What Is Missing

Published by

M.H.Bowker.
Misinterest: Essays, Pensées, and Dreams.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/75667
A forgotten dream has an exquisite (ex + quaerere: sought out) quality.

That it is missed, and known to be missed—which is to say that we remember we’ve forgotten it—gives it a precious feeling, the timbre of a cloud.

The dream, itself, may be profound or banal: a revelation of a sacred truth or a nightmare about forgetting to wear shoes.

Someone will say a forgotten dream must be forgotten, is meant to be missed, as if we could know what is not meant to be known.

When we forget a dream, we miss a chance to hear a fragment of our wish and fear. In this sense, we miss a chance to be completely.

It is fair to ask, “Who can blame us for forgetting?”
It is fair to ask, “What if there were no dream?”
It is fair to ask, “What if the dream were not forgotten but imagined in order to be imagined to be forgotten?”
It is fair to dream about an ancient being who shared one’s dream but did not forget.

The missing content of the forgotten dream may be the exquisite, itself, in its purest form: the unredeemable.

Still, it is unjust to consecrate such missing as meant to be.
To make missing meant to be is to say we’re meant to miss being.

2.

When we call for an answer but hear no reply, we are tempted to mistake silence for missing and missing for mystery.

Investigations into mysteries are ill-fated because mysteries are made of things we determine to be meant to be missed.

Indeed, mysteries require silences, mute and magnify them, insisting that inconceivable words, prayers, or songs may be heard, but only if they are never articulated.

We make mysteries on behalf of our misinterest: a neologism (I know) needed to describe antipathy to interest.

Misinterest is, admittedly, a paradoxical concept, for we are not supposed to be averse to that which interests us, much less to interest, itself.

And yet misinterest is everywhere, compelling us to mistake, mishear, misunderstand.

Misinterest protects us from the grief of re(-)called misses, but does so at the cost of interest in life.

Why?
Because of the feeling: “not good enough.”
If we are not good enough, we are not good enough to be.
Interest is a way of being; indeed, the heart of it.
Thus, guilt attends interest if we believe — even unconsciously — that we’re unworthy of interest, missing what is needed, undeserving of being.
Efforts not to be occasion guilt as well, since most of us know — even unconsciously — that we need to be.

3.

If a parent were, for any reason, incapable of loving a child, that parent would do well enough to show the child interest.

For love is only interest of a very special sort.
Someone will object that love is infinitely more, that interest alone is not enough.

This objection, too, is made of misinterest, misused to serve love's mystery.

Very often one person loves another, even profoundly, even ferociously, but cannot hold love's central interest. Hence, love goes missing and becomes a mystery.

The making of missing love into a mystery is a tragedy with which any thoughtful person is familiar: familiar, in part, because it is, principally, familial.

4.

To the dilemma implied by this condition, a solution presents itself: to survive.

To survive is to be barely, to transpose the feeling, “not good enough to be,” into the conviction, “To be barely is good enough.”

Those who would be barely require deprivations, *environs* that recapitulate abandonments in which another was not good enough, but wherein thinking so would have been tantamount to death.

In such cases, to be “not good enough” is a means of surviving.

One cannot be barely amidst plenty. But the deprivations and abandonments referred to here are not concrete.

Instead, visible, tangible, audible surpluses of all sorts may surround the barely being beings who, nonetheless, have “not enough” at their centers.

5.

It is fair to ask whether we occupy ourselves with such investigations (*recherches, Forschungen*) to discover what we miss or to avoid it, whether we pursue “*la magique étude du Bonheur*” [“the magical study of happiness”] of which Rimbaud wrote wryly be-
cause it is a study “que nul n’élude” [“that no one escapes”] (1886), or in spite of its putative inevitability.

It is uncertain whether we may ask why we miss what is missing without indulging in a fascination with loss, whether we can truly perpendiculate the peripheries to which we are drawn, whether we can hold on to what is central, even as centrifugal forces seem to pitch us away.

Some find it distressing to discover that there is no such thing as “centrifugal force.” Even what we feel to be “centrifugal” is a fiction born of an inertial frame, a frame we keep forgetting, like a dream, as we move and move, all the time missing what makes physical forces real: objects acting upon objects.