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Traversing the Phantasy

Flavio Gisler

*Do you know that moment when the last light of the day seems to linger in gold on the asphalt way?
And that it takes approximately an hour for it to completely dissolve into the approaching night? Do you feel that ease inside?*

This story begins in 1982. A young artist called William Basinski, at that time 24 years old, records sounds he perceives onto magnetic tape. We fast forward, 19 years, and we find him again in a studio in New York with this very same tape, trying to transfer the recordings to a more reliable digital format. While doing so he finds that the magnetic layer had deteriorated over time and by playing it, it started to fall off. The music therefore, had started to decay and changed its tonality, surfacing in cracks and gaps, over time. The «Disintegration Loops» were born. One morning in September he finished the project and invited his friends over to listen, sitting on the roof of his apartment building in Brooklyn. It happened to be September 11, 2001.

William Basinski filmed New York entering the night, that final hour of that day, where the gold leaves its sight. A video which you can find today on youtube, called «Disintegration Loop 1.1».

As a spectator 20 years later we see a dark cloud clinging to the ground, hovering above a city, entering the night. A reminiscence of an incident in time that was, as a professor of ours once put it, the moment everyone remembers, wherever they were. A solid dream that was sold to generations collapsed within an hour and forty-two minutes. And «we were all forced to experience what the compulsion to repeat and jouissance beyond the pleasure principle are: We wanted to see it again and again; the same shots were repeated ad nauseam; and the uncanny satisfaction we got from it was jouissance at its purest». ⁽¹⁾ I was six years old at the time but even I remember browsing the magazines and consuming these forbidden images, unaware of what it might mean for the world I was just becoming aware of. But it felt as if I was seeing something that comes close to a childish fantasy: That a house was just falling apart. It was the moment imagination became real. As I would later find out; this is, in fact, a shared experience. In a book called «Welcome to the Desert of the Real» by Žižek we find the following sentence: «The ultimate and defining moment of the twentieth century was

**The closest
some of us
will ever get
to heaven.**



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the direct experience of the real as opposed to everyday social reality – the real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for peeling off deceptive layers of reality.»⁽²⁾ And this dream of a reality that is opposed to everyday social reality still fosters in our hearts or, as Murakami so ingeniously puts it: «Everyone deep in their hearts, is waiting for the end of the world.»⁽³⁾ But what is this reality that surfaces when «the order you currently inhabit dissolves into chaos»?⁽⁴⁾

*What is the phoenix that will be born out of ashes?
For a brief moment in time «forget your perfect offering»
Imagine a place, vast ebony emptiness, revealed in its
existence by light's appearance.
«There is a crack, a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in.»⁽⁵⁾
And here lies barely conceivable a space between any
stimulus and any response, our origin, us.
«In this space is our power to choose our response.»⁽⁶⁾
Here we find our growth and freedom.
So let us arise and respond beyond our previous limits.*

Between 1915 and 1930 the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung worked on a book which later on would be known as «The Red Book». In it he records his self-confrontation sessions with the subconscious by deliberately evoking a fantasy in a waking state, and then entering into it as a drama; venturing into the depth of the psyche. His lived visions and dreams created a knowledge circulating around two poles. He called them on the one hand the «spirits of the times» («Zeitgeist») and on the other the «spirits of the depth». The spirits of the times that we are in now is all about utilitarianism, and it is ignorant of the reality of the psyche. It is the moment we are asked how we are and always repeat the very same word: Good! This is our everyday social reality. The spirits of the depth, on the contrary, is what we feel that makes us speak, beyond justification, use and meaning.

But as Jung puts it: «Filled with human pride and blinded by the presumptuous spirit of the times, I long sought to hold that other spirit away from me.»⁽⁷⁾ And in a world that still is, despite slow change, blinded by that presumptuous spirit of the times, what is left for those who search to transcend this social reality? I want to believe in a world where our bodies are not machines to fulfill someone else's dream.

But what can we dream of if a house just falls apart?

If every dream that becomes real will test us in everything we have learnt so far, let us respond as ourselves as we really are. And if every thesis needs an anti-thesis, first, we need to bring the spirits of the depth, the spirits of our depth into the world

we live in. This undertaking of courage, as it includes vulnerability, is believed in so beautifully by Hannah Arendt: «Just those who take their lives and persona into the venture of the public realm, will reach the public. This venturing is just possible in trust in humans, in fact, in the trust in the human in all humans!»⁽⁸⁾ And our response shall be named by Roland Barthes: «I want to change systems: No longer to unmask, no longer to interpret, but to make consciousness itself a drug, and thereby to accede to the perfect vision of reality, to the great bright dream, to prophetic* love.»⁽⁹⁾ And our action shall be taken within a belief that «everything that happens in love is beyond wrong or right».⁽¹⁰⁾

*Do you feel that ease inside?
let's not dream of the real
we have to take the world – and make it real
we are those who walk without fear
because those who walk without fear
will walk into a reality
not yet here*

**prophetic* meaning something not yet believed in

