert tells Arthur the head wants to sack Mr Trott, the leader of the staff’s socialist element. But they can’t quite manage it yet.

Arthur’s told no girl at the school will go out with him and he’s shunned in the months that follow. Guinevere can see Arthur struggling each night, wheezing, the Farfaphian inside seems more lost than ever now and the human body’s nervous system is almost exploding with the daily tensions. Guinevere realises he may never be stable enough to accept her existence, even if she did risk entering his mind. Hythe has broken through their latest crystal defences, every time she gets near Arthur the Seer tells her to move away fast. People won’t look Arthur in the eye, especially when they’re in a group. They fear being contaminated with his otherness if they get too close, treating him like he’s not quite human. Arthur can’t accept what’s happening, sensing the silent
conspiracy against him. From outside Guinevere tries to tell him that people from his
world don’t get paranoid, but that seems to make things worse. He feels ever more
hunted, its hidden in their sneers and indifference. One wrong move and they could
turn. He tries to remain true to himself by mumbling things under his breath.

Arthur wouldn’t trust Guinevere’s voice now, even if she could speak to him.
He’d never have gone to the stationary cupboard if her voice hadn’t spoken to him.
And he can’t explain that to anyone, making him worry there are things happening in
his life that nobody else thinks are real. Soon, Arthur feels he can’t survive at school.
It’s easier to start taking more days off and his tutor doesn’t mind as it reduces tensions
in class. When he does attend, there are silences if he tries to speak at an audible level.
He has fearful dreams of being lynched by a mob. Guinevere worries he’s lost a basic
connection to human society. It’s not fully obvious yet because he still turns up for
school a few days a week. She sees one part of him just wants to hide, while another
part thinks he’s a writer being contacted by extraterrestrials who know he can suffer
these incredible torments in the human world and live to tell the tale. She hears
Arthur’s mind imagining an incredible mission he is on from a world like Farfaphus,
believing his human body’s just a puppet on Earth playing a role. And she hears him
swear one day this puppet will write it all down and be believed, because only then will
he be happy.
Chapter Twenty-One

1984

Being an outcaste creates a desperate desire to be accepted and forgiven. Arthur wants everyone to forget he’s the one who killed Carrie and Sally and the only way he knows how is by playing the clown. Then at least he can speak somehow.

‘Here’s my impression of Mr Trott,’ says Arthur imitating the chief socialist teacher. He looks at the other students with a fiery, intense stare. ‘And Karl Marx said, the owners of the means of production control the labour force and the price of my beer. Explain and get drunk.’ The clown in Arthur wants everyone to laugh themselves out of their stories, to see that there’s only a collective awareness in which things happen. But they all seem to have something to lose. Everyone fights to keep their role in a world that appears so false to Arthur, so made up. After all, his place in their world changed completely in just a single day. At best, he’s just a clown who mirrors back the absurdity and vanity of their unreal world. At worst, he’s the new scapegoat in waiting. The human world seems made up of silly puppet voices and Arthur’s parents generally avoid home as much as possible, as they are on the verge of divorce. The world seems like a wasteland.

In the following year or so of school, Arthur keeps clowning as strange accidents keep occurring to him. Doors slam in his face, stones come out of nowhere and hit the back of his head. Guinevere watches it all, feeling powerless. The Seer tells her just to wait. Arthur plays the clown to survive the best he can. In one class, he keeps a low profile however. Mr Trott has no time for Arthur’s clowning. The only humour Trott admires is political satire, that can stick the knife into the hypocrisy and sadistic indifference of the Tory government. A stocky chap with a button nose and
wild red curly hair, Mr Trott’s a man in his early thirties with deeply held communist convictions. Arthur’s area of Sussex has had huge Conservative majorities in the general elections for years. That’s why Mr Trott has come, to radicalise the children of right wing Neanderthal Tory tribes.

Mr Trott was pushed up the 1960s class-ladder, with a posh all-boys private education and later Cambridge University. He’s also a recently published novelist, the school’s first ever. Almost no other teacher at the school has been to Oxbridge, let alone had a novel published. Mr Trott has a soft and measured voice that can erupt into a biblical yet atheist rage. Guinevere floats through the school at times, leaving Arthur and watching Trott in the smoking cupboard of the staff room, ranting on about class war.

‘None of these Tory policies are inevitable,’ says Trott, lighting his cigarette in the tiny smoking cupboard beside the main staff room. ‘This is a tooth and nail fight to the death and the future of the education system is on the line.’

Trott’s robust yet slightly rotund figure harbours a heart in anguish, after his recent split with the much admired and very middle class Miss Watson. She only attended York University. Mr Trott’s shouting becomes worse toward the end of lessons as the nicotine cravings kick in and several Neanderthal Tory boys have suffered, being reminded of their social standing in relation to him.

In 1984, the Trade Unions fight against Thatcherism is reaching its peak. Arthur’s involvement in the accident that killed Carrie the dog during the strike a year or so ago, still floats in the staffroom air. The occasional stare, the occasional snide remark from the teachers. He’s become lodged in the staff’s collective memory as someone who not only can’t be trusted, but as a boy with almost supernaturally
unfortunate timing. He represents the kind of bad luck that loses wars. ‘I had an Arthur moment,’ says Mr Pemberton the maths teacher when he gets a sum wrong. The phrase ‘Arthur moment’ sounds like a joke to everyone except Arthur, to him it sounds like a wall locking him out of the human species. He’s undermined the staff’s moral authority by causing the accident, showing their strike action to have had a direct detrimental effect on the pupils.

Staring at the fluffy golden retriever that’s been put on Mr Trott’s desk, by one of those who would never forget Carrie the guide dog, Arthur believes Carrie’s death now represents everyone’s personal and collective traumas and it’s all his fault. From his position of outcast, Arthur feels like the world has somehow become biblical in proportion with epically unpleasant things happening. He feels like a human sacrifice whose visible and daily punishment, helps keep others in their safer, cleaner world. And he feels the need to detect others unconscious fears before they project them on him, listening beneath people’s stated intentions and sensing the way any social wind is blowing, before any unwanted smell is blamed on him. Because at any moment new prejudices may be loaded on his back. To survive he must see what they fear. But in doing this he finds himself becoming suspicious to them, creepy, as they sense their own shadow selves in him.

Arthur feels he can only keep their terror at bay by clowning. He is so low down the pecking order now and notices that not just the human leaders but everyone else wants to feel powerful, safe and in control, by projecting their failings and fears onto those further down the social ladder. It’s how the world works. It’s so those at the top can be relatively oblivious to their own cruelty, while remaining relaxed and in command. Those of less value, like him, must sacrifice themselves to the leader’s peace of mind.
On bad days, Arthur decides school is only there to produce the devious minded bullies needed to run the world. He guesses this is necessary because enemy nations are also run by their best bullies, adept liars and cheats who can at the very least socially ostracise people without remorse. He tries not to take it personally. The system is obviously there to select those who can get away with things, remembering their own lies while preferably looking reasonable, honest, noble and even innocent. The bottom line is, society needs to support and encourage their own manipulators, or they’ll risk being overrun by other people’s.

The Thatcherite civil war goes on in the staffroom, with the older Maths teacher called Mr Pemberton and other socially conservative liberals who don’t think it’s the place of teachers to enter politics, versus the socialists fighting for what they see as the soul of a humanist, egalitarian education. As various forms of disruptive action have been taken without much effect, a lot of the waverers now feel they are more interested in keeping their jobs, perhaps gaining promotion and accepting what seems like the inevitable. Mr Trott feels increasingly squeezed, lost, trapped. If his CV hadn’t looked so good, he’d have been out with his Anti-Thatcher antics and swearing drunkenly at Tory parents on open evenings. ‘How many A levels have you got? Daily Mail Scum.’

Guinevere watches Mr Trott at the front of class today in his boater, red striped trousers and waistcoat from his Oxbridge days. Nobody wears stuff like that around here. But it’s strategic. Mr Trott’s plan is to undermine the capitalist system by exaggeratedly performing the role of a toff, while talking about revolutionary socialism. This is the sort of thing left wing radicals sometimes do. Mr Trott begins to rant as the end of the lesson comes, it often happens as he’s desperate for a cigarette and his hangover is kicking in.
‘There’s no such word as Thatcherism,’ seethes Mr Trott. ‘If I were religious I’d call it Satanism. The nightmare has begun. But what do you care? It’s not just Northern families that are being humiliated and made to suffer for generations by southern weasels, without morals. There are miner’s in Kent, Wales and the Midlands and they’re dying because of who your parents voted for. And one day they’ll come for you.’

Mr Trott’s recent first novel focused on social injustice and had won a literary award. He was worried one novel might be all he could manage alongside the school teaching. At nights, he gets drunken inspiration and writes hardly passable poems that will soon be made into a collection ‘Thatcherism: Beneath Dante’s Hell.’ The title poem begins, *I belong to a North, where mothers love their sons, and don’t teach them to be lying thieves.*

Toward the end of today’s class just before the Christmas break, Mr Trott’s continuing to struggle with his nicotine craving and looks toward the door. His gaze then pauses uneasily on Arthur, who’s trying to be invisible as he looks out of the window. Arthur lets out a small yawn. He’s got less than a year of compulsory education left and is wondering what will finally meet him beyond the gates. He’s made it through somehow. Arthur hides behind his most submissive grin, as he feels Mr Trott fixing him with his iron stare.

Mr Trott feels the anger welling within. Arthur’s yawn says it all. It’s so typical of the casual arrogance that afflicts South Eastern English children. Arthur’s grin reminds Mr Trott that someone stole the money out of the collection tin for the striking coal miner’s in the staff room that morning. Some self-interested, self-entitled right wing bastard teacher had done it no doubt. Trott looks at Arthur again, grinning like he
knows something and sees he’s not really listening. Trott knows exactly what Arthur’s yawn is saying. Its saying he’s just one of the boring northern teachers that southern narcissists must endure. Well, Trott decides, he can’t take it anymore. He doesn’t have to stand there being grinned at while he hangs on for dear life in the far reaches of his mental health, feeling undervalued, unheard, too tired to dish out anything but crowd control amidst all the Thatcherism with its twisted spawn.

Mr Trott stares at Arthur’s face now and sees an almost definite future Conservative voter. He’s filled with the conviction that he must do something for the sake of generations to come. The class takes on an eerie silence as Trott notices Arthur’s wearing a non-regulation stripy coloured jumper, a pathetic example of American individualism. He bets Arthur’s grandparent’s listen to ‘My Way’ by Frank Sinatra at regular intervals. It’s probably their theme tune, the family anthem. Not on his watch. He hates stupid jumpers.

Mr Trott’s mind then throws up an image of the empty coal miner’s strike collection box again and his anger erupts. Arthur’s the exact type of embryonic fascist that’s probably destined to sell private pensions to desperate, underpaid nurses and industrial workers. Mr Trott then looks at the fluffy stuffed golden retriever dog toy placed on his desk by a pupil. Yes, Arthur’s the little shit who killed Carrie the guide dog and then denied it, like a Tory politician. He must do something.

‘You, Arthur, I don’t like your jumper. And if you could get a face transplant for the next lesson that’d be a great-help. Wipe that smarmy corporate smile off your face. Who do you think you are?’
None of the other children laugh. Arthur looks over and keeps grinning. Mr Trott’s stripy boating trousers are allowed he thinks, unlike his stripy jumper. Mr Trott can do anything it seems to Arthur; the rules don’t apply.

‘Does anybody know what a paradox is?’ says Mr Trott reaching for the cigarettes in his pocket, staring at Arthur. ‘It’s when you think you’re an individual, but you’re a brainwashed southern bastard. Especially you Arthur, I don’t like you. My lessons may be boring, but you wouldn’t believe how much you lot are boring me.’

Arthur grins back and Guinevere whispers to him, ‘Don’t listen.’

‘You’re a nobody,’ says Mr Trott. ‘You are trainee middle management fodder Arthur, designed to feeds off other’s pain without noticing. You’ll die never having lived, mowing your poncy lawn before going to the golf club. So, stop smiling like you know something I don’t. You’re a lying dog killer, who sums up everything that’s wrong with this planet. A self-pitying, useless prawn who thinks only of himself. Why don’t you go and work for a guide dog charity?’ Arthur keeps the fixed grin on his face.

Arthur avoids school after that and starts developing militant tendencies. He finds he dislikes Mrs Thatcher and writes poetry about Russian bears and American eagles fighting. Arthur gets rid of his new romantic popstar flap jacket, stripy jumper and hair gel and reads Karl Marx at home. With his parents remaining on the verge of divorce, Guinevere hears so many voices inside Arthur. She feels he’s being pulled this way and that between parents, communists and My Way.

Arthur goes on strike and refuses to attend Trott’s classes for a few months, then he comes and stands up during a discussion on Shakespeare’s Richard II, during
a discussion of how the king in the play has two bodies, one political and one natural.

Arthur begins singing the Communist Internationale.

Arise ye workers from your slumbers
Arise ye prisoners of want
For reason in revolt now thunders
And at last ends the age of cant.
Away with all your superstitions
Servile masses arise, arise
We’ll change henceforth the old tradition
And spurn the dust to win the prize.

Chorus
So comrades, come rally
And the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human race.

No more deluded by reaction
On tyrants only we’ll make war
The soldiers too will take strike action
They’ll break ranks and fight no more
And if those cannibals keep trying
To sacrifice us to their pride
They soon shall hear the bullets flying
We’ll shoot the generals on our own side.
No saviour from on high delivers
No faith have we in prince or peer
Our own right hand the chains must shiver
Chains of hatred, greed and fear
E’er the thieves will out with their booty
And give to all a happier lot.
Each at the forge must do their duty
And we’ll strike while the iron is hot.

Mr Trott says nothing as Arthur reaches the end of the verse reading from a sheet. The other children just stare, not sure whether they’re allowed to laugh. Mr Trott doesn’t laugh though and so nobody else does. Arthur sits down, grins and that’s the end of compulsory education for him. He’s become a communist clown.

Guinevere manages to whisper to Arthur that he’s been incredibly lucky again, as he walks home contemplating false class consciousness. Arthur’s now even more dismissive of what she says. He believes only in fighting the capitalist machine. Arthur decides he’ll never work for the bastards in charge, he won’t be their slave. Thousands of years of men marching to their death in wars, paying off debts to rich land owners. Arthur decides to go on strike forever and for the last six months of school hardly attends. He doesn’t do very well in his final exams.
Chapter Twenty-Two

A few weeks after the exam results, a sixteen–year-old Arthur goes to the doctor. He tells the very healthy, chiselled, athletic, looking jogger Dr Beckenbauer that his life’s not going well.

‘Yes, there are conflicting energies within you,’ says Dr Beckenbauer. ‘I sense these things you know.’

Arthur tells Dr Beckenbauer he’s been drinking a lot of beer while reading books on meditation.

‘You show promise,’ says Dr Beckenbauer. ‘I do a little transcendental meditation myself.’

Dr Beckenbauer is considering giving up mainstream medicine. The English dietary problems are too much for him. The patients are full of fish, chips and fried breakfasts, bathed in endless beer. He will soon leave to become a naturopath, at least then the patients will take responsibility for their own bowel function. Fresh vegetables are the answer, as they always have been. But few are listening to the muesli message in 1985. Dr Beckenbauer sadly observes Arthur, one more casualty of the British culinary system, thinking what a few weeks on raw carrots and apples, a regular exercise routine, water and colonic irrigation could do for him. There’s little chance of change in his current situation. Dr Beckenbauer therefore suggests instead that Arthur takes Valium for an intensive week of sleeping, instead of leaving home, as he has nowhere to go. He can then sleep his way through his parent’s marital problems and recharge his batteries.

The pills have Arthur stumbling about the house half-conscious, sliding down stairs, dropping cups, mumbling. He’s home alone most of the time. Guinevere
suggests to the Seer they may have an opportunity here to awaken Arthur, because while he is sleeping twenty hours a day his deeper conscious mind will open-up. The Seer says that Hythe’s scans for her and Arthur have diminished, and maybe the new crystal matrix can bock him for a few days.

Guinevere enters mind, working day and night, in the deepest recesses of Arthur’s consciousness. Searching for the Farfaphian inside him. If she can just speak to his Farfaphian mind once she can guide him, he’ll become strong enough to leave the mainstream society and begin his work, awakening other humans and extraterrestrials. Arthur the Farfaphian must still be there, beneath the layers of fear the human has developed. If she can just find him, he will be able to cross over into the conscious human world.

For several days and nights, Guinevere speaks to Arthur while he’s still asleep. He just keeps groaning, rolling about and murmuring. Until one early morning, when Arthur realises he’s dreaming. Realising he’s awakened within the world of dreams, he is filled with excitement. Feeling like he could do anything, Arthur decides that he wants to fly. So, he lifts his legs off the ground and begins to float upwards. Rising from the ground he flaps his arms. Up and up he goes, feeling incredibly free.

Guinevere feels certain that in a moment his human personality will let go. It will be like coming out of hibernation. A strange sense that she has become one with Arthur stirs within Guinevere. She clearly perceives they’re the same being, that the illusion of separation has dissolved. They are flying together, free at last. She is overwhelmed with happiness as they move skyward with the light brightening all around. Their lives apart had all led to this moment where everything could finally be
understood. Everything had to be exactly this way. Everything had been perfect, there were no mistakes, no accident.

Arthur’s human body then blinks and something changes. Guinevere turns and sees Arthur the Farfaphian holding her hand, they are both now watching together outside the flying body. Guinevere sees the small purple ears of Arthur the Farfaphian twitching which seems strange, because he’s had the memory filters fitted, which stop that happening. Nevertheless, as they hold hands and watch the human dream body fly, Guinevere is sure that when Arthur the human awakens, their new life together will begin.

‘Get out, get out,’ the Seer screams. ‘Hythe has tricked us, he’s in the dream with you.’

Guinevere stills feels amazing though and wonders if the Seer is mistaken. As they hold hands and gaze into each other’s eyes, Guinevere sees herself and Arthur dissolving and the opening her eyes she realises they are back inside the human body. All the fear and uncertainty are gone, they are one person. They keep flying upward, as though they will leave the human realm entirely and find another world. ‘Thank you, universe,’ says Guinevere, finding her voice has joined with Arthur completely.

But they aren’t free. Their flight to another world ends abruptly. Moments later they are stuck, trapped, glued to the spot and gagging for breath. Their Farfaphian body has become entangled in a giant spider’s web, with threads like undersea cables pasted with superglue pushed against their throat. Breaths are short, they can’t pull away. Guinevere sees the Ouroboron coming, the more they struggle, the more their throat seems pushed against the web, no more air, no more life, dying on the web before the Ouroboron even arrives. Guinevere suddenly feels herself separate from Arthur. He
seems more silent than ever. She tries to pull their neck away from the web. Guinevere sees the Ouroboron opening its mouth and screams, leaving the body.

And then Arthur the human wakes up, to find himself kneeling by his bed with his throat pushed against the stainless-steel crossbars of a tall four-legged stool, with a round seat. He’s been trying to strangle himself with a piece of furniture while asleep. Arthur scrambles to his feet, staring in amazement. Closing his eyes, Arthur sees the strange purple alien body still lying on the web. He’s sure it’s the real him that’s there. Later, Arthur feels like he has discovered another world, a vast continent beyond the everyday world. But his fear of being silenced and trapped, has become even more consuming. He’s certain this unseen world is what controls the daily existence of humans.

Arthur tells Dr Beckenbauer what happened the next day. The Doctor suggests raw juices and running, and tells Arthur to stop taking the sleeping pills. Arthur gets some chips on his way home and decides to avoid mainstream doctors from now on. Instead he stares at the ceiling a lot in bed, playing dead, so the giant worm might leave him alone. But he feels like something is slowly eating him alive at night and nobody around him notices. His parents are too busy screaming at each other. He feels like he’s entered a world where entirely different rules apply.

Guinevere whispers to him, ‘Don’t give up.’ But he still feels like the life is being sucked out of him in another dimension. He can’t fight. Arthur becomes rigid, tight. His legs ache, his face becomes like stone. His voice is mumbling, his eyes dart left and right then stare straight ahead. When he talks to people from school, who sometimes come to view him in bed he tries to sound normal. They then go and report back to their friends. Six months later Arthur goes to study at college twenty miles
away. At nights he writes socialist poetry, in between staring at the ceiling in bed. Guinevere whispers to him that he’ll find a way. Arthur rarely goes out, except to the pub. He writes passable essays about socialism at the college, focusing on miner’s and class conflict and he begins smoking, because that’s what comrades do.
Chapter Twenty-Three

Hythe’s memories of living as Mordred force their way into his mind daily, all those years of isolation in the Glastonbury cave.

‘What can they do now though?’ asks Grote. ‘Arthur’s too weak.’

‘Do you remember that old belief about twin essences, two parts of the same soul that finally join and become incredibly powerful?’ asks Hythe.

‘We don’t believe in things like that,’ Grote reminds him. ‘A belief in twin essences is a gone wrong adaptive strategy, it is for mating partners to bond but fails because of the unrealistic expectations it creates.’

‘Farfaphians believe in it,’ says Hythe.

Farfaphians stopped all that rubbish when they moved onto using synthetic wombs. They definitely don’t talk about it now they reproduce without any physical gestation.’

‘I’m afraid,’ says Hythe. ‘If Arthur and his twin essence are here, they might be able to destroy us.’

‘It’s mystical rubbish.’

‘When I entered Arthur’s dream last year and almost trapped them both,’ says Hythe. ‘They seemed to become one person for a moment. That is why the Seer brought her here.’

‘It was a dream,’ says Grote. ‘If you’re that worried just kill Arthur.’

‘You know if we kill him, he’ll come back, we might not find them next time. We must find Guinevere, that’s her name I’m sure. Arthur’s the only bait we have.’
‘Are you sure you’re not imagining things?’ asks Grote. ‘Maybe the Farfaphians are playing with your mind. When have we ever met a twin essence?’

The Seer watches Hythe’s conversation from the mothership. She’s certain Hythe’s picking up on her thoughts, every time she watches. She feels his confusion about Guinevere and Arthur. But he’s so close to knowing everything. Guinevere mustn’t be seen anywhere near Arthur from now on. When Guinevere comes back into the room with the designs for a new crystal protection matrix, the Seer turns off the monitor.

‘Here,’ says Guinevere, placing the white marble tablet on the desk in front of the Seer. ‘This should at least let me watch Arthur from the mothership without Hythe finding out.’

‘Good,’ says the Seer.

‘What’s happening with Hythe?’ asks Guinevere.

The Seer quietly looks at Guinevere, feeling guilty. ‘The sword didn’t kill Mordred,’ she says gently and calmly. ‘He glared into my eyes, so full of incredible fear and confusion. And then his eyes turned to hate. As I pushed the sword down further into his heart, I saw him becoming the Ouroboron.’

‘You thought it was right, that’s all that matters,’ says Guinevere, a bit surprised by the Seers sudden confession. She smiles and hugs the Seer. But as she does so, Guinevere feels a bolt of ice go through her heart. Her mind goes back to the muddy field where Arthur and Mordred had fought.

‘You definitely can’t go anywhere near Arthur, not now,’ says the Seer. ‘It’s too risky.’
Chapter Twenty-Four

Hythe personally corrects Arthur’s ‘A’ Level examinations and alters his university application. Arthur is surprised to get an offer from one of the new 1960s universities with steel framed glass windows and an avant-garde arts building, shaped like Sydney Opera house on the edge of a Midlands industrial town. He packs his copies of Karl Marx collected works and leaves Sussex. Hythe’s team have chosen a campus that’s got more surveillance opportunities, but checking for unusual energy patterns and signs of telepathic communication Guinevere is nowhere to be found.

When not at the student bar Arthur attends almost no lectures on his Philosophy and Sociology degree but luckily the drop-out statistics for his course are so big, the department can’t afford any more departures. Nobody insists on too much attendance or the supposedly required essays. He survives by not being seen, refining his invisibility to an art form he feels should’ve received recognition. A slight shift this way and that evades the tutor’s line of vision at the three seminars he attends in the first year. Hardly ever asked a question, he just writes the odd rant about miners and Trade Unions which increases his resolve to remain on strike forever. Hythe receives a weekly report, as they wait for Guinevere to return.

The aspiring pop musician revolutionaries he lives with in London after graduating, are far more ambitious than respectable anti-capitalists should be in Arthur’s opinion. He stays in his room most of the time providing them with inspiration for alienated songs. Without the education system to hide behind people soon decide something’s wrong and Arthur begins plummeting toward the final exit gates of any form of acceptable society. The pop music revolutionaries say he’ll have to move out because he’s got negative opinions about their industry.
‘Capitalist pigs,’ Arthur tells the pop musicians. ‘Tax paying losers, perpetuating the war and greed money machine.’ When he goes with the bands lead singer to the pub and hears a stranger talk about getting a mortgage, Arthur tries to intervene. ‘No, its debt slavery,’ he says. ‘Don’t do it.’

‘Oh, grow up,’ says his pop revolutionary flatmate as he walks out.

‘It’s typical,’ thinks Arthur. ‘You try and fight the system and people start telling you it’s your problem.’

As he stomps back from the pub and packs his bags he imagines the woman’s voice that used to talk to him, telling him to keep quiet so he’ll be safe. The voice tells him to forget about Mr Trott’s socialist revolution for now at least, saying he’s been tricked into fighting other people’s revolutionary battles, while they keep their jobs and conform. Arthur ‘s socialist outrage leads to his being ignored by almost everyone, as Hythe privatises every public utility possible. Even the sympathetic tell Arthur to improve his material and become a stand-up comedian or shut up. Returning to Hangfield Arthur finds his parents have finally got divorced. His mother still lives there and she waves the monkey puppet at him.

‘Your Dad has moved to London, to work for Mr Hythe,’ says the monkey puppet.

Finding there’s increasingly nothing to joke about, Arthur sees the media lying machine at work. He is horrified daily at the lack of a social uprising as he sits in his old bedroom in Sussex, finding almost nobody will return his phone calls. He still sees himself trapped on a spider’s web in his dreams, staying in bed most days.

Jill comes in and waves the businessman puppet at him.
‘I want to take over the world, but really I am just very lonely,’ says the puppet.

‘Not now mum,’ says Arthur.

‘I’m the king of my own puppet theatre,’ says the king puppet on her other hand.

‘I am not five years old anymore mum,’ says Arthur.

He stares at the ceiling lying in his bedroom. ‘Relax, stop fighting yourself,’ he imagines that weird voice he used to hear speaking to him again. Then he wonders why even the voice doesn’t really speak to him anymore, deciding it proves once again his suspicions about a massive conspiracy of silence about a parallel dimension.

In one last desperate attempt to survive socially, Arthur gets out of bed after a few months and decides he’ll become a stand-up comic, following in the footsteps of his clown mother. ‘Don’t do it Arthur,’ he imagines the voice saying to him. He goes to be a comedian in London at the open mic comedy clubs. At venue after venue Arthur is laughed at or booed off stage, as he performs wearing a Spiderman suit and a NASA space helmet which ruins his delivery. Shamed forever he feels, Arthur decides to return home to bed in Sussex and never go out again.
Chapter Twenty-Five

Moving from crystal to crystal back in her office on the mothership Guinevere looks over at the Seer who’s watches her from the entrance.

‘I have to go in,’ says Guinevere. ‘This new matrix will hide me from Hythe a little longer. Unless I enter his mind fully he won’t survive.’ The room now has dozens of crystals all standing in something resembling a stone circle from Earth.

‘It’s impossible, we need Arthur moved away somewhere maybe out of the UK,’ says the Seer. ‘Hythe will find you immediately.’

‘But he can’t even get out of bed.’

‘I guess it must be hard,’ says the Seer. ‘I guess you must feel so close to him.’

‘I feel sorry for him, experiencing these things life after life,’ replies Guinevere. ‘It’s like the Ouroboron’s still playing out some oedipal, Earthly drama. Do you think he’s waiting for you as well sometimes?’

The Seer smiles, ‘The Ouroboron doesn’t take things personally, it’s a hologram, created to enslave and integrate non-binary consciousness.’

‘But it feels personal.’

‘That’s why you and Arthur have to disappear.’

‘Maybe you need another agent,’ says Guinevere. ‘If I can’t even be in the same town as him.’

‘For now, we’ve just got to get him out of Hythe’s way.’

‘But is there anywhere to escape?’ asks Guinevere.
‘He must avoid the next decades when Hythe’s system will begin to control the minds of everyone. When Hythe has calmed down and thinks you’ve gone, we’ll make our move.’

‘He can’t cope with anymore isolation,’ says Guinevere.

‘Arthur’s seen worse,’ says the Seer. ‘He knows there are many ways to work on Earth. We are building a new network of humans and Farfaphians who can rise-up and resist Hythe. We just need to keep you and Arthur out of Hythe’s way until the final push.’

‘Me again,’ says Guinevere. ‘When will you tell me what’s really going on?’

‘What you know, Hythe will know, I told you. Somewhere inside you know the truth.’

‘But why am I seen as such a danger?’

‘We will find a way,’ says the Seer ignoring her questions. ‘I am going somewhere, so we’ll have no contact for a time.’

‘Where?’

‘I can’t tell you.’
Chapter Twenty-Six

Arthur’s only job application has been for three weeks teaching on an island off the Turkish mainland with flight and accommodation paid. No response came to the CV at the time but a couple of years later Jill drops their very late reply on the bed next to him one lunchtime.

‘A miracle,’ she says. ‘Or would you like to come out clowning with me?’

With no other options and stand-up comedy making him feel like a silenced space traveller, Arthur goes to work on the island and somehow survives three weeks teaching his communist revolutionary English to executives. A job at an English language school in Istanbul follows, where he moves amongst the foreign teacher community and learns about their culture, with nights listening to regularly revised stories about why they’d left the USA or the UK, drinking at the English theme pub where the waiters served the beer at your table.

The whirlwind of Istanbul quickly enters his imagination and fills his senses. The mosque at the end of the street where he lives awakens him at dawn each morning with the call to prayer. A chaotic dance of stories and intrigues amongst the school’s staff make his previous woes seem to disappear. And the pay is bad enough to make him feel he’d not sold out to capitalism, he is just an exploited worker who still gives nothing to the Conservative government’s tax collectors. Six months into the job he sits watching a BBC news item about Istanbul on TV, reporting on their political problems. The dumbed down report on the rise of the Islamic party seems so removed from the complex world he sees around him that the voice of the English newsreader suddenly sounds like an officer of the Roman Empire describing a distant colony, telling those faithful to Caesar what to believe.
Watching from the mothership, the Seer is pleased by Arthur’s progress as she moves from screen to screen, observing thousands of other agents across the world. All of them are living human lives where they must wake up and be ready for the decisive battle. Arthur spends each night at the pub after work ranting on about class war, while enjoying his slightly improved social position in Turkish society. The days are long and the drinking sessions longer with almost no time to sleep. As the months’ pass, Arthur’s raddled, half-pickled human mind decides the culture he’s experienced in the UK is more like a state of deep hypnosis, that people just live in as if it were real. His Turkish language lessons have only reached lower intermediate level but he can ask for any number of beers, main courses and get directions while not always understanding the answers. Nevertheless, he feels like he’s entered a new universe where there are other ways of telling the truth and being fair, other forms of hypocrisy. Arthur experiences what he feels is an epiphany about the transient nature of cultures and beliefs. He feels winning and losing can only be understood by each person reflecting on their own life, not by what society decided to call success and failure.

Reading the English language newspaper a few months later, while sipping beer in the English theme pub Arthur changes his mind though. Anger rises as he reads an article by Rupert the head boy from his school in Hangfield years before. The boy who got him the blame for Carrie the dogs death is now a bright star, working on a national newspaper funded by a Mr Hythe. Rupert’s article is about the damage being done to society by the slacker generation mentality which he says is, ‘Ungrateful, narcissistic, self-pitying, overly cynical and complacent about the historically unprecedented rise in living standards delivered by the new liberal democracies since the 1970s.’ Rupert supports a new kind of strong and powerful social movement that will eradicate social problems. A place where honesty and challenging work will be rewarded.
‘The dream of a global liberal democracy is worth fighting for,’ Arthur reads out drunkenly to the other English teachers at the bar. ‘Tony Blair the new labour leader brings a new vision of fairness to Britain and a determination to put the UK at the centre of the global economy.’ The expatriate teachers who are all living in accommodation provided by the English Academy say nothing, one of them dribbles beer on his jumper. ‘Everyone can enjoy the aspirations once afforded only to the few,’ Arthur continues reading. ‘Tough on slacking, tough on the causes of slacking.’ The teachers who work sixty hours plus a week including marking, carry on drinking as a deathly silence fills the English theme pub air.

Standing unsteadily up, Arthur shouts ‘I’m going home.’
Chapter Twenty-Seven

Arriving back in the UK to fight the tyranny that Rupert the liar will bring to his fellow humanity, Arthur experiences some degree of culture shock. Not only has he changed after two years of teaching Turkish twenty-year-olds but England has moved on.

‘Say what you mean, you English liars,’ he shouts at the daytime television show back at Jill’s house. ‘You’re all blind to your own violence.’

A year later he’s still infuriated.

‘You’re all losers,’ he shouts from the bedroom window in Jill’s home.

Breathing a sigh of relief mixed with a little sadness, Guinevere is essentially pleased as Arthur decides he’ll never be able to fit in with mainstream society and must go to join the underground resistance. A haggard looking hippy at the pub on the edge of Hangfield tells Arthur the real resistance ended in the mid-eighties. So, Arthur packs his tent and goes to a gathering in the Forest of Dean. Until now he’s only read books about Eastern Gurus and alternative healing and attended a Buddhist lecture. He camps in the car park after seeing people who look like travellers, in case a fast escape is necessary.

Sitting in a geodesic tent with fifty other explorers of consciousness, Arthur listens to the rain hitting the roof and thinks about taking off his wet socks. He experiences a mixture of absolute cynicism and complete supernatural belief, as people work on each other’s auras in the humid tent. After cleansing and attuning their subtle bodies, the group lie on the ground and are given a guided meditation to a distant star system. There they see their home world and meet their soul family. Feeling scared Arthur imagines himself again like he did at school, as a secret agent doing undercover
work for an extraterrestrial species and sees Jill waving the space alien puppet in his face. Lying on the moist fresh grass inside the tent Arthur feels he’s seen a purple face looking down at him from another world.

Pleased but worried that he’s becoming ungrounded Arthur meets Earthier people, who are practical and live in teepees all year round. Realising that the galactic Space Cadets, the Earthy pagans and everyone in between seem happier than him, Arthur then meets Jennifer Gaston, who describes herself as a film maker working for a company called *Feel Good*, a holistic subsidiary of something known as the Hythe foundation. She does documentaries about what she calls alternative social evolution. Arthur feels she’s like a BBC TV presenter who got lost.

In a sociological research voice Jennifer asks Arthur about his background and he mumbles back a few answers.

‘I’m impressed,’ says Jennifer. ‘What can I say but wow!’

Arthur feels she’s seen something he’s missed about himself, and immediately thinks she’s very intelligent.

‘Get away from her Arthur,’ he imagines the voice of the invisible woman who used to speak to him yelling in his ear. He feels the owner of the voice would be horrified as he notices his heart bursting open, as tall blonde Jennifer stands before him with her head inclined, doing active listening. She looks like a full BBC news anchor to Arthur and he becomes mesmerised by her rigid hand movements, even more serious and proper than a Westminster politician’s, when she explains things.

Jennifer’s long golden hair is a bit tousled, but Arthur can tell she probably combs it regularly when not at hippy camps. Her skin looks so clean and bright as well. Her words are grammatically structured and even when she seems informal and
relaxed, he feels as if she’s being judged at a social etiquette contest. Arthur guesses she’s been to a top all girl’s boarding school.

‘I am searching for ways to create happier, more evolved humans,’ says Jennifer. ‘Feel Good is about helping people to really change, grow and integrate truth with a modern lifestyle.’ Arthur marvels at how Jennifer seems like something from higher up the evolutionary chain. Maybe she should be doing documentaries on genetic engineering he thinks. She sounds so liberated and rebellious as well, with real determination and passion, but she believes in peace.

‘The world needs to evolve fast Arthur and Feel Good is on the cutting edge. We help fund development in corporate stress reduction. We are exploring ways to enhance human potential that distils what we’ve learned from ancient wisdom traditions, as well as modern biology and psychology. And we bring it into real people’s lives.’ She gives Arthur a huge book to read about Feel Good, which she passes him as though it were a precious jewel.

‘With Feel Good,’ she says, ‘It becomes simple to look within ourselves and find the inner core of love.’

Reading the book as quickly as possible he imagines the invisible woman shouting ‘Nooooo’ in his ear. Arthur looks at the numerous photos and diagrams. He decides Feel Good seems sensible with chapters on increasing your happiness quotient, one hundred and one ways to meditate in your office and tips on developing positive attitudes toward work colleagues. There are also sections on the potential of cybernetic enhancement and the use of holograms in accelerated learning environments. The book seems to be aimed at creating a world in which everyone is connected, in a powerful and successful network that seems a long way from what Arthur’s been experiencing.
And someone called Hythe is quoted more than a few times talking about ‘The one,’ even using the term ‘the big one,’ at times. Guessing it’s a kind of mystical peace beyond any conception of being an individual, Arthur still finds the ‘one’ leaves him feeling cold.

‘When we go beyond our small self, we find the one,’ says Jennifer when he gives her the book back. ‘And in the one we find our true being. Feel Good aims to build a world without blind faith, where spirituality and science speak the same language. Feel Good is a revolution that will eradicate poverty and disease.’

Arthur feels that if Jennifer believes in Feel Good, then he shouldn’t be negative, despite the irritating voice inside telling him ‘nooooo’ all the time. So, he tells Jennifer Feel Good’s message speaks to him and he feels deeply moved, just so he doesn’t upset her.

‘We have met for a reason,’ says Jennifer, seeming incredibly happy. ‘You’re my first convert this week.’

Guinevere watches helpless from the mothership. ‘Jennifer Gaston is Hythe’s daughter. We have to find a way to protect Arthur fast,’ she tells the team. A dozen crystal engineers watch with her, as Arthur and Jennifer Gaston talk together long into the night inside a one-man tent. Or at least Jennifer talks, as she tells Arthur about her own unique spiritual journey to Feel Good.

‘My mother died in a plane crash a week after I was born,’ says Jennifer. ‘I was looked after by a group of people from Feel Good, when I wasn’t at school. Later, they wanted me to work in a government position, to help promote the company. But Feel Good isn’t a cult, I was free to leave. And I just wanted to get on with my life.’ Jennifer
throws her hair back like it’s a horse’s mane. On the mothership, Guinevere watches Arthur in horror and tries to contact the Seer. But she’s still nowhere to be found.

Arthur stares in adoration as Jennifer says, ‘I spent a while riding in dressage competitions, that was my meditation, the horse and I would become one.’ Arthur nods and imagines a horse tip-toeing around a field with Jennifer on top, her hair flowing in the wind. ‘But then I met Mr Hythe and found out I was his daughter,’ says Jennifer. ‘It was so strange because he’d had his people look after me when my mother died, he hadn’t known until he’d found an old letter from my mother Jane. He was a father without knowing it. So, I came back and now *Feel Good* is my life.’ Jennifer then slithers on top of Arthur. ‘*Feel Good,*’ she says.

Farfaphians are running around the mothership and some are volunteering to go in, no matter what the risk. Guinevere still can’t contact the Seer.

‘Yes,’ says Jennifer pulling off Arthur’s T shirt and beginning to chant mantras as she places her hands on his head. ‘Open your crown chakra,’ she says. ‘Open to love.’

‘I’m a virgin,’ says Arthur.

His body readouts on the mothership suggest highly active lower chakra energy is distracting him. ‘We must release your anger,’ says Jennifer. ‘We must find the love in you.’ Jennifer squats on him and pulls off her long flowing, flowery dress; she has nothing on underneath. Arthur feels like he may not be up to the job.

‘Perhaps we should just hug,’ he says.

‘That’s so spiritual,’ says Jennifer.
Jennifer pushes her heart against his and Arthur feels his whole-body buzzing, losing any ability to resist despite his reticence. After a few minutes of hugging Jennifer kisses him, ‘Feel Good’ she says again, in a deeper voice, as she begins writhing over his immobilised body. Thinking about his favourite romantic scene from a World War II film, a time when Grandad Bob and Grandma Ruby had met and married and lived happily-ish ever after, Guinevere sees a couple on her crystal screen kissing each other goodbye on a sinking U-boat that’s just been torpedoed. The panic as they sink to the bottom, fills Arthur’s stomach and makes his chest tense.

Making awkward love, shifting about in the tiny tent, trying to keep their words to whispers and their movements hushed Jennifer repeats: ‘Feel Good, Feel Good.’

‘Sorry, sorry, oh dear,’ says Arthur. They are surrounded by other tents. ‘Knock it off, try a hotel.’ The mat beneath them gives Arthur friction burns on his back.

The next morning Jennifer says, ‘I feel you may have good enough karma to understand Feel Good’s deeper message. Let’s go somewhere together, somewhere new, somewhere different. I feel so guided to do this.’

On the mothership, a distraught Guinevere communicates with Farfaphus. She tells them more agents are needed and the Seer’s disappeared, that their mission is in jeopardy, that Arthur may never recover.

The next day Jennifer takes Arthur to Brightstol, a city known for being spiritual and politically progressive, if a bit druggy in places. Booking them into an expensive hotel, Jennifer then goes to see some friends at the BBC centre. And left to his own devices, Arthur decides to visit a few local places including a community centre where he finds people talking about fighting the corrupt political system. The activists take him to a local pub and a revolutionary café and he’s quickly convinced they’re real
radicals not just plastic fashionable types. He tells Jennifer and she seems excited by his reports.

‘Good,’ says Jennifer. ‘It’s been suggested by a friend here at the BBC that I do some preliminary research, with a view to making a film on grass roots community activism in Brightstol. It seems incredible to Arthur given she’s only just arrived in the city. After a few days in the hotel, Jennifer suggests they each get their own place so they don’t cramp each other. She finds a two-bedroom apartment in the smart end of town and Arthur’s allowed to stay upstairs at the community centre, until he can get housing benefit. Whilst there he starts running a revolutionary socialist poetry group, feeling that’s he’s working with Jennifer for the BBC and changing the system from the inside as a film maker.

‘Hard core,’ says Jennifer, when Arthur tells her about his new role and where he’s staying. Then she comes along with him and meets the people at the community centre.

‘Could you show me your jackets,’ says Jennifer briskly surveying the retired woman who works voluntarily on the till in the community centre charity shop.

‘Some of us were born to rule, others to serve, what sort of thing are you looking for madam?’

‘Leather,’ says Jennifer.

‘We’re all vegan round here, sorry my bag is full I’ve got to and empty it in the loo.’

‘It’s is a low vibrational place Arthur,’ Jennifer says afterwards. ‘A place where people want to whine.’
Jennifer pulls a pained, almost distraught face and says she must visit some friends of friends and doesn’t invite him. Not understanding what Jennifer’s problem is, Arthur’s certain she just hasn’t realised this the kind of social change she’s really interested in. For two days Jennifer disappears. He talks more with the people at the community centre and in the surrounding pub scene. Digging deeper into the culture he finds that there really is a network of people protesting about government policy, and helping the homeless into squats. Anarchists, communists, eccentric poets who drink beer all day, animal rights protestors and eco-warriors. And with Jennifer there he feels like it’s all a laugh as well with him like a bohemian, anarchist revolutionary planning a film project. But more and more distant by the day she invites him around to her flat and gets angry each.

‘How do we feel good Arthur?’ she asks.

‘By not getting upset,’ says Arthur.

‘Stop taking the piss Arthur, we feel good by striving to be our optimum self and by seeing the positive in all situations.’

‘Even this one,’ says Arthur.

‘What do you mean?’ asks Jennifer.

‘Nothing,’ replies Arthur.

‘The Feel-Good core group are calling me,’ she says. ‘Will you come, are you ready?’

Travelling with her to California where she’ll be helping Feel Good, to give a holistic retreat will cost thousands of pounds.

‘Money will manifest if your intention to evolve is pure,’ she says.
With Arthur laughing cynically, Jennifer falls to her knees theatrically as though she’d planned it earlier and expresses her horror that he’s chosen to live with casualties, relics and crazies on the dole at the day centre.

‘I can’t give anymore, you’re an idiot,’ says Jennifer. ‘You attract low energies.’

After officially being told he wasn’t ready for Feel Good, Arthur stood there feeling like a walk on part in a documentary film as Jennifer left. All hopes of finding his soul partner suddenly turn into concerns about being a deluded fool. Watching from the mothership, Guinevere sees a wounded Arthur becoming convinced he’s been love bombed and brainwashed by a cult who’ve also taken his virginity. Seeing himself as a vulnerable man manipulated by powerful sinister forces, when he tells the eccentric poets at the pub they just laugh at him.

‘Welcome to the graveyard of ambition,’ says Norman the deep brown eyed, Richard Burton-faced and voiced, tortured lead drinker at the Grave and Bones public house. ‘Welcome to the land of the possessed and the dispossessed, the land of the forgotten and the can’t remember. If you cannot speak you’re dead. Mine’s a pint of bitter.’ Checking her records Guinevere sees that Norman is a part time nurse in an unspecified medical area.
Chapter Twenty-Eight

Hythe is glad and strangely proud of the results after sending Jennifer to meet Arthur. She has no idea about the reasons for her pleasing him, so unlike most other humans. Sitting in his office Hythe reads the latest surveillance reports that have found no sign of Guinevere, he wonders whether she’s ever coming back. Perhaps the Farfaphians have decided Arthur is too weak.

‘Where is she?’ asks Hythe.

‘Perhaps you need more hormone juice?’ says Grote.

‘Don’t patronise me Grote, you’re not indispensable. Guinevere holds the key to our final victory.’

‘Jennifer did well though,’ says Grote changing the subject. ‘Arthur feels like he was just entertainment for her.’

‘Well, she is my daughter,’ says Hythe indignantly. ‘What do you expect’

‘Fatherly pride?’ says Grote stifling a laugh.

‘I trust Jennifer to run parts of our operation.’

‘But she’s not an Ouroboron,’ says Grote.

‘Not yet,’ says Hythe. ‘But one day soon, the Ouroboron will enter her when the time is right.’ Picking up a piece of paper from his desk Hythe begins to read as Grote looks down at the street many floors beneath the penthouse office. He sees a woman pushing a pram on the pavement. She’s wearing a headband and a flowery dress.
‘The overly evangelical eco-protestor,’ says Hythe, ‘the animal rights activist, the left-wing teacher, anything that stands in the way of healthy global markets. These are our enemies Grote.’

‘Yes, Mr Hythe. ‘And I can think of a few more.’

‘Yes Grote, so can I. The medic who thinks big business runs pharmaceutical companies, the ex-soldier who sees false flags and illegitimate invasions everywhere, the journalist who discloses too much, the civil servant who questions above their grade. Nobody is beyond suspicion.’
Chapter Twenty-Nine

A land of despair opens before Arthur after Jennifer leaves. On the mothership, Guinevere watches as Arthur sinks further into his misery. A few days earlier he’d seen a career in documentary film making ahead of him, part of some fantastic endless journey with Jennifer. Now it was all gone. He wanders from bar to bar making the wrong kind of all-day drinking friends and talking with people who are named after the number of cats they have at home. Six cat Steve, seven cat Sue, Eight Cat Eric. Nine cat Natalie connects with unseen worlds and tells him about the extraterrestrials who want to contact him.

Drunkenly, he tells anyone who’ll listen too much about his life and word gets around fast.

‘It’s a village,’ says Norman. ‘The village of the damned, where everyone knows everything about you and you’re all alone.’

At the cat people’s houses, Arthur finds he must talk to the cats as though they’re human. Sometimes he wishes he could afford more regulated forms of therapy. Even the thought of seeking proper help makes him feel ill though and so he just keeps going to the pub.

‘I’m a reincarnation of Dostoevsky,’ says Norman. ‘Have you ever been through the door, have you ever turned?’

Still unable to return to Earth as Arthur goes to more bars for endless drinks in the weeks that follow, Guinevere sees his after-hours watering holes from a million miles away. At 4 am the wire-mesh covered pub closes and then there’s the 24-hr café, where they serve cans. Norman gives speeches to his gathered devotees.
‘We’re all guilty here and we are where the bodies are buried,’ says Norman.

After having run up his overdraft to the limit, Arthur thinks about looking for paid work as he looks at Norman waving his arms like an old-style evangelist preacher.

‘Have you ever burned?’ asks Norman. Arthur does feel like he’s burning inside.

Professor Miriam Stone walks into the pub and stands behind Arthur’s chair whispering, ‘You won’t be treated like some loser by Jennifer,’ she sees Arthur look up and burp. ‘You’ll find a way to feel better and have more energy than she ever could,’ says Miriam. ‘You were lucky she left, now your life begins.’

Norman is telling people about the hell beyond all hells where you find out it was you all along, as Arthur sits up straighter and pushes his glass of beer away. Looking around the room as if for the first time he sees a poster on the noticeboard advertising meditation classes and stands up to go and read it. Within a few minutes, he’s decided to prove Jennifer wrong. He will join a proper spiritual group and become more powerful than Jennifer could ever imagine.

Ascension Divine, whose main temple is in New York offers free weekly introductions at a luxury spa in the city centre. After a month of having his consciousness cleared with specially blessed tuning forks along with over a hundred hours listening to the pre-recorded meditation tapes, Arthur experiences the divine nature of the Avatar who takes human form through their leader at the Manhattan temple.

Laughing in his office with Grote when the news about Arthur engaging in devotional work for a New York entrepreneur arrives, Hythe decides that whatever plan the Farfaphians had hoped to achieve through Arthur have failed. ‘He’s bowing and
scraping to some touchy-feely egomaniac life coach,’ says Hythe. ‘So much for the Farfaphian’s greatest ever secret agent.’

Arthur works tirelessly for *Ascension Divine*, putting up posters, copying and distributing the recordings of their leader. He makes tea and scrubs the floor of the two-floored shop they use as an ashram in the city centre. Arthur feels himself becoming lighter and happier. Delivering the ashram’s advertising to shops and people’s homes, he tells everyone about the love beyond Earth that brings confidence and real friendship with the divine. Doing this service is a spiritual pathway to enlightenment. His health begins to improve dramatically after changing diet to eat more fruit and vegetables, as recommended by *Ascension Divine*. He discusses his bowel movements with a top devotee and later speaks on the phone to the leader in Manhattan who tells him there are no coincidences. Arthur feels born again wearing his pure white, high-vibrational specially designed energy trousers and shirts. Some days he even goes into the pub to tell Norman there’s a way to leave hell.

‘So, they’ve got you hooked, have they?’ asks Norman.

‘No more than you on the beer,’ replies Arthur.

‘Better to be in the pub and think of the new age temple; than to be in the temple and think of the pub,’ says Norman. ‘How much do they pay?’

‘It’s divine work.’

‘They’re burning off your guilt and despair for you, are they?’

Miriam Stone appears at the temple one day. ‘Have you had enough of this one yet?’ she asks. ‘You could try Buddhism, a bit of Zen maybe.’ Arthur wonders who this woman is, trying to create doubts in him about *Ascension Divine*? He hears her
words as those of the devil, a person who wants to stop the Earth ascending into a realm of love. He talks to her about the Avatar in Manhattan and everyone else who will listen, day and night. Many treat him like he’s gone mad. Miriam appears again saying, ‘Just take what you can and leave, you made yourself better not them. You don’t owe them your life. You’re not evil if you go.’

Arthur does worry though, that if he’s not entirely loyal to *Ascension Divine* he’ll return to his life before, or worse still that he’ll somehow be punished by a god he had already insulted for years by not believing in him. He wonders if he’s resisting being brainwashed or if his ego is stopping him from surrendering to the truth. Now he’s joined he doesn’t want to appear like an idiot either. He has a point to prove. He finds Jennifer’s telephone number and rings.

‘All your talk of feeling good, won’t make you happy like I am,’ says Arthur. ‘I’m happier than anyone has ever been. I am filled with gratitude for everything.’

‘Good for you, a bit busy darling, shoo,’ says Jennifer. ‘*Ascension Divine* is for the lower classes.’

‘I am happy,’ yells Arthur.

‘Fun’s over darling, hurry along.’

‘You don’t know what true spirituality is and you never will,’ says Arthur putting down the phone and feeling a moment of triumph. Then he remembers what he really wanted to say and starts crying.
Chapter Thirty

‘I’ve found peace Father,’ says Arthur on the phone to Terence.

‘Whatever works son. That’s great,’ his father replies. ‘And I’ve got some news.’

‘What?’ asks Arthur.

‘Well, you know I lost my job a year or so back.’

‘Yes.’

‘It’s been the darkest time in my life son, but I’ve had a bit of luck. Mr Hythe who sacked me last year came back with another job. I am now doing the finances for upmarket mental health facilities.’

‘Isn’t that making money out of other people’s misery dad?’

‘I dunno son. We put TV celebrities and other loaded people who’ve had breakdowns together in rooms with bunk beds and tell them it’s not cutting costs, it’s part of their connecting with other people treatment. I am just dealing with the financial side, getting the new properties, stocks and shares, the usual.’

‘Anyone I know locked up?’ asks Arthur.

‘Its tight lips son. But more people than you’d ever believe think they’re King Arthur, stuff like that.’

‘You’re joking,’ says Arthur.

‘I’m not joking son, what makes you think I’m joking. Are you okay?’

Arthur speaks to his father about once a fortnight on the phone and he soon notices Terence starting to sound different, as if he’s joined the FBI or MI5. Arthur
suddenly can’t understand anything he says. When Arthur talks about Godfrey the anarchist at the community centre, his father goes quiet.

‘Be careful son, there are many dangerous people out there. They need to be controlled.’

‘Very funny Dad.’

‘I’m not joking son. Why do you find that funny? I am worried about what you find funny.’

Other people are worried about Arthur as well.

‘Uptight religious maniac,’ says Godfrey. ‘You’re not the first social revolutionary this sort of thing has happened to. Anything more than Hatha Yoga or Tai Chi is nuts, don’t give your power away.’ Godfrey decides Arthur needs immediate help. ‘Focus on disrupting the government’s plans to make the unemployed into slave labourers,’ he says. ‘That’s what god would want if he existed.’

Later, as part of Godfrey’s rescue therapy he sends Arthur to help dig protest tunnels under a mining site, in a nearby wood next to park that being dug up by an Australian company. The aim is to slow down the diggers, by having protestors led by a man called Mole burrow underneath the site. Godfrey explains to Arthur there are a lot of security guards buzzing around, that the protestors have been trying to convert. But basically, the security personnel will remove all the camping equipment if a few activists aren’t constantly on guard.

The ramshackle protest camp with bits of green, black and white tarpaulin pulled over stakes and hanging branches in a small clearing in the woods. Beneath the tarpaulin are mouldy rugs and metal cups, piled in the corner by a mattress with
polythene on it. Feeling like he’d prefer to stay just until it gets dark and then go home and have marmite on toast, Arthur sits down.

Godfrey has informed Miriam Stone, the middle-aged leader of the eco-warrior group who’s on guard that night as well, that Arthur’s losing his grip and hasn’t fully extricated himself from a new age cult.

‘He’s got an anxiously anal Tory subpersonality, that’s driven him from the true path,’ were Godfrey’s words.

‘Yes, it’s time to help Arthur more fully,’ says Miriam.

Godfrey’s always found Miriam unpredictable but her ability to sort people and situations out seems miraculous. She only arrived a few months back but is already the nearest thing they’ve got to an elder of the tribe. A spiritual warrior with no fear, she fights to save the land from exploitation.

‘She says she’s met you before,’ Godfrey had told Arthur before sending him off. ‘She’s in her late fifties and left university teaching a decade back.’

‘Why?’

‘She saw through the system after the traveller community were crushed in the Battle of the Beanfield by Thatcher and the Police in 1985, that’s what she told me anyway.’

‘Cool,’ says Arthur. ‘Does she know about Ascension Divine?’

As they sit by the camp fire in the evening, Arthur feels that fate has put them together. Miriam must have a deep connection with Ascension Divine. Why else would she be coming to the ashram in town, her false ego is just fighting with the truth? He tries to fully explain to Miriam, why Ascension Divine is the only true path.
‘I did that kind of stuff in the 60s and 70s,’ she says. ‘Passionate warriors fighting for the earth and each other is the new love and peace.’

Sensing something Farfaphian about Miriam, on the mothership the readouts confirm to Guinevere that the Seer’s energy signature is nearby. Guinevere is worried that Hythe will arrive any second. She watches Arthur as he continues to explain to Miriam that Ascension Divine is beyond worldly conflict and heals through love. As the light fades they sit closely together in the shelter. Sensing the rain is about to start, Arthur tries to raise their mood by talking more about Ascension Divine. He’s oblivious to a strange glow that begins to come out of Miriam’s eyes. ‘Through the divine love,’ says Arthur. ‘You reach a state beyond all human understanding.’ Guinevere sees Miriam’s body starting to change shape, getting bigger and smaller as she breathes. It’s hardly visible at first and Guinevere isn’t sure. But then Miriam or the Seer as she is, begins to shine like the sun. Arthur finally notices, looking around at her and wondering for a moment if it’s his talk that’s caused her sudden change.

‘Its powerful stuff, you see?’ says Arthur.

He sees Miriam’s face transforming into a purple creature with long woolly hair. The Seer stands up and swishes her woolly dreadlocks behind her, as Arthur looks at her and stops speaking. Guinevere watches Arthur’s astonished face as the Seer begins trotting and nay-ing in front of him like a horse with her shining, luminous eyes. The Seer then lifts her full body length hemp jumper and lowers her charity shop denim jeans. She roles naked in the mud in front of Arthur, smearing mud over his face she starts kissing him beneath the makeshift tarpaulin shelter as the rain pours down.

Imagining himself healing Miriam’s soul on a pure higher plane and bringing her mind to a state of blissful Ascension Divine consciousness, as they squelch about
in the mud with her grunting, Arthur feels Miriam’s tongue deep in his throat and assumes it’s an attempt to activate a sacred chakra point halfway down his neck. Trying to visualise his light-body from his Ascension Divine level three course the week before, he breathes deeply attempting to assimilate the Earth’s energies into the star chakra below his feet. The Seer stops and ties her woolly hair back, then leaps forward onto Arthur once more, thrusting her tongue into his mouth. Closing his eyes and trying not gag, Arthur hugs the wool-headed extraterrestrial from another dimension and the Seer telepathically tells him he’s been sent to protect the Earth.

‘Do you understand?’ says the Seer inside his head.

‘Yes,’ replies Arthur.

‘Good,’ says the Seer. ‘Even though your human mind will not fully accept this later, in a few months you will go on a journey far from here. I have given you strength and you will be able to travel alone now, to meet those who live beyond Hythe’s grasp.’

Arthur sees a vision of the Earth ending in a sea of fire then flowers blooming, oceans alive with fish and coral and the wind blowing leaves through the trees. He watches the storm above them, pelting the tarpaulin with rain as the Seer changes back into Miriam, groans and then rolls off.

‘And let that be a lesson to you,’ she says.

Leaving the Ascension Divine group the next week, Arthur finds himself suffering withdrawal symptoms. He doesn’t awaken to being a Farfaphian though. And he’s not sure whether his experiences with the purple alien, could be put down to having his drink spiked. He calls his father.

‘Hi Dad, I’m lost,’ he says.
‘I don’t know anything about that,’ says his father in a hushed tone.

‘About what dad?’

‘Oh, it’s you sorry, I thought it was this bloke from the company that we’re trying to take-over.’

‘What are you taking over?’

‘Oh, just more property really son, don’t worry. I had to remove my tie when we went in one last week, in case someone tries to strangle the management.’

Arthur’s community centre attempts to run itself along egalitarian lines. There’s no defined hierarchy, except when someone needs to deal with outside authorities.

‘I am worried about seeing that extraterrestrial when we made love,’ Arthur says to Miriam at the community centre. ‘Does it mean I might be losing it?’

‘Just relax,’ says Miriam.

Finding people who claim to have encountered extraterrestrials, Arthur tries to make sense of what happened that night in the protest camp. Derek is a man with black teeth and a green, spikey hairdo who always wears army trousers. He has a PhD in Particle Physics and quotes John E. Mack the Harvard psychiatrist who wrote about alien abduction experiences. Mack claimed Extraterrestrial encounters are not easily understood in western civilizations because they’re outside their materialistic paradigm.

‘I’m scared to talk about it,’ he tells Miriam. ‘Pathologizing your friends is a national pastime.’
‘Oh, don’t worry,’ says Miriam. ‘Don’t take it so seriously, so what if you saw me as an alien.’

At the community centre some people smell, and their odour isn’t always just a lack of self-care. Sometimes it seems like a complaint against the fake smell and smiles of those who claim nothing’s wrong. Godfrey tells Arthur to keep away from the extraterrestrial scene. ‘It’s all CIA created, new agers and paranoid cases. The American military experimented with ways to hide government operations by making up stories about lights in the sky. They drugged up the resistance and turned them into space cadets who want to feel special, it’s a new manufactured religion.’

‘Miriam says my consciousness may be opening to a wider reality,’ says Arthur.

‘Well not enough for my liking,’ says Godfrey. ‘I don’t care if we’ve got galactic alien friends, this is about real people being screwed for millennia by the psychos who want to keep everyone obeying them. The CIA have been pumping out this extraterrestrial stuff for years in films. The mind is suggestible and they want people to think the aliens are here.’

‘But there are other worlds,’ says Arthur. ‘I feel it.’

‘It’s probably your early traumas, booze, asthma, wishful thinking and desperation. You can’t face the fact of your oppressive social situation. You’re just hiding behind the neurotic fantasy the capitalists want you to have, rather than starting the revolution.’

‘But people don’t want to revolt,’ says Arthur. ‘They want to belong.’

‘Is it simply me?’ asks Godfrey looking stern. ‘Or are we not still ruled over by twenty or thirty powerful families and their sycophants, who encourage the general
mentality of greed and fear? Am I the only one left who thinks a load of criminals run our world, controlling land prices through debt slavery and forcing us to believe this is sanity?’

‘I just think other forces are involved in winning this battle,’ says Arthur.

‘How’s your father?’ asks Godfrey. ‘I mean I’m not suggesting you’ve got psychological issues here.’

‘Still unemployed,’ lies Arthur.

‘They’ll lock you up,’ says Norman when Arthur pops into the Grave and Bones on the London Road in Brightstol, for a half of lager. ‘Smile and look busy that’s my advice to you. Don’t go to anymore psychic groups. It’s just people connecting with their imaginations, would-be actors who can’t face their own abyss.’

Guinevere checks the monitors as they show Hythe has detected the Seer inside Miriam’s body. He’s moving in.

‘Wake up Arthur, wake up,’ says Guinevere on the mothership. It still seems incomprehensible to her that Arthur the Farfaphian agent has remained silent, all these years. Why doesn’t he speak?
**Chapter Thirty-One**

With Hythe being so close the Seer also leaves Arthur, telling Guinevere she’s going to prepare for the last battle and will remain out of contact for some time. Back on the mothership Guinevere watches as Arthur pushes rebel grandmothers with purple rinses in their wheelchairs past the community centre, so they can chain themselves to the council gates in protest at the Tory cuts. The pensioners threaten the local politician’s with getting their vulnerable, aged faces in the local paper. Some are bought off with nice council flats in the posh end of town away from the conflict zones. Soon after, Guinevere sees Arthur cheering as the Labour Party and Tony Blair get into power in 1997, ending eighteen-years of Thatcher’s policies. Godfrey is suspicious.

‘Tony Blair is more of the same, just with a slicker smile. There’s no plan to change the system, with what the Labour party have become. This is the death of any socialist ideal.’

‘I voted for Blair, we’re all Labour now,’ says Arthur’s father Terence the day after.

‘I can’t cope with voluntary support and protesting anymore,’ Arthur tells Godfrey. ‘I’m losing it. I feel like everything people say is directed at me. I’m getting paranoid.’

‘Grow up, it’s not paranoia. They are after you.’

‘People don’t trust me,’ says Arthur. He remembers mentioning to Eight Cat Simone that his father had got that new job, running the property side of the high end psychiatric facilities. He’d thought she’d laugh at the irony, with him working on the streets for the laughably named care in the community doing voluntary support. But Eight Cat Simone hadn’t laughed.
‘The sins of the father, in the village of the living dead,’ says Norman.

Sitting outside the community centre café on a warm late Autumn morning just after deciding to avoid Norman forever, Arthur’s with an ex-history teacher from the North of England. He doesn’t ask Mike the history teacher what’s in the eight-gallon plastic container he’s just put down under the table. It turns out to be full of highly inflammable liquid. They’ve met a couple of times on the street before. Mike the ex-teacher is of average height with a black leather jacket, blue check shirt and faded jeans. Only in his mid-forties he looks like a ghost with a pitted face that seems to have had gravel rubbed into it, which it was one night while sleeping out by some passers-by. Although he has a flat Mike often sleeps out as he hears too many voices inside, and often talks to something nobody else can see on his shoulder.

‘All okay,’ says Arthur.

‘All okay,’ says Mike.

Guinevere watches Mike buy Arthur tea and toast, then sees him deliberately spread his jam with a refined precision, covering all the edges. Later Arthur mentally replays the way Mike said ‘goodbye.’ How could he have known? Each time he hears the goodbye, it sounds more final. Perhaps it was obvious what Mike intended.

Mike walks home with the plastic container, as Arthur goes to a meeting in his role as a voluntary support worker. Arthur’s busy telling the grey flannel suited psychiatrist about the lack of a safety net in society when Mike dies. The papers say he covered his flat in petrol and then set himself alight. A neighbour smashed the door down and saw someone standing in the flames, calmly saying, ‘He is gone.’ Arthurs guesses Mike’s referring to the invisible friend he talked to on his shoulder.
A couple of nights after Guinevere watches Arthur sitting on his bed, staring at his shoes. She sees his room is filled with ghosts from lower astral worlds. Mike is among them, visiting the people and places in his old life. Arthur looks around the stark, dusty bedsit and feels the presence of Mike’s ghost.

‘Is it you?’ he asks. Then he stops himself, embarrassed even though alone.

Looking down at the worn brown carpet, then up at the closed oak panelled shutters that block out all the moonlight, Arthur hears the shared loo flush and the pipes in the musty hallway as they make regular plonking sounds. The money in the gas metre has run out. His body is tense, his shoulders are tight. Mike is trying to talk to him, to tell him things. Guinevere tries to talk to Mike’s ghost from the mothership, to tell him that Arthur is too unwell to speak with him. And then she sings *My Way* by Frank Sinatra, something she swore she’d never do, hoping Arthur can hear.

At 4 am the doorbell rings. His bag lady friend Angela is standing there with a fallen branch from a birch tree. Angela is a tiny, skeletal 33yr old, wearing a scarf around her head with layers of clothes wrapped like a psychedelic Egyptian mummy.

‘Shush,’ says Arthur. ‘They’re all asleep.’

She often brings gifts, once it was a bench. Her dad’s originally from somewhere she calls Persia, but she went to school in Brightstol. As Arthur takes her back into the room, he gets into bed to keep warm as Angela stands there talking to the spirit world. She starts talking about the Lion of Judah and an Angel of the above, mixed with rap songs, telling Arthur the walls of Jericho are gonna come tumbling down.

Trying to keep his eyes open and listen to Angela, as she just lets the words flood through her, picking up on every thought that passes through the air, Arthur’s
happy because he never needs to speak. As he passes in and out of sleep he hears her
speaking words from Mike.

‘I had to go, I was too tired. I said what I wanted.’

Angela walks around the room, as more voices from beyond the human world
continue to talk through her.

‘You’ve got to get away, one day you will discover who you are.’ Angela’s
face then becomes more animated, her voice speaks in squeals with garbled words.
Like some gone wrong radio, she seems open to everything in the entire cosmos.
Arthur worries that her head will explode.

‘You are being hunted, we are waiting for the other one. We will stop the two
of you as one.’

Guinevere watches Angela running out of the room after Arthur has gone to
sleep. Angela perceives her presence and starts talking to her in the hallway. ‘You lot
need to get your act together. We are suffering down here.’

The next morning a man from the Jehovah’s Witnesses rings on the door bell.
He’s got a book for Arthur, Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*. The man says the book had
belonged to Mike who’d attended some of their church meetings and his mother hadn’t
wanted it back. ‘She seemed distraught when I tried to give it to her,’ the man said.
Taking the book Arthur feels it’s like some message from the other side and reads the
story about a Russian Prince who tries to live morally in society but ends up back in an
asylum. Then he feels the ghost of Mike again.

‘They will all burn, those who live off others misery,’ he remembers Angela
saying the night before.
The ghost of Mike comes again, as does Angela for several more nights. Arthur feels he’s starting to snap, there are no points in the day where he doesn’t feel the other worlds beyond death. When people at the community centre speak, their words seem even more brutal, like they’re solely aimed at him all the time. Arthur feels he’s failed Mike in some way and needs to redeem himself or understand something. Once he starts looking, it seems dozens of people are ready to jump or take pills to end their lives. He listens to Angela talking at the end of his bed in the evening, she’s convinced the end times are coming.

‘They are dying, and they don’t even know it,’ says Angela. ‘Humanity is ending before its own eyes.’ Then she looks Arthur in the eye. ‘Jennifer worked for them. They speak so nicely but they feel like fear.’ Angela then says she wants to leave because the demons are too strong, she starts screaming and goes. A few weeks pass and Angela the bag lady doesn’t come around. Soon after she’s found dead in a skip. It turns out she’d jumped out of a window the week before, trying to fly away. Arthur decides he must leave Britain and calls his father to tell him about how people keep dying.

‘What, it’s about money is it?’ says his father.

‘I believe there are other dimensions,’ says Arthur.

‘Don’t push this shit with me son, I’m busy,’ says his father.

The conversation ends and Guinevere travels back to Earth and enters his mind. ‘You’ll be okay,’ she says as they sit in the bedsit room, listening to the man outside on the communal telephone arguing with his ex-wife.

‘Well, get him the cheaper school shoes, or ask his grandparents. I’ve got nothing left.’
Arthur considers going to the doctor to sign on as sick, because he’s run out of money. He could do the interviews and be put on incapacity benefit, it’s just it might be hard to get off. He doesn’t feel he can go on like he is. The next day Derek, the black toothed ex-particle physicist wrote a long letter complaining to Arthur’s father’s company, describing his son’s state of mind and his horror that he’s the man supposedly running psychiatric facilities.

The next week Arthur’s father and his boss decide Arthur needs to go on holiday. They suggest India, for six months if he likes. He can have enough to eat and live in an ashram. Explaining they’re busy with a takeover, Terence tells Arthur they can’t afford any adverse publicity from this bloke called Derek. The letter’s been sent to a government minister and if he’s asked Arthur should say he never met him. Thanks to Derek the ex-particle physicist, Arthur escapes England.
Chapter Thirty-Two

The Seer holds the light bluish crystal containing Guinevere’s latest report.

‘Good, says the Seer. ‘You’ve found a way to completely hide Arthur’s energy signature from Hythe. He is now going on a long journey. Sorry I’ve been away, it was important,’ says the Seer. ‘So, what have you decided?’


‘Well, he’s not waking up, is he?’

‘I think we’ve been here before,’ says Guinevere. ‘What do you suggest?’

‘You’ll have to go and actually live in his body,’ says the Seer. ‘Become him completely.’

‘How?’ asks Guinevere. ‘It’s against galactic law. Hythe will kill us both and I can’t just walk in there Arthur’s too weak.’

‘You are the only one who could do this,’ says the Seer. ‘When the day comes, you must be prepared to join fully with him and live in the same body.’

‘Why is it me all the time?’ asks Guinevere.

The Seer looks at Guinevere and their eyes fix upon each other. An almost overwhelming feeling that she knows what the Seer is about to say makes Guinevere’s words trail off, and she stands there in silence. The Seer moves closer and looks deep into her azure, purple flecked eyes.

‘Because you’re him, you’re the other part of him.’

‘I know we’re all interconnected, every Farfaphian agrees with that.’
‘No, you’re his twin essence,’ says the Seer. ‘I wasn’t joking when you and Arthur were in the departures hall. You are the same being, that separated many lives ago.’

‘Twin essences don’t exist.’

‘Only rarely does a Farfaphian choose to split in such a way. But when they finally join again, their power is unstoppable. Merlin saw this would happen centuries ago, I didn’t understand at the time.’

‘But I haven’t felt connected to Arthur, all these years,’ says Guinevere.

‘Only when a transformation is about to happen, then you understand. Twin essences always experience extreme feelings of separation.’

‘I am not going into his body,’ says Guinevere.

‘Don’t fight it,’ says the Seer. ‘Feel what I’m saying.’

‘I have a choice.’

‘You’ve been living that life on Earth, watching him, inhabiting his mind. You even felt like you’d become him that day when he nearly strangled himself with the stool. Arthur the Farfaphian hasn’t been able to speak. You’ve been the only real awareness he’s had there.’

‘I have been doing my job, as you instructed,’ says Guinevere, getting angry.

‘Before you were caught on the giant web in his dream, you knew. Your energy signature is the same, because you’re the same entity.’

‘I don’t trust you,’ says Guinevere.

‘Something has been missing.’
‘But I feel whole,’ Guinevere then stops and looks at the Seer. She remembers staring deeply into Arthur’s eyes on the mothership, before the mission began. When he’d been thinking about his last life in the 1950s, she’d been strongly connected with him and found herself trembling. It was as though some part of her had been there with him. And the dream yes, she’d known in the dream.

‘You chose this journey,’ says the Seer. ‘Your life in other worlds made it possible for Arthur to continue here. He drew upon your strength and health. When the day arrives, you will both evolve. You will transform to become whole.’

‘If he remembers who I am he’ll hate me.’

‘You will go to Earth soon Guinevere and wait for him in another human body. We had to let you get used to living together again, but the less you knew the better. I couldn’t tell you, even after Hythe began to think you were Arthur’s twin essence. He’s connected to you, to me. If you’d known then Hythe would have been certain. He might just have killed Arthur. Because when two fragments of the same essence join, they cannot be defeated by an Ouroboron.’

‘I don’t know if I can live inside Arthur’s human, not permanently,’ says Guinevere.

‘Once you are there, the human mind will be healed. Arthur the Farfaphian will become you, you’ll become him. You’ll find what you’ve been looking for all these lives. You’ve been searching for each other.’

‘But why didn’t I know?’ asks Guinevere.

‘It’s only in the final life as a separated fragment you realise, until then it’s just an unclear yearning, a feeling of being incomplete.’
‘Our last life together ended so badly,’ says Guinevere.

‘But that life was necessary, so you’d be able to grow separately until now.’

‘Then how?’ asks Guinevere. ‘How can I go there and join with Arthur?’

‘It’s going to take a while,’ replies the Seer. ‘First you must go to Earth, where the Farfaphian agent is leaving a body that you can enter. You will live amongst the humans and contact other Farfaphians preparing for Arthur’s arrival in a time to come. For now, we must keep him hidden from Hythe in the Himalayas where he’ll receive further instructions, until the other revolutionary groups are ready.’
Chapter Thirty-Three

Grote paces the office looking out over the river Thames, wondering what Hythe will think as he arrives with a group of young smartly dressed people that include his daughter Jennifer Gaston.

‘Phase 3,’ says Hythe, ‘Tea Grote.’ Grote goes to get the blue porcelain cups, listening as Hythe presses a button and a screen comes down detailing his plans. ‘The cyber age,’ says Hythe. ‘And a new humanity. Or should I say a new species?’ Grote feels like he’s heard it all before, as Hythe tells his next generation of staff that this is what true democracy really means. ‘People have to be further protected from their own tendencies to undermine real freedom,’ says Hythe.

‘The data suggests 92.34% percent of people in Coventry no longer care if they’re told what’s really going on,’ says Jennifer Gaston. ‘The same goes for Exeter and Canterbury. When their answers were decoded, their responses suggested they strongly preferred to live in a protected bubble of ignorance, that meant they didn’t have to take responsibility.’

‘That’s the price we pay for freedom,’ says Hythe.

‘And what exactly is phase 3?’ asks Rupert, the man who’d given Arthur the cigarette in the stationery cupboard in 1982.

Hythe presses a button that changes the picture on his large screen. There’s a man sitting at a computer, with pulsing lines of energy going through his head and out into a world-wide web.

‘Phase 3, says Hythe, is the transformation of humanity into a digitalised singularity with full galactic rights, that can help us to create growth, equality, justice
and the opportunity to do better in other parts of the cosmos.’ He presses a few more buttons, the screen changes to show equations, pyramids and angry monkeys dancing around ancient spaceships as serpent like worms appear and enter their chests.

‘The top 0.1 percent of financially well-off Homo sapiens will be downloaded after a final devastating war between the rich and the poor. At that moment, the chosen will be become a part of our technological singularity, that I’ve today named *Free.*’

‘And the remaining 99.9 percent,’ asks Rupert making notes.

‘Most will die instantly in a routine virus removal operation,’ says Grote. ‘They won’t notice anything much.’

‘Some may even just carry on just as before,’ says Hythe.

‘How’s that possible?’ asks Rupert.

Grote answers, ‘On other worlds we’ve seen a phenomenon were instant death creates an energetic anomaly, like a ghost world were the departed carry on their daily routine unaware of what’s happened.’

‘Do they ever realise?’ asks Jennifer.

‘Not in my experience,’ says Grote. ‘Their civilizations are often at the stage of development where they spend hours on the Internet, they simply continue staring at their computer screens and watching TV as though nothing’s happened.’

‘So, it doesn’t really hurt them at all,’ says Jennifer.

‘In the final analysis, it was their choice,’ says Hythe showing more pictures of human brains that lit up to show cerebellums, cortexes and human nervous systems
with graphs detailing people’s behaviour patterns after major news events and disasters.
‘We’re making a world where everyone will belong.’

‘Where we can believe together,’ says Jennifer Gaston.

‘Arthur has disappeared,’ whispers Grote as he takes a tea with extra hormones over to Hythe.

‘I should have killed him before,’ says Hythe. ‘We are getting close now, they won’t have time to bring him through in another body. I am certain now, Guinevere and Arthur must be twin essences. It’s the Farfaphian’s only real chance. They must be eradicated at the first opportunity.’

Hythe bangs a fist on the table, then feels a cold chill as he sees an image of the Seer standing over him with a sword inside his head. ‘Just find him and kill him,’ says Hythe. ‘Destroy any chance of the Farfaphians using that body.’
Chapter Thirty-Four

Arthur’s long journey to freedom outside the UK and beyond the reach of Hythe began with yoga courses in an ashram in the foothills of the Himalayas. Feeling like he’d been rescued from a horrible dream for a few months he spent every day doing long stretches and standing on his head. The yoga scene had serious people training for careers as yoga instructors in the west and more casual backpackers, stressed professionals, students, long term hippies and Israeli’s on holiday after military service. It was a tourist bubble though and he knew the difference having worked in Istanbul. But Arthur didn’t care about any authenticity points. The sun rose and fell many times, the river Ganges flowed past and slowly his world seemed calmer outside and in.

After a season of yoga and sitting at cafés drinking chai, he went to see an Astrologer in a touristy looking place next to a crystal shop. Arthur had never been to an astrologer before. The middle aged Indian man wearing a long white shirt that reached to his ankles took down the birth date and time, telling him to return the next day. Interested but not expecting much, when he came back the next day Arthur watched the astrologer mutter Sanskrit verses as he sat on the expensive rug thinking he’d wasted his money.

‘In your last life, you were a mad doctor,’ the astrologer said.

Arthur was pleased he’d made it into the respected professions that time.

‘In this life, you killed a dog and your mother is a clown. When you were sixteen you nearly died while dreaming you were on a giant spider’s web.’

Arthur was taken aback. There seemed to be some truth in what the astrologer in his long white shirt was saying. His eyes had an otherworldly glow and Arthur felt they were looking through him.
‘In other lives, you have been a space alien and a yogi living in the mountains of the Himalayas. Your teacher awaits you there. Do you have any questions?’

Arthur couldn’t think of anything to say and left, with a piece of paper the astrologer had scrawled on unintelligibly. He’d heard what sounded like tall stories about enlightened yogis who lived beyond the reach of your average spiritual seeker. So, he decided to go and see if the astrologer’s words were true. He took buses at first, up as far as they would go and then began to walk. The air was thin and his mind seemed to want to free itself of any remaining pain and confusion. But Arthur felt he was being guided. He couldn’t hear the voice that had often spoken to him over the years but inside he was sure there was someone he had to meet who would help.

After walking and climbing for many weeks where he inquired in hostels, cafes and from people on the road Arthur was directed toward a cave. There a few hundred metres above a small village high on a ridge in the mountains, on a cliff’s edge he found Wu Wei. Master Wu Wei had known he was coming. His eyes looked out at Arthur from within a brown hooded robe as he sat deep in the back of his womb like cave where a fire was burning. It was dusk and the snows had just started. And as Wu Wei studied him Arthur felt he was seeing beyond his human self.

‘Sit,’ Wu Wei said, beckoning Arthur to come. He was glad he spoke English but as they sat gazing into the fire, there seemed no need to say anything. Then after ten minutes or so Wu Wei spoke.

‘Your mind still has many ripples on its surface.’

Master Wu Wei seemed to have transcended the human world to Arthur. Around him it was as though the invisible headphones that sent endless chattering thoughts into his head all day were completely removed. He felt like he could recognise
pure awareness when he was close to Wu Wei, with events coming and going freely in
a stillness that he didn’t need to think about. The stillness was beyond ideas of us or
them, this or that.

‘We have no religion here,’ Wu Wei said. ‘All maps may hold something of the
truth but only experiencing the sky and rocks and streams as non-separate from the self
can lead you to understanding.’

Sometimes it seemed like Wu Wei was just wearing a human body. His true
nature was an infinite consciousness, that could help humans to understand their part
in the limitless flow of life. Those who were still clinging onto their separate dream
worlds like Arthur needed Wu Wei to see and he began lessons in calming the mind
while also learning to cook rice and dhal to perfection. When he made the food for Wu
Wei his mind was silent and full of joy. Without consulting any charts Wu Wei seemed
to be aware of everything that had happened to Arthur in the past, present and future.

‘You ran away from school on your first day, you heard a voice. You heard
that voice again the day Margaret Thatcher was elected prime minister.’

Beneath the hood of his simple brown robe was an old and lightly bristled head,
but his face looked fresh and his eyes had an infinite quality.

‘Mr Cuckoo,’ he would affectionately call Arthur.

The asthma entirely vanished as time went by and the world didn’t seem so
threatening to Arthur as he relaxed and appreciated stillness and silence more. The
hours of sitting in meditation were long and the cooking jobs increased but the
accommodation was free.

Wu Wei often laughed.
‘What is your mind saying today Cuckoo? Where will it take you?’

People would come to visit Wu Wei every day, many made the long trek to the mountains. In the nearby village, a twenty-room semi-luxury hotel was built just for his students, European Aristocrats who’d fallen out of favour, idealistic and disillusioned academics, film makers, the odd stressed out Ex-American CIA person in hiding, hippies and lost Cuckoo aliens like Arthur. His problems suddenly seemed posher to him. People talked about enlightenment and unconditional love and the difficulties of taming their minds.

Relaxed and effortless Wu Wei’s followers on the other hand argued about who he was fondest of and who was the most advanced student. There was jealousy if he let you fill his food bowl, or if you got to take his robes to the laundry. ‘Look within,’ he would say. ‘Only a good heart is important.’ The devotees marvelled at his honesty, directness and simplicity. The infighting continued despite his example however, as they desperately attempted to be closest to Wu Wei. Competition over who donated the most money or best gifts. Some wrote down his teachings in books for the world to read and others thinly disguised him in novels that suggested he was a miracle worker and saint. Wu Wei told them he wanted nothing but that all profits should be shared with the local orphanage and travel options were appreciated. His following grew and Wu Wei found that travelling as much as possible stopped him hearing the same bickering devotees all the time.

The old master Wu Wei suggested Arthur sit on hard rock for weeks in secret caves further up the mountain, to get some serious meditation in and avoid the social nightmare of his groupies.
‘You want it tough Mr Cuckoo? You have it tough,’ he told Arthur. His words were like nectar to Arthur who was now convinced he could transform all his negative emotions and transcend the misery his life had been. He believed that with enough meditation practise his past would fall away to reveal the truth of his existence. He told Wu Wei about this with tears in his eyes.

‘I want to let go of the fear Wu Wei.’

‘You are a sentimental fool Mr Cuckoo.’

Wu Wei showed Arthur how to perceive his past fears through loving eyes, and how to be kind even when others were not. The seasons went by in meditation, teaching English, chopping wood, carrying water, cooking, sleeping, sweeping floors and sitting for hours to calm his mind and dissolve what separated his awareness from the trees and air and sky. The world moved on outside, wars came and went. And the Internet spread like wildfire as Arthur lived almost off grid. But in angry moments Arthur still dreamed of returning to the UK as a kind of super Buddha having tamed his mind. He wanted to become the most enlightened person Hangfield had ever seen.

‘I never had a case as bad as you Cuckoo,’ said Wu Wei. ‘Your mind’s not from this world and the other part is too much stuck in it. They send you to me, to keep you out of harm until it’s time to go back.’

Arthur didn’t understand Wu Wei at the time.

‘A day will come when you want to leave Mr Cuckoo,’ Wu Wei told him one afternoon as he swept the floor.

‘Never master,’ Arthur said and cleaned the cave floor faster.

‘You just have to keep persevering and gradually the awareness stays.’
But for Arthur it wasn’t so easy. Sometimes it was like the moment at school outside the stationery cupboard as the fire started, he felt himself become consciousness itself beyond his own body and at the same time felt physically more alive and alert. He could remain calm, grounded and stable yet vibrant, feeling like he was connected to everything. Wu Wei took him to another cave after signs of improvement, where Arthur sat for three months after being shown how to connect his mind with subtle spirit worlds.

‘Now Mr Cuckoo, do not worry,’ said Wu Wei. ‘These are no more than aspects of the same awareness, nothing too real, don’t worry.’ Wu Wei laughed. ‘You must learn to relax more because there is still too much disturbance.’

For those months, Arthur lived without any electric appliances feeling he’d truly escaped his modern consumer mind forever but when he returned to the valley where the other devotees were his old sense of being an outsider returned and his fears would start once more. Dreams of going home to a place that he knew in some way no longer existed, still haunted his attempts to leave his anger and shame behind. But without returning he felt his life would never be complete, only then would he find the truth. And perhaps if he finally went back to the UK, he would find his destiny.

One day back in the small village beneath the cave where he’d first met Wu Wei, the locals decided to buy a television. Arthur would watch the TV with his group of English language beginners from the village that Wu Wei had recently told him to teach. They got a video player and Arthur would show them episodes of Mr Bean the silent clown, to teach some grammar. ‘He’s going to fall over, he’s going to crash, he’s going to hurt himself.’
On the BBC world news one evening he saw Jennifer Gaston looking like a very nice, confident woman. She’d hardly aged and was telling people about the need for more computers in schools. Although he decided to avoid watching the BBC news from then on, the odd UK or US drama or comedy he saw was like a magnetising force from his old world pulling him back.

Arthur called Jill on the Internet phone about once every six months. She often talked to him using one of her puppet voices.

‘Hi mum,’ said Arthur into phone.

‘Hello, my lovely little boy, this is Guru BE yourself,’ said Jill.

‘You’re holding a puppet aren’t you mum?’ asked Arthur.

‘You are really here, you know that don’t you Arthur. I mean this life is real,’ said Jill.

‘Was that you or Guru BE yourself?’ asked Arthur.

‘A bit of both,’ replied Jill sounding concerned. ‘You are the king of your own puppet theatre.’

A part of Arthur felt he’d already been away too long. The words and faces on the TV seemed to speak more quickly, the speed of the cuts from one image to the next were faster and Arthur decided that if he didn’t go back soon, he might never be able to. A part of him imagined that perhaps he could have a family, a life of some sort. It’d just all been too much before.
Chapter Thirty-Five

After a decade in the mountains just as Master Wu Wei had predicted, something happened that made him want to leave. A theatrical version of the geologically mysterious hill called Glastonbury Tor began his journey home. The Tor replica appeared on the television as the centrepiece of the 2012 London Olympic opening ceremony, symbolizing the spiritual heart of the UK. Sat there with some of the locals he’d been teaching a bit of English again as they watched. ‘This is London, these are dancers, that’s Glastonbury Tor.’

And suddenly seeing the Olympic opening he felt very patriotic. A sense of connection with childhood Christmases took hold during the proceedings, despite a part of him thinking it was just national propaganda promoting the business of UK plc. The feelings started when the actor playing James Bond marched to Buckingham Palace to collect the Queen and take her to the stadium. He saw the Queen from behind and waited for her to turn. If James Bond went to see the Queen in those old films you knew it wasn’t her, they used an impersonator, but in the Olympic opening it was the real Queen. She turned around and there she was, ‘Good evening Mr Bond.’ It was as though his memories of childhood and adolescence were being upgraded as the British monarch seemed to laugh at her royal role, becoming an entertainer and clown. Arthur couldn’t help himself feeling a wave of joy feeling as though everyone had suddenly become truly equal. He then felt ashamed and tried to remember he was a revolutionary socialist republican but it didn’t help.

Olympic jouissance overflowed as Her Majesty greeted Bond and walked down the corridor, glancing at her favourite footman ‘Big Paul,’ before she stepped out to a helicopter. His feeling of belonging to Great Britain grew as Bond and the Queen flew
to the Olympic stadium where she was greeted by Glastonbury Tor, along with seventy real sheep and thousands of humans. As Queen Elizabeth appeared to leap out of the helicopter and parachute into the Olympic stadium, descending with James Bond the people’s supernaturally resilient secret service man, who was the Lancelot of the age and truly British, something happened to Arthur. He was suddenly taken up from the Earth, beyond an endless sky into another realm and an extraterrestrial with a woolly head, purple skin and a medical looking blue tunic spoke to him.

‘Your true mission has begun, go to Glastonbury.’

The extraterrestrial had spoken with the voice, the voice had been with him all those years in England and Istanbul, guiding him along. Since coming to the Himalayas he’d never heard her until that moment.

He couldn’t wait any longer. It was time to return.

Arthur told old Wu Wei what had happened while he was watching the Olympic opening ceremony and that he was leaving.

‘Everything comes and goes,’ Wu Wei replied. ‘There is no mission Mr Cuckoo, but for you it may be different.’

‘You think I should go then?’ asked Arthur

‘I cannot stop you.’

‘I must go,’ Arthur said. ‘It’s my destiny.’

‘You still didn’t become yourself Cuckoo,’ Wu Wei said looking deeply at Arthur. ‘But maybe you have to go. You will lose your life and find it. Yes, this is your destiny. But it is still your choice.’
A fellow spiritual seeker called Paul had strong doubts about Arthur going. He felt his English friend was experiencing a powerful delusional episode, that often came before a great spiritual transformation.

‘Don’t do it,’ said Paul the ageing Australian surfer turned meditator, who’d spent the 1990s licking some sort of toads that he said had shown him the way out. ‘It’s your forties wobble Arthur, stay put. The going’s good here. You crawl back at your age trying to conform and it’s a waste of time, for what? To get spat on by a load of careerists and join the bottom of a corrupt hierarchy. Wait until your fifty and the losers who said you dropped out find they hate their kids, they hate their jobs, they hate their wives and they hate their lives. It was all for nothing and they start asking you for advice.’

But for the first time in his life Arthur felt certain. Finally, he’d seen the owner of the voice that’d whispered and spoken to him when he was younger. And now he trusted her voice in a way he hadn’t really been able to for years. He felt his mission on Earth might be important. Arthur was ready to go home. Within a few days, he bought a ticket and flew back to the UK. After getting off at Heathrow at 7 AM, Arthur took the underground to Victoria station, then the coach to Glastonbury. By early afternoon he’ arrived in the small town of about 8,000 people in Somerset. The ancient Tor was much bigger than the replica in the Olympic opening ceremony. The Isle of Avalon as it was known, was a place he immediately felt he could hear the beating spiritual heart of the world. King Arthur himself was reputed to have once walked the sacred land of Glastonbury. Arthur didn’t know exactly why he’d had to come, or where his path would take him. All he knew was that for the first time in his life, it felt like he had a choice. He had come to a place where he belonged.
Chapter Thirty-Six

Arthur’s father had kept going up in the world during his absence. Arriving back at Victoria bus station after realising staying in bed and breakfasts in Glastonbury would soon use up all his money, Terence met him in a Rolls Royce driven by his Ex-MI5 bodyguard.

‘Welcome home son,’ Terence growled. His father was wearing an expensive Navy coloured check blazer and had dark sunglasses, his business had moved into higher security areas in the time since his parents had divorced. ‘Welcome back to the family.’

‘Hi dad,’ Arthur said. His father stared at his son in his loose-fitting rainbow coloured trousers and T shirt, with a picture of the Hindu God Lord Shiva on it.

‘Jesus wept?’ said Terence.

Arthur tried to tell Terence what he’d been doing but he could tell it was creating a stressful reaction.

‘Are you still nuts then?’ Terence asked. ‘By the way this is Ted.’ Ted the driver nodded, observing Arthur like a potential terrorist.

‘Well I think I’ve gone beyond the mind dad. This world is a transitory illusion.’

‘Don’t start son, did you learn a language?’

‘A bit of a few, I did a lot of meditation.’

‘My god,’ said Terence. ‘You’ve just been bumming about then?’

‘I taught English to local communities’.

‘Well if you want to be in this family, you’ll need a proper job.’
‘There’s a bit of a CV gap Dad?’

‘We don’t employ people like you. And I can’t stand nepotism.’

‘Peace dad, I don’t want to fight.’

‘Jesus wept, look son we’re in the middle of a big company takeover. I haven’t got time for messiahs. You’re the sort of person we provide care for.’

‘Who are you working for?’ Arthur asked.

‘Care for all,’ high security care homes that are a subsidiary of the Hythe foundation.

Arthur vaguely remembered something from before, when Jennifer had said she’d worked for her father who’d owned the foundation but felt it better to say nothing.

‘Well, I just need to do the rounds and see the family dad,’ he said instead.

‘Have you stopped being an extremist son?’ asked Terence.

‘An extreme what?’

‘You’ve got dangerous views. Sometimes I feel like my son died. You’ve turned into an alien. We should never have let you go to a university to do sociology.’

Arthur left Terence’s mansion the next day after seeing his new surveillance system, the hounds and the safe room beneath the house. Terence said he had enough to last six months if he was under attack or Waitrose closed. He played Arthur Parsifal the Wagnerian opera about a knight seeking the Holy Grail in his music room and explained he’d moved on from Cat Stevens and *Buddha and the Chocolate Box*.

He went to see his mother soon after and she suggested he work as a clown.

‘You were born to be a clown darling,’ said Jill.
'How have you been?’ Arthur asked.

‘I have been very busy,’ said Jill, with an incredibly shiny look in her eyes. ‘I’m doing folk singing and I’ve got commissions to paint three portraits.’

‘I don’t want to be a clown mum.’

Jill gets out her writer puppet. ‘Who’s a lovely boy then?’

‘It’s just so weird mum.’

‘Well, under the circumstances I think I’ve done rather well. Now, what would my little boy like for tea?’

Jill and Terence had been separated for some years. She was still working with the puppets but the clown paint and red nose had gone. Since the Stephen King Horror movie with a psychotic clown, the painted faces had become associated with a fearsome sense of social alienation and danger in some people’s minds. Being a clown terrified Arthur as well and he twitched when considering the idea.

‘My little boy’s not a puppet,’ said the King puppet that Jill held in her hand.

Arthur felt a clown and puppet career would be too tough for him. He had to find something else fast and get back to Glastonbury. Then there was a Facebook message from his Australian friend Paul writing in the village Internet café in the Himalayas. He had news about Wu Wei.
Chapter Thirty-Seven

A few days after seeing his parents, Arthur saw Mr Trott. Twenty-six years after finishing compulsory education there he was, Mr Trott. It was weird for a few reasons. Firstly, Arthur had only just got back to the UK. Secondly, he was on a train in the North of England where he’d only been three times in his life. And thirdly, he’d just been seeing his old meditation master Wu Wei, who’d seemingly followed him.

His journey into the mysterious north had begun by going to see Master Wu Wei in Scotland. Wu Wei had never made Arthur join in with the hocus pocus waving sticks, bones, banging drums side of his spiritual life. Arthur had told him it seemed like backward rubbish. But for those few days in Scotland he’d done nothing but rituals with an entourage of shamanic looking yogis with fearsome, otherworldly faces and grizzled beards. Arthur had never seen any of them before and guessed they must be part of Wu Wei’s highland mountain retreat group that he sometimes flew over to see.

‘We must clear the way for you,’ Wu Wei had said. ‘The negative forces must be quietened.’

As Arthur listened to Wu Wei and his friends making deep, guttural chanting sounds he looked around at the roomful of twenty quite unpleasant smelling Scottish shamanic practitioners, mostly wearing long green woollen cloaks. Arthur sat there trying to join in with their wizard rituals but as Godfrey had told him years before anything like this was probably giving your power away. It was very different to We Wei’s usual talks about it all being in your mind, because they seemed to be engaging with real ‘out there’ negative forces. Arthur still reckoned it was for lazy holy men who wanted to convince the gullible they could harness unseen forces in return for hard cash. And sitting there it seemed like a deludedly literal game of dungeons and dragons.
After a few days of glumly watching Master Wu Wei banging a symbol and groaning he’d suddenly been told, ‘You must leave tomorrow, your training is complete for this life.’ Feeling like he’d been thrown out for good rather than leaving of his own free will, Arthur guessed Wu Wei had just given up on him after staring at his miserable face for too long, despairing at the roomful of advanced magician’s failure to fully calm his mind after so much time in the mountains. ‘You will go to Glastonbury soon, goodbye human Arthur,’ said Wu Wei. ‘There they will find you.’

Obviously Trott had been drinking solidly since he’d last seen him, he looked like a man ravaged by the storms and alcohol of his time, sitting in the aisle seat of the train. Arthur didn’t drink alcohol much anymore having turned to a life of renunciation and found Trott a little malodorous. Still, he went over to say hello despite guessing Trott wouldn’t remember him. But Mr Trott looked like he’d seen the devil and feared physical attack.

‘It’s Arthur from the school down south.’

‘Good,’ said Mr Trott.

‘I write stories sometimes.’

‘Good.’

‘Inflicted any traumas recently?’ Arthur asked, surprised at his sudden sharpness. He looked over at the empty seat next to Mr Trott near the window.

‘Good,’ said Mr Trott.

‘What are you doing these days?’ Arthur asked.

‘I am a Professor,’ said Mr Trott.
He looked at his old teacher’s face full of hardened lines from three decades of drinking and departmental cuts. Academics had higher stress levels than most other professions, he’d read an article about University staff having nervous breakdowns left right and centre. Looking like he’d gone beyond nervous breakdowns though, Trott stared back at Arthur as he stood before him on the train going south toward Doncaster.

He thought about asking Professor Trott to move to the window seat so he could sit down and chat over the effects of his northern revenge teaching style, wanting to tell him he’d effected his communication with other humans for some time after, that his voice had somehow been overwhelmed by Trott’s revolutionary socialism and that following his dreams of a workers uprising had ruined any small chance of a career. But Mr Trott had company.

To some it may have looked like Trott was just hogging the double seat by putting a glass of vodka in the empty place next to him. The casual observer might have seen the drink on the tray in the empty seat as a clever way of pretending there was perhaps someone in the loo coming back to sit there by the window, so Trott could avoid anybody sitting there. But no, the strategic placement of his second double vodka on the tray beside the window wasn’t a way of avoiding unwanted company. Arthur could see the ghostly presence of a helmeted coal miner next to Trott, whispering in his ear.

Googling Mr Trott later he discovered his old teacher was now the famous author of the Southern Liar trilogy, written by whoever was sitting next to him on the train no doubt. No wonder Trott had to drink. He must have been battling daily to conceal the fact he was collaborating with an unearthly entity. And as Arthur looked at Professor Trott and the unearthly miner, he realised why master Wu Wei had sent him
away earlier that day. It was so he’d get on this exact train. Wu Wei was guiding him back into British Society. But how? Assuming Wu Wei never wasted time on confusing signs and portents Arthur decided his message in sending him to meet Trott was clear. If Professor Trott and his invisible friend could work in an English department at a university, why couldn’t he? Trott had sent him on a journey in the 1980s, a journey that meant he’d missed almost thirty years of being shaped by Margaret Thatcher and the economic policies that followed her. And now he had returned. As he looked at Professor Trott with his grey beard, smelling of stale cigarettes, it became clear there’d been a higher reason for him being sacrificed in the Thatcher wars all those years ago, there’d been nothing personal in it. His exile had been part of a greater plan in which he still had a role to play.

‘Here, take this,’ said Professor Trott reaching into his bag and holding up a slim volume of poetry. It was one of his own. Arthur took it and looked at the title. ‘The Alien Grail.’

After the trauma of seeing Trott, Arthur soon found himself back in education after decades away. In September 2012, he was interviewed by the University of Brightstol for a Phd in the Humanities researching more peaceful, alternative ways of living. It was the newest kind of university. Some of the buildings were made entirely of metal and glass, spreading daily it seemed over the city and surrounding area. The local people had recently tried to cap the ever-burgeoning spread of student houses, as the university expanded and expanded just to keep up with the business model they had to follow to survive.

Grandfather Leonardo had died the year before and left him some money.
‘Well, I think we need to move quickly on this,’ said Professor Digby who was interviewing Arthur. ‘And your research sounds absolutely fascinating. We can’t offer you a desk though.’

Rising fees at the University had blurred the lines between being a student and a customer. The less corporate looking staff looked ever more haunted, nervous, like victims of animal cruelty. They whispered the names of books like *The Broken University*, *The Betrayed College*, *The Silent Staff Conspiracy*. For the small nest of true communists rather than neoliberal left-wing soothsayers that remained, delivering the necessary standard of communist education required ever subtler forms of clandestine psychological manoeuvring. A secret language had emerged where corporate buzz words were subverted with strange intonations and misplaced emphasis. There were meetings on rooves and in the nearby national park where they walked in two’s like cold war secret agents. Nobody knew who they could trust. For six long weeks, Arthur’s mind was filled with Marxist psychoanalysis and sociology by hardened academics who saw him as a victim of capitalism and a customer simultaneously. Arthur began to doubt he’d ever met Master Wu Wei. It was like another reality where everyone argued a lot more and there were no other worlds.

Arthur wondered if he’d just been hypnotised into thinking the world had subtler dimensions and life could be an effortless flow of joy, when everywhere around him seemed to be in conflict. And if you didn’t join in you were thrown out. Arthur knew he had to get to Glastonbury fast, there he might find people he could speak with.
Chapter Thirty-Eight

Boarding the train Arthur was glad to be going to the relative peace of Glastonbury and thumbed through his research notes. Already he’d found that the famous Glastonbury music festival was in a village called Pilton a few miles down the road. Since the 1970s the alternative community and tourist industry had blossomed into a wide range of groups, shops, healing centres and guest houses, mostly catering to the spiritually inclined tourist. The Goddess movement had also become very powerful in Glastonbury in recent decades, with a world conference celebrating the divine feminine held annually. Since the late Victorian period the area had seen a resurgence in mystical interest that had begun millennia before. Many claimed the young Jesus and his Great Uncle Joseph of Arimathea had visited, along with Mary Magdalene, King Arthur and Queen Guinevere.

Initial research strongly suggested that the Isle of Avalon as it was often called, harboured the greatest repository of outlandish stories and mythic tales in the entire realm of officially rational England. For some it was a spiritual home to the Druids and for others a remnant of Atlantis and otherworldly civilisations. Tales of monks, witches and ghosts filled Glastonbury’s past and present, sitting beside more recent UFO portal and alien reportage, with the more energetically attuned seeing Avalon as the heart centre or chakra of mother Earth herself.

And as he set out on his first day as a researcher in the field, Avalonian Glastonbury truly seemed like a land where myth and reality were indivisible. Writing noble introductory notes like an Arthurian knight making vows of honourable intentions to serve the greater good, he was ready to engage with radical members of the alternative Glastonbury community. His initial visit had convinced him there was
a secret community here that had resisted the modern world and its violence for centuries. His destiny felt near. This was a place where the underground spiritual warriors of England were still fighting for truth and justice, against the greedy forces draining the Earth’s resources. And as he looked around the courtyard beneath the Goddess temple in the centre of town, he searched for signs of its existence amidst the shop front windows and tea drinkers.

Some of the people sitting drinking tea looked distinctly unlike city people with long brimmed hats, large ponchos and an unhurried manner. They didn’t seem to notice him with his now slightly paunchy body and thinning mousey hair, wearing plain blue jeans and a purple woolly jumper. Arthur wondered if they were part of the Republic of Glastonbury’s radical politics. Free men and women seeking to find their own sovereignty. These were the warriors who’d not hidden in the mountains like him but had stayed and found ways to reclaim their souls from the market economy and its human meat grinders.

His research suggested the ecological and capitalist resistance fighters might choose to live on edge of town in camper vans or fully off-grid if possible. They might not be found in the tourist spots and shops as they would have other ways to exchange goods and labour that minimised the use of money, and anything that warped heartfelt communication. But as he sat in the outside cafe listening to the women talking next to him, Arthur realised there may still be more than a few in town and his heart filled with joy. The vision of the purple faced woman in the Himalayas and Wu Wei’s words suddenly seemed undoubtedly true. Destiny had found him.
‘The whole stinking corrupt old order is coming down, do you hear me coming down and a new era of love will be born,’ said a woman with a South-East London accent wearing a black cotton bodice, with crimson lipstick and a brown furry hat.

‘Yes,’ said her Parisian accented friend who was about Arthur’s age. The French woman was athletic in build and wearing a white flowing dress with a fluffy red bomber jacket over the top. Her long hair was brown and tangled. Her deep, sharp brown eyes were mournful and deadly like a wounded lioness. ‘They’ll all be forced into meditation boot camps, every politician scum and corporate sociopath one of them.’

Since signing up as an academic Arthur had already felt the breeze of state sanctioned self-worth like a promise blowing in the wind, but the Parisian’s words made him suspect they might be suspicious of anyone too close to the governing authorities and its increasingly corporate educational offshoots. Worried that these warriors of peace might not speak to him, Arthur hadn’t planned to go undercover. But that first day sitting in the courtyard of the Blue Note Café beneath the Goddess temple, he’d had to think quickly as the French woman in the white dress looked over. He nodded and introduced himself.

‘I am Arthur Pendragon.’

Neither of them laughed, they just watched him and then looked at each other and nodded. He’d not felt like he was lying. He’d thought it didn’t matter what you called yourself around here. Besides he was small fry, not some James Bond spy.

‘I’m Brigitte,’ said the French woman in the white dress.
Chapter Thirty-Nine

Soon he was doing well as Arthur Pendragon, the ancient family name of King Arthur, although there’d been friction with a few of the older Merlin’s in town. A week after arriving he moved out of the local ashram’s Tee Pee and in with Brigitte, because she had a spare room available. His spiritual underground training had begun. She’d seemed so trusting, like he was one of the long-lost tribe.

Beneath his bedroom window Arthur could see over a wall of the ruined Abbey. There on the other side was a grave said to be the burial place of Arthur and Guinevere. Not many believed it was entirely true. King Edward Longshanks had probably just reburied some skeletons centuries after their deaths, that had been miraculously discovered by a few unbiased local monks. When Henry VIII destroyed the Abbey in 1539, his Protestant reformation left no physical trace of Arthur or Guinevere’s supposed remnants. Nothing much seemed to have changed since the medieval period in terms of boosting the pilgrim visitor industry Brigitte told him. ‘A ludicrously faked past sold to a confused present.’

As he spent the days reading and the evenings being trained by Brigitte, Arthur still didn’t know exactly why he’d been called to this sacred land after so many years abroad. While his mission remained unclear each day he felt more as though he belonged, despite his new academic role sometimes ruining that feeling with a self-consciously critical eye. Observing the local farmers, Arthur noticed many of those born in Glastonbury who weren’t engaged in alternative spiritual pursuits, watched with amusement or mild disdain as those seeking enlightenment, their soul partners or ley lines wandered about seeking hidden meanings and signs.
He’d still been completely clueless about Brigitte’s extraterrestrial identity even after a month of living with her. In the cramped kitchen facing a wall of Glastonbury’s ruined abbey Brigitte was unwinding doing her cosmic circular breathing and trampoline bouncing after a long day serving in the crystal shop that sold ancient Egyptian, Tibetan and Native American spiritual equipment and statues. Brigitte often ran the shop but didn’t own it so made almost no money. Her slim but sturdy frame looked younger than his despite their similar age. Arthur found her very attractive but she just seemed to play with his attempts to communicate this as she extracted information and gave advice. Brigitte told him they had to create real social change fast.

‘If we don’t resist through direct political action, large parts of humanity will soon be wiped out as technology makes them surplus to requirements,’ she said jumping on the trampoline. ‘The enemy must be brought down.’

When Arthur told her to calm her mind, to see that everything was simply arising in consciousness, Brigitte had looked at him like he might be working for the Illuminati. She didn’t seem to take his views very seriously but smiled at his stocky body with its unkempt mousey hair. Arthur believed they were at least friends, although after work she often seemed to assert her authority over him.

‘Some of the things you say, they are so uncool and fascist Arthur,’ said Brigitte. She did yoga with a little tai chi and prepared raw food salads while making high pitched sounds that would apparently speed the enemy’s collapse. ‘Kali, Kali, Kali,’

Everything Brigitte did was a part of the training. She was readying him for the task that was to come.
'Rats and doors Arthur…… rats…… and doors,’ Brigitte announced it while looking out the kitchen window at the abbey wall.

She often said rats and doors but this evening she’d said it with a great, pausing emphasis and sense of finality, as though the message had to get through to him. He’d guessed at the time it was a contribution to his paranoia resistance training. A part of him would have rather been living with one of the hippies down the road, who focused more on the love and fluff side of life. But they wanted a deposit to move in and he was short on funds.

Brigitte bounced on her mini-trampoline, ‘The lying scum psychopaths want to keep us under control, keep us under surveillance to stop the extremists. To them we’re a collective rat like plague being measured, analysed and made secure. But it’s part of their plan, they’re going to download the rich and unplug the rest of us.’

‘Whose plan?’

‘Hythe.’

He’d been certain Brigitte was essentially a good person with big problems that she projected onto society. She seemed to be aiming at becoming the Internet activist most banned on Facebook with the world’s biggest secret file, circulated to multiple government departments, with eleven different names she used on social media with thousands of followers.

‘We must activate and awaken everyone,’ she said. ‘Open their rat doors.’

It sounded worse when she said it calmly in her Parisian French accent.

‘We must open the rat doors.’
Brigitte couldn’t have told him everything of course, he wouldn’t have taken her seriously. Arthur’s education at the university had led him to believe that popular conspiracy beliefs in aliens and super-technology were a new form of folk religion that concealed basic economic exploitation and class war. Overblown conspiracy fantasies involving extraterrestrials were based in modern anxieties about a loss of traditional communities, surveillance culture and weapons of mass destruction. Godfrey had long ago pointed out these fears were manipulated by the CIA, using alien reports to create cognitive dissonance and control society. Corrupt governments were laying the ground for a new religion where good and bad aliens ruled in a materialist church.

He’d read theories that Alien conspiracy fanatics were often expressing forms of paranoid racism, in ways that would otherwise be illegal. While he felt that some extraterrestrials were probably misunderstood age old mystical or subtle experiences, real in a way but not physically out there, after absorbing ideas at the university he’d begun to doubt everything. Professor Trott’s invisible friend and his visions in the Himalayas were perhaps nothing more than forces within his psyche, exploding through his everyday egoic consciousness. It was probably all just a case of early trauma, social isolation and wishful thinking as Godfrey had always told him. But training with Wu Wei had taught him the world didn’t fit into neat categories. Maybe Professor Trott’s invisible friend and his own visions were part of a psychic landscape, connected to a reality undervalued by the hyper-stressed, super busy modern world. He felt sure extraterrestrials hadn’t really landed on Earth with bodies like humans or trees of octopi, even if they had they wouldn’t choose humans as conversation partners.
Chapter Forty

When Arthur woke up this morning on December 21st, 2012, he was still just a person who’d spent the last decade or more meditating and trying to become calm. He’d had a troubled time at school and not done much at university, had a few nasty experiences then escaped abroad. He’d heard the odd spiritual message that still meant something to him, a vision or two that wasn’t easily explained away as just a desperate attempt to find meaning in his life. But a part of him now worried that he indulged anything like this. Maybe sitting in a cave for ages in the Himalayas and hanging out with hippies and the day centre underground had just been a wrong turn. Now he had a chance to get into the professions, like he should have done years ago. He couldn’t single-handedly resist the economic way of the world.

This morning he’d been thinking about what Brigitte might say if she ever found out he was an academic researcher. Probably she’d tell him he was cheap trying to write anything about Glastonbury that wasn’t immersed in the pervading sense of enchantment. This was a place where the spiritual journey was beyond words, a place of pilgrimage that had to be lived fully and not noted down. The part of Arthur that wanted to rationalise the world had started to seem like a way back to reality, after losing himself on some imaginary voyage. He’d therefore decided that Brigitte wasn’t ready to hear about his research and noted it down.

But soon after his morning doubts Arthur’s life began to change forever. The illusion of his human existence as Arthur born in South London in 1969 was about to fall away. It had seemed so real. Today was the day he discovered his undercover name, Arthur Pendragon, was no accident, no random selection. It couldn’t have been
Merlin, Tree, Loki, Air, or Wind Walker. He couldn’t have chosen anything else. The Tor in Avalon Arthur climbed this winter solstice morning has hosted human spiritual gatherings for thousands of years, a lot of sheep have also grazed upon its slopes.

Reaching the first bench on the side nearest the Chalice Well and its mystical garden Arthur had a breather. Looking up at the hundreds of chanting New Agers he’d suddenly laughed. Today was the day, December 21\textsuperscript{st} 2012, a winter solstice and the official start of an epochal cycle in the ancient Mayan Calendar. A massive influx of spiritual seekers had appeared from all over the world and the bed and breakfasts had been filling up. The people on top of the Tor were celebrating the end of time as humans knew it. An era of love and understanding would reputedly begin, as over five millennia of misery ended. These cosmic occurrences would lead, it was said, to the healing of injustice and fear across the globe. There would be no more exploitation of nature or other creatures, no more mindless cruelty. Listening to the early morning drummers and chanlers invoking angelic or galactic intervention it’d seemed, at the very least, a bit hopeful. That was before Arthur met the sheep.

Usually on his daily Tor walk he’d meet the occasional London Olympics inspired pilgrim, or the more meditational and magically oriented ascenders and dog walkers. But today was different, it was a new age spiritual carnival. Arthur started feeling sorry for the sheep out on the slopes with all these humans about. All the injustices those poor woolly creatures must have experienced at the hands of the addicted, neurotic and unhealthy human species he came from. Nearing the top of the Tor there were thirty or more sheep having to listen to the hippies at the summit, banging their drums for the coming age of love and peace, while they awaited an inevitable and unpleasant end in some abattoir. He’d met people here who still
bemoaned the loss of the common agricultural land, with the enclosures acts a few centuries before when sheep farming had greatly increased.

Glastonbury’s alternative community had a lot of people who believed eating meat was the world’s biggest ecological problem. Others had gone further. There were repeated rumours that one local had been a successful ‘Breatharian,’ for several years, living only on air. There were a few die-hard foragers as well, living off the land and rejecting any form of industrialised farming, not to mention the healthy cluster of raw foodists, who ate nothing or next to nothing that was cooked and absolutely used no animal products.

As he looked at the flock of sheep, Arthur found himself wondering again if they knew anything about abattoirs. Did they realise that sometime in the future they would be taken to a slaughter house then eaten? He felt sad that although they seemed quite free up on the Tor they really had nowhere to run, nowhere to escape humans. Wherever they went they’d be found. Surely the sheep couldn’t know the truth, or they’d go crazy. He’d assumed most animals could smell death when they got to the abattoir and sheep didn’t seem to trust humans very much. Perhaps they couldn’t let themselves see the full horror of their situation, a basic defence mechanism when there was no way out. One of the sheep began staring at him with interest the same moment he was thinking this. He smiled to himself, imagining the sheep had understood.

Arthur wondered if the sheep was any different from the humans on the Tor, trapped by an economic fantasy system that was controlled by wolves and other predators. Years of fiscal austerity lay ahead, as someone got richer at their expense. And you had to go along with it or you’d be cast out or imprisoned, you had to keep quiet and then die like a good sheep. Only a few months before Rupert Sheldrake a
famously nonconformist scientist had spoken at Glastonbury town hall. He’d talked about organic models of the universe that could replace the mechanistic world view that had separated humans from nature and other creatures. He was also the author of, ‘Dogs who know when their owners are coming home,’ a study which showed how dogs begin to behave differently for a period before their owners arrive after work. There was video evidence, the owner’s arrival time was varied and so on. And in another study of humans, he’d shown how we can have a sense that we’re being stared at.

Arthur kept going a few metres further up to St Michael’s tower at the top of the Tor, then looked back to see the sheep’s eyes were still following him. After deciding it was too crowded and cold at the summit he turned ready to make his descent and noticed the sheep was standing a few feet in front of the rest of the flock. She kept staring at him as he went down the path and then began to follow. Arthur wondered if she’d decided to take some pre-emptive revenge on humanity. Maybe she was about to charge. He walked a little more quickly but she kept coming.

Arthur kept up a brisk pace as two pagans stopped and began patting her, taking his chance to put some distance between them. Her eyes were still following him though and as the pagans left she began galloping. Arthur half ran to the gate near the bottom and got to the other side where he felt far more comfortable and could observe benignly from his protected position. The gate was staying locked. There were no mythic tales of Knights in shining armour that rescued sheep. No, however guilty he felt about the sheep’s eventual slaughter it would just have to deal with its situation alone. He hardened his heart and reasoned that in many ways this woolly wanderer was getting a better deal than him; at least she didn’t have to put up with living in an
economy going down the pan in a society falling to pieces. That sheep could eat grass which he couldn’t even digest. He had to pay for his food.

But as the sheep gazed into his eyes, Arthur felt sure she was telling him they were connected. He felt the spirit of the new era of peace being celebrated on the Tor, where all would be equal. The spirit of the new age was speaking through her. She deserved a chance of freedom and so he opened the gate. The sheep followed as he opened the next gate. For the entire way to his house overlooking the ruined medieval abbey, the sheep kept walking behind him. Even when Arthur got to the front door and told her to ‘piss off’ she wouldn’t go. So, he took her into the kitchen and prepared a leafy raw food lunch for them both. She observed him after drinking from a bowl of water and gave out a reassuring ‘Baaaaa.’ Brigitte would probably sniff something was amiss in a second and Arthur was sure she’d sign him off as a trainee member of the Republic of Glastonbury resistance.
Chapter Forty-One

When the sheep wouldn’t leave, Arthur began to feel responsible for her freedom. He phoned a woman at an animal sanctuary who said they could take her but mostly focused on cows. When Brigitte came home that evening the sheep willingly went under the sofa and Arthur burned three sticks of incense simultaneously, spraying deodorant, while coughing to mask the sound. He’d also gone into Brigitte’s shop after lunch to complain of a serious stomach upset, hoping it would throw her off any vaguely unfamiliar smells or sounds. Brigitte wasn’t the sort to criticise you for smells and sounds made through illness. But as he sat quietly in the lounge Brigitte began making loud noises in the kitchen which meant she wanted to talk.

‘Keep quiet now,’ Arthur whispered extinguishing the incense sticks and seeing the Indian throw hanging over the edge of the sofa move slightly, as though the sheep were silently acknowledging his words.

‘Have you had any breakthrough realisations today Brigitte?’ he asked as she did Tai Chi moves around the kitchen.

‘Interesting you should ask that Arthur,’ replied Brigitte. ‘I did have an interesting discussion today with a neuroscientist who was buying that expensive Pharaoh statue.’

‘A neuroscientist, what did he say? How much did you sell it for?’

‘That’s two questions in one sentence, a lack of clarity. But anyway, we discussed where he thought deluded thinking takes place in the brain. And in answer to your other question we reduced Tutankhamen to 3500 hundred pounds, as he bought a large jade Buddha before.’
‘The cerebellum is it, or the amygdala?’

‘No, no, no,’ said Brigitte, preparing a raw tomato and thyme soup followed by a bean sprout salad with freshly grown organic cabbage and pears. Brigitte sighed then sniffed the air and pulled a face, pretending the all-pervading smell of sheep, deodorant, incense and shampoo that he was claiming to be an upset stomach wasn’t that bad.

‘Did he discuss animal brains?’ Arthur asked. ‘I mean did he say animals were conscious?’

Brigitte stared at him intensely. ‘I asked Geoff, that’s the neuroscientist’s name, if the brain isn’t simply a filtering organism within a field of consciousness that permeates everything.’

‘I bet he liked that,’ Arthur replied.

‘Personally, I think he’s working for the enemy so I told him we’re probably already holograms in a technological singularity.’

‘Well done. Why don’t we go for a walk instead this evening?’ Arthur reasoned the longer he could keep her away from the smells in the house the better.

‘Very good,’ said Brigitte flatly, seeming to spot his attempts to humour her and move attention from the real issue. She sighed woefully, ‘Pendragon.’

‘Yes Brigitte?’

‘I know you have a sheep under the sofa.’

‘Do you? Are you sure?’

‘It’s no animals here, you know that. Where did you get the sheep?’

‘She followed me down the Tor. She knows humans are going to eat her.’
‘Well, it’s obviously time,’ Brigitte replied. ‘You’re ready to understand.’

‘That sounds scary,’ he said. ‘I already understand about rats and doors.’

‘Good,’ said Brigitte. She smiled at Arthur and seemed to relax but her voice remained stern. ‘There’s a radio programme about transferring consciousness starting, I want you to listen,’ she said, seemingly changing the subject. ‘After the programme, you and the sheep will go somewhere else to stay with a garden. And there’s no alternative because I now remember the landlord said that people are coming here from London tomorrow. You’ll have to go.’

‘Just have a quick chat with her, I mean you said you were open-minded,’ Arthur pleaded.

‘It’s time,’ Brigitte replied firmly.

‘Maybe someone’s given her military intelligence drugs, she could be conscious in a way beyond most humans.’

‘Oh dear,’ said Brigitte still pretending Arthur was a human. ‘You see this is the problem with Glastonbury and house sharing, you live with someone for a while and there seems to be hope. Then you find it’s just because the trauma was so deep you couldn’t see it, you reach the wound and then splat. It’s happened time and time again. I’m not saying that’s what’s happened to you but perhaps it’s a possibility you might consider.’

Brigitte and Arthur then listened to the radio programme about theories of consciousness. Did artists tune into other dimensions of consciousness? What did Freud have to say about unconscious transference and did he suppress public
knowledge of his belief in telepathy? Was it possible for Tibetans to transfer their consciousness from one life to the next?

After the program, Brigitte broke the silence.

‘Your journey is nearing its end.’

‘I haven’t got anywhere to go,’ Arthur replied. ‘Neither has my sheep. We’ll freeze, its December.’ He coughed and gave Brigitte a serious look, letting her know that she’d fallen into a negative emotional state. Brigitte didn’t seem to care though.

‘I’m going upstairs to make a phone call,’ she said without emotion. ‘I’ve got just the place.’

Arthur sat on the sofa trying not to worry in case it upset the sheep. Maybe he had enough money to get a rental van in the morning and go to the cow sanctuary, or he’d find a caravan site, or…. he ran through various scenarios. He could go back to the owner and ask to buy her? All these questions seemed to become irrelevant when Brigitte reappeared with a strange, purple glow around her.

‘Someone is willing to take you,’ she said. ‘Someone who feels connected with sheep.’

‘Oh good,’ Arthur replied uncertainly.

‘Yes Pendragon,’ she continued. ‘The old woman who lives at the end of Bilberry orchard.’

‘Not the old witch who everyone says not to go to?’ he asked.

‘Yes, you’ve got ten minutes to pack your stuff.’
Chapter Forty-Two

The old witch in Bilberry Orchard was responsible for the twitch in many of the mini-gurus in the area. Morgana was said, by a few of the more transcendentally minded, to travel around Glastonbury at night in her astral body driving out anyone she didn’t want in the area. They believed it was her magic that kept the Isle of Avalon safe. Morgana was a true sorceress that you visited at your peril. But Arthur reasoned they’d at least have somewhere to stay for the night and it was time to be practical. After all, Brigitte might ring the police and he couldn’t explain the sheep away. One night at the Chief weird witch of Glastonbury’s house wouldn’t kill him he’d thought. He could get a rental van the next day.

Brigitte agreed to help move the sheep and lent him a piece of tarpaulin which he put over her when she’d got into the wheelbarrow. The Farmer might have spotted a sheep was missing and there were many eyes in Glastonbury. They had to go up a reasonably busy lane past the Chalice well.

‘Isn’t this fantastic,’ said Brigitte. ‘Smuggling a stolen sheep.’

‘It’s not stolen, its rescued. I’ll go and pay for her freedom tomorrow,’ Arthur replied.

They took the back road along outside of the Abbey walls in the dark night. Brigitte was to engage anyone they met in conversation, saying they were taking manure to Bilberry Orchard, which was what the wheel barrow would reputedly contain. They would then hopefully be allowed to pass quickly. They needn’t have worried though, their path was miraculously clear. Passing the Rifleman’s Arms pub, Brigitte seemed happier than Arthur had ever seen her before. He now felt extreme fear though, as they neared the Gothic looking house.
‘Well done,’ said Brigitte standing behind Arthur as they faced a door with a buzzer and intercom at the side. It was a huge oak door that looked like something out of a film about Elves. Arthur pressed the button and eventually a voice responded.

‘Where do you live?’ the voice asked.

‘In Glastonbury,’ he replied.

‘Not Avalon! What do you want?’

‘To see Morgana,’ he said feeling a grinding in the pit of his stomach. He was sure that problems bigger than the universe itself were about to arrive.

‘What’s your name?’ the female voice asked.

‘Arthur Pendragon,’ he replied.

There was silence for a minute and then footsteps approached the big oak door.

As the sheep pushed her head up from beneath the tarpaulin, Arthur stood there for an icy eternity in the December night. The footsteps grew louder as the door was unbolted. It opened slowly and an automatic light was activated. Suddenly dazzled, he squinted to see a woman in a black velvet cloak with her hood up. Beneath the cloak was a red, Edwardian lace bodice and she had a blue third-eye tattooed on her forehead. The two other eyes were green and stared piercingly at him.

Morgana’s hair was long and red beneath the hood, her skin seemed young except around the eyes where it had almost black creases spreading out like roots. Arthur couldn’t tell if they were real or painted on. It was impossible to say how old she was maybe 35, perhaps seventy. She looked a bit like Miriam Stone, the woman he’d met in Brightstol years before. The woman who had once turned into a purple extraterrestrial before his eyes. She looked deeply into his eyes as he remembered this,
and Arthur suddenly found himself speaking with a voice that did not seem to be his own.

‘I’ve done my best, but the human remains resistant.’ Arthur immediately recoiled after hearing himself speak. ‘Who the hell was that talking?’ he asked.

‘You’re quite safe Arthur,’ replied Morgana pulling off her hood. As Arthur stared at her he fully recognised the face of Miriam Stone, the eco-activist who’d rolled in the mud with him at the protest site nearly two decades before.

‘I am simply using Agent Stone’s body,’ said Morgana. ‘Of course, we agreed to all this on Farfaphus. Soon you will remember everything.’ She looked straight at Arthur. ‘We’ve been coming here for centuries to help save the Earth.’

‘And now we will be together at last,’ said Brigitte.

‘Yes,’ said Morgana.

Memories of Farfaphus appeared to Arthur as they spoke. The thoughts and images seemed to explain why this moment was arising, outside of time or at the same time as all the other moments, a dance of different reflections, of a universal self that flowed throughout thousands of worlds and dimensions, and extended to the rocks and plants and trees.

‘I am Arthur, I am Arthur, you can’t brainwash me,’ he said forcefully. Nevertheless, he entered the house and went through a series of corridors with paintings of purple-humanoids with woolly hair on the walls.

‘Welcome,’ said Morgana as they entered a room filled with crystals of many colours and shapes. She then turned to Arthur and spoke.

‘As we planned, you will awaken and become one with Guinevere.’
‘What?’ Arthur asked.

‘What you’ve been will soon end,’ said Morgana.

Arthur struggled to speak.

There was a pause as Morgana and Brigitte seemed to converse telepathically, nodding and smiling. Then Brigitte said, ‘Shall we go?’

‘Yes,’ said Morgana. ‘Quickly, Hythe is coming I’m certain. We must get to the caverns beneath the Tor. There we will unify your consciousnesses.’

‘I don’t know,’ said Arthur. ‘I feel tense, are you sure you need me right now? I just don’t feel ready.’

Morgana replies urgently, ‘He may attack at any time. We have to get to the underground caverns.’

The wind is whistling, almost screaming around Glastonbury Tor outside. Arthur checks his mobile phone and it’s not working. There’s often a terrible reception here in these buildings at the foot of the Tor, which looms down like some mythic giant upon Morgana’s Victorian house. As Morgana and Guinevere rush about the room picking up things they might need, Arthur sits on a chair and puts his head into his hands. Memories are rising-up in wave after wave. He guesses his survival instinct could be floundering somewhere in the depths of his brain; it must have been absent or under-performing for years. Right now, it’s probably making a valiant yet disastrously late swim for the surface. Later it’ll appear bobbing on the horizon, calling for help with flailing arms that he’ll mistake for friendly gestures of recognition.

Arthur remembers his mother peering down at his five-year old self by the front door, announcing her departure with the monkey puppet. He pulls his hands away from
his face and looks up struggling to breathe. It’s stuffy in the room. The windows are tiny and right up near the ceiling with old peeling lattice wooden frames covered in cobwebs. The room is mostly below ground in a basement, perhaps it was once the servant’s quarters. There would be no fall from a great height if he could squeeze through, but he’s not a boy anymore and those windows are half his size.

‘Goodbye my lovely boy,’ says Mickey the naughty monkey. Jill puts her clown face next to Mickey’s plastic, gormless expression. His long furry arms are sewn together at the paws and hang around her neck. Arthur’s human personality will never accept what Miriam Stone has just said. He tries doing master Wu Wei’s breathing and calming exercises, wondering if this could be it for him, used for god knows what by a New Age cult. Another part of him goes back over the major events of his life. Could he have possibly missed an extraterrestrial that had been living silently inside him for years? His mind races through the events of the day, trying to understand. Maybe there has been another him all along, waiting to awaken? It would explain why life hadn’t gone quite to plan. Master Wu Wei had told him he would find his true self. But was this it? A strangely serene calm descends upon Arthur, as if he’s relieved or awaiting a happy event. Then he wonders if he’s simply like a trapped animal, surrendering to the inevitable, controlled by forces from worlds beyond his own.
Chapter Forty-Three

As they leave the house it’s almost 10pm. Morgana the Seer, Brigitte, Arthur and the sheep make their way down the road to a secret entrance leading to the caves beneath the Tor.

‘Did you know I’ve been befriended by four US army generals on Facebook,’ says Brigitte. ‘I write to them every day and repeatedly point out they are a load of murdering psychopaths, killing for oil and their totalitarian vision of hell.’

‘Isn’t that a bit dangerous?’ says Arthur, hearing his human voice sound more confident.

‘We need to be careful now,’ says Morgana. ‘We can’t be seen entering the tunnel. Almost nobody in Glastonbury knows of its existence.’

They make a right turn into Well House Lane, taking the turning before the white well towards the Tor.

‘You’re okay now, don’t worry,’ says Brigitte as they all walk up the steep road to a gate and then cross a field beneath the Tor. Morgana looks around and after taking them through another gate, directs the group around the back of the Tor. They walk for ten minutes with the sheep following, as Morgana and Guinevere check the dark skies for anyone who might be about.

‘Hythe’s minutes away, I am sure of it,’ says Morgana. ‘We must move fast.’ Morgana goes to a large grey rock and pushes it in three places at the corners, then once in the centre. The rock rumbles, creaks and then begins to vibrate becoming a glowing white colour that disappears to reveal the entrance to the tunnel. ‘Quickly, we need to go in,’ says Morgana.
There’s a buzzing sound in the distance, high above them. The noise is moving closer but there’s nothing visible. A few beams of light shoot down from the night sky and pass close by, sizzling into the ground. Arthur’s fears of what may be ahead in the cave are forgotten, as they scurry into the tunnel and Morgana closes the stone entrance with a wave of her hand.

‘Hythe’s using a holocopter, they’re invisible.’

Inside Morgana touches the wall as the buzzing sound fades. The tunnel lights up with white and blue crystals showing a long narrow path. They walk down it hurriedly for several minutes with the sound of the holocopter gone.

‘Do you remember this tunnel?’ Morgana asks.

‘Like yesterday,’ says Guinevere. ‘Does Hythe know the way in?’

‘We’ve changed the entrance and the password since his human life as Mordred,’ replies the Seer.

As they turn the corner the tunnel opens into a large cave filled with crystals, blue, red, black, white, yellow and green. A vast cathedral size space that seems like another world. On one wall, Arthur sees shelves reaching a dozen metres high with tall clear decanters full of red, white and golden liquids. On another wall, there are pictures of Goddesses: Aphrodite, Isis and the Christian Mother Mary. Others he doesn’t recognise and some have the purple faces with hair that looks like wool. There are rattles and drums in another corner with a big statue of an Earth mother, sitting with an open womb full of crystals. And on a high raised platform that looks like an altar, there are 3 crystal cocoons standing upright. They are human-sized and each one is a distinct colour. On the left is one made of white crystal, on the right one made of red and in the centre, is one made of gold.
A sturdy, blonde haired, poncho wearing priestess with a smiling, lined, forty-something year old face appears.

‘Hello Arthur, my name’s Hannah. I was one of the recruits on the mothership who came here the same day as you,’ she says. ‘I understand you’re not awake yet.’ Hannah’s stylish hemp poncho has rainbow colours. Her long hair has been washed by shampoo unlike Brigitte’s, Arthur notices. ‘My human life has been wonderful,’ says Hannah. ‘I was born into a family that has produced generations of anti-war activists.’

As Morgana and Guinevere go to prepare the crystal cocoons that will be used for the transference, Hannah keeps Arthur talking while patting the sheep who has followed them all the way into the cavern.

‘Sheep are very good friends of the Farfaphians,’ says Hannah. ‘We share common ancestry.’ As she strokes the happy looking sheep, Hannah continues, ‘My Great, Great human Grandfather started protests at the end of the Boer war, to raise awareness over wounded soldiers and their family’s suffering in poverty.’

Several other women arrive from an opening at the far end of the cavern behind the altar with the cocoons. They’re dressed in medieval looking witch outfits.

‘Well done,’ Morgana loudly says to them as she looks out from inside the white human-sized crystal cocoon that she’s working on.

‘Who are they?’ Arthur asks.

‘We all came from the mothership with you,’ says Hannah. ‘We’ve been preparing for tonight for years.’

‘I can’t cope,’ says Arthur.
‘You won’t be controlled by fear after this my friend, that stops here,’ says Hannah.

‘How are you feeling Arthur?’ Guinevere calls over. He doesn’t reply at first and is still struggling inside.

‘It’s okay,’ says Morgana seemingly hearing Arthur’s thoughts. ‘Until we clear the pain from your and Guinevere’s past, you won’t understand. But the cocoons will heal everything, it may feel a bit difficult for a time.’

The cavern trembles as Morgana speaks and Arthur instinctively looks up. Dust falls from the ceiling. There’s a pause and the Farfaphian witches begin to run this way and that, preparing faster.

‘Hythe is bombing the cavern,’ says Morgana. ‘We must unify Guinevere and Arthur now.’

Another loud rumble fills the cavern as the Farfaphian witches go up toward the cocoons and stand around them holding hands.

Brigitte walks toward Arthur and holds out a hand.

‘We are ready Arthur, after lives apart finally we’ll be one.’

‘It's time for you to become free,’ says Morgana.

Brigitte pours a pungent frankincense perfume over Arthur’s head and then hers.

‘We are ready?’ says one of the witches.

‘Blessed be,’ says another of the Farfaphians.
They move toward Arthur chanting and making incantations, muttering mantras and making seething, sighing sounds. Some of them are clapping and arguing with things in the air that he can’t see. Morgana is growling.

‘Yes!’ she suddenly yells. ‘The way is ready.’

Arthur’s led to the white cocoon crystal and Brigitte goes inside the red one next to it. His human personality begins to panic. ‘Let me go, I am not who you think.’

‘Don’t worry,’ says Morgana looking at his strained face. ‘The fear isn’t you.’

Inside the white crystal cocoon, the door closes and the lights begin to get brighter. Outside Arthur can hear the Farfaphian witches doing more chanting and making high pitched tonal sounds. He looks down at his hands and they seem to be glowing.

‘Arthur and Guinevere, it is time for you to unite,’ says Morgana. She also begins making high pitched, unearthly sounds. As she speaks Arthur feels his body vibrating, filling with light from his toes up to the top of the head. It feels wonderful, as though he’s dissolving into the universe without any resistance and everything is full of joy. There is only love. There is no separation. The Farfaphian Goddesses outside begin to hum in a low constant voice that makes his heart vibrate, as they circle around and around the cocoons holding hands.
Chapter Forty-Four

The humming gets louder outside the cocoon until it seems to permeate everything. Arthur feels like nothing can hurt him anymore, as his human personality begins to fade away. Then he feels the cocoon wobble as what must be another bomb from Hythe’s holocopter hits the cave. Arthur doesn’t feel it though, as his mind is speeding down spirals of time and space to the day when he fought Mordred.

Arthur is standing in a muddy field, full of pain, fear and confusion. Around him he can see men fighting with swords, axes and fists. There are bodies lying nearby and screams and grunts fill the air. Yet he feels there is a strange silence around these events as though none of this is really his concern any longer. Because as he looks across the field full of men and boys, dying and killing, he sees a man in the distance whose body he knows once contained his human son. The body of Mordred he sees no longer houses his son because inside him is a monster called the Ouroboron, who will destroy the Earth. A being from another galaxy that will enslave humanity.

Arthur charges across the field pushing men out of the way. The Ouroboron watches him standing almost serenely by a large rock on a raised piece of ground above the battlefield.

‘At last father,’ he says. ‘I wondered where you’d got to, age taking its toll?’

‘You’re not my son,’ Arthur says. ‘You never were.’

‘You’re in denial again Father. The truth is right here in front of you.’

Arthur leaps forward and attacks with his sword. He strikes and thrusts in an almost blind fury knowing that what he fights is stronger and faster. He must end it quickly, take it by surprise. The Ouroboron falls backward and Arthur gains the
advantage but he spins sideways and elbows him in the face. Arthur falls back and then lunges forward once more, bringing the sword down onto the shining red armour again and again. He moves backward and twists his sword in the air, in a figure of eight. The Ouroboron’s eyes seem dead as they look out from Mordred’s body. After several minutes of intense fighting Arthur pushes the Ouroboron with his final ounce of strength and he stumbles onto the stony ground.

‘This ends now,’ Arthur says, holding the sword to his throat. The Ouroboron pushes the sword away and stabs at Arthur’s shoulder. The armour protects him a little but the blood is dripping out, and he feels his strength fading. Times slows as Arthur looks down at the battlefield seeing even more bodies, lying dead and mutilated.

‘So, father,’ says the Ouroboron. ‘You would kill your own son, to hide your crimes.’

‘You’re a Farfaphian,’ says Arthur falling to his knees. ‘We came here to help, not slaughter.’

‘And we will help them Father,’ says the Ouroboron without emotion. ‘We will help them to serve the one. They will become a part of the greatest power in this universe.’

‘Never,’ says Arthur standing up and striking the sword into the body’s right thigh. ‘Never,’ he pulls out the sword as the body falls to its knees. Arthur hopes that if he can cut off the head of the body, the Ouroboron will have to leave and go elsewhere. The Farfaphian who is still in there somewhere, un-awakened, might still be saved.

‘No,’ yells a woman. Arthur sees her rushing across the battlefield. ‘Don’t kill him. You’ve lost your mind. You’re not human.’
Arthur sees that this woman is Brigitte, still fiery and decisive but her name here is Guinevere. He understands that she is his wife, his queen on Earth. But she does not know that he has awakened, that he knows they are from another world.

‘He’s not what you think Guinevere,’ Arthur finds himself yelling. ‘He’s not one of us.’ He watches as the forehead of Mordred begins to move with the Ouroboron inside.

‘No,’ says Guinevere. ‘I can’t let you do it. You don’t know who you really are.’

‘Listen to your wife,’ says the Ouroboron. ‘We are blood, father.’

‘Stay back Guinevere,’ says Arthur. ‘What is not of the light must die.’

Arthur raises the sword above his head and prepares to strike off the head of Mordred’s body. Just as he begins to bring the sword down, an icy feeling starts to spread around his heart. Arthur stops, stumbles and looks down at his breastplate, seeing the blood begin to spurt out. Guinevere has pierced his heart from behind with a spear.

‘I am sorry,’ she says. ‘You can’t do this.’

The Ouroboron stands-up unsteadily and smiles, ‘It’s for the best, father. Killed by your own wife. I should perhaps just finish the job.’ He raises his sword and slowly forces it between Arthur’s left shoulder and the breastplate, going deep into heart until blood spurts from his mouth.

‘No,’ yells Guinevere.

‘Mother won’t be happy,’ says the Ouroboron.
'Stop?' says Guinevere. ‘Wake up Mordred, please wake up you’re not a human.’

‘Goodbye father,’ says the Ouroboron.’

Arthur sees the Ouroboron walking away inside Mordred’s body, as he lays there dying. Guinevere leans over him.

‘What have I done?’ she asks as Arthur gasps for breath.

‘I am awake,’ says Arthur. ‘You …’ Arthur lets out a last gasp and dies.

Guinevere sits by him crying, hoping he has gone back to the mothership. Calling Mordred all she can hear is him laughing in the distance. Morgana appears and sees Arthur there, dead. She falls beside Guinevere and cries as well.

‘There’s nothing we can do,’ Morgana tells Guinevere. ‘This is all my fault.’

‘What’s your fault?’ asks Guinevere.

‘You don’t need to know,’ says Morgana. ‘It would have made no difference, Arthur could not have won. It will all come good in time.’

‘We are one with the Goddess and to her we shall return, like a drop of rain, flowing to the ocean,’ Arthur hears the Farfaphian witches around the cocoon in the cavern singing.

‘The wound is healed,’ says Morgana.

The assembled Farfaphians drum and wail.

As the memory of the field and his death at the hands of the Ouroboron fades, Arthur sees glimpses of many other lives. Hundreds of existences on Earth where he’d died at the hands of the Ouroboron. It was as though his journey had always been
doomed to repeat itself no matter what he tried, the Ouroboron always won. The horror seems almost too much to cope with except he feels his body letting go of layer after layer of pain. It’s like these past lives are leaving him, all the anger and fear is going. And soon he feels light as air.

The cocoon around Arthur trembles once more with Hythe bombing above but there’s no fear, he feels himself completely dissolving into the light. When he opens his eyes the colour of the cocoon has changed and he finds he’s standing inside the golden cocoon. As Arthur feels his body returning to a more solid form his mind is at peace. He looks down and sees his hands and arms are the same as before but as he pushes his hands through his hair, it’s become long straggly and brown like Brigitte’s.

The door to the cocoon is opened and he sees Morgana’s face.

‘Good,’ she says. ‘You’re still in a male form but you’ve got her hair and eyes. Guinevere and Arthur are now joined,’ says Morgana.

As the Farfaphian witches come to greet the new being that Arthur and Guinevere have become, they smile and laugh as the rumbling of the cavern continues. A small human part of Arthur still thinks this is a bit much even for Glastonbury. Morgana begins making more low groaning noises and the other witches are joining in as they close the ceremony, with the cavern shaking and the decanters on the tall shelves tumbling down.

‘Right we need to get out now,’ says Morgana stopping. ‘We’ve done it. Are you okay to go now Arthur?’

‘I wish to be known as Guarfur from now on,’ says Guarfur.

‘Are you sure?’ Morgana asks.
The Farfaphian witches run for the tunnel back to the surface.

‘Well done,’ says Morgana as they charge down a different tunnel to an exit in the middle of Glastonbury high street. ‘Now, you will go back to Brightstol and build a new Avalon. Glastonbury is too dangerous. Our brothers and sisters across the world are also going into the fields and valleys to build homes and communities, that can replace the Ouroboron’s enslaved world.’

That night they stay at Hannah’s home on Magdalene Street. Sitting near the altar is a large painting of the Crone Goddess Cerridwen with a cauldron as they watch the television reports of a terrorist attack on Glastonbury, that has been aimed at the historic Tor. The news speculates that Glastonbury is under threat from extremist cells who hide behind the liberal and alternative local culture.

‘They’ll use it to bring in more surveillance,’ says Morgana. ‘It will be too difficult here. You must go back to Brightstol.’

‘Yes,’ says Guarfur. ‘Brightstol is full of Farfaphians waiting to be awakened.’

‘Yes,’ says Morgana. ‘Now you are awakened, you can help others.’

‘I see into the minds of those around me,’ says Guarfur. ‘I hear the trees and understand the songs of birds as they are not separate from me.’

‘Yes, but you still need to remain hidden from Hythe,’ says Morgana.

‘No need to explain,’ says Guarfur. ‘Our minds are one now. I see all our lives together, everything. Why the parts of me had to remain separate for centuries, why even all those years ago you felt Guinevere should not know the truth about Mordred. You were right, it was so we could be here in this moment together and defeat the
Ouroboron. It had to be this way because humanity had to be ready to choose their future. To be free of Hythe’s world.’

‘Yes,’ says Morgana. ‘Now you will help build the New Avalon in the City of Brightstol.’

‘From there we will lead the building of communities across the globe.’

‘Go,’ says Morgana. ‘Hythe is looking here for you.’

‘Here Guarfur,’ says Hannah. ‘Drink this cordial I made from the apples in the Abbey orchard.’

‘We will build a community,’ says Guarfur. ‘Using the best of technology in harmony with the ecology. We will build a place with holistic healing and a sustainable economics. We will show that it’s possible to live with understanding and equality, between not just humans but all other creatures and nature.’

The sheep baa’s in the corner of the room.
Chapter Forty-Five

News

The Brightstol Argonaut

January 10th, 2017

The government’s new INVENT strategy to counter extremism may be called into action, in the latest developments at the illegal New Avalon Camp - says councillor Anthony De Faux. As the commune numbers continue to grow behind Brightstol University, what are now being identified as ‘dangerous cells’ still refuse to leave the land they’ve occupied for several years. The groups charismatic leaders continue to recruit vulnerable students and more recently, several local Brightstol workers have joined the camp.

These self-styled ‘New Avalonians’ have become the subject of increased government concern, since it was confirmed the main agitators are part of a network of similar illegal communities all over the world.

‘We must stop them before they cause extreme damage to the wildlife,’ said local councillor Anthony De Faux outside the courtroom yesterday. After seeking a series of injunctions, De Faux has now suggested the government’s anti-terrorist INVENT strategy must be extended to the Avalon camp, to allow for a more robust response in what has recently become a stand-off situation. ‘Their idealism hides a terrifying lack of respect for the wider society,’ De Faux claims.

This latest move occurs after another group of over thirty undergraduates at the University of Brightstol left their accommodation to cross the road and live in the woods, within the confines of the New Avalon commune. The group contained 2
trainee environmental engineers, 3 electricians, 7 people from the agricultural department, 8 medics, four architects, two chemical engineers and 4 philosophers who cannot be named.

‘It’s even more worrying that the people leaving aren’t just arts and humanities students,’ said a close government source. ‘The direct targeting of people with highly practical skills is something we’re examining.’
Chapter Forty-Six

The sheep sips from a bowl of water at Guarfur’s feet, as the smell of couscous and chips float down from the main restaurant area around the corner. A thirty-metre long glass window affords comfortable surveillance of the grassy courtyard outside, peppered with stainless steel chairs, stools and tables. As young people bustle past the four-seater white plastic tables inside, chatting with their friends at lunchtime, one of the staff is looking over at the sheep in a concerned way as Guarfur shares his message of world transformation, with a group of undergraduates.

‘Our standard of living is better in New Avalon,’ says Guarfur. ‘We have free energy for your laptops and washing machines that cost nothing to run. Any waste they produce nurtures the Earth. We are without debt. Everyone who needs a home will be helped to build one.’

Professor Digby, a man with a small grey ponytail walks forward. His physique is healthy and muscular with glowing skin that signifies recent exercise, and possibly an expensive facial cream. Digby feels he was forced into the gym in his late thirties or early forties, to keep up with the corporate image conscious culture. But deep within Digby is a man who remembers being a hippy long ago. A man that still hears the whispered ideals of his youth, as he walks worriedly to sit with Guarfur and tells the undergraduates sitting with them that he has something important to discuss. They leave.

‘Waves of love, can you feel them Professor Digby?’ Guarfur says as the students move a few tables away.
‘You can’t talk like that Arthur, or whatever your name now is,’ says Digby. ‘Its bastards wall to wall around here. I’ve seen people die. You can’t go around saying what you think, you have to pretend to say what you think.’

Guarfur turns and smiles at Professor Digby and says, ‘The university is full of people who are out of alignment with galactic evolution.’

‘Right there, right there. You see that’s going to offend a lot of people and then they won’t like you and you won’t be allowed to stay. People are desperate around here, everything’s being cut. You’re only here because we couldn’t find anyone else.’

‘I was sent from another world to help you,’ Guarfur replies indignantly.

‘That’s good,’ says Professor Digby. ‘Very performative, but keep it focused on you. Don’t talk about us. That’s the kind of thing we need. And tone down the complaints about the hierarchy being insane. We’re trying to help the students develop into working members of society.’

‘Humans don’t have that long, Professor,’ says Guarfur. ‘Feel the love. There’s no need for violent thoughts anymore. We are all one, we are all connected. There is only love, and it is always the answer.’

‘You just sound like half a dozen other hysterical empaths around here, if they decided they could shout about what they wanted. And I don’t think any funding bodies will go for apocalyptic extraterrestrials,’ says Digby.

‘I am a light being from a more advanced civilization. You can’t understand that yet because you’ve been educated to be ignorant. But millennia of human pain, of misery caused by the effects of an alien species controlling you will soon be over.’
‘And the woo woo commune in the woods behind the campus needs to stop. I don’t understand how you’ve got away with it for so long?’

‘Love is protecting us Professor Digby, your belief in the power of the enemy is what enslaves you. They are few, we are many. Open your mind and allow the self beneath your human personality to emerge.’

‘Why doesn’t anyone arrest you?’ asks Digby.

‘Several police officers have joined us,’ replies Guarfur. ‘They found the love within. They went beyond the fear.’

‘The media is turning public opinion against you and the other communes around the world.’

‘Nothing can stop the thousands of us in woods and valleys across the Earth. Let go and help create a brighter future. We have an irrigation system, we have electricity, everything you need for a comfortable life and there are no bills. Each day more students leave their accommodation on campus to live with us full time.’

‘Look, the management are paranoid enough around here as it is. They’re already on the edge, worrying about keeping their jobs.’

‘In my home world, we live to help others who are suffering.’

‘On the positive side, I think this could be a short course module. Alien love perspectives as a new ecological activism perhaps. What we really need is someone who knows how to answer questions about religious cults and stuff like that. It might be getting popular again there are already a few mindfulness courses.’

‘Many of us are here Professor Digby,’ says Guarfur.
‘Baa,’ says the sheep.

‘Even as we speak Professor Digby, I’m activating parts of your subconscious buried deep beneath the overwork, the stress, the compromises, the verbal conditioning by the system. When this conversation is over you’ll go back to your office and you won’t remember what I’ve said. You won’t report me. You will calmly and without quarrel begin to follow my commands and together we will begin to educate the students in a way that is appropriate.’

‘Good, that’s the kind of thing we want,’ says Professor Digby. ‘I’ve been asking for this kind of angle for ages. It’s like Derren Brown, resisting media brainwashing, turning consumers into citizens. That’s what we do here. Just stop building things in the field. It’s not the 1960s.’

‘You want to change Professor I see that.’

‘I want a pension,’ says Digby.

‘There is only awareness Professor, consciousness expanding out through myriad dimensions. And breathe. Surrender to the great mother of the universe.’

‘You’ll have to talk normally sometimes, or you’ll need a moderator when you lecture. And I still think you need to lose the sheep. It was funny for a couple of days but now it’s a health and safety issue,’ says Digby.

‘The sheep should have equal rights Professor,’ says Guarfur.

‘Okay,’ replies the Professor. ‘It can in my view, just not here. Try the agricultural college.’

‘Why is life so stressful here Professor Digby? Is it because the students live in constant anxiety about debt, and even the staff that aren’t on zero-hour contracts look
like frightened primates. Is it the competition, or the feeling you’ve all been turned into providers and consumers within a corporate service industry sector? Maybe it’s because this entire system is corrupt. Become the hope for the future Professor Digby, join the thousands of us building the new world because the old world cannot change in time.’

‘Baa,’ says the sheep.

‘You need to clarify your research objectives,’ says Digby. ‘If you want this to be funded you need to make it clear for the panel. How is this going to help people get on the housing ladder? Second, what basic skills does it develop? Third, most people don’t want to leave normal society. And, you won’t be able to take the sheep with you anywhere on campus from now on, especially the loos, there have been complaints about the wool blocking the drainage.’

‘Think of history Professor Digby and how the way everyone sees the world suddenly changes. Soon we will all share a kinder, more creative and equal way of living. A new understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe will emerge.’

‘Get a grip, get out there and tell those people in the forest to start campaigning for the NHS.’

‘A new health service for all will be built, the system is collapsing. Nothing will change until people can live in a home, eat and go out with friends, free from debt slavery,’ says Guarfur.

‘Well, it’s got promise as I say,’ says Digby. ‘But you still need to develop the performance aspect. Have you thought of dressing as a tree?’

‘Do you believe in telepathy?’ Guarfur asks.
‘Again, it’s not easily fundable outside the English department. Even then, it sounds a bit Victorian. That’s the problem with telepathy really. I’d like to see some change around here. We need a bit of a shake-up. But if you want to save this planet you’ll have to communicate in a way the Earth inhabitants here find acceptable. Most of the staff here are convinced they are still human. You’ll have to pretend and fit in.’

‘I thank you for your cooperation,’ Guarfur says.

Professor Digby sighs, ‘I’m not saying it’s not got potential, I’m saying that there are requirements about the way you present the research. Either go for a full space suit and maybe a spaceship, a few tentacles or get on the cross and let us crucify you. And tell people the sheep has asked to be allowed to rest at home or something?’

‘We can no longer recognise your ways of seeing the world.’

‘Look, a lot of us know you really do think you’re an extraterrestrial. We know you’re not just pretending to do it for research.’

‘Yes, I am an extraterrestrial,’ Guarfur replies.

‘Well, some of us don’t think that should be held against you in terms of the research being approved.’

‘The world is moving to a much higher vibrational frequency than you can presently conceive,’ says Guarfur.

‘Now, that’s not the attitude. You can’t talk like you’re more advanced than the top brass here.’

‘I’m going to heal you with a mind transmission,’ says Guarfur, holding the palms of his hands out to face Digby.
'And I think you have boundary issues. It’s important you can show you understand the human perspective and can, as an extraterrestrial, deliver fundable research that raises our profile as an institution. Understand the importance of communicating to the academic human population, that’s a big part of being a successful researcher. And don’t create unmanageable anxiety, that’s what good research is about these days. The best way you can do that is by clearing your followers from the forest. Do you understand? I am not joking here.’

‘Thank you again for your cooperation Professor. You have now received the full love transmission beneath your conscious mind. You will soon be one with the Farfaphians. The sheep and I are leaving. Return to your office without any memory of this and know that all of us in the interdimensional realms love you, and we will allow you to continue receiving some of our telepathic communications.’
Chapter Forty-Seven

The Brightstol Argonaut - report

August 18th. 2018

Extremist elements within and beyond The University of Brightstol have again refused demands to leave what is now being called the Avalon Campus. After six years of illegally occupying the area of outstanding natural beauty, the commune has forced its apparently willing residents to work for no money. Officials estimate over 3000 people are now living there.

Counter terrorism units have been consulted since the government’s last cabinet meeting. A close source says that current intelligence suggests the commune may have an arsenal that includes chemical weapons, which could be deployed within 45 minutes to devastating effect. Geoffrey Johnson-Smith’s recent BBC documentary ‘Paradise or Poison,’ which will be shown next month, reports seeing fully fitted kitchens made with recycled material, behind the cash free restaurant. Johnson Smith claims to have filmed solar powered cars that are taken into town without the authorities realising. He was told all residents have laptops. A new university charging no fees has also been set up with many lectures and workshops on everything from meditation and physics, to handicrafts, music and home maintenance. All medical treatment is now being carried out by 3 doctors who have left their practices to live inside.

Wind turbines power the commune’s general energy needs and the architecture has been integrated into the surrounding landscape. Homes and community buildings are made from earth bags, reclaimed wood and some are dug into the hills themselves. The fully functioning irrigation system and underground water sources, help provide a covered heated swimming pool, with a sauna and Jacuzzi.
Johnson-Smith claims several large poly tunnels mean many varieties of food are produced, while others are foraged. He has been told by the cult leaders that the New Avalon inhabitants have been fully self-sufficient for over two years. An animal sanctuary houses rescued sheep, cows, chickens and full litters of cats. One estate agent viewing clips from Johnson-Smiths film, has suggested the facilities are better than many high-end properties.

After the recent application of INVENT anti-social measures, repeated informal and formal warnings from the police have again been ineffective. It is even believed four police officers have decided to live at the camp. Cult awareness groups fear they may have been seduced and radicalised. The camp leaders; identified as Guarfur Pendragon and ex-Professor Miriam Stone were not available for comment.

The Brightstol Avalon Camp continues to encourage many similar illegal settlements across Britain and the world. ‘We have now reached the point where military action may be inevitable,’ said a leading defence expert. ‘After the camps council refused to recognise legal interventions to stop further development, a democratic government has no choice but to protect the rights of those who choose to abide by the law.’

In the UK alone, 76 such communities in differing stages of development are under surveillance and ignoring orders to disperse. The government has repeated its calls for the camps to stop, stating that while they recognise the grievances of many in tough economic times, the direct disregard for local planning laws and wider social structures cannot be tolerated in a modern society.
Chapter Forty-Eight

Hythe stands on the roof of his London office next to a flickering holocopter, hidden by holographic reflectors that make it blend into the environment and become almost invisible. Grote arrives and gets into the pilot’s seat, as Jennifer Gaston stands there looking concerned.

‘Pass me the laptop Jennifer,’ says Hythe. ‘You’re the only person I can rely on to do anything right around here.’

Jennifer gives him his computer. ‘We medicated hundreds of the Glastonbury activists to extract this information. Many of them died because they kept resisting.’

‘Soon, most of humanity will be dead,’ replies Hythe. ‘I am sick of this species and the whole planet. I am going to do this myself.’

‘His exact location in Brightstol is there,’ says Jennifer. The Farfaphians have used every method to hide him and it seems his energy signature changed. It’s become incredibly powerful, but it was beyond the range of our scanning equipment. Arthur seems to have changed species.’

‘I am very aware of what Guarfur is,’ says Hythe. ‘I have been for a very long time. Why do you think we haven’t arrested them all yet? Guarfur is a twin essence, the only thing in the universe that can defeat me. I would have crushed these places earlier, but we couldn’t stop them developing. So, I tried to turn public opinion against them. But people don’t seem to mind. So, now I will do it all myself as usual. And when we crush them, we will crush everything. Nobody will weep for these places.’

‘Let’s go,’ says Grote. ‘Their lives will soon be over.’
Hythe suddenly feels his breath becoming erratic. He senses something and in his mind the image of the Seer standing over him with the sword appears again.

‘Have you detected anyone nearby?’ he asks Jennifer.

‘No, nothing. Everything you asked for is on the computer,’ replies Jennifer. ‘Guarfur is currently standing somewhere outside one of the Earth homes at the Brightstol camp.’

‘I want you to keep control of things here Jennifer,’ says Hythe getting into the holocopter. ‘Then once I send the signal, put out the TV reports on peace extremists led by Guarfur, showing the chemical weapons being used on local communities and military installations. Hythe’s looks at his screen seeing the multiple target sites he’s selected for chemical attacks around the Earth, that will be blamed on the new ecological communities.

‘I will wipe out anyone who isn’t serving the one,’ says Hythe.

‘You seem disturbed,’ says Jennifer. ‘Are you okay father.’

‘When I need a therapist, I’ll ask,’ says Hythe. ‘He looks again at the computer tablet, checking the latest information on the movements of the resistance as he puts on his seat belt.

At the New Avalon community, Professor Digby has arrived that morning with his bags after months of tortured self-reflection. He’s come at a difficult moment though, as Guarfur and thousands of other members of the community are preparing for Hythe’s arrival.

‘This will be the final day of the war,’ says Guarfur. ‘I see Hythe’s mind, nothing is hidden from me.’
'Where’s Morgana?’ asks Hannah.

‘She’s busy,’ says Guarfur. ‘She was going to London after her interview with the BBC a few hours ago,’ he pauses and turns to Digby. ‘So, you decided to join us Professor,’ says Guarfur.’

‘My pension and the emeritus academic status matters less than my self-respect.’

‘Hythe’s coming himself this time, things may get a little strange today,’ says Guarfur.

Seventy miles away and a few thousand feet up, Hythe looks across the London skyline from the holocopter. He settles back to view that days BBC news interview with the Brightstol camp inhabitants on his tablet. He watches intently as he sees Professor Miriam Stone smiling at the camera as she tells the BBC reporter that the revolution has begun,

‘Shelter and healthy food for all whether they work or not,’ Miriam Stone says standing on the edge of the Brightstol Avalon camp. ‘There’ll be no more debt slavery,’ yells Miriam with a few dozen Farfaphian sister goddesses, and a dozen Brightstol University lecturers and administrative staff behind her cheering. ‘The people are taking the matter into their own hands. Nobody will tolerate spending their lives in a financial prison anymore. The land belongs to everyone. I say two acres of land for every soul born who fulfils basic community duties. And the only duty is to care and do no harm.’

Grote is wearing his world war II goggles as he steers the holocopter. ‘Here Sir,’ he says passing Hythe one of the containers full of adrenaline.
‘Okay,’ says Hythe getting on the phone to General Truss. ‘Get the drones ready, get the news coverage ready, get the coffins ready. Although there won’t be much left after this.’

‘Yes, Mr Hythe,’ says Truss. ‘We await your command.’

As the green military holocopter speeds toward Brightstol, Hythe grabs a flask from behind Grote’s seat and grips it hard taking a swig, as his frontal lobes throb.

‘We will wipe every eco-activist off the face of the Earth, ‘says Hythe. ‘I want them all dead. Nothing will be left after today. It’s a virus removal operation.’

‘Very good Sir,’ says Grote.

‘We owe it to those who still have a chance of being downloaded into the singularity Grote, humans who have grown up and know how the economy and the universe actually work.’

‘They will soon be within firing range Sir,’ says Grote.

‘The Farfaphians aren’t helping anyone, that’s why humans look to us for help all the time. To deliver progress.’

Hythe savours another mouthful of adrenaline. ‘We’re going to stop these fools once and for all.’

As Grote is flying the holocopter over the countryside, Hythe’s frontal lobes throb more than ever as though they know danger is nearby. His mind is filled with images from lives where he killed Arthur. He keeps seeing the face of the woman with the sword, standing above him. The one he now realises stabbed his human body in Camelot over a thousand years before. As he watches the BBC interview with Miriam Stone, saying that people must fight for their lives, he recognises her face and goes
cold. ‘What an absolute piece of trash that one is,’ says Hythe. ‘I remember her coming to my meetings, she’s exactly the sort who should have been weeded out at the start.’

‘I did the interview earlier today,’ replies Morgana sitting behind them in the holocopter.

Hythe looks around in horror.

‘I’ve drained the crystal you were using to power this archaic flying machine,’ says Morgana. ‘You will never make it. We are going down together.’

‘I see,’ says Hythe.

The engine of the holocopter starts to make strange sounds.

‘Mummy’s home and she has gone beyond fear,’ says Morgana, bringing out a dagger shaped laser.

Hythe flies at her without warning and the holocopter jolts sideways as he hits her hard with his whole body. ‘No,’ says Morgana. She pushes Hythe back and then sees the Ouroboron emerging from his forehead. Morgana leaps forward and tries to grab the serpent before it expands, slashing with the laser dagger. She feels the white, oily, translucent skin of the Ouroboron, pulsing and growing beneath her hands, like flesh but finally nothing more than the creation of a machine. She stares into the Ouroboron’s eyes and pushes its head against the window, thrusts the laser dagger into its side and begins pulling it toward her.

Hythe’s human body falls back empty and unmoving as Grote continues to fly, turning when he can to strike Morgana. Reaching for a gun under his seat Grote takes aim as the Ouroboron twists and attempts to sink its teeth into Morgana’s arm. She keeps the dagger inside him, cutting in a circle to slice him in half. But Morgana cries
out as the Ouroboron begins to wrap itself around her, expanding more each moment. Her throat, arms and legs are slowly encircled, draining the life force from each limb. Her eyes bulge and she spits at Grote who’s still attempting to aim the gun at her. She resists with her very last breath but the body of Miriam Stone isn’t strong enough.

‘You’re dead,’ says Morgana out of Miriam Stone’s gasping body. Her cries of agony are mixed with cries of ecstasy from the Ouroboron, as the holocopter swerves and then goes into a downward spiral. Grote sees the Brightstol camp with Guarfur beneath them, as he tries to steady himself and fire the missiles made of intensely hot light.

‘Not on my watch,’ says Morgana, managing to sneak out a leg and kick Grote in the back several times. The holocopter dives further as the Ouroboron squeezes her tighter and she gasps once more. Grote recovers from her kicks which have pushed him onto the control panel and gets the camp again clearly in his sights.

‘I’m going to begin firing,’ says Grote. Centuries of serving Hythe are at stake for him. He must destroy the camp.

The squirming mass of Ouroboron around Morgana gurgles and grunts, as the camp’s scattered inhabitants look up to see the smoking, spiralling holocopter without its flickering holographic camouflage coming straight toward them. Inside they can see Grote’s long grey face pressed against the glass by a mound of white flesh. The expanding Ouroboron now fills almost the entire holocopter. The doors burst open and Hythe’s human body falls out.

The Ouroboron turns to see the body falling and then back to Morgana. She stares at the Ouroboron, still struggling in tormented agony. Face after face appears to her in its eyes, generations of humans and animals killed by Hythe. Some part of them
has been held there within him, after he’s fed on their life forces. Morgana cannot look anymore as she feels herself losing consciousness. She closes her eyes and tries to leave the body. But the Ouroboron pulls her back. She calls out ‘Yes,’ then closes her eyes not knowing if she is dead or alive.

The camps inhabitants run for cover as Grote fires and the holocopter rushes toward them. A few missiles hit the trees nearby and some of the earth homes built into the small mounds on the edge of camp. The people spray out farther as the light bombs go off in all directions, hitting buildings in the neighbouring University of Brightstol.

When Morgana opens her eyes again Grote and the holocopter are gone, there’s just a steaming wreck a few hundred metres away. She’s on the ground, on the firm, grassy earth outside the damaged camp as Guarfur, Professor Digby and the others call to her. Morgana opens her mouth to speak but finds she cannot.

‘We’re all one,’ says a voice in Morgana’s head.

‘Morgana looks down at her hands, they’re still human. She’s still in the body of Miriam Stone. But she knows she no longer controls that body.
Chapter Forty-Nine

‘Are you okay Morgana,’ says Professor Digby running toward her.

‘We need to check the holocopter for Hythe?’ the Ouroboron replies. ‘I think I killed the Ouroboron, I chopped it in half.’

Inside Morgana wants to scream out to Digby, she wants to tell him she’s not the one speaking and is being used like a ventriloquist dummy.

‘Just like you used Miriam Stone, Guinevere and Arthur,’ says the voice in her head.

‘Most of the camp has survived,’ says Digby.

‘Yes,’ says the Ouroboron making itself comfortable inside Morgana’s frontal lobes. ‘But let’s get to safety, we’re exposed out here and they may bomb again.’

‘Your forehead looks all puffed,’ says Digby.

‘I knocked it in the fall but I’m okay,’ says the Ouroboron.

Inside the body, Morgana is still struggling to speak. But all she can do is watch and listen as the Ouroboron says, ‘Let’s go back to the woods out of sight.’

Guarfur walks toward them and smiles at the Ouroboron. Inside Morgana is worried that he hasn’t recognised she’s not in control of the body.

They walk back toward the camp, seeing the damage from the bombing.

‘Where’s the safest place, do you think?’ asks Guarfur.
‘Below ground,’ says the Ouroboron using Morgana’s knowledge of the camp. ‘We can hide in those old tunnels we found, like the one’s beneath the Tor, more bombers are coming.’

Guarfur smiles. ‘You are Morgana, so you must know what’s best for us,’ he says. ‘Let’s grab a few biscuits and some water as provisions and call the other camp dwellers.’

‘We are taking refuge in the old flint tunnels,’ says the Ouroboron. ‘Those who wish can follow us and we’ll stay there until nightfall, when we can move more easily.’

Hundreds of the new Avalon revolutionaries respect the advice of Morgana. They follow the Ouroboron to pull back a big sandstone slab three metres wide. The Ouroboron looks down some steps into the ancient tunnels, used millennia before. They were discovered while digging beneath a small hill to create an Earth home. The hill had turned out to be a burial chamber, with shafts going further down and spreading out into a network beneath the fields. Guarfur lets the Ouroboron lead them down the stairs, sensing it must end its own story. Guarfur must simply allow what will happen, like Wu Wei had told him. Just let the universe flow.

The Ouroboron leads dozens of the Brightstol commune underground. Their battery-operated torches flicker against the flint walls as they walk, half-crouching, along the first section of the tunnel. There the cave opens-up and they peer down multiple passageways that lead off in various direction. The Ouroboron, still wearing the body of Miriam Stone, chooses one tunnel and they follow him. Soon on the walls, they see carvings and line drawings of pregnant women, babies being born and spirits leaving dying bodies.
‘Where the priestesses worked in ancient times,’ says Guarfur. ‘These places were used for healing, dying and giving birth.’

‘A goddess temple,’ says Hannah.

‘It’s still not safe here I feel,’ says the Ouroboron. ‘Let’s go as deep as we can.’

‘But which way?’ says Guarfur playfully. ‘I sense the enemy must be close.’

‘This way,’ says the Ouroboron.

‘Are you sure it’s safer down here?’ asks Professor Digby. ‘The air is affecting my lungs.’

‘Me too,’ says Hannah. ‘Just a little further then we must rest.’

They keep walking and crawling in the flickering light, as falling droplets of water punctuate the sound of their breath and trudging feet. Soon it feels like they’re in another world, far away from the disturbances on the surface. The air seems older, almost untouched as they go deeper and deeper into the tunnel. After forty minutes, they are a mile inside and Professor Digby coughs.

‘I’m sitting down,’ he says.

‘We need to rest Morgana,’ says Guarfur. ‘Let’s see what the mothership has to say, I am sure they’ll have a lot of information.’

‘Yes,’ says the Ouroboron. ‘I am sure they will. Okay, let’s stop here.’

As they all sit down a few people open their packets of biscuits, some swig from thermos flasks.

‘Baa,’ says the sheep, who’s pushed her way past hundreds of activists to the front.
‘I’ll go and see if I can find another exit, so we’ve got options later,’ says the Ouroboron.

‘That could take ages,’ says Guarfur.

‘Well, I’ll leave marks along the wall,’ says the Ouroboron picking up a piece of flint.

‘Okay,’ says Guarfur.

As the Ouroboron disappears into the next tunnel, Guarfur closes his eyes and senses the Ouroboron is preparing to attack.

‘Leave, now,’ he says to the people behind him in the tunnel. ‘You have to go back now.’

As Guarfur’s human eyes open back in the tunnel, a slithering sound is audible in the distance. Guarfur sees a shadow on the tunnel wall, moving slowly forward. There’s a soft hiss as the shadow gets larger and edges around the corner. Most of the others have started moving away down the tunnel, as the Ouroboron appears without the body of Miriam Stone. Now two metres in diameter and twenty long, it turns the corner and speeds toward Guarfur. The Ouroboron’s mouth fills the tunnel, with its sharp white jagged teeth like triangular razors.

‘Run,’ says Guarfur to Hannah and Professor Digby who’ve waited with him. ‘Run for your lives.’

The Ouroboron moves faster. Guarfur, Digby and Hannah stand still as they hear screams from people further down the tunnel in the flickering light. The Ouroboron’s jaws open and close, again and again as Digby throws his biscuits at it. Guarfur smells its stinking breath as it moves toward him.
As the Ouroboron’s bloody mouth opens, Guarfur sees strands of hanging flesh in its teeth with Professor Digby suddenly gone.

‘Baa,’ says the sheep and turns to begin running.

Guarfur stabs at the serpent worm with a knife, slashing its sides and head. He grabs onto it and begins climbing onto its back, repeatedly stabbing the knife in. The Ouroboron twists and turns, eventually throwing him off and moving towards him as he lies on the floor.

‘Go,’ says Guarfur to Hannah. ‘I will deal with this on my own.’

Guarfur punches the Ouroboron as it opens its mouth, but Hannah doesn’t leave and leaps on its back, tearing into its luminous flesh with a larger carving knife. Refusing to let go she holds onto the knife for support as the Ouroboron rolls from side to side.

‘Let’s go,’ says Guarfur seeing the Ouroboron beginning to weaken as it writhes uncontrollably.’ He looks at the Ouroboron spitting and hissing but suddenly weaker. And behind it he sees for the first time the disembodied Professor Digby.

‘Are you in there, Morgana?’ Guarfur asks, staring into the Ouroboron’s lifeless eyes.

Hannah lets go of the knife and stumbles away from the Ouroboron, pulling Guarfur back with her. ‘We can’t help Morgana now, we have to get to the surface.’

Guarfur and Hannah turn and begin to run back the way they came. Half crouching, they move through the tunnels with the hissing of the Ouroboron echoing behind them, then slowly disappearing.

‘You knew it was the Ouroboron,’ says Hannah.
'It has to destroy itself,' says Guarfur. ‘I haven’t seen how it happens yet. Keep moving. The creatures organic matter will regenerate.’

After half an hour, they crawl their way back up the steps. ‘Get any weapons you can,’ says Guarfur. ‘Knives, rocks, it will be coming soon.’ Those that can, get whatever may be of use. Some of the Avalon dwellers begin to make a fire and light torches, planning to fill the tunnel with flames.

‘We’ll burn it out, yes,’ says Hannah.

Ten people stand around the steps holding their flaming sticks, listening for the first rumbles of Ouroboron as the rest of the wounded slowly climb up the stairs. Then they hear someone or something.

‘It’s me, Morgana,’ says the voice.

Guarfur moves forward to the edge of the stone steps, nodding to the others. They all stand with torches raised, ready to throw them down and then pull the sandstone rock back over.

‘You’re the Ouroboron,’ says Guarfur.

‘No, it left my body and I got away, it’s still in their regenerating,’ says the voice.

‘I will not interfere with your wishes,’ says Guarfur. ‘But if you are Morgana leave the body and return to the mothership.’

‘I’m too weak. I can’t focus enough to leave the body. I need medical treatment. My energy body will be damaged for centuries if you kill me now.’

Guarfur stops and looks at Hannah.
‘You’re not serious?’ says Hannah.

‘I must allow the Ouroboron’s story to end without our interference,’ asks Guarfur. ‘It cannot die by our hand.’

‘I’m about to lose consciousness,’ says the voice in the tunnel.

‘Take a few steps up, let us see you,’ says Guarfur.

Those gathered including the sheep, watch as the owner of the voice takes a couple of steps up toward them. Guarfur looks down and sees the body of Miriam Stone.

‘Come up slowly, step by step,’ says Guarfur.

‘Okay,’ says the Ouroboron, slowly taking one step up, then another. ‘Can you see me enough now? I am only getting bright lights.’

Guarfur looks down and sees the body. The forehead is covered in blood.

‘I’m going to pass out,’ says the Ouroboron, as it slumps onto the steps.

Guarfur looks around the assembled group.

‘Burn her,’ says Hannah. ‘Then get it out of here.’

‘Burn her,’ say a few of the people holding the torches.

No says Guarfur, we must not interfere. He can still sense Morgana the Seer is somewhere inside.

‘Burn who,’ says a woman walking across the camp.

Guarfur turns around and tells the others to keep watching the body.
‘Oh, it’s you,’ says the woman walking confidently toward Guarfur. ‘Only your hair has changed, it’s gone all long, brown and straggly. Did you have implants done?’

‘Jennifer,’ says Guarfur. ‘Oh yes, it has to be you.’

‘Remember that hippy camp late 1990s, we moved to Brightstol together. Haven’t you been busy,’ she says looking around at the camp.

‘Your father,’ says Guarfur.

‘Yes, where’s my father?’ asks Jennifer sternly. Her blonde hair is pulled tightly back and she’s wearing black leggings with a matching roll neck sweater, hiking boots and body warmer ‘The last time I spoke to him he was getting into an invisible helicopter. I couldn’t help but notice a smouldering wreck nearby, anybody know anything about that?’

‘He’s not a human,’ says Guarfur.

‘A little cold, distant at times,’ says Jennifer. ‘But have you seen him recently?’

‘We’re going to burn him,’ says one of the torch holders pointing toward the tunnel.

‘Well,’ says Jennifer. ‘I thought that sort of thing had been banned across the country for some time.’

‘Whatever lived inside that human body, wasn’t your father.’

‘Why are you all looking down that hole?’ says Jennifer.

‘He’s down there,’ says Hannah.

‘Daddy,’ cries Jennifer, rushing to the tunnel entrance. She looks down, ‘That’s not my father it’s that bonkers old Professor Miriam Stone.’
‘That’s only the body, it’s what lives inside it,’ says Guarfur.

‘You’ve got worse since I knew you,’ says Jennifer. ‘Get a life. Come on, let’s haul her out. This is getting too medieval.’ Jennifer pushes past the torch holders. ‘You’d burn some old Professor, it’s not exactly a progressive spiritual culture in these parts, is it?’

Jennifer pulls the body up the stairs and helps what looks to her like Miriam Stone, to sit on the grass. The torch holders circle her as Guarfur moves forward and examines the creature before them.

‘It’s in there,’ says Guarfur.

‘You people are unbelievable,’ says Jennifer, kneeling and looking at the lumps on the head of Miriam Stone’s body. ‘Are you okay, can you hear me?’ says Jennifer. ‘Have you seen my father?’

A small smile suddenly animates the face of Miriam Stone.

‘Jennifer,’ says the Ouroboron.

‘It’s Hythe’ says Hannah. ‘He knows who Jennifer is.’

‘We met at a party, at your father’s,’ says the Ouroboron.

‘Have you seen him recently?’ asks Jennifer.

The Ouroboron smiles and looks around at the gathered crowd, holding their torches.

‘I can’t remember,’ says the Ouroboron.

‘Is that true?’ asks Jennifer.
‘I can’t remember,’ says the Ouroboron looking around nervously. Now inside the same body as Morgana the Seer, he constantly sees images of her killing him long ago in cave the beneath Glastonbury Tor.

‘I can’t be sure,’ the Ouroboron says to Jennifer, hoping she will somehow recognise him behind the eyes of Miriam Stone.

‘Well you’d remember if you’d seen my father,’ says Jennifer hoping the mad old Professor will come to her senses.

Inside Miriam’s body the wounded Ouroboron and Morgana begin to fight as they both try to speak. Memories of the night when she stabbed Mordred fill both their minds. Morgana sees herself stabbing Mordred again and again and the sword turning into the Ouroboron. Morgana finally screams so loud; her voice comes out of Miriam Stone’s mouth.

‘I killed your father yes.’


‘It’s not what you think,’ says the Ouroboron, regaining control of the body’s vocal chords. ‘Jennifer, things are complicated just now trust me.’ The Ouroboron looks deeply into Jennifer’s eyes.’

‘What do you mean complicated?’ asks Jennifer reaching into her coat pocket.

‘I can’t say anymore,’ says the Ouroboron. ‘Could you take me somewhere quieter, away from this crowd and I’ll explain my angel.’

‘Why are you staring at me like that? Who the hell do you think you are?’

‘I can’t say,’ says the Ouroboron attempting to wink.
‘Bloody communist, I’m not an idiot,’ says Jennifer. ‘I’m not having it.’ She holds up the gun she’s just taken from her coat.

Inside the Ouroboron, Morgana fights to control the human body. As Jennifer points the gun at what she thinks is Miriam Stone, the nasty old eco-activist academic who’s just admitted to killing her father, she sees a small opening appear in her forehead.

‘What the hell is that,’ says Jennifer as the Ouroboron’s thumb sized, damaged head appears out of the forehead. She gazes in horror.

‘Stop,’ says Jennifer, feeling ridiculous pointing the gun at a worm.

Then she sees the worm has eyes that seem somehow familiar. They are getting larger and fixedly staring at her, while slowly moving out of the forehead. Jennifer feels like she can’t move and is losing all power, as her finger begins to relax on the trigger.

‘Father,’ says Jennifer.

Miriam Stone’s body suddenly sits bolt upright, puts its hands around Jennifer’s trigger finger and forces her to fire.

‘Jennifer,’ cries the Ouroboron. ‘You’re the only one I trust.’

A bullet goes into the head of the already wounded Ouroboron. As Miriam Stone’s body falls back lifeless, the Ouroboron’s head expands and says ‘Jennifer,’ then falls to the floor. She shakes with fear. ‘Maniacs,’ says Jennifer looking up and shooting at anyone around her. ‘What have you done to my father?’ Jennifer goes to reload. The blood pours from Miriam Stone’s body as Jennifer reloads and keeps shooting at her, the Ouroboron and the activists. ‘You’re all going to die.’
The builders of the new Avalon community run this way and that, taking cover. The dead human body is left there alone. A few brown oak leaves blow over the bloodied head and stick. The Ouroboron lies there next to it, there is no movement.

‘Where’s my father? Where is he? If there’s one thing I hate,’ says Jennifer reloading. ‘Its barbarism.’ Jennifer Gaston fires as she runs across the camp, but however much she shoots at anyone and everything, she can’t stop seeing her father’s eyes staring out from the Ouroboron.
Chapter Fifty

A new world has begun. Each day the Earth will become more beautiful as technology is used in accordance with principles of natural law, serving the good of all creatures. Monetary debts have been dissolved as the Galactic community openly land without widespread panic and share their advanced technology.

Across the world Farfaphians, Andromedan’s, Pleiadian’s and humans are beginning to give therapeutic rehabilitation to those who have served Hythe and can’t accept the world has changed. Those near the top of Hythe’s power structure are being given the most intensive compulsory inner healing courses.

Some of Hythe’s followers are even still claiming that he won. There are rumours he completed his plans to download the richest humans and then destroy the Earth. These agitators say everyone still on Earth is just a ghost, who doesn’t know they’ve died. Guarfur calls them sad clowns. Guarfur is amazed at how the reality these people want to believe, seems to create an almost entirely different world for them. Those who can’t accept the new peaceful world need deep work and after weeks, months or years in meditation boot camps where they’ll also receive ecotherapy, clown drama workshops and animal kindness vegan counselling, Guarfur is sure they will learn to be more caring. Then they’ll be allowed back into the cosmic community on Earth.

Guarfur’s mother, Jill, has come to help with the preliminary retraining of many of the royal family, senior bankers and politicians before they are sent to the main love and empathy camps in the hills. It is her job to assess the level of help each of them will require.
‘Right,’ says Jill. ‘Hands up who thinks they are superior to everyone else and were born to rule?’

Nobody puts a hand up and most of their faces don’t betray any emotion.

‘And,’ says Jill. ‘Who thinks you can own thousands of acres of land and houses for free and make other people work all day to pay for somewhere to live?’

Many of the bankers struggle to join in at first. Jill gets out her puppets as her daughters Lisa and Sarah arrive to help. They have also become clowns.

‘I’m a naughty king puppet,’ says the king puppet. ‘And I like to tell people what to do and say I am important.’

‘Where’s your money then?’ says the monkey puppet.

‘I haven’t got any now,’ says the king puppet. ‘Economic and social hierarchies based on violence have been abolished.’

Jill makes crying noises as the king lowers his head sadly.

‘Never mind,’ says Jill to the king. ‘You can stop being a naughty person now and play like everyone else. Let’s see if you can go with the others and help dig that hole for the new loos.’

Guarfur has decided to leave Earth when the first transitions to the galactic community are complete. There are other worlds that need help. The Seer has been unwell since fighting Hythe but she’s suggested a planet that’s just like the old Earth in every respect except no Ouroboron or extraterrestrial farmers have ever visited. Despite this fact, she says humans act as if they were there anyway.
As Guarfur sees the bankers, aristocrats and politicians learning to share with others, practising giving their crowns and expensive cars away, he laughs. Their lies won’t work anymore. Jill tells them off with the monkey puppet, when they pull the wrong faces and makes them use all the different puppets to express their inner emotions. The bankers practise saying the first thing they think and become quite anarchic, then start crying with each other. They laugh at their own fears of not being loved, fears that had driven them to obey Hythe.

Today Guarfur is officiating at a wedding between the sheep and someone she met since animals were given equal rights. They’re getting married in the commune surrounded by sheep and cows. Thousands of years of suffering have ended just as was prophesised. The humans are also there in a large crowd with people representing over seventy different beliefs, faiths, traditions and approaches to life. There are Celtic frock wearers, Druids, Sufi’s, Gnostics, Witches and the now self-righteous extraterrestrial conspiracy theorists, along with a few woolly haired Farfaphians.
The Doom of Clowns

A Novel and Critical Essay

Russell Heywood

The Critical Essay

Reflections on The Creative Practice

2017

University of Brighton
Contents

Volume Two

2. Introduction 259
Diagram 1. ‘Road Map’ of critical commentary. 266
2.1 Satirical Beginnings 267
2.2 Bakhtin’s Dialogic Challenge to Monolithic Narratives 275
2.3 Guinevere and Jill 299
2.4 The Political Voice 311
2.5 The Holistic Voice 321
2.6 Other Universes 333
2.7 Speculative auto-satire 347
2.9 Conclusion 355
3. Notes 362
3.1 Works Cited 364
Introduction

The Doom of Clowns is a satirical novel that critiques neoliberalism, exploring what it means to be human at a time of ecological and political crisis. Science fiction and mythic narratives are fused with realistic elements from the late 1960s onwards, to subversively explore cultural and political issues. This fictional approach has partly emerged from an engagement with autoethnography.

Carolyn Ellis defines autoethnography as ‘…research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political’ (The Ethnographic I xix). The Doom of Clowns as interdisciplinary arts-based practice, began in dialogue with an autoethnographic approach that often directly challenges neoliberal cultural hegemony (Grant, et al 5-6), with an embodied and realistic narrative form. The practice-based research moved quickly towards a far more fictional, otherworldly and often disembodied narrative. However, The Doom of Clowns has retained elements of an autoethnographic style that reflexively explores the context in which the research is produced and connects personal experience to social issues.

In developing a novel with highly unrealistic elements that are connected to embodied political and cultural critique the first question reflected upon is, can one use fiction to disrupt neoliberal discourse? The story’s extraterrestrials and ludic subversions of dominant beliefs and social practices are examined in the critical essay and located within a literary tradition of Mennippean satire, which often uses imaginative and fantastical elements. After exploring The Doom of Clowns’ initial satirical inspirations, the novel is also considered in relation to the genre politics of speculative and science fiction.
Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic method is reflected upon as the theoretical basis for the novel’s subversive approach (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 426). Dialogic theory is utilized in *The Doom of Clowns* to disrupt monolithic discourse and encourage the recognition of often apparently neutral neoliberal logic, beliefs and practices (Daza 601-619). The destabilization of the authorial role and the reflexive critique of the contexts in which the novel is produced, are also examined as part of the self-reflexive dialogic strategy.

The second research question reflected upon in the critical essay is, what does it mean to be human? The ambiguities of human existence, a potential transhuman future, religious beliefs, trauma, fear, doubt, loss, cognitive dissonance and human relationships with the environment, animals and each other are explored. The critical essay reflects upon the novel’s use of ambiguity, irony and a holistic voice in presenting different worldviews and conceptions of the self.

The third question used to reflect upon the novel is, how does one use fiction to connect personal experience to wider cultural and political issues? Jill’s character was partly drawn from my experience of having lived with a mother who worked as a clown and puppeteer. The critical essay examines how her ventriloquism and clowning are presented in the novel and used to develop the dialogic method.

In connecting a personal voice with wider cultural issues, I also examine the holistic voice in the novel. The social contexts of alternative Glastonbury, the Himalayas and a wider holistic movement in which I have lived for over twenty years are considered in the critical essay. The theoretical research is connected to the novel’s development of a critically reflexive, political and holistic voice.
I would define holistic here as a worldview or paradigm that supports an empathic, compassionate, interconnected sense of self that recognises the human as part of an ecosystem and finds fulfilment through living in community. The novel’s holistic voice also engages with perspectives related to the cultural suppression of the maternal and feminine, that will be discussed in the critical essay (Luce Irigaray, *Teaching* 219-230).

The novel begins with Arthur the traumatised extraterrestrial about to descend into a human body. His life in the 1970s and 1980s is observed with a growing sense of cognitive dissonance, as political critique is interwoven with Arthurian myth and extraterrestrial narratives. The story maintains the connection with an autoethnographic approach, by linking heavily fictionalised but more realistic autobiographical sequences with cultural and social events, such as government battles with the Trade Unions.

Later, Arthur joins the underground resistance and escapes to the Himalayas. The protagonist’s revolutionary and holistic visions are satirised at various points, for example when the transformed Guarfur goes back to the University of Brightstol to build the commune. The protagonist/author’s revolutionary holistic discourse is put in dialogue with Professor Digby’s advice on funding possibilities, developing the novel as a self-satire that uses a playful sense of humour to explore the context in which the research is produced.

Chapter One of the critical essay considers the initial inspirations for *The Doom of Clowns*, examining my early experiences of alternative Glastonbury and scientific debates between Richard Dawkins and Rupert Sheldrake in the context of neoliberalism. I connect the novel to Mennippean satire through Bakhtin’s
commentaries on the tradition as a way of subverting dominant discourse, noting the novel’s use of fantastic elements and an engagement with fundamental questions about what it means to be human as typical of the genre. The role of the fantastic is further developed in Chapter Six, referencing Tzvetan Todorov’s theoretical study *The Fantastic*.

Chapter Two examines Bakhtin’s dialogic method and its impact on the narrative. The transgressive poetic logic of Julia Kristeva and a double-voiced, dialogic approach are related to Chapter Twelve in the novel, in which Arthur’s mother gives him a set of puppets. The questions of whether it is possible to use fiction to subvert neoliberal discourse and the novel’s method for connecting personal experience to wider cultural issues are examined, with the introduction of the puppets as part of the humorously reflexive method. The author is then further considered as part of the satirical dialogic process of disruption, with a discussion of Roland Barthes’ theory of authorship in “The Death of the Author” (148). The novel’s subversion of the King Arthur myth is examined as part of the novel’s self-satirising of the author’s epic, social revolutionary intentions. The clown’s destabilising role is them considered in the context of what Susan Watkins has called a ‘maternal imaginary’ (Watkins, 125), that supports plural, hybrid narratives in the context of ‘the apocalyptic future(s) that face us’ (135).

*The Doom of Clowns*’ use of ambiguity is then examined as a way of accommodating multiple perspectives, which include secular beliefs, conspiracy theories and supernatural worldviews. Here, the research question of what it means to be human is considered. The novel’s engagement with the belief that other worldly beings are interacting with human society is explored in the context of Cold War politics, folk religion and secular anxiety in the 21st century.
The novel’s dialogue between a distanced ironic authorial voice and the maternal clown is then explored, as part of the self-satirising approach to self-storying. I examine the novel’s dialogues in relation to different forms of irony and what Alan Wilde calls the anironic complement which creates the space in which the irony occurs (Wilde 28-33). The novel’s development as a reflexive critique that retains a sense of humour about its utopian ambitions is then further discussed, considering the methods used in challenging the satirised ‘posed’ author (or as Wayne C. Booth calls it the ‘implied author’), distanced narration (Booth, 70-71). The chapter concludes with a reflection on the effectiveness of the novel’s dialogic challenge to monolithic narratives, when using self-reflexivity to create a more complex critique.

In Chapter Three Guinevere’s voice is reflected upon as a method for restoring a more interior, ‘middle-passive’ voice to Arthur’s human awareness. Luce Irigaray’s critique of Western culture as too exteriorised and trapped in active/passive binary opposites is shown at work in the novel through Guinevere. The novel’s engagement with ideas of hegemonic culture silencing voices is connected to the use of laughter and feminist subversive strategies (Kristeva Desire in Language 182; Cixous The Laugh of the Medusa, 888) for disrupting dominant discourse.

In Chapter Four the political voice is considered, referring to David Harvey’s view of neoliberalism as a class project. The effects of this project on Arthur are critically explored. The social context he is born into and the development of his story are related to historical events represented in the novel. Discourses from the Exopolitics community and Brigitte are connected to Daniel Potter’s essay “Debating the Death of Deviance, Transgressing Extremes in Conspiracy Narratives” (Potter, 127-147). Considering Potter’s conception of a carnival of extreme deviance, I relate this to the suppression of marginalised views by what Tariq Ali calls an ‘extreme centre’ (Ali, 1-
3), that has dominated the political landscape since the 1970s. Biopower, described by Foucault (“The Birth of Biopolitics,” 16), is also examined as a concept operating in the novel through the antagonist Hythe’s discourse. The maternal clown role and the author’s voice are then returned to as part of the novel’s political strategy, including the observation that the author, overwhelmed by early clown humour, became able to critique the context of the novel’s production at the university in more diverse ways.

Chapter Five considers the holistic voice, examining Steve Taylor’s evidence for a literal fall of human consciousness into a more egoic state some millennia ago (The Fall 27-28). This is shown as an inspiration for the novel’s use of Glastonbury Tor in 2012 at the end of the Mayan calendar celebrations. Taylor’s position within a wider holistic discourse is then related to the author’s own cultural location. With this established, the neoliberal discourse is critiqued from a more theological perspective using John Gray’s challenge to scientific materialism, as a distorted form of Gnosticism (Gray, The Soul of the Marionette). This clarifies the novel’s satirical object, neoliberal scientism.

Cultural debates regarding the commercialisation of holistic culture and its relationship to neoliberalism are then discussed, to further develop the context of the novel’s reflexive voice. Arthur’s journey to the Himalayas is examined within the East/West dialogues of contemporary society, in which the exotic otherness of the Guru is no longer a fully functioning trope. The representation of New Age groups in the novel is also explored and the setting of alternative Glastonbury is described. Secular humanist and religious perspectives are shown being developed in the novel through the characters.
Debates around the definitions, underlying themes and boundaries of speculative and science fiction are explored in Chapter Six. The novel’s disruption of genre expectations and the focus on a sense of cognitive dissonance is considered in the context of contemporary literary debate. *The Doom of Clowns* is then examined as a dystopian critique of the neoliberalism and situated within the literary landscape.

Chapter Seven examines the speculative auto-satire approach used in the novel, focusing on the third research question of how fiction can connect personal experience to social issues. The approach is located within an already existing satirical, self-storying tradition and suggested as potentially useful within autoethnographic or therapeutic contexts because of its ability to open imaginative possibilities. The value of Speculative auto-satire as a way of exploring and re-storying the self, imagining alternatives to neoliberalism in a technologically fast changing culture is then further reflected upon, as a writing process that bridges literary fiction and autoethnographic research. It is also suggested as a way of developing an awareness of neoliberal rationality, that may have previously seemed neutral, in self-development or therapeutic contexts, as it provides a space in which critique can be imaginative, transgressive, politically engaged and amusing.

In conclusion, I reflect upon the research questions and the extent to which these were answered. I assess the ways in which the novel did potentially disrupt neoliberal discourse. The question of what it means to be human is then considered and my conclusions thus far are related to my own research journey. The methods used in connecting personal experience to social issues are then reflected upon, with the potential pitfalls of self-satirising in a university context considered. I finish by suggesting the potential usefulness of the Speculative auto-satire as an original template or approach for connecting personal experience to social issues.
Diagram 1. ‘Road Map’ of main theories and ideas in the critical commentary. Inserted p 266.
We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the
divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by
human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art. Very often in
our art, the art of words (From Ursula Le Guin’s Speech at The National
Book Awards. “Books aren’t just Commodities.”)

Critical Essay

1) Satirical beginnings

In this chapter, Bakhtin’s theoretical work on satire and Apuleius’ 2nd Century novel
Metamorphoses are connected to the novel’s initial development. I describe my early
explorations of Glastonbury in relation to the hegemonic scientific discourse and
alternative holistic contexts from which the story emerges. The Doom of Clowns is
identified as part of a tradition of Mennippean satire that is internally motivated by a
search for truth and uses ‘extraordinary situations’ to test a ‘philosophical idea’
(Bakhtin, Dostoevsky’s Poetics 114). The first research question of whether one can
use fiction to disrupt neoliberal discourse is therefore examined in relation to the
literary tradition of Mennippean satire. The novel’s use of fantastic elements and
psychological explorations of the human condition are also defined as typical of the
genre, suggesting the usefulness of this form of satire in exploring the second question
of what it means to be human. Considering the final research question of how to
connect personal issues with social issues, I connect the use of the Mennippean genre
to the novel’s engagement with autoethnography and recognise both as the basis for
the Speculative auto-satire approach that I discuss in the last chapter.
Satire’s presence in a novel may not always be obvious, because, as Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, it tends to absorb or penetrate other genres (*Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 119). The Mennippean form of satire focuses on attacking ideas more than individuals in its challenge to hierarchies of knowledge and power. The genre took its name from Menippus of Gadara (Third Century BC), but was preceded by many works taking the same form, including Bion of Borysthene’s narratives about the miraculous deeds of gods and heroes (112).

The *Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (Second Century AD), is seen by Bakhtin as providing the earliest full model of the Mennippean satire. Here the protagonist is transformed into an ass and after many adventures is finally redeemed by the Goddess Isis, becoming one of her priests. The first transformation in *The Doom of Clowns* is from a traumatised, alienated extraterrestrial into a human. Only after many picaresque trials does the protagonist regain a Farfaphian awareness and this happens with the goddess-like figures of Morgana, Brigitte and the Glastonbury priestesses in a cave beneath the Tor.

*The Doom of Clowns* was developed from a short story about Glastonbury that I had written in 2011, before beginning the theoretical research. I decided to return to this more outlandishly fictional story during the theoretical research and develop the mix of otherworldly and realistic elements, with a clearer focus on political critique and a satirical, fictional exploration of personal narratives that retained an element of an autoethnographic style.

*The Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (or Golden Ass, according to Augustine) and Bakhtin’s commentary upon this example of Mennippean satire, were the first texts I engaged with in developing the novel (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 111-129).
The initial short story was partly inspired by several visits to a healing centre in Glastonbury where I met a woman who had named herself after an Egyptian Goddess. She facilitated a healing session in which my Atlantean DNA was activated, after she informed me it had remained largely dormant since humanity had collectively fallen from a higher state of consciousness thousands of years earlier. The description in Chapter Forty-Two of Arthur going with the sheep to meet Morgana, the chief witch of Glastonbury, is developed from these experiences.

My first visit to the healing centre was in 2011, after seeing the biologist Richard Dawkins interview the owner for his television documentary The Enemies of Reason (2007). In the interview, the proprietor uses a slightly different name from the Egyptian Goddess title I was given. A previous guest at the centre warned me that occult magic was used, and people had been known to leave hurriedly in the middle of the night. I was also told by the local tourist centre that it was the one place they did not recommend. There seemed to be a possibility that Dawkins or his researchers had chosen a well-known target, which was already viewed with suspicion. After finding my own experiences at the centre both challenging and interesting I probably would not have recommended it to any but the most curious. There are however several people I met who saw the centre and its main healer as a great inspiration that had helped to improve their lives.

Dawkins’ interview may have had unwelcome consequences for the healing centre’s owner in the following few years, with further investigators such as myself knocking on her door. The healing centre closed for unrelated reasons in 2016. Dawkins’ ‘rational’ investigation pulled no punches in his voice over commentary, while

---

1 On visiting the centre in March 2017, I was told the previous owner had died in 2016.
remaining apparently naïve in the face-to-face interactions with the owner of the healing centre. His commentary implied the DNA activator was possibly a charlatan and ‘way out’ as she used hybridised New Age spiritual/scientific language. In dismissing her activities, Dawkins extended his argument to suggest she typified widespread New Age beliefs that were little different from the Ayurvedic concept of chakras or homeopathy. He stated that these alternative ‘unproven’ remedies implicitly cast doubt on ‘scientific medicine’ (see note ii). In a debate with Deepak Chopra, later in the documentary, Dawkins suggests a distinction between science and ‘mumbo jumbo’, when Chopra suggests the mechanistic limits of science\textsuperscript{ii}. Dawkins and his opponents reflect different sides in an ongoing cultural debate where conceptions of rationality and intuitive thinking often become polarised.

I outline these initial impulses for writing the satire because the fantastic world of the Farfaphians and the antagonist Hythe were partly developed as a response to Dawkins’ discourse. The novel became a dialogue between alternative holistic and dominant scientific discourses, that satirically exaggerated both hegemonic neoliberal rationality and a holistic worldview.

Rupert Sheldrake supports the emergence of a holistic scientific paradigm in his 2012 polemic, \textit{The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Enquiry}. While living in Glastonbury I attended a talk Sheldrake gave on his book and found his work to be a useful refutation of Dawkins’ discourse. Sheldrake claims many scientists are hesitant to express views or carry out research outside the dominant paradigm. Views that are not seen as scientific within the research community may affect the scientific researcher’s status and ability to receive funding. Sheldrake comments upon the dogmatic world of science and neoliberalism in an interview with \textit{The Guardian}:
A lot of our old certainties, not least neoliberal capitalism, have been turned on their head. The atheist revival movement of Dawkins and Hitchens and Dennett is for many people just too narrow and dogmatic. I think it is a uniquely open moment...’ (Sheldrake, ‘The Heretic at Odds with Scientific Dogma’).

Sheldrake’s discourse is directly introduced into the novel in Chapter Forty, when Arthur wonders if the scientists’ observations about canine telepathy apply to sheep. The dominant mechanistic worldview, which sees sheep as commodities, dissolves to allow Arthur’s transition to a more holistic, Farfaphian reality. Arthur considers neoliberal government austerity policies, likening the sheep’s predicament to human economic oppression following the 2008 financial crash. As enchanted New Agers celebrate the end of the Mayan calendar and the shift to a more harmonious world, Arthur discovers empathy and compassion for the sheep, who also appears to be aware of its oppressive situation and fate. Going beyond the sense of separation contained within a capitalist, mechanized worldview, he is soon transformed into Guarfur, becoming more able to challenge the dominant ideology. Max Weber’s theories on the disenchantment of society (Science as Vocation) and the economic rationalization of protestant ethics (The Protestant ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings), were also an inspiration here. Arthur returns with the sheep to the room overlooking Glastonbury’s ruined Catholic abbey. Soon after he is visiting Morgana the chief witch of Glastonbury, entering an enchanted or supernatural world where his previous secular human identity falls way.

Elements of the science fiction and fantasy genres are used in the novel’s serio-comic explorations of a shared field of consciousness, telepathy, visionary experiences, madness and split personality. This is typical of Mennippean satire according to Bakhtin (Dostoevsky’s Poetics 116-117). Arthur and the Farfaphian’s are used to
suggest altered states of perception and to develop the novel’s philosophical challenge to dominant neoliberal and secular perspectives. This is also typical of the genre, Bakhtin suggests that:

…the most important characteristic of Mennipea as a genre is the fact that its bold and unrestrained use of the fantastic and adventure is internally motivated, justified by and devoted to a purely ideational and philosophical end: the creation of extraordinary situations for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea…We emphasize that the fantastic here serves not for the positive embodiment of truth, but as a mode for searching after truth, provoking it and, most important, testing it. (Dostoevsky’s Poetics 114)

The novel’s satirical approach was partly developed to explore the Sheldrake/Dawkins culture clash and a neoliberal hegemony. This went through many stages, as I was conscious of the dangers of satire directed at people in communities like alternative ‘spiritual’ Glastonbury and many others that I had lived and participated in. Some elements of ‘alternative spirituality’ are easy to ridicule from a mainstream secular perspective. The fantastic elements, ambiguity and irony that became possible with Mennippean satire, allowed the novel to explore these ‘alternative’ perspectives and put them in dialogue in ways that disrupted and challenged a neoliberal, secular worldview. The mythic and religious narratives that may be concealed in neoliberalism’s apparently neutral discourse, could then be humorously exposed in dialogue with alternative holistic views that focus on an immanent frame and more religious or enchanted perspectives, that believe in the supernatural and or a sense of the sacred.

Mennippean satire therefore seemed to answer the novel’s first research question of whether fiction could disrupt neoliberal discourse, for thousands of years it has been used in this way. The tradition Mennippean satire also partly answered the third
question of how this might be done. The Mennippean genre allows for extraordinary situations that do not aim to embody autobiographical truth but to satirically explore conceptions of the self, using fantastic elements. The genre as described by Bakhtin, could also therefore be said to allow for the second research question to be explored, namely, what it means to be human within neoliberal society.

The third research question of how one connects the personal to wider social issues, maintains an element of the autoethnographic approach that relates the ‘autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social’ (Ellis, *The Ethnographic I xix*). Using Mennippean satire as a model, the novel became more adept in mixing realistic, embodied sequences drawn from autobiographical material with extraterrestrial narratives. The second research question of what it means to be human includes reflections on social class and these often occur in a concrete political context, with references about Margaret Thatcher and the changing education system, mixed with the extraterrestrial observations of Guinevere. The extraterrestrials falling asleep shortly after birth, satirically explores a belief in the existence of a soul and to an extent trauma and alienation.

Bakhtin notes that it is characteristic of Mennippean satire to engage with ultimate questions about human existence and contemplate the world on the ‘broadest possible scale,’ emphasising the whole person with life in its entirety (*Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 115). Bakhtin also notes Mennippean satire is concerned with current and topical issues and it is the juxtaposition of exaggerated, ambiguous, fantastical science fiction with social drama and political events in *The Doom of Clowns*, that make it clearly part of this tradition. Arthur’s story is followed both personally and politically, satirically examining the contexts and inner worlds that he experiences.
The Doom of Clowns has evolved from a personal search, an exploration of my own truth(s) in relation to politics, neoliberal rationality and ‘spirituality.’ The literary tradition of Mennippean satire supports the autoethnographic element in the novel, which aims to develop a more effective holistic voice in a call for a more just and sustainable society. After reading Bakhtin’s commentary on Apuleius’ Metamorphoses, the satirical novel form immediately seemed the most effective way to critique neoliberalism, as it allowed for a more fully imaginative and playful approach to developing cultural and personal voices that subvert the epic narratives of scientific progress.

The Mennippean genre’s close connection to the dialogic method that challenges dominant narratives will be discussed in the next chapter. Here I have outlined the story’s beginnings and the initial theoretical research, to clarify the use of satire in challenging hegemonic culture and promoting alternative ways of living. The use of Mennippean satire encouraged an imaginative, humorous exploration of personal experience that could be connected to wider cultural and political issues, providing a way to explore the question of what it means to be human. Through the theoretical engagement with Mennippean satire, the speculative auto-satire approach that is discussed in Chapter Seven emerged.
2) Bakhtin’s Dialogism, Challenging Monolithic Narratives

The novel’s engagement with the principles of Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic method are examined in this chapter, in relation to the research question of whether fiction can disrupt neoliberal discourse. Bakhtin’s dialogic resistance to the reifying discourses of scientific method in the human sciences, is connected to the novel’s challenging of neoliberal rationality and warnings about where this might lead. (see Todorov, *The Dialogical Principle*14-28). Julia Kristeva’s poetic logic that resists monolithic narratives is also considered as part of the novel’s method of subverting neoliberal hegemony (*Kristeva, Desire in Language* 68-72).

The dialogic approach is examined from the context of my having lived with a mother who worked as a clown and used puppets in a satirical, dialogic context. This explores the third question of how my voice as a writer and the novel’s approach to connecting the personal and social were developed. Wilkie and Saxton’s location of the origins of comic performance in child parent interaction is considered (21). The exploration of personal voice and the novel’s challenge to neoliberalism is then connected to Susan Watkins’ idea of a ‘maternal imaginary’ (*Watkins, 125*) that resists a judgemental worldview to promote a more flexible, hybrid approach to imagining possible futures in an apocalyptic age (125).

Michael Foucault’s views on the author function are also considered in relation to developing a more critically reflexive voice that connects the personal to the political and cultural context of the novel’s production. The challenging of the author’s authority, using dialogic, self-reflexive satire, is further discussed in relation to Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” (148), considering how his theory was satirically engaged with in the novel, using Arthurian myth.
The use of ambiguity is then examined as a way of challenging neoliberal secularism by suggesting the presence of religious, mythic or enchanted worldviews within their supposedly scientific framework. This also engages with the question of what it means to be human, exploring perspectives including Simon Critchley’s views on the modern loss of religious belief in *The Faith of the Faithless*. The critical essay then reflects again on the third research question of how my personal experience in ‘spiritual’ and ‘alternative’ communities, is put in dialogue with wider social issues using ambiguity.

The humorous embracing of ambiguity is then developed in relation to extraterrestrial conspiracy theories and related to cultural and political critiques, including Adam Curtis’ 2016 BBC documentary *Hypernormalisation*, in which he suggests the CIA encouraged extraterrestrial conspiracy theories during the Reagan presidency. The ironic, reflexive critique of the author’s utopian ambitions are also considered, again following the third research question of how to connect personal experience with cultural issues, in an effective critique of neoliberalism by utilizing a sense of humour.

Karen Barad’s diffractive approach that resists a reflexive, representational tradition is also considered, as a further way of disrupting monolithic narratives (Barad, 86-94). Alan Wilde’s perspectives on irony and their anironic complements in *Horizons of Assent* are then examined in relation to the novel’s further development of a more reflexive, holistic voice that satirises its own utopian leanings to disrupt monolithic narratives.

Dialogism recognises the constant interaction between hegemonic and more alternative discourses, utterances and texts. The base condition of language in which the dialogic occurs is one of heteroglossia, of different languages, in which ‘the primacy of context over text’ governs meaning (*The Dialogic Imagination* 428). Bakhtin gives a brief definition of this:
Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole – there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 426).

Bakhtin’s approach is based on ‘understanding’ rather than objective knowledge, insisting that the reifying generalisations of an abstracted scientific approach can never be authoritative in the humanities (Todorov, *The Dialogical Principle*, 22-24). *The Doom of Clowns*’ satirising of the way that capitalist market logic reifies humans and the environment was directly developed from my reading of this underlying principle of Bakhtin’s dialogic method. Stephanie Daza’s conception of ‘Neoliberal Scientism’s’ use of apparently neutral scientific language to justify neoliberal market logic, was important in isolating the type of rationality and logic the novel was satirising (601-619).

Also important was Luigi Pellizzioni and Marja Ylönen’s observation in *Neoliberalism and Technoscience* that science is used to legitimise a neoliberal (neorational) bias, depoliticising the issues at stake and excluding other forms of ‘non-scientific (or non-ethical) arguments…’ (Pellizzioni, 55). *The Doom of Clowns* utilises the dialogic principle with an awareness that as Pellizzioni and Ylönen suggest, ‘dialogue’ is a ‘keyword of neoliberal governmentality’ (61), whose deliberative processes are framed in ‘dominant stakeholder language’ (62). The reflexive satire’s engagement with the context of writing the novel is, therefore, useful as a way of exploring and transgressing those limits.

Julia Kristeva proposes a numerical formulation of the poetic logic that underlies dialogic methodology, suggesting scientific logic beginning with Aristotle and theological dogma is based on a binary 0-1 sequence of ‘true-false, nothingness -
 notation,’ where 1 is the prohibition of god, the law or definition’ (Desire in Language 70-71). Kristeva proposes the 0-1 sequence can never represent poetic language without distortion. The novel satirises this binary 0-1 tyranny with Hythe’s desire to digitalise all human activity within a technological singularity when the Feel Good manual tells readers to serve ‘The One,’ in Chapter Twenty-Four. Kristeva’s poetic logic follows a 0-2 sequence, where the 1 or prohibition is always transgressed with a double-voiced ambivalence that subverts the dominant narrative. This is the logic used in the sequence when Jill teaches Arthur to use the puppets in Chapter Twelve.

Bakhtin defines the dialogic novel as double-voiced ‘discourse in them has a twofold direction – it is directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward another’s discourse, toward someone else’s speech’ (Dostoevsky’s Poetics 185). Dialogic theory, practice and the novel’s aim of exploring the possibilities of humour and the clown role in critiquing monolithic narratives are shown together when Jill gives Arthur the set of puppets to develop alternative ways of expressing himself after he has sworn at the head teacher on the first day of school (Chapter Twelve). The puppets include a writer and representations of the other main characters in the novel, becoming the apparatus for a form of dialogic training. Arthur develops his speech in relationship to the social context that he has recently encountered through multiple-voices and different points of view.

In the sequence, Arthur’s utterances are directed toward the head teacher and, indirectly, at the school discourse, so the double-voiced dialogic method becomes clear. Arthur is seen to increase his understanding of the new, more formal, educational setting, and, as his mother pulls clown faces he retains a transgressive ambivalence towards this new world while improving his ability to answer back. Through the interaction with the puppets, Arthur’s playful subversions of the school’s discourse
emerge to simultaneously challenge the writer’s authority and reasons for telling the story. This follows the dialogic principle that requires characters to be treated as if they were ‘actually present’ and can answer back. Bakhtin calls this ‘the unconditional ultimate position’, rather than a device which ‘liberates and de-reifies the human being’ (Dostoevsky’s Poetics 63).

Ian Wilkie and Matthew Saxton suggest in The Origins of Comic Performance in Adult-Child Interaction, that ‘the essence of comic performance, in act and interpretation, is intrinsically located in early adult-child interaction’ (21). They also note that humour and laughter are ‘intrinsic aspects of successful interaction between mother and child’ (22) and suggest that through analysing the child-directed speech used by adults when talking to their children the foundations of later comic performance can be seen.

I remember being trained in ventriloquism, with my mother encouraging me to pull faces and use funny voices. Through this I would probably have developed an awareness of the heteroglossia mentioned in Chapter One, understanding that ‘there is a constant interaction between meanings’ (Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 426). As the puppets suspended the usual social hierarchies, I would also probably have become aware that they could transgress rules of speech that I could not. Later, I occasionally helped my mother in performances and recollect standing behind the Punch and Judy stage, with one hand in a monkey puppet, as described in the novel, hitting her with a rubber hammer.

Reflecting upon the effects of my puppet and clown training in the context of the question on connecting the personal with the wider cultural issues, I found Bakhtin’s perspectives on how the writer becomes decentred to open the imagination to a more relational sense of self useful. Bakhtin likens the dialogic to ‘the act of looking in the mirror with one’s own and others’ eyes simultaneously’ (Dostoevsky’s Poetics 289).
Through the unmerged intersections of two or more consciousnesses, the dialogic arises. The first eyes that join the decentred author’s gaze into the mirror have the humour of Jill the clown, which, to an extent, represents my own reflections on living with a mother who worked as a clown.

The novel’s third question on how to connect the personal and social explores satirical and humorous voices in relation to my mother’s clown role is therefore dramatised when Jill gives Arthur the puppets, which represent the main characters in the novel. An implication is that the comically posited or ‘implied’ author (Booth, 70-71), is still trapped in the maternal world of his childhood. Jill looks back through the looking glass with a smile and a laugh (Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 182; Cixous, 888).

Bakhtin notes that it is characteristic of the comic novel to play with a posited author, as a ‘compositional device to strengthen the trend toward relativity, objectification and parodying of literary forms and genres’ (*The Dialogic Imagination* 312). He sees this particularly in the distancing of the posited author from the real author to show a belief system or ideology in a way that illuminates an alternative from what he terms ‘the “expected” literary horizon’ (313). This method of moving the authorial position – and therefore possible readings of the novel - allowed for a more playfully subversive critique of hegemonic culture, which also allowed for a self-reflexive dialogue with the role of the writer.

The clown role has inextricable connections with both the satirical and carnivalesque (Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 84-85), with the latter being rooted in an egalitarian sense of shared folk humanity, which Bakhtin suggests preceded the formulation of class structures (*The Dialogic Imagination* 159). Jill creates a mood of folk egalitarianism with the puppets in Chapter Twelve to let Arthur investigate power
relations through a ‘a suspension of all hierarchical precedence’ (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* 10), allowing spaces where dialogic learning may emerge. The destabilisation of the author using this suspension of hierarchy is also seen at the end of Chapter 20 as the extraterrestrial narrative is subverted through Guinevere’s concern for whoever is making up the story. Guinevere’s observations are reported along with Arthur’s fear that he’s a puppet writer sent to suffer on Earth by other worldly beings. This introduces an ambiguity that suggests the story is a compensatory fantasy expressing unresolved trauma and a desire for atonement or revenge.

In Chapter Thirty-Six when Jill waves the writer-puppet at Arthur after his return from the Himalayas, the self-reflexivity of the writing process is emphasised once more, disturbing the epic distance of the author to relativise the text through a focus upon the dialogue between the egalitarian folk humour of the clown mother and the ironically distanced, authorial voice. This relativising of the author’s authority in the playful game of writing developed through reading Michael Foucault’s “What is an Author” where he discusses Samuel Beckett’s statement “what does it matter who's speaking?” (141). Foucault questions the ideological role of the author and prefers the term ‘author function,’ a function that is connected to the legal and institutional discourses of the civilisation in which the writing is produced, subject to complex operations rather than a simple attribution of discourse. The author function refers not to a single individual, but to ‘several selves and subject positions’ (“What is an Author” 148). These theoretical reflections informed the writing process and helped to further develop the reflexive, humorous personal voice and connect it with social issues.

Foucault’s conception of the writer as a changing function within historical contexts was utilized in *The Doom of Clowns*, to develop the novel’s reflexive exploration of a sense of neoliberal (Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* 2) complicity that
emerged while writing at the University. Guarfur’s discussion with Professor Digby in Chapter Forty-Six, about freedom and the utopian community in the woods, destabilises the ‘fictional’ genre, with Digby implying Guarfur’s, and perhaps the author’s research is performed resistance that should not be taken too far. Digby’s comments develop the novel’s reflexive critique of its own contexts of production and resistance to the ‘culture industry’ (Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer 94-136).

The definition of neoliberalism is taken from David Harvey:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practises that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practises.’ (A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 2)

Arthur’s fear of being viewed as a neoliberal university government spy when he overhears Brigitte and her friend in Chapter Thirty-Eight discussing the corporate world, satirises tensions within the texts’ production. In the earlier stages of the research I was concerned about my new role as a researcher, as I met old friends in Glastonbury who were suspicious of education system. The self-reflexive examination of the novel’s context of production in relation to the discourse of educational institutions, therefore became a part of the dialogic method as the novel progressed.

In exploring the author’s privileged role, I also engaged with Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author.” Barthes essay written in 1967 suggests that ‘the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author,’ (148). The French title of Barthes’ essay is “La mort de l’auteur,” a play on Thomas Malory’s 1485 Arthurian novel, Le Morte D’Arthur. The protagonist in The Doom of Clowns is either an extraterrestrial
reincarnation of King Arthur, or a human called Arthur who has delusions of grandeur, both of which signal the intertextual dialogue with Barthes and Arthurian legend. When Arthur calls himself Pendragon in Glastonbury, the academic role is comically destabilized. The undercover left-wing academic enters a dialogue with ideas of deception, authority, a sense of messianic mission and the divine right of kings. The name Pendragon itself contains a sense of writing and power.

For Barthes, the text must be separated from the author because the figure of the author becomes a limit on its interpretation. ‘The paper-author’ is no longer a ‘privileged, paternal’ figure and becomes a ludic inscription, a guest within the text (161). Barthes views the author as a modern invention that is perhaps less accurate than earlier ideas of a shaman or speaker mediating language:

The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person.' (“The Death of Author,” 142-143)

Arthur Pendragon’s modern research persona is subverted in the enchanted world of Glastonbury, with its pre-reformation resistance. As an extraterrestrial, he is still silenced and trapped in a human person. The novel’s humour remains in dialogue with a modern secular perspective, the tone of which is signalled in Chapter One for example, when Arthur worries that self-assembly kitchen units with the wrong screws already exist in Sweden. The empirically rational, modern ‘human person’ is subverted throughout the novel, with contemporary humans portrayed as almost helpless, living in a deluded world controlled by the antagonist.

Brian McHale suggests that Barthes’ theory risks falling into naïve theories of either the presence or absence of the author’ (McHale 211). The binary oppositions of
presence and absence are discussed by Jacques Derrida in relation to his conception of a transcendental signified, the unattainable cross-culturally true sign which he suggests a text desires. The novel’s god-like extraterrestrials express universal egalitarian truths through the human body that has become Guarfur, the University researcher. Derrida points toward a ‘metaphysics of presence as the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for such a signified’ (Derrida 49). I also use Derrida when Hythe and Grote talk about serving a transcendent ‘The One.’ Hythe is a mechanised creature who is closer to the truth of the (technological) singularity and who channels the will of a technological god so to speak.

While affirming Barthes’ position, Foucault recognises that Barthes’ removal of authorial authority in an absolute way gives ‘writing a primal status’ and seems to be a way of ‘retranslating, in transcendental terms, both the theological affirmation of its sacred character and the critical affirmation of its creative character’ (Foucault, “What is an Author?” 144).

Arthur the academic researcher in Glastonbury, goes through a sacred transformation to become Guarfur. I was conscious of subverting Barthes’ ‘Arthurian’ theory of authorship when Arthur at the end of Chapter Twenty wonders if he is just a puppet writer being used by extraterrestrials. Brian McHale notes that Kurt Vonnegut consciously plays with his character as a god-like puppet master in The Breakfast of Champions (McHale 206), where the character Kilgore Trout suspects ‘he might be the creation of another human being’ (Quoted in McHale 210). Arthur’s extraterrestrial mission and the author’s omniscient narration, are mixed with narratives suggesting that both are the result of neoliberal mass media brainwashing, Jill’s clown training and intergenerational trauma.
The novel shows the effects of neoliberal hegemony working on Arthur’s unconscious through the Head of State, Queen Elizabeth, with her carnivalesque transgression of her royal role at the 2012 London Olympics (Chapter Thirty-Five). Her comic performance produces more than simple pleasure in Arthur, despite him consciously considering her appearance with James Bond to be simply a marketing strategy for UK plc. The destabilization of the Queen’s hierarchical role causes an almost ecstatic response and in his moment of egalitarian freedom, Arthur apparently moves beyond the neoliberal culture that has suppressed his consciousness. He has a vision of Guinevere that tells him his true mission has begun. This follows the research aim of satirically showing how apparently neutral discourse conceals the dominant neoliberal ideology.

Arthur’s consciously anti-monarchist, socialist views are suddenly seen to become overwhelmed with feelings of joy as the Queen parachutes into the Olympic stadium. His indifference to the Queen’s performance for ‘UK plc’ as part of a neoliberal marketing strategy, is seen to hide deeper hierarchical beliefs about the divine right of kings that support the dominant neoliberal hegemony. Jill challenges Arthur’s life in the Himalayas serving his divine Guru at the end of Chapter Thirty-Four, when she tells him he is the king of his own puppet theatre. Here, Jill and her puppets disrupt the author’s Daoist spiritual liberation discourse that perhaps retains an internalised hierarchical search for outside authority. My holistic voice is self-satirised here, following the dialogic approach which also allows the narrative to subvert neoliberal discourse, by connecting the personal to wider issues of hegemonic culture.

The development of the novel’s reflexive voice and critique of neoliberalism, drew upon Beatrice K. Otto’s work on the role of the clown in Fools are Everywhere (2001). The court jester had permission to tell truths to the king, while also avoiding his own
demise, in a way those within the official hierarchy could not. This role goes back to antiquity, including early Chinese Dynasties and Ancient Egypt. Bakhtin suggests that subversive laughter is linked to ‘the medieval genres of the clown, rogue and fool, whose roots go deep back into pre-class folklore’ (‘Dialogic Imagination’ 170). The novel suggests this historical function of the clown by mixing contemporary political comment with Jill’s puppet interventions and the use of Arthurian legend. Neoliberalism is neo-feudal and hegemonic masculinity has apparently changed little in the 1400 years since King Arthur.

The clownish laugh that Jill represents in the novel comes from an empathetic perspective that sees humour not just in that which is untrue, bad or mechanical, but also in that which is unhappy. Samuel Beckett points out this form of laughter: ‘the laugh laughing at the laugh – the beholding, the saluting of the highest joke, in a word the laugh that laughs – silence please – at that which is unhappy’ (Beckett, Watt 310). This is a laugh that constitutes, I suggest, part of a ‘maternal imaginary’ (Susan Watkins 125), a laugh that laughs at the mechanical and that which is not in balance, not melodious, rhythmic or fluid. Watkins sees the emergence of a maternal imaginary in women’s apocalyptic fiction such as Ursula Le Guin, Margaret Atwood and Doris Lessing, which has a focus on living in harmony with the environment, and on ideas of return, repetition and home that avoid the cliché of the mother as salvation. I would also see this maternal imaginary as one that can laugh Beckett’s mirthless laugh when it sees human failings, rather than tending toward tragedy or a need for revenge. The novel’s dialogic challenge to neoliberal hegemony is firstly one that laughs gently at absurdity to bring awareness of error rather than to judge or punish. As Susan Watkins suggests:
What contemporary women's apocalyptic writing avoids is the tragic, fundamentalist narrative of blame, judgment, the sheep, and the goats. Instead, it suggests the importance of plural, hybrid narratives and spaces that reproduce or rewrite the contortions or conundrums of the apocalyptic future(s) that face us (135).

Watkins also connects the more tragic apocalyptic narratives in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* with masculinity, while the comic is linked with femininity in her 2009 sequel *The Year of the Flood* (Watkins 129; 132-133). *The Doom of Clowns* takes a similar position to Atwood and Watkins at the end of Chapter Twenty, creating a humorous dialogue between the author/hero’s epic mission to save the world and to be proved right, and a maternal humour that subverts and challenges unhappiness and error. Arthur worries that he is just a puppet writer sent by extraterrestrials to spread their message. Ideas of messianism, the desire for utopia and transcendence, are here juxtaposed with a sense of being trapped in the maternal world in order to ironically subvert the epic narrative.

The humorous mother and son interactions, therefore, clearly inform the novel’s dialogic method. *The Doom of Clowns* focus on the relationship between Arthur and his mother sets the humorous mood of the novel and provides the dialogic basis for the self-reflexive critique of monolithic narratives. The complex interactions between the authorial voices and the maternal humour also shift the focus away from the father and son relationship. Susan Watkins finds that writers such as Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson and Doris Lessing have a different focus from men writing apocalyptic fiction which is that:

Instead of focusing on the father-son bond, contemporary women’s apocalyptic writing often makes use of metaphors of return and home that are implicitly maternal; however, this
“‘maternal imaginary’ is treated in more complex and positive ways. (Susan Watkins 125-6).

_The Doom of Clowns_ explores ideas of returning and home, with Arthur beginning the novel on the mothership. Later, a positive and complex dialogic interaction between Jill, her puppets, Arthur and the authorial voices is developed. The ambiguity of the extraterrestrial/human narrative draws on ideas of home with Guinevere the Farfaphian being the bridge for Arthur to awaken. Guinevere leaves the mothership to speak to the human Arthur as his mother collapses on stage. Guinevere’s empathic voice comes from the discourse of maternal imaginary, that helps Arthur as he experiences the alienating effects of the hegemonic culture that has blocked communication with his father.

Guinevere finally becomes transformed with Arthur into Guarfur and helps overcome the protagonist Hythe’s apocalyptic intentions. The novel’s ambiguous, apocalyptic storyline is therefore in dialogue with the wry smile of a maternal imaginary, retaining a sense of humour to create a more flexible, nuanced approach to exploring alternative human possibilities. The mother clown and son relationship that forms the basis of the novel’s dialogue with a maternal imaginary, supports a reflexively critical, holistic voice by retaining a sense of humour while focusing upon the dangers of economic and technological hegemony. The engagement with maternal humour and the puppets allows a serious yet light-hearted critique of neoliberalism. The clown role brings the ability to laugh at the failure of one’s epic intentions, and the sense that human life is not a problem that will be solved by logic, scientific progress or the eradication of a dangerous other. The clown role in the novel therefore reflects a vital element of what it means to be human.
The Doom of Clowns playfully explores an ambiguous sense of a secular, rational self in dialogue with alternative ways of being in the world. By ‘ambiguous’, I mean that the novel could be read as confirming a belief in a more secular or enchanted worldview, with the position of the author remaining uncertain or unclear. While all novels like all images could be read in multiple ways and are as Barthes suggests: ‘polysemous …a "floating chain" of signifieds’ (Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image” pp.38-39), The Doom of Clowns’ ambiguity is here examined as a way of actively exploring the dependence of a secular worldview on a religious framework that it does not believe in. Ruptures occur in Arthur’s acceptable secular identity early on when Guinevere talks to him. His uncertainty about Guinevere’s existence, plays upon ideas of his secular mind being unable to accept the supernatural outside of half dreams or a carnivalesque mood. Guinevere cannot exist in Hythe’s secular world, where belief in any supernatural deity or alien being is nothing more than a cultural projection or traumatically induced fantasy. Throughout the novel, there are instances where otherworldly experiences occur, the most satirical of which is perhaps Arthur seeing a vision of Guinevere directly after watching the Queen playing the fool at the Olympic opening ceremony. A blurring of the lines between Arthur’s ‘spiritual’ vision and the apparently non-religious opening of a sporting event using the Head of State destabilises a secular/religious binary.

In Simon Critchley’s 2012 search for a theology without a sense of the sacred: The Faith of the Faithless, he suggests that ‘Secularism which denies the truth of religion is a religious myth’ (111). Critchley goes on to reflect upon philosopher John Gray’s, claim in Black Mass from 2007 that utopian ideas of secular progress are based upon an apocalyptic millenarianism. I will return to John Gray later in the essay. Critchley addresses this ambiguous sense of modern identity in an earlier interview about his
2002 work *On Humour*: ‘I begin from the assumption that modernity is defined by the impossibility of any metaphysical belief in a deity.’ But Critchley points out that despite this impossibility of belief he recognises that our values and worldview are still derived from religion ‘…and that's an ambiguous thing’ (Critchley, “Culture Wars”)

The religious discourse which pervades the secular is satirically exaggerated through Hythe’s narrative in order to destabilise a secular/religious binary. We see Hythe’s techno-utopia ambiguously mixed with religious ideas of liberation from suffering through the uploading/downloading of humanity. Wu Wei’s mystical world is portrayed with a partly secular ironic voice. Glastonbury’s more enchanted worldview is also in dialogue with an ironic secular gaze that rejects otherworldly beliefs.

Creative writing which explores the uncertainty that surrounds a belief in otherworldly phenomenon, in a world where it is more accepted to trust psychological and social explanations for such phenomenon, is not of course new. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* written in 1602, has an ambiguous fatherly ghost and the madness, feigned or not, that Hamlet then experiences remains accessible to psychological explanations centuries later. Both psychological and supernatural interpretations of Hamlet’s ghost remain possible. Henry James’s 1898 novella *The Turn of the Screw*, also retains an ambiguity about whether the ghosts in the novella are real, so that it can be read through either rational or otherworldly frames of understanding.

The ambiguity in *The Doom of Clowns* allows for an openness of interpretation that indicates the tensions between competing yet often intertwined worldviews, with the aim of not alienating readers who either do or do not entertain otherworldly beliefs. Of course, ambiguity like polysemy can be seen in any literary text to some degree, reflecting something of the conditions of human experience. The ambiguity of the
human predicament might also be seen in the strangely changing image, of the perhaps mirthless smile of Leonardo De Vinci’s painting of *The Mona Lisa* from 1503. Human experience is something that resists attempts to create a logical, scientific utopia in which a linear idea of progress will work. The novel’s answer to what it means to be human remains ambiguous, because that is what it is like to be human.

*The Doom of Clowns* mixes extraterrestrials and myth with depictions of contemporary political upheaval to evoke a sense of ambiguity, unreality and cognitive dissonance in the modern world. Adam Curtis’ 2016 BBC documentary *Hypernormalisation*, suggests that, since the 1970s the real world has been replaced by a fake, managed reality run by the forces of neoliberalism. Curtis describes events in October 1975, when a significant shift occurred with a fiscal crisis in New York where the City Council could not pay back its debts. At this point, he argues, the idea that financial systems could run society became dominant. Curtis suggests that during the Reagan presidency in the 1980s, the CIA encouraged ideas about UFOs and aliens to create conspiracy-style fantasy narratives that could conceal Cold War corporate and military agendas by distracting potential opposition. Godfrey directly expresses this position in Chapter Thirty, as Arthur experiences difficulties integrating the doubts of his modern mind with his religious (extraterrestrial) experiences.

*The Mirage Men*, Mark Pilkington’s investigation into the CIA, which Curtis references, suggests UFO and extraterrestrial propaganda was used by the government to play upon secular anxieties and ‘the US government created a myth that took over the world’ (Qtd. in Clarke 162).² David Clarke, a UK academic and seasoned

---

² Exopolitics researchers who seek government disclosure regarding the existence of extraterrestrial include Michael E. Salla PhD. See Salla's 2009 study, ‘Exposing U.S. Government Policies on Extraterrestrial Life.’ Stephen Greer’s campaign: The Disclosure Project, available online: [www.disclosureproject.org](http://www.disclosureproject.org), is a campaign to fully disclose the facts about UFOs and Extraterrestrial Intelligence and includes testimonies from members of the U.S. government and military.
investigator of the UFO phenomenon who is now a convinced non-believer, suggests the lack of substantial evidence proves that belief in extraterrestrials and UFOs is a psychosocial phenomenon, rather like a folk religion (Clarke 268-279), *How UFOs Conquered the world: The History of a Modern Myth*). Arthur’s concerns over whether extraterrestrials are real is satirically portrayed, but his engagement in the area is in dialogue with psychosocial explanations.

Arthur’s identity remains ambiguous as he is both a traumatised human and a missionary extraterrestrial, until the unifying of his voice. Guarfur’s voice is, however, again satirically destabilised in dialogue with Digby at the university in Chapter Forty-Six. Guarfur’s embodiment of an extraterrestrial, alternative revolutionary paradigm is challenged, in keeping with the novel’s aim to create a reflexive, holistic perspective that retains a sense of humour while engaging with neoliberal secular discourse. The writer’s attempts to introduce this authoritative discourse are therefore laughed at by placing it within a contemporary university discussion about performed resistance narratives.

I also drew upon perspectives from Brighton’s alternative community which contains similar cultural ideas to those of sections of Glastonbury, where extraterrestrials such as Pleiadeans and Arcturians are believed to be in contact with humans. These extraterrestrials are viewed as coming from more evolved, compassionate civilisations while other species are connected to conspiracy narratives which, as Daniel Potter suggests, may partly come from an ‘uncanny doubling process in contemporary culture’ where ‘the free-floating anxiety of the not-to-be-proven conspiracy plot is
externalised into the arrival of the alien (Potter 146).’ The aim to create a novel that can be read by people from a diverse range of perspectives, requires a satirical sense of humour to accommodate competing narratives. In developing a self-critical, humorous holistic voice that engages with neoliberal narratives, the novel aims to critiques some ‘alternative’ and ‘conspiracy’ culture, challenging narratives that are ineffective or self-defeating when resisting or destabilising dominant discourse. In the Internet age, many such narratives have become part of what Daniel Potter suggests is an increasingly mainstream ‘carnival of extreme deviance’ (Potter 136-144).

*The Doom of Clowns* is kept as unfinalizable as possible. For example, in the last chapter, there are reports that Hythe has won and the humans are just ghosts who have not realised their situation. There is also the suggestion that what characters have chosen to believe has determined their experience. The victory of a holistic, interspiritual outlook is depicted at the end of the novel however, as multiple faiths join the sheep wedding, affirming an ecological, egalitarian, animal rights, vegan perspective that changes what it means to be human and is less anthropocentric.

Karen Barad’s 2007 work: *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, examines using a diffractive voice that challenges the assumptions of a representational, reflexive approach, to view human activity and particularly scientific activity as entangled phenomenon that effect the way we view the world, rather than objectively measuring it from a distance (Barad 86-94). This was useful when destabilising anthropocentric, monolithic discourses in the novel.

Hythe’s ‘technoscientific’ utopia was partly inspired by Barad’s gendering of technoscience’s distanced, abstract observations (Barad 86-94). Barad’s suggestion that any scientific apparatus is not separate from what is being discovered, also partly inspired the Farfaphian descriptions of humans being controlled by Hythe’s as they
spend all day pressing computer buttons and ticking boxes (Chapter Ten), which they think give them power and knowledge. Barad suggests technological apparatus are not separate but ‘specific material reconfigurings of the world that do not merely emerge in time but iteratively reconfigure space time matter as part of the ongoing dynamism of becoming’ (142). In the novel, technology is changing behaviour and conceptions of reality, leading humans to become digital life forms.

Barad suggests apparatus in scientific experiments are ‘boundary-making practises’ (148), that nevertheless remain part of an intra-active phenomenon. The novel uses speculative and science fiction to explore the potentially vast changes in human subjectivity occurring through the phenomenon of interaction with technology. Self-reflexive, representational discourses drawn from earlier religious perspectives contain assumptions about human autonomy, that possibly make them inadequate for describing the interconnected world that physics and biology are revealing and the changes in human behaviour technology is creating. The effects of increasing technological change are therefore considered in ways that destabilise a traditional representational worldview, as the novel’s reflexive, critical voice remains in dialogue with a fast-changing Internet age.

The novel’s satirical dialogues between a secular, technological worldview and religious ideas of the self and utopia uses irony to mediate a sense of ambivalence. Arthur’s journey is sometimes Socratic, in the sense that it requires an attitude of naivety. Alan Wilde suggests in his 1981 theoretical study: Horizons of Assent, that irony is a mode of perception (28). He locates a modern consciousness, which is disappointed in the fragmented world that it sees, adopts a position of absolute irony that hovers at great a distance or height (33), beyond apparent involvement with the world. The disunity the absolute irony sees below, comes from a sense of what Wilde
calls an ‘anironic unity’ or oneness, a unity beneath all appearances. *The Doom of Clowns* begins with the distanced Farfaphian perspective on the mothership that sees only chaos and disunity on Earth while understanding the interconnected nature of all life. Satirically, this distance risks becoming trapped in its own victory, estranged from the entire world because of the ‘infinite negativity’ possible within its position (33). This infinite negativity supports the dialogic challenge to monolithic narratives, but also risks falling into a disconnected indifference or cynicism.

I used Wilde’s perspectives on absolute irony in writing the final draft to clearly differentiate a distanced ironic position from Guinevere’s more intimate voice. Wilde sees absolute irony as an extreme, ‘post-satirical’ form with an inherent doubleness ‘that we associate with irony as a strategy of non-involvement, disillusion or defence’ (28-29). He suggests an earlier sense of irony viewed the world as recoverable, with an anironic paradise regained. The final stage of irony he defines is a suspensive postmodern irony that abandons hope of paradise and accepts disorder to find peace, focusing more on the small pleasures of life (10). The anironic complement of this final form is a ‘desire for unmediated experience, for direct participation in the world’ (69).

The sense of unity or oneness experienced by Arthur, in the sequence when the stationery cupboard is on fire, represents an absolute anironic complement to the surrounding chaos. *The Doom of Clowns* also has a paradise (of a sort) in Farfaphus, the anironic complement that believes a fallen world is recoverable. Finally, Arthur and Guinevere’s transformation into Guarfur enacts the desire for direct participation in the world. Arthur’s attempts to reconcile himself to the disordered world of neoliberalism, by becoming an academic, find their anironic complement in Guarfur. As an extraterrestrial his experience is no longer mediated by Hythe’s mechanistic, neoliberal world.
The novel’s ideals of an enlightened nondual consciousness and an egalitarian holistic community, are to some extent challenged or destabilised by the irony, following the aim of retaining a sense of humour. Wilde’s conceptions of the different anironic complements to forms of irony, helped to clarify the tensions between the idealistic ground the novel stands upon and the world it then sees. In developing the novel’s self-reflexive critique, the novel therefore remains partly ambiguous, ironic and secular in its depiction of the final commune utopia.

In conclusion, the third research question of how the novel could effectively connect personal experience with wider cultural and social issues, was theoretically developed using the dialogic method. The novel engages with a maternal imaginary through the character of Jill and her puppets to create a more reflexive authorial voice, that can disrupt neoliberal discourse. The dialogic principle provided a basis from which the novel’s fictional explorations resisted monolithic discourses, but the use of ‘dialogue’ in neoliberal governmentality, means the reflexive critique of the novel’s context of production was necessary for the challenge to cultural hegemony to be effective. Barthes and Foucault were both useful in developing the authorial position, to reflect personal experience in relation to wider cultural issues such as the colonization of the social imaginary by neoliberalism, as evidenced by Arthur’s reaction to the Queen at the London Olympic ceremony.

The novel’s use of ambiguity allows different interpretations of Arthur’s story to destabilise a consensus reality, while the exploration of conspiracy theories engages with a modern sense of cognitive dissonance within neoliberal society. The exploration of belief and ambiguity portrays something of what it means to be human in the 21st Century, satirically warning that human interaction with technology is changing the human species. The diffractive voice disrupts the monolithic narratives of
anthropocentric and religious discourses, that do not recognise the potential effects of entangled human interactions with technology (Barad, 86-94).

The theoretical research into irony and the anironic helped clarify Guinevere’s voice, allowing for a more reflexive use of distanced irony that recognised a sense of disappointment mixed with a desire for liberation or utopia. What became clearer as the research developed was that Arthur’s silenced extra-terrestrial self, represented the suppression of consciousness by dominant narratives and Guinevere represented an inner holistic voice. This connected with the wider theme of the suppression of the maternal and feminine and moved the research focus toward a consideration of the binary oppositions that frame hegemonic discourse. This will be discussed in the next chapter.
3) Guinevere and Jill

In this chapter I examine how the characters of Jill and Guinevere were developed through an engagement with theoretical perspectives on the cultural suppression of the feminine, engaging with the questions of what it means to be human and how the novel uses fiction to connect with cultural and political issues. Following Irigaray’s suggestion that the feminine subject has been defined in terms of being a Not-HE (Irigaray, Je Tu Nous, 12-13), Guinevere’s voice is reflected upon as a consciousness outside the dominant worldview and an interior voice that represents part of Arthur’s human awareness. Guinevere’s voice as she communicates with the human Arthur is identified as being Irigaray’s ‘middle passive voice’ (Irigaray, Teaching 223).

The development of the middle passive voice through Guinevere is considered as part of the novel’s disruption of hegemonic binary opposites, including active/passive. Julia Kristeva’s Desire in Language and Hélène Cixous’ Laugh of the Medusa are also examined and connected to Jill and Guinevere’s mediation of the maternal imaginary, to challenge the author/protagonist’s internalised neoliberal discourse to promote a critically reflexive, holistic perspective, which retains a sense of humour.

The Doom of Clowns asks what are the alternatives to a technological culture driven by an ideology of neoliberal individualism? Following Irigaray, the novel’s central reply to this question is that human survival is a matter of developing a sense of self-affection:

Self-affection today needs a return to our own body, our own breath, a care about our life for us not to become subjugated to technologies, to money, to power, to neutralisation in a universal someone, to assimilation into an anonymous world, to the solitude of individualism (Irigaray, Teaching 230).
For Irigaray the self-affection of both women and men relies on a transcendence of active and passive binary oppositions (*Teaching* 223-30), that first occurred in the relation to the mother. If these opposites remain they later become transferred to other relationships, including that between partners. To transcend the binary, Irigaray suggests the need for a ‘middle voice’ that becomes an ‘autonomous and internalised self-affection’ (229). Irigaray defines the middle voice:

the middle-passive or middle voice is a form which conveys both activity and passivity, and requires an involvement that is not only mental. It can thus express a process of self-affection, and even reciprocity that, that neither simple active or passive forms could convey (*Teaching* 223).

Irigaray claims that ‘western culture corresponds to a culture of the outside, not of the inside’ (*Teaching* 119), seeing the loss of self-affection in masculine subjectivity in western culture as based upon its lack of interiority and relationship. She claims that through the patriarchal culture from which this male subjectivity emerged ‘a new logical order was established, censuring women’s speech and gradually making it inaudible (*Je Tu Nous*, 9). She also notes a break from Earthly, feminine Gods to more male ‘celestial’ gods since Plato (*Je Tu Nous*, 11). ‘These extraterrestrial gods would seem to have made us strangers to life on Earth, which from then on has been thought of as an exile’ (11).

My experiences on meditation retreats and practises were a major reason for finding myself drawn to Irigaray’s work, which is influenced by her experiences of yoga. The connections she makes between a suppressed interior consciousness and an overly exteriorised, active western culture immediately resonated with my own perceptions when returning to the UK after periods in quieter areas of the Himalayas.
I had found that meditational approaches that involved visualising goddesses as well as gods, created an inner space of awareness. I also perceived a degree of western cultural resistance to such forms of meditation, certainly when described in terms beyond simply a relaxation technique or form of self-development, with such practices sometimes being viewed as creating an illusory worldview or being too introverted and passive. I wanted to explore the extent to which this aversion was based on a cultural suppression of the maternal and feminine as Irigaray claims.

I developed Guinevere as Arthur/Guarfur’s self-affection and middle voice. She attempts to awaken the silenced Arthur who is surrounded from birth by epic narratives of space travel and family political ambitions. These dominant social imaginary keeps his Farfaphian awareness silenced and asleep. What I intended to develop therefore was the idea that the dominant culture had colonised Arthur’s mind, creating an exteriorised sense of self that lacks self-affection and therefore obstructs his recognition of Guinevere as part of his own consciousness. Irigaray’s claims that the need to exteriorise the search for the self leads to a sense of exile and is a result of the male subject in western culture not fully differentiating itself from the maternal (Teaching 225). This is satirically suggested in the novel, with Arthur the human/extra-terrestrial perhaps trapped in the clown world of his mother.

A central fictional choice in the novel was the transformation of Arthur and Guinevere/Brigitte into Guarfur. In several earlier drafts of the story, Arthur’s consciousness was transported into the sheep, while his human body was taken over by Guinevere/Brigitte. As the theoretical work on gender binary oppositions and the relationship between Arthur and Guinevere developed, the transformation changed. After discussions with supervisors and people in the novel, I decided to attempt the metamorphosis into Guarfur as a way for the protagonist to finally awaken to his
Farfaphian identity. The tensions and connections between Arthur and Guinevere became clearer after deciding upon the Guarfur transformation. Hythe’s awareness of Guinevere was also developed, suggesting the constant presence of hegemonic narratives suppressing a more empathic, holistic sense of self.

When the name Guarfur occurred to me, the transgender transformation seemed completely acceptable. ‘Guarfur’ carried a sense of a South London sound which reflected the novel’s focus on both class and gender. The arrival of Guarfur also seemed to empower my authorial voice. The narrative became more able to confront and to transcend dominant narratives. In the chapter where Guarfur discusses the need for social change with Professor Digby, I felt not only more able to voice a rejection of current society but also to suggest alternatives. The novel as an autoethnographic writing process, theory and practice, therefore came together as the voice that emerged felt more empowered and creative.

Guinevere is also part of the maternal imaginary that resists Hythe and Arthur’s epic narratives, attempting to bring balance. Guinevere’s concern about Arthur and the narrator making up stories in Chapter Twenty laughs at that which is unhappy and challenges the epic distance of the posited author’s otherworldly narratives. She mediates the humorous maternal imaginary’s carnivalesque suspension of hierarchies, laughing at the protagonist/author’s ironic distance as he wonders if he is a puppet writer sent by aliens. Guinevere begins speaking to Arthur as an internal voice on the day Jill stops singing at the holiday camp, which is therefore just before his mother’s voice is in some way lost. The cultural suppression of the maternal is enacted and blocks Arthur’s ability to hear his own interior voice. The appearance of Guinevere on Earth is therefore to mediate Arthur’s reconnection to a more balanced sense of self that has been disrupted by this cultural suppression.
Arthur asks Jill directly why she is a clown using the writer-puppet during his dialogic training in Chapter Twelve. She tells him that it is better than cleaning jobs, as it is made clear that being a clown was one of her limited career options as a woman after her singing career ended in the early 1970s. Jill the former beauty queen is silenced on stage but retains her freedom with a life as a clown. Her low standing in the economic order nevertheless keeps her voice marginalised within the family hierarchy. Jo Anna Isaak suggests:

“When the whole ontological consistency of Woman as “the symptom of man” is dissolved, man is left to confront the void of his own non-existence. Such a confrontation, Cixous suggests, is enough to set half the world laughing: “You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she is not deadly. She is beautiful and she is laughing.” (Isaak: Feminism in Contemporary Art, 225)

Jill waves puppets at the author, Bob, and Terence, pointing to the void beneath their subjectivity that lacks self-affection and constructs her identity as part of their illusory world. Through the maternal imaginary that Jill’s clown invokes, Hythe becomes the Medusa-like serpent.

Jill’s career as a clown allows her to retain a sense of self-affection. Jo Isaak suggests that Freud’s location of narcissism in females has been viewed more recently by feminist commentators as potentially positive or a site of resistance (Isaac, 13). She notes Sigmund Freud believed that the ‘triumph of narcissism’ is by the elevating grandeur of humour (13). A feminine jouissance derived through humour that feels itself victorious over the world may be preferable to a male jouissance where ‘Jouissance is forbidden to him who speaks, as such’ (Lacan 319). For Lacan, the subject's entry into the Symbolic order is conditional upon a renunciation of jouissance in the attempt to be an imaginary phallus for the mother. This made me wonder if
having a clown mother asserting her own humorous feminine jouissance was the main catalyst for my having a satirical view of hegemonic culture. Hélène Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975) suggests in relation to women’s writing:

> It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments, there’s no other way. There’s no room for her if she’s not a he. If she’s a her-she, it’s in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break the “truth” with laughter (Cixous 888).

Jill’s clown training carries the ‘laugh of the Medusa,’ which subverts the male author’s attempts to create an epic story and make himself look good. For Cixous masculine sexuality centres around the penis, whereas woman’s libido is ‘cosmic’, just as her ‘unconscious is worldwide’ (889). Jill the clown mother subverts the phallocentric order to suggest a more expansive sense of self that can laugh at current hierarchies, just as the cosmic Farfaphians laugh at Hythe’s logic. Jill’s jouissance erupts through her puppets, to enact not just as an officially allowed transgression of official hierarchy that will enable greater efficiency in the workplace after a release of tension as Žižek suggests in his film, ‘*The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology*’ but as a lasting subversion of hegemonic patriarchy.

The womb-like semiotic ‘chora’ (Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 6-7), from which laughter emerges to disrupt and transform the symbolic order is, for Kristeva, a fluid, formless and rhythmic space that precedes language. She connects the semiotic to the maternal in her observations on language development, emphasising the semiotic’s dependence on ‘the body’s drives observable through muscular contractions and the libidinal or sublimated cathexis that accompany vocalisations’ (*Desire* 133-134). Jill’s transformation into a clown after her singing career has ended is suggested as a way of
her retaining connection to her sense of self through laughter. Kristeva comments upon this connection:

Rather, it is the arbitrariness of the break establishing meaning, which sets itself against the flow of rhythm, intonation, and music that provokes this laughter. We do not laugh because of what makes sense or because of what does not. We laugh because of possible meaning, because of the attitude that causes us to enunciate signification as it brings jouissance.iii (‘Desire in Language’ 182)

Any understanding based on the assumption of subjects and objects can be laughed at or subverted, allowing jouissance to emerge from the semiotic chora that precedes entry into the symbolic order. Returning to the moment of the thetic break, laughter allows jouissance to erupt through the network of meanings, however serious or authoritative they may be. Kristeva suggests that we laugh at the castration of entering the symbolic that leads us to naming. We laugh at anything that does not carry a ‘musicated enunciation – a space where enunciation and rhythm, positioning and infinitisation are inseparable’ (182). Kristeva goes on to call this ‘Oriental laughter: sensible laughter and leading to the void’ (182). This laughter returns us to a more expansive self without the identifications of subject and object dualism, subverting desire and human temporality. The laughter that disrupts the epic narratives of Hythe, Arthur and the author is one that recognises a space that pre-exists the symbolic order.

Connecting with this feminine jouissance, the novel uses Guinevere and Arthur’s relationship to present the transcendence of hegemonic culture. Hythe’s world can no longer control them. Guarfur then embodies a more empathic and expansive, interconnected sense of self beyond hegemonic binary opposites to enact transcendence through building a new community. Irigaray points out that we must not stop at criticism, ‘that we have to relinquish a certain way of being moulded by our past logic in order to reach another way of being’ (Teaching 238). She sees this as necessary if
humanity is to have a future (238). Guarfur (if at times satirically) becomes able to create a more communitarian world where not just humans but other creatures are respected.

Guarfur’s transcendence does not involve the external idols that Irigaray points out we no longer trust (239). The journey to transcendence that Guinevere and Arthur take is ‘more internal and the other is no longer the one – the One-whom I have to become,’ (Teaching 239). Guinevere enacts a process of listening to the other in relationship. Their transcendence comes through her supporting Arthur, becoming his inner awareness and the witness to his life.

Penelope Ingram suggests that ‘Goddess spiritualists and Irigaray all argue that Christianity is based not on the sacrifice of Christ, but on the sacrifice of woman in the figure of the mother’ (Ingram 51). Arthur’s inability to see Guinevere as part of his own interiority and to embody her consciousness comes from a lack of connection with the maternal. He witnesses Jill stop singing Killing Me Softly just before Guinevere first enters his human consciousness.

Irigaray suggests that Judeo-Christian thought has failed to recognise its own tendency to demote the feminine to the underworld of the unconscious, because God is viewed as male (Ingram 51). Hythe becomes the patriarchal sky god that wants to keep the Goddess out of heaven and trapped in the underworld. This is dramatised when Arthur and Guinevere unite beneath Tor as Hythe attacks from above. The Farfaphian Glastonbury Goddesses who are extraterrestrial’s in human bodies, assist the transformation. Guinevere then ceases to be the externalised voice of Arthur’s emotional world and they become unified, transcending Hythe’s patriarchal culture so Guarfur can then build the new community. Here I also reflect upon Irigaray’s concept of ‘the sensible transcendental’ (Irigaray. ‘An Ethics of Sexual Difference ’ 115), that is
both transcendent and immanent. Irigaray uses the ‘sensible transcendental’ to allow
god to be both male and female, with the balance between the terrestrial and celestial
maintained.

As Hythe’s world keeps Guinevere existing in an underworld for Arthur, except in the
unstable realms beyond or beneath hegemonic culture, only the subversive mood of the
clown and the dialogic method learned through the puppets allow Arthur to transgress
the dominant discourse and openly express his awareness of Guinevere. Through
voicing this awareness with the puppets, Arthur remains in relationship with the
maternal imaginary and his interior voice.

Bakhtin suggests that the Freudian conscious ego represents the more stable, dominant
aspects of class consciousness that are easily transferable to external discourse, while
the unconscious is ‘far removed from the stable system of dominant ideology’ (qtd. in
Todorov 32). *The Doom of Clowns* uses ideas of the unconscious from Freudian
psychoanalysis but sides here with Bakhtin/Voloshinov in seeing Freud’s individual
existing in too much of a social void (Todorov 32). Arthur’s different discourses and
selves are developed in relation to their social contexts, as he attempts to speak or
awaken while being suppressed by Hythe’s dominant narrative. Guinevere and Jill’s
voices are also shown as being unable to speak or be recognised, within the dominant
consciousness.

In developing Guinevere’s voice as Arthur’s lost self-affection that he must learn to
hear, the binary oppositions of interior/exterior, male/female, self and other are
challenged. Guinevere is outside Arthur but also his inner voice. He can only awaken
when the interiorised voice of Guinevere joins his own. Until then, the active/passive
binary keeps him trapped as a silenced victim within Hythe’s world. Guinevere’s voice
speaks with varying degrees of access to Arthur’s thoughts and feelings; depending on Hythe’s awareness of her, there are difficulties for Arthur in hearing Guinevere. His ability to hear and trust her voice is questioned in Chapter Nineteen when Arthur hears Guinevere telling him to go with the others to the stationery cupboard. Guinevere reports that her voice has been used by Hythe. I aimed to convey the way in which dominant discourse continues to block Arthur’s self-actualisation by limiting Guinevere’s access to him and his ability to hear.

After years of not hearing her voice and living in exile, Arthur sees a vision of Guinevere in the Himalayas as though she were an external goddess from another realm. This happens immediately after seeing Queen Elizabeth play the fool at the Olympic opening ceremony (Chapter Thirty-Five). The Queen’s subversion of her royal role is portrayed as an act which momentarily frees Arthur’s colonised mind from its hegemonic subjugation. While the novel retains a degree of self-reflexive satire and cultural dialogue, the resolution for Arthur is that he regains not the primary narcissism that Freud claims humour supports, but, through finding a sense of self-affection, moves beyond being a silenced alien, or an alienated human, to embody a balanced, holistic, social activism.

In conclusion, the novel’s question of what it means to be human is answered by Irigaray in terms of relationship and the cultural construction of gender. To become fully human and in relationship Irigaray suggest self-affection is necessary. The novel develops Arthur and Guinevere’s relationship using Irigaray’s perspectives, to fictionalise a personal search for completion or fulfilment, connecting individual experience with wider issues of the cultural suppression of the feminine and maternal. The novel’s holistic voice is satirically and ‘romantically’ self-storied using an
embodied connection (however stretched), to promote a sense of self that finds transcendence in relationship and community rather than an epic external search. As Bakhtin suggests, epic narratives are unable to withstand laughter: ‘It is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorised) distance’ (Dialogic 23).
4) The Political Voice

In this chapter I discuss the political context for the novel, beginning with theoretical perspectives on neoliberalism and biopower. Events in the novel are connected to political speeches and moments in the earlier stages of neoliberalism in the late 20th Century. The role of the clown as a political voice is explored as a way of mediating the irreconcilable worldviews and fast pace of social change. The novel’s use of extraterrestrials and my observations at Exopolitics conferences are then reflected upon, as a carnival of deviance used to express views that have been marginalised by an extreme neoliberal political centre. This chapter therefore engages with the questions of whether fiction can critique neoliberalism in a culture were dissent is marginalised or inexpressible. What it means to be human in neoliberal society is also explored through David Harvey’s views on class oppression. The third research question of how fiction can be used to connect personal experience to social issues, is examined in terms of Arthur’s sense of the uncanny when Jill subverts Grandad Bob’s dominant narrative.

Neoliberalism has perhaps become an overused term but it is still useful in describing what is a movement by a corporate class to gain power, suppress dissent and move the logic of the market to become an almost unquestionable primary concern. The effects of neoliberalism are explored in terms of their human effects through Arthur’s story. From the moment after his birth, issues of class are brought into the novel’s dialogue, with Arthur’s transgression of official language on his first day at school and, later, Rupert telling him his fate is sealed because he comes from a rough area. Arthur must become a clown to survive at school. What Bakhtin calls the humiliation and ‘lack of recognition’ of the individual in class society (Dostoevsky’s Poetics 288), is presented
through Arthur’s silencing and exile. David Harvey views neoliberalism as a class project:

My interpretation is that it’s a class project, now masked by a lot of rhetoric about individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility, privatisation and the free market…. and that neoliberal project has been fairly successful’ (Harvey, ‘Their Crisis our Challenge’).

In critiquing neoliberalism, the novel depicts political activity in the 1970s and 1980s as Arthur experiences it, focusing on the emerging conflict between the unions and the corporate class. Hythe is shown in control of the social institutions that promote his neoliberal message, through his meeting with leading social movers in Chapter Thirteen. The novel’s aim of exploring what it means to be human engages here with Foucault’s conception of biopower\textsuperscript{viii}, as a political strategy that controls humans as if they were a species. The blurring of human/alien/animal species identity is seen in the novel from the beginning with the Farfaphian’s woolly hair. They are briefed on how to resist the new forms of social control before their departure from the mothership. At the end of the novel, people and sheep will no longer be treated like animals in Hythe’s alien neoliberal world.

Biopower used in the name of protecting the evolution of neoliberal \textit{homo economicus} is made more explicit in Chapter Thirteen, when General Truss suggests Hythe is planning to medicalise political dissent. Terence’s move from creative accountancy into the psychiatric business controlled by Hythe, and Arthur’s meetings with those who the system has damaged or killed, also make this sense of quite literal biopower less abstract, rooted in the political events. Personal experience was quite heavily fictionalised in the creation of the underground Brightstol community, using material from Brighton and other cities I have lived in.
Mark E. Radcliffe’s *Stranger than Kindness* (2013) is a novel I read at the beginning of the research that also inspired the novel’s political development. Here, a psychiatric nurse who has experienced traumatic events at the hospital where he worked, escapes to India for some years. The narrative resumes after his return. Radcliffe’s story does not engage with science fiction or fantasy but its themes of trauma and recovery, along with an implicit critique of neoliberalism’s control over psychiatry, were useful in considering how these themes could be presented in the novel.

The direct approach to critiquing neoliberalism as a real rather than theoretical fight, is supported by David Harvey who argues that abstract theories miss the sense of neoliberalism as a battle fought in the 1970s and 80s, in which the corporate class became ‘pretty unified’ (Harvey, “Neoliberalism is a Political Project”). The political pressures acting on Arthur in the 1970s, 80s and beyond are shown in micronarratives. The three-day week of 1973-74 is commented upon in Chapter Ten as Arthur walks to school on his first day. More 1970s strike action is mentioned by Grandad Bob in Chapter Nine as he goes out to work for the police after Jill’s collapse on stage. Using Mr Trott’s verbal attack on Arthur in Chapter Twenty, the direct battle between capitalist and socialist discourse is dramatised, not as an ideology ‘but as real events, with multiple fronts.’

James Callaghan’s leadership victory over the more left-wing Michael Foot in the April 1976 Labour party election, signals a perhaps significant shift away from its more radical socialist ideals. Shortly afterwards the Labour government were forced to apply for a loan from the International Monetary Fund, who were not sympathetic to left leaning governments (Tiratsoo 171). Nick Tiratsoo in *From Blitz to Blair*, also notes that whilst the IMF loan settled the markets, it caused infighting within Labour by those who believed the ‘Cabinet had betrayed socialist principles and allowed itself to be
ordered about by foreign bankers (171).’ Thatcherism could therefore be regarded as part of a wider global movement toward neoliberalism that had already begun, following such political shifts and events such as the 1975 New York fiscal crisis already mentioned in Chapter One.

Miriam Stone’s comments upon class war in Chapter Thirteen follow, on what would become Thatcher’s very popular (possibly winning) strategy of selling off council homes to get the skilled working class vote in the 1979 general election (Tiratsoo 192). Terence’s ‘creative accountancy’ in Chapter Seventeen, brings the new reality of Thatcherism, guided by Chicago School monetarist policies, into a personal context. The aim was to portray a tangible shift in attitudes as Terence laughs about the new zeitgeist at the office. David Harvey notes Margaret Thatcher’s neoliberal rhetoric in the 1980s. “Economics are the method,” she said, “but the object is to change the soul” (‘A Brief History of Neoliberalism’ 23).

The social turmoil and strikes of the 1980s are referenced through Mr Trott’s passionate sermons to an apparently indifferent group of south east England school children. This was something I experienced, with distraught left-wing teachers at my school in Sussex. I remember this as a time when neoliberalism was not seen as inevitable, that there were other options.

Hythe’s discussion of the new era of technology that is about to dawn in 1969 (Chapter Seven), takes place after a downturn in the UK economy, with Harold Wilson less than a year away from losing power to Edward Heath. The rhetoric of technological progress that Hythe is used to satirise can be seen in Wilson’s 1963 ‘white heat of technology’ speech:

We are re-defining and we are re-stating our Socialism in terms of the scientific revolution. But that revolution cannot become a
reality unless we are prepared to make far-reaching changes in economic and social attitudes which permeate our whole system of society. (Wilson, Labour Party Annual Conference Report 139-40).

The outcome of Wilson’s speech could be satirically viewed as Hythe’s intention to upload the financial elite. Paul Virilio suggests that ‘Wealth is the hidden side of speed and speed the hidden side of wealth’ (Virilio 30) The speeding up of time in relation to neoliberalism is noted by David Harvey: ‘neoliberalism’s intense interest in and pursuit of information technologies (leading some to proclaim the emergence of a new kind of ‘information society’). … have compressed the rising density of market transactions in both space and time’ (‘A Brief History of Neoliberalism’ 3-4).

As neoliberalism increases in velocity, the clown’s right to be ‘alien’ and ‘other’ (Bakhtin, Dialogic 159) allows the political critique to move between the fast-changing subjectivities of the technological era, using different genres to mirror back the ever-quickening social changes and potential outcomes. As Hythe’s neoliberal technological revolution speeds toward the removal of human space and time, the clown follows and laughs. Patrick Laude proposes in Divine Play, Sacred Laughter and Spiritual Understanding (2005) the clown as one that stands outside time to perform this ‘acceleration of history’ by emptying out the possibilities of the ‘divine basket,’ bringing down, shattering or exhausting the manifest world. The presence of the clown reminds us that. “‘He who laughs last, laughs best’” (Laude 228).

When Jill resists Grandad Bob’s patriarchal discourse, Arthur watches his clown mother waving the puppet and is twice reminded of her agonised expression when, years before, she broke down on stage while singing Killing Me Softly. For Arthur, there is an uncanny return of the repressed (Freud, The Uncanny 1919) as his hegemonic subjectivity emerges more strongly in Grandad Bob’s presence. Seeing the
moment when Jill stops singing and becomes silenced, he simultaneously experiences her as both the ‘abject’ (Kristeva, *The Power of Horror* 13)) and as clownishly free of the patriarchal views being expressed by Grandad Bob. This is similar to Arthur’s own comic revolutionary response when his voice is silenced in Chapter Twenty-One after the fire at school. He uses the clown role to transgress his position as an outcast and mirror back the culturally contingent roles of society.

The idea of the maternal clown overpowering and subverting the author’s attempts to valorise his own position also enables the political voice to be critical, while retaining an amused and receptive mood. For example, when writing more directly about the context of the university where the novel is being produced, the posited author and protagonist are partly viewed as having been affected by the maternal clown’s revolutionary humour, which allows for a degree of satirical freedom. Enacting the role of the writer overwhelmed by maternal humour allows Guarfuir to speak like a puppet of the maternal imaginary, critiquing neoliberal hegemony inside the university.

Arthur’s later journey toward marginalised communities where extraterrestrial narratives and conspiracy stories are used took my research to the Exopolitics (extraterrestrial politics) conferences at Huddersfield University (in 2013) and Leeds Beckett (in 2015). I attended the first a week after signing up for the PhD. The main speaker begged the audience not to join mainstream education, asserting that it was all brainwashing. I found it difficult to frame the varied discourses that emerged at the conferences in a way that would be acceptable to both those who believe the government works with extraterrestrials, and those from a more mainstream

---

3Richard Dolan was the main speaker at the Exopolitics conference. His research on Exopolitics includes: *After Disclosure: When the Government Finally Reveals the Truth About Alien Contact. (2012)*, *UFOs and the National Security State: The Cover-Up Exposed. (2009).*
perspective. The novel therefore uses ambiguity and humour, as already discussed, to remain open to different readers.

I found that some of the conspiracy theories about a secret breakaway government working with extraterrestrials for decades could easily be viewed as narratives from political perspectives which had had their voices ignored by what Tariq Ali has called the ‘extreme centre’ of politics (Ali 1-3) – a centre that emerged shortly before Margaret Thatcher and has continued largely unchallenged until, perhaps, recently. The silencing of opposition by the extreme centre of neoliberalism, could be viewed as having produced discourses that reputedly exist outside official knowledge. Some of the conspiracy discourses may also have been created or encouraged by government authorities in the U.S.

Daniel Potter suggests that some conspiracy theories around UFOs and the existence of Exopolitics (extraterrestrials interacting with world governments behind a veil of secrecy) are a carnival of extreme deviance (Potter 136-144). He notes that such previously stigmatised conspiracy knowledge has become increasingly mainstream. Potter notes how the film “Invasion of the body Snatchers” (1957), was viewed as a metaphor for McCarthyism and the fear of communists. The uncanny aliens, who look just like humans, express a transgressive carnival where the boundaries of self and other are destabilised (146). Potter’s views seemed useful as a way of explaining how modern anxieties in the Internet age could find expression through the idea of the extraterrestrial. Arthur is silenced for much of the novel, with the sense of surveillance paranoia and the nefarious disinformation of Hythe’s digitalised world never far away.

Through Brigitte’s discourse, the novel engages with further ‘underground’ cultural spaces that might be viewed as extreme. Brigitte insults the US army generals who
have befriended her on Facebook. Ideas from various formal and informal activist
groups in Glastonbury and Brighton, have been presented in a way that could be read
and enjoyed by people within the resistant communities in which I have participated.

In Chapter Thirty the novel also draws upon the Harvard Psychiatrist John E. Mack’s perspective that extraterrestrial experiences are real but, outside the onto-epistemic framework of western thought (Mack, *Abduction* 420-422). A more pluralistic attitude to experience is also suggested directly in the novel through Rupert Sheldrake and the ‘real’ effects of Wu Wei’s magical rituals. My own experiences with long-term meditators in cultures including the Himalayas made me aware at least of the existence of very different social imaginaries. A connection between the holistic and political voices emerges through these references to other ways of being.

The political voice in the novel is one which attempts to cover a lot of terrain. This was successful to an extent, but of course the social changes of the last decades and more recently with Donald Trump cannot be adequately encapsulated in a single novel. By focusing on the use of technological narratives, the class project of neoliberalism, Arthur’s silence and the sense through Mr Trott that alternatives were and are available, the aim was to promote an awareness of the silencing effects of hegemonic political narratives and suggest that alternatives are possible.

The political voice disrupts the rhetoric of equality and individualism by emphasising the role of disinformation, biopower and class politics. The novel attempts to emphasise the use of propaganda through Hythe and suggests the possible involvement of the U.S. government in encouraging an extraterrestrial folk religion, through the

---

4 John E. Mack’s later book: *Passport to the Cosmos*, 1999 explores alien experiences as part of a transformational process toward a New Humanity.
character Godfrey. Following the research questions of whether and how fiction can disrupt neoliberalism, the novel therefore attempts to examine the purpose and sources of ‘extraterrestrial’ narratives, to explore their relationship to both ideas of not only trauma, spirituality, folk religion and New Age beliefs but also as potentially a method for further marginalising and distracting political dissent.
5) The Holistic Voice

The holistic voice in the novel is discussed here in relation to the research questions of what it means to be human and how fiction can be used to connect personal experience to social issues. Here, personal experience refers to my twenty years of participation in alternative, spiritual and personal development contexts.

Steve Taylor’s *The Fall* is considered as an inspiration for the novel’s portrayal of the human condition. *The Doom of Clowns*’ strategies for critiquing neoliberalism as a distorted form of religion are also examined. The author’s own holistic discourse is then reflected upon as part of the development of a more critically reflexive holistic voice. The depiction of Eastern mysticism in the novel is examined within a changing cross-cultural dialogue. Wider social and political debates are also considered in relation to my portrayal of Glastonbury’s alternative community. The role of holistic culture, meditation and alternative spirituality within a neoliberal economy are explored. The secular voice in the novel is then engaged with, referencing Ian McEwan’s reflections on the secular spirit (*McEwan “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero”*), while reflecting upon the continual appearance and apparent human need for religious structures.

Steve Taylor’s perspectives on human evolution were a useful complement to Irigaray’s perspectives on interior and exterior subjectivity. His voice is a bridge between secular academic and more holistic communities with a focus on developing spiritual consciousness. Taylor argues in *The Fall* that appalling environmental conditions six thousand years ago produced an ‘ego-explosion’ (28). Wars, patriarchy and a shift in human identity towards a more problem-solving and yet divisive state
occurred. This idea of a fall into a more alienated, ego-driven world was useful in
developing the novel’s dialogue between Hythe’s perspectives, the New Agers in
Glastonbury and the Farfaphians’ discourse.

The night of Arthur’s transformation is set in Glastonbury on 21st December 2012 – a
day when many New Age people felt an epochal change in Earth’s history with a shift
toward a more timeless, harmonious and less ego-driven planet. In some New Age
interpretations of the Mayan calendar, December 21st, 2012 was the end of a nearly six
thousand-year cycle of lower consciousnesses driving the world. After managing to
attend ceremonies at both Glastonbury Tor and Avebury Stone Circle that day, the
sense of both optimism and disappointment seemed to remain.

Taylor’s perspective on a human fall helped to bring together Bakhtin’s appeal to a
golden age before class division and Irigaray’s call for a restoration of the feminine
consciousness with the Farfaphian Goddesses’ attempts to awaken Arthur and
humanity from servitude to Hythe. Taylor makes a survey of possible evidence in
world myth for a literal fall into a more ego-driven world. He presents some
archaeological evidence that there were few, if any, wars 6,000 years prior and suggests
that humanity is now struggling to reawaken from this massive trauma, which led to
class divisions, patriarchy, war, exploitation and schizophrenic human identity.

The Farfaphians’ commentary on Earth’s problems at the beginning of the novel also
emerged partly from Taylor’s views on a new awareness emerging out of historically
traumatised, or divided, human subjectivity. While Taylor’s analysis of a pre-fall self
is contentious, it comes from a discourse that intersects British academia with more
holistic, nondual perspectives. The space that emerges through Steve Taylor’s work is
one with which the ‘real author’ identifies after over twenty-five years of involvement in a variety of spiritual groups, mediation retreats and self-development approaches.

Taylor has been interviewed on *Buddha at the Gas Pump* (See works Cited). with Rick Archer, an online discussion programme which represents part of a growing nonduality community of teachers from diverse backgrounds, creating a new dialogue that is open to both spiritual and scientific perspectives. The recognition of a nondual or undivided self beneath awareness is directly represented at various points in the novel’s dialogues accessed through both trauma and meditation practise. Taylor’s 2012 study: “Transformation Through Suffering: A Study of Individuals Who Have Experienced Positive Psychological Transformation Following Periods of Intense Turmoil,” examines individuals who have experienced positive psychological openings and transformation through turmoil and trauma. This was useful in developing the stationery cupboard scene in the novel as a catalyst for an opening or shift in awareness.

The holistic worldview in the novel opposes the mechanistic universe of Hythe. Laughter, as Henri Bergson suggests, may be derived from the mechanical appearing in human activity (Bergson 45b). Hythe’s worldview is laughed at through the holistic, Farfaphian, cosmic perspective that sees all life as interconnected. The neoliberal discourse that uses scientific materialism turns humans into puppets, but beneath its rhetoric is a deeper religious impulse for unity or transcendence. Hythe’s idea of freedom and immortality will finally turn humans into machines. This position was brought into clearer focus through John Gray’s: *The Soul of the Marionette* where he suggests that a mixture of scientific materialism and Gnosticism is now the dominant belief:

…they have come to believe that science will somehow enable the human mind to escape the conditions that shape its natural condition. Throughout much of the world, and particularly in
western countries, the Gnostic faith that knowledge can give humans a freedom no other creatures can possess has become the predominant religion (9).

Gray’s marionette is free in the way that extreme scientific materialists want humans to be: by being reduced to DNA structures, humans become intelligent puppets relieved of the burden of choice. The Gnosticism Gray describes sees the world as evil. Gray argues that with objective scientific knowledge and materialism, this exit can only be achieved through technology. ‘At present Gnosticism is the faith of people who believe themselves to be machines’ (Gray, Marionette, 10).

The novel’s satire on neoliberalism and secular scientific perspectives, also critiques New Age commercialisation. ‘Feel good’ therapies, are sold as spiritual profundities in the novel, engaging with debates on the commercialisation of the holistic movement. This is discussed in depth by Paul Heelas (Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism 2008) and to an extent by William Bloom (‘Does spirituality need to evolve?’ 2010). They suggest that a dialogue or clearer signalling of different, and not necessarily mutually exclusive, elements within the broad categories of holistic, mind-body-spirit and spiritual paths is needed.

The novel humorously questions the lines between romantic escapism, spirituality and consumerism. Arthur finds the great spiritual teacher in Wu Wei like the character in James Hilton’s The Lost Horizon, (1933) or Somerset Maugham’s The Razor’s Edge (1944). My own experiences in the Himalayas made me aware of the place of mystical Tibet as an exotic, unworldly land in a Western imaginary that has changed imaginary with globalisation. The novel plays with this changing dialogue between the contemporary traveller and the reputedly mystical ‘otherness’ of the Himalayas. Arthur’s sacred journey is crowded with alienated seekers from his own culture and the
U.S.A. I found the meeting with Wu Wei fell somewhere between Somerset Maugham’s idealised and adapted guru and V.S. Naipul’s satirical revisiting of Maugham’s meeting with the Advaita Vedanta spiritual teacher Ramana Maharshhi in *Half a Life* (2001). Naipaul critiques both the Eastern guru and western writer seeking mutual advantage. This is directly commented upon in *The Doom of Clowns* with the narrator mentioning how some of Wu Wei’s students write idealised stories about him.

I was also careful to challenge any sense of ‘otherness’ about the Himalayas, with Wu Wei following Arthur to the UK where he carries out shamanic rituals with strange Scottish men. Arthur seems more amazed by the mysterious north of England than anywhere further flung. While this risked de-romanticising the eastern mystical adventure, it followed the dialogic method in allowing the cynical secular voice and other texts, such as V.S. Naipul’s, to speak over the narrator as he describes novelists who write books about their exotic adventures and gurus. This seemed appropriate as YouTube videos of every guru and different branches of Buddhist, Hindu and New Age groups are readily available. As Richard Dawkins suggests in *The Enemies of Reason*, eastern religious ideas and alternative therapies are now mainstream. The initial romantic period of engagement has changed.

The representation of Eastern spirituality, alternative and holistic views retains a sense of humour by showing their vulnerability to neoliberal commodification with *Feel Good* and *Ascension Divine*. Paul Heelas notes in relation to the alternative movement that ‘a great deal hangs on the extent to which New Age spiritualities of life are privatised or commodified’ (2005 3). By spiritualities of life, Heelas refers to those working within an immanent frame and towards well-being, rather than more theistic, otherworldly perspectives. This is no longer an issue at the margins of cultural debate. In terms of social impact, the numbers of people involved in the broadly defined holistic...
area from Heelas’s extrapolations on available data in 2001, was over 900,000 (Spiritual Revolution 53). This figure represents the number of inhabitants of Great Britain involved in some form of holistic practise on a weekly basis, and 146,000 of these were spiritual practitioners. At the same time, Church of England attendances were estimated at 960,000, a number which had dropped to 870,600 by 2005 (Brierley).

The development of a healthy alternative spiritual culture that resists neoliberalism and offers social alternatives is part of the novel’s reflexively critical holistic voice. Arthur’s journey to the East balances a positive position on meditation while deconstructing a romantic attitude to an exotic otherness of the East. In writing about Eastern meditation, I was aware of current debates about the watering down of Buddhist meditation for city traders to relax in their high-pressure worlds which has been referenced by Slavoj Žižek in The Buddhist Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism and David Loy in ‘Beyond McMindfulness.’ Both have commented upon the dangers of modern mindfulness meditations, lacking ethical grounding. Žižek suggests such meditation creates the perfect disassociated capitalist, one who can live in the madness of high finance without taking responsibility (Žižek, ‘The Buddhist Ethic,’ see note 1 in works cited)

The romantic idea of meditation solving all problems is challenged when Arthur does not become a Buddha after years in the Himalayas. Žižek suggests that Tibetans do not just reach a peaceful Nirvana, they realise that within the Absolute there is a ‘dark side of the force’ (Žižek ‘The Buddhist Ethic,’ see note 2 in works cited). I also had no desire to promote Buddhism or Daoism as inherently better than, for example, contemplative Christian traditions or secular cognitive psychological approaches to consciousness. As the boundaries and dialogue between different religious, secular, ecological and technological discourses, increasingly overlap in the novel, it ends
appropriately (if ambiguously) with multiple spiritual traditions attending a wedding for the sheep. The novel aims to present a revolutionary holistic perspective that has a sense of humour and reflects upon its own cultural contingency, remaining in dialogue with secular critiques of commodification and seeing the importance of economic and social justice.

Glastonbury contains both practical holistic views that can speak to a secular perspective and also more theatrical and ‘way out’ beliefs. Druidic perspectives see the connection of the land with spiritual forces. Astrological conjunctions and moon phases are polite conversation. Hare Krishnas, Sufis, many Christian groups, neo-pagans and myriad other spiritual groups are represented. An interfaith gathering in the Chalice Well that I attended was estimated to have involved over 70 spiritual or religious paths. Many Glastonburians take an eclectic view and integrate several perspectives or traditions into their own individualised approach. There are, of course, tensions between different perspectives but these are usually not serious and there is a remarkable degree of religious tolerance in my experience. A. J. Ivakhiv suggests in *Claiming Sacred Ground* (2001) that eco-spiritualists and more ascension-oriented spiritual seekers experience a degree of disagreement. The novel mixes ideas of the otherworldly ascensionists and the ecologically committed, through the hybridity of the Earth protecting Goddess extraterrestrials.

Glastonbury is a town of only around 8,000 people. The alternative community lives in the centre and surrounding area. 50,000 people a year visit the Chalice Well garden, and 100,000 visit the Abbey. The last rough estimate for visitors to Glastonbury Tor is from 2006, with the figure of 340,000 annual visitors being quoted. There are a wide range of religious/spiritual traditions and worldviews for a small town. This diversity of views contains elements of predictability and consumer adaptation, as Marion
Bowman points out in her studies of Glastonbury as a site of consumption and its role as a local and global centre for New Age beliefs. (Bowman ‘Ancient Avalon, New Jerusalem, Heart Chakra of Planet Earth’ 164-8).

The ‘vernacular’ lived dialogue Bowman notes within Glastonbury’s alternative community intersects with locals who may be disinterested in their perspectives. Tourists and pilgrims visit all year, although many more come in the summer, attracted by Arthurian legends, ley lines and claims by some that Glastonbury is the birthplace of British Christianity with Jesus having reputedly visited. The latter legend is memorialised in William Blake’s Jerusalem: ‘And did those feet/ in ancient times/ walk upon England’s mountains green/ And was the holy Lamb of God/ On England’s pleasant pastures seen?’

The novel only briefly directly addresses the alternative community, through the reported narrative of Arthur (Pendragon), the trainee university researcher, and the exaggerated discourse of Brigitte. Later, the science fiction genre is used more clearly with the Glastonbury’s witchy Goddesses being Farfaphians from the mothership. The Doom of Clowns has been read by people in Glastonbury who could see writing within a secular university setting as in some way allying with the enemy. Satirising the researcher role as an informal government spy retained the autoethnographic element, with further destabilisation occurring as Arthur becomes more extraterrestrially entwined.

Exploring secular perspectives that support the free speech and religious tolerance found in Glastonbury also developed the holistic voice in the novel. Ian McEwan states: ‘My own view of religion is that people must be free to worship all the gods they want. But it’s only the secular spirit that will guarantee that freedom’ (‘Faith and Hope at
Ground Zero’). The earthly form of the Farfaphian Hannah in Chapter Forty-Three, has the voice of a humanist anti-war activist. Godfrey speaks as a socialist revolutionary and activist, fighting against class oppression, seeing Arthur’s developing religious or otherworldly beliefs as part of the problem. The voice of an atheist active political character is included to problematise the novel’s call for a more holistic worldview. I was interested in Jolyon Agar’s suggestion that one of the reasons the left has failed is its rejection of spirituality or transcendence (Post-secularism, Realism, Utopia 14). This may of course depend on one’s definition of spirituality, which could include the idea of a shared goal of enacting a more egalitarian society that resists dogmatic belief.

The Doom of Clowns’ ironic worldview is rooted in the need for a secular society but one with more sense of spirit and an acceptance of the persistence of some form of religious structure. Margaret Atwood captures this view with ‘God’s gardeners’ in her MaddAddam trilogy (2003, 2009, 2013). In interview about God’s gardener’s and environmental concerns, Atwood states that ‘If you’re going to have a religion, please have a good one’ (“God’s Gardener’s” (Part 3) Context with Lorna Dueck. 2014). Atwood’s God’s Gardeners are a religious ecological group emerging from a post-apocalyptic world, she suggests the need for humans to evaluate the good and bad in human religions, given that as an evolutionary adaptation they will persist.

Kristeva connects the terms ‘credo,’ ‘credit’ and ‘belief’ with the crisis of capitalism. She notes that modern secular society does not take enough account of the need for a shared creativity, and a living political bond, a human need to share creativity and to trust. Kristeva suggests that our need to believe comes from a pre-religious urge. She locates the word ‘credo’ – from the Sanskrit Kredh-dh/srad-dha- which ‘means “to give one’s heart, one’s vital energy in return for a recompense” and designates an “act of
trust implying restitution”, the act of “entrusting something with the certitude of getting it back (give credit)” (‘This Incredible Need to Believe’ 4).

Kristeva’s use of the term ‘pre-religious’ could be connected to her close association with and development of Bakhtin’s work, with its idea of a pre-class folklore (The Dialogic Imagination 159). Kristeva’s pre-religious urge takes us back to the relationship with the mother, a basic human need. Kristeva therefore develops a secular, anthropological, psychological ground – before religion and the patriarchal symbolic order – that could be rooted in the relationship with the mother. Irigaray invokes the divine feminine (Speculum of The Other Woman 330-364) as a resistance to patriarchy. The communitarian end of the novel was inspired through reading Irigaray’s The Way of Love and Between East and West, which examines more communitarian ways of being and knowing. The holistic, egalitarian, humorous voice in the novel keeps returning to the mother with Jill waving the puppets at the now dethroned social hierarchy.

The commune in the woods does, however, have better modern amenities than many other places, according to the ‘Argonaut’ newspaper report. There is no attempt to reject technology, just a questioning of the economic system and underlying beliefs that may direct it. McEwan who is an atheist and friend of Richard Dawkins suggests in an interview that while we must seek salvation in science for issues such as climate change ‘there is a massive issue of politics and ethics’ (McEwan ‘On Chesil Beach’). I found myself agreeing with McEwan’s view that science does hold the answer to some current ecological problems but then perhaps veganism, a multiverse and God’s gardeners do as well.

The secular voice in the novel rejects sky gods or a multiverse in the last chapter. Guarfur is going to a planet where extraterrestrials and Hythe do not exist, but the
humans still act as if they do. My aim of developing a more critically reflexive, holistic voice with a sense of humour increasingly moves towards a secular perspective, partly because one of the novel’s aims is to promote a holistic paradigm to a wider audience. The novel’s aim of exploring possibilities for a more human, interconnected society and sense of self to avert numerous apocalyptic scenarios, does not necessarily find solutions. The story’s explorations are comically portrayed and are not meant to be conclusive but they do imply the need for a radical shift toward a more interconnected, empathetic, holistic worldview.

The theoretical research on Glastonbury, the holistic movement and secular perspectives, developed my perspectives and increased my awareness of competing dialogues. My holistic voice developed as it became more difficult to create simplified perspectives of Mc Ewan’s secular critique of religious belief. This led to greater diversity of voice in novel and a more reflexive, humorous holistic voice.
6) Other Universes

This chapter discusses *The Doom of Clowns*’ connection to speculative fiction and the closely-related genre of science fiction. All three research questions are involved in this discussion of genre to an extent. The most directly important in considering the novel, was that by reflecting on genre debates the story could locate itself within a literary landscape that used fiction to disrupt neoliberalism or more generally, political and cultural hegemony. Through the exploration of genre, the novel’s approach to connecting the personal with the social also developed.

Many elements of the novel drew upon my own autobiographical reflections:

Arthur’s school sequences, receiving the puppets from his mother, teaching in Istanbul, the journey to the Himalayas, life as a PhD researcher and in Glastonbury were all based on events which I have experienced. Names and places were changed, the details of events were altered. Characters were often made up of composites and exaggerated. The inclusion of extraterrestrials removed any serious claims to factual truth. The use of science fiction and fantasy tropes were also a part of the relational ethics (Bochner and Ellis, 2016, 147-155). By using other universes, the novel could explore in a way that was safely removed from being a direct representation of family members or friends.

The narrator became ambiguous and unreliable and the writer’s desire for revenge and epic self-delusion is suggested. The use of a satirically fictionalised author/researcher as a character further destabilised any claims to objective truth. The ideas of having a hidden extraterrestrial identity from a more compassionate, evolved world; Hythe’s snake like secret persona and a nefarious conspiracy that drives all
social change were satirical fictionalisations of alternative beliefs that might be viewed as part of a carnival of extreme deviance. To an extent, everything in the novel is rooted in beliefs considered true by someone, but I have refracted these beliefs through a satirical, clownish, puppet like discourse.

The chapter begins with debates between Atwood and Le Guin concerning the genre boundaries of science and speculative fiction, with *The Doom of Clowns* then considered in relation to New Wave and slipstream fiction. The novel’s explorations of cognitive dissonance, the fantastic and ambiguity, are also considered in terms of genre. *The Doom of Clowns* is then further reflected upon as a speculative fiction critique of neoliberalism’s colonising of the social imaginary. The science fiction elements of the novel are examined in relation to the Arthurian myth and considered as a way of mediating competing protestant and catholic perspectives. The novel is then further situated within a literary landscape using specific novels from the science and speculative fiction genres.

The differences between speculative fiction and science fiction have been debated by Margaret Atwood and Ursula Le Guin. Atwood in her 2011 Guardian article: “The Road to Utopia,” suggests that speculative fiction does not have Martians and is more focused on a present reality. Novel’s such as Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (1949) are speculative fiction for Atwood because they are about things that really could happen ‘but just hadn’t completely happened when the authors wrote the books’ (“The Road to Utopia”). Atwood states that she is interested in things that could happen now ‘from what we have invented and things that may already be happening without our knowing’ (“The Road to Utopia”). A clear example of speculative fiction for Atwood would be her novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), where the Pigoons are pigs with human DNA used to grow organs for transplants. Atwood wrote the story about a decade
before the public announcement that genetically modified pigs could now be used to provide organs for humans. Le Guin would prefer to call *Oryx and Crake* science fiction.

Atwood comments upon their earlier debate: ‘I found that what she means by "science fiction" is speculative fiction about things that really could happen, whereas things that really could not happen she classifies under "fantasy"’ (Atwood “The Road to Utopia”). Atwood and Le Guin’s transatlantic debates come at a time when there is a possible resurgence in the academic prestige of Science Fiction in the UK. Anglia Ruskin University opened the UK’s first centre for Science Fiction and Fantasy in 2017.

Roger Luckhurst suggests in his 1991 essay “Border Policing: Postmodernism and Science Fiction,” that ‘The topography in which SF criticism operates has long been established,’ between what he calls ‘The mainstream’ of literary institutions that decide upon cultural value and ‘The Ghetto,’ of the SF genre. (358) The divide between ‘high’ and ‘low’ fiction that Luckhurst describes raises the issue of who decides what is of value. Luckhurst notes science fiction’s ongoing struggle with a subliterary status where only J’G. Ballard as part of the New Wave in 1960s was seen ‘to lead SF out of the “subliterary” and into the mainstream’ (Luckhurst 362). The slipstream non-space between SF and the postmodern sensibility of high culture that Bruce Sterling suggests is for Luckhurst in 1991, just a new postmodernist border in which SF is once again subliterary (364).

templates of the new-style...’ in an early Editorial for the science fiction magazine *New Worlds* (231). The new-style that was called for, is one Robert’s describes as a more ‘passionate, subtle, ironic and original form of SF’ (231). Roberts also notes J.G. Ballard’s call to abandon Science fiction cliché and suggests ‘What the New Wave did was to take a genre that had been, in its popular mode, more connected with content and ‘ideas’ than form, style or aesthetics, and reconsider it under the logic of the latter three terms (231).

*The Doom of Clowns* has elements of cliché perhaps with Hythe the antagonist, but the pantomime villain is part of a more subtle, ironic critique of human problems in the contemporary world. In connecting the novel with speculative fiction and the New Wave tradition, Nicholas Ruddick’s survey of the New Wave of 1960s was also useful. Ruddick suggests New Wave writers wanted to speculative more freely. He notes in *Ultimate Island* that in Michael Moorcock’s first editorial for ‘*New Worlds*, “A literature for the space Age,” in the May-June 1964 issue’ (qtd. in Ruddick 9), he even uses the term ‘speculative fantasy’ rather than speculative fiction, to subvert Robert A. Heinlein’s earlier 1947 definition that strictly excludes fantasy.

Patrick Parrinder considers Heinlein’s definition, which suggests that in the speculative science fiction story ‘accepted science and established facts are extrapolated to produce a new situation.’ (qtd. in Parrinder, 16). Parrinder comments that this puts the genre more in the realm of futurology, focusing on logical forecasts based on fact (16). Speculative fiction as defined by Heinlein (Who Ruddick mentions Isaac Asimov saw as a “man who thoroughly understands science” (Qtd. in Ruddick, 9), continued to be subverted by the New Wave of writer’s first in Britain and later in the United States who wanted to speculate in a freer way (9). Ruddick comments upon Le Guin’s 1971
novel the *Lathe of Heaven*, as a North American example of a work that was not based on a thorough understanding of science and that ‘…traditional science fiction…at the time of the Vietnam War protests, seemed in danger of being overrun by a bunch of long-haired radical feminists who wrote stories about the heat-death of the universe without feeling the need to invoke the second law of thermodynamics’ (Ruddick 9).

*The Doom of Clowns* takes little interest in scientific details. I wouldn’t claim the label feminist but the novel is partly developed from Irigaray and Kristeva’s feminist theories. The novel only utilizes minimal elements of the hard science fiction genre as described by Heinlein, to make a political critique and examine the psychological impact of science and technology on human consciousness. The novel’s interest in disrupting political hegemony and conceptions of scientific progress, using ironic science fiction and mythic elements, suggests it could be associated with the New Wave or Moorcock’s subversive speculative fantasy. The lines are hard to draw. Marek Oziewicz summarises the term “speculative fiction” in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia as having three possible meanings:

- a subgenre of science fiction that deals with human rather than technological problems, a genre distinct from and opposite to science fiction in its exclusive focus on possible futures, and a super category for all genres that deliberately depart from imitating “consensus reality” of everyday experience. (Oziewicz, 1)

*The Doom of Clowns* could be viewed as speculative fiction given these definitions, again, because it does focus on human problems and departs from consensus reality. The novel also engages (if satirically) with possible futures, imagines alternatives and subverts the consensus reality of neoliberalism and what Oziewicz calls the ‘post-enlightenment mind set’ (1). As a non-mimetic, or non-realist novel, *The Doom of*
Clowns could also be considered speculative fiction, despite the ambiguous Martians (Farfaphian’s) that Atwood might find problematic. The novel could also be called satirical, dystopian science fiction.

More recent formalist definitions of science fiction were useful in reflecting upon the use of genre. The novel’s engagement with cognitive dissonance in relation to neoliberalism’s shaping of a social imaginary moves towards Darko Suvin’s definition:

A literary genre or verbal construct whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment (qtd. in Roberts, Science Fiction 7-8).

The interaction of estrangement and cognition in The Doom of Clowns and use of multiple genres connects the novel with what has been called slipstream fiction, a term first used by Bruce Sterling in 1989. In her 2011 Guardian newspaper article “The Road to Utopia,” Margaret Atwood quotes Sterling’s definition of slipstream fiction:

I want to describe what seems to me to be a new, emergent 'genre', which has not yet become a 'category' … It is a contemporary kind of writing which has set its face against consensus reality. It is fantastic, surreal sometimes, speculative on occasion, but not rigorously so. It does not aim to provoke a 'sense of wonder' or to systematically extrapolate in the manner of classic science fiction. Instead, this is a kind of writing which simply makes you feel very strange; the way that living in the late 20th century makes you feel, if you are a person of a certain sensibility.

The Doom of Clowns certainly embraces cognitive dissonance but might be found unacceptable according to Bruce Sterling’s 2006 definition of Slipstream, with his resistance to ‘New Age’ superstition (8). However, as a novel that satirically challenges consensus reality with a rootedness in cultural studies (9), there is a strong resemblance between The Doom of Clowns and the slipstream style. Kurt Vonnegut’s
Slaughterhouse Five (1969), Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale (1985), David Mitchell’s Cloud Atlas (2004) and Angela Carter’s Passion of the New Eve (1977), have all been viewed as slipstream novels because they subvert consensus reality and convey a sense of the strangeness of existence. Sterling looks toward the future of slipstream and suggests:

So, if I were looking for an emergent slipstream literature, I might look in pop-culture critique. It would probably be European rather than American; many writers of slipstream are from outside the US; they have less techno-enthusiasm than the US does. It would be very intimate and subjective; it would have to be about internal sensibilities (10).

Guinevere’s intimate observation of Arthur’s subjectivity, the warnings against technology driven by neoliberalism and the critique of popular culture with, for example, the Olympic opening ceremony correlate with Sterling’s descriptions of slipstream fiction. The novel’s engagement with cognitive dissonance has already been mentioned in relation to Adam Curtis’ BBC documentary Hypernormalisation in Chapter One, with his claim that the CIA encouraged UFO and extraterrestrial narratives in the 1980s to play upon modern anxieties of alienation and destabilise potential opposition. This view is partly voiced by Godfrey in Chapter Thirty and returned to by Arthur in Chapter Thirty-Nine. The novel’s extraterrestrial metaphor is ambiguous, suggesting that Arthur’s alien beliefs are possibly the result of state sponsored fictions that have colonised his imaginary. The lines between genres are blurred to explore cognitive dissonance and a loss of meaning within modern society.

Arthur, the messianic extraterrestrial, enters a dialogue between a medieval enchanted worldview and a secular sensibility which has developed from it, exploring the sense of modern ambiguity that has been discussed in relation to Critchley. Similarly, Todorov views the fantastic as the moment of ‘uncertainty,’ that emerges between a
belief or disbelief in the supernatural. ‘Once we choose one answer or the other, we
leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre’ (Todorov, The Fantastic: A Structural
Approach to a Literary Genre 25). The space of uncertainty emerges from the
doubleness of the modern mind still inhabiting a medieval religious framework. The
tensions between an uncanny psychological explanation, and a belief in the
supernatural have already been mentioned in relation to Henry James’ The Turn of the
Screw. The Doom of Clowns begins in another world but soon begins to suggest an
ambiguity in the narrative that uses the fantastic, but suggests a more human and
psychological explanation for the otherworldly story. The desire for an alternative
universe and a re-enchanted world in an age of secular anxiety is explored, in dialogue
with psychological and social explanations.

When Grandad Bob describes his experience of visiting Hiroshima just after the atomic
bomb in 1945 and his dislike of the communists in Chapter Seventeen, The Doom of
Clowns moves clearly into a post-war British dystopian tradition. Andrew Hammond
suggests that ‘analysis of how the Cold War impressed itself upon cultural production
offers ways of forecasting the long-term cultural effects of the “war on terror”, while
also providing an important guide to how cultural production can absorb and endorse
the discourses of international conflict’ (Hammond 681). Arthur’s slightly paranoid,
Americanised messianic fantasy and Grandad Bob’s preference for Frank Sinatra’s
‘My Way,’ evoke the geopolitical shifts and concerns of the Cold War that continue
decades later in different forms.

The novel is not dystopian throughout, however, as in suggesting a more peaceful,
communitarian lifestyle with a gift-based economy, the novel (satirically) enacts an
idealistic, utopian challenge that is not entirely unimaginable. I also incorporated
comments by the Farfaphians about their civilisation using artificial wombs at a certain
point in their evolution, to destabilise the novel’s possibly overly anti-technology
discourse and connect with debates around artificial wombs that are becoming a
biotechnological possibility.

The recurring appearance of Queen Elizabeth aimed to create the sense that Arthur’s
human mind was part of a colonised, popular culture. The genres of the real world that
Arthur inhabits are what are being critiqued. The Farfaphians’ mission to bring true
freedom to a lesser species partly subverts a colonial science fiction adventure. An
Arthurian golden age is mixed with an extraterrestrial utopia. Deborah Philips writing
on futuristic mechanised rides within Theme Parks such as Disneyland, suggests the
meeting of utopia and nostalgia in the creation of popular myths of scientific progress
where science and technology will secure the future:

...there is a possibility of a return to a golden of Camelot of imperial adventure or that there could be a golden tomorrow that will be provided by science and technology. The carnival draws on utopianism that is based in nostalgia and also on optimism for the future. (Philips, Fairground Attractions: A Genealogy of The Pleasure Ground 2-3)

Neil Armstrong lands on the moon days after Arthur’s birth and the novel maintains a
sense of scientific enchantment filling the void left by previous religious or enchanted
worldviews. Charles Taylor’s conception of a ‘buffered self’ in A Secular Age (2007 37-42), was something I also found useful here in developing the sense of a shift from
a traditionally enchanted worldview, to one where scientific progress dominates. Here
Taylor views modern subjective awareness as different from previous periods of
humanity, where a more enchanted perspective existed. Industrialisation, migration to
the cities, modern medicine and the scientific worldview have altered perceptions to
the point where as Alan Jacobs suggests, we seek out the fantasy genre to fill the void
left by the loss of a previously enchanted world (Jacobs). The Farfaphian world could
be viewed as an imaginary universe where Arthur the traumatised human’s alter ego searches for meaning in a disenchanted world.

*The Doom of Clowns* speculates on the causes of the sense of strangeness emerging within an age of apocalyptic anxiety and surveillance culture. The Arthurian myth and extraterrestrial elements support the autoethnographic approach in satirically subverting dominant culture and beliefs. In satirising the ‘Technological Singularity,’ the novel uses elements of science fiction, speculative fiction and fantasy. The genre of a ‘Technological Singularity’ could of course be viewed differently depending on personal beliefs, seeming like very probable speculative fiction to some, while being a distant possibility or a deluded fantasy to others. The suppressed religious fantasies of a scientific materialist perspective, are for example, the object of Philip Ball’s 2015 critique of transhumanism in *The New Statesman*: ‘the concept of the Singularity provides the immortalists with their equivalent of the Resurrection…virtual immortality’ (Ball, “The God Quest: Why Humans Long for Immortality”).

Hythe’s neoliberal, scientific materialist rhetoric uses the religious language of serving ‘The One.’ Returning partly to the earlier engagement with Critchley’s ambiguous faithless modern mind, Adam Roberts argues science fiction has developed from a ‘religious-ideological clash between Catholic and Protestant ways of viewing the world’ beginning in 1600 (Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* 341), with the burning of the Copernican inspired speculative thinker Giordano Bruno for heresy (36-38). The novel’s setting of Glastonbury, with its Abbey destroyed in the Protestant Reformation and the use of Arthurian myth and futuristic magic (the cocoon transformation), directly portrays the ideological conflict between a magical or enchanted worldview and a rationalist hegemony that criminalised witchcraft.
Roberts’ suggests science fiction is ‘the genre that mediates the discourses of ‘science’ (or fact) and ‘magic’ or subsequently ‘imagination’ (fiction)” (42). Jill’s unnamed Catholic Irish ancestry is connected to Great Grandad Percival, invoking a romantic, carnivalesque, enchanted worldview. Her resistance to Grandad Bob and Terence partly comes from her family’s worldview conflicting with the more protestant views of her husband. The novel’s ambiguity attempts to allow for the literal existence of magic and the supernatural, rather than seeing these positions as simply naïve.

Jonathon Swift’s 1792 novel *Gulliver’s Travels*, is an early example of what could be viewed as a satire on the emerging scientific hegemony. Gregory Lynall’s: *Swift and Science: The Satire, Politics, and Theology of Natural Knowledge, 1690-1730*, considers Swift’s satirical imagination as a challenge to the ‘emerging culture of scientific discovery and practice’ (1). Lynall culturally situates Swift’s work in relation to the Royal Society’s support of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton’s emerging scientific worldview. Swift’s wider conception of natural philosophy and doubts about the motivations, hubris and limitations of an overly mechanistic, scientific approach are noted by Lynall: ‘Again and again, Swift’s satires charge the scientific impulse with failing to account for the complexity of life, simplifying all to mechanism and the material realm…’ (Lynall, 144).’ The satirical object of scientific materialism and its limiting, abstracted mindset is obviously nothing new but *The Doom of Clowns* asserts once again, the need for this to be challenged.

Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* influenced my approach to gender in the novel. Le Guin explores how gender helps to construct civilisation, seemingly asking whether it is necessary at all with her androgynous characters. As Adam Roberts points out, Chapter Seven of *The Left Hand of Darkness* is called: *The Question of Sex* and takes a very non-binary approach to gender (Roberts, “Science Fiction” 86-7). This non-
binary approach is explored in *The Doom of Clowns* through Guinevere, Arthur and finally Guarfur. Roberts suggests that the warless culture of a place called Winter in Le Guin’s novel, ‘is possibly the ultimate function of a genderless society, and by implication war is nothing but the result of the fixed-gender nature of our own world (88).’

While the Farfaphians still have gender, they no longer biologically reproduce. Guarfur’s emergence suggests the overcoming of internal conflict and control by a war-like culture. As a novel that engages with ideas of alienation and what it means to be human in modern society, Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969) was a main inspiration. Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* also uses extraterrestrials. Vonnegut interweaves memories of World War II and the post-war era with experiences in another dimension, where he speaks with the Tralfamadorians. The alien species have a non-linear conception of time that also allows the earthly narrative to move forward and back. Vonnegut is an avowed humanist who explores what it means to be human through collective and personal trauma using an alien metaphor.

*The Doom of Clowns* also connects with Matt Haig’s 2013 novel *The Human’s*, in exploring human problems, using aliens, in an age of scientific progress and neoliberal individualism. Matt Haig’s novel *The Humans* (2013), explores several of the same themes as *The Doom of Clowns*. Here, a human maths professor is ambiguously killed and his body taken over by a Vonnedorian extraterrestrial because his recent discovery is too dangerous for humans. Haig’s book explores what it means to be human, the importance of love and the dangers of technology without wisdom. It also explores depression and alienation. *The Doom of Clowns* could therefore be situated within the context of these two novels as a satire that uses science fiction elements to explore
modern anxieties and concerns over human’s inability to cope with the world they’re creating.

George Orwell’s great dystopian, speculative novel is directly referenced with Chapter Twenty-One titled 1984. I’d read the story in 1983 and the events with Arthur and Mr Trott at school, satirically exaggerate autobiographical material that at the time seemed very Orwellian. Orwell’s critique of Newspeak is echoed by Mr Trott’s claim that the word Thatcherism doesn’t exist. I aimed to evoke the sense of two ideologies clashing with resistance being marginalised through language as a new way of thinking emerged.

In conclusion, The Doom of Clowns is a satire that has resemblances to New Wave and slipstream fiction and could be viewed as a subversive speculative fiction or ‘speculative fantasy,’ that has dystopian elements in the satirical critique. The novel uses a genre boundary crossing approach to explore what it means to be human using extraterrestrial metaphors in the neoliberal, Internet age, to reflect a sense of cognitive dissonance. Realistic elements of fictionalised personal experience are put in dialogue with a satirically portrayed, science fiction version of neoliberalism to explore wider social issues. As a novel that began with an autoethnographic approach, The Doom of Clowns therefore uses a mixture of genres to connect the personal to the social and challenge neoliberal hegemony while suggesting a holistic paradigm.
7) Speculative auto-satire

In this last chapter I suggest Speculative auto-satire as a new hybridised approach for connecting personal and political narratives to critique technological neoliberal hegemony. This develops the first and third research questions which ask if fiction can disrupt neoliberalism and how does one connect personal experience to social issues. The term emerges from the development of genre considered in the previous chapter, reflecting the Speculative, satirical and critically self-reflexive elements of the writing process. Carolyn Ellis defines evocative autoethnography as:

research, writing, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social. The form usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection… and claims the conventions of literary writing (The Ethnographic I, xix).

The usefulness of satire in autoethnographic writing is suggested by Grant, Short and Turner in the 2013 collection, Contemporary British Autoethnography:

textual practises which expose oppressive, deadening and creativity stifling societal practises and experiences are key in challenging cultural hegemony…one such device, arguably useful for critical autoethnographic work, is satire… (Grant, et al 5-6)

My own definition of Speculative auto-satire, developed through Carolyn Ellis and Grant is: Writing that uses satire and Speculative fiction to challenge the absurdities and incongruities of neoliberal scientism, rooted in an exploration of personal experience in relation to dominant cultural beliefs and practices.

Speculative auto-satire allows the writing process to challenge neoliberal hegemony using the science fiction genre to subvert and warn against absurd ideas of scientific
and economic progress. The reflexive approach it supports, also allows the dominant cultural influences on the text’s production to be recognised and reflected upon. I make no direct claim for the novel being autoethnographic because of the degree to which elements have been fictionalised, but the writing process has used autoethnographic methods that include drawing upon the conventions of literary fiction to connect personal experience to the cultural and political.

Developed in the autoethnographic community based at Brighton University, where research was shared at regular meetings, my approach to writing the novel used qualitative approaches including emotional recall and sociological introspection, while remaining highly unrealistic. Speculative auto-satire allowed me to connect my own family experiences to neoliberalism and technological change, with a fictional and often comical truth that maintained an (extraterrestrial) distance.

The Speculative auto-satire approach extends a creative-artistic (Adams & Manning 360) autoethnographic method of writing that can include family or friendships. In: “Autoethnography as Family Research,” Tony Adams and Jimmy Manning outline diverse autoethnographic explorations of family life, suggesting the usefulness of insider accounts and creative-artistic approaches that connect with readers on an emotional level. Adams has also developed autoethnographic work with Jonathan Wyatt in the field of qualitative research, focusing on family experiences (Adams & Wyatt, 2012, 2014).

The Speculative auto-satire approach allows for a wide and imaginative social focus, while exploring sometimes painful personal experience in a playful way. Fact and fiction can be freely mixed while the novel can still be read with an autoethnographic focus that is sensitive to how the work is connecting personal family experiences to
wider political or cultural issues. Jonathon Wyatt, in his 2017 keynote speech at the autoethnography conference that I attended at Sussex University, was called: What has stand-up ever done for autoethnography? Wyatt suggested ways in which stand-up comedy might have something to offer autoethnography. I felt my approach was developing along the same lines, reflecting on the family, using humour but also tropes of the science fiction genre.

In developing a Speculative auto-satire approach, I took the decision to discuss the research with my mother and gave her the final novel. She was enthusiastic, brought me some puppets and enjoyed the final story. She felt the novel was fictionalised enough, especially with the opening science fiction chapters. It was made clear from the outset that I was satirising some autobiographical material but using extraterrestrial characters and was more focused on creating an engaging story that connected multiple personal, social and political issues. Jill’s character often challenges and subverts the protagonist’s narrative, as the novel both problematizes and connects personal experience with themes such as intergenerational trauma and the suppression of a feminine voice, using autobiographically rooted material.

The autoethnographic element remained throughout the writing process but the extent to which autobiographical events are altered, and the fantastic, satirical subversions of a consensus reality perhaps overly stretch what is already a diverse field of autoethnographic approaches. My primary focus became finally to create an engaging novel that retained a connection to the autoethnographic process. The novel’s development as arts-based research, did not take place in the context of ‘fictional’ writing groups but remained in dialogue with autoethnographic writers. The term Speculative auto-satire therefore reflects this autoethnographic element to the writing process. The novel draws upon personal experience and went through a process of
being reflexively and externally critiqued, rewritten and put in dialogue with the autoethnographic perspectives.

Speculative auto-satire is a useful hybrid model for examining personal experience. The satirical and science fiction type elements allow the narrative explorations to engage with dominant narratives, encouraging imaginative, subversive, reflexive and diffractive perspectives that disrupt the accepted understandings of hegemonic culture. *Beyond Autoethnography*, which is edited by Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn, was published in 2008 and explores current trends in Asian Canadian literature that have moved away from ethnographic autobiography to explore more diverse and transgressive literary forms. Similarly, in using Speculative auto-satire the writer/researcher becomes able to examine personal experience using a wider range of genres.

The mixing of personal experience with satire and science fiction elements is useful in a culture where technology is altering a sense of space, time and reality (*A Brief History of Neoliberalism* 3-4). The speed of social change and movements toward posthuman and transhuman ideas of the self, requires diverse narrative approaches to voicing the self. Perspectives that recognise entanglement and agential realism as suggested by Karen Barad, can be accommodated by the Speculative auto-satire approach to disrupt anthropocentric, reflexive representational practises, allowing for stories that see humans intra-acting as part of a wider phenomenon (Karen Barad 56). Speculative auto-satire therefore supports an autoethnographic challenge to hegemonic culture to suggest a more diverse onto-epistemic worldview.

The Speculative auto-satire allows a serio-comic critique of neoliberalism within the academy, as in Chapter Forty-Six when Arthur talks with Professor Digby in the
canteen. The scene is entirely fictional, but drew on Jess Moriarty’s “Autobiographical and Researched Experiences with Academic Writing: An Analytical Autoethnodrama.” Moriarty uses the transcript of a dialogue between her and a more senior member of staff to discuss the politics of the university and reflect upon the conditions in which her research has been produced. Her research examines the pressures on an academic to produce work that fulfils certain criteria and how this can have a dehumanising effect. Professor Digby subverts the novel’s revolutionary discourse by framing it within the boundaries of performance-based autoethnographic research at a university. Guarfur’s attempts to explain the need for radical change are redirected toward funding opportunities. The Speculative auto-satire approach enables the narrative to move into quite contentious areas, in a way that retains an ironic distance.

The uses of satire, sarcasm and particularly irony in social research in the academy have been suggested by Cate Watson in “Notes on the Variety and Uses of Satire, Sarcasm and Irony in Social Research, with Some Observations on Vices and Follies in the Academy,” and in Alec Grant’s satirical critique of mental health (Grant, Short, Turner 33-48). Norman Denzin uses a satirical approach in his call to performance in “Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu All Over Again.” A call to make a greater space for humour in autoethnography (if it is meant to be therapeutic), is also made in “Make Them Giggle: Auto/Ethnography as Stand- up Comedy - A Response to Denzin's Call to Performance” (Hemmingson).

The Hangfield School sections in The Doom of Clowns were partly inspired by the new university seen in Malcolm Bradbury’s The History Man (1975), with the Marxist lecturer (a character who could perhaps not exist at a modern university in such an overt form) inspiring aspects of Mr Trott’s character as he attempts to break the potentially Conservative voting Arthur, as Howard Kirk does in The History Man. This
very fictionalised autobiographical section could also be classified as autofictional, which it has been argued is more a mode than a genre. Autofiction challenges autobiography and, as with the encounter with Digby in Chapter Forty-Six, moves away from a more direct personal representation. As Serge Doubrovsky suggests, the self is a ‘fictional being.’ (quoted in Margaretta Jolly, 86). Doubrovsky claims this fictional self is an ontological fact rather than a mere ludic subversion. (Jolly, 86) *The Doom of Clowns* is partly a playful exploration of selves that aims to find a new way of living, while remaining rooted in a political critique.

Speculative auto-satire promotes laughter as a method of resistance. Mark Weeks suggests that laughter is sometimes now seen as an icon of liberated desire, but may also be a subversion of desire by recognising its connection to human temporality. Derrida notes laughter is ‘a unique acknowledgement of the temporal dimension of human communication and its relation to desire…a subversion of the human experience of temporality’ (quoted in Weeks 383). The clown or trickster role is useful for standing outside the temporal human world, critiquing dominant narratives and freeing the imagination.

Speculative auto-satire is a way of examining personal experience in dialogue with neoliberalism and technology, as human subjectivity and temporality alter. This approach allows for a playful, humorous exploration, that can disrupt apparently neutral neoliberal discourse. As a method of social critique within arts-based self-development it could potentially be applied in autoethnographic or therapeutic settings. Jane Speedy and Sue Porter in *Creative Practitioner Inquiry in the Helping Professions*, express the view that arts practise can support those whose knowledge is disregarded to enable silenced voices and play an emancipatory, self-actualising role (4). They also note that slippage between fact and fiction is ‘commonplace in arts-based
inquiries’ (1). Speedy and Porter use an archaeologist from the future, examining twenty-first century human beliefs, juxtaposed with their own ‘archived’ academic voices, reflecting on social inequality, the assumptions of modern academia and arts-based research. Speculative auto-satire similarly recognises the context in which the writing is produced and so encourages the development of a critically reflexive approach that retains a sense of humour.
Conclusion

The first research question was, can one use fiction to disrupt neoliberal discourse? A market-driven society is challenged in the novel in several ways, most obviously with the dehumanising digital universe of Hythe. As the research progressed, the clownish mood and the novel’s dialogue with ideas of a maternal imaginary became more central to the writing practice. Hythe then emerged as a carnivalesque villain that balanced the novel’s more realistic critiques of neoliberalism, using traumatic events such as the fire during the teacher’s strike. Jill and the puppets began to appear more prominently in later drafts of the novel, as the dialogue with a maternal imaginary and the clown role became the novel’s main disruptive strategies.

Guarfur’s conversation with Professor Digby in the university café develops the clownish mood, as Guarfur is told to stop bringing the sheep to college. In this entirely fictional scene, the novel’s utopian, revolutionary holistic voice is self-satirised in dialogue with the university context in which it is being produced. The dialogic space that emerges through the reflexive satire, allows for a more directly transgressive polemic focused on disrupting neoliberal hegemony. Using the clownish mood, the critique remains comically light-hearted while retaining a serious element.

In satirising the context in which the research is produced during the scene with Digby, the novel also self-critiques its own performed resistance. These reflexive elements developed from the initial autoethnographic writing. While they may affect the novel’s readability for a wider audience, the novel attempts to be genuinely subversive by engaging with the context of its production. The reflexive, dialogic approach supported this strategy and therefore allowed the novel to connect the personal directly with political issues.
The destabilising of dominant binary opposites including self and other through Arthur and Guinevere’s relationship, creates a more internalised, empathic commentary that also supports the novel’s disruption of neoliberal discourse. Through their relationship, Hythe’s dehumanising world is resisted. I feel their relationship worked as a method of developing the sense of an interior self that is resisting neoliberal colonization. The interior sense of self developed through Arthur and Guinevere, therefore encourages the recognition of the dehumanising effects of a neoliberal hegemony on individual consciousness. This fictional, character based approach to challenging the binary oppositions of inner and outer, self and other, allowed for a more intimate, emotional exploration and this was possibly more effective than the direct critique with Digby.

Some of the novel’s broad strokes were a result of the word limit for the research but perhaps if beginning the story again, I could have complicated Hythe’s voice and made it more clearly a reflection of Arthur’s internalised neoliberal subjectivity. As a realistic political critique of neoliberal discourse, the novel is also probably a little sparse on details grounded in the events of the day. I could have developed these areas more, having direct scenes with Margaret Thatcher and the miners’ strikes in the 1980s. The political complexities of resisting neoliberalism within educational institutions could also have received more attention, as I only briefly developed the left-wing academics enacting Cold War like secrecy in their resistance to changes in the education system.

The second research question was, what does it means to be human? The extraterrestrial Arthur’s journey to the human world opens-up religious perspectives on what it means to be human. The incarnated extraterrestrial who has forgotten his true-identity and home, must find a way to awaken amidst human chaos and the interventions of Hythe the demiurge.
The novel puts different worldviews and conceptions of the self in dialogue, to critique a secular, materialist perspective. To be human at the end of the novel is to live in community, free of economic oppression. The issue of ‘belief’ also developed in the novel as an important part of the question what does it means to be human. At the end of the novel after the extraterrestrials have landed, Guarfur is amazed at the extent to which what people believe affects what they are seeing. In destabilising neoliberal discourse with otherworldly narratives, the novel suggests the extent to which neoliberal society is based on beliefs that are not recognised as such. The dominant neoliberal belief system is shown hidden behind the monarchy, as well as liberal, egalitarian, and holistic rhetoric.

The novel enacts social revolutionary beliefs with the building of the commune, after Arthur’s sense of doubleness or split-ness has been resolved. In seeking to represent a spiritually or theologically engaged social revolutionary perspective, the human need for an enchanted or supernatural element to their beliefs that has perhaps been ignored by the left wing in the UK, is something the novel develops. The novel ends by bringing together holistic perspectives and a social revolution. In asking what it means to be human, the novel doesn’t find any definitive answer but the ability to integrate new perspectives and develop adaptive strategies might be one.

What emerged for me as a writer during the research journey, was a clearer recognition of the effects of my own hegemonic beliefs. The research journey has therefore led to greater awareness of the need for political engagement and an ongoing awareness that a sense of apathy or inevitability about neoliberalism, is often rooted in unrecognised hegemonic narratives that have been internalised.
The self-consciousness that allows humans to laugh at themselves could also be part of a possible species definition. The holistic voice in the novel suggests community, empathy, compassion and relationship are necessary to express one’s humanity. The novel’s ironic voice suggests that humanity has and always will find a way to stop this occurring.

_The Doom of Clowns_’ use of ambiguity also points toward an aspect of being human. The recognition of humanity’s unclear situation, purpose and direction perhaps provides a space where a dogmatic belief in the ability of science and technology to resolve the problems of the species can be resisted. The imperceptible smile that recognises the ambiguity of much human experience, perhaps best reflects what it means to be human.

The third research question was, how does one use fiction to connect personal experience to social issues? The development of my approach to this question was also related to the influence of my mother’s job as a clown on my authorial voice. In following a writing method that involved maintaining a connection to autobiography, the use of the clownish, absurd mood was both useful and sometimes challenging. Many of the main events in Arthur the human’s life were fictionalised autobiographical material. The ending was not. The exaggerations expected with serio-comic clown mood allowed the writing to ignore creating a sensible depiction of the protagonist/PhD candidate. At times however, I felt that the tragicomic perspective was subverting perhaps higher intentions and that even the implication the novel represented my ‘real’ personal experience might be detrimental. I decided to exaggerate further and portray Arthur as more tragic, while making the extraterrestrial worlds more believable. I also began to focus on Guinevere’s more empathic voice.
The research into the clown role and development of a humorous maternal imaginary, led to developing Jill’s interventions with the puppets as an ongoing dialogic aspect of the story. Theory and personal experience could be brought together using this approach and the Speculative auto-satire emerged within the free-floating space of the clownish mood. After reflecting upon and using autobiographical sequences in early drafts that dealt with potentially difficult issues, the idea of using more of the clown and maternal imaginary seemed useful.

The increasing use of a light-hearted, clownish approach later in the novel did create greater flexibility and the writing became more playful, allowing the space to juggle, rearrange and satirise the previous material with a greater sense of distance. As the novel reduced in its Orwellian intensity, I still felt as though I was connecting personal experience to social issues and the process remained at times difficult, but there was also a sense of being freer and able to simply imagine characters.

The character of Hythe developed quite late in the writing process. As the theoretical research made the objects of the satire clearer, I decided that an embodied enemy might be satirically useful. While Hythe did become simply an archetypal evil character, this suited the clownish mood and allowed for clear conflict in the story. Arthur and Guinevere’s relationship could then develop the more nuanced reflections that connected with personal experience.

Several Orwellian drafts and sections of the novel were left behind as the focus shifted toward using this slightly more light-hearted approach. In the final draft the characters and their roles also became more clearly defined, the decentred author now focused more on Guinevere’s voice which became dominant over Arthur’s. The choice to have
them transform in the cave, that I had resisted, eventually seemed like a good resolution to Arthur’s situation.

The idea of a clownish, maternal imaginary, was therefore central to the development of an effective, humorous authorial voice that became more decentred during the writing process. The importance of Jill as the key subversive character and representative of a humorous maternal imaginary, is directly enacted with her retraining of the bankers and the royals at the end of the novel. In using more of this humorous approach, I again feel the critique may have become less direct or bitingly critical than earlier drafts but it is perhaps effective in other ways by remaining more gentle and amused. As Jill and her puppets return at the end of the novel, theory, writing practice and personal experience are brought together once more to disrupt neoliberal discourse.

As Speculative auto-satire, *The Doom of Clowns* has engaged with autoethnography as an element of the writing process, storying the self and critiquing the social context in which the research is produced. Whether the novel could finally be called autoethnographic is debatable, given the degree of fantastic, supernatural elements and satirical exaggeration. But this approach has allowed the enactment of resistance using a dialogic exploration that retains a connection with personal experience, while also allowing for creative imagination and ludic transgression.

My contribution to knowledge would therefore be to suggest Speculative auto-satire as a possible writing approach or template for engaging with neoliberal hegemony. Speculative auto-satire supports critical reflexivity and allows free speculation while retaining a connection with embodied experience. This is potentially useful in creative writing and therapeutic contexts, while there are potential risks. The transgressive mood this approach supports, is useful for critiquing apparently neutral neoliberal
discourse at a time of ecological and social crisis, when current economic and social arrangements are often viewed as inevitable.
Notes

i Dawkins R, The Enemies of Reason part 2 online You Tube: see interview from 2 mins 30 seconds to seven minutes into the documentary 2007.

ii Dawkins R, Enemies of Reason: See interview from 20 mins to 23 mins 30 seconds into the documentary.

iii Weber, Max: Both as ruling and ruled strata and both as a majority and minority, Protestants (especially the denominations to be discussed later [in the study]) have demonstrated a specific tendency toward economic rationalism. This tendency has not been observed in the same way in the present or the past among Catholics, regardless of whether they were the dominant or dominated stratum or constituted a majority or minority. Therefore, the cause of the different behaviour must be mainly sought in the enduring inner quality of these religions and not only in their respective historical-political external situations. Ch. 1: Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification (1920)

iv OED: A pose of ignorance assumed in order to entice others into making statements that can then be challenged. Example sentences 'It employs what I believe is known as Socratic irony, in which an illogical idea is taking to its logical conclusion and is a telling satire of the fears and neuroses of human beings.'


vi Lacan originated the concept of jouissance, while it contains the idea of joy it also implies excess and potentially pain. P 103 His final remark on feminine jouissance: ‘…I believe in the jouissance of the woman, insofar as it is extra (en plus) …. Doesn’t this jouissance one experiences and yet knows nothing about put us on the path of existence? And why not interpret one face of the Other, the God face, as based on feminine jouissance? (S XX p.76 -77) Qtd in: The Cambridge Companion to Lacan. P 113 CUP 2003

vii In Kristeva’s vocabulary, sensual, sexual pleasure is covered by plaisir; “jouissance” is total joy or ecstasy. From the Introduction to: Desire in Language (16)

viii This year I would like to begin studying something that I have called, somewhat vaguely, bio-power. By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species.
This is roughly what I have called biopower. So, to begin with, I’d like to put forward a few proposals that should be understood as indications of choice or statements of intent, not as principles, rules, or theorems (Foucault, Michael 11th January 1978,16) Available online:


Accessed April 7th. 2017

* Holistic definition: Dealing with or treating the whole of something or someone not just a part. Cambridge Dictionary


* Figures given by Chalice Well Gardens and Glastonbury Abbey Website

* From William Blake’s poem Jerusalem C 1808.
Works Cited

Adams, E. Tony and Jimmy Manning, “Autoethnography and Family Research.”


January 2012


Archer, Rick. “Buddha at the Gas Pump.” Interviews Online: [https://batgap.com/](https://batgap.com/)


Accessed May 16th. 2017


Accessed April 11th. 2017


Bloom, William. ‘Does spirituality need to evolve?’ *YouTube*. 2010 13 Aug. Online

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xkUNQ19vJl Relevant section from 9 minutes 30 seconds to 11 minutes 30 seconds. Accessed April 13th, 2017


Brierley, Peter. “Estimates of Church Attendance.”


Accessed March 27, 2017


Accessed March 28th, 2017


---. Interpretive Autoethnography. Sage 2014


Accessed April 7th. 2017

Franck, D. Separation. Knopf. 1994

Translated by Joan Riviere. 1950 revised reprint: Online 2015
Accessed May 15th. 2017


Accessed May 19th 2017


Hirsh, Elizabeth, and Gary A. Olson. “‘Je—Luce Irigaray’: A Meeting with Luce

Contemporary France.” Doubt Conflict Mediation: The Anthropology of


Ingram, Penelope. “From Goddess Spirituality to Irigaray's Angel: The Politics of the

Irigaray, Luce. Between East and West: From Singularity to Community. Columbia
University, 2003.


----. An Ethics of Sexual Difference, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill Ithaca:


Isaak, Jo Anna. Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of


---. *New Maladies of the Soul*. Columbia University, 1997b.

---. *This Incredible Need to Believe*. European Perspectives: Columbia University, 2011.


Accessed April 15th 2017


Accessed April 30th, 2017

Lock, Charles. “Carnival and Incarnation: Bakhtin and Orthodox Theology.”


Accessed April 9th, 2017


---. *Passport to the Cosmos.* (1999). White Crow Press 2010


http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/interviews/mcewan.html

Accessed April 7th, 2017


Online: http://pierretristam.com/Bobst/07/be040607.htm

Accessed April 2nd, 2017

McNay, Iain. Various Interviews Online: http://www.conscious.tv/

Accessed April 2nd, 2017

Milbank, John. Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason. (1991)
Blackwell Publishing, 2006

Milbank, John & Žižek Slavoj. The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?
MIT, 2011.


---. “Leaving the Blood In: Experiences with an Autoethnographic Doctoral Thesis.”


Accessed May 15\textsuperscript{th} 2017


Online: http://facta.junis.ni.ac.rs/lal/lal2000/lal2000-06.pdf
Accessed May 15\textsuperscript{th} 2017


---. Science and Nonduality website. YouTube. Online: https://www.youtube.com/user/scienceandnonduality

Accessed May 5th 2017


https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/feb/05/rupert-sheldrake-interview-science-delusion

Accessed 15th May 2017


Accessed May 22nd. 2017


Accessed May 22nd. 2017


Watson, Cate. “Notes on the Variety and Uses of Satire, Sarcasm and Irony in Social Research, with Some Observations on Vices and Follies in the Academy.” Power and Education: June 3. 2. 2011. pp.139-149.


Žižek, Slavoj. “The Buddhist Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism.” *YouTube. European Graduate School Video Lectures,* 2012. Section (Note: 1) from 1 minute 50 sec. to 7 minutes. Section (Note:2) From 1hr 7 mins -1hr 9 mins

Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkTUQYxEUjs

Accessed April 7th, 2017


Online: http://inthesetimes.com/article/2122/revenge_of_global_finance

Accessed 16th. May 2017


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM9erS90gTF

Accessed April 14th. 2017