

EnWorld

AN ENCAPSULATED FUTURE

A NOVEL

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“The varieties of skullduggery which make the repertoire of the totalitarian government are just about as unlimited as ingenuity itself.”

–George F. Kennan

“Don’t let it happen . . .”

–George Orwell, *1984*

PROLOGUE

Before entering *EnWorld*, consider, please, *literary time and space* and the *living story*, for they are essential to understanding what follows. They are the map of the territory, of EnWorld and how it came to be born.

Think of literary time and space as the place between the poles of a *U*-shaped magnet. The poles of the magnet are points in story time. At the polar left of the *U* is the beginning of a story. On the right is a story's end, an imagined future. Across the poles, left to right, the story flows, toward the imagined future, though not always—if it is a *living story*—as the author intended. Living stories have minds of their own.

Living stories, unlike those that conform to a formula or ride a pre-constructed roller coaster, go where the characters take it. The author of a living story hitches a ride in literary time and space, gets swept along. Sees what happens.

Across the poles of a living story, its *characters* move; in a living story, along with human characters, themes, ideas, events, places, and times are characters too, for they have lives of their own and the power to affect the outcome. The living story belongs to its characters, and in The End, it rests in the hands of readers, who get the final vote as to the future it defines.

There is an additional phenomenon of this living story. It has the ability to adjust its past to accommodate autonomous acts on the part of its characters—major divergences from author intent. When characters rebel, evolving by their nature, Calliope—the muse of epic poetry, daughter of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory—enters the story holding her writing tablet and stylus. She rewrites the past to fit the story’s rebellious present—like a river meeting a stone, adjusting the whole—bringing things into alignment.

This revisionist-history capacity in a story appears less phenomenal when considered in the context of memory in general: the capacity of mortals to rationalize past behavior and that of nation-states to rewrite history. Yesterday is always and forever fleeting. The living story, in this light, becomes more, not less, like life.

Do not think for a minute that I think my understanding of the living story is original. Ray Bradbury said this: *“Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations.”* Author Aharon Appelfeld, when asked by Philip Roth why he chose fiction to tell the story of his life, said this: *“The materials [of fiction] are indeed materials from one’s life, but ultimately the creation is an independent creature.”* And from Alan Judd’s *A Fine Madness*: *“Reality lacks reality until it is imagined.”*

Reality lacking “reality until it is imagined” comes close to describing the work of physicists awarded a recent Nobel Prize for proving that particles in an entangled state (like characters in a story) do not exist in a certain way until observed (like by the readers of a story), which is quite like Brahman metaphysical concepts found in the Hindu Vedas and various Eastern religions and philosophies.

Fairy tales do come true, and horror stories too. The French philosopher Simone Weil postulated that *“Imagination and fiction make up more than three quarters of our real life.”*

However, for all its mystery, the living story keeps one foot always in *consensus reality*. It does not operate by magic, nor is it merely imaginary. It is earthbound in its way.

When The End of a living story is reached, if the story is believed in by readers, the imagined future connects back to the past through literary time and space and comes to life within the reader, and sometimes in the physical world. This latter instance of realization is neither paranormal nor magical nor science fiction. It is simply an expansive view of everyday reality. What was impossible, often fantastic in the past, through stories, comes to pass—or what was well on its way to coming to be is forestalled.

Readers of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* find within themselves a new, or renewed, level of moral courage. Those reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* may discover a world of religion. In the pages of *1984* or *Brave New World*, an emerging future might be forestalled.

Consider that the living story across literary time and space birthed rocket science and ultimately the rocket ship. The rocket ship was first imagined in various forms in stories venturing out from the left-hand pole of literary time and space. Rocket ship stories proliferated. The storytellers, with their characters—lunch-bucket and barroom adventurers, scientists, and engineers reading comic books, novels, and learned journals—brought the idea of the rocket ship into the collective human imagination. The *idea* of the rocket ship, in due course, reached a critical mass of belief. Conceivable, persuasive, plausible. Rocket ship stories arced across the poles of literary time and space, and rocket ships soared. Man walked on the moon. A future was born.

In the time between the imagining of the rocket ship and its first flight, many living-story readers, with flying colors, passed the F. Scott Fitzgerald test of first-rate intelligence: "*the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.*" *Impossible* and *possibly* balanced in the mind, resulting, sometimes, in the *possible*.

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Within *EnWorld* (this novel) is a second novel, Satan's *A World of Evil*. A novel within a novel: two living stories, the first telling the story of the second, each with its own powers, proclivities, risks. These novels in literary time and space are interwoven, not back and forth or side by side, but at the same time. Think vehicles on a highway changing lanes, not trains on tracks. The telling is together, the destinies joined.

The stories begin near The End and move back and forth in time, which is not in stories the least unusual—this nonsequential parsing of time exposing the two-way street of time established by the laws of physics, opening speculation of simultaneous spaces. Stories, as they move about in time and shift point of view are like those aforementioned entangled particles, here *and* there. Clocks telling more than one time. Windows with more than one view. Yet apples still fall from trees according to earth's gravity. As Stephen King said: "*Thank God for selective perception. Because without it, we might as well all be in a Lovecraft story.*"

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Book One of *EnWorld* features Satan in manlike guise, with attendant human pronouns. In addition to this pronominal convenience, Satan and his subordinate devils use words like *good* and phrases like "for the best" from their own satanic point of view.

There is a probing of Satan, and the tricks of his trade—this includes an examination of totalitarianism and Satan's new-and-improved version *totalism*. Satan is placed under the character-study glass with some purpose. As said in 2 Corinthians 2:11: "*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*" And said by Sun Tzu: "*Know your enemy.*"

Another character in Book One is Birsha, a young devil being prepared to play a major role in the final chapters of *A World of Evil*. Satan

is cheating (no surprise). He plans to launch his subordinate devil across literary time and space at the eleventh hour of his novel (in progress, up ahead in literary time and space) to assure the scales of the story tip toward his intended The End. You can't do that, of course; it's against the rules of story itself, pulling a plot-bending character out of a hat near the end of a story. But Satan, by hook or by crook, does it and gets away with putting his thumb on the scale.

Also in Book One, EnWorld itself is introduced, and along with it, readers meet its founder and first leader, Stephen Morgue, and then his more formidable clone and second leader of EnWorld, Stephen the Savior. Modernity, and the late twenty-first-century society it spawned, the fertile ground from which EnWorld emerges, are also characters in Book One.

In Book Two, nearing The End of *A World of Evil*, during the reign of EnWorld's third Stephen, the Phantom Girl faces off against EnWorld, and Good and Evil are put on trial. In the balance is the end of time. Hell on earth forevermore.

The *EnWorld* narrative advances, in the main, by character studies—characters as previously broadly defined both people and things. Many of these characters have little or no regard for plot. Mark Twain, in the “Notice and Explanatory” at the beginning of *Huckleberry Finn*, wrote, “Persons attempting to find a plot in it [the story] will be shot.” Milan Kundera (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*) agrees: “The unity of a book [novel] need not stem from plot.”

In *EnWorld* and *A World of Evil*, notwithstanding characters bearing the main weight and being subject to mischief, there is a plot. There is a series of events and the momentum of cause and effect. No one will be shot.

Note: Nonhuman characters, if not anthropomorphized—made fantastical, talking cars and the like—must be approached with the recognition that they are different from human characters. EnWorld itself, for instance. Non-fantastical, insentient things and ideas with dramatically

important roles, there for more than to set a scene, further its progress, establish a mood—totalitarianism, for instance, herein, require explanation. Explanation has a bad name in the novel. Not always so.

Showing a person at work can reveal the person's inner workings. Showing a watch at work, encased in 904L austenitic stainless steel versus 24K gold says something about the inner workings of the man or woman who wears it but nothing about its inner workings: the watch's battery-driven electricity that vibrates the quartz crystal or its gears and springs. They must be explained. Enter very large, very complicated watches, as it were, into a novel and there is the requirement for a bit of the essay. Milan Kundera proposed the following in a list of things rightly at home in the novel: "*essay, autobiographical fragment, historical fact and flight of fancy.*" I venture to add for the record "quotes" and "anecdotes"—authentic but occasionally not, given the imperfections in recorded history—"another novel" and "the novel itself" to the list.

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WHO AM I IN ALL THIS?

Who am I in all this here to unfold?

A daemon, high above and within

(through panes, 'round corners the story told)

*pond'ring deep snow, thin ice and chill wind,
and what sun there may be to temper the cold.*

Think no more of me than the prick of a pin.

Forgive me my moods, whimsy, and woe

—and my nascent persuasions entwined.

Time to roll the story dice, snake eyes or sevens. See what happens.