



LE TEMPS QUI POUSSE / TIME GROWS BY
Commande de la future Cité des imaginaires

TIME GROWS BY

Sound-Salad by Alain Damasio (in black) and Floriane Pochon (in blue)

ENGLISH VERSION

OVERTURE >

You came to hear a soundwalk, didn't you? And you think it's engraved, intact, on a hard drive of nickel and cobalt. You don't know that with each broadcast to your headphones, the trip changes shape; it changes because the soundwaves, as soon as they're emitted, are warped and twisted by temporal waves that come from the intertime. *From the what ?* Yes, the intertime — the internet of time — that allows time periods to communicate with one another. *Hmm. Hold on.*

Know this: the extraordinary garden you will be discovering on your right as you climb the contorting stairs, was but a cover. *The truth lies deeper.*

The Garden is extraordinary especially through its unusual temporal properties. It forms a world-block in which the three facets of past, present, and future perpetually coexist within the same space.

This is not a garden: it's a wild place where time grows by. Might have grown, grew, *beaucoup*.

Time has lengthened the bamboo stalks, it'll seed the rocks with lived time, it groves to receive the droves of futures just waiting for the rain to unfurl.

This will not be a garden : it would have been an embassy where the fragile flowing of things and creatures will be protected from universal time. *You might -- still -- have withdrawn.*

This garden closes at the end of the day because the tides of time are much higher at night. You are going to stand at the edge of a zone into which nobody went without a guide. I would have been one of them. I am also the eldest. I am called Remy Verne, *otherwise known as Nerve*, I'm the grandson of Jules Verne, his reincarnation. I can ventriloquize any author. Here, I've taken on the voice of Alain Damasio, may he forgive me; I speak with his inflexions to comfort you.

Nerve comes and helps you explore this somewhat mad place, like his ancestor. He'll be your sherpa amidst the strangeness, the risk and adventure.

Jules wrote Around the World in Eighty Days. Nerve offers you instead... Around the day in eighty worlds. Let him guide you...



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STROLL >

Here we go, the trip's already begun. *Can you tell? You are steeped in Imagination.*

Already, you can no longer turn back: behind you, the stairs have evaporated. Your present decompensates. *Your memories percolate toward the future.* Time no longer goes: *it knows, it gnaws the stones beneath your feet*, it would be a tuft of grass in your fissures, *it was flower and fruit* -- it grows by.

You rise over the road toward a fuzzy space. *To how many of the dead do you speak?* Never hesitate to take off your headphones as soon as you feel the pressure grow, never hesitate to hit pause, to breathe. Your body is theoretically not at risk, *what are you playing at?* but your mind...

Stop at the first gazebo that you come to.

The Cap 44 wavers in the turbulent air; you see a mill dancing before a quay brimming with sailboats, the flour whirls under the gusts, a cane sugar refinery comes out of the earth... In the distance, naval shipyards make wood and steel ring out. On the harbor basins, the dockers whip out crates. Then the mill burns utterly; the walls collapse. The end.

Can you see the Loire? *"Rivers are roads that move."*

The Loire is like time: sometimes it flowed in reverse, from the Atlantic ocean inland. *The tidal bore.* The tide turns the river inside out like a glove, it'll bring the future back, mixed with saltwater, from Saint-Nazaire's estuary up to the Machines of the Isle of Nantes. It has brought with it the groundswell of sturgeon and catfish who come to dredge up the ooze of a past combining the skeletons of priests and royalist Chouans duly drowned in the enthusiasm of the Revolution with the corpse of Steve Maia Caniço, pushed from a bridge.

To the left is seated the grey crane, Titan at the end of the isle, attached to the Banana Hangar on the quay of the Antilles; in front of us the arm of the Madeleine neighborhood connects to that of Pirmil, *the fingers of the fluid hands entwined in the current can almost be felt.* Further on, the Radiant House (or Maison Radieuse) by Le Corbusier. Across the way, Trentemoult, fishing village, serene *and sweet.* The Loire flows, and as for us, we rise. The river would lengthen and the bluff looms. Stone against water, granite in its gown of ivy, with its lovely green fall. Its falls. The arc of the Miséry quarry is now quite visible.

The temporal strata pile up, the tectonics of the quarry. *It shakes up the intertime but good.*

I like this granite, in two varieties, one very hard, *blue-grey*, the other brittle *and yellow.*



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In Nantes, the paved streets still resonate with jostled elbows, you hobble on quays of cracked collarbones, the castle of Brittany itself is built on blocks of life spent carving, scraping the granite of Misery.

Higher up is Chris Marker's pier -- la Jetée -- where you already met one another. Here is the dike wedged in the hill that launches its track toward the horizon like the deck of an aircraft carrier.

You're already all the way up, on the gazebo, *voilà*, you'll just follow Maurice-Schwob square and its hundred-year-old cedars, you were rather bowled over, in back, still on the dike? *No matter. Fix your gaze in the distance on the blue office building across from us. That's the Cap 44.* Built in eighteen ninety-four. In reinforced concrete, using François Hennebique's method, revolutionary at that time. An industrial mill. The Mills of Nantes. Built to refine a white powder, flour, to be used for pasta, bread, or biscuits, quay Saint-Louis, port of Nantes.

So, follow the grain of impure wheat, washed/cleared of grit, cleaned/winnowed, divided and brushed, which now passes into the fluted cylinders. Next it goes through the blower, it'll separate the bran, it was sorted by size, rolls them again under smooth cylinders and would at last pour the rain of divine flour into bags that depart on barges up the Loire, unless they're kept on-site to make Nantes' biscuits. In 1934, the mill will close down, do you dig? Look, it served as an agricultural warehouse, it was storing wine shipments in 1946, in 1972 it becomes offices. Then ruination, then nothing, then nothing but a dream.

And in 2028, it's the Cité des Imaginaires. For you, it's an evanescent future; for me, Nerve, it's there, solid, engraved on my retina. *So shut your eyes for six second and open them again, each iris rinsed. The Cité des Imaginaires. Can you see it come clear? Yes, you can see it, right up against the quay, a bud on the riverbank, a flickering mirage. Standing on its pillars, it carries a suspended mass with a mirror facade, the illusion of a floating island that architects call the Sky, because it captures the colors and reflections of the sky.*

It's twilight; we're at the end of November: the trees on the quay leave traces of watercolor reds and ambers, the base of the building lights up, through the windows real trees have grown amidst a forest of beams and posts, the Hennebique structure contains a café that calls out to you, you're going to go warm up there... Here you go, you've got your hands around a hot chocolate, you'd cross the atrium now, you'll take the big stairs, you were wandering around in the organic library, a Third Place, all of alcoves, hammocks, acoustic bubbles, where you read, did play, still chat, maybe picked up a manga and slip away into elsewhere before heading back to the Great Jules Verne Museum, where you'll find out all about grandfather, where you've seen that he examines the epoch better than anyone knew how.

And here you are up on top, on the upper deck, a roof patio with trees, the *Pavilion of Stars*, the final gazebo, where you will contemplate the isle, the quarry, the city, and the little lake of the Extraordinary Garden, and turning back toward the west, the adjoining Loire gliding toward the estuary.



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You've done nothing but go up at this point, bravo... Now you need to go back down. Push open the little gate and take the stairs downward... Prepare yourself for the adventures you'll experience below: *Voyage to the Center of the Mirth*, *Five Weeks in a Saloon*, *The Children of Captain Nantes*, all these worlds await you in the garden. And so many others...

The stairway on the left offers a balcony and a lover's nook. From there, you can see the via ferrata and the thirty climbing routes by which I sometimes escape; the new garden and its basin, *Twenty Thousand Newts Under the Pond*; the gazebo in the shape of a pelican's nest by Tadashi Kawamata and the lactescent lunar tree. The railroad is still there, twenty-two meters under the earth, you saw it disappear, didn't you?

The platform on the right, before the final flight of steps, offers an ideal view of the little gardens. To the left the frisée lettuce, the hibiscus and kalopanax, to the right the yucca garden, fragrant ginger and the tetrapanax.

Tetrapanax papyrifer, to be precise, the rice paper plant where you slice thin sheets from the inside of the stalk for your watercolors, Nerve. Correctly dried, the paper is light, white, and soft, slightly translucent, a velvety surface -- but too fragile. Everything you mark on it tears and ends up going down the drain. That's why you talk, Nerve, your voice is your only paintbrush.

Look closely under the ramp at the grey guardrails of the stairwell, you're the one they're guarding, young lunatic.

Below, the ganivelles still cut you off from the future, from the nourishing orchard and the pergola -- follow them, then turn toward the waterfall up to the gigantic cherry laurel, the first shrub of the garden, protected from the wind and blossoming due south, then veer off by the stone path heading downward.

I am the lizard of the walls who tags with his feet the words Zone to Defend.

You shall be the fire salamander that cannot be bought. She is the blue, the common copper, the speckled wood butterfly. You shall be the sixteen species of odonata that quiver at the water's surface: I have been the banded demoiselle, you are the night-blue dragonfly, the blue and the lesser emperor, she will be the little nymph with the fiery body and the red bamboo silhouette, I would be the variable bluet that answers it color for color.

We were the free bubble of dew touching the dragonfly's elytra at dawn.

Then suffer... me to blow it gently away. Here it is, evaporated.

You now walk in the heart of the garden on the paths that fork. Plunge toward the shadows where the day lours with the brambles. *Brambleback - n. Time that tracks backwards. Counter-movement of the*



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living, which takes back what belongs to it in the shadow and the tangle. Refusal of temporal pruning: every moment regrows in every direction to forge its own path, despite the risk of wrong turns.

Sit down on the smooth-backed benches of cut oak, and caress a few still living months of the seventies with the palm of your hand. *Who would you have liked to be?* Perhaps you'll find the little stand of bamboo further along, with its quivering stakes? The bamboo where the present grows out from the middle, where each segment of a stalk, as you grab hold of it, will expand in you the joy of being here and now with things well in hand // *well in hand*, feeling the hard, dense. tube, the strength of the plant pulsating, the arrow of growth.

Here, time descends. It is presence. It opens.

A bouquet of instants beneath the breath of a gust -- this is the little stand of bamboo. *And if you think of someone intensely enough, you will see their memory grow, or their becoming, between two knots, at a millimeter per second.*

The tiled floor of the brewery, in red and white mosaic, confused by the leaves. 200,000 bottles per day in 1950, not a glass shard today. *When are you already dead?* The little lake of ceramic in cameo, hidden behind the stand of bamboo where, at night, the footsteps of the women carrying the crates of freshly bottled beer can still be heard. Some still dance there without wearing down the tiles; time has no hold on things. *What are you hanging on to?*

On the ground of the little pathways, can you tell that you're walking on wood shavings, on the ground up undergrowth of the whole city of Nantes? In reality, your feet are kicking up the sawdust of a multiplicity of experiences lived by the inhabitants and which have passed into the sap; you aren't crushing anything, don't worry; instead, it's these lives that carry you and that throb beneath your footsteps. *What have you been able to do out of love?* The shaving sound elastic and yielding, *they crumble slowly, feeding the earth, they trap the warmth and the rain*, they are bits of bravura, bursts of laughter, of shrapnel, *of voices*, time-shards of living memory, *a shred of childhood too long kept silent*, lips opening, *a kiss, a love-sliver*, broken shards of friendship, *it's a bourbon shared by the ladies*, the weariness of a sailor falling asleep on a crate at the foot of a freighter — it's all this at once, mixed up and pressed down and repressed. *What are you hanging on to that you should let go?*

Up close to the gate, quite a lot better than the apple tree, the fig tree awaits you, the fig tree that was the true tree of Adam and Eve, believe it, from its fruit, so sexual, that you open with your fingers, juicy under the skin and delicious beneath the tongue.

At two paces, *Sesbania punicea*, powerfully orange, where becoming bursts out, where you can gather Rebellious Nantes which resists, act upon act, occupation upon demonstration -- *What do you have to lose?* — the Nantes that counterattacks everywhere, disarms the police, fucks the place up, shove it



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up your ass, here's a bank keeping its head down, our desires make a mess, the bad times will pass.
[What do you hold dear?](#)

The giant ferns that take us back to the Precambrian, the fatsia with its open hands and warped fingers that twist history and revise it. [What will be your last words, if you could choose them?](#) The bougainvilleas in bloom, weeping, the banana-less banana trees, who smile, thinking of smoothies, the magnolias up high, who sing Claude François.

Unscrew your head, lift your head way back to see them at last. [Who? or what?](#) The planes that tilt over Nantes. [The planes that will never land in Notre-Dame-des-Landes.](#) The chemtrails that veer off in a sky as blue as an orange. Their white marks, their shitty mark, their big capital letters written in jet fuel in water vapor, their chalk alphabet across the blue back of the picture. (Is it grey out? It's just that you don't know how to see behind the curtain anymore. Is it grey out? Split the slate roof, gawker!)

The camphor tree to the left after the waterfall, which soothes the pain of the future; the manioc at the edge of the path, starch of slow-burning time, of long stretches; Japanese pepper because the night's spicy.

And if you could say nothing, what should I hear?

What is silent when we are present?

What makes you grow?

At one point, near the gate of the park, before it's over, a little secret trail brushes against a flowerless camelia. It leads to a tunnel under the cliff. [Don't try to go through it. It's a time-portal.](#) Through it you will see the future -- [a crazy building, post-humans in shorts, a Mad Machine... Who knows?](#) Don't stay there for too long, for all glimpsed futures attracts us: [it enters you, plays tricks on your cortex.](#)

[Instead, shift to your right and lift your eyes.](#)

You stood face to face with majestic ivy: [the guides here call it "lierre aux glyphes," glyph-ivy.](#)

Thanks to the ivy, you could decipher the arborescence of the past, all the traces that this place has left.

In French, ivy is *lierre*, which is *l'hier*, yesterday, which says it all. Delirious *lierre*, unlaced, (["I grab on to you, insubstantial ivy"](#)), intravenous ivy, divine and vineglorious, war for the wretched. Ivy with claws, that hangs on, hooks to rocks ; ivy with ticks, [and that yet move](#) ; a ball of knotted ivy nerves for those who think that instead of fighting, better to take off, climb away, [huddle up](#). A stone-stake stuck to the rough bluff, enough soil on the ledges for the aloes and cactus to play racketball.



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At the foot of the wall, time flows high to low. On this immense slate, the glyph-ivy transcribes the history of the site stem upon stem, from leaf to leaf -- the brewery, the flour, the Mills, the factories, the sailboats, the imagination on its way and its City, in limbo, the blindness of industry that Verne had already pinpointed. Aloe, anyone there? Bamboo-zled again.

The waterfall is pure time gushing forth. But if you look at the falls in the basin, you can see it flow backwards, toward the sky. A geyser. The waterfall is liquid time that seeps out, inconstant, stopped, unflowing, then suddenly flooding out, a torrent of rain. Thus is born the instant's inspiration. Hold out your hand, touch the current, don't put your fingers in its grip, be careful, be careful... Listen. The Cape pond weed shakes out its frills in the basin. The waterlilies metabolize mezzo voce your waves of dejection. Would you like to have flowers at the tips of your fingers?

Under the falls, at their edge and in the water, the blocks wriggle. Where time is caught. It would be a mistake to believe that stone is memory. That the past is held there, folded and compact, petrified and intact, waiting to be reread, to be noticed. What do you refuse to see?

In truth, the blocks capture all kinds of temporal waves.

There are blocks of childhood, of becoming, blocks of futurity, enormous, that will split one day, that that can already be felt when you brush against the moss that disguises them like glyphs at the surface of the granite. Take a moment to read one, to understand its syntax, to allow yourself to be traversed by the vibrations it contains, and you shall perhaps witness the rising within you of the renowned Cité des Imaginaires, behind the tops of the trees, and you shall hear the words of Jules Verne coming from his manuscripts all by themselves, on the third floor. "All that is impossible remains to be accomplished", "Yet the future must come to an end some day."

But the future doesn't come to an end. I come from it.

The river possesses three bridges, three temporal access points. In the pond to the rear a vortex turns that sucks in water. That's where I recharge each night, where I am reborn in the whirlpool of time. I am the dead guide of the garden, the sherpa to the beyond, a shaman, a sensei, except that my Japanese lantern is a plant.

I was a wave-packet, your mental resonance when you no longer vibrate, I will be the imagination that you do not yet allow yourself to explore: yet that creates tomorrow, that forges it, together, by hand. The imagination that questions progress and its promises, visible and insidious power, our relationship to the living in all its tenderness. The imagination that offers the possible to the real, that offers some "respiration", that punches holes in everyday tunnels, the free thinking that does not seek the familiar but the strange and the foreign, that no longer seeks "who am I and what is my identity?" but "where are you, where are all of you and what is your thread, your fiber?" that I may come weave myself into your cloth.



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Your voyage is coming to an end, the worlds are already dissipating.

You are going to leave the Extraordinary Garden to rediscover your lives.

Here I remain, lingering at the edges out of love. [What makes you grow? // what grows silent when we are here?](#) Waiting for time to grow by in the tetrapanax, in the heart of the bamboo, the dragonflies and the bees. Chilling out on the blocks of futurity that split so gently, bathing in the little ceramic lake where the women working at the brewery dance and dance in laughter. Gathering the present, the purple berries of your presence, by the ears, as though with a carrier bag of fiction.

[« Mobilis in Mobili ».](#)