

# Andrei Molotiu Attacks Photographs

Contributed by Andrei Molotiu

TTSL (after Tom McCarthy) Andrei Molotiu I The photographs that follow are patently not "authentic," nor indeed are they photographs. Both are fictional devices set in place to give the fiction itself the veneer of authenticity. As far as characterization is concerned, the villains are pantomime cut-outs, and the hero's only attributes are strength, good looks, compassion, and moral principles that prompt him to take a stand against injustice. That is as complicated as it gets. The hero, pitted against ever more morally corrupt antagonists and placed in ever more tangled and ambiguous situations, remains impossibly strong. You know the type: you might even, in your more honest moments, detect a strain of it in yourself. He delights in "doubling." The medium can turn things into language and language into a thing. Mirages, hollow signs of the heat-glow, are taken for objects and people; objects and people are taken for mirages. The casting and consuming of voices are sometimes done by mouths and ears alone, but mostly they are done through technology. He has no past, no sexual identity, no complexities. Their real content may still remain invisible, hiding in the light. II The argument may seem stunningly naïve. Eventually, though, he removes it completely. Things are never that neat and tidy. Politics is present, but it is treated with disdain. What could they have to tell him about the revolution anyway? All it has meant for them is a change of name on the placard beside their hovels and of the uniform worn by the police who swing their truncheon at them. Friendship may bring about emotional awakening and cultural enlightenment, but politically it brings cynicism. The authority may be grounded in the divine, but it is established and consolidated through technology. Terrified at first, he eventually digs up the floorboards and finds a record player. The holy world of spirits collapses once we see the mechanisms at work behind it. But overall these are rearguard actions in a larger losing battle. The enforcers of the prohibition law get drunk. Blood falls from the animals not as a libation, but rather "to be made into I don't know what—food, drugs, jewels, explosives." Sometimes the interruptions are innocuous; sometimes they are not. Full and empty spectacle make move and counter-move against one another, but the empty wins out in the long run. Too right. III He seems drawn to these places like a dowser's stick to subterranean water. Even spaces not designed for burial turn into tombs when he steps into them. At best this relationship is fraught; at worst it goes disastrously wrong. In whose name? Whose legacy demands this? The secret, once more, has been disguised in a name and transplanted across the world to throw its pursuers off the fact that it was right at home the whole time. This is the pattern set by the crypt, pulsed out in its coded broadcasts. To keep it safe he buries it inside his crypt and carries it around for all his life, showing and hiding it, saying it without saying it. Radio messages shuttle back and forth: from rocket to moon-surface to ground control and back again. Here, too, time zones are overlaid. Here, too, the sun is intensely scrutinized. Here, too, is abandonment. We should learn something from this. What? Who knows where the signals will end up, or what they will end up meaning? IV Let's believe this for now. It is as though language, like the microphone, were shying away from the message it is carrying. The relations here are complex, to say the least. No matter: she voices the message he could not deliver, and voices it loud and clear for everyone to hear. Those who can discern the rhythms can step into them and operate in their blind spots. In his zone of near-silence, he injects language into a flower. It is constructed with a rocket scientist's skill for routing, plotting elliptical paths of departure and return. It stacks up layers of meaning like so many pancakes, toy bricks, sheets of acetate. And yet, as they were last time, they will be disappointed. The event field is unconsummated; and language fails to deliver. The voice that carries the secret remains inaudible even as it is amplified. It may terrorize the heroes, burn their ears, but it stops short of destroying their world by naming the event as event. The scene is ridiculous and totally implausible. This stage set sacrifices him on its hollow altar, leaving him trapped inside an empty, perforated drum. Naming him, her voice removes his name. Perhaps she is not wrong. V Let's start where we left off: he is killed. What happens next? What became of the original we do not find out. The home he returns to was not the home he left. These gifts are all poisoned, booby-trapped. He may get away with it, but its specter will haunt his line for generations. Their departures and returns follow the path of time. It is in his blood. He must sweat it, because even animals pick it up. While doing this, he is hit by a car. "My good deed for the day," he tells himself. They decline, but he insists. The volcano eventually erupts, blowing into the sky a column of smoke more than thirty thousand feet high. Their memories of it have been absolutely wiped, erased. Where is this new detour through secrets and sunflowers leading us? In him, the logic of the primitive meets the logic of art. My artifice is as good as nature. My artifice is better than nature, he is saying now. You are better than a description or resemblance of Adonis; if there is a "counterfeit," it will have been imitated not after Adonis but after you. For him, everything is a copy. What lies at its core? VI This process is dark, sometimes shocking, in many respects catastrophic. It is certainly sad. When there is duplication, comedy results. A person being manipulated like an automaton by another person is funny. Repetition takes place in the field of time. Here, though, the fall has become more than simply a pratfall. Time and again he turns his head to tell people to look where they are going and then crashes into whatever is in his path. That he is always falling, relapsing, messing up, is a sign of his awkward relationship not only with the material world but also with the divine one. Gravity, like repetition, opens up the dimension of time. The tragic hero rushes into death in order to make his or her life meaningful, to retroactively give it a significance of transcendental proportions. In comedy this option is removed. An awareness of one's own fakeness can have disastrous consequences. The meeting was never going to happen. Eventually, it gets played out in the field of art, the most self-conscious of all environments. To turn water into wine would be a miracle. Some peace and quiet to smoke his pipe would be nice. VII Even when parchments have been overlaid and treasure unearthed, significant portions of it remain uncovered. It divides into three parts which circulate through time and space. This is more than simply an extended plot device, of course. "Tomorrow I shall be famous!" he cries. What about his other descendants? He had three sons. This is extremely dubious practice, to say the least. All literature is pirated. Every act of reading is its own kind of remaking of a work. The second scene moves at a quicker

pace.Â