

Crawl is happy to present an essay by Kate O'Hara on *Collapse*, a recent work by the Red Cabbage collective.

Collapse

“At the collapse of their morale, their will power, and their patience was so abrupt that they felt they would never be able to climb back out of their hole.... They drifted rather than lived....wandering shadows who could have only found strength by resigning themselves to taking root in the soil of their distress.”- Albert Camus (The Plague)

Red Cabbage's latest production is set after the collapse of society – the phantasm, one that we desired¹. This is where this journey begins. What does life mean post-the apocalypse and post-a god who has forsaken us? We arrive at the Williamstown port, a historical site of Australian colonization, the beginning of a story, yet we disembark at the end, - “My beginning is the end” according to T. S. Elliot.

Drawing upon a renewed fascination with the apocalypse and its aftermath in the zeitgeist, think of the spate of Hollywood films like “I am Legend”, “Cloverfield” and “Blindness”, Red Cabbage takes us on a journey through a spectacular and nostalgic world of images installed throughout this cultural significant site. The Disasters of War series by Goya and the iconic painting, The Garden of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch are among the a tableau of visual art, literature and film that are referenced in this modern Collapse.

The world they create is sublime, life is lived through ritualized spectacle – (as it is remembered and revered before...) Reminiscent of a Peter Greenway film the action happens on multiple planes vying for our attention. The spectacle is duplicated within the new society, cinematic in its scope. Morality and humanity are precarious when the structures supporting them have collapsed and survival has lead to necessity, even torturous cruelty. The realities of the catastrophe have created a paradoxical, hopeless desire for the civilized as remembered in distorted images. We watch from the inside yet are unable to intervene upon its cycle.

The journey parallels that's of the Alchemist of this world, left to find meaning from the bricolage of remnants and debris of our collective memory before the collapse (in this case a collection of archival film). How does one redeem the loss of humanity in the aftermath of apocalypse?

Where do we find hope? For some, hope comes, as Richard Barnett asserts Albert Camus's transcendence, in the form of ‘creativity’. “[It] is for Camus a very particular and intense form of rebellion [in the face of pessimism and lack of meaning]; the fruits of the creative life provide the only possibility of even limited immortality.” The sublime image of life lives on in Collapse...and offers a porthole to renewed hope, an Alchemist's motivation being this very immortality.

On the precipice of new hope, and birth of a new rhetoric, “Yes we can!,” in our contemporary world politic – Red Cabbage confront the end an era, encapsulating its disillusionment but also finding the creativity, beauty and the sublime in its absurdity – its end is our beginning- and the cycle begins again, high on new hope but with its own baggage.

- Kate O'Hara

¹ See Baudrillard, Jean, The Spirit of Terrorism, Translated by Dr Rachel Bloul, Le Monde, 2 November, 2001. This desire for collapse is evoked by Baudrillard in relation to the event of the collapse of the World Trade Centre Twin Towers in 2001. “That we have dreamed of this event,

that everybody without exception has dreamt of it, because everybody must dream of the destruction of any power hegemonic to that degree ...It is almost they who did it, but we who wanted it.”

Collapse is a large scale site specific performance by the collective Red Cabbage. It is being performed in Williamstown until November 30. For tickets or more information you can go to hobsonsbaytickets.com.au

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Visit the Red Cabbage blog at redcabbagecollective.blogspot.com .