



Ageing

The experience of being on Earth for this brief time is quite a challenging one. Being well over the biblical age of a male expected life span gives me pause for thought. I'm pretty sure that many of us question the same things, especially if there are no immediate loved-ones to focus on. That's sad in many ways, and I shouldn't dwell on it, but it's hard not to. The new year is underway and so the reflections come thick and fast. Though we shouldn't regret, apparently, for me it's a lifetime occupation and a difficult habit to break.

My children are my books, those I've written and those which others have published through Hawkwood. For the most part, they go unnoticed, but hopefully each of them have touched a few souls whose perceptions are perhaps changed ever so slightly for the better. This is clutching at straws, but straws are all I have. If there is a meaning to the chaotic run of events, it eludes me. I haven't seen any convincing religious construct, nor any reliable prophets. I see a lot of 'me, me, me and I' but little empathy, compassion and understanding.

Instead, there is this whirlwind of life which threatens to blow you away as you age. It's harder and harder to keep focus, especially with media so powerful and ubiquitous spreading untruths as truths twenty-four hours a day. The things that matter no longer matter, nor do we matter, except as residents for care homes charging exorbitant fees, eating up the savings we thought so precious.

This is cynical, I know it, and am trying to fight it but I feel as if I am in a dense jungle of noise, traps and dangers, and the light of truth is far, far away. No, I do not want Jesus or any other fabled prophet of ancient societies. No, I don't want the arrogance of scientists promoting their own inexplicable theories about the nature of Nothing. I certainly don't want light entertainment and unfunny comedies, nor loud, brash, almost deafening sounds of vanity.

The sun is shining, the sky is blue and I am heading off on a walk into the unknown. It's cold, so I'm wearing a hat given to me by a friend who died last week. He bought it as a thank you for helping him through his final days. It's a funny little hat, more like a balaclava, with a hole where memories fall through. He led the life he wanted, regardless of others. I feel that I've led the life of others, regardless of the one I wanted. I will sift through this reflection on the walk.

Walking is a slow and steady process. It doesn't always win the race but it's a chance to look around and take in what you miss, rushing around on trains, planes and automobiles. And although you know where you're heading, there are unexpected stops, routes that you can't follow when moving at the speed of light and states of mind that you can't recreate in any other way. It's more a representation of life than other forms of travel and doesn't stress the body. As my body ages, walking is time travel, to memories fast receding but also to future plans, not yet beyond the summit of the hill. As life speeds up and what's before is far less than what's behind, step by step gives me some semblance of control in an otherwise wild universe, and time for reflection, be it enlightening or troubling. And if the worse comes to the worse, ageing brings one benefit, at least in the UK – a free travel card. For now.