



Proto-Barbarist Apologia 2.0

After posting my latest essay (*My Proto-Barbarist Apologia*) on my website (“pascual-delgado-poetry.ca”), Alan Zisman, my webmaster and very good friend, pointed out rightly that there was little in the piece that would justify calling it autobiographical. He was right, of course: I do tend unconsciously to wade into general philosophical argumentation about basic concepts while sidestepping any existential references.

My original intention was to explain why my other website – “Proto-Barbarism.ca,” created back in 2004– pretended to be an attack on Postmodernism, while at the same time exploiting its ideas and techniques. I must now recognize that I failed to do so... in that essay. I will now try to do just that.

In *My Proto-Barbarist Apologia* [2004], I presented a historical overview of pre-modern aesthetics, followed by that of Modernism and finally concluded that: “...postmodernist art can be described as a multilayered aggregation of appropriations of earlier works and styles bordering on plagiarism.” I now add that Postmodernism as a philosophy as well as an art movement was also a chaotic amalgam of ideologies and methods. Artists such as Christo –who wrapped Paris’ Pont Neuf in fabric from 1975 till 1985– or Ai Weiwei –who covered the floor of an enormous hall with tons of sunflower seeds in 2010– were simply pompous and excessively wasteful, while expressing absolutely nothing except the massiveness of their egos.

In my *Proto-Barbarism Manifesto* –originally published in 2004– I stated that “**Proto-Barbarism** is the confusion of tongues after the Fall of the Tower(s).” This article (#13) alluded both to the fall of the tower of Babylon as well as to the attack on the World Trade Center towers, on September 11th 2001, which symbolized for me the end of Western global supremacy. I intuited then that it also tolled the death knoll of Postmodernism, as the artistic expression of Western triumphalism. And although I claim in thesis #9 that: “Proto-Barbarism...means the complete overthrow of Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Expressionism, Surrealism;” yet, in a spirit of impish contradiction, the Manifesto extols DADA as a viable paradigm (article #11) –therefore, a regression to the most radical phase of modernism.

By the way, as the website was described as a faux global movement, many artists and poets were invited to contribute their works. Over the years, other creators have uploaded

their writings or their artwork to Proto-Barbarism.ca. Among them: Christine Devereaux, Nureyla Kama, Mushka Lightstone, David “Captain Self-Destruct” Newman, Rena Okada, Jimmy Panoutsopoulos, Shem Richards, Kimberly Beth Watson, and Alan Zisman.

Other writers and philosophers have written about the aftermath of Postmodernism, but appear more conciliatory than me. A good example is the essay entitled *The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond*, by the British cultural critic Alan Kirby. It was first published in the British journal *Philosophy Now*, no. 58 in 2006; and became the basis for his book *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture*, published by Continuum in 2009. The essay argues that postmodernism as a cultural period is over, and has given way to a new paradigm based on digital technology which he calls "digimodernism." Kirby's essay forms part of a growing movement that emerged in the 2000's and seeks to chart cultural developments in the aftermath of postmodernism, such as Nicolas Bourriaud's *Altermodern* (an exhibition at Tate Britain in 2009), and Raoul Eshelman's performatism. *

Another recent example of this interpretation is that of Gregg Henriques, professor of psychology at James Madison University, who claims that there is a new postmodern movement that transcends postmodernism. He calls it *Metamodernism*. He states in his blog, co-authored by Daniel Görtz, that "...at its broadest contours, the metamodern view can be considered a kind of higher-order synthesis that includes and transcends both the modernist thesis about rationality and science and the postmodern antithetical critique. In addition, metamodernists tend to view the current state of our knowledge to be overly chaotic and fragmented and advocate for a more integrated pluralism that allows for positive, constructive work on what some have called a 'post-postmodern grand meta-narrative.' " To substantiate his argument, Henriques identifies postmodernism with "...movements such as the massive civil rights and feminist positions that emerged in the 1960s, as people demanded changes in the existing power structures that were seen to be connected to a Christian, white male hegemony." **

I'm afraid I must disagree with Henriques and Görtz that postmodernism was some kind of revolutionary offshoot of Third World liberation struggles or of feminism. Just as with the Babylonian megalith of old, post-post-postmodernism will fall and crumble into ruins, to be discovered by *crypto sapiens* archeologists, centuries after we have all turned to dust.

Written by © Pascual Delgado, August 7th 2023.

* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Death_of_Postmodernism_and_Beyond

** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/theory-knowledge/202004/what-is-metamodernism#>:

*** Image is collage of the face of Mona Lisa on the head of Caravaggio's Medusa (1596).