

Tragedy 3.0

Tragedy. Tragedy... Tragedy(?). On passive anti aesthetics: making art as a commentary on capitalism... 15yrs ago... acknowledging that they had lost the battle... report a scam... 3.0: a whole other level of hopelessness and misery... decay. idiotic, one could say. словесный понос...¹ On spatial conditions: how we are however we are... scammed. Damn... *sigh* ‘... brought up as she had been to believe ... with other waifs ... in a merciful ... (brief laugh) ... God ... (good laugh) ... first occurred to her ... then dismissed ... as foolish ... was perhaps not so foolish ... after all ... so on ... all that ... vain reasonings ... till another thought ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... very foolish really but ... what? ... the buzzing? ... yes ... all the time the buzzing ... so-called ... in the ears ... though of course actually ... not in the ears at all ... in the skull ... dull roar in the skull ... and all the time this ray or beam ... like moonbeam ... but probably not ...² shit.

The following is to be read with the consideration that it is merely an excerpt; a distillation of conversations and phone notes— not anticipating this appearance, and texts I’ve yet to have read with tentative plans.

Yes, we’re bored of talking about Brexit, but it’s not like it’s going away and there’s a lot to talk about post-rapture. Particularly, how easy it is to forget that the Left could not fathom Trump assuming the US presidency, nor Brexit to withdraw the UK from the EU. Articles that circulated in response to the referendum results cite theorists, who pronounced the rise in xenophobic populism years prior, in a harrowing tone. Yet, this air of disbelief entwined with despair accentuates the privilege of those who can evade criticising Left politics— and maintain the charade. From these unfortunate successions of incidents,³ the rude awakening of the UK’s deep plunge into austerity, inflation, and racist policies repeat a stunned anger. Now, the usual indignation about the Tory Party welcomes the Opposition Leader, Keir Starmer, into its fold.

Some of you are reading this possibly with a sigh as this is not news to you. Yet, precisely this sentiment is pivotal. We know that we are not to take things at face value regardless of one’s political camp. In other words, the general consensus has been that the government is corrupt. Disjointedly, a loop of shock and outrage replays as conditions worsen. However, we have yet to admit that we have agreed to this public secret.⁴ Across the spectrum, the urgency for reform varies— arguably in relation to where one stands on the scale of precarity and status of residency. Somewhere on the spectrum, we’re still performing the narrative: the belief of a post-colonial society... the belief of freedom by way of capitalist sovereignty. Such a tension regarding public secrecy between conformity and revelation reflects the thinking of Michael Taussig in his book, *Defacement*. At the time of its publication, Taussig argued that in spite of its inability to withstand daily challenges which uncover it, the leak appears to bolster fidelity and normalise the scandal. The truth remains at a combustible simmer; with the imminence of the secret’s exposure prey to defacement. However, as I lick my finger and point it upwards to feel which way the wind is blowing, I would argue that this suspension of epiphany has been unleashed.

By popular opinion the current state of affairs is bleak. The endless antagonisms render everyone to a demoralised disposition. One that feels all ending, poignant, and inauspicious. Reminiscent of the exhausted words of William Shakespeare, ‘Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing’.⁵ Although true, if we are to look at public secrecy as the collective agreement,

¹ Russian. pronunciation: *slovesnyy ponos*; meaning: verbal diarrhoea

² Beckett, Samuel, ‘Not I’, 1971.

³ Refers to, yet not exclusively, Donald Trump’s inauguration, Brexit, Covid-19 pandemic.

⁴ Taussig, Michael. 1999. *Defacement*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

⁵ Shakespeare, William. “Macbeth.” Act 5, Scene 5, Lines 24–28.

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then who is the idiot if not the individual who— considered a fool, does not adhere to the group participation? The idiot is the disruptive person; traditionally, the one that is discredited in the midst of their ostracization. But, it is the rejection of their incoherency that highlights our own complacent acceptance of validating power. For Isabelle Stengers, the idiot ‘is the one who always slows others down, who resists the consensual way in which the situation is presented and in which emergencies mobilise thought or action. This is not because the presentation would be false or because emergencies are believed to be lies, but because “there is something more important.”’⁶ Now! At the eleventh hour, the subjects objectified for another’s pontification are whom we must look towards in our actions! It is no longer about the altruistic, exceptional, or singular hero, although one was not anticipated. It is about the necessity of keeping perspective.

In the midst of a ballet open professionals class, I found myself in a steadily increasing anxiety over landing double pirouettes on the left. The queue of dancers that gathered in the corner dwindled and my nervousness became perceptibly apparent. Until just before my turn, my fears were quieted by the mature ladies in my group who lent back to blurt, ‘It’s just ballet. People are literally shitting in the streets. Okay? It’s just ballet’. As it happens, this is true. At a gallery in New York, a houseless person routinely took a shit outside the entrance and the gallery didn’t know what to do. Yes, we can criticise the inescapability of capitalism from a conceptual angle and still play *the game*. At the same time, there is an imminent reality behind the gallery window, which is honest and hostile.

Masses of people are in severely critical condition. The crazy thing is, we continue to put on exhibitions with the knowledge of the future short-lived; sometimes *about* the future short-lived. *Why did the Titanic’s orchestra play till the end?* It’s an embrace of a failure as the chaos presumes. Within the turmoil new things are born with a disobedience and an outrage that reflects so much is at stake. Despite dysregulation and rebellion at play, we can forget that power has a certain format. Political movements are and will be susceptible to confusing power with raiding the building, but, it is just perverting the name while embodying the structure. We’re all complicit and are presented with compromises— even at the most mundane level, to which we consciously and unconsciously decide within such an intense level of precarity.

Armageddon is a slow death. The irony of it all is that we have seen the fall of nations and cultures many times before through imperialism, settlement, and erasure.⁷ Now, the snake has come to the neck of itself from eating its tail. With this much uncertainty, we must be weary of the change in perception as opposed to change itself. We won’t know what that will look like... yet. According to the idiot: we do not know. The ending will write itself.

- Kaivalya Brewerton

⁶ Stengers, Isabelle. 2005. “A Cosmopolitical Proposal.” In *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, edited by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, 994–1003. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁷ The extinction of nonhumans and natural ecosystems are to be included in this statement.