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Consider a world in which cause and effect are erratic. Sometimes the first precedes the second, sometimes the second the first. Or perhaps cause lies forever in the past while effect in the future, but future and past are entwined.

On the terrace of the Bundesterrasse is a

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striking view: the river Aare below and the Bernese Alps above. A man stands there just now, absently emptying his pockets and weeping. Without reason, his friends have abandoned him. No one calls any more, no one meets him for supper or beer at the tavern, no one invites him to their home. For twenty years he has been the ideal friend to his friends, generous, interested, soft-spoken, affectionate. What could have happened? A week from this moment on the terrace, the same man begins acting the goat, insulting everyone, wearing smelly clothes, stingy with money, allowing no one to come to his apartment on Laupenstrasse. Which was cause and which effect, which future and which past?

In Zürich, strict laws have recently been approved by the Council. Pistols may not be sold to the public. Banks and trading houses must be audited. All visitors, whether entering Zürich by boat on the river Limmat or by rail on the Selnau line, must be

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searched for contraband. The civil military is doubled. One month after the crack-down, Zürich is ripped by the worst crimes in its history. In daylight, people are murdered in the Weinplatz, paintings are stolen from the Kunsthaus, liquor is drunk in the pews of the Münsterhof. Are these criminal acts not misplaced in time? Or perhaps the new laws were action rather than reaction?

A young woman sits near a fountain in the Botanischer Garten. She comes here every Sunday to smell the white double violets, the musk rose, the matted pink gillyflowers. Suddenly, her heart soars, she blushes, she paces anxiously, she becomes happy for no reason. Days later, she meets a young man and is smitten with love. Are the two events not connected? But by what bizarre connection, by what twist in time, by what reversed logic?

In this acausal world, scientists are helpless. Their predictions become post-dictions. Their equations become justifica-

tions, their logic, illogic. Scientists turn reckless and mutter like gamblers who can not stop betting. Scientists are buffoons, not because they are rational but because the cosmos is irrational. Or perhaps it is not because the cosmos is irrational but because they are rational. Who can say which, in an acausal world?

In this world, artists are joyous. Unpredictability is the life of their paintings, their music, their novels. They delight in events not forecasted, happenings without explanation, retrospective.

Most people have learned how to live in the moment. The argument goes that if the past has uncertain effect on the present, there is no need to dwell on the past. And if the present has little effect on the future, present actions need not be weighed for their consequence. Rather, each act is an island in time, to be judged on its own. Families comfort a dying uncle not because of a likely inheritance, but because he is loved

at that moment. Employees are hired not because of their résumés, but because of their good sense in interviews. Clerks trampled by their bosses fight back at each insult, with no fear for their future. It is a world of impulse. It is a world of sincerity. It is a world in which every word spoken speaks just to that moment, every glance given has only one meaning, each touch has no past or no future, each kiss is a kiss of immediacy.