

The Messianic Messing-Up

Notes on Gianluca Iadema's *Aphàiresis*

"In messianic time the saved world
coincides with the world that is irretrievably lost."
Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*

Prologue: "Something did not work," a replica of Gershom Scholem said, "we do not know why exactly. Some say that the "vessels" could not contain the data and thus were broken. The data were dispersed. Many of them returned to their source; some "sparks" fell downward and were scattered, some rose upward."



Aphàiresis, photogram

The messing-up hypothesis. - What happens when concrete entities are digitalized? When, conversely, abstractions, "immaterial" things, are turned into material entities? What really happens during these transformations? What is lost, forgotten, or repressed? Are there things that cannot become immaterial, or – conversely - material? And then, what happens to these reluctant beings that resist becoming anything? Do they continue to exist, somewhere, do they haunt the corridors of the immaterial and the antechambers of the material world?

Hypothesis: when a part of reality is digitalized or, conversely, when a digital cloud becomes so heavy that it drops its big data, some lateral entities emerge, unexpected monsters that were not programmed, and desired - what I call, respectively, the zombies of the digital and the specters of the analog. The zombies of the digital stem from the virtualization of the world,

while the specters of the analog are produced when virtualized entities are actualized.



Aphàiresis, photogram

Virtual, actual, counter-all. - The virtual, Deleuze explains, is a problem; the actual is a solution that is not pre-formed by the problem (the virtual is not a pre-existing possibility waiting for its realization). But when an actualization occurs, a part of the virtual is counter-actualized – hence specters. And when the actual is virtualized, a portion of the actual is counter-virtualized – hence zombies. Between the virtual and the actual: the reluctant space of the counter-all.

Specters, zombies, anamorphoses. - Gianluca Iadema's video music work *Aphàiresis* explores the reluctant space of the counter-all. In his work, we can see specters everywhere,



Aphàiresis, photogram



Aphàiresis, photogram

zombies coming back from the dead matter of the analog,

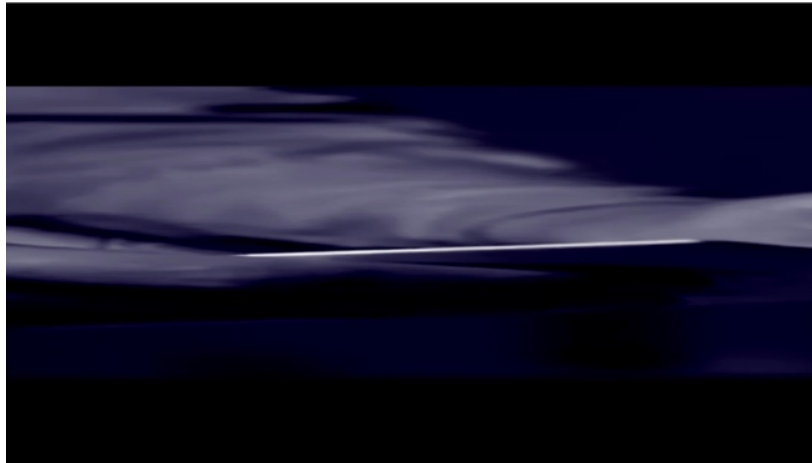


Aphàiresis, photogram

and – between them - anamorphoses:



Aphàiresis, photogram



Aphàiresis, photogram

- The zombies of the digital manifest the ontological failure of the digitalization of the world. They are the avant-garde of the party of those who refuse a resurrection at any cost – those who reject the capitalist resurrection, the de-extinction that some artists unconcerned with politics conjure up in their simulated reality, their video-game dressed up as a work of art. The zombies of the digital claim loud and clear: “we want to choose how to un-die the dead, how to save matter’s spirit.” “Reclaim the spirits!”, they say (in reference to a famous UK political group, Reclaim the Streets).

- The specters of the analog refuse the way the world is realized – even in its digital form. They can assess the weight of so-called “virtual reality.” Overall, they would have preferred not to - not to have lived like this, neither to be haunting nor to be saved.

- Anamorphoses are distorted projections: to recognize these distorted images, a viewer should occupy a specific vantage point, not one facing the screen. In Gianluca Iadema’s video, anamorphoses – from Greek *anamorphoun*, to transform – occupy the space between the analog and the digital, and the space between specters and zombies. They occupy a space of transformation fixed as such in its failed state, as the optical embodiment of a process that cannot be achieved, as the presentation of a discontinuity – the counter-all.

Under erasure. - Appearance, disappearance: non-appearance, non-disappearance.

The last refuge. - In *Aphàiresis*, we see hands and faces – many of them coming from Bergman’s *Persona* (1966):



Aphàiresis, photogram



Aphàiresis, photogram

Why these juxtapositions of hands and faces? Concerning the hand, let's remember that "digit" means number and finger: the digital is maybe an attempt to be "in touch" with the (so-called) immaterial. Concerning the face, we might see it as the print par excellence of the singular. In "The Work of Art in the Age of the Technical Reproducibility," Benjamin sees the photographic portrait as the "last refuge" of "aura" – understood as what adds to the face the spectral presence of its own disappearance. In the second photogram I have chosen, the face and the digits are separate; in the first one, the face of the Other – the Lacanian *Grand Autre* - exceeds the subject's capacity to lay hands on it. You cannot transform the aura without losing it – except with a special form of image, a sort of counter-reproductive technique able to create (not reproduce) a singularity, that is: to create, in a work of art, the finite embodiment of the infinite. *Aphàiresis* is a refuge for what refuses the offer to be saved at any cost. Saving what is lost, but as lost.



Aphàiresis, photogram

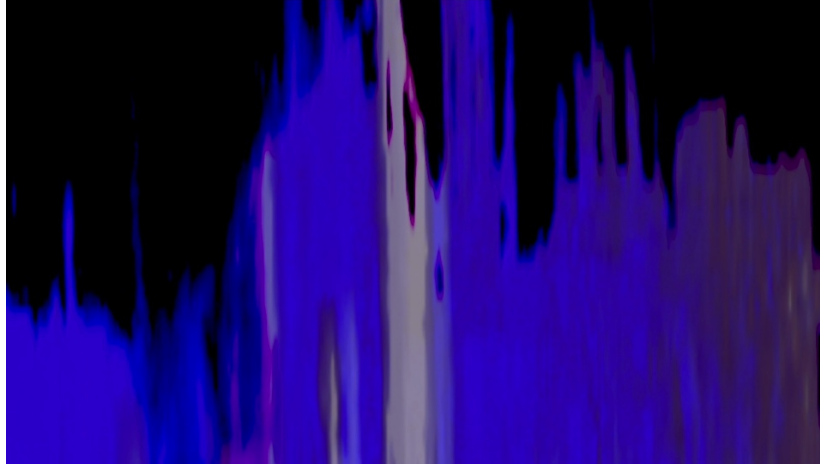
The messianic messing-up. - Analogizing idealities failed (more or less); then, digitalization came. Digitalization is a parodic redemption fortunately messed up by the messianic itself – by an interrupting power, which is less chaotic than deactivating. The same that is irremediably not the same is - the same.

Discreet ellipsis. - Discrete, just like discreet, comes from the Latin word *discrētus*, meaning separated. *Aphàiresis'* music is discrete, helping us to discern (i.e. to separate) – to see. *Aphàiresis'* music has discretion in the matter of expressing the trouble in mediations. Discretion in the matter of revealing the space between, the digitanalog transformations and what disturbs them: the formations coming from the counter-all.

However, *Aphàiresis'* music does not follow the logics of the images. Listening after the fact to the album alone, without the video, I realized that many tracks – “Morphe,” “Hyle,” “Pneuma,” “Apeiron,” “Nyn” – share a common feature: one passes without mediation, but with discretion, from one sound dimension, one sonic texture, to another one. With discretion, that is to say with *tact* and restraint, thus without violence: the passage from one sound layer to another one is unmediated without appearing as a rupture. Neither denied, nor represented, missing gaps are turned into secret passageways.

What *Aphàiresis'* music produces are ellipses, discreet ellipses. Sonic ellipses in place of visual anamorphoses. What the music saves is that which cannot morph, but exists, silently - note that *Persona's* characters in Gianluca Iadema's video do not speak, they touch, they are touched, but they keep silent, and the music comes from the manifest lack of words. What the music helps to take away, to abstract (that is what *aphairein* means) is our refusal of being entirely abstracted. As long as we will believe that matter can be saved thanks to a technology able to fix our finitude, death will reign; as long as we will believe that spirit is an abstraction able to resist abstraction, life

will be impoverished; the zombies of the digital and the specters of the virtual will proliferate, preventing the arrival of the angels of colors and their fractal wings:



Aphàiresis, photogram