



MOUNTAINS OF FLAME AT THE EDGE OF A GREY DESERT

# CANTO THREE

The Redemonization of Art in the Age of Mechanical Belief

or/

A Sharkstooth for Algorithms

If criticism dispenses praise or censure, it should seek to place itself as nearly as possible at the same point of view as the person acting, that is to say, to collect all he knew and all the motives on which he acted, and, on the other hand, to leave out of the consideration all that the person acting could not or did not know, and above all, the result. But this is only an object to aim at, which can never be reached because the state of circumstances from which an event proceeded can never be placed before the eye of the critic exactly as it lay before the eye of the person acting. A number of inferior circumstances, which must have influenced the result, are completely lost to sight, and many a subjective motive has never come to light.

Clausewitz, *ON WAR*,

*Book Two, ON THE THEORY OF WAR*,

*Chapter V, CRITICISM*

Why not be fascist?  
Just a wee suggestion

Again:

Why – not – be – fascist – ?

You see the trick here, right?  
The self-label fascist really means freethinking,  
the thought-crime, the mental border transgression, which proves you're able to occupy any position at any moment;  
like the old adage »always be a liberal with fascists, a fascist with Marxists, and a Marxist with liberals«. It's asking  
'what can't be said here?', and then talking about that, inhabiting that; it's reaching into the zone of exile where  
suppressed and overlooked aspects of self are relegated.

So,  
Why not be fascist?

Know what you're thinking:  
"Fucker's Trojan-horsing; that's how these tricky sophists roll. And even if it's one of those libertarian things, why play  
that game?"  
Well it's up to you to make your way through that then.  
Make an effort!  
Take one for the team!

After all - what are you afraid of?  
That the model of reality you have now  
is mostly just a means of convenience  
and it might prove a better one  
despite how uncomfortable that will be?

Oh,  
- so your operative reality asylum won't even allow that combination of words o form in your mind.

OK,  
let's start again:

Pigsfoot

Why not be pigsfoot?

Yes  
That has a ring to it

Are you ready now?

Let's go then

(And remember, if you lose your bearings:  
»the dead trees will show you the way«)

Aye so – why not be fascist then?  
know what I mean?  
let's take a look at that now.

So you know this thing where you're out and about, getting on with things, and trying to make a fair hash of your life, and you start noticing a certain climate of opinion, a set of parameters for articulation, certain tendencies for what gets said and doesn't? I'd be referring now in particular to that amalgamation, confluence, agglomeration, of postmodern relativism, identity politics, and social-management progressivism (because we are all reasonable people here) that holds sway as a dominant and normative frame of reference among the oversocialized. Particularly those invested in culture as a trade skill. Reaching its apotheosis in the byzantine interrogative mode of the academy.

The crumbling mausoleum.

Or maybe it's just about different senses of humour. Not to be knocked. From such misconnections much blood has eventually flowed. And rightly so – it's a more authentic division than most.

Do you recognize this thing at all? You know this thing where we're tasked to right history's wrongs by decolonizing the self? If it rings a bell, and if you've taken it in any way to heart, it might be worth having a closer look at what's going on.

In the proliferation of oh-so-subtle analyses of socio-political conditions, and strategies of cultural aesthetics, is there something seismically fucking massive being missed out (hint: you)? And is the

ostensible attempt to diagnose and deconstruct instrumentalizing control processes just another re-expression of those control processes – business as usual?

And then there's that view, what was it again? Oh yeah:

»I have more respect for a man who lets me know where he stands, even if he's wrong, than the one who comes up like an angel and is nothing but a devil«

Now we all like a good chat – it helps to shake things up when that auld heads-down view of things creeps up on us. But there might be more than meets the eye to the tenet that any voice asserting its own validity and primacy must be dissected. Sure that whole notion of primacy is just your inheritance from the imperial monolith you unwittingly serve, you must know that.

Does it not strike you as telling that the decentring of self, the constant mindfulness of the partiality of one's perspective, its miasmatization into a cloud of qualifying doubts, is in the context of mass industrial society, which is predicated on instrumentalizing and compartmentalizing living beings on an unprecedented scale, and to an unprecedented degree? So that what's passed off as an emancipation of the person supposedly subjugated by conditioning, which will apparently be wrought by the great multiperspectival paradigm (that's 'be tolerant in our terms or else!' in its for-the-masses terminology), is actually a translation of the condition of mind that comes with slavery, a coming to terms with one's own enslavement, rationalizing quiescence and continually reinforcing self-policing as the norm in social relations.

So maybe we shouldn't just roll over and have our tummies tickled when the project to deconstruct the so-called privileged perspective is invoked (marketed by the means of the dubious-disingenuous feel-good claim that this will restore justice to the historically silenced), when this is done by negating the primacy of any perspective whatsoever, given that this is almost certainly yet another manifestation of the relentless disempowerment of living beings by social-management and technological control systems.

It might be that the project to reclaim that which has been steamrolled by history is also the final denigration of the overwritten, because even that which does emerge into the fibres of that bloody tapestry can only do so denuded of its agency, the potency of its specificity – it emerges into the context of being just another perspective (when maybe we should face up to the fact that all culture is essentially supremacist and, you know, just get over it). So looked at another way, the apparent reclamation of the oppressed and the excluded is really an extension of colonialism into the very structure of culture as a site of empowerment – the final insult. Well maybe not the final insult – we're an ingenious species when it comes to bending others to our will, especially when we're telling you it's in your interests.

So what about identity politics then? That'd be the dovetailing of the relativist paradigm, the relativist cover-story or alibi, into a properly functioning system of mental slavery. It's the sealing-in of relativism, so that we're positioned within a managerial system, self-defining and self-regulating within that system. After all – a machine has to have component parts as well as an operational construction. We might go so far as to say that the de-essentializing of self as a site of creative agency is then fixed by identity within a control framework; an autoemasculation and defecundizing of the unique voice. The spirit that animates the voice is ceded for the voice that describes a position.

Instead of a person is, a person represents. You're expected to answer for predetermined circumstances, to the exclusion of speaking from where you are. That's the price of making a better tomorrow then.



When you think about it it's a bit like varieties of Campbell's soup cans – each person a unit within an overall system of homogenizing production: 'managed difference', or rather dissimulated sameness. A bit like representative democracy itself, where actual participation is ceded for cursory appearance in a fairly transparent management system. And then there's the old Monty Python scene with the chorus »we're all individuals«, the twist being now that the chorus actually do call out »we're all interconnected« – then each of us steals away into the shadows on our own, or with partners-in-crime, and does something really fucking odd or aberrant that we'd prefer no-one else to get wind of. So much for the death of the subject.

Maybe that's something like that idea of the horizon of our becoming being that we're nodes on a network – cybernetically, biomechanistically, memetically, or just plain old chattel on its way to the market. And while we wouldn't want to downplay the delights of being noodled nodally darlings, might there be some other options, some other dimensions, even claims and assertions, which is to say gifts, that could be brought into play?

So why not be fascist?

Hold that in your mind now, take a pause with it – roll it around like you're at a wine-tasting, like you're working your beloved's clit toward her cosmic-scale orgasm, like you're inhaling deeply of your favourite vapour.

But - it's hardly progressive though? And we're all progressive or we're nothing, aren't we?

So – what about that auld nothing then?

Maybe considering that nothing approacheth the heart of the matter – how the rigid psychological police-state by which the oversocialized keep their number in line is predicated on maintaining the pretence that something which occupies their own heart is just such a nothing; in a word – denial. That these negated possibilities for living concealed in that nothing get procrusteed down to ideological extrusions characterized by a nihilistic hillbilly twang and the tendency to explosive violence is then a double-play of avoidance strategies: both self-fulfilling-prophecy, whereby unresolved social-historical-philosophical issues are dumped on the grunt workers and underclass, which justifies further complacency (although the surreptitious social-snobbery does have the benefit of signifying an appreciation of tradition, which may eventually point to an expanded frame of reference), and lazy caricature and smear of the dumped-on who are doing the tough work of processing those issues in the tricky crucible of lived reality, which further justifies further complacency (although the gross obviousness of this ploy at least demonstrates a capacity for decadent sloth which is recognisably human, ironically stemming from the universal appetite for quick-hit narrative reductionism which unites all human partisan bands); a stunted vista.

(But then it'll all pass soon enough with that whole collapse of the technological edifice thing – coming soon to a theatre near you – when the glut of the industrial maggot-god has its day, and we relearn the nuances of dirt as we scavenge about in it. That'll likely bring out a bit more of the who-we-always-were despite the social masquerade, and take the shine off some of the us-and-them thumbsucking – all that subcontracted divide-and-rule.)

The key issue is however not the limitations of such a denialist milieu but the compensatory skill it has developed in exporting its malaise, through aggressively promoting crude moralism which substitutes for real (as opposed to selective) historical knowledge, genuine analysis, and intellectual-imaginative vigour. The assessment that contemporary social-management progressivism is a secularized translation of Christianity, and inherits much of its guilt-based ploys and anti-life existential characteristics, is – wait for it – completely fucking accurate. The self-mutilating dimension is in centering its philosophy of life around an imperative to sacrifice the pleasures, insights, sensual adaptations, and perspectives available now for a

supposed better future. Where Christians had »the kingdom of heaven on earth«, now we are urged to continually strive for a managed society of social justice; such lovely chimeras to settle down into our slumbers with, although the historically-minded among us will note that »the devil's in the details« about how they are to be engineered into being.

Despite its woolly clothing in the language of utility the imperative to centre our lives on the relationship with an imagined better future, rather than fully engaging in the world we're in now realistically and generously, is the repurposing of the insidious notion of redemption: the now becomes a shadow of a projection, and is therefore experienced as intrinsically lacking. This is anti-life, a denial of life, a kind of morbid and masochistic mental perversion which props itself up on the assertion that it's well-meaning, which segues into the evangelism of its adherents – the compulsion of those who follow the doctrine to assert that others must follow it too.

Little with wake the faithful, even when the world begins to shake with the return of the repressed – in fact the emergence of cultural forces which express the unresolved conundrums of human life in its historical struggling predictably has the opposite effect for dogmatic absolutists, making them entrench further. Rather than taking the opportunity to examine its position, the strongholds of the milieu are fortified, the signals to fight the enemy are ramped up, and anyone committed to developing their knowledge or practice field can basically shut up or fuck off if this means going off-message while the fight is supposedly paramount – potentially indefinitely. The faithful effectively vampirize a knowledge field in order to sustain their own well-being, which is based on positioning themselves as ideologically and philosophically central to a conjured imperative for humanity at large. This self-positioning at a spurious centre is an addiction, which will never be relinquished without a crisis of faith that must come from within; despite the supposed imperatives demanded by the world's conditions the dynamic is not actually rooted in the arrangements of the world around them, which is a prop or a backdrop for a sense of self languishing in underdeveloped capacities.

The background gnawing sense of one's mediocrity may inevitably lead to the desire to homogenize others, and one way to achieve this is to replace learning with conditioning. When everyone around you is singing to the same hymnsheet, and telling themselves they're fighting the good fight, you can get away with pretending that your life is substantial and meaningful without actually achieving much – which could almost be a definition of »the contemporary«.

The paradox of the success of slave-morality as a vehicle for power-grabbing has often been remarked upon, but this isn't such a paradox when the context is taken into consideration. Given the impoverishment of inner life and dilapidation of skill and knowledge into ruin by 'the cause', such a weltanschauung is actually highly-adapted to the suicide of the human species, complementing its extermination of its non-human kin and its resolute fidelity to designing a world where it can drown in its own excrement; the philosophy may well have co-evolved with the apparatus for precisely this end. The dismal is fit-for-purpose in a toxic world, and the best specimen of adaption in a death-culture is one that methodically murders itself and promulgates self-murder to the widest audience.

The spirit of the endeavour is of course salient, not the form – liberating paths can find advocacy from agents who have the same social labels as dungeon-keepers. So it is with the analysis and psychological praxis embedded in Martin Luther King Jr. speeches, whereby we're encouraged to approach each other according to character, not taxonomical category. Such a vision of social justice grounded in the greater value of genuine existential affirmation, which imparts a sense that a greater self already exists now, rather than 'calling out' in a vindictive 'now I can turn the tables on you' way, is genuinely worth attention. Conversely the logic of guilt-tripping and castigation, which claims it will emancipate people from lowest-common-denominator reductionisms of the socially-constructed self in a hierarchical economic-power-political determinist prison-world, in fact both mirrors that world and co-creates it. The best we can do with devotees of the latter is to walk a ways with them, showing that we give a shit about them and that there's another world out there, then part company so they know that we care about ourselves also, and won't let our lives be wasted.

The strategic issue isn't how to rescue our neighbours who prefer to live in a mire over where the air is clear – they're welcome to do so, and welcome to abuse their children and other dependents in such fashion – it's how to prevent ourselves from rejecting valuable analytical perspectives and aspects of life because others have manipulated them to appear as if they belonged to that mire. Despite the grimly predictable dullardry of the 'all right thinking people must agree' mindset, there's usually something of value behind any motivating ideology, including those centred on self-harm; one can lose hold of what's valuable in even the most botched attempt when apprehending what's being smuggled in behind the scenes.

And, just to touch on it, while making merry with bureaucracy-of-the-soul is a must for Kraft durch Freude (no relation) purposes, it's all too easy to get carried away, and slip towards frenzy as kick-back against despondency – an occupational hazard for earnest have-a-go types drawn to the soapbox. At the risk of being prescriptive, it's best to be mindful that sustained residence in the place where annihilation of particular and aggregated humans seems the most elegant retort is notoriously conducive to depleted ability in directing one's attention artfully. Just saying.

Aye surely so the attempt to see off that load of ballix whereby inherited privilege, the authority of conferred office, is passed off as meritocracy, is a fine thing. We just don't need to replace that with an even worse conflation whereby the authority of a specific experience, a specific voice, is negated, because our lives amount to nothing more than historical construction and cultural conditioning.

And if you stop, feel, and breathe into that, cephalopodically, you might touch on the crux of the matter, the septic core, which is wrapped up in that word-de-jour, privilege.

The roots of the word, 'privus' and 'lex', are more than enough for illuminating what it means to be a historical subject – the private individual positioned by law; one who is granted a voice by being positioned in the accounting book of history. Its descent into cheap rhetorical device emerges in a context where political analysis has been replaced by the mentalities born of Public Relations – the praxis of salesmanship and public image damage-limitation in a pas de deux with the politics of wishful thinking – where it maintains pre-eminent traction among a panoply of ideological binding manoeuvres designed to achieve hyper-short-termist microvictories.

Thankfully the longer-term implications of this weaponized use of privilege to negate any suggestion of selected social targets as meritorious (because those selected obstruct the agenda of those using the term, and therefore must be disabled), may also have the effect of condensing and purifying merit, so that the actual dross of its conflation with inherited position is purged – then the propensity for applying power in the world becomes more available for self-realized warriors of all natures along the spectrum from greater to lesser Jihad.

Hidden behind the use of privilege to castigate – castigation being also a way to exile – is another denied and suppressed value; this is 'to prevail'. The roots of the word, 'pre' and 'valere' are more than enough to illuminate that a living being will always be more than historical subject – it is that which is powerful in itself, which has power before the workings of the world, which proves this in proceeding into and through the world; it is they who affirm their voice despite history.

We are the prevailers.

Instead of policing ourselves to expiate the crime of privilege in an endless restitution of the world's ills, or shackling ourselves to the claims of victimhood which narrow our visionary scope to a sad remnant, why not put the same acumen and focus into creating a value? The value we create is that of prevailing.

It is our birthright.

Speaking on what it means to be modern cultural historian David Brett painted the vivid image of modernity as the feeling that one is being continually torn between the world that's coming and that which is passing, wishing to keep that which is best from the vanishing world, but also to embrace the emerging world in good faith and with an open mind. His suggestion is that if you don't experience a feeling of being torn in this way you're not fully in touch with what it means to live in the modern world.

Glittering in the wasteland of modernity are the shards of fascism, that giddy pageant of existential hubris, that bear on this dilemma, like broken glass in November sunlight. It's advisable to look away, otherwise you might become one of 'them', ironically enough (after all why just bash a fascist and post the happy-snap on Instagram, why not round them all up and gas them, then burn the evidence? That way we'll be done with this thing once and for all).

The light which shines on those fragments left by the epic conflict upon which the curtain fell in Berlin 1945 expands not only into past and future – that net of time in which we struggle – it expands into self and world, embodied being and fevered dreaming – the whole terrain of our wanderings through uprootedness.

Sure Peggy McIntosh, who more than anyone did the groundwork for the efficacy of »privilege« as a rhetorical weapon, even takes the view that »experience is sacred«, for fuck's sake. Lest we forget. So, in light of that, and weighing up the respective merits and demerits, why not be fascist?

All that sacralized fusion of body and will enabling the inexorable flow of history, as expressed through the devastating sublime of the technological behemoth, which transmutes into vehicle and springboard for the existential power process – what's not to like about that? A philosophy has to acknowledge culture as a site of sacrifice and tragedy if it's to have anything going for it at all, but it also has to see life in terms of its excess, otherwise it might be missing the point.

Why not? OK first off let's dispense with trite disingenuities – broken limbs and burning bodies, boneheaded statism blurred with national ultrasentiment, making fertile soil for industrial-scale pogroms – not particularly relevant, given that the consumer world is predicated on simply deferring global-scale holocaust till later, and outsourcing it in funsize portions in the meantime. More to the point is all that that muddling up of intrinsic power with shiny packaging, resulting in an truly unfit notion of what constitutes the 'unfit'; and while I'll be the last down-ass bitch to say well-cut uniforms and toned muscles don't look great and feel good to the touch, in the end they're just fodder for vultures. The best comeback on that one is the Chapman Brother's *Übermensch*, which had its for-real historical flourish in the contribution of untermensch Jewish scientists to the A-Bomb program. Chagrin hardly covers that error of judgement by the vanguard of the master race. The most devastating autonegation is of course the vainglorious claim to elitism, and like all elitism it's just a gilded cage; in the cold light of day the clarion call begins to sound like bleating.

Human excellence is mutational, not categorical.



»You all right there lad?

- Yeah, I am. Thinking mate.

Seem a bit quiet then.

- Yeah.

Have you got a problem then, or what?

- No, I've got things on my mind.

Like what?

- Well, like...well, can I ask you something?

Do you really believe in all that shit?«

As *This is England* skilfully interrogated it. But then Shane Meadows is an artist who opens out understanding through an empathetic recognition of people's humanity, rather than closing it down by reducing people to ciphers in a fusty Manichean puppet-show.

So here's the point – that we choose what we take from what we can, as well as knowing how to learn from what we're given. How else can we give what's best to those able to receive?

Whether you've got the ovaries to face it or not it's the both/and, both the terror of civilization's blood-rite, with its apotheosis in industrial modernity as a staggeringly invasive instrumentalization of life, and the assertion of life's excess, errant in its claims, unaccounted for, enigma of embodied being. Fuck all this aspiration to fuse one's life to the crest of the zeitgeist, this is pure Deus ex machina hi.

Aye rightly the colonization of the human by culture is a self-generating field of constructing artifice, but it's also specific. There is no decolonization through and within culture. Unless we walk away from culture entirely and become the wilderness then the task at hand requires us to meet the festival and the battle, with or without our charioteer, as it comes to meet us, bearing with the human creature as a being that also finds and expresses power through cultural specificity. We work on it, and play with it, and with that commitment become more alive to these dimensions in others. If we don't recognize another person as powerful in themselves, including through the shapes thrown by their cultural self, then we fail to meet them in their struggle and embrace with life. We abdicate from comradeship.

So – should you choose to sally forth into that woodland of heresies, under the sun-pierced canopy, soil-brown underfoot, placid and resolute, with primal green hydra, adorned with droplets of bloodthorned berry-red, pulsing its limitless grip, hungry for life and light, in a world dappled and dazzled in black-

flamed swirling reels, insects flitting every which way, anarchic and monarchical, what might then you return in company of, and whom might you be, when you make your place in the village of affinities?

After all, why dispose of Leviathan's divinity, and so supposedly free ourselves from oppressive histories in so doing, why not assume that divinity for ourselves?

And at the very least it could be a decent gambit for getting one of those big strong Antifa boys to come a-knocking, and you can get some passionate action. I guarantee he'll melt in your arms like a sobbing babe after shooting his fury deep into you. Oh my, are those Manichaeian political zealots erotic dynamite sister – but they're a bit shy, and never learned about how the laws of attraction work, so you need an opener.

Then, when we've finally taken care of that little game of kiss-in-the-ring, wake to the new day and think:

»why don't you just take over?« (as would any self-respecting Gauleiter)

Perhaps the most killer line in Pasolini's *Salò*, his revisioned *120 days of Sodom*, set in the short lived fascist republic of Salò in north Italy, was spoken by The Duke:

»we fascists are the only true anarchists«

Life is also bloody. How does that taste?

Let's leave it there.

With acknowledgements to Cathbad the Druid for instruction on the use of sharks' teeth to magically sever the binding power of words, and for summary of the role of algorithms in both recommending books and mass surveillance by the secret state. Also to Z for reading over back in the winter.

- Om Lekha -