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Burned by the Thing

Summary:

The author considers a series of artistic works—Pizarnik's and Bassnet's *Arbol de Diana*, Prokofjev's music, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Saer's *Nobody Nothing Never*, Hölderlin's *Hyperion*—applying to modern art the Lacanian concepts of the Thing and the Real. Modern art aims at the Real: referring to Plato's myth of the cavern, the author states that some art can drive us from illusion toward the real. But this Thing is not something outside in the reality, nor is it the Kantian Thing-in-itself: it is "a thing from the inner space" according to Freud's conception. In this context, he discusses some classic commentaries on Hölderlin's *Hyperion*—namely by Lukacs and Santner—in order to interpret Hölderlin's work as both a philosophical and sociological farewell to the metaphysics of subjectivity and an attempt to mediate among the meaningless multiplicity of life.

In the traditional metaphysical approach, art is about (beautiful) appearances, and science is about reality beneath appearances. However, today's sciences focus more and more on the weird domain of autonomized appearances, of phenomenal processes deprived of any substantial support; no wonder, then, that, in a symmetrical counter-movement, modern art is more and more focused on the Real Thing. Is not the most succinct definition of modern art that it is art "beyond the pleasure principle"? One is supposed to enjoy the traditional art, it is expected to generate aesthetic pleasure, in contrast to modern art causing displeasure—modern art by definition hurts. In this precise sense, modern art is sublime: it causes pleasure-in-pain, it produces its effect through its own failure, insofar as it refers to the impossible Things(1). In contrast to it, beauty, harmonious balance, seems more and more the domain of sciences: already Einstein's relativity theory, this paradigm of modern science, was praised for its simple elegance—no wonder that the title of Brian Greene's best-selling introduction to string theory is *The Elegant Universe* (Greene 2000).

In a first approach, this thesis cannot but strike us as false: is the meaning of a work of art not by definition open, unfathomable, freely floating? On the top of Gellert Hill in the Buda part of Budapest, there is a gigantic monument to the Liberation of the city by the Red Army in 1945: a gigantic statue of a woman waving a stretched flag. This statue (which is usually perceived as an exemplary case of socialist-realist baroque kitsch) was actually made in 1943 on the orders of the Fascist dictator Admiral Horthy, to honor his son who fell on the Russian front fighting the Red Army on the Nazi side; when, in 1945, Kliment Voroshilov, the Soviet commander, was shown the statue, he thought it could serve as the monument of liberation... does this anecdote not tell a lot about the openness of the "message" of a work of art? How, then, can a work of art inherently refer to the Real?

The traditional Platonic frame of reference is thus turned around: sciences deal with phenomena, events, appearances, and art deals with the hard Real. In order to grasp this shift, one should therefore return to Plato's allegory of the cave in *The Republic* (514a-520a). Imagine prisoners chained since childhood deep inside a cave: not only are their limbs immobilized by the chains, but so are their heads, so that their eyes are fixed on a wall. Behind the prisoners is an enormous fire, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way, along which men carry shapes of various animals, plants, and other things. The shapes cast

shadows on the wall, which occupy the prisoners' attention. Also, when one of the shape-carriers speaks, an echo against the wall causes the prisoners to believe that the words come from the shadows. The prisoners engage in what appears to us to be a game: naming the shapes as they come by. This, however, is the only reality that they know, even though they are seeing merely shadows of shapes. Suppose a prisoner is released and compelled to stand up and turn around. His eyes will be blinded by the firelight, and the shapes passing will appear less real than their shadows. Similarly, if he is dragged up out of the cave into the sunlight, his eyes will be so blinded that he will not be able to see anything; at first, he will be able to see darker shapes such as shadows, and only later brighter and brighter objects. The last object he would be able to see is the sun, which, in time, he would learn to perceive as the cause of all the things he has seen. Once thus enlightened, the freed prisoner would no doubt want to return to the cave to free "his fellow bondsmen"; the problem, however, is that they would not want to be freed: descending back into the cave would require that the freed prisoner's eyes adjust again, and for a time, he would be inferior at the ludicrous process of identifying shapes on the wall. This would make his fellow prisoners murderous toward anyone who attempted to free them.

As is always the case with allegories, the literal texture of Plato's narrative threatens to overflow his later interpretation, so that we are constantly forced to make choices: how literally are we to take the literal texture? What are features to be interpreted, and what mere details of imagination? Say, are the puppeteers who deal with the shapes political manipulators, so that Plato also proposes an implicit theory of ideological manipulation, or are we, cavemen, directly deluding ourselves? However, there is a deeper problem here which could be best put in Hegel's terms. One can, of course, start with the naïve notion of people perceiving true reality from a limited/distorted perspective and thus constructing in our imagination false idols which we mistake for the real thing; the problem with this naïve notion is that it reserves for us the external position of a neutral observer who can, from his safe place, compare true reality with its distorted mis(perception). What gets lost here is that we all ARE these people in the case-so how can we, immersed into the cave's spectacle, as it were step onto our own shoulder and gain insight into true reality? Is it that we should look for small inconsistencies in the realm of the shadows, which provide a hint that what we take for reality is an artificial spectacle (as in a scene from *The Matrix*, in which a cat runs across the threshold of a door twice, signaling a glitch in the functioning of the matrix)? Whatever the case, we, the cavemen, have to work hard to arrive at some idea of what the "true reality" outside the cave is-the true substance, the presupposition, of our world is in this sense always-already posited, it is the RESULT of a long process of distilling, extracting, the core of reality from the flurry of deceiving shadows.

Perhaps, however, one should risk a different approach and read Plato's parable as a myth in the Lévi-Straussian sense, so that one has to look for bits of meaning not through its direct interpretation, but, rather, by way of locating it into a series of variations, i.e., by way of comparing it with other variations of the same story. The elementary frame of so-called "post-modernism" can effectively be conceived as the network of three modes of inversion of Plato's allegory. First, there is the inversion of the meaning of the central source of light (sun): what if this center is a kind of Black Sun, a terrifying monstrous Evil Thing, and for this reason impossible to sustain? Second, what if (along the lines of Peter Sloterdijk's *Spheres*) we invert the meaning of the cave: it is cold and windy out in the open, on the earth's surface, too dangerous to survive there, so that people themselves decided to dig out the cave to find a shelter/home/sphere? In this way, the cave appears as the first model of building a home, a safe isolated place of dwelling-building one's cave is what distinguishes us from beasts, it is the first act of civilization... Finally, there is the "standard postmodern" variation: the true myth is precisely the notion that, outside the theatre of shadows, there is some "true reality" or a central Sun-all there is are different theatres of shadows and their endless interplay. The properly Lacanian twist to the story would have been that for us, within the cave, the Real outside of the cave can only appear as a shadow of a shadow, as a gap between different modes or domains of shadows. It is thus not simply that substantial reality disappears in the interplay of appearances; what rather happens in this shift is that the very irreducibility of the appearance to its substantial support, its "autonomy" with regard to it, engenders a Thing of its own, the true "real Thing". And, perhaps, this "Thing", the struggle to render it, is the proper "object" of art. In his memoirs, Dmitri Shostakovich dismissed Sergei Prokofjev, his great competitor, as refusing to take historical horrors seriously, always playing "wise guy". However, to name just one supreme example, Prokofjev's first violin sonata (op. 80) clearly demonstrates the obverse of

Prokofjev's (in)famous "irony":

Throughout its four movements (...) one senses a powerful undertow of struggle. Yet it is not the struggle of a work against something outside itself, but rather the struggle of something within the work, unmanifested, trying desperately to break out, and constantly finding its emergence "blocked" by the existing, outward form and language of the piece. This blocking of "something within" (...) has to do with the frustration of a desire for cathartic release into some supremely positive state of being, where meaning-musical and supra-musical-is transparent, un-ironizable: in short, a domain of spiritual "purity".(2)

It is here that Prokofjev pays the price for his ironic stance, and it is such passages that bear witness to his artistic integrity: far from signaling any kind of vain intellectual superiority, this ironic stance is just the falsely-bright obverse of the failure of Prokofjev's constant struggle to bring the "Thing from Inner Space" (the "something within") out. The superficial »playfulness« of some of Prokofjev's works (like his popular first symphony) merely signals, in a negative way, the fact that Prokofjev is the ultimate anti-Mozart, a kind of Beethoven whose "titanic struggle" ended in disaster: if Mozart was THE supreme musical genius, perhaps the last composer with whom the musical Thing transposed itself into musical notes in a spontaneous flow, and if in Beethoven, a piece only achieved its definitive Form after a long heroic struggle with the musical material, Prokofjev's greatest pieces are monuments to the defeat of this struggle. What, then, IS this "thing from inner space", insofar as it stands for Truth as agency? The famous "stolen boat" episode from Wordsworth's Prelude provides the precise coordinates of its emergence:

One summer evening (led by her /Nature/) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;

There in her mooring-place I left my bark,
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams

It is clear what “effectively happens” in this episode: the young boy was here victim of an optical illusion: “When he rowed away from the cave the boy had fixed his gaze upon the top of a ridge, behind which there initially seemed to be nothing but the sky. As he rowed further out on to the lake, however, a more distant peak, behind the ridge, came into view. The further he is from the shore (and his first instinct is to row faster: “I struck, and struck again”) the more he can see of the mountain; it therefore seemed to be growing still in stature”. There is, then, an extremely rational explanation for what the boy sees. His imagination, however, transforms the mountain into a “living thing” which “strode after me”(3). This is how a “thing from the inner space” emerges. All the ingredients of a fantasy-staging are here—the noumenal “shines through” in what is “effectively” just an optical illusion. That is to say, far from being a simple descendant of the Kantian Thing-in-itself, the Freudian “Thing from the Inner Space” is its inherent opposite: what appears as the excess of some transcendent force over the “normal” external reality, is the very place of the direct inscription of my subjectivity into this reality. In other words, what I get back in the guise of the horrifying-irrepresentable Thing is the objectivization, the objectal correlate, of my own gaze – as Wordsworth put it, the Thing is the “sober colouring” reality gets from the eye observing it:

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality(4).

Perhaps, from this perspective of the Thing as Evil, one should turn around the well-known Augustinian notion of Evil as having no positive substance or force of its own, but being just the absence of Good: Good itself is the absence of Evil, the distance towards the Evil Thing. To put it in transcendental terms: Good is the mode of appearance of Evil, “schematized” Evil. So what happens when we come too close to this Evil Thing? “The action” of Juan Jose Saer's *Nobody Nothing Never* (*nadie nada nunca*), this masterpiece of pure parallax, is minimal, practically nonexistent: during a stifling Argentinean summer, Cat Garay, heir to a once prosperous, now dilapidated family, and his lover Elisa try to protect their horse from a horse-killer on the loose; their intense affair and the hunt for the killer on the banks of the Parana river take place in the atmosphere of political anxiety and disintegration. The story progresses so that every event is told twice, first in the voice of an “objective” narrator, then in Cat's voice—with the same phrases often repeated verbatim. Is this not like Malevitch's “black square on white surface”, the marking of a purely formal minimal difference, gap, against the background of the “nothing” of narrated content? We are not dealing here with a substantial difference between two particular contents, but with a “pure” difference that separates an object from itself and that, as such, marks the point at which the subject's gaze is inscribed into the perceived object. The same minimal difference is the point around which the poems of Alejandra Pizarnik, another supreme Argentinean writer, turn. Three short poems from her supreme achievement, *Arbol de Diana* (*Tree of Diana*, 1962), which fully display her almost zen-like succinct precision:

like a poem buried in /enterrado del: by/
the silence of things

you speak to ignore me /para no verme: in order not to see me/"(5)

far beyond any forbidden zone
is a mirror for our sad reflections /transparencia/(6)

This song of regret /arrepentido/, alert, behind my poems:
This song denies me, chokes my voice(7).

are interconnected in a way which becomes discernible if one adds a line from "Signs," a poem from a later collection *El infierno musical* /The musical hell, 1971/

Everything makes love with silence(8).

Pizarnik is arguably THE poet of subtraction, of minimal difference: the difference between nothing and something, between silence and a fragmented voice. The primordial fact is not Silence (waiting to be broken by the divine Word), but Noise, the confused murmur of the Real in which there is not yet any distinction between figure and its background. The first creative act is therefore to create silence-it is not that silence is broken, but that silence itself breaks, interrupts, the continuous murmur of the Real, thus opening up a clearing in which words can be spoken. There is no speech proper without this background of silence: as Heidegger already knew, all speech answers the "sound of silence". Hard work is needed to create silence, to encircle its place in the same way that a vase creates its central void. This is how death drive and sublimation are strictly correlative: death drive has first to erase the murmur of the Real and thus open up the space for sublime formations. With regard to poetry, this difference is not between poems, but between poem(s) and the song which, of course, has to remain unsung, unspoken, since it is the song of silence.

It is here that the visual dimension enters; recall Nietzsche's complaint in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Prologue, 5): "Must one smash their ears before they learn to listen with their eyes"? Is this complaint about the difficulty of teaching people how to listen not ambiguous? Does it mean that it is difficult to learn to listen with one's eyes, or that it is simply difficult to learn to truly listen? In other words, if we follow Wagner's Tristan (who, while dying, shouts: "I see her /Isolde's/ voice"!) and accept, as one of the definitions of modern art, that one has to listen to it with eyes, does this mean that one can truly hear (hear the silence, the silent Message-Thing covered up by the chatter of words) only with one's eyes? Is, consequently, modern painting (as it is indicated already by Munch's "Scream") not a "sound of silence", the visual rendering of the point at which words break down? And, incidentally, this is also how the critique of ideology (whose Platonic origins one should unabashedly admit) functions: it endeavors to smash our ears (hypnotized by the ideology's siren song) so that we can start to hear with our eyes (in the mode of *theoria*).

Back to Pizarnik: avoiding the fake obscurantism, one should not be afraid to read these four fragments "logically", as parts of a complex argument, providing clues for each other. So let us begin with the last line, "everything makes love with silence": this, of course, does not mean that there is sexual relationship between Something and Nothing, but, precisely, its failure: this love-making is failed. That is to say, the voice of silence, that of "a poem buried in the silence of things", is not a silent support, protective and caring of the poet's words, but that which speaks "to ignore" the poet, a brutal malevolently-neutral entity which "alert, behind my poems (...) denies me, chokes my voice". So when Pizarnik refers to this song of silence as a "mirror for our sad reflections", located "far beyond any forbidden zone", this, again, makes it an inaccessible threatening entity, in Kantian terms: a song which dwells in the terrifying noumenal domain of the Real in which a kind of "objective" truth (or, rather, a totally objectifying knowledge) about me is inscribed. In order to clarify this key point, let us recall a wonderful scene in *The Matrix*, when Ciphur, the traitor, the agent of the Matrix among the rebels, who is located in reality, kills rebels one after the other (who are immersed into the VR of the Matrix) by simply unplugging them from the connection to the machine. While the rebels are experiencing themselves as fully immersed into ordinary reality, they are effectively, in the "desert of the real", immobilized on the chair on which they are connected to the Matrix: Ciphur has the direct physical approach to them the way they "really are", helpless creatures just sitting on the chair as if under narcotics at the dentist's, who can be mishandled in any way the torturer wants. Ciphur is communicating with them via the phone which serves as the communicating link between virtual reality

and the “desert of the real”, and the horror of the situation is that, while the rebels feel like normal human beings freely walking around in reality, they know that, at the Other Scene of the “desert of the real”, a simple unplugging of the cable will cause them to drop dead in both universes, virtual and real. This situation, while parallel to that of all humans who are plugged into the Matrix, is worse insofar as here, humans are fully aware not only of their true situation, but also of the threat posed in reality by the evil agent who intends to kill them shortly. It is as if the subjects obtain here the impossible direct link with the Real of their situation, the Real in all its threatening dimension. This Other Scene is “a mirror for our sad reflections (...) far beyond any forbidden zone”.

This, of course, brings us back to Plato: how can one survive a direct confrontation with the Sun, the ultimate Real, without getting burned by the rays of its heat? Among the poets, it was Hölderlin who focused on the risks of this confrontation, paying for it the highest price of madness. And we are in a domain in which the fall into madness has a clear political connotation. Georg Lukacs deserves to be consulted here—one should recall here “Hölderlin’s Hyperion”, his weird, but crucial, short 1935 essay, in which Lukacs praises Hegel’s endorsement of the Napoleonic Thermidor against Hölderlin’s intransigent fidelity to the heroic revolutionary utopia:

Hegel comes to terms with the post-Thermidorian epoch and the close of the revolutionary period of bourgeois development, and he builds up his philosophy precisely on an understanding of this new turning-point in world history. Hölderlin makes no compromise with the post-Thermidorian reality; he remains faithful to the old revolutionary ideal of renovating ‘polis’ democracy and is broken by a reality which has no place for his ideals, not even on the level of poetry and thought(9).

Lukacs is here referring to Marx’s notion that the heroic period of the French Revolution was the necessary enthusiastic breakthrough followed by the unheroic phase of market relations: the true social function of the Revolution was to establish the condition for the prosaic reign of bourgeois economy, and the true heroism resides not in blindly clinging to the early revolutionary enthusiasm, but in recognizing “the rose in the cross of the present”, as Hegel liked to paraphrase Luther, i.e., in abandoning the position of the Beautiful Soul and fully accepting the present as the only possible domain of actual freedom. It is thus this “compromise” with social reality which enabled Hegel’s crucial philosophical step forward, that of overcoming the proto-Fascist notion of “organic” community in his *System der Sittlichkeit* manuscript and engaging in the dialectical analysis of the antagonisms of the bourgeois civil society. (Therein resides the properly dialectical paradox of the proto-Fascist endeavor to return to a pre-modern “organic” community: far from being simply “reactionary” the Fascist “feudal Socialism” is a kind of compromise-solution, an ersatz-attempt to build socialism within the constraints of capitalism itself.) It is obvious that this analysis of Lukacs is deeply allegorical: it was written a couple of months after Trotsky launched his thesis of Stalinism as the Thermidor of the October Revolution. Lukacs’s text has thus to be read as an answer to Trotsky: he accepts Trotsky’s characterization of Stalin’s regime as “Thermidorian”, giving it a positive twist—instead of bemoaning the loss of utopian energy, one should, in a heroically-resigned way, accept its consequences as the only actual space of social progress... For Marx, of course, the sobering “day after” which follows the revolutionary intoxication signals the original limitation of the “bourgeois” revolutionary project, the falsity of its promise of universal freedom: the “truth” of the universal human rights are the rights of commerce and private property. If we read Lukacs’ endorsement of the Stalinist Thermidor, it implies (arguably against his conscious intention) an utterly anti-Marxist pessimistic perspective: the proletarian revolution itself is also characterized by the gap between its illusory universal assertion of freedom and the ensuing awakening in the new relations of domination and exploitation, which means that the Communist project of realizing “actual freedom” failed.

Hölderlin’s starting point is the same as Hegel’s: the gap between (the impossible return to) the traditional organic unity and the modern reflective freedom—how are we to overcome it? His answer is what he calls the “eccentric path”: the insight into how the very endless oscillation between the two poles, the very impossibility and repeated failure to reach the final peace, IS already the thing itself, i.e., this eternal way IS man’s fate. However, what Hölderlin fails to do is to accomplish the next properly Hegelian step into the true speculative unity of the two poles: his limitation is best epitomized by the title of his philosophical fragment, “Being and Judgment (Ur-Teil, primordial division)”. Being is for Hölderlin the always-already

lost pre-reflexive Ground to which we eternally long to return-what he does not do is to conclude that this very presupposed Ground is already retroactively posited and as such already (a name for) PURE DIFFERENCE. In short, what eludes Hölderlin is the true nature of the Hegelian Universality as the site of the structural deadlock, of an impasse which particular formations endeavor to resolve. It is for THIS reason that, towards 1800, he definitely turns towards poetry as the most appropriate way to render the “eccentric path” of man-so, in his case, at least, the turn towards poetry is an escape, an index of the failure to accomplish the work of thought.

The solution of *Hyperion* is that of a narrative: what in reality cannot be reconciled, is reconciled afterwards, through its narrative reconstruction. (The interesting and crucial feature of *Hyperion*, this novel composed of letters, is that ALL letters are written AFTER the “actual” events). Is it then adequate to read this solution as Hegelian, i.e., to claim that, in a clear parallel to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hölderlin sees the solution in a narrative which retroactively reconstructs the very “eccentric path” of permanent oscillation between the loss of the Center and the repeated failed attempts to regain the immediacy of the Center as the process of maturation, of spiritual education? Read in this way, Hölderlin’s later shift can easily be interpreted as a farewell to the metaphysics of subjectivity, as breaking out of the metaphysical closure and the assuming of an irreducible gap covered up by metaphysics. The model of such a reading is Eric Santner’s book on Hölderlin: for Santner, the break of the late Hölderlin occurs when this narrative synthesis and *Aufhebung* of the tension is threatened, abandoned even, by the “sober” acceptance of irreducible multitude which can no longer be reconciled in an overall narrative scheme. And, as Santner points out, this abandonment of the encompassing narrative frame does not lead to abandonment of links between fragments, but to a discovery of new level of interconnectedness, a “paratactic” field of secret links, of echoes and reverberations between monadic elements-something, one is tempted to claim, not unlike the inner links of Plato’s *chora* which precede the grid of Ideas.

One should introduce here a triple, not just a bipolar, structure: the narrative procedure is neither the direct exposure to “fire from heaven” (the ecstatic throwing-oneself into the lethal bliss of the divine Thing) nor the deadly sobriety of the icy everyday life with its meaningless multiplicity, but a mediation of the multiplicity itself. In other words, while Santner locates the “narrative vigilance” on the side of the “fire from heaven”, treating it exclusively as a defense against the dispersed multitude of the sober and icy ordinary life, would it not be even more appropriate to treat it as a defense against the ecstatic dissolution of all structure in the “fire from heaven”, as an attempt to retain a minimal structure of life? Is narrative not ultimately a narrative about what Hölderlin called the “law of succession”, the paternal symbolic order which keeps the chaotic abyss of the Sacred at a proper distance?(10)? And, furthermore, are paratactic coexistence and a mystical experience of Oneness not on the same side, both opposed to the narrative organization? Is the ecstatic experience of Oneness not something which only emerges when we step outside the grid of a narrative and confront absolutely particular monadic entities?

The shift in Hölderlin, deployed by Santner, from “narrative vigilance”, from subordinating everything to the grand narrative of the Westward movement of gods and to laying the foundation for the arrival of new gods, to “sobriety”, to the marking of the signs of daily life, can be perfectly accounted for in the Heideggerian terms of the shift from onto-theology, from an all-encompassing metaphysical narrative, to the post-metaphysical attitude of *Gelassenheit*, of “letting things be” outside any frame “ohne Warum”(11). However, the irony is here double. First, Santner himself develops this shift in a book which totally ignores Heidegger (and to write a book on Hölderlin ignoring Heidegger is an achievement in itself). Secondly, Heidegger himself, in his detailed readings of Hölderlin, also ignores this “Heideggerian” aspect of the texture of Hölderlin’s poetry-the paratactic disintegration of the narrative unity- and focuses precisely on the grand narrative of the withdrawal and possible new arrival of gods.

What if we read Hölderlin’s shift as a shift from desire to drive? “Vigilance” is a vigilance for partial objects around which drives circulate. Such a reading has a precise socio-political background: one should approach Hölderlin’s openness towards the signs of everyday life through the perspective of one of the key features of capitalism, namely the permanent production of the piles of leftover waste. The obverse of the incessant capitalist drive to produce newer and newer objects are thus the growing piles of useless waste, piled mountains of used cars, computers, etc., like the famous airplane “resting place” in the Mojave desert-in these ever-growing piles of inert, disfunctional ‘stuff’, which cannot but strike us with their useless, inert presence, one can, as it were, perceive the capitalist drive at rest. One should recall here Benjamin’s insight

into how we encounter historicity proper precisely when we observe cultural artifacts in decay, in the process of being reclaimed by nature. In November 2003, after a visit to Poland where he participated in the festival Camerimage and opened an exhibition of his own paintings and sculptures in Lodz, David Lynch was thoroughly fascinated by this truly “post-industrial” city: the big industrial center with most of the steel works and other factories in decay, full of crumbling grey concrete housing developments, with extremely polluted air and water... Lynch wants to invest money to create there his own cinema studio and help transform Lodz into a thriving center of cultural creativity (Peter Weir and Roland Joffe are also linked to this project). Lynch emphasized that he “feels very much at home in Poland”-not in the Romantic Poland of Chopin and Solidarnosc, but precisely in this ecologically ruined Poland of industrial wasteland. This news confirms again Lynch’s extraordinary sensitivity on account of which one should be ready to forget his reactionary political statements as well as his ridiculous support for a New Age megalomaniac project of a mega-center for meditation. The postindustrial wasteland of the Second World effectively is the privileged “evental site”, the symptomal point out of which one can undermine the totality of today’s global capitalism. One should LOVE this world, up to its grey decaying buildings and sulphuric smell-all this stands for HISTORY, threatened with erasure between the post-historical First World and pre-historical Third World.

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Notes:

- 1 Is, then, postmodern art a return to pleasure?
- 2 Ronald Woodley, accompanying text to the recording by Martha Argerich and Gidon Kremer (Deutsche Grammophon 431 803-2).
- 3 Gardiner (1990), p.84.
- 4 See also: „/.../ the midnight storm / Grew darker in the presence of my eye.”
- 5 Pizarnik & Bassnett (2002), p. 20.
- 6 Pizarnik & Bassnett (2002), p. 25.
- 7 Pizarnik & Bassnett (2002), p. 26.
- 8 Pizarnik & Bassnett (2002), p. 32.
- 9 Lukacs (1968), p. 137.

10 What cannot but appear as the most radical opposite of Heidegger's reading, the Oedipal reading of Hölderlin's breakdown (developed already in the 1960s by Jean Laplanche), is thoroughly convincing: as Hölderlin himself clearly noted, he was unable to locate the lack, i.e., he was living in a permanent state of ontic-ontological short-circuit in which every experience of (even a minor) ontic failure or imperfection threatened to explode into an ontological catastrophe, into a disintegration of the entire world. Instead of dismissing this reading as psychologically-reductionist, ontic, missing the ontologico-historical level, one should rather elevate the unfortunate "Oedipus complex" to the dignity of ontology.

11 Why does Heidegger focus almost exclusively on Hölderlin's poems? Why does he totally ignore his philosophical fragments and the novel *Hyperion*? There is a good reason for it: his late poems signal the breakdown of the solution Hölderlin tried to articulate in *Hyperion* and his philosophical fragments from the last years of the 1790s.