SPURIOUS

Lars Iyer

SPURIOUS

Lars Iyer

Copyright © 2011 by Lars Iyer

All rights reserved

Melville House Publishing
145 Plymouth Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201
mhpbooks.com

The Library of Congress has cataloged the paperback edition as follows:

Iyer, Lars.
Spurious : a novel / Lars Iyer.
p. cm.
eISBN: 978-1-935554-92-9
I. Title.
PR6109.Y47S78 2011
823′.92--dc22

2010038113

v3.1

To Sinéad

Contents

Cover
Title Page
Copyright
Dedication

First Page

I'm a terrible influence on W., everyone says that. Why does he hang out with me? What's i
it for him? The great and the good are shaking their heads. Sometimes W. goes back to th
high table and explains himself. I am something to explain, W. says. He has to account for m
to everyone. Why is that?

I don't feel I have to account for myself, W. says, that's what it is. I've no real sense o
shame. It must be something to do with my Hinduism, W. muses.—'You're an ancient peopl
but an innocent one, unburdened by shame', W. says. On the other hand, it could be simp
due to my stupidity. I'm freer than him, W. acknowledges, but more stupid. It's an innocer
kind of stupidity, but it's stupidity nonetheless.

It's been my great role in his life, W. says, helping him escape the high table. He's dow
among the low tables now, he says, in the chimps' enclosure.

W. remembers when I was up and coming, he tells me. He remembers the questions I used t
ask, and how they would resound beneath the vaulted ceilings.—'You seemed so intelligen
then', he says. I shrug. 'But when any of us read your work …', he says, without finishing th
sentence.

So was he ever up and coming?, I ask W. He was, he remembers. That was a golden ag
Everyone looked up to him. Everything was expected of him! Each morning, he got up an
read and took notes until he went to bed. He had a desk and a bed in his room, and his book
and his notebooks, but nothing else. He didn't go out, didn't drink, but just read and too
notes, day after day. What went wrong?—'Drinking', he says. 'I drank too much, I smoke
too much'. Why did he drink?—'The sense of the apocalypse', W. says. 'That it was all fo
nothing'.

W. is impressed by my stammer.—'You stammer and stutter', says W., 'and you swallow ha
your words. What's wrong with you?' Every time I see him, he says, it gets a little worse. Th
simplest words are beginning to defeat me, W. says. Maybe it's mini-strokes, W. speculate
That would account for it.—'You had one just there, didn't you?'

Perhaps, W. muses, my stammering and stuttering is a sign of shame. W. says he neve
really thought I was capable of it, shame, but perhaps it's there nonetheless.—'Somethin
inside you knows you talk rubbish', he says. 'Something knows the unending bilge that com
out of your mouth'.

'Something inside you always knew, didn't it?', W. says. 'Didn't your teachers say as muc
on your report card: *Lars has a stutter, but it doesn't seem to bother him'?* But why was
unbothered?, W. wonders. Did I imagine that my shame should end with the *sign* of m
shame? I wasn't *ashamed of my shame*, that's the point, W. says. My shame didn't prompt m
to thought and reflection. It didn't make me change my ways.

It's all down to my non-Catholicism and non-Judaism, W. says. Only for a Jew and

Catholic like himself (W.'s family are converts), is it possible to feel shame *about* shame.

W. dreams of serious conversation. Not that it would have serious topics, you understand, h says—that it would be concerned, for example, with the great topics of the day.—'Speec *itself* would be serious', he says with great vehemence. That's what he's found with the re thinkers he's known. Everything they say is serious; they're incapable of being *un*serious.

Even I become serious when a real thinker is about, W.'s observed. We remember th afternoon in Greenwich when W. was lost in conversation with one such thinker. I wa leaning in, trying to listen; I had a sense of the seriousness of the conversation, W. could se it. He was impressed; for once I wasn't going to ruin it by talking about blowholes o something.

'Conversation!', exclaims W. That's what friendship's all about. He thinks even I have sense of that.—'It's why you stammer', says W. 'It's why you swallow half of your words'.

‘When did you know?’, W. says with great insistence. ‘When did you know you weren’t goi
to amount to anything? *Did* you know?’, he asks, because sometimes he suspects I never di
Well *he* knows, at any rate, for both of us.—‘Neither of us is going to amount to anything
he says with finality. ‘Neither of us! Anything!’

W. speaks mournfully about my intellectual decline. Of course it’s not my decline h
laments, but that of his own judgement, and his own fantastic hopes: how was it that h
placed them in me? Why did he need to place them in anyone at all?

How’s it come to this?, W. says. What wrong turn did he make? He was like Dante, he say
lost in a dark forest.—‘And there you were’, he says, ‘the idiot in the forest’. I was alwa
lost, wasn’t I? I didn’t even know I was lost, but I was lost. Or perhaps I was never los
Perhaps I belonged in the forest, W. muses. Perhaps I am only that forest where W.
wandering, he says, he’s not sure.

‘Do you think it’s possible to die of stupidity?’ W. sighs. ‘Not as a consequence of th
stupidity’, he notes, ‘but *from* stupidity. And shame’, W. asks me, ‘do you think you could d
of shame, I mean literally die?’

We should hang ourselves immediately, W. thinks, it’s the only honourable course
action. We are compromised, utterly compromised.

Things are bad. We should kill ourselves, W. says. He’s thought of setting himself on fi
before a crowd like that madman in Tarkovsky’s film.—‘Not that it would do any good’, h
says.

Early morning at the airport.—'Beer', W. commands. 'You can pay for this'.

We're always renewed, W. says., when we set off once again to speak in Europe. Alway young and uncowed, full of fresh hope and new happiness, toasting each other in foreig countries and falling down drunk in foreign gutters. Are we really that shameless?, W wonders. But perhaps it doesn't matter whether we're shameless or not: we'll do exactly th same thing anyway and will be eternally surprised at the rediscovery of our own idiocy.

But are we really that innocent?, W. wonders. Don't we, at one level or another, *know* ou own idiocy? Doesn't it saturate our awareness to the extent that we know nothing else? B by some miracle, we always regain just enough innocence, just enough forgetting for it all begin again.

'What have I told you!', says W. as we board the train in Frankfurt. 'This is public space. Pu lic. That means outside your head'. He points to my head. 'Private'. And then out to th world. 'Public'.

W. is a great upholder of this division. Abolish the public/private divide and you aboli civilisation, W. always says. He looks around him contentedly.—'See how quiet it is Europe? It's civilised', he says, 'not like you'.

Europe makes him gentler, better, W. says. It improves him. It's the public spaces, he say They're so quiet in Germany. So calm.

Later, and W. is in a contemplative mood. Is he thinking of his Canadian boyhood? No, W. thinking of his many European trips. He's been back and forth across Europe, back an forth … W.'s travelled. Not like me.—'You haven't been anywhere. It's obvious'.

W. is an experienced traveller. Take drinking, for example. He can pace himself, he say Morning to night, he drinks like a European. Steadily. That's the secret. You should watch th Poles, he says, they're experts. *Poles—experts*, I write down in my notebook.

The best train journey, we remember, was the long one from Warsaw to Wrocław. Sma round tables like in a cafe, but in the dining carriage of a train. And waiter service—discret attentive, but not servile. We drank, steadily. Europe passed by the window, flat and gree All was well: our guide was with us, we felt secure, safe; like small children with the parents, we had nothing to fear.

This time, we have to look after ourselves. Of course, it's already gone wrong. We ste ourselves: we have to concentrate. Are we on the right train? Is it going in the rig direction? Left to fend for ourselves, we become panicky. Then the conductor comes round take our tickets. *Alles klar*, he says, in a voice that is infinitely calm. It soothes us. *Alles klar*, write in my notebook: we're in safe hands, this is a safe country. Over the next few days, w

will only have to repeat his phrase to feel secure; it watches over us like a guardian angel.

I remind W. of his photo album. Photos of the young W., happy in Canada, with his famil
who are likewise happy, and then photos of W. in England. The fall, W. calls it. The mov
says W., that's when the disaster happened. His parents brought them back to England, t
Wolverhampton, of all places.—'Wolverhampton!' says W., 'can you imagine!' Ah, what h
might have been, had he stayed in Canada!, he sighs.

W. is lost in a Canadian reverie. They had a dog which was half wolf, he tells me, and sh
would follow him on his paper round, leading him by the arm.—'She took my hand in he
mouth and led me, it was amazing. She never barked. And when we left, she starved herse
to death, because she missed us so much. That's loyalty'.

Above all, W. admires loyalty. Sal's loyal, he says. She's loyalty itself, just as he is. You'
not loyal, W. always insists. You'd break the phalanx. You'd betray me—for a woman. H
insists on this. When have I betrayed him in the past?—'You will betray me', says W., 'I'
certain of it'.

Canada. Betrayed, I write in my notebook.

Kafka's our spiritual leader, W. and I agree over cocktails in the Münsterplatz. He's gone th
furthest, we agree. But we need more immediate leaders, too. W.: 'We're stupid, we need t
be led'. Didn't we long ago decide we could redeem ourselves only by creating opportuniti
for those more capable than ourselves?—'It's our gift', says W., 'we know we're stupid, b
we also know what stupidity is not'.

We ought to throw ourselves at their feet and ask them to forgive us. We always stop sho
of this, of course. We have to remember not to tell them, each of them, that they are our ne
leader. It would only frighten them off, W. says. No one should ever know he or she is ou
leader, we agree. Only we should know. And we should follow them in secret.

In truth, we have found several leaders. Our *first* leader was always an example to W. an
me.—'I'm not very interesting', he always insisted, 'but my … thoughts are interesting
My … thoughts! We were particularly impressed by the *way* he said it. *My … thoughts* …
was as though there were an infinite distance between those words. As though he had nothin
to do with his thoughts! As though they had him and not the other way round! He felt a kin
of *moral duty* to his thoughts, we remember. It was as though his life was only a receptac
for something infinitely more important.

'He was completely serious', W. remembers, 'not like us'. Completely serious! And ther
was a kind of *lightness* in that seriousness, he remembers, as though thinking were a kind o
beatitude. What will we ever know of the infinite lightness of thought? W. wonders. O
thought's laughter, which laughs in the eyes of the thinker touched with thought?

But then the disaster happened, W. remembers. We told him, didn't we? We told him h
was our leader. We told him what we hoped he'd make us become. We told him of our hope
and fears … That's where it all went wrong, we agree. We scared him off. After that, w
resolved never to tell our leaders that they were our leaders, but we couldn't help it.

Didn't the same thing happen with our *second* leader? Ah, our second leader! He had a
absolute lucidity when he spoke of the interlacing of his life and thought, we agree. It wa

like looking into the clearest of rivers, W. says. How frankly and absolutely he spoke of h thoughts, and to anyone who asked! Frankly and absolutely, as though life were a glass t look through and not to live! Or that life was lived at another level, where thinking, re thought, was possible!—‘A level of which we have no conception’, says W.

But it happened again. ‘Which one of us blurted it out’, W. asks, ‘you or me?’ Regardles the spell was broken. We had spoken to him of what we lacked and what he had. We spok of cosmogony and the opposite of cosmogony, of the beginning of times and of their comin end …

Then there was the *third* leader.—‘Ah, our third leader’, W. exclaims, ‘the greatest one o all’.

Everyone knows to keep quiet when he speaks, W. says. He speaks very quietly himsel and is immensely modest, but everyone knows it: here is a thinker, here is thought in perso He lives in a different way from everyone else, that much is clear. He lives another kind o life, and his quietness is a sign of his elevation.

It’s what everyone in the room knows when he speaks: he’s better than the rest of u cleverer; he occupies the stratosphere of pure thought. Thought is here, and we are touche by a cold and fiery hand, by what it would be impossible for us to think by ourselves. T have a thought that would burn our lives away like dross! To have the whole of our live become clear and still like pools of water in northern forests!

We lean in, listening. He speaks so quietly, and we must be more quiet than we can be t hear. And for a moment, we forget we are apes, and listen with the whole of our being.

And then it happened again. We told him all we wanted was a leader and to be led by leader. We told him about our first leader and our second leader, and our desertion by ou first leader and our second leader. We told him of the *tohu vavohu* that comes at th beginning and will return at the end. We told him of the apocalypse and of waiting for th Messiah …

Will we find our new leader in Freiburg? It’s unlikely, we agree as we sip our piña colada

Wandering back to the hotel, we lose ourselves in the streets, chancing upon the same sectio of waterway again and again, the same weir. The city’s closing itself against us, we decid Against the likes of us. It doesn’t want us here. Should we throw ourselves in the river? that what it’s telling us?

Kafka was always our model, we agree. How is it possible that a human being could wri
like that?, W. says, again and again. It's always at the end of the night when he says thi
after we've drunk a great deal and the sky opens above us, and it is possible to speak of wh
is most important.

At the same time, we have Kafka to blame for everything. Our lives each took a wron
turn when we opened *The Castle*. It was quite fatal: there was literature itself! We we
finished. What could we do, simple apes, but exhaust ourselves in imitation? We had bee
struck by something we could not understand. It was above us, beyond us, and we were n
of its order.

Literature softened our brains, says W.—'We should have been doing maths. If we kne
maths, we might amount to something. As it is, we'll amount to nothing'.

There's nothing wrong with literature per se, says W., who cannot go a day witho
speaking of Kafka, but it's had a bad effect on us. Besides, he says, he bets Kafka was good
maths. He was good at law, after all, which is probably a bit like maths. Perhaps we shou
drop out and become lawyers. Perhaps that would be the making of us.

Literature destroyed us: we've always been agreed on that. The *literary temptation* was fata
Of course, it would be different if we read literature alongside philosophy, W. says, bu
literature, for us, could not help infecting our philosophy.

But doesn't W. admire the fact that we *feel* something about literature? Doesn't he think i
what saves us? W. is not persuaded.—'It makes us vague and full of pathos. That's all w
have—pathos'.

Once, W. thought of himself as a writer, a literary writer. He filled notebook aft
notebook. It was in his early twenties. Everyone wants to be a literary writer in their ear
twenties, W. says. Of course no one ever is. W. realised it pretty quickly. He knew he was n
Kafka, he says. That's what I don't know yet—I don't know I'm not Kafka. I don't have
sense of myself as a failure, which is ironic because I *am* a failure.

It would be different if either of us had literary talent, W. says. Do I think I have literar
talent?, he asks me. W. *knows* he doesn't have literary talent, he says. But he doesn't think
know. Admittedly, I never said I had literary talent. But I don't deny it enough. Anyway, it
very clear: I don't have literary talent, W. says. And just so I know, I haven't got an
philosophical talent either, he says. Does he have any philosophical talent? He has more tha
I do, he says. Just a little bit more, but that's already something.

His IQ's higher than mine, W. says. Just a little bit, but that's what separates us, man fro
ape. And he's from a higher class than me, W. says.—'I have manners. You have no manner
And you're continually touching yourself. Look at you: you're doing it now!' I take my han
out of my shirt.—'Why do you like touching your chest so much? Does it arouse you? Kee
your hands on the table where I can see them. Read your book'.

For a long time, W. thought he might *become* Kafka. He was all W. read. Constantly, aga
and again, everything by him and everything about him, and he speaks lovingly
discovering the brightly coloured Schocken editions of Kafka.

It was one of those old Victorian libraries, he says, such as could be found in the towns an
cities of the West Midlands. He probably hadn't read all the books in the children's sectio
he says, but there was nothing left that seemed worth reading. He asked a librarian for
ticket for the adult section of the library and, even though he was relatively young (h
imagines himself being twelve or thirteen, but he was probably older), they allowed him one

It was the brightness of the dust jackets that drew him in, W. says. They were fluorescen
orange, he said, a bright and baffling colour. And when he opened the book, it was as if h
had crossed over a threshold, as though there were another light streaming from its pages,
splendour that has fascinated him ever since.

For a long time, W. says, he saw little difference between Kafka and himself. Imagine it—
boy from Wolverhampton who thought he was a Jew from Prague! How is it possible for
human being to write like that?: yes, that was always W.'s question before Kafka.

How was it possible? W. stopped writing after his undergraduate years. He'd write all th
time, but he realised he would never be Kafka. W. gave his notebooks and writings to
girlfriend.—'I didn't keep a scrap', he says, as German teenagers gather round us in th
Augustinerplatz, playing early Depeche Mode on a ghetto blaster.

In the shops in Freiburg, they wipe the door handles after we leave and rearrange the book
we looked at. What is it about us? Are we that disgusting?

We wanted to gaze at the great editions. At the collected works of Schelling, published b
Vorlesung. At those of Nietzsche, edited by Colli and Montinari. W. wanted to look f
Cohen's books, which are out of print in several languages. But the shop assistants we
suspicious. Our German was deficient. Our questions went awry.

Tired of the city, we catch the train to Titisee and hire a pedallo to paddle out onto th
lake. Feet on the dashboard, the blue bowl of the sky above us, we discuss the fate of Ma
Brod, who spent all his life writing commentaries and exegeses of Kafka's work, and the fa
of Kafka, which seems altogether more dark and mysterious precisely because of Brod
commentaries and exegeses.

We discuss the inadequacy of political thought in tackling the question of politic
economy, and the failure of philosophical thought to pose, really pose, the question of *wh
matters most* …

Above all, we bewail the fact that the great disasters about to befall us barely leave a trac
on the intellectual reflection of our time. It's as if we were going to live forever, but the re
thinker, we agree, knows, without melodrama, that thought is fragile and already touched b
death.

Isn't that what the convalescing Rosenzweig knew as he assembled *The Star of Redemptio*
in his barracks in Freiburg? It took him seven months, that's all. Seven months, and he wa
also writing a letter a day to his beloved …

Freiburg's a terrible place, we agree at the top of the observation tower on the Schlossberg.
was rebuilt to look exactly like it was before the bombing, that's the problem, W. decide
and compares it unfavourably to Plymouth, which was rebuilt in an entirely different style.

W. reminds me of Abercrombie's Plan for Plymouth, published during the war, which sa
the city organised in long boulevards, transected by the avenue that runs from the tra
station to the Hoe. Modernism at its finest, we agree.

But Freiburg's fake. I remind W. of Warsaw, the central part of which was built in an exa
replica of what was there before the bombing—weren't we at our happiest eating out wi
our guide in the old square?—'That's because it was *obviously* fake', W. says. And then the
was the warmth and conviviality of the Poles.—'The Freiburgers are cold, cold!'

Last night, we worked our way through all the wines on the menu, glass by glass. In the en
the Polish waiter sat down with us and told us the bar was terrible. He was keen to try h
English: 'My heart, how do you say it? (he makes the gesture, and we say "aches") *aches* f
you. Go somewhere else'.

Where should we go? In moments of crisis, W. always asks himself what Kafka would d

What would Kafka do in our place? What would he make of it all? But that's the point: Kafk would never find himself in our place; he would never have made the mistakes we've made.
Kafka was at least a man of Europe, of old Europe. A Europe in crisis, but Europ nonetheless. And us? What does Europe mean to us? What could it ever mean? We're lost Europe, two apes, two fools, though one is infinitely more foolish than the other.
We have to get away. But where to? W. takes the situation in hand.

Strasbourg soothes us. Strolling through the wide boulevards, we grow calm and quiet. S many beautiful buildings, one after another! It's too much, we're dwarfed, humbled … an for a time, we're quiet, really quiet, lost in wonder at old Europe.

The phrase, *old Europe*, is an oxymoron, W. and I decide. The Europeans live in history, a we do not. What can we do but pass across its surface like skaters? Its historical depth something of which we are only half-aware, we decide. It troubles us, it makes us fe uneasy, but in the end we can have no relationship to it.

What did we say to the European professor who asked a whole circle of us how man languages we spoke, rather than read? We can read a whole bunch of languages …, that what we said. That's not what he asked, he said. Not one of us *spoke* a single language. Mo of us hadn't really been to Europe. None of us thought of ourselves as Europeans …

He was disgusted, of course, W. says. We were disgusted with ourselves. We were mired self-disgust, our whole circle. We hung our heads. If we could have hung ourselves at th moment, we would have done so.

Strasbourg. Isn't this where Levinas and Blanchot met for the first time? We remember th photo of them both from Malka's biography: two students, the one tall and thin, the othe cheerful and plump; one dishevelled in a double breasted suit and the other dressed like dandy with a silver-knobbed cane …

'Compare our friendship', says W., 'to that of Levinas and Blanchot'. Of the correspondence, only a handful of letters survive. Of ours, which take the form of obsceniti and drawings of cocks exchanged on Microsoft Messenger, everything survives, though shouldn't. Of their near daily exchanges, nothing is known; of our friendship, everything known, since I, like an idiot, put it all on the internet.

Blanchot was above all discreet, but I am indiscretion itself; Levinas barely spoke of h friend, but I am gossip and idle talk itself. Whereas both men were immensely modest, an weighed everything they said with great consideration, I am immensely *im*modest, and weig nothing I say or write with any consideration at all. Whereas both wrote with great care an forethought, I write with neither care nor forethought, being seemingly proud of my immens idiocy.

Suddenly, we are weary. Old Europe is immeasurably greater than us, we know that. Wh hasn't walked in these streets? What hasn't happened here? European history flows throug the city like a great river. And what of us, carried along like two turds in that river?

We sit down in a bistro and drink Alsatian wine from tumblers. W. speaks his bad Frenc

softly, and we dream, for a moment, that we are real European intellectuals.

In they come, depressive weather systems from the Atlantic, reaching W. first (in th southwest of England) before reaching me (in the northeast of England), bringing grey day with constant rain. The Westerlies are destroying us, we agree. When will it end?

This summer, W. tells me on the phone, he's become even more stupid than usual. He reading Cohen in German on the infinitesimal calculus. But he barely understands Germa He barely understands maths! The English mathematical terms he finds in his dictionary translate the German ones are just as opaque. What does it all mean?, W. wonders.

I've been thinking only of administration, I tell him. It's my only concern, I tell him. It taken me over. It's all to do with my periods of unemployment, W. thinks. It's what I mo fear, unemployment.—'You could only have become an administrator', W. says. 'Yo developed the soul for it. The fear'.

My administrative zeal frightens him, W. admits. It's a sign of complete desperation. In th end, it's what will always compromise my real work, my reading and writing.—'You alway have administration to fall back on', W. says. 'You never really experience your failure'.

With neither a fear of unemployment nor a fearful skill as an administrator, W. is alon with his failure, he says. It's terrible—there's no alibi, he can't blame it on anyone. Whos fault is it but his? W. laments his laziness, his indolence. He had every advantage and now- what has he accomplished? What has he done?

I can have no understanding of his sense of failure, W. tells me. None. It's beyond m —'You're like the dog that licks the hand of its master. You'll be licking their hand even a they beat you, and making little whiny noises. You're good at that, aren't you—makin whiny noises?'

He sees me in his mind's eye, W. says. I pause from my ceaseless administrative work, loo up for a moment … Of what am I thinking?, W. says. What's struck me? But he knows I' only full of administrative anxieties, and my pause is only a slackening of the same relentle movement.

And what of him, when he looks up from his labours? What does he see? Of what is h dreaming? Of thought, W. says. Of a single thought, from which something might begin. Of single thought that might justify his existence.

Absurdly grateful—that's the phrase that sums it up, W. says. Take my life, the misery of m life—take what little I've achieved, what little chance I had, and what little I've accomplishe despite that lack of opportunity—and still, I'm *absurdly grateful*.

I'm grateful for my flat, for the squalor in which I live. I'm grateful for the damp tha streams down the walls and the rats that crawl over one another in my back yard. And wi my solitude, my misery, the fact I speak to no one, the fact that no one speaks to me—it exactly the same: I'm *absurdly grateful*.

'You're surprised even to have got this far', W. says, that's what horrifies him. This far-but how far have I got? If anything, I've gone *backwards;* I've ended up with less than I ha before. I've subtracted something from the world. Haven't I taken from W.? Haven't deprived him of some important part of his own ability?

I'll thank them as they kick me in the teeth, W. says. But I'll thank them, too, when the kick W. in the teeth. A friend of mine deserves nothing else, that's how I think of it, isn't i Down we fall, further and yet further. Down—another step, and down again—W. didn't kno there were any more steps—and thanking them all the way …

Of course, I should take my life immediately, that would be the honourable thing, W. says. should climb the footstool to the noose … But it would already be too late, that's th problem, W. says. The sin has already been committed. The sin against existence, against th whole order of existing things.

That I should have lived at all is a disgrace, W. says. It's *the* disgrace, the disgrace o disgraces. But about the fact that I *do* exist, nothing can be done.

He could stab me. In fact he's offered several times. Sometimes I've asked him t Sometimes I've proposed a double suicide: he stabbing me, and I him. But then, of course, would do nothing; it's already too late. There's only the fact that I exist, and the fact that hi W.'s, existence has already been *utterly contaminated* by my existence.

A double suicide—is that the answer? But who would stab who first? Who would string u the nooses? And could W. be sure, really sure, that I was really prepared to die as he was? O even that *he* would be prepared to die as *I* apparently was?

Death seems as far away from us as ever. When will it end?, W. wonders. Isn't the en overdue? Shouldn't it have come already? When the apocalypse comes, it will be a relief, W says. We'll close our eyes at last. There'll be no more need to apologise, or to account fo ourselves. No guilt …

It's our fault, it's all our fault, we should at least admit that, W. says. It's our fault an particularly mine. *My* fault, W. says, because my existence couldn't help but contaminate hi And *his* fault, somewhat at least, because he continues to allow his existence to b contaminated by mine.

But what can we do about it? To whom should we apologise? Each other? I shou certainly apologise to him, W. says. I owe him a lifetime of apologies. But doesn't he owe m an apology, too? Doesn't he, by his continual presence in my life, *perpetuate the disaster?*

He gives me license, W. says. He gives me encouragement—but why? In the end, perhap I'm only a figment of his imagination, a kind of nightmare, he says. Can't you see I' burning?, I ask him in his dream. But in the end, he's burning, W. says. He's the one who s himself on fire.

Every summer, he begins work with great ambition, W. says. He'll read more than ever, an
more deeply! He'll write as he's never written before! But by the end of the summer, it's a
gone wrong. Why does he never learn?, W. muses. Why does nothing change?

It's a great mystery to him, W. says, his eternal capacity for hope and the etern
destruction of his capacity for hope. He lives and dies a whole lifetime over summer, W
says, and is reborn every autumn, a little more stupid.

How are his studies of messianism progressing?, I ask W. on the phone. He's burrowing bac
through Rosenzweig and Cohen to Schelling, he says, whose books he can only get hold of
Gothic script. He can barely read Gothic script, he says. It drives him crazy. But neverthele
he's made some discoveries.—'It's all to do with infinite judgements', he says. 'And th
infinitesimal calculus'.

Above all, messianism's got nothing to do with mysticism, says W. He can't abid
mysticism.—'It's maths, it's all about maths!' He can't do maths, W. says. This is the gre
flaw which prevents him really understanding messianism. But then too it might hav
something to do with the two kinds of negative in ancient Greek, W. says. The two kinds o
privation, the second of which is not really a kind of privation. 'It's like the *in*-of infinite', W
says mysteriously, 'which is not simply an *absence* of the finite'.

But W.'s studies of ancient Greek are not progressing well, he says. It's the aorist, it defea
him every time. W.'s bumping his head against the ceiling of his intelligence, he says. I ofte
have that feeling, I tell him.—'No, you're just lazy', W. says.

'What are your thoughts on messianism?', asks W. I don't have any thoughts o
messianism, I tell him. What about him? W. isn't able to think about messianism, he say
He's not capable of it, and neither am I.

Perhaps that's all messianism could mean to us: the possibility that one day we might b
changed so radically that we would be able to think about messianism, says W.

'What have you done today?', W. asks me. 'How do you actually spend your time?' Weel
and months and years pass, but I seem to do nothing, W. says. 'What have you read? Wh
have you written, and why haven't you sent me any of it?'

'Friends should send each other what they write', W. says. He sends me everythin
—*everything*, and I barely even read it. He doesn't know why he thanked me in th
acknowledgements of his new book, he says. I tell him I was surprised to find myself thanke
as part of a long list of friends and colleagues. Didn't I single him out in m
acknowledgements for *very special thanks?*

W. says I didn't even read the chapters he sent to me. He could tell: my remarks were to
general. I did read them, I tell him, well, nearly all of them.—'You didn't read chapter five
says W., 'with the dog'. He was very proud of his pages on his dog, even though he doesn

own a dog. 'You should always include a dog in your books', says W.

It's a bit like his imaginary children in his previous book, W. says.—'Do you remember th
passages on children?' Even W. wept. He weeps now to think of them. He's very moved b
his own imaginary examples, he says.

He wants to work a nun into his next book, he says. An imaginary nun, the kindest an
most gentle person in the world.

What we lack in intellectual ability and real knowledge, we make up for in pathos, W. says.

He's learnt everything he knows about pathos from me, he says. He can make himself wee at the pathos of his writing. I must be constantly weeping, W. says, night and day, since m writing is based only on pathos and has virtually no other content.

Yes, I am a pathetic thinker, W. says, if I can be called a thinker at all. Of course, so is h He learned it from me. In its way, it's quite impressive—the way everything I say is marke with urgency, as though it were the last thing I will ever say! As though I were going expire at any moment!

Then there's the way I raise my voice in my presentations, reaching great bellowi crescendos entirely arbitrarily, W. says. They bear no relation to what I'm actually sayin And then I like to go all quiet, too, don't I?, W. says. All hushed! As if I'd drawn everyo back to the dawn of creation! As if something momentous were about to happen!

All in all, it's always an amazing performance from me, W. says. I always look as though want to start a cult. *Schwärmerei*, W. says, that's what marks everything I write. It mea swarm *and* enthusiasm, W. says. I'm one of the enthusiasts that Kant hated. It's a *Schwärmerei* with me, isn't it?, W. says.

Sometimes he thinks it's because I'm working class. I can't get over the idea someone actually listening to me, W. says, that I have an audience. Which, come to think of it, rather extraordinary. I think I'm speaking to people better than me, more refined. Which i of course, almost always true. I hate them and I love them, W. says; I want only the approval, but at the same time I don't want it; it's the last thing I want.

W. has his pathetic moments, he admits. Sometimes he feels the *Schwärmerei* rising in h breast. Sometimes his voice begins to climb the decibels. But then he knows that I am follow him, and who will notice his excesses then? I make audiences flinch, he says. I mak them twitch in involuntary horror. All that *Schwärmerei!* All that pathos!

It’s our great fortune to live at the periphery, W. and I agree. He feels an enormous love fo
his city in the southwest and I feel an enormous love for my city in the northeas
Conversely, I am always overjoyed to visit his city just as he is always overjoyed to vis
mine. There’s nothing better than visiting a city at the periphery, W. says, just as there
nothing worse than visiting a city at the centre (although, he grants, there are peripheries
every centre).

And there is our own peripheriness, W. and I agree. We are essentially peripheral. Who
threatened by us? Who bothers with us? No one, we agree. We have been completely le
alone. No one watches out for us, but on the other hand, no one has really noticed us, so w
can get up to whatever we like. We are blips on no one’s radar. Our fates matter to no on
and perhaps not even to ourselves. That’s one thing that marks us very strongly, we agre
indifference to our own fates.

For haven’t we noticed that the world is shit? Isn’t it the most obvious thing that it’s a
going to shit? You can’t struggle against it. You can’t do anything at all. Those at the cent
don’t realise it. They haven’t grasped their essential powerlessness. Only we have grasped i
we who live at the periphery of our own interests, no longer advancing our own cause.

For what would that be: *our own cause?* What could we want in a world of shit? First of a
distrust yourself, burrow down. Destroy all vestiges of hope, of the desire for salvatio
Because it will not come good. It’s leading nowhere. Nothing means anything. The cent
does not matter. There’s suffering everywhere—agreed. There’s suffering and horro
everywhere—on that we’re agreed. But the first step must be to peripherise ourselves, and
peripherise ourselves with respect to ourselves.

W.’s street. The houses at the bottom are no longer derelict, he says. You used to be able
see the faces of children behind the cracked windows, like ghosts, but now developers hav
moved in.

This part of the city was once very wealthy, he says. His house was once owned by a ship
captain, he says—imagine it! We stand back and admire its storeys.

The railway to London used to run through here, he tells me a little later. Passengers woul
disembark from their cruise liners onto the train, and go straight up to London. The house
are still grand, W. says, although most of them have been turned into flats now. They’re fu
of alcoholics and drug addicts, he says. No one wants to live round here.

Children bang on the window as we sit inside and drink.—‘Ignore them’, says W., ‘dor
pay them any attention’. He’s not frightened of them, he says later as he closes the shutter
—‘They’re lost’, he says, ‘you can see it in their eyes’.

Their grandparents would have moved down from Scotland, like everyone around here, W
explains. Thousands of them came down to the dockyards a couple of generations ago, b
there’s no work for them now, nothing. So what do they do but drink all day?

He’d drink all day, says W., if he had nothing to do. Sometimes they punch him or thro

ashtrays at Sal, but that's alright. He'd be exactly the same, says W.

Sand beneath an exposed cobblestone. Under the paving stones, the beach, I say to W., whc showing me old Plymouth. Not much of the old city survives, W. comments. We pass throug a walled medieval garden, with a low maze and a fountain. Alcoholics drink beneath portico, listening to a radio. There's no one to move them on, W. says. He approves of that.

These are the end times, we both agree. It's enough to be left alone like the alcoholics, b our time will come just as their time will come. We'll be rounded up and shot, W. says. It only a matter of time, we know, before we are found out. They haven't really noticed us ye that's what saves us. But when they do …!

The clock is ticking, we agree.—'This is not our time', W. says as we walk through th newly converted Victualling Yard. Who lives in these flats?, we wonder as we pass throug the wide boulevards. Who can afford them?

What are the signs of the End?, I ask W.—'You. You are a sign of the End', says W. 'Actuall we both are. The fact that we have careers or flourish at all is a sign of the End. Of cours the fact that we won't have them for much longer is a sign that the End is coming closer'.

There's something sick about us, W. says, something depraved. Only it's not just about u says W., but about the whole world. We're seismographic, W. says. We register the gre horrors of the world in our guts. That's why I'm always about to soil myself, W. says. It why I have a continual nosebleed and always feel ill.

Many illnesses have coursed through W.'s body. Colds, of course. Myriad flus. Pneumoni once. Gastroenteritis, twice. We're weak, he says, we're the runts of the litter. Something ha come to an end with us. We're the end of the line in some important way.

It all finishes here, W. says, pointing at his body and then pointing at mine. Especially her says W., pointing his finger at my belly.

My obesity always impresses him, W. says. My greed. The way I eat, the amount I ea He'd call me a *carnal* man, W. says, but that sounds too grand.—'You're just full of greed'. H wonders what would I be like if I didn't go to the gym?, It's all channelled into my enormou thighs, W. says. They're grotesque.—'You're out of proportion!' And my great fat arms, W says.

For his part, W. takes no exercise. He hasn't felt well for many years—eleven or twelv he's not sure how many. There was a time when he'd go for great walks on the moor, h remembers. He had a walking friend, of course. You can't go walking on your own, th would just lead to *enormous melancholy*, he says. In fact, that's what I always say, isn't it: th going out walking on my own would lead to *enormous melancholy?*

W. is no stranger to melancholy, he says. He's essentially agoraphobic. He's only *reall* happy holed up in his room, working. He'd prefer never to leave his house, says W. C indeed his study. He'd like to become a recluse like Howard Hughes, he says, with jars c toenails and bottles of urine. It's only the love of a good woman which saves him from that.

Now and again, he thinks he should walk to work, or cycle. But it's too far, and all uphi

sample content of Spurious: A Novel

- Critical Decisions: How You and Your Doctor Can Make the Right Medical Choices Together for free
- download online Professional C# 6 and .NET Core 1.0 pdf, azw (kindle), epub
- click I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced pdf, azw (kindle)
- download online One Perfect Day
- **Waterfell (The Aquarathi) pdf**

- http://bestarthritiscare.com/library/The-Strangely-Beautiful-Tale-of-Miss-Percy-Parker.pdf
- http://conexdxb.com/library/Professional-C--6-and--NET-Core-1-0.pdf
- http://dadhoc.com/lib/I-Am-Nujood--Age-10-and-Divorced.pdf
- http://jaythebody.com/freebooks/One-Perfect-Day.pdf
- http://test.markblaustein.com/library/Waterfell--The-Aquarathi-.pdf