

John Seal

look to the void with expectation, oh precious and pregnant hope

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At the moment when everything was being destroyed she had created that which was most difficult: she had not drawn something out of nothing (a meaningless act), but given to nothing in its form of nothing, the form of something. --Maurice Blanchot "Thomas the Obscure"

She looked out the window for a long, silent moment before she turned back to the friend who was sitting in her apartment with her. Her friend had been pretending to read a piece of junk-mail, quickly scanning the ad copy for something easy to mock—just in case the conversation died too painfully.

“The world is there. Out there. And we are part of it.” She spoke without really considering what she meant, which made her voice sound hollow--the voice of a cloud chasing its shadow over a hillside. The comment hovered until it drooped, fell, and made a stain on the floor.

Her friend looked down at the stain as she opened her mouth to respond. Glad not to have to resort to cheap sardonics--poking fun at the advertizing--her friend said, “The world is here, too. And that window is part of a system of biases contained in the architecture, and the personal items with which you have decorated it, and all the experiences you have had here, and all the experiences you have been told you have (or should have) had...”

“Yes, yes, yes,” retorted the window gazer, “and all that window can show us is a compilation of information that has been cataloged and predigested; and perception is just a load of shit; and something about Kant and epistemology; and blah, blah, blah!” A slight blush of embarrassment rose to her cheeks as she realized that she was angry with herself. She was critically lashing out at her own beliefs and not necessarily those of her friend.

“Well, not necessarily, my friend,” the window gazer’s companion countered. “It depends on how the system that includes the window is ordered, and how you are ordered to interface with that system. That window is not Wikipedia, at least not yet it isn’t.”

The stain on the floor began to widen a little. It seemed to grow denser, deeper. Through the stain they were just able to make out faintly a banner ad for an appliance sale at a national retail chain, and a flashing, imploring invitation to chat with local singles.

The hand of the window gazer’s companion returned to the plate to retrieve the last medallion of toasted “Pain Paysan,” a skinny oval loaf with an impenetrably hard crust. “Funny name for a loaf that cost \$8,” she thought.

Her friend had taken pains to retrieve some butter from a small, local dairy at the farmer’s market earlier that morning. “I really think it’s the he best butter you can get!” the window gazer had proudly crowed.

“Is this all life can be?” she thought as her teeth pierced the crunchy surface, “An absurdly expensive romanticization of some long gone and highly dubious country life, slathered with a greasy coating of ‘the best you can get’ to ease the swallowing?” A little bit of errant saliva had almost passed her lips before it was quickly soaked up by the napkin she thankfully had in hand to mop her buttery fingertips. In that bit of saliva was probably a whole universe, whizzing and buzzing, ordered in its way, and much like our own. No matter. It is gone now.

“Well, the world is out there, or it is here, or it is this window, but somewhere on the other side of something is the world. I just wish it didn’t sound like an admission of faith to say it,” moaned the window gazer.

“Remember that quote you loved so much in college? The one from that 1970s film theorist, Markum, or Marcus, or...”

“Her name isn’t Markum.”

“Oh? What was it?”

“I don’t remember. I could look it up, but I’m not going to. What about it?”

“It read something like:”

To make something appear in this world takes such a delicate hand. One small nudge with too much force in the direction of the radical, the new, will cause an object (particularly an objet d’art) to quickly disappear under its easily recognizable and thus easily marketable ‘radicalism.’ It will be thrown to the swine as a flashy piece of rhetoric, and its central mechanism will be copied by everyone looking to make pearls cheaply.

“Well? What about it? Of course I remember it, but what about it?”

“It’s reality, you see? Every time you establish a reality it breaks under the weight of its utilization. It is like an artwork. It loses meaning when it is forced to appeal to system outside of its intended scope—and reality might be the only artwork we’d have if it weren’t for...”

“Ugh! Let’s get out of here. This place, you, that stain on the floor, reality, it’s all driving me crazy!” cried the window gazer. Her cheeks still a little inflamed, her voice rose to an almost-wail. “Let’s go to the park. Get some fresh air. Watch the turtles sun themselves.”

The sun through the window lit up a column of tiny dust motes. They churned and swirled like protozoa dancing with newborn stars in a cosmically primordial swamp. Below, almost the entirety of the stain was taken up with a pop-up ad begging participation in a survey to help streamline access to the deepest reaches the psyche.

“Wait,” her friend interrupted, “I almost forgot. Our painter friend texted when you were in the bathroom. He wants to know what we are doing.”

“Tell him: ‘Nothing.’”

“Oh! Ho! Ho!” chuckled the gazer’s companion, and then continued in an intentionally drab monotone, “Turn to the void with expectation, oh precious and pregnant hope.”

“You little snob!” squealed the window gazer, “I don’t know why I waste time on you.”