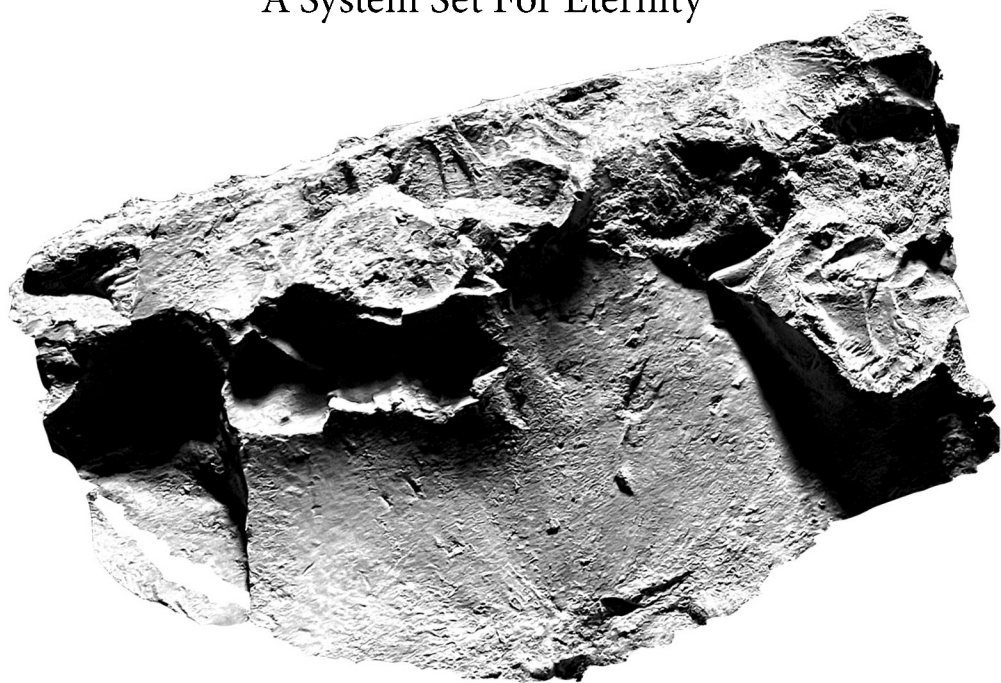# A System Set For Eternity

Hannah Hornby

Everything is seemingly churning away, whirring and grinding down. Tunnelling into its own matter. Destroying and regrowing. Burning and uploading. But it's looping and there's repetition. Time is in flux. "Present events seem to flow into the past, like a boat that drifts past us on the riverbank and then recedes farther and farther downstream".[1] Then the water twists into whirlpools all around you, everything feels circular and continuous as behaviours and histories roll around once again. Old patterns begin to surface and what is new is simply akin to the past.
Submerging,
Resurfacing,
Repeating,
Never-ending.

<A System Set For Eternity>

A System Set For Eternity

Hannah Hornby

Contents

Grey

Scratch,
Scraping,
Scratched
And scraped.
Graze,
Grazed elbows.
Carve,
Carve into,
Carve around.
The dust falls,
And the dust settles.
A pool of dust,

[Process]

A puddle of dust,
An indentation,
An indentation to allow a puddle to form.
A pool of rainwater,
A pool of salty tears,
A pool of grit and stone and sediment.
Dust which mixes with grit.
Grit from the oyster's shell between your teeth.[A]
Grit and pearls,
A tarnished pearl with no value.
An amulet sat in a clam shell beneath the ocean,
Now sat on your mantelpiece.
The amulet with more tales to tell than days you've seen.
Sleepy gritty days.
Time carved out for you to watch the dust fall.
The dust has fallen on your grazed elbow.
You sit next to the amulet on the mantelpiece,
The amulet is scraped,
Scratched,
Littered with imperfections,
Scratched red raw.
Like skin,
The skin around the graze,
The skin now imperfect.
So lay down your arm upon the clam shells.
The shells which lie on the ocean bed,
A bed carved out for you,
A bed of sand and sediment,
And fall into another sleepy gritty day.

The toll of a life. Battered and weather beaten. The surface of you, your skin, the surface of the stuff and the things are all eroded and chipped by now. So, cement the walls, pour it over the riverbanks and coastlines. Fill the gaps between the skirting boards and windowpanes and the crevasses in your broken skin. Surely then you're safe. Safe from the elements and from yourself, and from the systems that spin off money and power. And that desperate greed which ignores the input and ingests and ingests and ingests until its doesn't know what next to grab and that hungry belly can't seem to sustain its growth. Until the input has been chewed and chewed and chewed, and until the mouth is dry and empty.[B]

There are whispers of a revolution against the grey landscape.
Will you fight back against this landscape?
Will you fight back against the place between a place?
An empty uninhabited place.
A motorway underpass.
The eeriness of the urban concrete alleyway, which sees echoes bounce between the walls, reverberating between the roaring engines which traverse the urban tapestry. Where an apocalyptic yellow from the streetlights lingers in this muddled definition of dystopia.[C]
In a land which isn't land who is breathing?
Maybe like the space outside a city.[D]
A tunnel beneath a river.

The concrete holds so much within its matter, but no one
seems to stay.
The debris of the world begins talk.
Animacy found its voice, and speaks about the past, and
about today, and about 700 years from now.

Wartime

The things of the world are pushed deep into the mud. Water splits away from the soil, allowing a shallow pool of moisture to settle and glisten light across the water's surface. The mud dries out, cracks, freezes over, thaws, returning it to its thick gluey state. The cycle repeats and the debris of the world sinks down into time, soon to be engulfed by the soil. Buried in experience and time. Soon all the stuff and the things and that forgotten object, along with other fragments and bits and bobs and lives, are churned up, captured by the jaws of

development. The jaws clench down on the spirit and soul of time before, grinding it down. Would the debris cough and splutter through dusty lungs? And chant of London back in 2024. Just as the shells of the old Economist building chant of London in the 1950s, back when they were submerged in sharp sand and water. Back when they became something brutal and strong. Their delicate intricate design was taken over by the stature and sheer mass of the Smithson's design.[E] They hang in the cement with ears pricked, invisibly watching. Would you fear those tiny shells if they had lips which could move?

And so, Man's war on Nature broke out. Man followed in the footsteps of Caligula, the mad Roman Emperor who declared war with the sea. Caligula "drew up his army on the shore of the ocean…he suddenly commanded them to gather up seashells, and fill their helmets and the folds of their tunics with them, calling them the spoils of the sea due to the Capitoline and the Palatine". The ocean's armour, now a possession of a mad emperor, who believed in the power of Ancient Rome. Will your victory feel so satisfactory? Or will your bones line the ocean bed, joining the shells as a reminder of Nature's omnipotence.

Man draws his swords, thrashing violently at the air. Next, he wheels out his trebuchet, launching rock against rock. He then turns to bullets and nuclear

power, to fossil fuels and concrete production, for Man cannot sanction trade with Nature, a deal was never struck. Although Nature was hit hard and buckled at the knee, Man was never able to make the final blow. Nature fought back sporadically, with unpredictability and immense power. Flooding the boundaries, Nature let thunder boil up and spill its booming voice across the battlefield; followed by cracks of lightning and disorientating wind, Man was sent into hysteria. Man sprawled about on the floor as if stuck in an ocean wave, unable to swim to the surface. Bodies thrashed in the soil, digging Man deeper into its surface, which soon became muddy. Man's mind became lost, it wandered through time and trickled down the drainpipes, entering that space which isn't a space. Man sat bolt upright in a dream. Man was taken back to that land which isn't land; that tunnel which runs between the North and South Island…

Crocodile lined escalators,
Thin evenly spaced hand carved wooden steps.
Rotation,
On loop,
A continuous loop,
The loop of laughter,
The loop of a rusty bike chain juddering and scraping in its rusting ageing state.
The juddering loop of the old man's steps,
His ageing state,

A space is entered,
A place unseen,
Surrounded by a heavy lull of water.
Looping particles weigh down on your space.
A loop which occurs outside the place,
A looping routine as you leave the space,
A looping routine as you enter the space,
You enter the space on the crocodile lined escalator.
You enter the place on the thin evenly spaced hand
carved wooden steps.
The tiles uniform,
A repetition,
A looping pattern between tile and plaster,
Between tile and plaster a footstep after a footstep.
Crocodile lined escalators,
Thin evenly spaced hand carved wooden steps.
Rotation,
On loop,
A continuous loop.

CHAPTER 3.0

Post-War

Man, nearly drove itself to extinction.   [Output]

CHAPTER 4.0

Slumber

And so, a slumber began. For 300 years Man slept, whilst Nature quietly continued to grow and evolve and twist around its former self.

A Time After

Two days after 300 years had passed Man began to rise from the dream, stretched stiff muscles, flex aching spines and open weary eyes to a land now overgrown in thick vines and spongey beds of moss. Nettles sprouted at the foot of ageing oak trees. Fungi in vivid colours ran up the sides of the trees, parallel to a tiny trail of ants. The morning's condensation coats blades of grass which in turn bounces light across the fresh faces of the newly awakened people.

They lived in this haven for a year or two before they started to clear the land to rebuild. As they did so they discovered what lay below the mesh of vines. Fractures of a time which existed long ago. Rubble and treasures, accents, and whispers. The people were soon captivated by a material which seemed to appear on mass, they noticed trapped objects within its form. They wondered what memories were held in the material's imperfections. There was a seemingly mesmerising quality to its rawness. The way it contrasts against soft petals, the translucency of a dragonfly's wing, feathers, the shine of a beetle's shell, the richness of the howling wind. The material marked a moment from the past with such clarity the people of the new world seemed to be transported back to the 300 years prior. The act of archaeology was an act of time travel.[F]

The children slid down the smooth underbelly of the concrete and between the slabs which were piled high. Stories and mythologies were conjured up, concrete became a material with power and an almightiness circles its presence. The people saw it as something rare and precious, carved into by their ancestors and by Nature. It represents a time which was strange and acted as a reminder of their history. A turning point in the relationship between Man and Nature. The people in a ritualistic manner began to worship the material as a relic from the past.

A toe which grazed the side of the concrete.
Scratch,
Scraping,
Scratched,
And scraped.
Blood seeping to the surface,
Staining,
Then seeping into the concrete's surface,
Like raindrops during a monsoon,
Flooding the surface,
Staining the concrete darker.
Red rivers,
From clay,
From blood,
Staining the concrete.
Staining your skin.
As you swim in the red river,
Your hair coated in clay,
Your scalp filled with dust,
From the eroding concrete.
The dust falls,
And the dust settles.
A pool of dust,
A puddle of dust.
The graze on your toe,
now stinging.
You place your forehead on the concrete,
You kiss the top of its hand,
You surrender to the material.

Spinning in circles around it,
Holding the hand of your neighbour.
Chanting to the beat of your footsteps,
Calling out to concrete.
Leaping over its form,
Until you trip and graze your toe,
And until the red river sweeps you up,
Carrying you across the land,
A piece of debris in a monsoon storm,
Littered with imperfections.
Scratched red raw,
Like skin,
The skin around the graze.
You surrender to the material.
You surrender to Nature.

<A System Set For Eternity>

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A. "It feels like we're in jail, but we haven't done anything
bad" murmured the Japanese oyster fisherman to the sea
wall. "Our richness is drawn from our contact with the
ocean."[2] But people feared the ocean's power, and so, as
nights became restless, the sea was pushed out of sight.

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B. For "it's easier to imagine the end of the world than
the end of [that hungry machine]".[3]

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C. Mark Leckey's installation, *Under the Bridge*, pulls on grey concrete aesthetics as he comments on a bridge built in his hometown in 1968. "It was this new modernist emblem of the future…by the 70s it had become this dystopian neglected ruin full of the threat of violence and dread, in the 80s it was this fantasy of nuclear winter, this post-apocalyptic landscape, 90s it was repainted and rebranded as part of New Labour's programme taking Britain back to the swinging 60s".[4] Time has come full circle, in a place which isn't a place. But a place which stands as an archive of social history. Leckley goes on to say that the bridge is "sub temporal, below time"[5] and that time is passing over the bridge. Here time is something fluid, in flux, sat next the world and between one reality and the next.   101
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D. A Zaum. From the Russian Avant Garde movement, a language created to mean nothing, to represent disorder. Things which are beyond sense and which hover around it.

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F. For Larissa Sansour the act of archaeology too was something of significance. In her 2016 film, *In the Future They Ate From the Finest Porcelain*, we see a poetic cross over between Sci-Fi, archaeology and global politics. Set in a fictional future Sansour highlights to the audience the importance of what an object can represent and hold within its form. But also, the power of myth telling as a tool to influence history and politics. Through the act of a future excavation the audience is reminded of "Britain's colonial past in the Middle East and the borders created across land".[7] The act of archaeology catapults the past into the present instantaneously, giving the object a voice and a body, to share its memories and speak about what is represented between the particles of the thing itself. In this instance the mere present of the porcelain provides proof of civilisation and a right to the land. Fiction is shown to be a device to give objects animacy and a body in which to discuss ideas. The viewer is then able to sits in the rhythm of the work.

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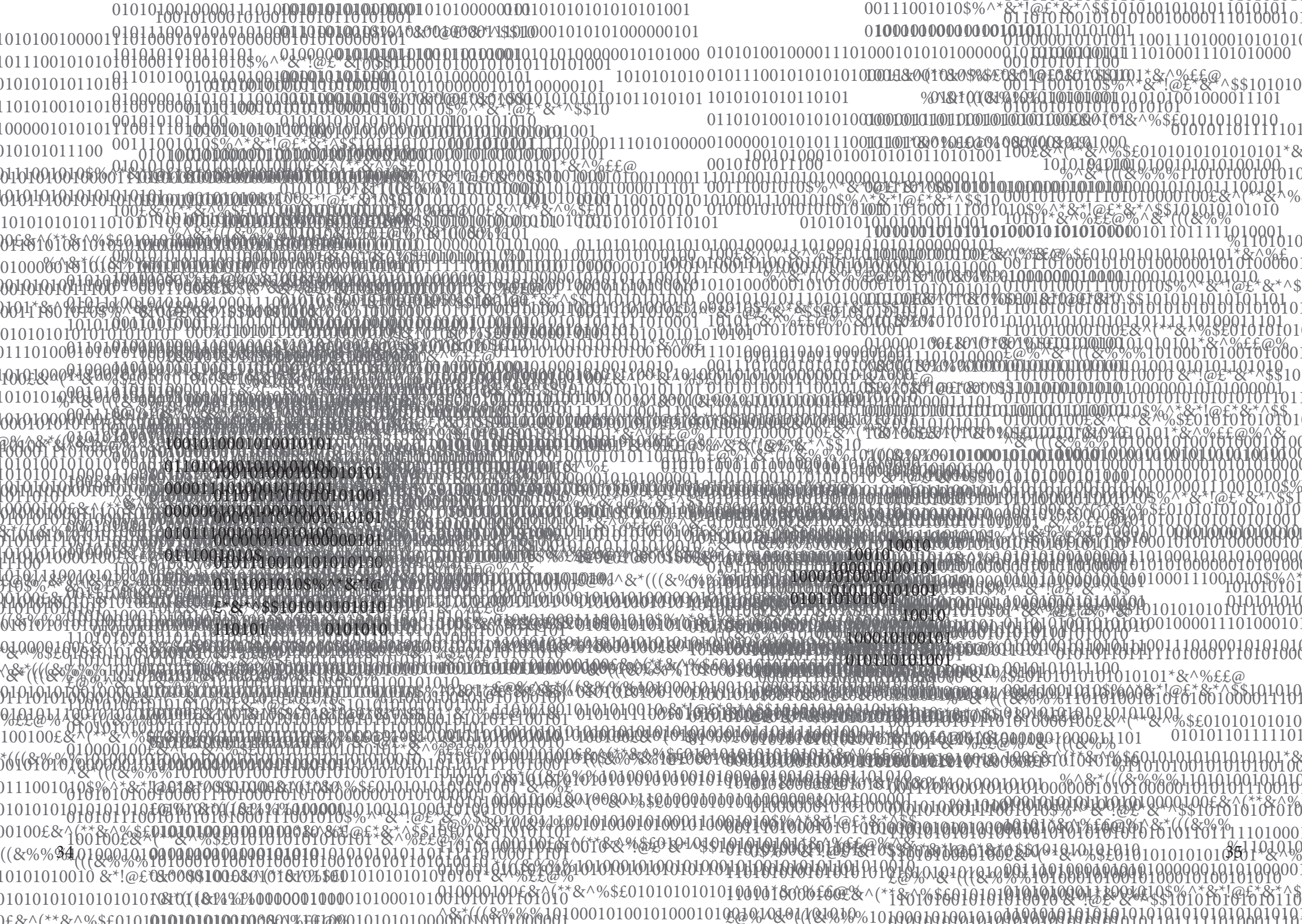
Systems of life, systems in nature, systems of history, machine systems, systems of time, systems repeating, systems of governance, categorising systems, systems which loop, grind down and carve away.