

Lockdown time, time loops, and the crisis of the future

Final published version, April 2023

Secor, A.J., Blum, V. Lockdown time, time loops, and the crisis of the future. *Psychoanalysis Culture Society* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41282-023-00379-4>

Authors: Anna J. Secor¹, Virginia Blum²

Affiliation:

¹ University of Durham, Durham, UK

² University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

Cincinnati Psychoanalytic Institute, Cincinnati, OH

Corresponding author email: Anna.J.Secor@durham.ac.uk

Abstract

Amidst the Covid-19 lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 in the United States and United Kingdom, a fantasy took hold that life under lockdown was like living in a time loop. The time loop quickly became the genre of the moment. And yet, however “timely” they appeared, most of the time-loop films and series du jour had been conceived and produced before the pandemic. Why and how did they become retrofitted to the temporality of the pandemic? To answer this question, we delve into the split time of the time-loop film. We argue that, in its deferred arrival, the time loop became a fantastical solution to the problems of loneliness, stuckness, and the future that the pandemic stoked but did not originate.

Keywords

Time-loops, lockdown, trauma, future, separation, alienation

[Note for typesetters: the superscript numerals in the text have been highlighted, eg. ¹, these need to be hyperlinked to the respective endnote when the proof is produced, thanks.]

Introduction: “Every Day is Groundhog Day during Lockdown”

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, on March 23, 2020, the United Kingdom went into lockdown, closing all schools, non-essential businesses, and issuing stay-at-home orders for all but “key workers.” Although there was no national lockdown in the United States, eight states had issued stay at home orders by March 24, and across the country schools closed and those who could began working from home. While degrees and practices of “lockdown” or “quarantine” have fluctuated over time, and have been differently and unevenly enacted across national contexts, two years after these initial pandemic responses it was not at all clear whether we had exited “pandemic time” or were merely, at that moment (in 2022), awaiting its next iteration.

By April 2020, analogies between life in lockdown and in the movie *Groundhog Day* (Ramis, 1993) were already popping up on social media and news outlets throughout the US and the UK. While Twitter produced such wry lines as “*Groundhog’s Day* [sic] was better as a film” (Klinenberg, 2020), A. O. Scott and Manohla Dargis (2020) writing in *The New York Times* decided that “with so many of us locked down and facing days that blur together, it felt like the perfect film to revisit.” Already in the first weeks of the pandemic, the film was called upon to offer both reassurance and lessons. Viewers shared their feelings that the film offered hope that “tomorrow”—the end of the pandemic—would someday arrive, juxtaposing Phil’s (Bill Murray’s character) words upon exiting the loop at the end of the film (“Do you know what today is? Today is tomorrow. It happened.”) with the public reassurances of Dr Anthony Fauci, then director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, that

there would be an end to the pandemic (see comments to article by Dargis and Scott, 2020; News in Health, 2020).

In 2023, the feeling that a month in lockdown was an eternity may seem distant, but the likening of “pandemic time” to *Groundhog Day* has, if anything, only gained in cultural currency. But more than simply the promise of an end, *Groundhog Day* increasingly had been taken to offer lessons for what we ought to do with our time, if indeed we want to be released into a better tomorrow. This passage from a February 2021 article titled “Every day is Groundhog Day during the pandemic” in *Grazia* captures the discourse in which *Groundhog Day* has become both a diagnosis and a prescription:

Now, with the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, never has real life felt more like being stuck in an endless loop. With lockdowns, stay-at-home orders, social distancing, and endless days in tie-dye sweatpants reaching nearly the one-year mark, it’s easy to relate to Phil. First, we felt miserable and insane trapped at home, then had some fun with it with the same f**k it mentality of no tomorrow (Want to drink that whole bottle of wine on a Tuesday? Oh, we went for it). But, like Phil, many of us adapted to our new normal and used this time to learn, whether it be practicing yoga, mastering the art of baking banana bread, or educating ourselves on important issues. The moral of *Groundhog Day* is not just making the best of a seemingly hopeless situation, but using the time we are given to evolve into being better humans. ... When our own spell is finally broken, the world will forever be changed, hopefully, for the better. (Parker, 2021)

The suggestion that the film “offers pointers,” as a July 2020 piece in *The Guardian* (Renshaw, 2020) opined, both for living in a time loop and for breaking the spell, has

continued to circulate well beyond the initial periods of lockdown in which the rhythms of daily life were upended. Headlines such as “How to break the Covid-19 *Groundhog Day* cycle” in *Forbes* (Kohler, 2021) and “‘Groundhog Day’: The movie’s final life lessons for getting through the end of the pandemic” in *CNN* (Allen, 2022) proliferated, offering a wholesome vision of what can be accomplished if only we make the most of our time in lockdown. The trope became so widespread that, in an interview in the *Daily Beast* (Stern, 2022), even Bill Murray took the bait and weighed in on how “some good has come from COVID,” replicating the upbeat message of the film by suggesting that people being “confined to their own homes ... [is] an unusual condition that we’ve been given to work with, and in the moments you can grab it take it, and work with it, it’s great.”

Why did the time loop become such a recurrent motif for thinking about life under lockdown? While it is presented as simply descriptively apt, a way to represent “the feeling of time stretching on to create one endless day” under lockdown (Kohler, 2021), the association is not a given. In fact, there is a critical disjuncture between the fantasied deathlessness of the time loop and the period of the pandemic. As one physician writes in an opinion piece in a *USA Today* outlet:

Quite contrary to the movie, where Phil figures out that in the time loop there were no consequences to his lawlessness, debauchery and abhorrent lifestyle, as he wakes up every Feb. 2 with a clean slate, the COVID time loop is overflowing with widespread human death and debility. (Malik, 2022)

In a conventional time loop, conversely, the protagonists never age, and even if they “die” on a daily basis, they remain intractably alive. And, of course, lockdowns and quarantines *did not* impose a new constraint on the flow of time (for indeed this is not possible!), but rather a

new (unevenly experienced) spatiality, in which some stayed home while others picked up more shifts. Given these disjuncts between the time-loop trope and the conditions to which it has been retrofitted, how are we to understand the prevalence of the time-loop conceit in the time of Covid-19, except by examining the underlying fantasy?

It appears we were primed to enter the time-loop fantasy, not only by *Groundhog Day* and the small number of cross-referenced time-loop films that followed it in intervening years, such as *Triangle* (Smith, 2009), *Source Code* (Jones, 2011), *Edge of Tomorrow* (also known as *Live Die Repeat*) (Liman, 2014), *Before I Fall* (Russo-Young, 2017), and *Happy Death Day* (Landon, 2017). In a strange kind of temporal folding, 2020 and 2021 saw the release of a cluster of time-loop movies. *Palm Springs* (Barbakow, 2020) and *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* (Samuels, 2021) were both conceived and produced prior to the pandemic but arrived on our screens as though tailor-made for our times. The mini-series *Russian Doll* (Lyonne, et al., 2019–present) was released 2019 shortly before the pandemic and thus also retrospectively seems to have predicted the circumstances of the pandemic. Of the films released in 2020 and 2021, only the short *Two Distant Strangers* (Free & Roe, 2020) was filmed during the pandemic. Regardless, the proximate release of these time-loop films fueled the sense that this genre was particularly attuned to our times. The frequent implication in the entertainment media was that the new spate of time-loop films were a comment upon the current moment: As “each day of lockdown bleeds into another ... the *Groundhog Day* premise has become its own subgenre” (Gaughan, 2021). Despite the temporal glitch (with most of the films and series actually having been conceived and produced before the pandemic), the time loop became the trope du jour: an overdetermined fantasy of the day that does not end—until of course it does.

What is the fantasy that the time loop expresses? Moreover, what makes it possible to claim that the time-loop genre is *especially resonant to the pandemic period*, even as the

pandemic arrived after the fact? In this paper, we delve into the question of how time-loop films sustain a certain relationship between desire, mortality, and the future that made them appear to be of the moment in 2020–2021. We begin by situating our work in relation to two Lacanian accounts of the time loop: Slavoj Žižek’s (2000) comparison of the time loop to analysis and Todd McGowan’s (2011) distinction between temporal and atemporal cinema. We reflect on how the trauma at the center of almost all time loops speaks to the unconscious of pandemic-era viewers, with temporal distortions functioning as both cause and effect of trauma—from Joseph Fernando’s theory of the “zero process” functioning of trauma that holds time at bay, to Lacan on the traumatic advent of the subject via alienation and separation. We go on to argue that the split temporality of the time-loop film presents fantastical solutions to trauma, alienation, and the question, “What do I want/What does the Other want of me?” (Lacan, 1966/2006). Our final move is to bring this analysis back to the question of why it appears that the time-loop film serves up a particularly compelling fantasy for our times.

Time Loops and the Splitting of Time

In *The Ticklish Subject* (2000), Žižek proposes to address what he calls “the time-loop in science fiction” (p. 299). For Žižek, the central dynamic of such stories is the impossibility of the protagonist encountering themselves, and indeed examples abound of films in which such an encounter—whether forbidden or sought, dangerous or humorous—is often at the crux of a narrative structure in which an enigmatic message is ultimately found to have been issued not from the past but from the future—and to have been the subject’s own message all along. *La Jetée* (Marker, 1962), *12 Monkeys* (Gilliam, 1995), *Lost Highway* (Lynch, 1997), and the television series *Dark* (Odar & Freise, 2017–2020) are all good examples of this circuit. As Žižek (2000) aptly notes, these plots echo the time-loop structure of psychoanalytic treatment

itself, in which the symptom arrives as a persistent but unintelligible message from the subject's future self: "a signal bearing a message that comes *not*, as one would expect, from the 'deeply buried past' of ancient traumas, but from the (Subject's) *future* – from the future in which, through the work of psychoanalytic treatment, the meaning of this symptom will be realized" (p. 300).

The time loops that we are discussing here are different. In the films referenced above, the protagonists "travel" in time, often setting the temporal and spatial coordinates of their destination (accurately or not, as in Zemeckis's *Back to the Future*, 1985), as though all time simultaneously exists in a tourism-friendly version of Einstein's spacetime manifold. In time-loop scenarios as we distinguish them, the protagonists do not "travel" in time but instead find themselves "rewound" looped like a GIF. This is often expressed by the fact that they "wake up" to a morning that they have already experienced—as marked by the voice of the radio announcer saying identical things, the sound of the car unlocking on the street below the window, the same sprawl and arrangement of limbs in bed. The accumulating effects on the looped subject of what are often implicitly innumerable iterations of the looped period of time (usually a day) include mastery and trauma, wisdom and nihilism. And yet the world—the subject's place or environs—is usually wiped clean of any signs of change, set to repeat until the "work" of the time loop is accomplished.

Thus while "time travel" may express the split in the subject, the overt split in time-loop films occurs between the looping protagonists and their environment. Arguably, this split is prior to, or more elemental still than, the split expressed in time travel. In *A Parallax View* (2006), Žižek suggests that "being human" fundamentally consists in an "uncoupling" of the subject from their environs through the emergence of the death drive (p. 231). By splitting the subject from its "background," the drive initiates "a cycle of autonomous behaviour"—that is, it sets the subject "free" to act in maladaptive ("anti-Darwinian") ways.

Elsewhere Žižek illustrates this gap between subject and environs with a discussion of film shots from the 1930s and 1940s, in which actors appear obviously discrepant to their background, the hero positioned too close to the camera with the background becoming a blurred and artificial dimension (2005, p. xiii). While discordant shots visually manifest this crucial gap that, as Žižek observes, “*defines* modern subjectivity,” the time-loop film does so in its very structure.

In contrast to time-travel narratives, in which the temporal possibilities appear to expand, the time loop instead contracts time and operates explicitly according to the logic of the repetition compulsion and the death drive. Opportunities for infinite “do-overs” such as in *Groundhog Day* (where Phil ultimately gets his perfect future with the ideal woman) overlap with traumatic repetitions whereby the loop both escapes temporality and traps the characters *in* time. In this sense, time-loop films display characteristics of what Todd McGowan (2011) terms “atemporal cinema.” McGowan distinguishes between films dominated by desire (temporality) and the drive (atemporal cinema) in order to situate them with respect to the possibility of recovering the lost object. In films dominated by desire, “the focus on time produces an investment in a future pregnant with possibility, including the possibility of escaping loss” (McGowan, 2011, p. 15). Atemporal cinema, on the contrary, exemplified by films such as *Memento* (Nolan, 2000), *Donnie Darko* (Kelly, 2001), *Irréversible* (Noé, 2002), and *The Butterfly Effect* (Bress & Gruber, 2004), is a cinema of the drive whereby we come to terms with constitutive loss. McGowan maintains that:

Unlike the logic of desire, the logic of the drive does not respect the forward movement of time but remains attached to repetition. Desire moves in a linear fashion from object to object through time, seeking out the object of desire that would finally bring satisfaction. But from the perspective of

the drive, time is an illusion created to hide the necessary failure in the subject's relation to its lost object. (2011, p. 32)

The time-loop films we are considering complicate the categories of temporal and atemporal cinema. In fact, McGowan's distinction between desire and the drive points to two primary modalities of the time loop itself. One is the experience of being stuck in time, banned as it were from the field of the future. The other modality of the time loop is characterized largely by the inherent optimism of the "do-over," of which *Groundhog Day* is perhaps the most famous example. Although as McGowan (2011, p. 277) remarks, "repetition itself becomes the source of trauma," the restoration to temporality (exiting from the loop) coincides with the mastery of the loop's hidden challenge, whether this is to prevent a traumatic event or to allow it to happen, to find love or to repair other attachments. In other words, time-loop films suggest two distinct and paradoxical orders of time: one characterized by the abeyance of the future within the time loop and the other in which the fulfillment of the protagonists' drive quest (that is, what is required for them to accomplish in order to leave the loop) releases them into a now-tolerable durational temporality. Like McGowan, we might interpret this second modality as a transcendence of the fantasy of desire whereby death is accepted. Or, alternatively, we might read the protagonists' (typical) accomplishment of romantic love as yet another version of denial. In what follows, we explore the fantasy of living within a time loop during the first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic: what psychoanalyst Joseph Fernando has referred to as "a piece of time frozen in a sequenced state" to describe severe trauma and what lies beyond it (2018b, p. 48).

Traumatic Temporality: Frozen Isolation

Joseph Fernando has theorized what he terms the "zero process" to explain what happens to our sense of time in response to trauma. In contrast to primary process functioning, which

happens “outside of time,” and secondary process functioning, which is under the dominance of the ego and strives to integrate experience, the zero process is a failure of integration. As Fernando puts it, the zero process unfolds in “a series of moments, frozen in time, endlessly running in a loop” (2018b, p. 48). Fernando’s severely traumatized patient reflects on when, at the age of four, she was told that her mother was dying:

“Time stopped. It was like a black hole. It was like I died, in that moment.

For that moment. A frozen moment with a black hole. Like the intruder in the house, it’s dark like the night when the intruder comes in. Is the intruder maybe death itself?” There was a silence, and I said, “It all went inside you.”

“Maybe if I kept it inside me, I could stop time.”

“And save your mother.” (Fernando, 2018b, p. 38)

This is how the zero process defends against trauma that already happened in chronological time. As Fernando’s time-looping patient puts it: It “stop[s] time.” Fernando writes: “The contents of the zero process are not yet in the past in the psychical sense. They are always about to happen or just happening, and thus belong more to the present and the future than the past” (2009, p. 156).

While Fernando’s theory is largely about severe trauma, we find this temporality in which the traumatic, already accomplished “future” is held at bay, to be present in representations of lockdown. In fact, the extent to which so many have described their lives as “every day the same, all blurring together” echoes a zero-process reaction to trauma. Characterizing the time-loop quality of life under lockdown as endless repetition from one day to the next denies what is (most significantly) not the same: the daily increase in deaths. The omission of this central (and potentially traumatic) aspect of the pandemic constitutes an

insistence on time's freezing in order to avert one's gaze from the terrifying events of time's passing. Perhaps this is an unconsciously registered way in which the time loop feels explanatory during the period of the pandemic.

As McGowan maintains, time loops by their very nature (endless repetition) are traumatic. Moreover, trauma often saturates the *content* of the time-loop narrative as well. At the conclusion of every one of the eight-minute simulations in *Source Code*, the train horrifically explodes. An initial traumatic encounter with the alien invader hurtles the protagonist of *Edge of Tomorrow* into a time loop and leads to successive traumatic encounters within the loop. Nadia in *Russian Doll* dies every day in multiple ways, and Tree in *Happy Death Day* is always brutally murdered. As Nyles in *Palm Springs* explains to Sarah, "the pain is real." At times the trauma is emotional—as in *Palm Springs* where Sarah wakes up to the realization that she slept with her sister's fiancé and every day Nyles is forced to relive his girlfriend's betrayal.

If a time loop provides a "solution" to trauma, it does so in multiple ways. To parse the power of the time loop, we can index it to the twin traumas of alienation and separation that Lacan (1966/2006) associates with the advent of the subject. For Lacan, alienation refers to the traumatic split caused by the subject's submission to language. The *alienated* subject is mortified, assigned an ill-fitting place in the symbolic order; likewise, in the time-loop scenario, the subject is split from its environs in that the looping protagonist is set apart from an impervious "background" (symbolic order) and yet endlessly reinscribed within it. The horrific aspect of this split is well expressed in *Two Distant Strangers* in which, no matter how inventively he strives to avoid his fate, Carter, a young black man simply going about his business, is repeatedly murdered by a police officer. Caught in the loop, Carter is continually returned to his "place" within the deadly white supremacist order. Unlike other

time-loop films, *Two Distant Strangers* does not end with Carter's exit from this deadly loop but only the promise that he has all the time in the world to work it out.

Time-loop films enact a dramatization of and a fantastic solution to the trauma of alienation. The time loop arguably depicts the most isolating of experiences. The looping subject is excised from their environment, which becomes no more than a painted "background" filling the void, as Žižek describes the "discrepancy" between Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* and her environs (2005, p. xiii). The one who "loops" does so by diverging temporally from their environs, turning it into an "artificial" backdrop, a stage set on which they can act out multiple scenes or scenarios. As the protagonists in *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* would have it, the rest of the world consists of sleepwalkers and zombies in front of whom their evolving drama is performed ("you will forget all this tomorrow," says Mark, to a frozen and blurred backdrop of townspeople). By inserting a dramatic wedge between the looped protagonists and the rest of their world, the time loop holds up to closer inspection the separation of the subject from the automatism of those relegated to "background." The characters who don't know they are in a loop ("nonplayable characters" as Nadia, the computer game expert, refers to them in season 2 of *Russian Doll*) are destined to repeat the trauma precisely because they don't remember—the traumatic memory is in a zero process, unintegrated state as Fernando would have it.

The depiction of zero process in the time loop was particularly timely when the Covid-19 lockdowns amplified anxieties of isolation. "What the pandemic did was it froze our lives, right?" Professor of psychiatry at Massachusetts General, Robert Waldinger says of the pandemic lockdown: "It froze us in these weird positions where we're closer than we want to be to some people, and we're too distanced from others" (Sweet, 2021). With single people expected to be especially vulnerable to what has been termed "the loneliness epidemic" (Walsh, 2021), the circumstances of lockdown put singletons under the spotlight.

The headline of a 2021 article in *Time* says it all: “Being single was just part of their lives before the pandemic. Then it became the defining one.” The author notes of one of her interviewees that “the period of enforced singleness has made her rethink her inattention to her dating life” (Luscombe, 2021). An article in *Guardian Australia* is similarly pointed. “The single people *Guardian Australia* speaks to say they preferred living alone before the pandemic because it allowed them the choice of when to see people. But that choice has been taken away” (Taylor, 2021). It is as though there was an arrogance to living as a singleton now exposed by the pandemic and its associated lockdowns.

The time-loop films of the day seemed to underscore this anxiety about the dangerous isolation of being single. *Palm Springs* screenwriter Andy Siara had the following to say about the film’s intention:

The whole idea [of the movie] is that it’s better to share this experience of life, even if it is all meaningless. We might as well go through with a buddy. Shit is dark, but at least things are good when I can sit down on the couch and have a glass of something and watch some TV with my partner, or talk about this movie for hours and hours with [its director] Max [Barbakow]. (Wilkinson, 2021)

Although Siara seems to give equal billing to his relationship with his collaborator, the relationship with his partner is paramount. ? “Always remember,” Nyles tells Tala and Abe at their wedding, “you are not alone,” which is precisely what *Russian Doll*’s Nadia assures Alan as she talks him out of suicide. This insight is central to many time-loop films and it often points to the restoration of lost attachments. “We’re all fucking alone,” cynical Nyles announces to Sarah, but then he yearns to stay with Sarah “forever.”

Freud's discussion of the *fort/da* in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is thus arguably the urtext for the time loop in a psychoanalytic register. The child, Ernst, interminably re-enacts his mother's comings and goings (Freud, 1920/1955). You are not alone, the spool consoles Ernst, as he tosses it away and retrieves it in his effort to restore the missing mother—even though the very arc of the spool measures the insuperable separation between mother and baby that founds the maternal object as “lost.” *Russian Doll*, *Palm Springs*, *Happy Death Day* and *Happy Death Day 2U* (Landon, 2019), and *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* all feature dead or dying mothers, a loss which fixates the female protagonists in time and place and sets these women on a self-destructive path. Tree becomes the quintessential “mean girl.” Nadia is killing herself with drugs and alcohol. Sarah “drinks too much and sleeps around,” and Margaret in *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* seemingly freezes the whole world into a single day in order to keep her mother alive. The time loop, like the repetition of lost and found, *fort* and *da*, distracts the central characters (and the viewer) from their constitutive isolation not only within the loop (where they are overtly severed from the temporality of life) but, most importantly, outside of it.

The Fantasy: Beyond the Loop

While alienation strands the subject in a kind of living death, excluded from but also trapped within the symbolic order, isolated in the loop, the trauma of separation sets the alienated subject in motion on a quest to occupy the space of the Other's desire (Lacan, 1966/2006). In the time loop, this is the quest for a quest, the drive to figure out what the loop/Other wants from the subject in order to enable their release. In both *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* and *Palm Springs* the question “what does the time loop want from me?” is made explicit (and referenced to the aim of moral improvement founded by *Groundhog Day*). This is taken to its most sophisticated level in *Palm Springs*, where the protagonists conclude that the loop wants

nothing from them, but nonetheless they exit the loop by stepping in the space of the bride and groom that has been laid out for them from the start.

Indeed, accomplishing romantic love is often key to escaping the loop. Narcissistic Phil, from *Groundhog Day*, internally reshapes himself in the image of the woman he admires; in *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*, Margaret turns away from dependency-love of the mother to the mutuality of her relationship with Mark; in *Palm Springs*, two love phobics find each other; in *Happy Death Day*, Tree outgrows being a “mean girl” as a result of her feelings for Carter. What will compensate Tree, Sarah, and Margaret for the primordial loss of the mother, we are instructed, is the love of a good man. Separation, we learn from these romcom versions of the loop, need not be forever. There is something out there to replace the lost object.

This final crossing over can be indexed to what Bruce Fink (2004) calls a “further separation” that appears in Lacan’s later work: the traversing of fantasy in which the divided subject is able to “cross over” to the position of their own cause; that is, to subjectify “the traumatic cause of his or her own advent as subject, coming to be in that place where the Other’s desire—a foreign, alien desire—had been” (p. 62). In the time-loop film, this final separation is enacted when the heroes complete their quest and are set free from repetition, released into a pure durational time, the unfigured beyond of the time loop. While the endless time of the time loop is organized according to the logic of the death drive with its extreme version of conservation, the final release into durational time not only resolves the traumatic impasse by allowing the subject to “move on,” but also, in the romantic union, offers all the promise of fulfilled desire.

The key offering of the time-loop fantasy is thus that, having exited the eternity of Joseph Fernando’s frozen loop of time, living towards death will now be bearable. Having cracked the riddle of the desire of the Other (what was required to exit the loop), the

protagonists have overcome trauma and are no longer alone, the romantic union having been achieved at whatever cost. No longer alienated from their place or separated from the desire of the Other, they are released into a new durational time that has been purified of the traumatic impasses that manifested the loop in the first place. This brings us to the key time-loop fantasy of the pandemic: the fantasy that not only is there no aging, loss or death within our “pandemic day” temporal bubble (we have all the time in the world to work things out), but when this bubble pops, what awaits us is not a return to the temporality we had endured before the time loop, but rather an exit to a renewed temporality, a future beyond trauma.

But do our protagonists in fact traverse the fantasy of the Other’s desire or do they remain subject to it? Lacan believes that the neurotic suffers from a conviction that they can really obtain what the Other desires whereas a “cure” entails no longer mistaking the desire of the Other for one’s own. While the fantasy of the time-loop film might be that it is possible to escape the traumas of alienation and separation, in fact the films show little imagination for what this might look like. Instead, the loopers imagine that they are traversing the fantasy *all the while mistaking the Other’s desire for their own*. This is precisely how many of the loopers exit the loop, succumbing cheerily to the Other’s desire, specifically in answer to the question, “What does the Other want of me?” As Fink puts it in his reading of Lacan’s “Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire”: “How can I get the Other to want or desire me? Perhaps if I can figure out what the Other (for example, my parents) wants, I can try to become it” (Fink, 2004, p. 119). Margaret and Mark from *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* escape their loops through the romcom love story but only because they have both been instructed by their parents to do so. Margaret’s dying mother urges her daughter to enter time and Mark finally capitulates to his father’s investment in his “future.” Phil of *Groundhog Day* initially imitates Rita by quoting French poetry, eating her favorite foods, ordering her favorite drink, and toasting “world peace,” but only woos her successfully once

he has become the authentic object of Rita's desire. The "final separation" of the exit from the time loop does not bear much scrutiny; the films end abruptly on the other side of the time loop, before the fantasy of final separation can be seen to run aground.

Exiting the loop appears to be the resolution, the point at which the problems of isolation and the anxiety-inducing figure of the singleton are "worked through" and the cinematic love story is fulfilled.⁸ But at the same time, the time-loop genre foregrounds the solitude of its protagonists. Since all time loops attempt to circumvent death even as death is what preoccupies them, their very structure circles around the problem of being inevitably "alone." The endlessly postponed traumatic realization is that it is not the "temporal anomaly" (or lockdown, or even being single) that is the real source of alienation. Being alone is what "no one can stand," Sarah observes. "It's why people get married, even if they aren't in love." "You are not alone" is the denial at the center of the time-loop story.

(No) Future

To be stuck in a time loop is to keep the future at bay, to freeze the moment like Fernando's patient does. Fernando describes how post-traumatic defenses conspire to reshape time. The "temporal shifting," of the zero process, as Fernando describes it, enables "zero process denial" and zero process denial in turn "uses the not yet happened nature of the zero process to insist that the trauma is not real" (2018b, p. 49). The most obvious expression of this is how the time loop rescues the subject from mortality, their own and others'. Within the time loop, death may be traumatic, comical, or just the quickest way to reset—even "to beat the traffic" in *Palm Springs*—but one thing it is not is *death*. The subject always rises again to have another go at it. During a global pandemic, the appeal of a fantasy in which daily deaths are impermanent is easy to grasp, yet this does not "explain" the arrival of the time-loop fantasy in pandemic times. In fact, if time loops were having a moment, that moment might

perhaps more aptly be periodized as 2016–2019. The time-loop films conceived and produced during this previous period were *resignified* during pandemic time, at which point they gained a new psychic energy. This is the action of the *après coup*, or “afterwardness” (*Nachträglichkeit* for Freud) (Laplanche, 2006/2017).

How and why did this *après coup* take place? That is, how were time loops poised to arrive after the fact of their time and precisely at the moment when they seemed to have a heightened relevance? The answer, of course, is that their arrival itself produced this seeming “relevance.” Indeed, while the first weeks of life under lockdown were compared to *Groundhog Day*, when the time-loop films du jour arrived, they were less upbeat than this genre-defining film. The heightened nihilism of the 2019–2021 releases (*Russian Doll*, *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*, *Palm Springs*, and *Two Distant Strangers*) suggests that we might consider them in the context of their times, in the circumstances which in fact predated the pandemic itself.

One way to grapple with the *après coup* of the time loop is therefore to look behind the deferral of death and trauma in the time loop to the more mundane futures that are held off when tomorrow does not come. In *Palm Springs*, the function of the loop is to ensure that the day after the wedding will not arrive; the notorious failure of romantic love in the aftermath of the “special day” is thus held in abeyance. In *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*, the articulated trauma being deferred is the death of Margaret’s mother, but this is perhaps only secondary to a more extravagant rejection of any tomorrow in this film. What punctuates Mark’s repeating day is his father wanting to “talk to him about his future,” which he finally tells his father does not exist, has been cancelled, simply will not happen. Although Mark himself thinks he is describing his future-less life in a time loop, his father received these pronouncements as the refrain of youth (e.g., the “no future” chorus in “God Save the Queen” by the Sex Pistols) and a reflection of our times (e.g., impending climate catastrophe and

sinking expectations for home ownership or well-paying jobs). While Mark's message is hidden from himself, Margaret expresses it more directly. After the two protagonists have exhausted themselves smashing up a "perfect" model home (show house), Mark (with notably bad timing) suggests a possible way out of the loop. Margaret responds:

Are you really in that much of a hurry? Like hooray, it's the future. It's marriage counselling, global warming, and colonoscopies, and student loans, and suddenly you're 80 and you're waiting for your Zolof prescription at Rite Aid in your sweatpants, wondering where is that creeping sense of failure coming from? Because it all went by so fast. And you never wrote that book, you know? Or kissed that girl or ... went to Paris. It's all over. And it wasn't even what you wanted.⁴

The future holds nothing of value to contrast with the daily reset of the time loop in which there are neither consequences nor lasting achievements beyond self-improvement. When Margaret says, "it"—that is, the durational time of a life—"wasn't even what you wanted," she raises the question that complements the final question of Lacan's graph of desire. For what propels the subject to make a "final separation" and to traverse the fantasy is not only settling on an answer to the question, "What does the Other want of me?", but also its complement, "What do I want?" In the context of the time loop, the question becomes not only whether the subject wants a future—that is, whether to stay within the "frozen moment" (Fernando, 2018a, p. 38) or to cross over by exiting the loop—but what kind of future.

In the most recent iterations of the time-loop genre, these questions come wrapped in layers of disaffection and unreality. The time loop may perform a radical alienation of the subject, but dwelling eternally in this explicitly frozen moment may be preferable to facing a future where alienation continues outside the genre. In *Palm Springs*, when Sarah proposes

an exit strategy, Nyles asks her, “But why would I want to go back there anyway, you know? It’s a world of death and poverty, debilitating emotional distress.” When Sarah retorts that “This isn’t real, Nyles, everything we’re doing in here is fucking meaningless,” Nyles underscores the pleasure of this release from “meaning” in the time loop by responding, “So what? It’s not like things were going so great for you out there.” Despite the command “Wake up!” that initiates each day within his time loop, it seems Nyles would prefer to keep on dreaming. Indeed, whether he ever actually “wakes up” is thrown into question by a couple of hazy roaming dinosaurs on the horizon of the California desert at the very end of the film. The time loop is arguably thus a dream from which one awakes only to keep dreaming.

The time-loop films’ pandemic era *après coup* is bolstered by a growing sense, predating the pandemic, that the “future” is in trouble (Anderson, 2010). The feeling that, over the past thirty years, societies in Europe and the United States have come to face the “slow cancellation of the future,” reflects a collapse of the expectations that ideologies of capitalist modernism and liberal democracy had nurtured (Berardi, 2011, p. 18; Fisher, 2014). For Lauren Berlant, the dull grind of life under conditions of diminished possibilities means that people are “being worn out by the promises that they have attached to in this world” (2011, p. 28). As Franco Berardi writes in *After the Future* (2011, p. 18), “The future is over. As you know, this isn’t a new idea. Born with punk, the slow cancellation of the future got underway in the 1970s and 1980s. Now those bizarre predictions have become true.” He goes on to explain that this statement is not quite literal: “Of course, we know that a time after the present is going to come, but we don’t expect that it will fulfil the promises of the present” (Berardi, 2011, p. 25).

The time loop offers to take Berardi’s proposition literally, cancelling future disappointments (and colonoscopy appointments). This “promise of ending an unwanted

future” (Anderson, 2017, p. 475) is a promise for our anxious times in which both the everyday failure of the promises of liberal democracy and neoliberal governance and the horror of catastrophic futures hover over the impasse of the present. In compensation, as we have shown, the time-loop conceit offers *not one but two* fantasies of time: an infinite time for working out (without decaying towards death) and a time beyond this in which we are fully reconciled to our finitude. By giving the subject access to two orders of time, the time-loop film effectively promises that *these times are not the same*. If we are *either* in a time loop *or* beyond it, one thing we can be sure of is that we *are not* living repetitive, stagnant lives *while at the same time* aging, failing to find fulfilment or love, and moving towards death.

The fantasy of the time loop is thus to resolve the problem of time and the future by separating repetition and duration into two mutually exclusive “perfect” times (see Johnston, 2005, on drive-time). While the denial of this convergence of repetition and duration may have become acute during the pandemic (and hence the insistence on describing time as stopped), its significance comes from how the problem of stuckness and the crisis of the future well predated the first lockdown. The timeliness of the time loop is thus not only in the capacity of Fernando’s frozen loop of time to preserve us from the ruinous future, but also in the promise that the future *will be restored*—but this time it will be better, and we will be ready for it.

Conclusion: Belatedness and Missed Exits

In 2020–2021, the time-loop fantasy arrived after its time and was retrofitted to life under lockdown in the US and UK. To believe that it was the pandemic that destabilized the future is to miss the logic of the *après coup*, whereby the chronologically second scene of trauma functions psychically as the first. It is the scene that activates the past (Freud, 1895/1966;

Laplanche, 2006/2017). If we label the pandemic the “first” scene that triggers the anxiety associated with what had already run aground, then we can see how we arrive at a strange kind of reassurance through making the time loop the pre-eminent genre of the lockdown. *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* is an especially telling example of the pandemic’s retroactive effects in that its very production history straddles pre- and post-pandemic times. Based on a 2017 story by Lev Grossman, the film went into production before the pandemic and stopped shooting *during* its initial stages (Weston, 2021). Yet in the interval between shutting down production and restarting, it appears that the cast’s own understanding of their film evolved into pandemic-era terms: “The stars tell ABC Audio the film is a good reminder to everyone to appreciate small moments, especially as we’re all stuck in our own ‘time loop’ of sorts during the COVID-19 pandemic” (Truccillo, 2021). The “future” anticipated by the film, one filled with disappointment and colonoscopy appointments, now recedes into a paradoxical lockdown-era optimism in which the sole threat to the future is Covid. Yoked to the time-loop fiction of endlessness, in a reversal of the pessimism of “no future,” we miraculously seem to have all the time in the world to fulfil our own desires. The future, in other words, appears rich with possibility.

The retrofitting of the time loop has both symptomatically enacted and papered over the trauma of a “second” (pre-existing) scene that possesses both social and psychic resonance. This is the scene in which we are stuck in repetitive loops, alienated and mystified, while time flows inexorably towards a future that we are neither prepared for nor want. By making the separation and alienation of the subject a temporal anomaly, the lockdown-as-time-loop conceit provides “cover” for what was already and enduringly traumatic in living. From a developmental perspective, the time-loop film is more often than not about growing up. The loop represents a fixation and exiting the loop enacts developmental progress. Our stuck protagonists dwell in the endless playtime of the loop

while (endlessly) deferring the future of adulthood. Such is the case with *Groundhog Day*, *Palm Springs*, *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* (for Mark), and even *Russian Doll* where Nadia's drinking, drug use and refusal of "adult" attachments, along with a professional life dedicated to creating video games, all point to a developmental fixation.⁵

Growing up, more often than not, in the time-loop film is linked explicitly to heteronormativity along with a generally accepted understanding of the emotional and professional expectations of adulthood in neoliberal societies. As we have shown, almost all the films we discuss conclude with the accomplishment of the heterosexual couple. Even in *Source Code* (generically a thriller, not a romcom) the passive history teacher "grows up" into a romantic lead who assertively woos the girl.

Having been recruited by two more recent iterations, however, which are the crisis of the future and the paralysis of living under lockdown, the hitherto cheerful developmental narrative of the time loop falls apart. The future's false promises on both individual and social levels utterly transforms the otherwise normal/normalizing account of individual and social progress.

If lockdown could be represented as a time loop, not only was the trauma of aging and death in the time of Covid held at bay, but the "pause" in durational time presented an opportunity to repair the (pre-pandemic) crisis of futurity. The time-loop fantasy, harnessed to the pandemic, promises that the time of repetition and isolation is an aberration that can be exited (if only we learn to be less selfish, let go of our mothers, confront our demons, outsmart our opponents, achieve romance, discover what we want from life). For example, Michelle Chikaonda, who treated herself to a personal time-loop film festival during the pandemic, observed that the pandemic led to many of her friends becoming *unstuck*:

As different as each of these decisions was, they shared a common thread:
people made them after the extended pause of the pandemic gave the clarity

to see what they actually wanted out of their lives. *It's time*, they all said, not merely suggesting that it was the right time, but perhaps even that these moves were overdue. (Chikaonda, 2021)

By fulfilling the loop's quest, the subject is (re)placed in relation to a (better, less lonely, less threatened) world and to their own uncompromised desire. Or so the fantasy goes. The fact that time-loop protagonists usually simply accede to the reproductive futurity of the heterosexual couple suggests that the time-loop fantasy ultimately may have promised more (by way of transcendence and renewal) than it delivered.

As we head into the beyond-time of the pandemic, when lockdowns and quarantines are increasingly "in the past" but Covid-19 seems destined to be part of any future we can we imagine, the time-loop conceit may be fading from the public eye. In fact, with *Dr Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (Raimi, 2022) and *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022) in cinemas as we write this in 2022, a new, multiversal fantasy could be taking center stage. Perhaps there is no repairing this timeline, even with all the time in the world. We may have missed our exit.

Endnotes

- ¹ There are a number of films that are arguably both time-loop and time-travel films, in which there is a "rewind" or do-over effect but the subject also does encounter themselves, often murderously; see for example *Primer* (Carruth, 2004), *Timecrimes* (Vigalondo, 2007), and *Triangle* (Smith, 2009).
- ² This holds true for the film as well insofar as Roy expressly chooses his marriage over a buddy relationship with Nyles.

- ³ Arguably, the cinematic love story itself is structured by the paradoxical time-loop fantasy of simultaneously escaping the dreaded future and fulfilling their drive quest, which explains why so many time-loop films culminate in the union of the romantic couple. As Todd McGowan (2011, p. 84) writes: “The heterosexual romantic union that concludes so many films implies that antagonism can be surmounted, that a complementary relationship can be achieved. This idea provides individual subjects with hope that they will find someone to provide what they lack, but it also works to convince them that the social order is a coherent whole (and thus working out successfully).”
- ⁴ Transcribed from the film. In the original short story on which the film is based, it is Mark who expresses awareness of a death-bound future: “Maybe this was crazy. After all, I had time and I had love. I had it all, I had everything, and I was throwing it away, and for what? For real life? For getting old and dying like everybody else?” (Grossman, 2017, p. 31).
- ⁵ Another time-loop film, the American comedy *Naked* (Tiddes, 2017), features a protagonist whose time loop enacts his ambivalence about commitment to marriage and a career. With each reset Rob Anderson awakens naked (like an infant) in an elevator on the day of his wedding.

Conflict of interest statement

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Author bios

Anna J. Secor is Professor of Human Geography at Durham University, UK. Her research seeks to understand the dynamic entanglement of psychic and material space and time. Her research has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Geographic Society. She is co-editor of *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Geography* (Wiley, 2015) and *A Place More Void* (University of Nebraska Press, 2021) and served for six years as an editor of the journal *cultural geographies* (Sage).

Virginia Blum is Professor Emerita in the Department of English at the University of Kentucky. She is the author of *Hide and Seek: The Child between Psychoanalysis and Fiction* (Illinois, 1995) and *Flesh Wounds: The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery* (UC Press, 2003) as well as essays on psychoanalysis and sexuality, psychoanalysis and human geography, and psychoanalytic approaches to literature, film, and popular culture. She trained as a research candidate at the Cincinnati Psychoanalytic Institute where she currently serves on the faculty.

References

- Allen, D. G. (2022, February 2). ‘Groundhog Day’: The movie’s final life lessons for getting through the end of the pandemic. *CNN*.
<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/02/health/groundhog-day-movie-lessons-covid-wellness/index.html>
- Anderson, B. (2010). Preemption, precaution, preparedness: Anticipatory action and future geographies. *Progress in human geography*, 34(6), 777-798.
- Anderson, B. (2017). Emergency futures: Exception, urgency, interval, hope. *The Sociological Review*, 65(3), 463–477.

- Barbakow, M. (Director). (2020). *Palm springs* [Film]. Limelight Productions; Lonely Island Classics; Sun Entertainment.
- Berardi, F. (2011). *After the future* (G. Genosko & N. Thoburn, Eds.). AK Press.
- Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Duke University Press.
- Bress, E., & Gruber, J. M. (Directors). (2004). *The butterfly effect* [Film]. FilmEngine; BenderSPink; Katalyst.
- Carruth, S. (Director). (2004). *Primer* [Film]. Studio Canal.
- Chikaonda, M. (2021, June 15). What can ‘Naked’ and ‘Map of Tiny Perfect Things’ teach us about unsticking our lives? *Broad Street Review*.
<https://www.broadstreetreview.com/essays/what-can-naked-and-map-of-tiny-perfect-things-teach-us-about-unsticking-our>
- Dargis, M., & Scott, A. O. (2020, April 16). Viewing party! Let’s all watch ‘Groundhog Day’ together! *The New York Times*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/16/movies/groundhog-day.html#permid=106577220>
- Fernando, J. (2009). *The processes of defence: Trauma, drives, and reality – a new synthesis*. Jason Aronson.
- Fernando, J. (2018a) Trauma and the Zero Process: Clinical Illustrations. *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 29 (3), 37-45.
- Fernando, J. (2018b). Trauma and the zero process: Theoretical considerations. *Psychoanalysis*, 29 (3), 46–53. <https://doi.org/10.18529/psychoanal.2018.29.3.46>
- Fink, B. (2004). *Lacan to the letter: Reading Écrits closely*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Fisher, M. (2014). *Ghosts of my life: Writings on depression, hauntology and lost futures*. John Hunt Publishing.
- Free, T., & Roe, M. (Directors). (2020). *Two distant strangers* [Film]. Dirty Robber; NowThis; Six Feet Over.
- Freud, S. (1966) Project for a scientific psychology. In J. Strachey (Ed.), *Standard edition: Vol. 1* (pp. 295–397). Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1895)
- Freud, S. (1955). Beyond the pleasure principle. In J. Strachey (Ed.), *Standard edition: Vol. 18* (pp. 1–64). Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1920)

- Gaughan, L. (2021, March 24). Groundhog Day-type movies dominated the pandemic. Groundhog Day-type movies ... *Dallas Observer*.
<https://www.dallasobserver.com/arts/in-a-locked-down-world-time-loop-movies-became-a-genre-11998078>
- Gilliam, T. (Director). (1995). *12 monkeys* [Film]. Atlas Entertainment; Classico.
- Grossman, L. (2017). *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. Kindle Edition
- Johnston, A. (2005). *Time driven: Metapsychology and the splitting of the drive*. Northwestern University Press.
- Jones, D. (Director). (2011). *Source code* [Film]. The Mark Gordon Company; Vendôme Pictures.
- Kelly, R. (Director). (2001). *Donnie Darko* [Film]. Flower Films.
- Klinenberg, E. [@EricKlinenberg]. (2020, April 20). *Groundhog's Day is better as a film* [Tweet]. <https://twitter.com/EricKlinenberg/status/1252030074146238464>
- Kohler, L. (2021, January 21). How to break the Covid-19 Groundhog Day cycle. *Forbes*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/lindsaykohler/2021/01/27/how-to-break-the-covid-19-groundhog-day-cycle/?sh=44bd7d0f29be>
- Kwan, D., & Scheinert, D. (Directors). (2022). *Everything everywhere all at once* [Film]. IAC Films; Gozie AGBO; Year of the Rat; Ley Line Entertainment.
- Lacan, J. (2006). The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious. In *Écrits: The first complete edition in English* (B. Fink, Trans.) (pp. 671–702). W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1966)
- Landon, C. (Director). (2017). *Happy death day* [Film]. Blumhouse Productions.
- Landon, C. (Director). (2019). *Happy death day 2u* [Film]. Blumhouse Productions.
- Laplanche, J. (2017). *Après-coup: Problématiques VI* (J. House & L. Thurston, Trans.). The Unconscious in Translation. (Original work published 2006).
- Liman, D. (Director). (2014). *Edge of tomorrow* [Film]. Village Roadshow Pictures; RatPac-Dune Entertainment; 3 Arts Entertainment; Viz Productions; TC Productions.
- Luscombe, B. (2021, April 7). Being Single Was Just a Part of Their Lives Before the Pandemic. Then It Became the Defining One. *Time*. <https://time.com/5955250/single-during-covid-19-pandemic/>

- Lynch, D. (Director). (1997). *Lost highway* [Film]. Ciby 2000; Asymmetrical Productions.
- Lyonne N., Headland, L., & Poehler, A. (Creators). (2019–present). *Russian doll* [TV series]. Universal Television; Paper Kite Productions; Jax Media; 3 Arts Entertainment; Animal Pictures; Shoot to Midnight.
- Malik, F. S. (2022, February 8). Opinion: A doctor's on COVID: We are going through an endless 'Groundhog Day' time loop. *The Tennessean*.
<https://eu.tennessean.com/story/opinion/2022/02/08/covid-we-going-through-endless-groundhog-day-time-loop/6696589001/>
- Marker, C. (Director). (1962). *La jetée* [Film]. Argos Films.
- McGowan, T. (2011). *Out of time: Desire in atemporal cinema*. University of Minnesota Press.
- News in Health. (2020, August). *Dr. Anthony Fauci on COVID-19 vaccines*. National Institutes of Health. <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2020/08/dr-anthony-fauci-covid-19-vaccines>
- Noé, G. (Director). (2002). *Irréversible* [Film]. Les Cinémas de la Zone; Studio Canal.
- Nolan, C. (Director). (2000). *Memento* [Film]. Summit Entertainment; Team Todd.
- Odar, B. & Friese, J. (Creators). (2017–2020). *Dark* [TV series]. Wiedemann & Berg Television.
- Parker, A. J. (2021, February 2). Every day is groundhog day during the pandemic. *Grazia*.
<https://graziamagazine.com/us/articles/groundhog-day-bill-murray-pandemic/>
- Raimi, S. (Director). (2022). *Dr Strange in the multiverse of madness* [Film]. Marvel Studios.
- Ramis, H. (Director). (1993). *Groundhog day* [Film]. Columbia Pictures.
- Renshaw, D. (2020, July 16). 'The world is in a state of turmoil': why time-loop movies resonate in 2020. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/jul/16/the-world-is-in-a-state-of-turmoil-why-time-loop-movies-resonate-in-2020>
- Russo-Young, R. (Director). (2017). *Before I fall* [Film]. Awesomeness Films; Jon Shestack Productions.
- Samuels, I. (Director). (2021). *The map of tiny perfect things* [Film]. FilmNation Entertainment; Wishmore Entertainment; Weed Road Pictures.

- Scott, A. O. & Dargis, M. (2020, April 21). How many more weeks (years)? Watching ‘Groundhog Day’ together. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/21/movies/groundhog-day.html>
- Smith, C. (Director). (2009). *Triangle* [Film]. UK Film Council; Dan Films.
- Stern, M. (2022, February 2). Bill Murray on the bright side of the pandemic and inventing shotgun golf with Hunter S. Thompson. *Daily Beast*.
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/obsessed/bill-murray-on-the-bright-side-of-the-pandemic-and-inventing-shotgun-golf-with-hunter-s-thompson?ref=scroll>
- Sweet, J. (2021, January-February). The loneliness pandemic. *Harvard Magazine*.
<https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2021/01/feature-the-loneliness-pandemic>
- Taylor, J. (2020, September 3). ‘It gets into your bones’: the unique loneliness of coronavirus lockdown when you live alone. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/sep/03/it-gets-into-your-bones-the-unique-loneliness-of-coronavirus-lockdown-when-you-live-alone>
- Tiddes, M. (Director). (2017). *Naked* [Film]. Broken Road Productions; Baby Way Productions.
- Tuccillo, A. (2021, February 12). Stars of ‘The Map of Tiny Perfect Things’ show us how to appreciate the small stuff. *ABC Audio*. <https://933classichits.com/2021/02/12/stars-of-the-map-of-tiny-perfect-things-show-us-how-to-appreciate-the-small-stuff/>
- Vigalondo, N. (Director). (2007). *Los cronocrimenos* [Truecrimes] [Film]. Karbo Vantas Entertainment.
- Walsh, C. (2021, February 17). Young adults hardest hit by loneliness during pandemic. *Harvard Gazette*. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/02/young-adults-teens-loneliness-mental-health-coronavirus-covid-pandemic/>
- Weston, C. (2021). *Where was Map of Tiny Perfect Things filmed?* HITC.
<https://www.hitc.com/en-gb/2021/02/12/the-map-of-tiny-perfect-things-filmed-where-filmed/>
- Wilkinson, A. (2021, March 18). The plague prophets. *Vox*.
<https://www.vox.com/culture/22289454/pandemic-year-contagion-world-war-z-station-eleven-rest-relaxation>
- Zemeckis, R. (Director). (2009). *Back to the future* [Film]. Amblin Entertainment.
- Žižek, S. (2000). *The ticklish subject: The absent centre of political ontology*. Verso.
- Žižek, S. (2006). *The parallax view*. MIT Press.

Žižek, S. (2005). Foreword: A parallax view on drives. In A Johnston, *Time driven: Metapsychology and the splitting of the drive* (pp. xiii–xvii). Northwestern University Press.