

READING

MDIA 2005



University of the West Indies / CARIMAC / Sem2 '14 - Thur / MDIA 2005 Communication through Typography and Layout

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In the dead of night these cursed citizens wrestle with their bedsheets, unable to rest, stricken with the knowledge that they cannot change a single action, a single gesture. Their mistakes will be repeated precisely in this life as in the life before. And it is these double unfortunates who give the only sign that time is a circle. For in each town, late at night, the vacant streets and balconies fill up with their moans.

16 APRIL 1905

In this world, time is like a flow of water, occasionally displaced by a bit of debris, a passing breeze. Now and then, some cosmic disturbance will cause a rivulet of time to turn away from the mainstream, to make connection backstream. When this happens, birds, soil, people caught in the

branching tributary find themselves suddenly carried to the past.

Persons who have been transported back in time are easy to identify. They wear dark, indistinct clothing and walk on their toes, trying not to make a single sound, trying not to bend a single blade of grass. For they fear that any change they make in the past could have drastic consequences for the future.

Just now, for example, such a person is crouching in the shadows of the arcade, at no. 19 Kramgasse. An odd place for a traveler from the future, but there she is. Pedestrians pass, stare, and walk on. She huddles in a corner, then quickly creeps across the street and cowers in another darkened spot, at no. 22. She is terrified that she will kick up dust, just as a Peter Klausen is making his way to the apothecary on Spitalgasse this afternoon of 16 April 1905. Klausen is something of a dandy and hates to have his clothes sullied. If dust messes his clothes, he will stop and pains-

takingly brush them off, regardless of waiting appointments. If Klausen is sufficiently delayed, he may not buy the ointment for his wife, who has been complaining of leg aches for weeks. In that case, Klausen's wife, in a bad humor, may decide not to make the trip to Lake Geneva. And if she does not go to Lake Geneva on 23 June 1905, she will not meet a Catherine d'Épinay walking on the jetty of the east shore and will not introduce Mlle. d'Épinay to her son Richard. In turn, Richard and Catherine will not marry on 17 December 1908, will not give birth to Friedrich on 8 July 1912. Friedrich Klausen will not be father to Hans Klausen on 22 August 1938, and without Hans Klausen the European Union of 1979 will never occur.

The woman from the future, thrust without warning into this time and this place and now attempting to be invisible in her darkened spot at no. 22 Kramgasse, knows the Klausen story and a thousand other sto-

ries waiting to unfold, dependent on the births of children, the movement of people in the streets, the songs of birds at certain moments, the precise position of chairs, the wind. She crouches in the shadows and does not return the stares of people. She crouches and waits for the stream of time to carry her back to her own time.

When a traveler from the future must talk, he does not talk but whimpers. He whispers tortured sounds. He is agonized. For if he makes the slightest alteration in anything, he may destroy the future. At the same time, he is forced to witness events without being part of them, without changing them. He envies the people who live in their own time, who can act at will, oblivious of the future, ignorant of the effects of their actions. But he cannot act. He is an inert gas, a ghost, a sheet without soul. He has lost his personhood. He is an exile of time.

Such wretched people from the future

can be found in every village and every town, hiding under the eaves of buildings, in basements, under bridges, in deserted fields. They are not questioned about coming events, about future marriages, births, finances, inventions, profits to be made. Instead, they are left alone and pitied.