

Futures

CTM means contra-temporal movement

A fresh spin on time travel. By John Cooper Hamilton

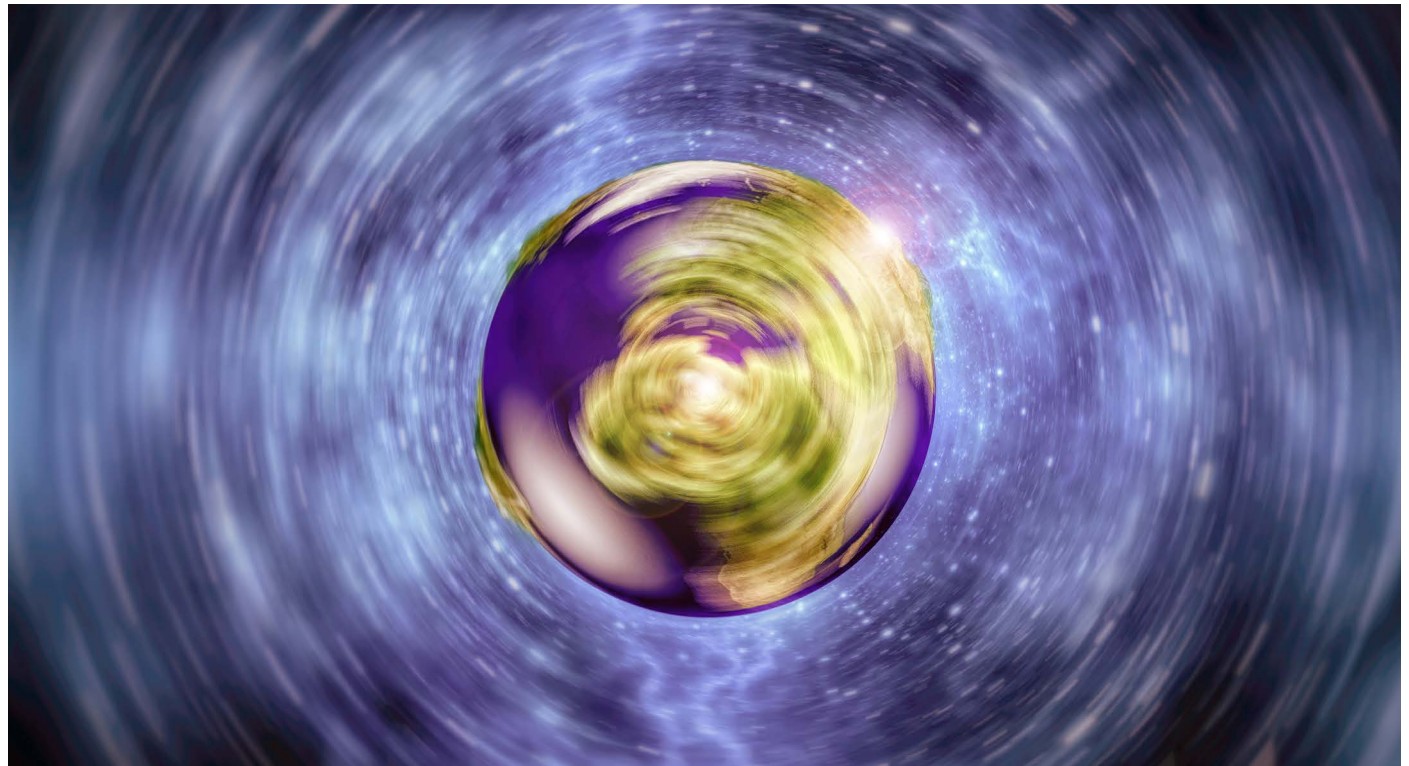


ILLUSTRATION BY JACEY

I lift my finger from the button, and that, good people, concludes my demonstration. Impressed?

What? From your catcalls it seems some of you *still* doubt. Some are unpersuaded that I am the world's foremost genius, its greatest scientist. I really think you'll remember if you simply apply yourselves and concentrate. You – yes, *you with the blue bow tie!* – you remain obdurate in your heresy! Fool! I will crush you! I will –

Ahem.

I see from the speaker clock that time is tick-tick-ticking away. If you'd been paying *proper* attention you'd know how little that means. I have defeated the tyrant Chronos! All the Universe is at my feet, *our* feet, fellow researchers ... once the last bugs are worked out. I –

Shut up, *shut up!* Fine! I'll show you again. I have time on the stupid clock. I warn you that Max, my assistant, is armed. Any who interrupt will be burnt down where they stand, as is permitted in our by-laws.

To begin.

It has long been known that the manipulation of time, and contra-temporal movement – henceforth CTM, for brevity – is possible. The problem has been harnessing enough energy to power a working CTM device.

CTM, remember, means contra-temporal movement. Acronyms allow for succinct and efficient communication. That's important at all times, but especially when time is short. The C stands for 'contra', the T for 'temporal', and the M for –

Max!

No interruptions! And thank you, Max. Burnt hair smell: 'yeuch', am I right? Henceforth aim lower, Max.

As I was *saying*, the problem with a working CTM device – contra-temporal movement device – is obtaining sufficient energy. We have all played with fusion-bomb-pumped contra-temporal devices. Amusing party tricks, but vaporizing everything to be moved through time sharply limits practical applications.

I, friends, frenemies and fellow researchers, have the answer. The device I hold is not a pen. It is the Rotational Energy Extractor-type Doomsday Device, Real Name TBA. It arose from an unrelated line of research.

This, by the way, is just the remote. The actual Real Name TBA is in a vault under this hall, and it's even smaller.

When I activate the Real Name TBA, Earth's rotational energy is extracted – hence the name ... Rotational Energy Extractor-type – *Max!*

Much better aimed. Clean up in aisle three, yes? Ha!

Laugh, damn you all, *laugh!*

My thanks. You're too kind, friends.

Where was I? Centrifugal ... or is it centripetal? I can never remember. Energy, anyway, is sucked up out of Earth and into a zero-point infinite-capacity battery, kindly provided by Dr Johar. I –

Don't worry about that rumbling, fellow researchers. The planet and everything in contact with it have ceased spinning about

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Earth's axis. With respect to us, all but the lowest reaches of the atmosphere have accelerated to 1,800 kilometres per hour. If you look out the pretty windows you can see San Francisco's tallest buildings already falling over. There goes the Transamerica Pyramid. And watch, there to the side! The Millennium Tower is *literally* blown away. Which of us hasn't thought of doing it figuratively? That's shear stress for you.

Anyhoo, all the energy, the *fantastic* energy of an entire world's rotation – I'm sure it's centrifugal – is now powering the CTM device. That's contra-temporal movement. A trickle charge, enough to throw Australia to the Moon, is needed to get things going. The next step –

That noise? Well, of course that's every still-living citizen in the city screaming as the wind spreads downwards ... oh, the other noise? That's the Pacific.

You didn't think it'd just *sit* there, did you?

Observe from the other bank of windows, please, as the ocean rises. Rises! It's coming for us all! *Bwahahahahaha!*

Excuse me. Returning to the demonstration. The CTM device, which I believe I've mentioned means contra-temporal movement, is now ready to use. I –

Comrades, retake your seats! There's no use in running. Not now. There's nowhere to run to. All but the most elevated parts of central Asia will be scoured by the angry waters of Gaea, unchained at last.

People! Please. Look at my clock, there's not much time left. You're being discourteous, and I really want you to get it all through your heads this time. Before rebar from the collapsing walls is driven through your heads. Heh.

No, really, folks. There's no suspense here. *Everybody dies*. But watch, this is the important part! I assure you you'll find my demonstration quite interesting. We –

They aren't listening, are they Max? Well, set

the CTM device. CTM means –

All right, all right! You know what it means. Lower your weapon. Set the device for the maximum volume-affected, the Earth–Moon system, and the maximum time-travelled, 60 seconds.

Ready? I'm going to hit it a few times, just to make sure.

Hello? Everybody, I'm ready. *Proper* attention this time! Don't look at that! That's merely a hundred metres of water. *This* is science! I press my finger to the button, activating the CTM device – CTM means contra-temporal movement – then –

– I lift my finger from the button, and that, good people, concludes my demonstration.

Impressed?

John Cooper Hamilton writes humorous genre fiction, except when it's sombre or creepy. He even writes literary fiction if he thinks he can get away with it.