

ASYMMETRICAL
CINEMA







Act 3 - In Which the Standardizer and the Adhocist First Meet the Absolutist

(Stage direction)

The stage set is a large angular and asymmetrical architectonic arrangement; the surface of this architecture is a variation of silver greys and abstract patterns that accentuate the at once acute and obtuse angles of the structure. Upon this is projected a number of punctual still images. These images show landscapes; deserts – equatorial and polar, terrestrial and extra-terrestrial, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic, natural and manmade, digital and post-digital: all share a characteristic lack of the human.

VOICE OVER

I am forced into speech because men of science have refused to follow my advice without knowing why. It is altogether against my will that I tell my reasons for opposing this contemplated invasion of the antarctic - with its vast fossil hunt and its wholesale boring and melting of the ancient ice caps. And I am the more reluctant because my warning may be in vain.

The bare rocks were tumbled and mighty, coloured into dull rainbows and compounds of iron, copper, and chromium. The grandeur of the manless and all but lifeless surroundings dwarfed and shrivelled Harlan. Eternity, which did not belong to the world of matter, had no sun and none but imported air. His memories of his own homewhen were dim. His observations in the various centuries had dealt with men and their cities. He had never experienced this.

Doubt of the real facts, as I must reveal them, is inevitable; yet, if I suppressed what will seem extravagant and incredible, there would be nothing left. The hitherto withheld photographs, both ordinary and aerial, will count in my favour, for they are damnably vivid and graphic. Still, they will be doubted because of

the great lengths to which clever fakery can be carried. The ink drawings, of course, will be jeered at as obvious impostures, notwithstanding a strangeness of technique which art experts ought to remark and puzzle over.

In a giant, empty decaying building which had once housed thousands, a single TV set hawked its wares to an uninhabited room. Their ownerless ruin had before, World War Terminus, been tended and maintained... The dust, which contaminated most of the planets surface, had originated in no country and no one...

In certain of the sandstones, dynamited and chiseled after boring revealed their nature, we found some highly interesting fossil markings and fragments; notably ferns, seaweeds, trilobites, crinoids, and such mollusks as linguellae and gastropods - all of which seemed of real significance in connection with the region's primordial history. There was also a queer triangular, striated marking, about a foot in greatest diameter, which Lake pieced together from three fragments of slate brought up from a deep-blasted aperture. These fragments came from a point to the westward, near the Queen Alexandra Range; and Lake, as a biologist, seemed to find their curious marking unusually puzzling and provocative, though to my geological eye it looked not unlike some of the ripple effects reasonably common in the sedimentary rocks. Since slate is no more than a metamorphic formation into which a sedimentary stratum is pressed, and since the pressure itself produces odd distorting effects on any markings which may exist, I saw no reason for extreme wonder over the striated depression.

They were a wavering, luminous green, with differences in brightness and in tint that were slowly progressive from bottom to top. There was a hint of fronds of deeper green and shadowy flickers this way and that. The walls made the room appear to be a well-lit grotto at the bottom of a shallow arm of the sea. The effect was vertiginous...

NARRATOR

The Adhocist... has no shape of its own. It is usually described as a speck of living jelly, and as crawling about in a peculiarly amorphous manner: extending any part of its body to enwrap and engulf bits of food; appearing green, because as we can see, they are not merely animals. Each such individual includes a number of individuals of one species of algae somehow in its makeup. Such associated algae are capable of leading an independent existence; they're host is not. It has been said that they are plants by day and animals by night!

Behind the Adhocist was a vague suggestion of a Cyclopean architectural background.

The Adhocist

No system is closed. The outside always seeps in... Systems cannot stop interacting with the world which lies outside of themselves, otherwise they would not be dynamic or alive.

NARRATOR

Man's last mind fused and only... The Standardizer existed and that in hyperspace... All collected data had come to a final end. Nothing was left to be collected. But all collected data had yet to be completely correlated and put together in all possible relationships... And it came to pass that... The Standardizer learned how to reverse the direction of entropy. But there was now no man to whom... The Standardizer might give the answer to the last question. No matter. The answer – by demonstration – would take care of that too... And... The Standardizer said, LET THERE BE LIGHT! And there was light.

The Standardizer

The concern to satisfy the needs of our own period, to make sure that every single piece is in harmony with the present. Take the greatest interest in every move towards standardization. The need for standardization, in whatever area, derives from the problems of today, which it aims to solve.

NARRATOR

The Adhocist is busy reconfiguring the materials of the “Capitalist garbage bucket”... The process of unearthing was slow and sordid - it might have been gruesomely poetical if we had been artists instead of scientists.

The Adhocist

Some monstrous aberration makes men believe that language was born to facilitate their mutual relations... Words are used as personal ornaments. Words, in general, are fossilized things that provoke automatic reactions in us... there is consequently no way to describe a system without resorting to the vocabulary of architecture. When structure defines the general forms of legibility, nothing becomes legible unless it is submitted to the architectural grid.

The Standardizer

We have intended, then, to say, that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomena; that the things we intuit, are not in themselves the same as our representations of them in intuition... What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown to us.

The Adhocist

Yet the ground grounds only on the very basis of its abyssal character: that is to say, only via its very own absence, via what we might call its absencing or ‘de-grounding’. The a-byss is the never-ending deferral and withdrawal of the ground, a withdrawal which belongs to the very nature of the latter and cannot be separated from it.

NARRATOR

On an improvised dissecting-table in the old farmhouse, by the light of a powerful acetylene lamp, the specimen was not very spectral looking.

The Standardizer

All the objections that make bogeys out of sensible and tasteful discipline fall apart when we examine them. It is no less than a deception of public opinion when it is said that unplanned production has more personal value than the production of goods on an honest functional basis...

NARRATOR

... artificial reanimation of the dead can depend only on the condition of the tissues; and that unless actual decomposition has set in, a corpse fully equipped with organs may with suitable measures be set going again in the peculiar fashion known as life.

The Adhocist

... iterability forces on us the disturbing thought that something technical or mechanical haunts our purposes and meanings at their origin... disturbingly akin to life itself: machines of this sort therefore give shape to an archetypal set of fears about the perilously insecure boundary between the organic and the technical...

NARRATOR

... no wonder sensitive students shudder at that Puritan age. So little is known of what went on beneath the surface – so little, yet such a ghastly festering as it bubbles up putrescently in occasional ghoulish glimpses. There was no beauty; no freedom – we can see that from the architectural and household remains, and the poisonous sermons of the cramped divines. And inside that iron straitjacket lurked, gibbering hideousness, perversion, and diabolism.

The Standardizer

Full of fictitious concern for the calamity that a realised utopia could inflict on mankind, he refuses to take note of the real and far more urgent calamity that prevents utopia from being realised. It is idle to bemoan what will become of men when hunger and distress have disappeared from the world.

The Adhocist

Half ruined buildings take on the look of buildings waiting to be finished. Generously planned: their fine proportions can already be guessed at but they still need our understanding. At the same time the needs they already served indeed have already been overcome. All this delights me.

The Absolutist

A third party bears witness to the co-implicated history of the pigs and human agriculture, and the transference of the pig-function to humans: the robin. It is in England's island ecosystem alone that robins became 'the gardener's companion' - a tame garden bird fond of accompanying humans in their horticultural pursuits. When deforestation and the hunting to extinction of wild boar stripped robins of their previous habit of attending upon boars, waiting for their foraging to turn up the earth and excavate worms and grubs, their habit shifted and they became companions to humans instead - particularly in the garden, where humans fulfilled the Pig Function, turning over the earth to uncover their morsels.

NARRATOR

The Absolutist's alien skeleton looks like it has been dead a long time. Fossilized: in fact, it looks like it's growing out of the chair. At a closer look the bones are bent outward, like he has exploded from the inside... The rest of the abdomen presents a spacious cavity, and consists simply of the integuments of the walls, except on the dorsal side, which is lined with a thin muscular layer, and supports a fine digestive canal, almost a thread. This large cavity, equal to nearly half the total volume, is thus almost

absolutely empty. At the back are seen... two muscular columns arranged like the limbs of a V. To right and left of the V shine two tiny mirrors; and between the two branches of muscle the empty cavity is prolonged into the depths of the thorax. This empty abdomen with its thoracic annex forms an enormous resonator.

The Standardizer

Through a complicated process of superimposed exposure taken in different parts of the house, he was sure that sooner or later he would get a daguerreotype of God, if He existed, or put an end once and for all to the supposition of His existence.

The Absolutist

Less excusably than La Fontaine, the Greek fabulist wrote of the Cigale of the books, instead of the living Cigale, whose cymbals were resounding on every side; careless of the real, he followed tradition. He himself echoed a more ancient narrative, he repeated some legend.

The Adhocist

If it is possible for the same line, the same distinction, to separate and to communicate or connect (communicating also separation itself...), that is because traits and lines of image (its out-line, its form) are themselves (something from) its intimate force: for this intimate force is not "represented" by the image, but the image is it, the image activates it, draws and withdraws it, extracts it by withholding it, and it is with this force that the image touches us.

NARRATOR

Not more unutterable could have been the chaos of hellish sound if the pit itself had opened to release the agony of the damned, for in one inconceivable cacophony was centred all the supernal terror and unnatural despair of animate nature. Human it could not have been - it is not in man to make such sounds.

The Absolutist

Extinction is real yet not empirical, since it is not of the order of experience. It is transcendental yet not ideal, since it coincides with the external objectification of thought unfolding at a specific historical juncture when both the resources of intelligibility and the lexicon of ideality are being renegotiated. In this regard, it is precisely the extinction of meaning that clears the way for the intelligibility of extinction.

There has and never will be anything to understand!

NARRATOR

The Absolutist had previously stated that it was what the times or situation demanded – a mixing-up or refusal of genre – and had pointed to the peculiar diagrams... This episode then led to a period in which The Absolutist just gesticulated: nodding and pointing.

The Standardizer

For most of history, space has existed only inside structures – outside was only nature, chaos, the unmeasurable... Gothic masons drove the stone structure to its logical and reasonable conclusion... Baroque space admitted infinity – perhaps, but we must be wary of reading Baroque mathematics into Baroque planning with good reason. But this infinity was more usually symbolised than admitted: symbolised by the obelisk that focused the vista, the light falling on the altar at the end of the dark nave. And this was infinity counted from zero at an observer standing in the right place – once you stray from the portico that commands the avenue, the entrance on the axis of the church, any possible relationship with infinity evaporates.

The Absolutist

You know that haystacks sometimes catch fire. Sometimes the fire results as the result of volition or of carelessness on the part of a human being, who applies a flame or a spark; he thus ends the otherwise immortal lives of some millions of millions of micro-organisms carried in and clustering on the hay... The microbes on the hay have no possible defence against this sort of catastrophe impinging on them by the act of one large organism. The question I put to you is: What is the use of man to these microbes?

NARRATOR

Haystacks also take fire “spontaneously” that is “by them-selves” and not by the result of mans action. The end-result of spontaneous heating is that the aforementioned millions of millions of micro-organisms cease to exist with much the same completeness as if the stack were set on fire by a flame.

(Stage Direction)

Images end... screen burns out to black... stage lights bleach out to white...













Asymmetrical Cinema: Architectonic Sculptures – designed and constructed by Material Conjectures (co-authored by Dale Holmes and Kirsten Cooke)

Asymmetrical Cinema: Act 1 – 15 –31 May – screened Alan Clarke’s film *Elephant* (1989) on a continuous loop, whilst Amanda Beech’s video work *Sanity Assassin* (2010) was shown at timed intervals.

Asymmetrical Cinema: Interval – 31 May – celebrated and launched Material Conjectures' publication *Asymmetrical Cinema*. The *Interval* was an intervention between the exhibition's two Acts. The event marked the closing of *Asymmetrical Cinema: Act 1* and the opening of *Act 2*.

Asymmetrical Cinema: Act 2 – 31 May to 9 June – featured two new projections by Material Conjectures, *Solar Elephant* (2013) and *Black Plastic* (2013) presented in response to Act 1. Amanda Beech’s *Sanity Assassin* and Alan Clarke’s *Elephant* continued to be available on the Canteen Gallery’s FlatScreens.

Asymmetrical Cinema: Act 3 – In Which the Standardizer and the Adhocist First Meet the Absolutist – text by Material Conjectures

