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# **Chromopolitika**

**monologue**



## I see everything

I see figures: women, men, and dear children, gods, goddesses, and allegorical figures, grape pickers, grape smashers, wine makers and wine bearers with their breasts, blond peasants with golden wheat, scientists with their lab-coats, atom and space tamers, astronauts and pilots and common drivers of trucks, cars, bicycles, locomotives, hot air balloons, ships – entire histories of moving through space – from amoeba in some liquid to satellites in cosmos, conquering space on a horse, many horses. I see other animals, not just me, the non-existing black lion talking – I see deer, fawns, butterflies, elephants, giraffes, many tigers, panthers and leopard and their spots, we see many fish and sea algae, I see the sea – supposedly black like a lion, but really blue with all the colourful subjects of the sea kingdom, squid and octopus with tentacles flowing and twitching in all directions, and not only animals, but swimmers everywhere – jumping, swimming, being one with the water and with little stones on the bottom of the sea, or little jewel-like squares on the bottom of the swimming pools, and fountains with immense blues of the water, or the skies, or infinite greens and browns of high mountains with stags and goats and mountain climbers and skiers colourful against the white snow, and children on sleighs.

I see colour: lead white, ivory, chalk, beige, Indian yellow, imperial yellow, Dutch orange, saffron, amber, ginger, nude, puce, shocking pink, scarlet, cinnabar, violet, ultramarine, cobalt, indigo, navy, turquoise, electric blue, cerulean, absinthe, emerald, avocado, khaki, russet, sepia, umber, kohl, Payne's grey, obsidian, ink, charcoal, jet, and of course pitch black – not a colour but it is the only colour I can be painted with because it comes from carpenters, from coffin makers, and they only had black. Material conditions of works of art – there you have it – cannot be escaped. All that black, associated with death and all that life coming from the black. All this abundance from such scarcity. All those



images of beautiful life rendered in the gravediggers' colour, stolen for a moment from death, a cornucopia, a bounty of everything.

## I see paradise

What is this place? Is it the Peaceable Kingdom where the wolf and the lamb will feed together and the lion will eat straw like the ox? The place where infants will play with cobras and they will neither harm nor destroy? Is it Marx's paradise where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity, but each can become accomplished in any branch they wish? Where society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, herdsman, or critic?

Is it a democracy of gods all equally holy, blessed, and glorious? You desire simple clothing, ascetic morals, and unseasoned enjoyments; we, on the contrary, desire nectar and ambrosia, purple mantles, costly perfumes, pleasure and splendour, dances of laughing bodies, music, and plays.

Or what the people want: a place that popular imagination designs and desires as utopia – a *Luilekkerland* / Land of Cockaigne / *Zemlja Dembelija* / ზარმატების ქვეყანა (*zarmatsebis kveq'ana*) a place of plenty, youth, promiscuity, and cheese falling from the sky, somehow always satirised by the Bourgeoisie, from a position of privilege and plenty, as a paradise of fools, idlers, and debauchees.

No feast for the masses, I hear from above, but an austere diet! The less you eat, drink, buy books, go to the theatre, go dancing, go drinking, think, love, theorise, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you save and the greater will become that treasure which neither moths nor maggots can consume – your capital.



In other words, the less you are – the more you have! I say no!

As a lion, I am the guardian of the garden of Eden. My garden is on a carpet. I have a human face and ears, the body of dog, a mane that goes in all directions and sometimes even forms fashionable hairstyles. I am green, red, or black, because not many women saw me in real life or in an image, but still wanted to weave and embroider me. And what is a carpet but some wool, colour, and the labour and artistry of innumerable women weavers? And what is wool but the labour of a herder? And what is colour, except the labour of girls picking flowers in the fields?

People crave paradise – they have it on their carpets. Every garden is a picture of paradise; religions promise it, but so do politics. A garden where everything works. The best combination of freedom, prosperity, and community that humankind has been able to build. The rest of the world is not exactly a garden. Most of it is a jungle, a jungle that could invade the garden. A nice small garden surrounded by high walls in order to prevent the jungle from coming in is not a solution. The gardeners have to go to the jungle and garden it!

### **I see a picture**

I am fascinated by infinite space, by the endless stars, and by galaxies upon galaxies. How does a person feel when looking at the sky? They think that they don't have enough tongues to describe what they see. Nevertheless, people have never stopped describing the sky, simply listing what they see. I want to swallow it or at least draw it, paint it, make it into a mosaic, carpet, or quilt that makes infinity comprehensible, palatable. I have a desire to see it all, behold the entirety, to recognise, encompass, embrace, and devour every detail, this sheer profusion of meaning and uncontrollable excess. Sculptors of the world: let us make a cast of the globe!



"I find myself at the centre of a plastic world, in which colours and forms existed in total clarity and simplicity. I see a potential masterpiece everywhere – in the crowds, the markets, the festivals, the marching battalions, the workers in the workshops, the fields – in every shining face, every radiant child," thought Diego Rivera after his return to Mexico from Paris. With his colleagues Orozco and Siqueiros, he became such a super star of epic murals that John. D. Rockefeller Jr., a great patron of the arts, commissioned a mural for a central place in a foyer of the Rockefeller centre in NYC. The mural tried to encompass the entire world: industry and science, the workers of the world called to revolution, the horrors of First World War and the end of capitalism, the decadence of bohemian life, the numbness of the middle class, celestial bodies, the plants, and even the world under a microscope, viruses, bacteria (syphilis), and cellular life.

However, Rockefeller didn't expect a portrait of Lenin among other historical figures on the 4.85 m × 11.45 m mural *Man at the Crossroads*.

After refusing to change the portrait of Lenin, Rivera was paid out in full and the work was covered and later destroyed. We can imagine that with every strike of the hammers that broke away the painting piece by piece from the wall and revealed a mixture of wall and ground layers, the mural looked more and more like an icon of abstract expressionism: the big drip compositions by Jackson Pollock that he would paint 10 years later. Politically, the abstract painting became an icon of liberalism, individualism, dynamic activity, and the creative risks that were possible in a free society. It was as if realism yearned for abstraction.

But abstraction also yearned for realism . . .



Artists abandon all figuration and narrative meaning and focus on the gesture of painting, leaving abstract calligraphic, geometric, or organic-shaped traces of paint on canvases. There was a whole magical thing about “new” painting (already old news in the world of music but for painting brand new): it was the pure essence of human wonder, and wholly set apart from food, from sex, from clothes, from houses, from drugs, from cars, from news, from money, from crime, from punishment, from games, from war, from peace – and surely apart from the universal human impulse among painters and plumbers toward inexplicable despair and self-destruction! This is how the fictional 20th century painter in Kurt Vonnegut’s novel *Bluebeard* spoke about his youth and his circle of fellow artists: abstract expressionists.

The character was famous for large abstract canvases made using the latest technological advances in chemical colour production. He tried to keep the paint the same as it was in the can – at the time the colour from the can felt more exciting than any oil on canvas. However, after some time all of his canvases, many of which were sold to banks and other great public buildings, became blank again; the colour was unstable and simply peeled off. Our Bluebeard was greatly embarrassed and stopped painting altogether. But after many years we find him on his property on Long Island, hiding something in the potato shed: a painting. It is a detailed 2.5 x 20 m representation of a battle at the end of WWII in Europe – the one in which he lost his eye.

We are standing on the rim of a beautiful green valley in the springtime. By actual count, there are five thousand, two hundred and nineteen people in the painting. The largest person is the size of a cigarette and the smallest, a flyspeck. He represents an entire world in this realistic battle-field, including his deceased fellow artists Pollock,



Rothko, Gorki, Krasner, Abbot, Sterne, as well as many people he didn't know . . . As if only this figuration can heal his loss of everyone, including his eye and paintings . . . As if abstraction is appropriate only for young enfant-terrible bastards for some time, until they transform in one way or another into something conservative, or reactionary, or just meek and tame, or plainly – dull. Abstraction is the freedom from meaning until the meaning claims its toll. It seems we are always doomed to realism after the trip of the avant-garde. After revolution always comes some kind of counter-revolution, depression, reaction. After the revolutionary 1960s came the prelude to the 1970's "Age of Aquarius": no one was talking about revolution any more – the new thing was the unconscious. People who claimed to be leftists quoted Nietzsche and Celine, while right-wing magazines hailed revolution in the Third World; people opened schools of transcendental meditation or macrobiotic restaurants; the ones who peddled the works of Che on the instalment plan in the old days were now offering herbals, Buddhism, astrology, and Kabbalah. The revolution was not the domain of the working class any more – they were plagued by acquired privileges. All eyes turned to ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities to trigger the revolution. No more grand, uniting narratives, just floating signifiers, myriads of micro-narratives, fictional self-sufficiencies, and the discovery of Trauma.

### **Picture 3**

In the centre of Tbilisi there is a magnificent, abstract façade on the former House of Political Education. Instead of the originally planned portrait including Lenin, Soviet workers, and partisans, the façade is realised as a complex, carpet-like abstraction in relief mosaic, all in orange, dark red, yellow, and blue, with shapes morphing from flower to fish to sun to eye and being none of these, the rhythm of their transformation constructing this exciting almost overly organic, even delightfully scary façade. The portrait of Lenin somehow was lost again, but his vision of monumental



propaganda included grand paintings that would line the streets proposed in the renaissance utopian book *City in the Sun* took an unexpected turn. One can only admire the kōan-like connection between this abstract, colourful façade and the notion of political education. That is, until we recognise that what we see in the façade is fire.

## **I see fire**

“I have come to bring fire on the earth” (Luke, 12, 49), says Christ on Mount Tabor, as the Holy Spirit descends on the apostles in the form of tongues of fire.

In Orthodox teaching, fire is God Himself and His energy. On the western walls of churches, we see the fire that flows from the throne of the Lord. For those who choose love and truth, fire is not burning but illuminating. Those who willingly refuse truth and love burn far from the truth and divine energy. Such is the river of fire, symbolised by the flow of water, paradoxical as the power of fire itself. The unfair use of water; the unfair use of fire as knowledge lit many bonfires throughout history, ones in which the innocent were incinerated – those of the Middle Ages against women, those of capitalism, wherein both people and nature are ravaged.

One of the mountains of the Caucasus has a hostage: Amiran – chained to stones. In Georgian mythology, He is the same as Prometheus, the one who brought fire to humankind – stolen from the gods – as knowledge, technology, and civilisation. Like Christ, he chose the side of man, rejecting the power relations that were transcendently established, and opening a new door towards changing the world. Those who try to tame the wildfire are walking a path of rebellion against the gods.

Knowledge, technology, and civilisation: symbols of patriarchal, rigid rationalisation can never provide a bright



light in which humanity can be tempered like a noble metal. Rather, they become a burning and destructive wildfire – an inextinguishable fire of war and destruction fuelled by greed and extraction that consumes everything in its path. It is an unregulated fire, a fire that can no longer be tamed by the fireman who, in Socialist Realism, holds the flame in his hands – not extinguishing it but slowing it down for the common good.

Effort to regulate fire is a legacy of revolutionaries, with its concomitant feminist wisdom, with all its scenes and mosaics of colours and shapes in which fire breaks out and contains all the physical and metaphorical manifestations of life and light, warming everyone with equal rays instead of burning them in bonfire. Today we find contemporary revolutionary wisdom in the struggles of indigenous peoples against these bonfires around the world. Knowledge differs from wisdom: knowledge can either save you or burn you, while wisdom is the proper use of knowledge.

We need a Prometheus-like fire woman who can break free from this curse and regulate the cycle in harmony with the environment. Between tradition and modernity, between man and woman, between socialism and capitalism, this paradox of the dual use of fire is like a river with truth on one side and hell on the other, like all that black from which death is coming and from which all life is born. Although fire itself remains constant in its flow, the reason for the difference in its use lies in human behaviour, not in the fire itself. We can observe the icon of such a fireman in the Soviet mosaic adorning the Tbilisi fire station or within Orthodox frescoes from which the river of fire (love) flows. This Christ-like presence resides in every firefighter, miner, or care worker migrant woman, like every Amiran in Georgia who currently struggles without sufficient salary to support their family. The Curse of Prometheus illustrates nature's miraculous power of regeneration and recreation – the cycle of reproduction that sustains life and change, work that is historically shouldered by women.



The façade in Tbilisi and its highly abstract mosaic includes knowledge about taming and tempering fire, but this is repeated not only in other Soviet mosaics, but in church frescoes, folk carpets, history, mythology, religion, and languages, as well as in nature in various forms, shapes, myths, resistances, teachings, and colours. This mythic, real, spiritual, and mystical tapestry is akin to the complexity of ethnic carpets woven by women around the world over the centuries. Fire radiates innumerable colours as a transformative force. It's like Marx's paradise and Christian peaceable kingdom together, where humans coexist peacefully with wolves and lambs, where the coffin makers and the carpenters will have not only black, but all innumerable colours. All these colours are regenerative. The flame of knowledge bestowed upon us still burns.

### **I see cosmos**

In the city, I see before me the square and the curve clash in the most beautiful way. What do you prefer: rational, elegant, impeccable or biomorphic, serpentine, sensual? As the century folds in half there is a negotiation with Modernism: build with no ornamentation and then spill the excess of colours, shapes, narratives and feelings all over the place! Mosaics, murals, and reliefs claim the space for art everywhere. Art belongs: it is awkward, it dominates, it is discreet, it is abstract, it is naïve and sophisticated, it is folk, IT IS, and it is for the people. This spill, this excess, this enjoyment of excess, this explosion of colours, like the release of mass libidinal pleasure is always connected with Socialist Realism. Liberation of the labour energy of the working masses from the yoke of property and the rule of the capitalists is a struggle for the transformation of Man's physical energy into intellectual energy, an energy of the mind. No energy should be wasted, the latent energy of the crowd should be galvanised. Such energy will be able to bring back to life – the earth will become too small for all those reincarnated in the new times, and therefore



new planets should be populated. And for that reason – forward! Forward everything human and earthly: clouds and microbes, all together rise up, the living and the dead – everyone, rise up! Rise and charge again and again to perish or to conquer, all as one, all people and all lynxes, all fir trees and all wolves, all oaks and all beaches, mountains, and people, people, people, living people all who abandoned or were abandoned, all who fled or who wanted something without knowing what. And none should halt so long as there was any resistance. Never. Till the stars. Till the final secrets. Till the ultimate causes.

## I see colours

Everything in innumerable colours.

In the Georgian language, colour was never just a colour; it simultaneously conveyed character and appearance. ყველაფერი (*q'velaperi*): everything (literally – all colours) – means the combination of all colours. Similarly, არაფერი (*araperi*): nothing – represents a void, something devoid of colours, nothingness. The world is presented to us in countless colours: უთვალავი ფერი (*utvalavi peri*) [Shota Rustaveli], contradicting the Western understanding of colour, where colours are countable and visible. The words “such” and “how” – იმფერი (*imperi*) or ამფერი (*amperi*) and რაფერი (*raperi*), are derived from relations to colour, infusing specific character, quality, appearance, and meaning with colour. ფერისცვალება (*Peristsvaleba*), the Christian transfiguration, means to assume a bright, fiery face and to be clothed with divine energy.

“The colour is the caress and intoxication of the eye; an explosion of colours, the eye becomes confused, a little agitated by this kaleidoscopic cinema where the most dizzying combinations of colours dance. In the intense daylight colours, objects, architecture, and people begin to blur, spill, or dissolve into each other as if their limits had



been lost in a haze of sexual intensity. The East becomes an explosion of colours. What shimmering silks, what fancy, glittering marbles, what opulent bronzes and golds! What fashionable blacks, what striking vermilion, what silver lames from Byzantium and the Orient! Enough. Such stuff founders in a narcotic haze. Let's be done with it . . . it is time to crusade for whitewash and Diogenes."

A certain distaste for colour runs through Western culture; from Aristotle, to Goethe, to LeCorbusier, colours are disturbing or unsettling, and for Huxley, the hallucinatory state of heightened colours was one of "notself," or, in other words, disorientation, loss of consciousness, and loss of touch from what we see as reality. Colours were deemed artificial or not genuine, accused of attempting to mask something, always less-than-true and the not-quite-real. During Reformation, colour was seen as a distraction from God, and so all Protestant churches were systematically stripped of their Catholic "sensuality" and excess. Colour is always a property of some "foreign" body – usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer, or the pathological. Colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential, or the cosmetic. Savage nations, uneducated people, and children have a great affinity for vivid colours; animals are excited to rage by certain colours. People of refinement avoid vivid colours in their dress and the objects that are about them. This chromophobia, or fear of colour, manifests as the valorisation of white (skin?) as the colour of rationality, cleanliness, and control.

We will not allow the division of the world into two districts – the East and the West, but we are standing in the centre of world-wide art life, in the centre of a small leading group of persistent workers – conquerors of painting and drawing.



Maybe that's how paradise sees the world.

In two non-existent pictures that wanted to show it in totality. On one side, a picture of progress. On the other, the image of destruction.

Between progress and destruction, there is a world. A destroyed wall painting by a Mexican painter and the huge hidden canvas of Bluebeard. Both captivated from the sight. Turned into fiction. Pictures of the world that the world talks about, but cannot look at.

A medusa that cannot look at its own face of horror.

Perhaps the image is always insufficient for the world. It is impossible to show the totality of the world, just as it is impossible to show God. It's always a metaphor.

And in this insufficiency, every representation becomes an excess.

The world as excess; it turns into a stone at the sight of itself.

Perhaps any attempt to depict the world as a whole becomes a picture of an orgy, an orgy that should be kept out of sight. It could start a fire. Rebellion. A noise that might break the windows or a fatigue that will make everyone fall asleep.

I see a representation of the world that is missing.

Big picture of an orgy. It is impossible to describe it because it looks like something else at every moment. Because it turns into what the eyes want to see. Bodies in ecstasy turn into dead bodies. Bodies of progress into corpses. And vice versa. A corpse into a living body, a dead body into a body



of ecstasy. The earth devours bodies, bodies devour bodies. I recognize someone in everyone. Maybe I recognize myself too. But I won't be able to describe myself. Because in this orgy of the world there is too much light and too little light at the same time. Too much light in the lobby of Rockefeller Center. Too much darkness in Bluebeard's shed. Both are impossible to watch. It's like you're looking at a fire or an excessively black night. Both turn us into a shadow.

Shadows as black as the body of a black lion, too dark to be seen. Surrounded by the devouring fire of progress.

### **I see myself**

If a certain asceticism is associated with the experimentalism of the avant-gardes, then Socialist Realism often appears as some kind of orgy, but an orgy channelled into an anti-orgiastic domain, such as the world of labour, the world of trade, traffic, housing, the world of the everyday represented on bus stations, research institutes of microtechnology, lithopone factories, knitwear factories, glass factories, electromechanical plants, bread factories, automobile repair centres, railway depots, garages, swimming pools, tourist camps, theatres, cafes, kindergartens, universities, roadsides, nightclubs, bath houses, super markets, mental health institutes, residential buildings, sanatoriums, aquariums, teahouses, poultry breeding farms, cinemas, steelworks, wool processing enterprises, mineral water fountains, wineries, concert halls, glass factories, railway worker associations, houses of culture. I see the Socialist proletariat aware of their own tremendous, red-blooded strength, glorying in it, resolved to use it to emancipate themselves and humanity. No dreaming in the fictitious world of Apollonian bourgeois order, but revelling in the joy of the earthly paradise, undeterred by any preacher or moralist. Not Apollo, Jesus, Prometheus, or Diogenes but Dionysus. Only a Dionysian working class can accomplish the social revolution.



## **I can't see darkness, I feel it**

The feud of the cube and the curve, line and colours, can appear to be just a new iteration of the Apollonian and Dionysian dynamics as proposed by Nietzsche. One is transparent, symmetrical, balanced, elegant, and light, the other seductive, mysterious, uncontrollable, and dark. A precious and measurable harmony that is opposed to a yawning chaos. But they always exist together, just like on the western and eastern wall of the temple in Delphi, Dionysus on the other side of Apollo expresses the possibility, always present and sometimes occurring, of an eruption of chaos into the beauty of harmony.

Music was always acknowledged as having the privilege of expressing the soul, but only visible forms were accorded the definition of beauty. Chaos and music thus came to constitute a dark side of Apollonian Beauty. It was expressed by those senses that permit a distance to be maintained between the object and the observer: sight and hearing rather than touch, taste, and smell. But those forms that could be heard, like music, aroused suspicion because of the involvement they imply in the soul of the listener. The rhythm of music refers to the perennial flux of things, considered discordant because it is devoid of limits.

Dionysiac Beauty is dangerous Beauty, antithetical to reason and often depicted as possession and madness. It is the nocturnal side of the late summer sky, populated by initiation mysteries and obscure sacrificial rites.

This disturbing nocturnal Beauty was to remain concealed until the modern age, only to emerge as the secret and vital reservoir of contemporary expressions of Beauty, thus revenging itself on the beautiful harmony of Classical Beauty. Revealed at night in dance halls, ballrooms, and clubs as pulsations and beats, as orgiastic and trance-like participation, as the Beauty of sound-made-movement-



made-touch. The city lives by day, observed and guarded  
by mosaic figures of shards, squares, and slivers of colourful  
glass and stone. But at night . . . When light is scarce and  
Dionysus takes over, we feel them coming alive but we don't  
see them. We feel the beat

The foot, the ground  
The flesh and the bone  
The beat of the road  
A slingshot's stone

And it goes on and on in that suspended ecstasy that is  
being released

A spark, a flame  
A blast  
It's a little warm

We feel the time that is not yet to come, we feel it how it breathes

It's a sliver of glass  
It's life, it's the sun

The time resides in us, which is not yet to come

It's night, it's life

It's moon, it's stone

a spark

a drop

a glass

a beat

a loop.



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