

**DAMIEN
&
THE LOVE GURU**

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*Finally, a flat rectangular surface
is too handy to give up*

25 November 2023 – 26 January 2024

DOLLS AND VANISHING POINTS

“It’s not that deep. It’s not that serious.”

Those exact words ended my previous relationship, which lasted around five days. Both phrases are widely spread, they’re almost slang. What I love about slang-language is that it’s almost democratic in the sense that, like a trend, it gets virally, mimetically picked up by people and fills in the gaps of what everybody subconsciously intended to say without ever finding the right words for it. Slang: a language that unites.

I’m always speaking in tongues, because what I say, and how I say it, are two entirely different avenues of communication.

Take the construct of “it’s giving”, which means that something is good, enjoyable, entertaining, arousing, generous. By naming an association, you can also use the phrase to describe what that “it” gives: “it’s giving 90s hustler vibes.” What this Give tells us about It, which has always been both ephemeral and reactionary (pop-slang), is that most of us have accepted the transactional nature of every aspect constituting contemporary life. Everything to be experienced is either giving, or it’s taking, because reality is a marketplace and nothing more... What? And when my ex said to me: “it’s not that deep”, I realized in what literal sense prophecies of the Frankfurt School have turned out to be true. We need dolls to talk about ourselves. We need them to start, carry and end our relations.

Vanishing points are crucial to dolls, and crucial when surrendering perspective onto things that are not that deep. In language, as in painting, you generate information by limiting its contents, by structuring your formal expression to insist on the absolute consequentiality of a point which everyone knows doesn’t exist.

Belief precedes understanding. Clarity is biased.

Lately, one *feels* things to be true.

One of my favorite scenes in *Barbie* (2023) finalizes as one of the most cringe. Newly arrived in “reality”, Stereotypical Barbie contemplates Los Angeles whilst seated on a park bench. Tearing up as the outside world unthreads before her – in nature, in culture, in the expression of sensations, harmonious or in conflict – Difference as Unity drags our protagonist to truly feel. Barbie goes from not wanting anything to change

in Barbie Land because it “stirs up irrepressible thoughts of death” to realizing that change/difference is the beautiful thing about life. “You’re beautiful.”, she tells an elderly woman. Looking the embodiment of Difference in the face, Barbie smiles and clearly states: You’re beautiful, because you’re unlike me.

Barbie is, in that sense, a humanist movie about vanishing points. Most movies about vanishing points end up being humanist. Stories of malfunctions, inconsistencies, quarrels and discomfort get flipped through the fabrication of meaning (explicitly *not* purpose), in hopes to legitimize and to animate the most absurd beauty of continuing to exist.

FAST CARS

Let’s go to a place, where everything is made of blocks, where the only limit is your imagination. Let’s go wherever you wanna go. Climb the tallest mountains. Venture down to the darkest caves. Build anything you want – day or night, rain or shine – cuz this is the most significant sandbox you’ll ever set foot in. Build a majestic castle. Invent a new machine, or take a ride on a rollercoaster. Play with friends. Build your own little community. Protect yourself with the strongest armor that you can craft, and fight off the dangers of the night. Noone can tell you what you can or cannot do. With no rules to follow, this adventure: it’s up to you. Official Minecraft Trailer, 2011.

QUEERNESS AND COMMITMENT

For many who have accepted a lack of depth in everyday life, walking around as their own image has become pure jouissance. I can confirm having done the same. Bimboification is “very that.” Friends would argue that what distinguishes queerness, in essence, is the self-assumed spectacle by which it seeks to subvert norms. Queerness is flashy, humorous, provoking; it’s different at all costs. More importantly, it’s fluid. It escapes the shackles of fixed identity by constantly hyper-reinventing itself. As a result, its agency today is no longer dependent on gender identity or sexual orientation, yet its performance is paradoxically linked to signifiers and aesthetics too. There’s a deceiving, disorientating factor to queerness. Having liberated itself from all constraints, freed from all gazes, queerness is on the loose. Making sense feels conservative. Linearity, both in thought and action, would denote loyalty. It would mean that what *is*, is built on what *was*, and causal for what *might* become. It would mean an up and a down, a left and a right. But Kant and all his stupid ethics and rationalities are honestly so passé, and totally not an ally. Sometimes it feels as though the fluidity principle in queer-acting, which is not always inherently positive, because it can be as giving as it is taking (when it turns into blatant narcissism for example), manages to escape accountability. For relationships, that’s a problem.

And then I wonder; Wasn't the binary just a simpler place to be? So, I reach out, grab a copy of Murakami's *Men Without Women* (2014), read a few stories, and decide that: no. Not only is it dysfunctional, but it is also boring, repetitive, and uninspired. On top of that, it reeks of suburban middle-class. So, in the aftermath of my recent break-up, being quite the queer myself, I'm left posing the question:

Can two caricatures of themselves ever sustain a singular image, which they call a relationship? Don't relations require some form of fundament in being, some assurance that both parties will not wake up tomorrow and decide, on a whim, to be someone completely different?

When Foucault declared Friendship "as a Way of Life", what I think he meant was that, contrary to heterosexual relationships, gays in the 70s had a type of cart blanche on how to conduct themselves, to whom, and for what purpose. Homosexuality was fertile soil for sociological reinvention, it was a relation outside itself, it provided voyeuristic architecture and lifestyles, as well as assigned desire, both consummated and cognitively tanked, to be the primer of reasoning. Decades later, this tendency expanded beyond sexual minorities. Preciado went further in naming the pleasure-principle as a (if not *the*) leading formula in late-capitalist state control. That means desire, like everything else today, comes with a price: dependence. *Not* on people, but on objects (capital): drugs, medication, clothes, affording to be in the right place at the right time, affording to have time to begin with. Thinking within those parameters, even the straightest, soccer-watching, beer-chugging dude living in a metropolitan city today basically counts as gay, and I honestly have no problem with that (wink.) Whether you attend wild orgies in Berlin or just satisfy yourself with eating potato chips on your couch, you're still a hedonist. Sacrifice is not a virtue.

Capitalism did not progress in spite of queer theory, but alongside it. Consumerism runs on diet of fluctuating markets. Fluidity in identity factors in on this dynamic. Insofar as it is dependent on external qualities and experiences, active self-conception is another form of production. Capitalism encourages disloyalty because objects need to be consummated before they can be replaced; expiration dates are imperative for any production cycle. Queerness is as tangled in, as it is responsive to, this phenomenon. And yet, because trying to hold a tight grip on defining queerness is like attempting to preserve an ice cube in the palm of your hand on a hot summer's day, queerness has the obligation to deviate. Queerness must, once again, take a brutal U-turn on a jammed highway and regain its fundamental integrity, which has always been about defending freedom while making no sense at all.

I consider William Blake's poetic and painterly oeuvre to be queer. And without getting into too much detail about the obsessively neurotic, esoteric, philosophical, and mythological universe that got the best of this man's mental health (RIP), I would like to introduce one of the bestial villains of his stories: Spectre. They are an entity that represents the

rational power bestowed onto mankind, and more importantly, they are opposed to the act of imagination, which in Blake's eyes is the greatest good. What's Sepctre's consensus? Well, think rationally for long enough and you will soon come to realize that there is no reason to not always and exclusively act in your own self-interest. As long as you're comfortable being alone, self-centeredness and lack of sympathy with others are not punished by universal laws. If you're not comfortable being alone, then you better start training in the arts of the trade, because all rational relationships require transactional grounds.

Andy Warhol opened his essay *Love (Senility)* with this summary: "(...) I'll pay you if you pay me." How true this has become, and how cynical it would be if this were the whole truth.

But because queerness lies precisely on opposite ends of rationality, throwing nasty looks from across the room like a pissed-off Drag-race contestant, we are reminded that random acts of kindness, empathy, sympathy, loyalty require Imagination, and so implicitly, irrationality. This is what being queer means to me. It means that, despite all odds, you try your best at being a nice, reliable, caring person. You form groundless friendships and communities. And despite the world sometimes seeming like a dark, anxious, and alienating place, you actively, creatively, invest in imagining new (non)sensical justifications for your own niceness.

The key to this is the act of placing personal identity on the rack alongside the other clothes. A queer person is one that, if needed, can step, watch, and listen outside of itself, like Barbie did on that bench.

A queer relationship is not a meeting place of consummating personal pleasure, of igniting supply and demand. You can wake up every day and reinvent yourself anew, you can shift between images and preferences and binaries, you can be intangible, never serious, and escape language. This inconsistency does not have to prescribe how you are towards others. It does not equal unreliability, self-absorption and perpetual self-prioritization; on the contrary.

Two caricatures of themselves *can* maintain a unified image, which they call a relationship, without any fundament in being, precisely because their individuality is firstly *autonomous*, then ever-shifting, never-resting and constantly adapting. Queerness allows for imagination; it allows to act against your immediate self-interests and desire.

It is, in that sense, our vanishing point – “the most significant sandbox you'll ever step foot in.”

Daniel Moldoveanu, 2023