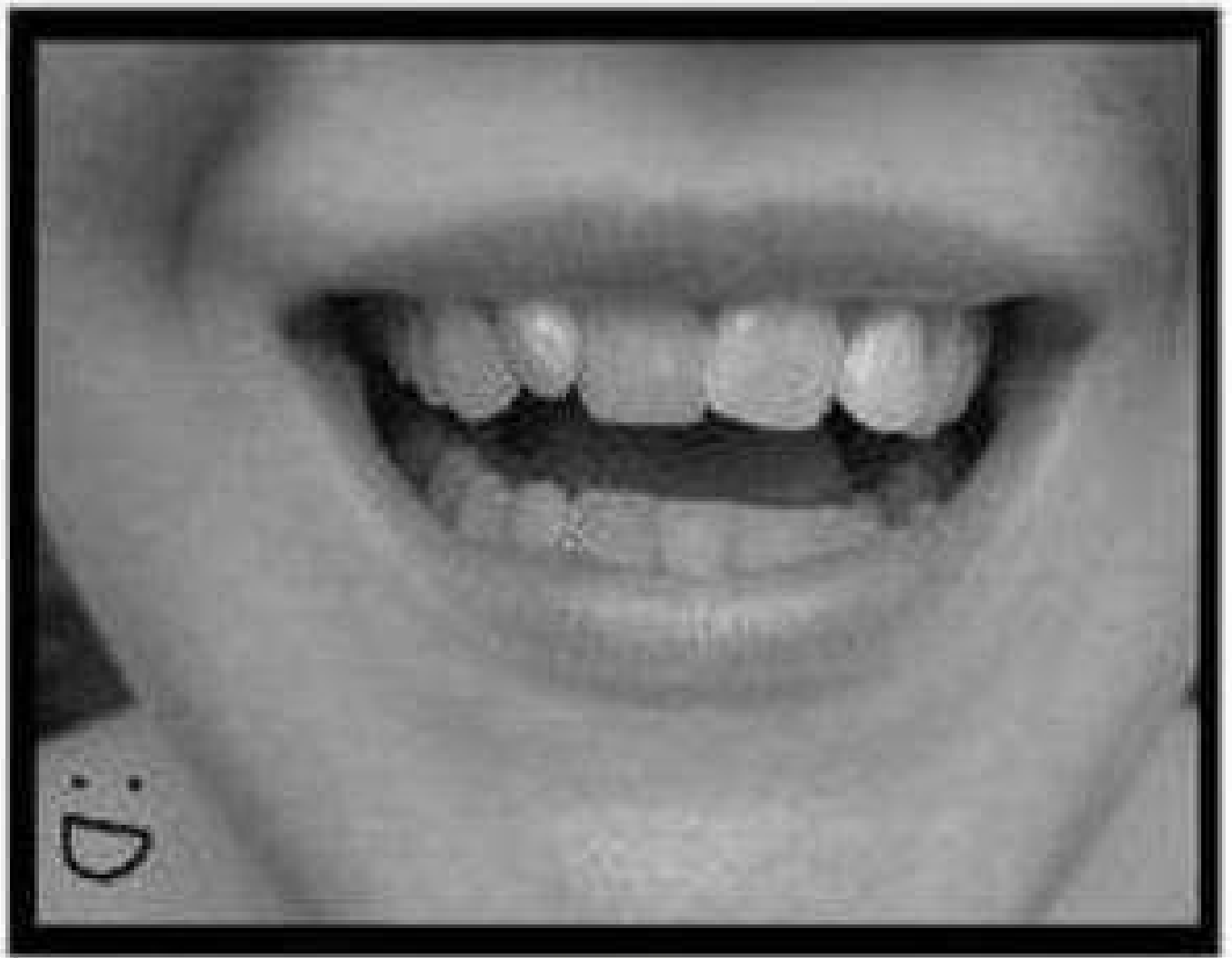


# The Joy of Atheism



Annette Greenaway

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## **Doodle**

Today I will fold myself  
Into a paper swan,  
Float myself down the river,  
With poems printed on my wings.

## **Down With Television, Up With the Web**

Down with television, conversation killer.

Down with television, destroyer of communities.

Down with television, wrecker of brains.

Down with television, the wealthy's weapon against the weak.

Up with the Web, conversation starter.

Up with the Web, creator of communities.

Up with the Web, developer of minds.

Up with the Web, the true democracy.

## Silence

I have decided that I will spend the next year silent.  
I will not speak or write another word.  
I will recycle my phone and my laptop.  
I will carry a set of cards with me wherever I go.  
One of the cards will say, "Yes."  
Another will say, "No."  
Another will say, "Two sugars please."  
One will say, "I adore your shoes."  
One will say, "Apologies. I am spending the year silent,  
And cannot respond to your query at this time."  
One will be a picture of a flower.  
One will say, "Good people don't kill people."  
One will say, "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog."  
One will say, "No explanation required."  
One will say, "Insert amusing anecdote here."  
One will say, "I love you."  
Two of the cards will say, "I disagree entirely with your last statement."  
One will be written in lower case, and the other in block capitals.  
One will say, "Sex please."  
One will say, "OK, you can stop now."  
One will say, "It's your turn."  
One will say, "I'm sorry."  
One will say, "I'm terribly sorry."  
One will say, "Why?"  
One will be completely blank, and I will hold this card against my face,  
Matching my expression.

You may think I am doing this because I am unhappy,  
And I want to wallow in my own misery,  
But I'm looking forward to being wordless.  
I have a feeling it's going to be twelve months  
Of uninterrupted joy.

## **The Joy of Atheism**

In a hundred years  
We'll all be dead  
But that doesn't matter.

There are great people I'll never meet,  
Great sights I'll never see,  
Great books I'll never read,  
Great films I'll never watch,  
But that doesn't matter.

All that matters is the beauty of the here and now,  
Heaven and Hell  
Co-existing  
In this moment.

## **The Real You**

I want to split you open like an atom,  
Releasing the real you,  
Your heart,  
Your guts,  
Your brain,  
Your spirit,  
Exploding, splatting, gushing into mine.

## **In Your Arms**

In your arms  
There are bones  
Sometimes when you hold me  
I picture our embracing skeletons  
I wonder what would happen if we had no skin  
Or if I could climb inside your body  
And swim in your juices.

Sometimes I rejoice in these thoughts.  
At other times  
I just want to  
turn my brain off.

## Installation Featuring a Young Harrison Ford in Miniature

### #1

Harrison is sealed within a glass bulb similar to a snowflake shaker. The bulb contains an array of wood shavings. Harrison is unable to speak because a wooden staircase is connected from the ground to his mouth. The staircase leads directly to Harrison's oesophagus. Harrison appears to be in great pain, and on closer inspection you'll notice he has splinters embedded in his cheeks. But don't worry – it's only make-up, and Harrison is acting.

### #2

Miniature Harrison stands in the centre of a medium-sized dinner plate. The upper half of his body is dressed as Indiana Jones. He is naked from the waist down. He is watching a live flamingo attempt to mate with a stuffed flamingo. At irregular intervals, Harrison shouts, *"It belongs in a museum!"*

### #3

Harrison is dressed as Han Solo. He is standing in a toilet cubicle. Once again, he is in miniature but the toilet cubicle is life size. He continually attempts to climb the white ceramic tower before him but slips back to the ground each time. The man standing next to you observes that the scene is reminiscent of the struggle of Sisyphus.

## **Looking good**

Why does looking good have to mean so much?  
Sometimes I wish I didn't find you  
So god-damned attractive.  
I wish I didn't keep thinking  
How lucky I am to be with someone who isn't ugly.  
Please stop looking at me with those trance-inducing eyes.  
Am I really this shallow  
Or is this the way things are supposed to be?

## **Spreading the Joy**

I wonder if our happiness  
Makes the world better in any way,  
Or does it just make unhappy people more miserable?  
I'd like to spread the joy around  
But spreading the joy is difficult.  
Most of the time it just irritates people.  
They smile while their eyes ask politely:  
*Please could you go and be cheerful somewhere else?*

## **Missing Persons**

Looking in your eyes,  
I see you've been missing for some time.  
You didn't leave a note,  
Or offer an apology.  
When you speak, your words are like postcards  
From some forgotten city.

I wonder how and if I will discover you again.  
It's not like hunting for missing keys.  
There will be no televised appeal,  
Or posters pinned to local lampposts.

I hope you're happy.  
Really, I hope you're pleased with yourself.

I can't find you because I too am missing.  
I've been missing  
For some time.

## **Horror Scope**

Casually  
Yet frantically  
I turn to page fifty-three  
To discover the fate of me  
And eight-point-three  
Percent of the population.

Apparently  
We're all going to be  
Decapitated by Frisbees  
On Thursday.

## Installation Featuring the Naked Sleeping Bodies of Tony and Cherie Blair

#1

The Blairs are standing hand in hand, their snoozing heads slumped to their chests but their backs perfectly straight. Behind them a large projector screen plays an episode of the sitcom *From Death us do Part* featuring Cherie's father as an idealistic young socialist. It takes a few moments for you to notice Tony's face has been cleverly superimposed onto the screen, replacing that of Alf Garnett.

#2

The naked Tony sits in a prison cell while his wife sleeps soundly outside. She is wearing a barrister's wig. In his left hand, Tony clutches a copy of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. In his right hand he holds a copy of the novel *1984* by George Orwell (real name Eric Blair).

#3

Tony and Cherie are sleepwalking. They hold each other by the hands and spin in a circle, repeating the same old nursery rhyme over and over.

*Ring-a ring-a roses  
A pocket full of posies  
A-tishoo, a-tishoo,  
We all fall down.*

But instead of falling down they continue to spin, oblivious to the world around them. You don't notice at first but with each step the Blairs are continuously avoiding the patch of landmines which are visibly embedded in the floor.

The woman next to you remarks that this whole exhibition is exploitative and ultimately meaningless, yet somehow it's impossible to look away.

## **Rock Paper Scissors (A Love Triangle)**

You are made of stone  
I am made of paper  
I wrap myself around you  
And you are mine.

I am made of paper  
You are made of stone  
You hurl yourself into me  
Breaking my heart.

She is a pair of scissors  
She opens her legs  
Cutting me into pieces.  
You stand watching, waiting your turn.

She is a pair of scissors.  
You smash her blades apart.  
I didn't ask you to do that,  
But you did it.

And it's too late.  
Too late for any of us now.  
The game is over  
And no one has won.

## **You Were the One**

You were the one who asked me to meet you in the frozen lake, swimming under the gleaming sheet of ice, looking up at distorted shadows and distant birds. The temperature is fine once you get used to it and if you hold your breath for long enough you can turn into a mermaid. But you aren't here like you promised and I'm waiting, drifting amidst sleeping fish and rock-hard reeds and suddenly I am desperately alone and impossibly cold.

## **Eyes Like Dinner Plates**

She had eyes like dinner plates,  
And they were dinner plates.  
You could eat your dinner off them,  
So we ate our dinner off them,  
Using her nostrils as holders  
For our salt and pepper shakers.

You may think we were the victors in this scenario,  
And she was the victim,  
But she was smiling all over her face,  
And we were so unhappy.

## Reincarnation

She's not me,  
That child who sucked the nipple off her dummy  
And drenched her bib in second hand orange juice.

She's not me,  
That spiteful brat who slammed her sister's fingers in the door  
When she lost at Monopoly.

She's not me,  
That teen who didn't want to go to school  
Assuming she was fat and ugly because no one told her otherwise.

She's not me,  
That girl who went out clubbing Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday,  
And didn't pay for any drinks.

She's not me,  
That woman who allowed her boyfriend to treat her like dirt,  
And secretly enjoyed it.

Sometimes I recall these people,  
Inherited memories from my skin's former occupants,  
Reincarnation  
In real life.

## **Exhibition Featuring a Series of Photoshopped Versions of the Shroud of Turin**

#1

In the first of one hundred and sixteen exhibits, the Shroud of Turin has been adapted to resemble the face of the late John Lennon during one of his bearded phases.

Someone behind you mutters something about “the ever-present spectre of Warhol”.

#2

The Shroud of Turin now resembles the face of the late Santa Claus. His beard is coloured Tip-Ex white. In faint grey etchings in the corner of the shroud you see a blurred object which the caption beneath the picture explains is a Coca Cola bottle.

#3

The Photoshopped Shroud of Turin clearly resembles the face of the late Osama bin Laden.

The lady ahead of you turns away in palpable revulsion.

“A disgrace,” she says. “Superimposing the face of a mass-murderer onto the likeness of Christ? Could these morons sink any lower?”

Unbeknown to her, the artist is standing directly behind her. The artist waits for the lady to depart before burying his face in his hands and silently weeping.

“What have I done?” he whispers. “My God, my God, what have I done?”

## **Kitchen Sink Melodrama**

Somewhere in the interior of my skull  
I'm aware I'm overreacting  
But they were *my* pickled onions  
And that was my final Laughing Cow triangle.

In the future I may grow to accept your faults  
And the crimes you have committed today  
But I will never forgive you for failing to appreciate  
The enormity of the situation.

## Nostalgia

After the apocalypse  
When we're huddled together in the cold and dark,  
Wondering who will die next,  
Will we still be having those conversations  
About how *The A-Team*  
And *Thundercats*  
And *Benjie, Zax and the Alien Prince*  
Were works of art  
In an ironic way?

## Nostalgia #2

My favourite bit from *Doctor Who* was when Peter Davidson turned into Colin Baker, even though I loved Peter Davidson and wanted him to be my dad. He was lying on his back having sacrificed his life to save his assistant, the American one, and all his previous assistants appeared in cartoon bubbles above his head saying "Don't die, Doctor!" And Adric appeared from beyond the grave and said, "Don't die, Doctor!" And I was lying on the carpet on my stomach saying "Don't die Doctor!" because I loved him and wanted him to be my dad, and then the Master appeared and said, "Die Doctor! Die Doctor!" Then he turned into Colin Baker and the music started and my sister said "You're not supposed to like *Doctor Who* because you're a girl."

## **Thinking, Not Praying**

I watch you walk across the carpet,  
Trapped in your own silence.  
You walk into the kitchen, not seeing me sitting here.  
I can hear you breathing through the wall.  
I want to tell you I can help you,  
But I don't like lying.

I close my eyes,  
Join my hands,  
Hoping,  
Thinking,  
Not praying.

## **A Note to Richard Dawkins**

Buddhists aren't idiots.

Jainists aren't idiots.

Christians aren't idiots.

Zoroastrianists aren't idiots.

Confusionsists aren't idiots.

Rastafarians aren't idiots.

Pagans aren't idiots.

Hindus aren't idiots.

Taoists aren't idiots.

Jews aren't idiots.

Sikhs aren't idiots.

Spiritists aren't idiots.

Falun Dafaists aren't idiots.

Shintoists aren't idiots.

Unitarians aren't idiots.

Agnostics aren't idiots.

Muslims aren't idiots.

Nor, I believe, are you, sir.

## **Let's Embrace**

Let's embrace uncertainty,  
Let's embrace meaninglessness,  
Let's embrace the absence of life after death,  
And the nonexistence of a divine creator.

Let's embrace the accidental nature of our being,  
Let's embrace randomness,  
Let's embrace loving each other because it's a good thing to do,  
Rather than a ticket to Paradise.

These are all good things.  
They are gifts from no one.  
Let's embrace making the most of our time on this planet,  
Before we all die.