

on
'the
weekend'.

**But first a note on
Claustrophobia**

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 its uses, its multiple visual

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boundaries. Inside everything

It is Friday and a productive metaphor with which to ^{open} ~~begin~~ a thought and ^{reverse} on 'the contemporary' is 'the weekend'. ^{a polemical} ^{reversie}

But first a note on Claustrophobia ^{it is a matter of}

Politics is ~~grounded~~ in speculation, ~~an abstraction~~ of what *could be*. Crucial to the functioning of our present age both economically and politically is an infrastructure predicated on the transnational circulation of human and material resources. An immaterial infrastructure whose heart is an algorithm, recent examples of architecture provide a telling visual metaphor of its *public* character. At Mountain View, in the GCHQ building in the UK and Amazon's new head quarters in Seattle, there is an emerging architectural aesthetic that is suffused with claustrophobia. Derived from the Latin *claustrum* which means a place shut in, a confined place and a frontier fortress, claustrophobia is inscribed with practices of containment and the militarized holding of a territory. It is this confinement that defines Mountain View and its siblings. But their distributed infrastructures are not concerned with securing or defending geographical space. The focus is the security and defense of a temporality.

Emblematic of the 21st century, international finance and its ^{handmaiden} ~~multiple~~ ~~social, cultural and economic~~ ^{offspring} politics, is the crucial 'medium' in which ^{it} ~~are~~ produced, deployed and circulated. But it is not a transparent medium. It is opaque. Echoing the visual grammar of the prison and the fortress, its interiority from an external observer is always hidden. All that is visible are its edges, its multiple virtual and physical, fortified boundaries.

^{yet} Inside everything shines and smells of fruit. An expectant electric hum fills the cool air as overhead lights flicker into full brightness. Sparkling glass doors slide apart and shoppers enter an air conditioned new world of special discounts and opening offers. Outside in the sunshine on streets freshly liberated from traffic, people relax, sip coffees and talk to absent friends.

absent friends. Strolling

among benches and

Strolling among benches and information displays a man hands out balloons, close by a young woman passes out free food and under the shade of a tree a street performer tunes an instrument and clears his throat.

Suggestive of "the brilliant fragments of a splintered utopia in which we would like to believe"ⁱ the weekend is a deafening orchestration of desire. Front loaded with a sound track of screams and sirens the theme is legitimate social collapse and cultural mash up. "Homo ludens"ⁱⁱ and "homo democraticus"ⁱⁱⁱ, those revelers of unbridled self interest, are given free rein to play across state licensed "acres of organization to support drunkenness, disarray and disorder"^{iv}. But this beguiling disorder of a utopia rests upon an imagined equality, a merchandised emancipation that offers "a form of distraction at the intellectual, political and aesthetic level of the nursery"^v.

Deployed by media conglomerates and only partially managed the weekend is ~~the~~ full on bells and whistles^{version} of contemporary democracy. At the mains wired heart of this participatory opera is the individual triumphant as consumer and commodity, for whom everything is available,....everything except progress. In this "instantaneous community of emotion"^{vi} the mass is unhinged from the responsibilities and duties of a common good, for in this emancipated moment the struggles and toils of the empirical realm are cast off for the unpaid labours of physical pleasures. Perpetually promised this "communism of public emotion"^{vii} lets loose absurd freedoms and those who "have dragged out their lives in stupor ~~and~~ ~~spread~~ Monday through Friday are invited to "see saw into extensive absences and instantaneous immersions in other worlds"^{ix} and partake in the bacchanalian feast.

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Aware of others but without speech or dialogue soft bodies bounce to the beat of transactions in pop-up palaces laid out for bestialized bodies, wallowing in a pornography of matter. Gesticulating and getting off in a “kindergarten grotesque”^x, a “seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed”^{xi} the unyoked costumed self begins to hunt. In this solo game the ~~quest~~^{to} is to prove “one’s ability to be someone else”^{xii}, to become the chameleon, swapping clothes and personality. Deregulated, disowned and orphaned ~~and~~ in sympathy with ~~their~~ stage set, where “toilet groups mutate into Disney stores”^{xiii}, the solitary self plays at avatars and proxies.

In the “teeming blend of cafes, sidewalk musicians, and small galleries and bistros, where it is hard to draw the line between participant and observer, or between creativity and its creators”^{xiv} the wannabe shape shifter “improvising with continually re-programmed memories” hunts the urgent and overwhelming moment. Propelled by the shameful burden that to “hold onto yesterday’s clothes ~~and mobile phones~~ spells catastrophe”^{xv} they rehearse themselves, but ~~shy away~~^{always remain} from a final ~~committed~~ performance, the pleasurable joy of testing, trying and discarding is the intoxication sought and the “readymade doll with a human face”^{xvi} fixates ~~leisurely~~ on rewriting and erasing ~~their narcissistic~~^{outmoded} biographies.

~~Stripped~~ ~~of~~ dramatic plot, the prequels and sequels of the democratic self are renegotiated “into a never ending series of egotistical measures”^{xvii}, where each posture is ~~merely~~ the prelude to the next. Inhabiting this ceaseless and irresolvable charade, cause and effect is refused and refuted, leaving the consequences of the social carnival of the weekend, indefinitely postponed. But watched by ‘the public’ gazing out of posters, billboards and led screens crammed with adoring couples and grinning happy friends, the provisional individual is possessed by ‘lifestyle’ moments, ~~remnants~~^{a hybrid} of a fashion shoots and public information ~~leaflet~~. It is against this impossible world that ~~they~~^{we} are measured and policed.

bodies bounce to the beat of transactions in memory

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When the shops, bars and museums close 'the public' living it up forever in glossy images will remain. The sweating swearing individual rooted in the world of time and matter will only persist as a solitary incidental presence, moribund ~~and~~ redundant. *and suggestive of a splintered utopia in which they would like to believe.*

And to return:

Everything is dirty and smells of vomit. Sirens and shouts fill the air as overhead lights strobe into full brightness. Sparkling glass windows fracture as revelers enter the world of police vans and emergency medics. Outside in streets liberated from caution, people run, guzzle spirits and talk to sudden friends. Meandering among benches and information displays a street cleaner picks up broken bottles, close by a young woman passes out and under the shade of a tree a man urinates and clears his throat.

And to repeat:

~~And to repeat:~~

In a bleak supervised kindergarten premised on institutionalized 'bad' behavior, competitors pick their costumes for the role-play games of the regenerated/refurbished public/private realm. Under new security - community support officers and street pastors - the play pen civic realm is the comfort cradle for another new future. 'Transported' to this non-future, the individual is relieved of History and begins life as a dog "happy to be fed and content to sleep in the sun all day" xviii.

This non-future of a weekend emerges first in the distance with the transformation of the horizon into a facsimile of the Big City, and it is before this approaching line of rising shining glass towers that progress is relegated to another defunct yesterday.

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All connections ~~with~~ ^{to} history are broken, the striving for radical reform, the protesting for ~~a~~ better alternative tomorrow are eroded out by the glimmer of a better you, ~~while~~ staring down from billboards and high resolution screens, ~~is~~ your doppelganger your better half, ^{having a really and I mean a real fun time.}

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participant and observer, or

But back to you coming out of surgery into a palace laid out for the ~~animal~~ ^{animal} body, ~~as~~ ^{as} flickering in and out of legibility, an indefinite and concluding moment of willed amnesia suggestive of the garish fragments of a shattered utopia that you would like to forget, that weekend that deafening stage set for all night rituals of reverse alchemy. Front loaded with soft masses of flailing arms and insensible legs collapsing and buckling to a sound track of screams and sirens. "Homo ludens" and "homo democraticus" relieve themselves of their drunkenness, disarray and disorder. But this guzzling disorder of a utopia rests upon a distraction that is not intellectual, political or aesthetic. Denounced by media conglomerates and only partially pornographic the weekend is a full on horror show for the Sunday papers. At the mains wired heart of this confrontational shouting match is the bellowing individual to whom everything is fuzzy, except their ego. In this car crash of emotion, stray bodies are slumped, handcuffed and reminded of their responsibilities by ~~duty~~ ^{security} officers charged with upholding the common good.

¹ Augé, M (1992) *Non-Places, an introduction to supermodernity*. London: Verso, pp. xvii.

between creativity and its

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And to repeat:

The weekend that stage set for rituals of reverse alchemy, where individuals are transformed into soft masses of flailing arms and insensible legs knotted up in contractual friendships riddled with opt out clauses and empathy is ~~taken care off by~~ monthly direct debit~~s~~.
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catastrophe"^{xv} they rehearse

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and to resurrect¹³

The weekend that high decibel harmony of sirens, shouts and ambulances which echoes across acres of methodical drunkenness, accompanies the binge of fast friends and abrupt encounters. In the pits of street corners, theatre^a of intimacy performs for ~~any~~^{all} ~~passerby~~; reckless and fickle the score is all tongues and grunts.

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from bars and restaurants.

Everything is dirty and smells

of vomit. Cigarettes and shouts

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spit and sweat.

The benches are

stained with

spit and sweat.

The benches are

stained with

spit and sweat.

The benches are

stained with

spit and sweat.

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behavior, competitors pick

their costumes for the week-

for

and to ~~swallow~~ ^{choke} ~~end~~ ^{the} 11

The weekend ~~that dystopia~~ of suffocation, scheduled ^{crushing}

and wound tight around ~~a mere~~ ⁱⁿ 48 hours, a ~~squeezed~~

time to pause, but not to reflect. A ~~quick~~ sharp rush of

hours and minutes to burn ~~through~~ till they gutter

and shrivel on Monday morning, and in that dawn

darkness, the hours we spent stuffing it all down

~~like~~ like idle lords and ladies, returns and blocks ~~any~~

words of complaint in the throat.

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and content to sleep in the sun all day”^{xviii}.

the glimmer of a better you,

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their ego. In this car crash of
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 upholding the common good.