

Retraining Birdingdogs

“Why’s that dyou think?” I (advisor) ask, advisoring. Asking someone something you know and know they don’t and letting (euphemized) them try getting it and wanting (hoping) for them to. Like watching bubbles rise up from a belowairbubbler who can’t swim while they don’t but do go on sinking, you’re only allowed to sit there watching cheerily nodding ignoring all similarity to torture until you’re real sure no headway’s being made, they’re drowning. Funny, real funny. But as in bone though. Haha it is not.

In slow motion Kenny turns to me from my office whiteboard, held marker frozen felttip uppointed like a loaded snubnose, hand cocked, triggerfinger ready. You can see the gears going.

In a fullbeat pause lost to betweentime id’s nagwhisper (deja vu) gets lost too, overlooked for what’s overshouting: way out in the idlebrain boonies two little identical mes in identical businessformalwear square off and doff black tophats, shake bet he’ll get my answer (left) and (right) he won’t, aboutface gone fatale femmes dueling and strut to spectate from opposite box seats.

In slow monotone Kenny who’s staring at me halfseeing sayasks “whatdoyoumean Katya”

I manage not to blink. “Well, you’ve got it proved something’s weirdly different in the memory falsification rate that time doesn’t explain, and it’s predictable weird – what I mean is, whatdoyouthink’s why?” You don’t give out a thing to do to have it get done, you give it out so who you gave it to has to hang with it for awhile enough to get to wondering why it’s worth doing and to asking what it’d show if it got done, hopefully even into hypothesizing how done might look and if some dones might look different. Usually it doesn’t come out that way though. Usually it’s more like playing fetch, excitement and good exercise for one, nostalgia and a throwing arm that aches for the other.

“Huh.” Kenny turns boardward so the franticspinning gears can’t be seen (still can hear them) leaving a haircutneeding headback and in profile a marker the end of which (capped you hope) anxiety’s usurped into digging cheek.

Ope, whying him, that’s the deja vu, of course this happened, me him though and my advisor me. The memory uprises whole, unaltered, strutting into Varyenkha’s office shitgrinning, slapping on the desk the dogeared printout of the plot, my proof, jumpdropping into the interrogation chair and leaning back, flopping sockberkenstocked feet up, saying “you. reaka.” — knowing *I did It*, hearing trumpets, jokebowing triumph, my name being the entire entry pronunciation exceptis for flyingcolors (Oxford, Cambridge, Webster, Worcestershire), making it into Rogets’ (synonyms: *excellence, einstein*; antonyms: *mediocrity, eh*), thinking *how the tables have turned*

“So,” says Kenny slower than he turns toward me which he does at uturningsnail pace, furrowbrowed and blindstaring, thinking so hard his eyes could’ve just gone full cataract for all he’s seeing. In wobbly palmsmudged chickenscratchscript

he's scribbled annotations and placed strategically a couple fontsize fortyeight italicized questionmark pairs: ??.

And oh how the tables had not turned and oh how I did not see that, not seeing the slight wicked to Varyenkha's smallgrin or mimic to her lean back, not scenting even a whiffhint of suspicion even when, templedfingers taptapping lips, she said "you found it, that is good Katya, that is fine." and nodded and held a pause I broke by confusedly excitedsnapping "it's there!" – starting to see it only when her face lit with sadbigsmile and all mimic dropped, when she shook head twice (disappointment uncountable) and asked "and yes, but what does it mean Katya?" while sighing and my mouth was opendropping and before adding "no? no answer?" which questionwall I hit pride first silently. "I do not ask you to look for a thing to have the thing. If it is there? good. if it is not? fine. Why, that is what matters. Scientist, not birddog. Birdingdog. You find a thing? Do not bring to me it back intact all floppyears. Open it up, look what is it inside. That you tell to me."

"Real quick I'm gonna go over what I think I got to be sure what the thing is I we found is, then get to why, cool?" Kenny's nod and pitchperfect repeat of my "totally" would definitely be mocking if currently he weren't so clearly divorced from the physical plane and on autosocialize, a ship idhelmed and mirror neuron crewed. Turned back to the board he starts thoughtprocesstalking, sketchplotting memory selfsympathy as a function of time.

A lot of it's definitional but a couple bits do toe into the hypothetical and the intuitions're actually rock solid which, not a surprise but if there hadn't been or if it'd all been off mark that wouldn't've been either, it's definitely progress. Mentally I make a quick note to point out that later when it's not the smack middle of pointmaking but redecide better and quickly discretely physically jot it on a printout atop my desk recently delivered per graduatestudentpost policy via courier bike, ten am's got a long tail of day, it'd be forgotten otherwise by tenten realistically, pushed out for like, scheduling a tetanus booster for the dog I don't have.

"Alright, I haven't gotten a chance yet really to work it out so you know, take this with salt but... I'm thinking what would explain it is if samecontext repetition literally alters memories to be more like now and less like then, so eventually they stop cueing the experience at all and just cue the remembering." He flourishcircles the jumpy phase transition and, shitgrinning, makes first eyecontact today, "So, if instead of measuring it in time, we did quotidion rate" and on, left and right both gone to thoughtful frown, unsure interpretation and contemplating bet's draw.