

HOW TO FINESSE AN 11TH-HOUR NONROBOTIC REBOOT OF THE PRE-PLASTICINE CHTHULUCENE

By way of assuring you that I'm not hyperbolizing the direfulness of our current de-emphasis upon & benighted underfunding of the Arts & Humanities, here's a cōre-curricular passage to ponder :: "We believe that Art must look over the edge {of the Abyss}, face the world with a steady eye, & rise to the challenge of ecocide with a challenge of its own: An artistic response to the crumbling of the empires of the mind . . . We must build cultural arks, to carry forward endangered Wisdom . . . For the fate of the Humanities, as we confront the end of modern cīvilization, is the fate of Humanity itself." (From Paul Kingsnorth & Dougald Hine's "Uncīvilization: The Dark Mountain Manifesto," 2009 -- as quoted in the National Book Critics Award winner & Guggenheim Fellow Maggie Nelson's "On Freedom;" GrayWolf Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2021). What say we {re}learn to {re}value the Arts that encourage {re}connection. Another way to phrase this implied query in this era of cyber-connectivity might be, Why should we bother with the slow work of Looking, Making, Reading, &/ōr Thinking?

Or, should you prefer the until-recently cutting-edgy French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, "The {less-than-obvious} trick of placing the nude from Manet's 'Dejeuner sur l'herbe' opposite Cezanne's 'Card Players,' as one might put an admiral's hat {sacred headgear?} on a monkey, is nothing more than the advertising-style irony currently engulfing the world of {pseudo-}art. It is the irony of repentance towards one's own culture. It is as though his{?}tory were rifling through its own dustbins & looking for Redemption {thlnk Bob Marley} in the rubbish {Ah, tHere's the rub!}. His{?}tory itself has become a dustbin . . . jest as the planet is becoming its own dustbin. We are currently living in an age of defunct ideologies, bygone utopias, & fossilized ideas which continue to pollute our mental & moral space . . . Amnesia, by whatever name, would appear to be the order of the day. This dilemma is what Disneyland is to the Imaginary. Will this prove to be the incinerator from whose ashes the PhoeNiX sIAsh Simurgh of Post-Modernity will be resuscitated? What is remarkable is that nothing one thought superseded by his{?}tory has really disappeared. His{?}tory has only wrenched itself from cyclical time to fall into the category of the recyclable" {thlnk Warhol redoing da Vinci}. (The preceding quotes are from Jean Baudrillard's "The Illusion of the End," as translated by Chris Turner; Stanford University Press, CA, 1994).

Speaking of 'sign'ificant recent French thinkers with a 'tude, you might think a chap with the name Roland bARThes might care about Art, & he in fact does, to Wit :: "I search, I begin, I try, I venture further, I run ahead, but I never know that I am ending: It is never said of the PhoeNiX that it dies, but how can one be reborn without dying?" Like all who are creatiVely engaged, "I desired, dreamed, struggled, my way traVersed with contretemps. The image dies so that I may liVe . . . In the amorous realm, the most painful wounds are inflicted more often by what one sees than by what one knows . . . The Lover is thus an Artist, & her/his world is in fact a world reVersed, since in it each image is its own End {which of course presupposes ReBirth}." (These quotes being from bARThes's "A LoVer's Discourse," as translated from the French by Richard Howard; Hill & Wang, NYC, 1978), with an immodest modicum of me own piquant sauce, so to PUNish. For, Verily, as T. S. Eliot puts it so memorably in his "Four QuARTets," "In my Beginning is my End/In my End, my {Re}Beginning." (This InSight being an 'echo' of the great Sufi poet Shabistari's "The Secret Garden," which dates from ca. 600 years earlier than TSE) In other words, to quote Shabistari yet again, "These mōtes live for a while, & then retUrn to dust," in order to ReCreate themselves in another fōrm, anōther pattern, as is were, & mercifully still is . . .