

The Old Age of Andropolis Angelides

“Well we stepped out
In the shatter light
And I watched as we blew away
Through a sea of seats
And the tangled up streets
And the cities in a grey-blue haze..

There's motorway sparks
And meetings in the park
And fires from years ago
You can watch your friends
Through this tiny lens
Then you'll know that there's no way home” [1]



The population of the planet Earth was becoming a cause for concern. The world wars of the past three centuries had taken their toll and now, the people of the 23rd century were separated from each other by vast and barren landscapes.

They used to count the wars, but after world war 16, following a disagreement on whether the 15th world war from 2257-2269 had actually been a *world* war, (due to the lack of involvement of South America) it became conventional to name the war after the leader of the country that made the first strike.

The 15th World War then became the Fairchild-Harris War and the 16th World War the Alonso War.

Thankfully nuclear war ceased to be a threat after World War 4 following the discovery of the electro-strong field. This meant that the strong force which binds the nucleus of the atom together, could easily be increased using a strong alternating magnetic field at the correct resonant frequency, thus preventing the nucleus of the atom from breaking apart. In fact this increased force would destroy the original form of the nucleus rendering the device useless.

Many other weapons were developed and used but conventional firepower remained a formidable force to be reckoned with. Even as recently as 2319, huge street battles took place in Europe where hand to hand combat was still used to deadly effect.

At very close range these ancient fighting methods were still used especially now that magnetic field devices could render any metal objects, for example handguns, knives and swords literally too hot to handle and they tend now not to be used in combat.

This city of Detrayna (formerly Detroit), now under Chinese control, was still a centre for technological excellence since the discovery of the *learning net* during the 22nd century, the first group of computers to pass the Turing test, ushering in the age of the 9th generation of computers. However, it was still smouldering, smouldering from the fires from the 2371 uprising. The Yankee rebels (YRA) had made another futile attempt to regain control of the city from their Chinese masters, making anachronistic references to the 'golden age' of the United States of America.

The lampposts were twisted in a fashion reminiscent of early Hiroshima footage, looking like a long forgotten bunch of flowers wilting in the summer sun having gone for days without water. The strange grey-blue metallic haze which coated them was a result of the firestorm that engulfed this place.

"Besides the enormous ash cloud produced by a firestorm, under the right conditions, it can also induce condensation, forming a cloud called a [pyrocumulus](#) or "fire cloud". A large pyrocumulus can produce lightning, which can set off further fires." [2]

The smell was almost pleasing, a kind of sweet charcoal smell, like the burning of summer fields.

Andropolis, now in his 58th year, intelligent but war weary sat in the huge, ancient library, about to use quite an old technology, the webcam, to chat to his family back in Greece. He had hoped to return but that's unlikely now. At the age of 58 he is not likely to chance the 500 mile walk across the NCAC (Northern Chinese American Continent) to Philadelphia to catch a boat to Naxos. Yes, he would love to visit his mother but he has children and grandchildren of his own to protect here.

"Transparent faces from the old school
No-one to project them onto
He drives by 1958
And someone says his name...

Wounded in sleep again
The sequences move by me
A million miles across the room
A tearing sound of smiling
We're fixing distances on maps
And echo paths in crowds
The light from other windows
Falls across me now" [3]

Andropolis enjoyed living in an age where ROPTEO was a reality. Retro Only Past Time Event Observation was a marvellous invention. It meant that past events could be observed from any 3-dimensional position, given the exact space-time location. This meant providing a position (which needed to be calculated by a computer due to the movement and rotation of the Earth through space) and a start time for the session.

The display was colour, three dimensional, life size and so realistic that the only thing that distinguished it from reality was the floating, bobbing space time counter which hovered in the top right of the field of view.

Most people preferred to leave this running as it reminded them that they were in a virtual environment. Some people were known to have had nightmares about either re-living traumatic events without the counter present (indicating that things were really happening to them) or that their real life experience had a counter display (meaning that their lives were history). Considerable sums of yuan had been spent in combating the psychological effects of this powerful experience.

Gladio was still in existence today:

“Gladio ([Italian](#), from Latin [gladius](#), meaning [sword](#)) was founded in 1958 by S.I.F.O.R. (Italian secret service, later replaced because it was suspected of involvement in a 1964 coup plot) and the CIA. Its 15,000 members were recruited from fascist WWII veterans groups and had access to 151 secret arms dumps. The purpose of Gladio was, we are told, to act as a resistance group in the event of a 'Warsaw pact invasion', a 'Soviet takeover’” [4]

Andropolis had been a Gladio captain in 2336, when he was only 22. He had been named after Andropolis Angelides, one of the founding members, and would often use the ROPTEO machine to observe events in the old days, back in 1958 when his namesake was highly proactive before his assassination in 1960 (he had chosen not to observe that particular event).

The first time he heard his name spoken by the sometimes semi-transparent (depending upon the calibration of the machine) 'old school' faces, he was taken by surprise assuming that they were talking to him, which of course they weren't. This is an easy mistake to make, and had Andropolis read the 'precautions' section of the handbook, then he would have been perfectly aware of this 'false association' effect.

The MMRE (Million Mile Room Effect) can be disturbing to the unaccustomed user. It happens when the program skips from one space-time location to another and is caused by the orbit of Earth around the Sun. Data packets are being routed through microscopic worm holes in space-time and as the Earth revolves around the Sun in an annual orbital path of 584 million miles, it only takes 15 hours for it to travel 1 million miles through space.

Skipping forward by only 15 hours on the ROPTEO machine can cause a momentary stretching out of the observed scene making it appear a million miles long! This can be quite unnerving for first-time users leaving them a little nauseous, if the recommended travel sickness pills have not been taken. The interface soon readjusts but the problem cannot be overcome due to relativistic constraints.

All of this was only amusement and what was more important was work....

James Goldman, the manager of this project was feeling happy today, it was early May and gentle beams of sunlight refracted through the brown tinted transparent vertical blinds of their tenth floor office. Children played in the streets below, laughing as they threw around the smouldering ashes left over from the demonstrations of the night before. They were quite safe, there had not been any wars in this region in more than 20 years (although the Dutch were still fighting the Canadians in California).

“Hey! Andropolis. Got those echo paths finished yet?” he chirped.

"Which city?" Andropolis replied.

"Well Richmond, Virginia, dumb ass!" This wasn't Goldman being unpleasant, he liked to call everyone (even himself) "dumb ass". In fact, it was a sign that he was in a good mood. When he was not happy he always used the term "Mr. Angelides" and spoke quietly about how "disappointed" he was.

The problem was with these echo paths. Another YRA demonstration was planned for this weekend in Richmond and although Andropolis sympathised with the aims of the YRA, he didn't agree with their tactics and in any case he was a civilian employee of the NCAC police force.

The latest technique in crowd control was in the use of sound waves. As long as the exact echo path lengths were known between buildings (taking into account reflections from individual members of a crowd) then resonant sound waves were found to be very effective and safe when used for crowd dispersal. It was vital that this data could be transferred to Richmond by then. Andropolis wasn't worried. He was 58 and experienced, he had finished it last week.

"Now it's springtime
On the moving stairway
Time to start again
And I'm wondering vaguely
Just whose face this is
And could we ever be friends?"

Outside now it's so huge and blue
And the city windows start to glow
And the tides are soft as we're casting off
And the summer starts to show" [1]

That song 'Touch and Go' written all of those years ago, 392 in fact, played over the satellite radio. It sounded so familiar, and had been popular in the Gladio years, yet it was from the 20th century. No better musical instrument had been found than the electronic synthesizer (although the Dolphin Wave Transponder came close), so these electronic pop songs, just like classical compositions had truly stood the test of time. In fact, Gary Numan's "Are Friends Electric" had been the best selling brain implant song in 2371.

He was reminded of a face he had seen while running a future scenario algorithm on his 9th generation work computer during a tea break. Given various input conditions it had created the face of a probable future acquaintance. Strangely she looked Greek. Olive skin, beautiful really, and brown eyes. Maybe it was time to return to Greece. It was huge and blue out there and with the onset of summer, the journey across the Atlantic was becoming more appealing.

There were no fossil fuels to power transport (they were exhausted during the 21st century) but there was still wind power. Maybe he could take a land yacht to Philadelphia, yes a land yacht, and then sail, sail back to his beloved homeland, away from this wretched and forlorn place.

References

- [1] Foxx, John. *Touch and Go*. Metamatic (Universal/Island Music) 1980.
- [2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_storm
- [3] Foxx, John. *A New Kind of Man*. Metamatic (Universal/Island Music) 1980.
- [4] <http://libcom.org/history/operation-gladio-italy>