I remember her black synthetic trousers with the white stripe up the sides and how she'd wear them with a brown singlet until the last minute, until enough of the guests had arrived that she could disappear and come back and dazzle them all with her dress and her earrings and her hair still the same, the same messy hair that sat atop the last outfit, that now looked different, sophisticated, undone.

I remember when the song changed and a table of eyes were for a moment locked on me as a cracker topped with tangelo sprouts and salmon arrived all warm and someone said Go on, eat it, eat it all, they said to me. I remember the looks dispersed and conversations resumed once I'd stopped chewing and my Adam's apple had resettled in my neck. I remember thinking this is how things are gonna be now, and resolving to wait fifteen minutes before forcing myself to throw up in the bathroom upstairs.

I remember she was not my mother and this was not my house. My mother and I were living there because we had nowhere else to go, and she was my mother's best friend in the whole world. I remember how my mother hated her. I remember watching her in black synthetic trousers, and watching her entertain guests in her beautiful dress and how she never relaxed the whole night. I remember thinking of the cruelest thing I could possibly say to her and my heart racing as I waited for the right moment to say it.

I remember she'd touch my arm and say mean things about my hair or my clothes, and she'd ask if I masturbated and whether I was a boy or a girl. I said I didn't know and I remember my body burning and how I'd run to school to burn it more and how I'd pass out in class and give my lunch away because I cried and I remember she wanted me to eat it because she cared about me and it was filmed 'guerilla' style (this was the height of flashmob era, and so on). A fictional local dance troupe did a doty dance while genuinely puzzled real-life onlookers staggered past again. Iconic stuff, and every wedding I've ever been to has blasted that song and then everyone tries to reenact the dance routine from the music video but no one actually knows it or is good enough to do it. It would be like being able to recount any lines after you could barely read a script. I guarantee you remember it. So, Spike Jonze made the music video for Prize You and I guarantee you remember it. Actually, before I get ahead of myself, I'm sure the needs will be championing at the bit to tell me that actually Francis Ford Coppola's son also made the music video and you're right, of course, but it's also pretty obvious that his influence was quite limited on set and the creative direction really belongs to Spike. The video is set outside a cinema in Los Angeles and it was filmed 'guerilla' style (was the height of flashmob era, and so on). A fictional local dance troupe did a doty dance while genuinely puzzled real-life onlookers staggered past again. Iconic stuff, and every wedding I've ever been to has blasted that song and then everyone tries to reenact the dance routine

SPROUTS

I'm sorry, but it's true. Have you ever heard of a little track called Prize You? Exactly. In fact, the reason the history books will remember Norman Cook is all because he actually had plugs. Anyway, both Cook and Moby were chart-topping DJs. Both Cook and Moby understood that music could be electronic and still sound nice. Both Cook and Moby won Brit Awards.

Mr and Mrs Jackson (slang names) are ready for their guests and they've argued and Mr Jackson has thrown things across the room. Mrs Jackson didn't cry because she doesn't cry anymore. Child Jackson's best friend is here and has been here for five nights straight and just last week they caught her in the colosseum, before none other than the Emperor Spikellus Jonze, and instead of getting his gladiator on he blasts that album out and waits thirty-seven whole seconds of recorded music. I don't know if this is what swung it for Jonze - nobody can know what went on that ranch twenty years ago - but you'd be seething, right?

Anyway, you can imagine it. Jonze is sitting in his media room and maybe the History Channel's still projecting away but he's muted the black and white footage of Winston, Franklin, Joseph and the boys at the Yalta Conference. The Dolby 5.1's done its job and the last sound hanging in the air is that little mechanical whirr as the CD player forewarns Norman Cook's magnum opus. And Jonze picks up the phone, and he calls Hollywood, and he calls the record labels and their A&R men, and he calls the History Channel and it's game over for Moby. The history books, Jonze sends spittle flying as he yells down his cordless phone, will remember Norman Cook.
WHAT PEOPLE TALK ABOUT WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT PORCELAIN BY MOBY

I don’t know what people talk about when they talk about ‘Porcelain’ by Moby. In fact, I don’t know if people talk about ‘Porcelain’ by Moby at all. I remember years ago, Moby appeared on MTV’s ‘Cribs.’ That was the television show that granted celebrities a platform to float around their increasingly alien, sun-drenched stickers of mini-mansions. The hosts would pivot and pause to show off the contents of the refrigerator, the lower closets, the bedrooms, the bathrooms, the pools—rooms heavy with purple velvet pool tables and framed eBay sports memorabilia and, with a wink, the room invariably described as the one “where the magic happens”. It was the early thousands, and it seemed like some gaudy love-child of Richie Rich and The Shonan-kan, and the show was to attract the tabloid buyers and ball players how to play The Sims with their own houses and maximalism was firmly in.

Moby’s appearance, however, was something exceptional. A quiet, awkward DJ led MTV’s cameras through a East Village apartment just large enough to play the part of a forgotten walk-up. The hospitality was unforced, and the camera moved with a will and the approach to the residence didn’t even merit a floor walkup, the approach to the floor in order to craft ten-minute Cribs to play the part of a forgotten Moby. I don’t know what people talk about when they talk about ‘Porcelain’ by Moby at all. I’ve never figured it out and it annoys me that I haven’t. Was MTV Cribs a machine self-aware and technical enough to use Moby as a contrapuntal bulwark against the maximal performances of wealth and poor taste the show otherwise championed? To read Moby’s smile as earnest and vestigial, or to generate that smile after they talk about Moby at all. I’ve never seen the show’s production one of mindless automation that meant sentient eyes were only laid upon the content of the point of view. It was as if the show was Moby’s.pet够 to resist, and it’s a lot easier to repeat that his smile than reveal someone’s ignorance by attempting to talk about a Moby song. I was asked if I wanted to write a section of ‘Porcelain’ by Moby and I was thrown into a reverie and began to talk with passion about the sensation of freedom evoked in lines like “I try to fly / fly-ing high. Well, that’s not a bird / that’s not a balding(DJ) who goes by the moniker Fatboy Slim, and the song’s called Sunset, Porcelain’s that other song, and it sounds even better than Fatboy Slim’s ‘Insomnia’. TLL the truth, birds and nuclear weapons. As my misapprehension about ‘Porcelain’ was politely corrected, fissures formed and healed in the depths of my memorial reserves. ‘Porcelain’ slowly unpeeled and two songs, and two realities, came into view before me. I couldn’t help but think that this is exactly the reason people don’t talk about Moby’s songs — and especially not Porcelain. This is goodbye… Is it Moby exhaling this line, or is it a sample? Is it Moby’s anguish or has it been artificially infused into the singer of some rocksteady B-side from fifty years ago? Of course, it doesn’t matter, but it’s yet another question I’ll never have an answer to. If I begin to talk about ‘Porcelain’, or when I talk about Moby in the roof top in the year 2002, worrying about whether the balsamic vinegar is going to drip into the margarine shelf below it. We don’t talk about the balsamic vinegar is going to drip into the margarine shelf below it. We don’t talk about things. In the same way that a rising tide lifts all boats, a track from Play or the other Moby albums that people pretend to know about draws listeners into a common confusion. To play Porcelain in a communal setting is to see people hum and mouth the song’s lyrics and warped synths sounds for the first seventy seconds or so, before disappearing into wistful looks, memories of intermediate school, and their own very smiles. This is a remarkable feat and Porcelain is in rare company in its ability to forge it. Weezer’s Island in the Sun and Groove Armada’s At the End of the Universe, and when they coexist in space is sovereign. Instead of spatial ellipsis fragmenting the bodies of the protagonists, Southland Tales is a hypersaturation of recordings across a flat screen that appears as God’s eye: a security monitor. It is chaotic because it is too consistent, too comprehensive.

Sonically Southland Tales is always rising and singing, like Moby’s Porcelain. The formula goes that when the world collapses Moby plays, and the world is always collapsing. The way it turns just makes it collapse more with the tides. The film is liquid: ‘the ocean, says The Rock’s Boxer Santars, and in all acts he knew it is saturated with continuity, and it is also the most unstable. The Bourne Identity and Miami Vice are both space-sick because the characters cannot adjust to the demands of now-time. Southland Tales is time-sick because space is fighting back. The ocean is in control and its soundtrack is Moby after Porcelain.

THE MOBY UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

Remembering Moby in the decades after Porcelain is a recurring theme where the recovery of sensuousness from the abstractions of late capitalism is concerned. First in film and then in music itself. The agitaton and paranoia of The Bourne Identity ends with its protagonist escaping to the paradise of Mykonos, cue Moby. Two other films, both released in 2006, push that film’s agitaton and paranoia even further, channeling post-cinematic affect through the memory of Moby and Southland Tales. All three films are agitated and paranoid because they are concerned with the way that global trade and surveillance networks distribute human subjectivity across a totalising now-time. The people in these films never sleep because time is always active, and they are never in one location because they are always scattered across computer monitors and boats and fire escapes and fields and phone lines. The totality of time in these films is the total obliteration of space and matter. What appears as things regress, however, is Moby. Miami Vice, like The Bourne Identity, remembers Moby after Porcelain. There is a scene where two of the characters decide to stop advancing the plot. They go to kill time together over the horizon. When the plot is not being advanced the ground stabilises but it is then that they keep time in space and when they coexist in space they remember Moby. Moby plays in this scene. Moby is the soundtrack to the rejection of telics. To remember Moby is to reclaim space with someone you care about and to act toward no greater end or purpose than just being together. What remembering Moby does is reveal the late capitalist uncertainty principle: to become attuned to the velocity of global trade and surveillance networks is to forfeit knowledge of our position, just as to remember Moby does. To claim certainty over our position in space is to forfeit knowledge of network velocity. This is what they hope for in Miami Vice: that in making one another concrete, in experiencing one another as flesh, they can stop one. And it almost works.

The problem is that to remember Moby is to concede that there is a fundamental discontinuity between the one that remembers and that which is remembered. Space can be made concrete through the rejection of time, but without time we are all made ghosts. We slip through one another’s fingers as we fall through rocks and water and history. We try to regroup but we return to the beach alone, to remember Moby and that bright that shines from forever ago: I remember we were together, and we must have disappeared a while. Maybe that was enough.

Southland Tales remembers Moby after Porcelain, but it also cannot forget Moby after Porcelain. Moby is everywhere in Southland Tales. World War 3 has come and gone and the Patriot Act, forged two years after Moby’s Porcelain, never went away. A company is using ocean currents to generate energy, but the affected tides have slowed their earth rotation. Spatially Southland Tales is more angular than its post-Porcelain colleagues because its now-time is sovereign. Instead of spatial ellipsis fragmenting the bodies of the protagonists, Southland Tales is a hypersaturation of recordings across a flat screen that appears as God’s eye: a security monitor. It is chaotic because it is too consistent, too comprehensive.
JOUR D’ÉTÉ

The first time I heard Porcelain by Moby was an early summer’s day. One of those ones where the sun is high, bright and full of promise, but there’s still a bit of dew on the ground tucked under shrubs and at the base of the fence. Sweat prickles at the nape of my neck, but nowhere else. The heat isn’t yet oppressive, as it will turn in the months to come. I don’t really need my sunglasses on but I don’t like squinting. And I think they look cool anyway.

We’re hosting a barbecue at ours and it’s all laughter, the crack of beer cans opening and meat being abused by the grill. This was years ago now so it’s all guess. I guess. Nothing-plant-based on that Weber. The radio’s hanging out the kitchen window and it’s on one of those ‘middle of the road’ stations – and why not – and then Porcelain by Moby comes on. And I thought does it?

Everybody always asks you where you were the first time you heard Porcelain by Moby, but nobody ever asks you where you were the second time you heard it.

The second time I hear Porcelain by Moby, I am driving on the Interstate in a five-year old red Toyota Camry with busted aircon. The sun hangs low on the horizon, dancing through the brown dust rising off the road. I can’t open the windows for the dust and it feels like we’re breathing old water. There wasn’t any paracetamol in the glovebox. The kids – all three – in the back, fussing and shouting and sulking. My head throbs. Why am I doing this? My pits are drenched. And where am I going? I have $240 cash in my wallet and I can sell the Camry, or so I keep saying to myself like a mantra.

The second time I hear it, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair are invading Iraq.

Television consists of a shot of a hulking, grey plane with a big fat belly. It either takes off from one desert, in Arizona or wherever those young men in combat fatigues assemble to face their fates, or it touches down in an almost identical desert in... where? Saudi Arabia? Kuwait? One of the good guys anyway. I decide to pretend it’s the same plane every time. Just the one, droning back and forth between deserts, tinted cockpit windows disguising the fatigue and distress of the two schlumps rostet on this endless service to hell. If only Saldam could figure it out – get that one plane out of the sky and you’re golden.

The second time I hear it, my coffee has gone cold but I don’t know how to ask for a refill from the server when I have a full mug. Will she be okay with it, does it happen all the time? Maybe I just need to drink it all quickly and then ask. Or I could pour it into the planter on the window sill. No, she’ll see that – the diner isn’t very busy. Actually I’d also like some pancakes, so I’ll have to call her over anyway. I thought that if I asked the lawyer to meet me here that maybe he would pay for breakfast. It was a good plan, but he didn’t show up. Not a great sign, I suppose. I push the button again on the front of my phone to see if there are any messages. Of course there aren’t.

The second time I hear it, I’m using a tatty list of ‘leads’ and a beige phone with strange grey patterns forming around the holes in the mouthpiece to call people and ask if they are happy with their current health insurance provider. They all are. Every single person. It seems impossible and, of course, it is completely untrue. They’d all rather eat wasps than remain on the line with me. That’s fine, because I know something they don’t. Iraq’s army has collapsed, and the Marines are bearing down on Baghdad. I move my mouse and click the refresh button to see what else the Drudge Report has to tell me about the oil fields and the greed.

The second time I hear it, I collect three trash bags full of my clothes from out the front of the house. That’s nearly everything. This is goodbye. Honestly it might not be so bad. Lots of people end up having a fresh start, I should really try to look on the bright side. But then I lose it. Like, I absolutely and completely lose it. I’ve pushed the Weber into the back of the car and slammed the red boot down but it doesn’t fit and now the hinge or maybe it’s a hydraulic joint or maybe it’s a catch I don’t know but it’s fucked, and that’s just one more goddamn thing and how am I ever going to sell this goddamn Camry. I wake and I’m going out of my mind. I’ve crashed the Weber through the lounge window and I’m halfway down the street. Glovebox. Still no paracetamol.

The second time I hear it, I am living in a motel on the edge of town, two miles from the closest McDonald’s. I have to be careful where I eat my Quarter Pounder combo because the room has a patio with a patina of indeterminate organic matter across its surfaces.

The second time I hear it, it turns out there weren’t any WMDs to start with.

The second time I hear it, I understand what it means to be dying all the time in my dreams.

The second time I hear it, I haven’t yet forgotten the first time, but I will.

SUNDAY DRIVE

Winter’s night driving west. A few years back we were attempting a match-making two wildly unsuitable friends. One, a glamorous neurotic princess, the other a muscular neurotic nerd. We thought neurosis the ultimate in poigniant compatibility. Not so. It was raining, dark, and cold, the visibility sucked and he was only on a restricted licence and the road churned intestinely around the dumph bush. We hooked into some beers. Nasty of us in retrospect, I often feel guilty for having left the driver out of getting into the vibe. That vibe was bad though.

Spring’s day driving north. When I was younger the north seemed tremendously oppressive, and the drive in the back of the Corolla, its safe speed bell complaining continuously — ring ding ring ding — as Mum pushed the shitty engine to go over 100, felt as if the sky and earth were closing in on me until I was extruded out onto a beach somewhere. Sweating from fear, not the heat, I’d clamber out spinning and gasping for air. Sometimes I would be crying too, having sung my ‘songs of death’ to achieve hysterial catharsis. I’d be scolded for such behaviour, but it was the 90s and one did not wear their children’s peculiar actions as badges of neurodivergent honour.

Summer’s evening driving south. Havelock North is the Sataonic capital of the world, and it greets me with a warm, dry embrace. It smells scorched, the sheep are scorching in the sun and the roast lamb comes out of the oven scorched too. I love it. There is nothing damp about it.

THE GENTLE SUBLIME

A second-order apprehension of the sublime brought about by the experience of something which cannot harm the subject and in fact pleases her on an aesthetic or emotional level, but which nevertheless stirs in her a pinch of melancholy and leads to the reminder of her own insignificance, which paradoxically affirms her place in the world, warming her body while tickling her spine.

One of Desert Mother Syncretica’s finest entries in the Apephathagnata Patrum details how the only way to preserve the moment as a memory is to immediately cut it out of your heart, she says, like it was going to kill you. The gentle sublime is often erroneously conflated with ennui.
**SUNDAY DRIVE II**

Probably the least interesting thing, I mean the least interesting way to put it, is the way my friend did when he put it like this. He said you start with an object, any object, and you map it in relation to another one, a marker of any description. What you do then is you track the moving object in relation to that marker, and then you’re dealing with movement in space, and that’s what time is. We, not him, but we were driving back from up north and it was dark. There’s this whole stretch where you can’t see anything on either side and there’s nothing but the road. Eventually there are signs and posts and you know you’re moving. She said back there it’s like the road and the night in stillness is everything else. When the signs and posts reappear you go from being nowhere to hurtling into a nowhere that’s someplace else.

We hit the clouds through the Brynderwyn Hills and couldn’t see through the pitch black to the farmland below. The cat’s eyes along the road and retroreflectors along the barriers all lit up gold, and the headlights burned the mist to a reddish brown. It felt like we were underwater or in outer space. Or in heaven. She went to put music on but there was no coverage between points. It felt like we were underwater or in outer space. Or in heaven. She went to put music on but there was no coverage between points. It felt like we were underwater or in outer space. Or in heaven.

This thing about *Play* is that everybody had the CD. My burnt CD was different to the next CD although they both sounded similar. People who were picky about those sorts of things would listen to all the different *Plays* from across the world and say how the UK edition had a more detailed mix than the Australian one but how the US one was an all-rounder if you weren’t willing to shell out for the Japanese print.

When streaming *Play* there is no enduring CD that anyone can use to access *Play* that is sonically and materially distinct from every other *Play*. With streaming there is a single *Play* that appears everywhere, from the same place, and that holds what is now understood to be the universal value of *Play*. Nobody knows which mix of *Play* is the one they are streaming, but that is beside the point because there are no other *Plays*. This is *Play* stripped of all sonic and material difference. We are in the era of a *Play* singularity.

Sometimes I wonder whether the universal *Play* gets lonely. I wonder whether it is in one of those data centres beneath the snow covered forests in Northern Europe, and whether it gets cold. The universal *Play* sits there in the dark and sends its signals across the globe to anyone requesting *Play*, before having every trace of itself deleted from the receiver’s device. The 52-hertz whale is described as the ‘world’s loneliest whale’ because it calls at a frequency that other whales do not respond to, either because they cannot hear it, or because they actively ignore it. The universal *Play* is the loneliest *Play* of all. We know it only by its echoes.

On this drive, however, the universal *Play* found a home. *Play* was tangible data in my phone; numbers represented in my File Manager and executable through music playing software. It had not yet been cleared from my cache and so we were floating into the blackened orange mist and *Porcelain* was there with us, sinking. We all fell into this nowhere together.

**BREATHEING PORCELAIN: MOBY’S RAPTURE**

They call it rapture of the deep when a diver loses their mind down there. It’s the pressure and then the hallucinations that’s so dangerous. I’ve never been down that deep, but they say it also happens shallow and you don’t notice it as much. I got shallow-water blackout once, it’s when you just stop and you’re floating there with your face in the water and nobody notices cause the water’s so shallow and you’re so quiet.

*The Porcelain* video has Moby reflected in somebody’s eye. I heard someone say the eye from *Porcelain* looks like a space helmet, and someone else say it’s like a diving suit. I think they’re both conflating Moby’s *Porcelain* video with the one for *No Surprises* from the year before. Moby’s *Porcelain* evokes space travel and drowning because the reversed strings in the song feel like the slow-motion hyperventilation that is shallow-water blackout. You are hyperventilating as you quietly float there, breathing water.

Rapture of the deep is the saturation of oxygen, and the increase in pressure that comes with descending into an inconceivably vast space underwater. As space opens up, things close in, and as the heart speeds up, the world goes thick as syrup. If Moby’s *Porcelain* also feels like rapture of the deep for the way the strings both rise and fall to a cool numb somewhere between tranquility and crushing depression. What is clear is that Moby’s *Porcelain* is asking us to breathe water.

An important thing to note is that the eye doesn’t just reflect Moby. It reflects the cosmos, and a baby, and a flower. Moby’s *Porcelain* sounds like breathing water, and the *Porcelain* video flattens time like breathing water. It reflects the cosmos, and a baby, and matter into a thick sea of video the way the strings both rise and fall to a cool numb somewhere between tranquility and crushing depression. What is clear is that Moby’s *Porcelain* is asking us to breathe water.

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