

NOTES ON TEMPORAL DISPLACEMENT

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In *I Need To Be Closer To You (DST IV)*, two people face us from separate screens. Evan Tyler, on one side, sits against a wall in a white t-shirt; Emily DiCarlo, on the other, is similarly attired. Above and to the right of each is a counter with a label: “Mar 11, 2018, 1:59:03 AM - Regina” floats over Evan, “Toronto - Mar 11, 2018 1:59:03 AM” over Emily.

Time ticks forward for each. At 30 seconds past the minute, the two both say, “I need to be closer to you.” And the seconds continue.

As the minute approaches, Emily’s eyes widen, her mouth opens, and then her image hits an edit point, a hard cut that spasms her back to her position at the beginning of the loop. At 30 seconds past the minute, again, Emily and Evan both say, “I need to be closer to you”, as they do each minute for the rest of the hour—Evan repeating himself each time, and Emily caught in a loop.

You can see the anticipation in their faces each time a minute approaches its 30-second mark. The point at which they must perform is also the point at which they get to imagine themselves connected through their twinned utterance. Emily’s flinch near the end of her loop is a different kind of anticipation; she is stunned and slightly alarmed, perhaps at the fact that she is about to time-travel.

The locations marked in the superimposed labels matter. Regina is the capital of Saskatchewan, a province that unlike most of the world

stubbornly refuses to adopt Daylight Saving Time. There are various supposed justifications for this—one I recall hearing frequently as a child is that DST would confuse prairie cows. So, I suppose I should find it both ironic and zoologically consistent that even after living in Toronto for 10 years, I think to myself, as I adjust my clocks twice each year: “this is total bullshit.”

And it is bullshit. You gain an hour that you have to give back in six months. However, this semiannual performance, if we think of it as a provocation, might offer a chance to contemplate the nature of time itself—each spring is a reminder that you can’t “save” time, after all. Time is a resource you can only spend.

Time is also curved; this is as true for physicists as it is for lovers.

In physics, the curve of time is measured against that universal constant, the speed of light. As light’s trajectory is bent by the effects of gravity, getting from point A to point B in a low gravity situation takes less time than in a high gravity situation.

Both literally and metaphorically, which is to say both physically and affectively, time passes more slowly when the pressure is high. If you were to leave your partner on the Earth for the weightlessness of space, your lover would age more slowly than you; you might return on what is January 1st for both of you, but with a different number of years having passed.

What might this mean for anniversaries?

I find myself watching the clock as I watch the two faces onscreen (and as I am, in some disembodied sense, watched by them). I, too, anticipate each 30-second marker, each shared vocalization. 25 seconds, 26, 27... This isn’t quite clockwatching, in the colloquial sense. A clock-watcher finds the very passage of time more fascinating than whatever labours they’ve been assigned; the clock that maps the clock-watcher’s obligation becomes, while watched, the inexorable guardian of their

emancipation. For viewers of *I Need To Be Closer To You (DST IV)*, the clockwatching is vicarious—we monitor their task as they time it by the clock.

They perform for each other, but also for us. Seconds pass as eyelids droop, and our lovers, to a point, are doomed. Each needs to be closer to the other, but they occupy separate, antithetical ontologies: one is linear and causal, the other looped and untouchable. Emily's time warp happens again, and again, each minute. Her jump cut is the moment where the effect of DST becomes physical, where the temporal displacement occurs for that half of the pair. She keeps reliving that minute... he doesn't. She opens her eyes in anticipation and teleports slightly upward, straightening her spine, refreshed artificially, while Evan's gradual decline is a slow submission to the weight of his own sleepy head on his own enduring shoulders.

Fatigue takes its toll on Evan. At 3 minutes and 45 seconds, we see the first of his neck adjustments: a slight stretch to our right, a realignment of joints and a restoration of wakefulness that never lasts long. At 34 minutes and 30 seconds, his eye twitches and he bows his head, summoning the strength to go on. These foibles, twitches, or misfires remind us that one of the two figures onscreen is experiencing time as we are (though, at time of writing, even he is doing this a year in the past from me). In these moments where the program's mask slips, which I have taken to calling



“seizures”, we get a glimpse at the face underneath. At 27 minutes and 30 seconds, he reminds us of the distance involved by going off script, saying,

“I think... I need... to see you”. At 40 minutes and 20 seconds, he makes an extra utterance of the titular phrase, alone, presumably having misread the time. But is this forgetfulness or anticipation? Is he reading his own past mistakenly, or making his own future arrive too soon? It is, oddly, the most genuine of all the utterances here, a gesture that by its very transgression of the rules is rendered more desperate, more nakedly honest. In the 21st and 55th minutes, Evan misses his cue. Emily's regularity, her consistency reminds him of his task and he catches up mid-sentence.

Who is in support of whom, here? Is Evan's dogged determination to stay awake and perform his chronometric ritual the exact form of devotional sorcery that gives Emily the ability to hover in her perpetually liminal Ground Hog minute? Or is Emily's artificial, technologically-induced ability to unwaveringly repeat each gesture, word, and flinch exactly, minute after minute, providing Evan with the consistency needed to keep him on track in his verbal marathon?

On which side, in other words, is the hour lost, and on which is the hour gained?