

RIOT



THE MOTHER
The Mother
a play by
Bertolt Brecht





TEMITON



...trigine have a history in ...
...production. Another ... is the ...
...to see film in France, to the ...
...and ...
...to repair and ...
...of the ...
...in the 1960s, or the ...
...several ...
...older and ...
...it ...
...the other ...

...ER PLUS

100 x
ZA MINUTU

SOSO
SALOON



LOUÉTIN



Michael Rowland, from the series SPACE COW (2019)



80002



Set 700

PHILIP



THE SPECTACLE OF POWER
CONVERGES WITH ITS IDEAL IMAGE

Political power comes into being through the “grant,” by an absolutist authority, of “individual agency” – of so-called freedom of will – which requires a certain theatre, a performance on the part of the subject acknowledging that such a freedom is indeed within the grant of power in the first place. This performance takes the form of an exchange in which a *capital* authority over life & death is abrogated into political subjectivity. By such dialectical sleight of hand, power indeed asserts its claim over, & obtains at a discount, the feudal rights to the freedom of the individual, & to the idea of freedom as such. Whatever thus presents itself as exempted or excluded from the domain of the political, is so solely upon this foundation. For this reason we must seek the **alienation** of the subject not in some social imposition from which it may one day be freed by a *political act*, but in its very ontology. The individual subject is itself nothing other than the signifier of a constitutive alienation & the embodiment of an insidious contract from which there is no release. This is the true meaning of subjectivity, compromised at birth, weaned upon the most Oedipal of bad faiths. It bears the sign of the asymmetry of power inscribed upon its brow & dreams constantly of becoming its opposite. And from this stems every impulse & logic of **resistance**.

Vito Acconci

MANIFESTO
A TALE OF TWO OR MORE
ARCHITECTURES
(An Architecture Of Fairy Tales)

It is the best of architectural times, it is the worst of architectural times. It's the age of lightness, of fluid architecture; it's the age of architecture that's only constructed into forms of fluidity and lightness that themselves remain solid and heavy. It's the epoch of architecture that emerges and grows as a living creature; it's the epoch of architecture that only looks as if it emerges and grows, that only looks like a living creature. It's the era of sensual architecture; it's the era of an architecture of visual affects. It's the season of virtual architecture, science-fiction architecture; it's the season of architecture that, when built, comes tumbling back down to earth. It's the spring of code-writing and computational architecture; it's the winter of generic architecture generated by and justified by numbers. We architects and designers practice operations now that will make architects ultimately unnecessary, we anticipate architecture that designs itself; in the meantime, we're narrowed down to the chosen few starchitects. We architects and designers harness multiple complexities; all the while we refine complication into elegance, we revive aesthetics, we do something that smells like art, we resort to taste and sophistication, we tag onto an 'upper class.' We architects and designers make places for people; but the more parameters we use to design, the less our design-process can be read in the places we build – if people can't 'get' the buildings we make, then those buildings are meant to appear as a force of nature, and we expect from people only belief.



THE ALIENIST TENDENCY

A breach has been made with the past, bringing into perspective new aspects of alienation: the morphology of a dead technical civilisation in the fictional process of resurrection!

And we are returning again to the “honesty of thought & feeling”?

This holographic world is being shaken out of its torpor by a four-billion-year-old technology. Yet a collective interest in the Anthropocene is not the “corporate interest,” though the broad lines of its future development are narrowing logarithmically.

If the outward forms of the new alienation differ fundamentally from those of the old, these are not the aesthetics of a “movement” avid for attention at any cost. But simply the inevitable product of the alienating conditions of the epoch. A century’s earnest & pregnant struggle preceded its eventual emergence.

The path of development of the new alienation represents a serious obstacle, made only to appear obscure by conflicting theories & dogmas. Worst of all, its denial has already, & not by chance, become institutionalised.

That is why every critical tendency convinced of its historical mission must be purged from within.

Theoretical catchwords & catchphrases, like “accelerationism” & “economies are assembled from flows,” have the effect of diverting alienation into external channels (the transcendental object *par excellence*) or making it merely one-sided (the mechanics of *irreversibility*).

This is reflected in a general ignorance of alienation’s radically *pre-conditional* character. An ignorance that mistakes it for a “bridge uniting opposite poles,” between historical materialism & technological transcendentalism.

Consequently Alienism has been mistaken for an aesthetics of *paradox*.

But can the real nature & significance of Alienism be conveyed by a mere stance & counterstance?

Rationalisation by pseudo-dialectics isn’t a purifying agency but an alibi for planned social obsolescence. Just as “emancipation” of architecture by functionalism masks the purely formal character of its “economic solutions.” Both find their counterpart in the alienation of everyday life.

For whereas rationalism is the construction of a unified method of social control, alienation implies a predetermination of reality itself. Set upon their course, there is “no going back.”

New resources of alienation have further accelerated this ideological manufacture of the “real”: an isometric whose fluid molecular density has made it possible to erect a global array of transparent structures.

Together they constitute a “Great Chain” or a “Great Wall.”

Yet this most pervasive of all social architectures cannot even be seen.

Only by its ruin does it become visible.

WHITNEY



**ART IS
MEATPACKING**

99 GANSEVOORT ST

Sponsored by

America 

Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still #23, 1978.
Gansvoort street, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, gift of The Weinstein/Ethan
Wagner 2012/2014. © Cindy Sherman, courtesy
of the artist and Metro Pictures, NY.

**Whitney Museum
of Art Capitalism**

whitey.org
[#NewWhitney](https://twitter.com/NewWhitney)

ART IS MEATPACKING



Jo Bliin, I WISH THE EARTH WAS FLAT AGAIN (2019)



Jo Blin, YOU ARE NOTHING ON TWITTER (2019)



Atefeh Ahmadi, FAMILY PORTRAIT (2018)

EXPERIMENT AS RESISTANCE

"The Pillman radiant wasn't my first discovery, it wasn't important, and, strictly speaking, it wasn't a discovery"

– Arkady Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*

Experimenters resist in their zones by not seeking knowledge, but confusion. They know resistance is as futile as any attack. They want to keep speculating, independently of the relevance or the practical use of their investigations. Experiments produce no results, but anti-results. An anti-result is an unstable, evanescent environment which excludes all previous paradigms without defining a new one. Away from "the logic of speculation" itself. Just trying again, failing better. Unconditionally obfuscating. "For LiPuma," writes Achim Szepanski, "the logic of [financial] speculation is three-dimensional. The first dimension concerns the social ontology within which each instance occupies a place given by the totality. Second, this logic shows that the agents can identify a risk position. The uncertainty is transformed into a risk, and at the same time the worldly sources of risk are identified, which aggregates various risks."¹ Proper experiments generate further uncertainty, they continuously define one fugacious speculation zone after another preventing the possibility of calculating risk. Experimenters love uncertainty, the incalculable space, the outside. They carefully destroy each of the three dimensions by engulfing their action zones in a blind blank space: social ontology is excluded, risk cannot be identified, uncertainty occupies all the space. "Rather than a special class of object, art became a special class of information" – writes McKenzie Wark in *Alienist IV* – "Art is a derivative, a financial instrument. The art object is the repository of the sum total of all information about it. The artwork is merely the receipt for its own resonance as information."² Following its way to dematerialization – from artwork to concept to performance to information – experimental art becomes un-art (unlike the anti-art of the historical avantgarde), ungraspability itself, the unreadable map of its own occultation, the programmed impossibility of being turned into information: it's un-formation, meta-metamorphosis, an entropic orgy hiding in plain sight with the mobile camouflage of the indeterminate fakeness of fakes. Let a thousand weak myths bloom and go immediately extinct! The experimental goes beyond concept, performance or information: It might be the blackness of a black hole resisting its own resonance as information. The resistance to sound, to light, to form... so black we couldn't even decide – much less calculate – if it's there there or not, if it will ever be, but still entangled with the world.

GERMÁN SIERRA

¹ Achim Szepanski, "The Speculative Capital" (3), *Onscenes* (4/10/2019).

² McKenzie Wark, "Late Holocene Style," *Alienist IV* (2018): 14-19.



**RESISTANCE, by
its very defi-
nition, doesn't
take place in a
"SAFE ZONE"**



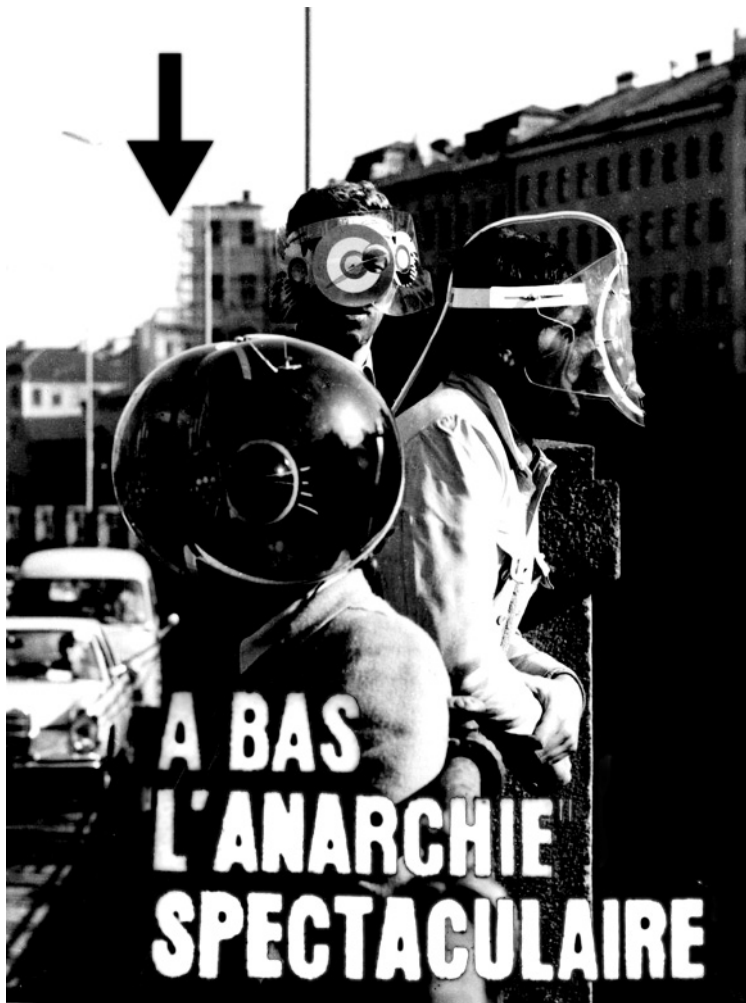
**To the
Keepers
of the
Categories:
all $\text{gen}[d]r$ is
 $\text{alien}(\text{ated})$.**



GENDER WILL BE ALIENATED OR WILL NOT BE!



**ART
WANKS
A TIGHT
RIMBAUD
OVER
ABYSSINIA**



A BAS "L'ANARCHIE" SPECTACULAIRE

BLUEPRINT FOR A MANIFESTO OF ALIENIST CINEMA

The very origin of the SYSTEM OF CINEMA must be subverted:

1. cinéma: l'autre monde

"For any ardent materialism, truth is madness." (Land)
For an ardent capitalism, madness is truth.



2. cinéma: l'histoire

Structured LIKE A LANGUAGE, the filmic 4th-dimension is an unconscious colonised by a system of hyper-production, commodified into a SUBJECT whose meaning it is.

3. cinéma: le réel

Just as pathology denotes the abnormal,
the image produces the real.

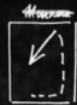
~~le désir~~
~~du destin~~
~~la culture plénière~~
~~la capitale comme lieu de~~
~~la douleur~~
~~capitales de l'impression~~

4. cinéma: l'aliénation

Reflecting the sexual logic of taboo & transgression, the SYSTEM OF CINEMA venerates order & derives its gratification principally from it. It proffers emancipation as the zero sum in a movement of convulsive signification: cinema or nothing. As desire is the discourse of the unconscious, cinema is the dream of capitalism.

The armature of any system of representation is MONTAGE:

Montage isn't an attribute. ↔ Montage is (image) ontology.



The IMAGE is abstracted from montage as a quantum state is abstracted from superposition: event from probability.

Montage as xeno-paradox:

The autopoietic "interval" of a between-two-angular-momentums;

The indivisible Planck limit of a "difference-without-terms";

The teleology of the present; of presence, as WRITING (cinematographia).



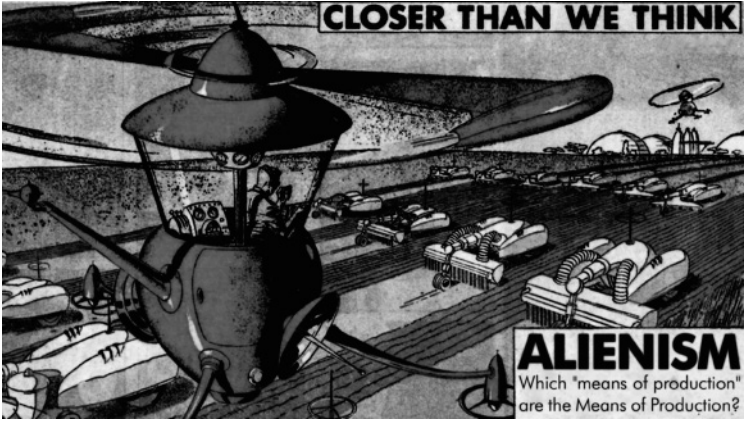
Montage doesn't produce an image of thought (dialectics), it is the operation of cinematic thought "itself."

ENTROPY is the dramaturgy of FILM FORM: the eternally diminishing return, refracted, polarised.

The subversion of cinema is the dissipation of IMAGE as "surplus production" into a logistics of NON-WORK. Montage as radical AMBIVIOLENCE.

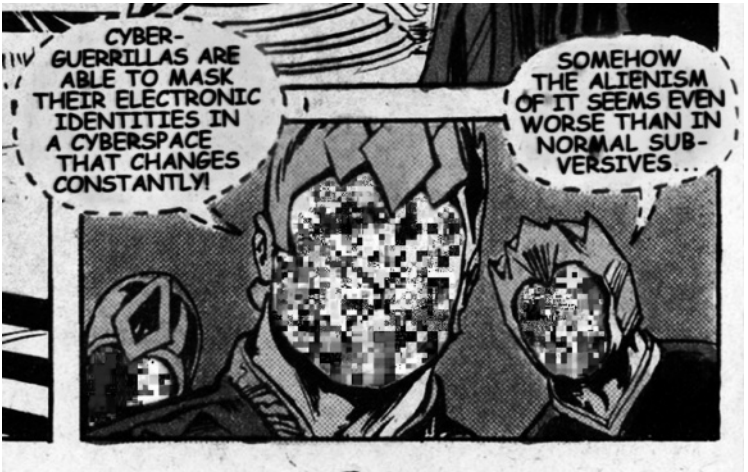
INTERIOR MINISTRY

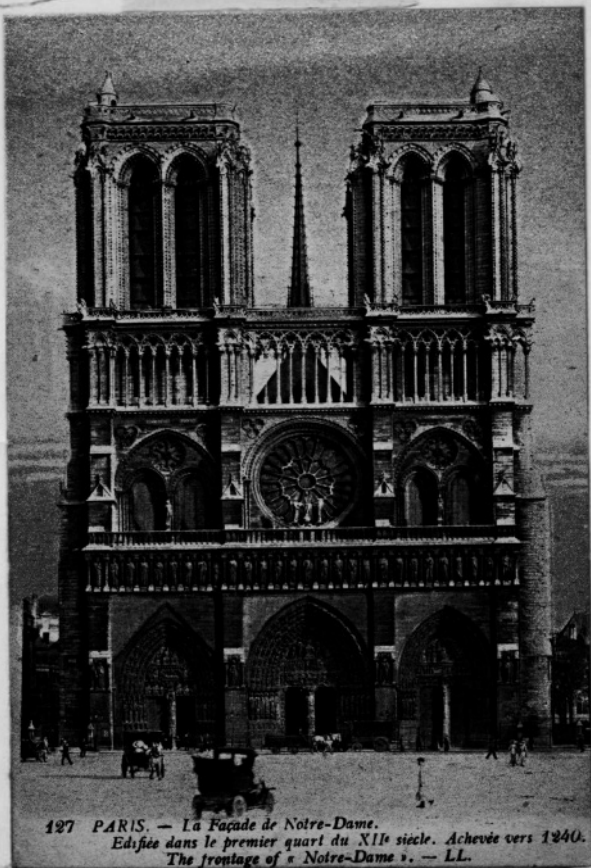
CLOSER THAN WE THINK



ALIENISM

Which "means of production" are the Means of Production?

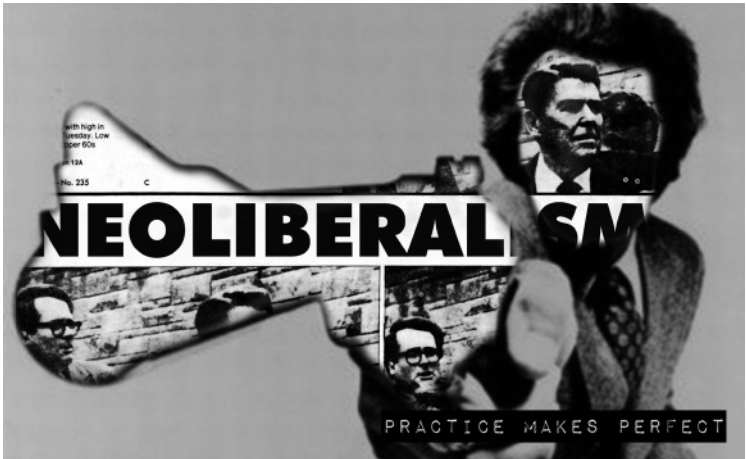
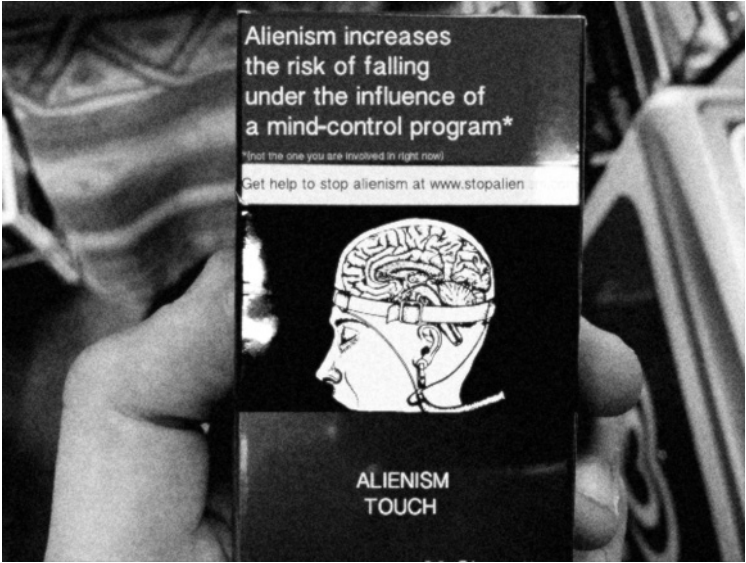




127 PARIS. — La Façade de Notre-Dame.
Edifiée dans le premier quart du XII^e siècle. Achevée vers 1240.
The frontage of « Notre-Dame ». — LL.

L H O O Q

SHE'S GOT A HOT ARSE!



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT



#WEARENOTSORRY

**SINCE ART IS DEAD,
IT HAS EVIDENTLY
BECOME EXTREMELY
EASY TO DISGUISE
COPS AS ARTISTS**

DEBORD

ART CAPITALISM'S DARK OPERATORS

*Descendez les flics
Camarades
Descendez les flics*

– Aragon

That avantgardism has long been amortised to the so-called Culture Industry in no way detracts from its efficiency as a disguise for Art Capitalism's dark operators: reactionary elements within the field of self-professed "political art" whose role is that of infiltrator, chaos agent, provocateur.

It is ridiculous to define the revolutionary in art by that which has failed at revolution simply to become an accessory of Art Capitalism.

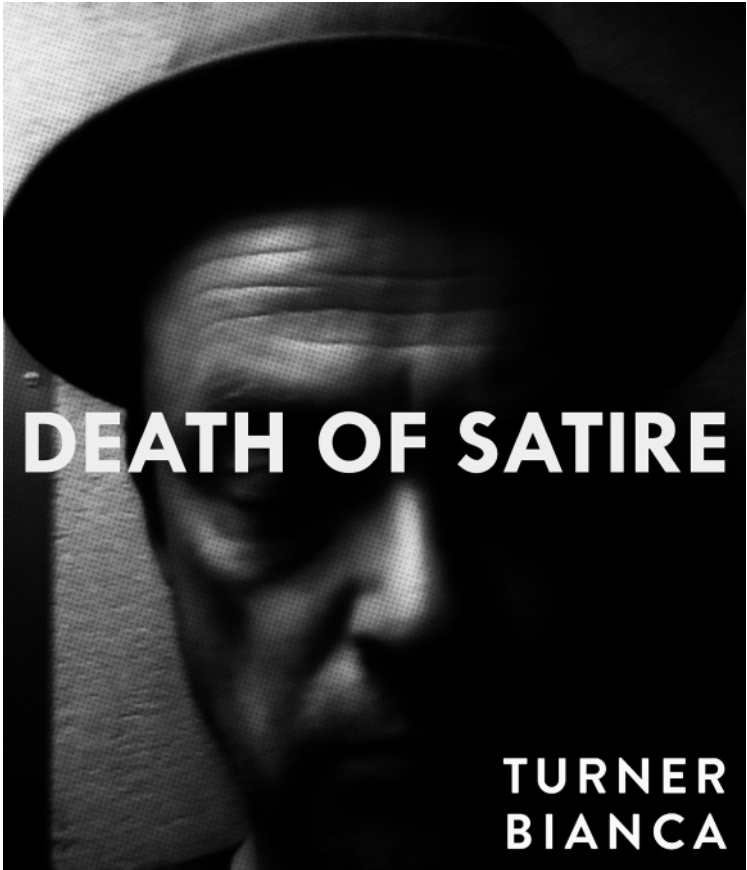
Just as Capitalism isn't ONE, so too "the avantgarde" isn't a rigid designator. There is no fixed order, no slide-rule. If the avantgarde exists, it does so in a dimension that has failed – on the ideological plane – to be foreclosed.

As Wark & others have shown, it is ridiculous to speak of Capitalism – or in a high academic tone of Late Capitalism – as if it were a reification of all temporal relations: as if Capitalism, transcending time itself, were to name every possible relation to a future.

Traversed by its own internal contradictions, Capitalism is nothing if not evolutionary. Yet it deceives by positing the terms of its critique as unchanged & unchanging: historical artefacts of a revolutionary critique confined to Museums of Modern Art & their propaganda fronts.

The paradox of the avantgarde-as-commodity is that it exists in order to profit by discrediting itself. Its agents inhabit the radical fringes, hyping an economy of "pure principles" designed to subvert the evolutionary, the experimental, the possible – & in order to trumpet the reactionary products of this subversion as the true measure of art.

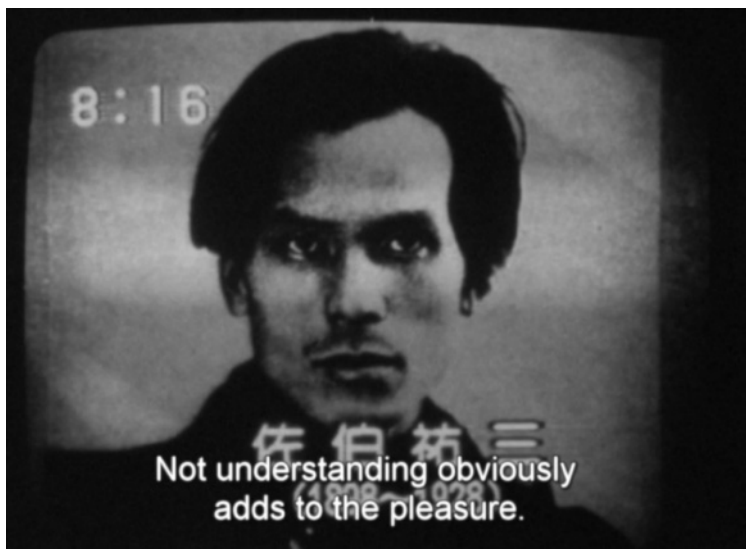
We know who they are.



DEATH OF SATIRE

TURNER
BIANCA

"Alienism does not fall from the sky readymade: it is no more inscribed in the TOPOS NOETOS than it is prescribed in the wax of the brain."

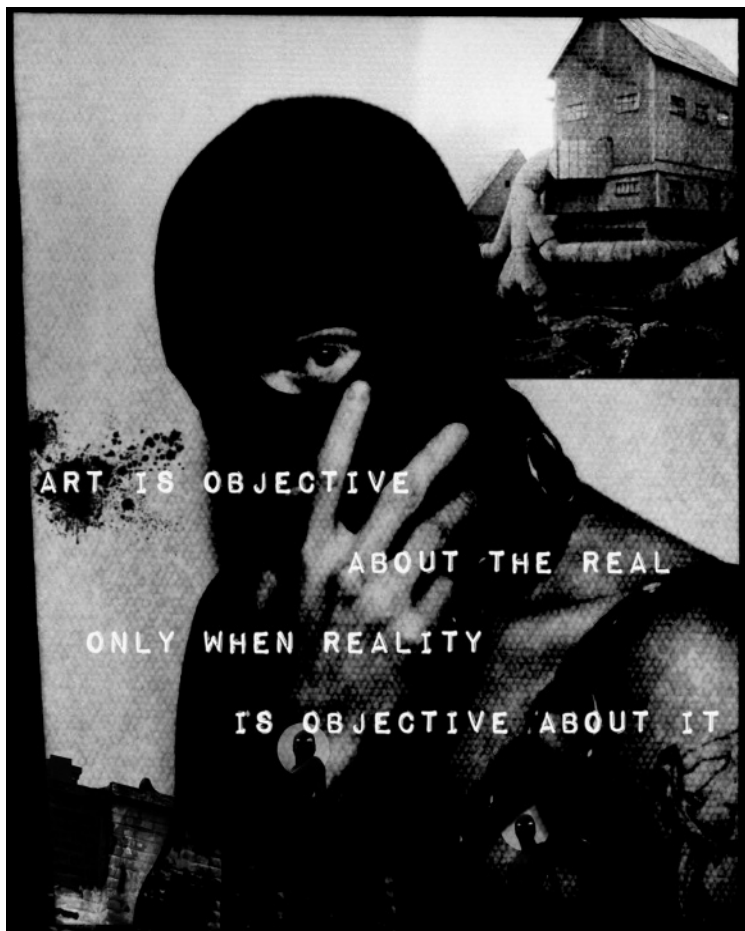




SAATCHI ART



**ART KAPOTALISM'S
DARK OPERATORS**



ART IS OBJECTIVE ABOUT THE REAL
ONLY WHEN REALITY IS OBJECTIVE ABOUT IT

THE PROCESSES

A Factographical Proem (part 1)

"More than 1,000 people have already been arbitrarily sentenced & imprisoned. And now this new law, supposedly also called "anti-rioters law", is meant to prevent us from demonstrating. We condemn every violence against demonstrators by the police. Nothing will stop us! Demonstrating is a fundamental right. Down with the impunity for the law enforcement! Amnesty for all victims of oppression!"

– Call for the first General Assembly of the *Gilets Jaunes*

"I will be a worker: it's this idea that keeps me alive, when my mad fury would have me leap into the midst of Paris's battles – where how many other workers die as I write these words to them? To work now? Never, never: I'm on strike."

– Arthur Rimbaud

1.

during an election campaign in 1904 in Berlin for the German Reichstag the hitherto almost unknown **Rosa Luxemburg** reprimands Kaiser Wilhelm II. for having no idea of the horrific living conditions of the working class

she's sentenced to three months imprisonment for "insulting the Majesty," of which she has to serve six weeks

at the end of 1905 she travels to Warsaw in support of the Russian revolution

the following March she's tried again in court martial proceedings & avoids the death penalty only by paying a bond

on 11 July 1873 poet **Paul Verlaine** is brought before the examining magistrate in Brussels for having fired two pistol shots at his friend whilst inebriated

Rimbaud with merely a slight hand injury informs the attending judicial officer that he'll refrain from all civil & criminal proceedings

London then Brussels: the appalling nights of hygienic dreams of idiocy & tooth decay [Rimbaud who reproaches Verlaine with a gesture of contempt for the subjective tenor of his verses but not the never-ending booze & absinthe frenzy, & Verlaine who's just afraid of Rimbaud's *imagination*]

in a letter to Rimbaud dated 4-5 July, which is confiscated upon Verlaine's arrest the name of the Paris Commune Eugène Vermersch falls the officials

in the eye [sentenced to death in absentia], the target of their widely scattered projectiles

in 1961 poet & director Pier Paolo Pasolini is accused while working on the script of *Mamma Roma* of raiding at gunpoint a refuelling station & looting 2000 liras

a weapon loaded with golden cartridges

the newspapers then publish a photo of Pasolini during filming, holding a submachine gun & making a distorted face

although Pasolini denounces the indictment as baseless & there are no witnesses, he's considered guilty

I'm not joking

the court will assert mitigating circumstances & grant that he's committed the act only to use it as script material in his forthcoming book

2.

In 1960 **George Jackson** is accused of having stolen \$71 at a gas station in Los Angeles

although there's evidence of his innocence, his public defender advises him to trade with the prosecutor on account of two criminal records for trivial offenses

he should plead guilty & in return receive a lenient sentence

& he's eventually sentenced to a one-year-to-life detention

Jackson spends 10 years in Soledad Prison [the monstrous breeding of capitalist companies], whereof 7 years in solitary confinement frozen on a few square meters

a revolutionary has no personal interests no ties no name he moves in zones in which the bourgeois order the so-called civilised world with its social contract doesn't count

his hatred of society as the only weapon available which passes the censorship of his letters from prison

Jackson's language traces & magnifies the cracks in the walls of this hell
police & anti-terrorist units arrive at Tarnac at 5 am on 11 November 2008
a hamlet on a plateau in the Département of Corrèze in south-west France
with dog teams they fight from house to house
but the 150 paramilitary cops find neither weapons nor sufficient evidence
to justify an arrest or an indictment

a wavering oligarchy of ruminating cadavers is wildly striking out on all sides
a crippling loss of authority no police shamanism will be able to restore

nine inhabitants of the village, called from then on the Tarnac 9, are alleged
to have formed a criminal group with intent to execute a terrorist attack
one of them **Julien Coupat** will serve seven months in custody

in consequence of a law designed to preempt supposed intentions
[preparatory actions] & not the proven facts, & thereby to suppress terrorist
attacks preventively

in 1959 the authoritative Salvadorian poet **Roque Dalton** is arrested
[having called for resistance to the exploitative practices of landowners] for
alleged anti-state activities & is condemned to death

a day before his execution, the dictator is overthrown & the sentence
repealed

in the ensuing political turmoil Dalton manages to escape he flees to
Guatemala Mexico then the years in Cuba where he joins the revolutionary
movement

Chris Marker recalls in *Le fond de l'air est rouge* the global struggles
of the political left in the 1960s & 70s the murdered & executed leftist
revolutionaries & activists like Che Guevara Pierre Overney Jan Palach
George Jackson Roque Dalton or Ulrike Meinhof their trials & funerals

the human being must still be thought of as an ensemble of social relations
[Marx in the sixth thesis about Feuerbach]

Dalton returns to El Salvador in 1965

you only make politics in the enemy's camp

unprotected from those one attacks in free verse

the poet as a subversive a heretic a prey prisoner & a torturee can be a murderer a poet within a groaning hell machine

the ruling military junta detains him again & imposes a second death penalty

shortly thereafter, an earthquake destroys the prison walls & once more he succeeds in escaping

he returns to Cuba a few months later works as a newspaper correspondent & functionary in Prague

sees Lenin haunt Moscow hand-in-hand with the spectre of communism

a sacred left-wing alliance waiting for better days

& instead prefers to believe in the forces of Trotsky's "permanent revolution"

3.

after her speech at the 1906 party congress of the SPD at which she called for strikes as a political weapon, **Rosa Luxemburg** is accused of "incitement to class hatred"

the preparatory action is not defined

she has to go to gaol for two months

Verlaine hopes the court's indulgence will attribute his act to a moment of madness & there's no intention of harming Rimbaud at all

another letter from Rimbaud to his friend on 7 July is sent to the case files this time the name Andrieu attracts the attention of the authorities [Jules Andrieu head of the London exile communards & in May 1871 delegate of the *commune* tasked with confiscating their possessions / Rimbaud writes in a letter to Andrieu: The goal must be the renewal of poetry & the consequent promotion of socio-political actions]

in a medical examination, doctors diagnose traces, some more active, some more passive, of *pederastic* habits on Verlaine's body

the investigation documents point out that the motivation of Verlaine's shooting at Rimbaud is to be found exclusively in the *immoral relations* & *shameful passions* of the two poets for each other

in 1972, the author of "Implacable Art: **Anna Mendelssohn** is accused as member of the "Stoke Newington Eight" & blamed for multiple bombings

in which one person gets mildly injured

at the time she's already been in custody for 5 months

isolation & repression have aggravated her condition so much that her six-month protracted negotiation has to contend with recurring health problems

anyone who claims prison rehabilitates people must be crazy

she is blind & at night runs from wall to wall
sleeps on the bare cell floor

in Goya's palace of fears & demons [disparate anatomies of grinning grimaces]

in a passionate defence speech she rejects any responsibility for the attacks

but she understands the motivation behind them

in the courtroom, she speaks a language inaccessible to the members of the judiciary apparatus

something that outside of a narrowly defined notion of society defines that provokes & disturbs those who go to bed with the idea of the existence of a *force majeure*

though her words do leave an impression, this does not discourage the jury [by a 10-2 majority vote] from finding her guilty

from the barbarism of the Middle Ages of the Inquisition & colonialism to the world wars & the *raison d'état* of political totalitarianism: a poet can be a political activist

4.

On 7 April 1979, the Italian state makes a swoop on the leftist autonomous movement in which more than 6 000 people are arrested

all in all, they are accused of armed subversion & 19-fold murder

Nanni Balestrini who in his "Vogliamo tutto" wrote the collective history of the working class

can be found on a public wanted list again

skipping revolts rebellions & strikes that draw more & more circles until finally a ring pulled around the whole city & the cops

that connects more than just an associative band

a poster with a closed fist

the constant revolutionising of all social relations [Marx]

& a state power watching in surprise how quickly the pathogen called AUTONOMIA is spreading

all together we've prepared the bottles all together we've torn open the university floor in order to procure stones

the uprising is always a surprise

everyone's got stones & Molotovs in their pockets because we've all decided to have a violent demonstration & fight back

a panorama of wild strikes that paralyse half the city

since all students & comrades take action without an order service without isolated groups of provocateurs since they're involved in all actions

against a "strategy of tension" among clans of neo-fascist politicians & clerical secret-lodge military & industrialists

who set off a bomb in Piazza Fontana in Milan that killed 17 people & injured over 100 people

to conceal the events more than 30 people disappear (unpleasant witnesses & in-the-know communists, etc.) who are drowned in bathtubs or fountains or victims of strange car accidents found dead behind the scenes shot in the street alleged suicides or injured in hunting accidents

state massacres committed under the code name *Gladio* secret paramilitary organizations belonging to the Italian military intelligence service of the CIA & the NATO emerge

since one of the well-known anarchists Valpreda should not be held responsible for the assassination in the Piazza Fontana they arrest comrade Giuseppe Pinelli & detain him on a Milanese territory

the judiciary becomes a mainstay within a repressive system authorised to solve a political problem

the state gets a kind of black box out of which information only comes out filtered or falsified

in 1969, **George Jackson** [whose detention is extended year by year] & two other blacks prisoners get accused of killing a white jailer

not because there is even one single proof

but because the prison authorities have identified Jackson as a *black militant*

in 1970, 30 percent of prisoners are blacks, while blacks are only 15 percent of Americans make up the population

the bright light in front of his cell allows him to read through Marx Gramsci Césaire Fanon C.L.R. James all night long

he never sleeps more than three hours

when two prisoners argue with each other, the guards shoot the darker one

between 1949 & 1977 [thus still two years after his death] **Pasolini** is accused a total of 33 times [doesn't Dante's Inferno contain 33 chants]

in the early 1960s he was literally snowed under a deluge of lawsuits & except for *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* every one of his films is followed by an announcement

the propaganda machine as a dispositive of social submission

endless process appointments & house searches within a climate of pseudo-tolerance

in 1971 for "incitement to military disobedience of seditious & anti-national propaganda & incitement to Crime" for two articles in the journal *Lotta Continua* for which he spent the year in the position of chief editor ["Proletarian in uniform" in volume No. 5 & in No. 8 "Report on the Fascists from Siena"]

in the *Film 12 dicembre* for which *Lotta Continua* requests his help, PPP pursues the circumstances of the murder of Giuseppe Pinelli [interrogated at a police station in Milan by officials under the leadership of commissioner Calabresi killed by a fall from the window from the fourth floor Calabresi is acquitted of any guilt for lack of evidence & after his violent death in 1972 receives the Italian Republic order of honour for civil bravery]

for Pasolini, the hatred of the bourgeoisie lies in their way of life which he dissects in his writings & films the typical bourgeois moral attitude the breeding of an artificially uprooted man

whose needs coincide with the offers of a department store catalogue a matter of fervour

the smear campaign conducted over several decades in countless court appointments culminates with Pasolini having to assert himself against the most ridiculous charges & the first-instance court sentencing him several times then the second-instance court acquitting him

it will then become clear that the world has long had the dream of a thing

namely, that the thought not manifesting itself in action is not a thought

5.

in September 1913 Rosa Luxemburg warns of the devastating consequences of imperialism nationalism & militarism & calls for international solidarity of the working class against war

if we are expected to raise the murder weapons against our French or other foreign brothers, we explain: We do not do that

in the spring of 1914 she is sentenced to 14 months imprisonment due to a request for conscientious objection & command to refuse

her defence speech will later be published under the title "Militarism, War & Working Class"

she doesn't have to start the detention immediately

together with Jean Jaurès she appeals to the power & solidarity of the proletariat at an international meeting in Brussels

Jaurès is murdered on the way back by French nationalists

shortly thereafter, the First World War breaks out

the circumstances under which in November 1920 the poet **César Vallejo** is thrown without a trial into the central prison of Trujillo – otherwise nothing more than a dilapidated black dungeon whose horror will accompany him for the rest of his life – are still not fully understood

whether he accidentally gets imbroiled in a spontaneous uprising of parts of the population of Santiago de Chucos who take to the streets to protest corruption & manipulation resulting from a recent election or whether Vallejo is one of the ringleaders of this riot in the clash between police & the insurgents in which three people get killed & a mall looted & set on fire

in a series of shots & blows the truth is redefined

individually tailored repressions based on loosely assembled algorithms

reports that have seen Vallejo at the head of the uprising & mention he's carrying a revolver & speaks encouragement to the others show only how seriously the poet & communist [who will later defend the Spanish Republic] takes the social revolution the workers' fight against exploitation & oppression

in the Trujillo prison he writes most of his second book of poetry *Trilce*

while his hands plunge into the corner of his black cell

the secret circuit of justice dense & invisible beneath the surface

a fly falls to the ground still crackling

he experiences the daily deprivations the scars made by bones sticking out

the laughable weight of a starving person inside a bloody ocean

in the many letters he writes to fellow poets & journalists, he asks for their support & mentions he's not expecting a fair trial

the media echo is huge & after 122 days he's finally released

shortly thereafter, he turns his back on Peru & travels to Europe

Paul Verlaine is sentenced to 2 years imprisonment & a fine of 200 francs

Rimbaud recovers quickly & within a few weeks at the granary of his mother's estate in Roche he writes *Une saison en enfer*

in a whirlwind in which he sweeps everything away longs & desires clarity for himself he opens for a moment the engine room the future of poetry his own terribly increased nature which his imprisoned friend will later be able to read in the *Delirium* & *Alchemy of the Word*

the exposed metaphors the absorption of all poisons

6.

Anna Mendelssohn receives a 10-year prison sentence of which she must finally serve 5 years

she hears of Ulrike Meinhof's death in prison

something that does not leave her cold

she wants to stay alive

live in the dark in hell without any contact with the outside

police raids & razors: there is nothing to talk about with them

the red line [the arbitrary scale of their cards] they cut into your body

a state claiming the monopoly of force

& an implemented case-law that legitimises it

every attack on the sovereignty of power must be sanctioned

the hiding places of the poetics that must remain untouched

it's not the damage caused by explosions that really disturbs the state organs

rather, it's the fact of disclosing the vulnerabilities visible to all within the system

a fact that makes them look stupid

a long-time member of the "Revolutionary People's Army" in 1975, **Roque Dalton** repeatedly rubs against the dogmas & doctrines of the Marxist leadership

where the Communist Party comes more & more to resemble the Catholic Church, he becomes the guerrilla fighter & heretic

you must be able to write your life to make your sparkling anger glow

but inhumanity cannot be represented without insight into humanity

the moment however he's ready to risk his life for the common cause [the actual communist idea]

comrades begin to doubt him more & more [the CIA who's long had Dalton on some of its death lists has been spreading the rumour he works as a spy for the US & procures the necessary fake papers]

as if one feels a look in the back & reciprocates it [Benjamin's Aura]

he is executed by his own comrades at close range by two pistol shots

after his death, his recently written novel "Pobrecita poeta que era yo" appears in which Dalton prophesies the scattered CIA spy allegations & his murder in every detail

I only keep a book

what am I dealing with? suicidal thought to rip out the heart the black fruit

in one of his letters from his 1964 imprisonment, **Jackson** writes *I have all the emotions switched off, I have moved away from myself & learned to see other people & the world in the right proportion*

I have broadened my horizons so that my thinking is not just my family & their surroundings but captures the whole world

an extension of consciousness which limits one's own self to the spatial restriction of the few-square-meter-small prison cell is limited

&, in a way, a reversal of Rimbaud's ideas from his letter of May 1871 about the deregulation of all senses [*it's about getting to the unknown through the lawlessness of all senses*]

the moment in which so many workers are slaughtered on the barricades / in which so many black comrades merely serve as a mass at the disposal of the whites

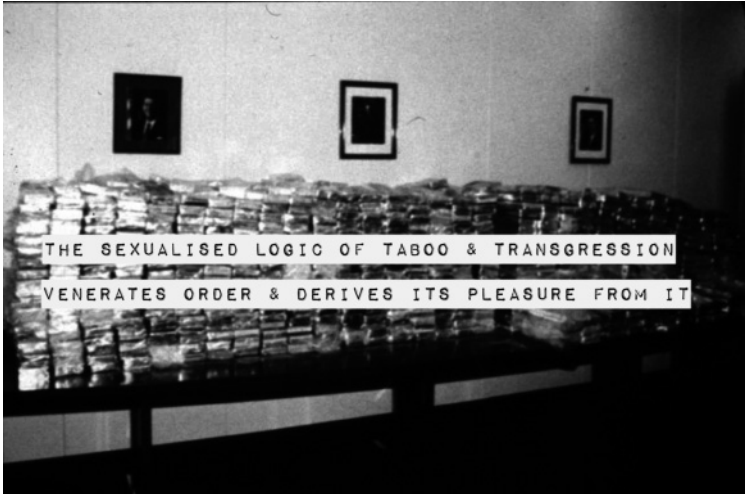
it can only be a matter of exchanging the subjectivist position for the objectivism of the poet as the illuminator of the story

I am making tremendous strides in the effort to acquire everything I need to accomplish my plans

PETER BOUSCHELJONG
translated by David Vichnar & Tim König



THE GREAT ACCELERATION



THE SEXUALISED LOGIC OF TABOO & TRANSGRESSION
VENERATES ORDER & DERIVES ITS PLEASURE FROM IT



RE-ENACTING THE ANTHROPOCENE



NO EXIT

Protest only serves as the prenatal expression of an attitude that must still give birth to direct action.

In order to create new possibilities, oppositional fervour needs to collaborate in the work of a complete reinvention of the current order or "reality."

Power cannot be importuned to deconstruct itself.

The Anthropocene isn't an artefact of the Corporate-State Apparatus but its reification.

It isn't a symptom, but a system.

It is a system that has closed off all the exits & has the force of negation on its side.

The work required to defeat it is that of a relentless & unremitting deconstruction.

An unreasonable & onerous task, perhaps, yet without fulfilling it the future will indeed be devoured by the still incomplete project of the Corporate-State Apparatus.

For its apotheosis is the final catastrophe.

Tomorrow, the Corporate-State Apparatus will no longer be merely the dominant ideological form, it will be the Death Star that has consumed the World.

Department of Education and Science

Fun with Bombs

Science Laboratories

DES Safety Series. No 2

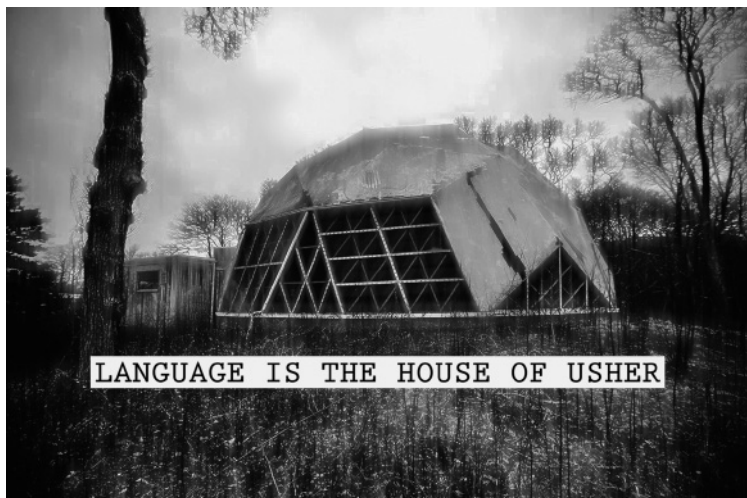


BUT THERE ARE
STILL *OTHER* WAYS
FOR ME TO
HANDLE YOU,
LOVER!

HMSO



rien ici sauf
ce message.



TECHNOLOGY IS ALIEN LIFE

Language, the original techne, evolved from the magnetosphere, the gravitational field, orbital & rotational periodicities, the compressed atmosphere, impact craters, thermal vents, clay beds, swamps, glaciations, caves & amphibious zones – the primordial architectures – into all forms of planetary being.



USES FOR A DEAD POLITICS

THE ANTHROPOCENE IS CAPITALISM'S "HUMAN HYPOTHESIS"

Between the Anthropocene & the approaching Technological Singularity a stark predicament comes into view: that those cultural formations so far modelled on "Western democracy" are unable on their own to produce the social, political & economic transformations necessary to survive the conditions likely to prevail in the coming century.

It's virtually impossible (despite every effort in the media to do so) to

evade the awareness that we inhabit an era whose commodified politics is completely at odds both with the global consequences of its actions & with the alternative possibilities opened up by a counter-tradition of *experimentation* in art & technology. Socalled progress has come at the price of the renunciation of any mode of experimentation that doesn't immediately consolidate those socially-engineered forms of the Corporate-State Apparatus into which modernity has congealed.

Yet we know a different End-of-the-World is possible to the one prepared for us by the Corporate-State.

REALISM IS INFORMATION WITH NO OTHER PURPOSE THAN TO SIGNIFY "REALITY" WHERE NONE EXISTS

The period from 1989 until the turn of the millennium produced what was represented as a drastic decline in revolutionary thought – which is to say, the practical critique of political economy. This was attributed to a lack of possibilities for theoretical renewal & the apparent exhaustion & corruption of revolutionary principles encapsulated in the Soviet Union's collapse & the "triumph" of neoliberal mysticism. Yet the end of Cold War merely prefigured the return of a more insidious commodified false consciousness under the mantle of the New World Order.

For over half-a-century, market ideology has renounced "a strict hierarchy of factitious values" & openly advanced an appeal to irrationalism. The irrationalism of a neoliberal *perpetuum mobile*: unlimited market expansion, unending consumption, inexhaustible profit potential, the autonomous power of the Free Market. From its position of serene omnipotence, Capital caused to trickle-down to the "masses" a subtle defeatism that still insists, after decades of neoliberal asset-stripping, that the "Free World" no longer has a taste for politics – as if in answer to a collective wish that the Free Market might finally have lost its taste for profit.

Yet it is precisely a measure of politics' potential to signify the contrary that its devaluation has been taken to ever-lower depths in the avowal of the "Free World's" diminished interest. For it is the greatest accomplishment of Power to have perfected the art of the *fait accompli*, whose repudiation would thus also represent the greatest threat to it. History teaches that such a "point of view" is an illness, for which there's no cure that isn't more dangerous than it is.

POLITICS OF THE UNPRESENTABLE

"Silence," wrote Juan Goytisolo, "has been, is, & will be the greatest accomplice of the abuses & crimes of dictatorships." Not because repudiation is impossible, or simply dangerous, or merely difficult. But because "society" allows itself to be persuaded that – like everything else supernumerary

to this freest of all possible Free Worlds – it has run its course, served its purpose, expended its reason for being. Having “abolished” class struggle, successive generations of Thatcherjugend have taken every opportunity to instruct society that it DOES NOT EXIST.

That democratic systems, in their present throws of decadence, have with a disturbing sense of inevitability tended towards Ubu-esque convulsions of totalitarian grotesk is a “truth universally acknowledged.” Yet this truth remains held in check by a soporific counter-belief that, in democracy, everything “balances out in the end.” The “end,” however, is a stingy paymaster.

This deluded belief in a homeostatic system of self-regulation in which the “balance” of the Free World consists, doesn’t derive from any historical indifference towards politics on the part of the “masses,” but from a systemically inculcated fatalism that politics itself is *a matter of indifference*. Yet at the same time, whenever the impetus for violence arises in the face of such an overwhelming “indifference” (at the moment it is finally unmasked as an *ideologically control force*), barely has it acquired a popular form than it is co-opted by the system itself, which – at the slightest disturbance to its “democratic” rites – flies from the cultivation of ennui to a rabid nihilism.

Thus are the “forces of progress” always prepared to volunteer “the conquest of freedom & justice” in a great act of self-sacrifice.

UNDER WHAT GUISE DOES POWER RE-EMERGE FROM THE THEATRE OF ITS NEGATION, IF NOT AS NEGATION ITSELF?

The Doomsday Clock may read 2-minutes-to-midnight, but in reality time has run out. The option of gaining greater knowledge, of “re-educating,” is no longer on the proverbial table. The Anthropocene has brought into view, in its naked political reality, the fact that a complacent belief in a “geological timescale” with no bearing on human affairs is critically, catastrophically false.

The Anthropocene is not simply an abstraction reified as the latest “concrete situation” in an ongoing rhetoric of crisis. It is the critical mass of the entire history of colonist-corporate violence imploding upon the so-called “real” of the Free Market Consumer Paradise – taking the rest of the world with it. It is the ultimate China Syndrome. There is no poetic justice in this picture.

To speak of alternatives, therefore, isn’t about “building a consensus” to change course, or to change the stakes. Nor is it about “opposition,” which merely restores the very logic it presumes to contest. It is about planning & undertaking the effective NEUTRALISATION of a World Order whose apocalyptic mission is to go down with the spaceship.

There is no point whatsoever appealing to the Corporate-State

with sentimental morality. The Anthropocene is to the evangelists of neoliberalism what Manifest Destiny was to the Yanqui founding fathers. The simple fact is, for the Powers-That-Be, the world is a zero sum game.

A PSYCHOSIS OF AESTHETIC GRATIFICATION

Meanwhile, with blithe unconcern, techno-mystics & academic Marxists alike instruct us that so-called liberal democracy will collapse, not through the revolutionary struggle of the masses, but as the consequence of a corporate-technological dynamic which has emptied itself of any substance. That is to say, into the form of its own ideal commodification.

Yet it is precisely in the form of the commodity that the Corporate-State Apparatus is able to go on adapting to any contingency & incorporating every negation, since it itself is nothing but a signifier of its own seemingly unlimited expropriative capacity. In doing so, it holds up a mirror to the political domain, in which the "consciousness of the masses" is reflected as hollow shell, echoing with its own sound & fury, etc.

The power of a mere reflection to produce the reality it supposedly represents, is the political lesson consumerism has drawn from Mao's "mass line" ("from the masses, to the masses").

Mao: "Take the ideas of the masses (scattered & unsystematic ideas) & concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated & systematic ideas), then go to the masses & propagate & explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own."

The emancipatory promise of transcendental post-capitalism is no different from this. In realising the mass line's potential for expanded production of Corporate-State power, via the enchantment of a seemingly endless line of credit, the commodity transforms itself into the true medium of the *political*. Thus the spectre of an interminably conjured "to come" leads through the mirror-maze of subjective emancipation to an ideal self-validating hyperconsumption: the pathological *desirability* of the Anthropocene.

"ONE LAW FOR THE LION & OX IS OPPRESSION"

The anointed philanthropists of post-capitalism, with all the unctuousness of hand-wringing priests, inquire after the spiritual & mental health of those who've fallen prey to the idea that "material well-being & progress can be disassociated from the conquest of freedom & justice."

Nevertheless, it is impossible to address the question of the Anthropocene without first addressing the legacy of a market ideology that presumes a status equal in effect to that of a "natural order." The eliding of the "world" with the *thought of the Anthropocene* is inherent to the very logic of the marketplace, not a crisis that has befallen it or a deviation

from a correct path. The Anthropocene is *bound* to a logic of capital's *immanence*, as both self-evident & as that *which cannot be held to account*. This asymmetry is its very premise & the very reason why the so-called free market has no investment whatsoever in fundamentally redressing the "crisis" of the Anthropocene, which it views as a "natural" evolutionary process & which it is incapable of not perpetuating.

Thus is the valuation of the "world," like every other commodity, subordinated to the market. And thus, too, the freedom of the market produces greater & greater levels of material inequality. This gives the lie to the meretricious dogma of "first among equals," as much as to the self-advancing rhetoric of "one world."

That the idea of freedom has degenerated into mere advocacy for free enterprise, is no revelation. Nor that, while resisting the regulation of its own interests, the market should seek to constrain those upon whom its free operations depend. Yet to accede to the idea that "value is fixed by whatever price is realized in the market," is equivalent to abetting the market in dictating the terms of economic bondage for those over whom it asserts power, while refusing collective responsibility for the *execution* of that power.

In this, the market is permitted to behave as if it is a natural law, on the pretence that the struggle of the marketplace is (natural) evolutionary struggle, & that nature (by definition) is unaccountable. Yet where in nature unaccountability is symbiotic with disinterestedness, no such relation obtains in the marketplace. Under conditions of Corporate-Statism, there is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.*

COLLECTIVE CEREMONIES OF ABNEGATION?

To Ricardo's "iron-clad laws," then, we must add the inevitable passage from liberal democracy to fascism, as the teleological counterpart to that inflated Marxian projection (a marginal note magnified into a pillar of truth) of capital's ultimate self-supersession in the service of a transcendental apocalypticism.

* The often-mooted 10% *flat tax*, for example, which for a subsistence wage-earner has a qualitatively far greater impact than a tithe on corporate profits. Yet even this version of *égalité* would represent a kind of utopia in an "advanced liberal society" like France, where – in a climate of continuing austerity overseen by the former investment banker Macron – those lowest on the economic rung are expected to bear the burden of the Corporate-State's climate catastrophe through *additional taxation* (a so-called "eco-tax") while those at the top of the ladder receive ever-greater "tax-relief" (including the scrapping of the "Solidarity Tax" on wealth & a *flat rate* on capital gains). In a farcical repetition of Reaganomic "trickle-down" mystification, it's still only the poorest "polluters" who pay, not those who profit from pollution, who instead are rewarded "in order to stimulate the economy." The corporations, meanwhile, indulge in public relations stunts like concocting a "global taskforce" to "combat" the toxic waste they themselves continue to produce on an expanding scale (the so-called "Alliance to End Plastic Waste," which includes ExxonMobil, Saudi state oil, Dow Chemical, Proctor&Gamble...).

Yet, as with all dystopian futures, this too already exists, as that sadomasochistic spectacle of Corporate-State autoeroticism called the Anthropocene. This parody of a social contract goes a long way to explaining how apparently localised *economic* protests have “spontaneously” transformed itself into a global *political* movement on a scale unseen since Mai '68. For those who demand a critical theory to fit the “facts” & not vice versa, the “facts” have been laid bare.

There's no concealing the *telos* of this fissile econosphere or passing the countdown routine off as a rogue operation in arithmetic. In an age of robotics & AI, it is no longer possible to separate a “labour theory of value” from politics as such. Between surplus & obsolescence, the one is constantly being recuperated in the production of the other, under the false appearance of a “subjectivity” capable of perpetuating itself even “in a world from which all life has vanished.”

Extinction, therefore, must not be confused with a mere status of environmental habitat, since – in its most radical (& increasingly imminent) formulation – it defines the *condition* of a future defined as techno-capital singularity.

ONLY THE IMPOSSIBLE HAS NOTHING TO LOSE

“As we drift past the tipping point,” says Stiegler, “the Anthropocene discloses itself as a dead-end trap...” But the Anthropocene isn't simply a trap, it's the mansion with many rooms the god of Capital promised all along! It is the prize of a collective Will-to-Alienation that stuffs itself on the exorbitant plastic fruit of a Faustian contract whose enforcers are meanwhile kicking the door down.

In a world still solemnly possessed by the most absurd beliefs & false enlightenments, the “omniscient narrative” of the Anthropocene cannot even claim the allure of tautology. Its causalities have from the very outset been despairingly obvious & of an Eichmannesque banality. The trick was merely to seduce the people into hating themselves more than they hate their oppressors – synchronising that self-hate with the nihilism of an industrial juggernaut centred entirely within itself.

Haunted by the spectre of its dead futures, what superstition wouldn't seize the opportunity to proffer all the comforts of the Next World before the onerous task of averting the end of this one? An end which it itself has so assiduously cultivated.

And if in such impoverished “cultures” the poorest means of expression are inevitably those left to the greatest number, then it is equally true that these are also the more easily turned to the work of apocalyptic reason – since their only register runs directly from the barest minimum to the all-in: from a lit match to a conflagration: from nothing to everything.

ART ISN'T THE MEANS OF EMANCIPATION, BUT THE PRODUCT OF AN EMANCIPATIVE STRUGGLE

Every expiation requires a sacrifice, but the first sacrifice must be of the dangerous superstitions themselves. Yet culture's like a scapegoat that only wants to die prettily.

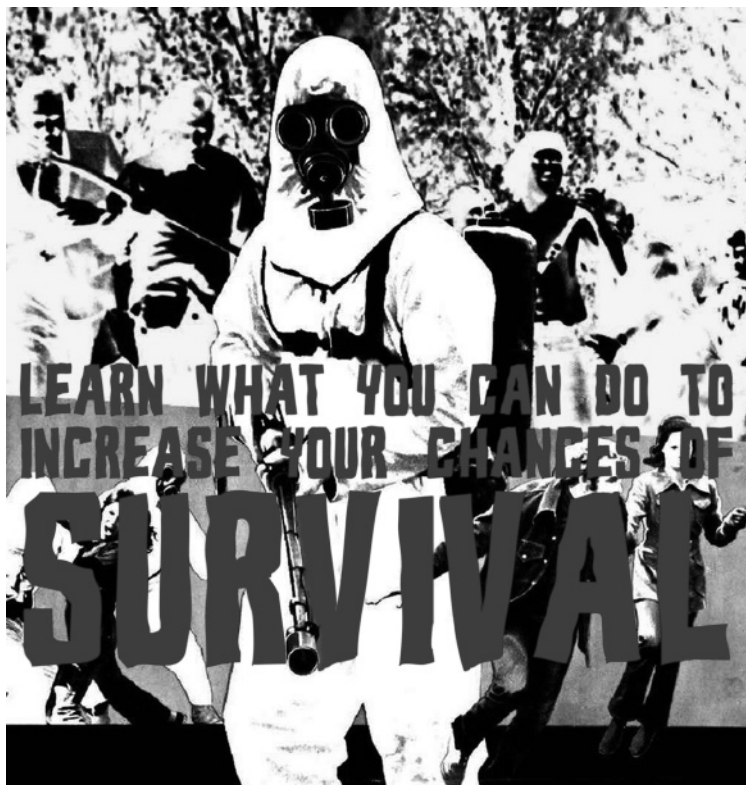
It is a measure of its pathological condition, that a culture so impoverished is willing to believe the most flagrant lies about itself. In this we must conclude that "the society of the spectacle" is no less "the showtrial of society." Even its eruptions into protest assume the form of a self-impeachment. No sooner does it smash its imaginary idols than it hysterically rebuilds them – in an ever more elaborate & paradoxical ritual of self-abasement. Such are the funeral re-enactments of a dead politics whose spectre has never been laid to rest, cleverly caused to haunt the collective "guilty conscience."

What distinguishes the Corporate-State from those forms of totalitarianism that preceded it, is precisely this. For it's enough that a spectre be *sufficiently* believable to a culture *desirous of belief*, yet a culture that is itself of *insufficient means to satisfy its desires*. It's enough, in other words, for this spectre to subsist from hand-to-mouth. Not for eternity, nor even a thousand years. But from one moment to the next. One compromise to the next. One submission to the next. One distracted desperation to the next. All constellated into an infinite relay.

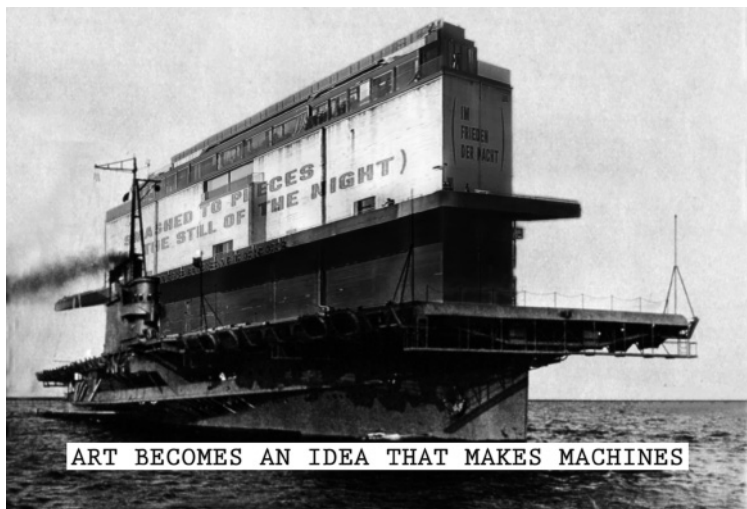
This frisson of precarious beliefs is the *non plus ultra* of an ideology that lays flowers on its own grave, while preparing of its mausoleum a veritable doomsday box. It is the highest form of a culture that perceives itself only in hologram. A fractured image reflecting itself in perpetuity. The holy cybernated corpse. The one true god of the Anthropocene.

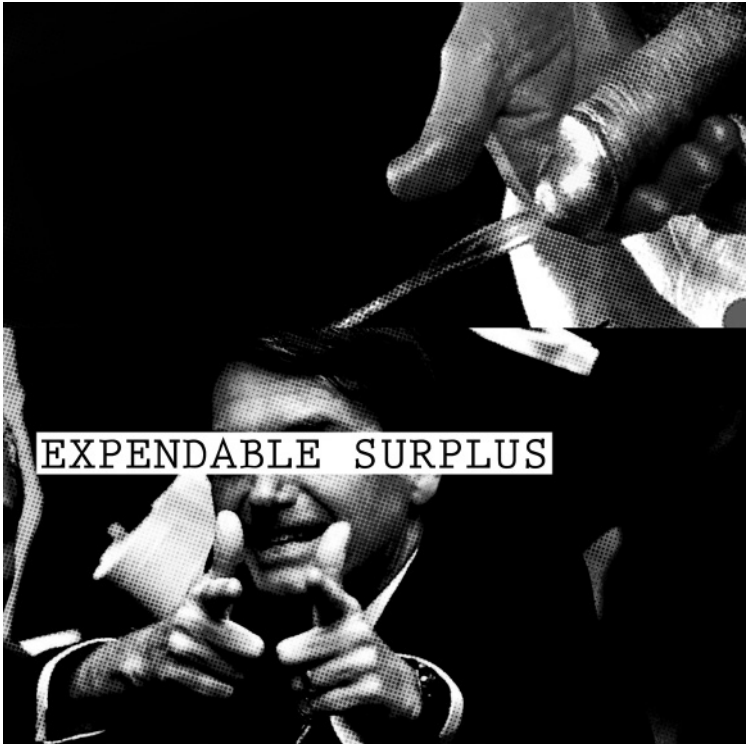
The task of art isn't to come to praise it in its house, but to bury it once & for all.

INTERIOR MINISTRY
February 2019



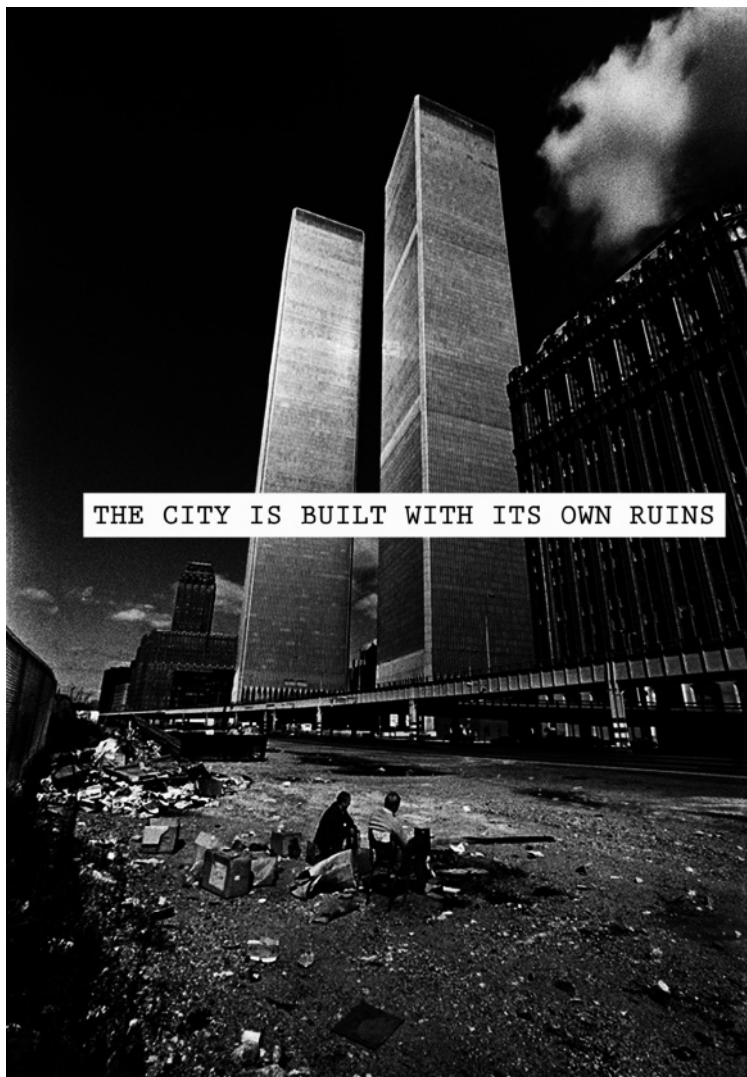
LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL



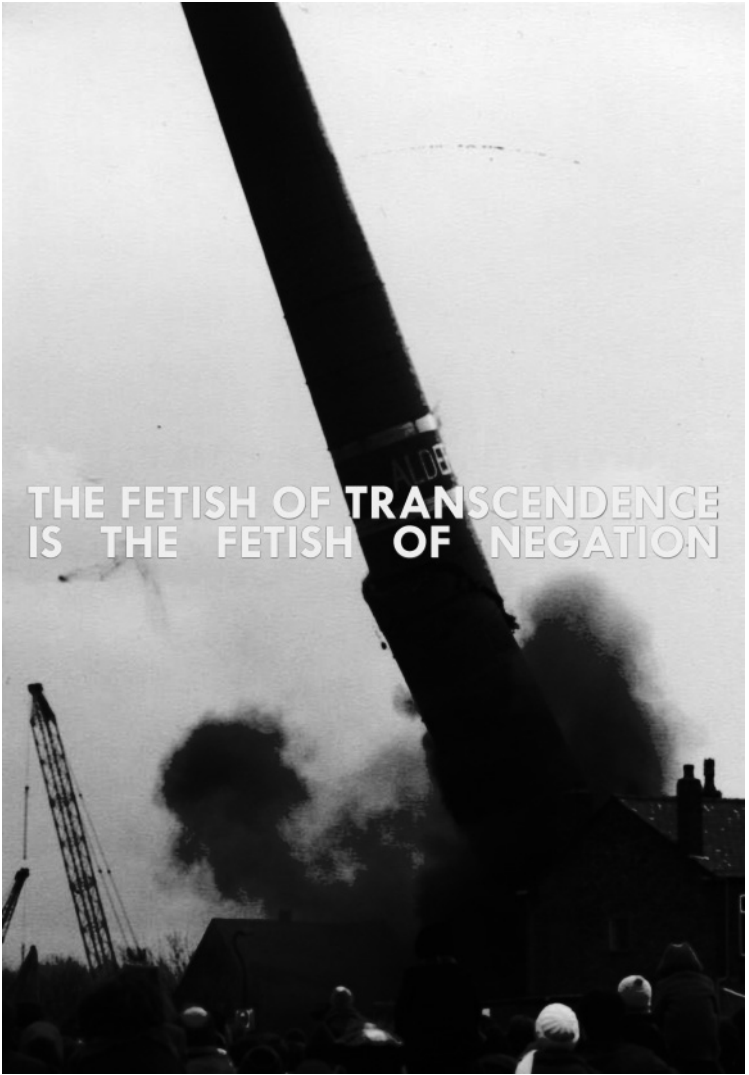


"Just as the only 'guarantee' against making mistakes consists of thinking for oneself, so the only 'guarantee' against bureaucratisation is to be found in permanent action in the anti-bureaucratic sense, by fighting against the bureaucracy & by showing in practice, that a non-bureaucratic vanguard organisation is possible & that it can maintain non-bureaucratic relations with the class. For bureaucracy is not born out of incorrect theoretical opinions, but out of its own necessities in a certain stage. It is necessary to show precisely through acting that the proletariat can do without the bureaucracy."

– Pierre Chaulieu/Cornelius Castoriadis, "Réponse au camarade Pannekoek," *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 14 (April-June 1954)



PRINCIPLES OF ANARCHITECTURE



THE FETISH OF TRANSCENDENCE
IS THE FETISH OF NEGATION

THE FETISH OF TRANSCENDENCE IS THE FETISH OF NEGATION

A black and white collage of images. The top half shows several figures falling from the sides of tall, modern skyscrapers. The bottom half shows a city in ruins, with a large, skeletal metal structure in the center and a church with a steeple in the foreground. The overall mood is one of chaos and destruction.

THE IDES OF MARCH & THE DAY AFTER

THE RUIN OF IDEOLOGY IS
THE CONCRETISATION OF HISTORY

How did the world come to be crowded with so many little Caesars? Are we approaching a new age of ceremonial regicide? For too long a revolutionary perspective has been the view from a periscope, whereas the true corruption lies in our spleen, like a sludge of accumulated

microplastic. It's no longer enough to "cut off the head of the Beast," the virus of the Corporate-State Apparatus has infiltrated every vital organ of the social body, the lymph, the entire nervous system. It has infected the stratosphere, poisoned the oceanic abysses. Its replication has gone into overdrive: soon the planet itself will be nothing but one giant sarcoma. It won't be a question anymore of the *accumulation* of Capital: there'll be *no more air* for what once was real *to dissolve into*. For too long we've been told to be prudent, that "revolution" is a child's cloud-castle. But prudence, as Blake said, is a rich ugly old maid courted by incapacity.

"NOBODY HAS DONE THIS TO ME!"

On the 16th of March, the mainstream press reported that Emmanuel Macron had cut short a skiing trip in the Pyrenees in order to chair a crisis meeting with government ministers, following the burning & looting of a Hugo Boss designer store on the Champs Élysées. Macron had been feckless enough to be caught by the cameras wining & dining on the terrace of an exclusive resort while the Gilets Jaunes battled with riot cops for the 18th consecutive Saturday. Under the tag #Le16TousAParis, Macron had been forewarned for weeks about this planned concentration of Gilets Jaunes protests in the French capital, but in the spirit of his Grand Débat elected to absent himself from the city in order to swan about on the ski slopes while an estimated 270,000 protestors across the country attempted to make their grievances heard (a number that officials modestly reduced to 32,300 [7-8,000 in Paris] in their press briefings, while at the same time claiming the 80,000 cops deployed to "protect property" had been "extremely stretched"). [Now that Macron can no longer pretend the protests don't exist, he is proposing to prohibit them.] Following Friday's Climate Strike action, the *day after the Ides of March* saw the largest popular protests in France since Mai '68, yet all the mainstream media could bring themselves to report was the destruction of Fouquet's & the "sangfroid & determination" of "law enforcement officers." Twitter, meanwhile, was swamped with images of BAC irregulars & hooligans in cop uniforms once more cold-bloodedly beating protestors & street medics. As of now there have been 12 fatalities, with over 100 seriously injured: 5 having lost hands, 22 having lost an eye.

IN THE KINGDOM OF THE BLIND, THE PROLETARIAT NEEDS ONLY ONE EYE

The Corporate-State is raising up a Cyclops army against itself, the better to point its finger at those who oppose it and scream MONSTER! The people – children, women, men – *the indignant*, are branded "nihilists," "anti-social elements," "rioters," "extremists," "terrorists." Disfigured by the

Corporate-State, the people have indeed become a monster, yet no longer as a rhetorical nicety for those in Power to fling about, but as Power's disenchanted mirror-image. Its opposite. Its monstrous negation. Despite the Corporate-State's shrill cries of alarm, the monster it has created doesn't covet the world of its creator, but the very contrary. It has no use for the Corporate-State's priceless junk. Its Versailleses, its Mar-a-Lagos, its super-yachts, its villas in Davos, its ghettos for the 1%. No more than for its Kenzos, its Longchamps, its Zaras, its SS-brand Hugo Bosses. It doesn't want its factories, its nuclear weapons silos, its unemployment "benefits." It couldn't give a shit about "looting" its well-protected privileges. Its *patrimony*. Just to breathe freely, it wouldn't be enough to abolish the Corporate-State, still it would be necessary to #trashtag its mountains of garbage. What else is there to do with all the kitsch of Power, other than burn it?

THE FUTURE IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

History, so they say, is catching up with us. In fact it already has. It's left the future far behind, with the tailings, effluent, outfall. The present's just the air left to breathe in a junked fallout shelter, from a time when ideology still had others it could blame for its suicide. In the meantime, the fascists have re-mobilised. Mass shootings, police shootings, media suppression, border walls, coups-in-progress, climate denial... The mosque attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, are unfortunately merely the latest in a series of proxy actions by supposedly isolated individuals, who in reality are united in a Worldwide Fascist Conspiracy legitimised in the political "mainstream" by the likes of Fraser Anning, Viktor Orbán & Donald Trump, among a throng of fellow-travellers. But the slaughter in Christchurch will be only a temporary embarrassment for those who've come to power on the back of a manufactured immigration crisis, fuelled & spread by Rupert Murdoch's global hate-speech lobby.

NO CRIME & COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

On 11 September 2001, 31 people identified as "Muslims" were killed in the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. At the time, the Western media expressed surprise & incomprehension that "Islamic terrorists" would kill their "own people." No-one, however, was *surprised* that "Islamic terrorists" had attacked the World Trade Center in the first place – other than the fact of the magnitude of it, the seeming lack of warning, the unprecedented logistics, the "success" of the attempt. The reason for the media's "incomprehension" was that, to Western eyes, *all Muslims are the same*. The media exploited this for the purpose of their preferred "clash of civilisations" narrative, in which a clear line is drawn *between "us" & the enemy*: the Western World pitted against the Islamic World. In this there

was an insistence that the 9/11 attacks could *not be permitted*, on any level, to be treated as *indiscriminate*. Just as 9/11 was viewed as an “attack on America,” an “attack upon freedom,” an “attack upon democracy,” so too each individual victim was subsumed into a collective identity. But to do this required excluding the “Muslim” casualties from the “non-Muslim” casualties: the “real” victims. It refused to acknowledge that the ideological profiling of Al-Qaeda – like Daesh in its wake – included *all* its victims.

SHOOTING RANDOMLY INTO A CROWD

There’s a reason why André Breton’s notorious “simplest surrealist act” – to go down into the street, revolver in hand, & fire randomly into the crowd – persists in causing controversy. But this controversy has nothing to do with the sanctity of human life. By 1929, when Breton issued this provocation, no educated European could be under any illusions about the sanctity of human life in the eyes of a Corporate-State apparatus that’d killed 20 million people during World War 1 & would go on to impoverish & starve many thousands during the Great Depression. The real provocation of Breton’s *acte gratuit*, was the claim of pure randomness: the shot metaphorically to be fired into the street was the shock of randomness itself, undisguised by the occult significations of ideological conspiracy. If we are prepared to suggest that Breton’s provocation may be other than simply an offence to good taste, or violation of reason, or an insult to the victims of “senseless” violence, it is because it nevertheless brings into view what is too often disavowed: that, in reality, the victims of terrorism are forced to abide in an ideological limbo – of the politicising of individual innocence & the imputation of collective guilt – & so they become *for a second time* the victims of an abstract collective punishment. Far from being paradoxical, this is the very stuff of that “righteous indignation” in which the clash of civilisations is rooted, since to be deemed innocent also requires the individual to be a kind of tacit “collaborator.” A collaborator in the violence of the tribal myth – in the moral majority – in the illicit fruits of stolen labour. Everything in its place. The World Order. Were it possible, an act of sheer randomness would abolish in an instant the entire armature of this idea.

DISCRIMINATION IS THE ALGORITHM OF POWER

When the Corporate-State Apparatus goes out into the street & fires into a crowd, it doesn’t murder a random cross-section of humanity. It murders only those who are, by implication, *guilty before the fact*. It is not *indiscriminate*; it discriminates very precisely.

When the police go out on a killing spree in America, there’s nothing random in the fact that their victims are predominantly black.

And when Daesh went into the streets of Paris on the night of 13

November 2015, the 130 people they murdered were not *chosen at random*, but with the exact same degree of intent as the WW2 “strategic” revenge-bombing of civilians in Warsaw, London, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Dresden, Nagasaki, Hiroshima.

With the same degree of intent as Guernica & Guatemala City.

With the same degree of intent as Laos & Cambodia.

Etc. – etc. – etc.

And when white supremacists live-streamed their attack on two mosques in Christchurch last Friday, it was not a *random act of terror*: the 50 people who died, died because they were Muslims. As individuals their deaths would only be allowed to *appear* “arbitrary.” None of them “deserved” to die, they’d committed no capital offence. Yet as Fraser Anning, the unelected Australian Senator’s racist screed proclaimed – & which the Murdoch press duly amplified – they were all nonetheless guilty. Guilty by the most spurious narcissistic “reasoning.” As the powerless everywhere are guilty. Like the “witches” of Salem, guilty of magic, yet helplessly burned at the stake. And the “secret overlords” of the global Jewish “cabal,” defencelessly murdered in their ghettos by Nazi hooligans.

Thus are the victims presented as the *real* murderers, while those who perpetrate violence upon them are presented as its *true* victims (the front page of a UK scandal rag described one of the Christchurch killers as an “angelic boy” – no doubt because he selflessly gave others to die for whiteman’s sins, in a country still under the yoke of European colonialism).

POWER IS ITS OWN PREDESTINATION

Industrialisation may be said to have subverted the everyday realism of atrocity – reduced to statistical computations on a cybernetic scale – but monuments to the banal & *all-too-human* rationality behind them can readily be found in such places as Auschwitz.

Yet Breton’s “surrealist” provocation is in no way diminished by simple statistics, because its premise is that of a *revolutionary thought*. This revolutionary thought dares to imagine a world in which such things *could happen randomly*. It seems absurd. God was invented by humans to protect them against precisely such a world, in which guilt may not in fact be apportioned for every act.

Randomness is the great abomination of all ideologues: it suggests we are not responsible for our punishment, or at least blameable for it. (“God,” Einstein complained, “doesn’t play dice” – yet neither are dice *random*, but probabilistically *determined*.) To the Christian mind, chained to the dogma of “original sin,” randomness is the ultimate heresy.

It is for exactly this reason that it also represents the most radical & terrifying emancipation from a dogmatic view of the universe. It is as if

Breton were reformulating the old proposition, passed down via Nietzsche to Bataille: that if God is really dead, why do we not behave as if we truly believe that to be the case? Why do we still obey the God that comes in the form of the State, of Society, of the Oedipus Complex? Why do we not *assume responsibility* for a world that is *without intentions towards us*, even as we are collaborating in its murder?

COMMODIFICATION TRANSFORMS A MYSTICAL SYMBOLIC MEANING ON A HIGHER PLANE INTO A UNIVERSAL ABSTRACTION ON THE ONLY PLANE

Breton's "surrealism" wasn't an escape from reality, but an attempt, however flawed, however tentative, at a revolutionary encounter with the real *on the level of ideology*: (1) by attacking those hypocritical pieties of the Corporate-State embellished by the "sanctity of human life": pieties that have always been used to mystify *collective persecution as justice deserved by collective guilt* – of punishment, oppression, exploitation *justified* by "progress" & the pseudo-sovereignty of "individual will"; (2) by abolishing all claims to manifest destiny: the solipsistic belief that *we* are not products of randomness, but of some greater divine plan, & that *we* are the *chosen agents* of that plan. For only those enchained to predictability can be easily governed. Surrealism's "simple act" is like a signpost to the apocalyptic event-horizon beyond the domain of the Commodity Fetish: that point at which the power of the Logos ceases to command & resolves through contingency into complexity, weirdness & chance. It doesn't simply indicate a direction but itself constitutes a path: the negation of so-called "individualism," of eugenic "moralisation," of fear at the service of tyranny disguised as the *public good*. The question is not simply to act, but to demand nothing, beg nothing, justify nothing & offer nothing *in return* for Power's false benevolence. The demands, the justifications, are written already in the streets, in garbage heaps, in the mines, in the polluted oceans, in the worthless trickledown of debt-bondage. To mourn the violence of the Corporate-State & its deranged avatars mustn't provide a spectacle of gratification to those who profit from it. Mourning, too, must be a form of revolt. And revolt must be in a language that is irrecoverable – beyond any aesthetic stance or counter-stance – refusing to be entrapped by senseless "dialogue" & "grand debates." If Power understands what we mean, we have failed.

INTERIOR MINISTRY
17 March 2019



LES RAISONS DE LA COLÈRE

We have to wonder why it took so long for such a great number of men & women, whose existence is a daily struggle against the profit machine & the deliberate undertaking of the desertification of life & the Earth, to rise up from their lethargy & resignation.

How could we have tolerated, with such persistent silence, the arrogance of the financial powers that pull the strings of both the State & the supposed representatives of the people (that only truly represent their own selfish interests) to enforce laws & morals?

The silence was truly well-maintained. We diverted our attention toward making a great deal of noise around political quarrels, where the conflicts & coupling of the Left & the Right became exhausting, sinking into ridicule. We have even, at times surreptitiously, at times openly, incited a war of the poor against the poorest – against migrants chased by war, poverty & dictatorial regimes. It was at this moment that we realized that during this perfectly orchestrated distraction, the meat-grinder for the living had been running endlessly.

Therefore, we had to be aware of this progression of desertification, of the pollution of lands, oceans & air, of the growth of both capitalist greed & poverty which currently threaten the very survival of so many species – including our own.

The silence held by the deception of our informers is a silence full of noise & fury.

This has clarified many things. We finally understand that the real thugs are States & the financial interests that sponsor them, not the window-smashers of luxury stores that mock the victims of consumerism & rising poverty with the same cynicism of the politicians, regardless of their party or faction.

The ruins of a well-known luxury store on March 16.

The men & women that took the Bastille on July 14, 1789 had very little knowledge, except through vague glimpses, of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. They discovered later, without realizing it, the freedom yearning to see the light that Diderot, Rousseau, Holbach, & Voltaire espoused

This freedom was able to destroy tyranny. This deep-rooted refusal of despotisms resisted the guillotines of the Jacobins, the Thermidorians, Napoleon Bonaparte, & the restoration of the monarchy. It later resisted the rifles aimed at the Paris Commune, passing over Auschwitz & the gulags.

Certainly taking over the Élysée Palace would be giving too much credit to the grotesque paladin in power that the Order of Multinationals put in charge of doing the cops' dirty work. We should not be satisfied simply with the destruction of symbols. Burning a bank does not destroy the banking system & the dictatorship of money. Setting government buildings & the paperwork of administrative centres on fire does not abolish the State (no more than depositing its public figures & high-ranking officials).

We should never break human beings (even some cops have a bit of human conscience to save). That the yellow vests would rather choose to break the machines that charge us for everything & down excavation tools that dig the trenches of profit through our landscapes is an encouraging sign of the human progress of revolts.

Another reassuring sign: while crowds & social assemblies can be easily manipulated – as the clientelism of both the far-left & far-right suggests – we can note that, at least for the moment, the absence of leaders & appointed representatives greatly frustrates power; from which end should they catch this moving nebula? Here & there we observe that individuals, who are usually drowned out within the mass, are among themselves manifesting the creative humour, initiatives & ingenuity of human generosity (even if things can always go wrong later).

From the yellow vests movement, there emanates a joyous wrath. State

authorities & capitalists would like to say it's blind. It is only searching for clarity. The blurred vision of governments is always searching for glasses.

A woman in yellow states, "I would like Macron, who lives in a palace, to explain to me how I can live on 1500 euros a month." And thus how can people tolerate budget restrictions that affect public health, non-industrial agriculture & education, that lead to the cancellation of rail lines & the destruction of landscapes to profit real estate & commercial complexes?

And the petrochemical & industrial pollution threatening the survival of the planet & its populations? Here the First Paladin responds with an ecological measure. He taxes fuel, whose costs fall on consumers. That keeps him from touching the profits of Total & its associates. He already showed his environmental concerns by sending 2500 cops to Notre-Dame-des-Landes to destroy community vegetable gardens, a sheep pen, self-built houses, & the experience of a new society.

And what of all those taxes & duties which, far from benefiting the average citizen, are used to bail out bank embezzlement schemes? What of the hospitals lacking medical personnel? The farmers re-naturing soil while private subsidies go to an agribusiness industry that pollutes land & water? The high school students in their factory farms where the market goes to choose its slaves?

"Proletarians of all countries," Scutenaire once said, "I have no advice to give you."

Quite evidently, as verified by the trend of democratic totalitarianism, all forms of government historically & presently have only worsened our bewildering inhumanity. The cult of profit cripples solidarity, generosity & hospitality. The black hole of cost effectiveness slowly absorbs the joie de vivre of its galaxies. Without a doubt the time has come to reconstruct the world & our everyday existence. Without a doubt the time has come to "handle our own business" against the businesses working against & disintegrating us.

Judging by the freedom of commerce that exploits & kills the living, freedom is always fragile. It would take almost nothing to reverse it & change it to its opposite. And it would take almost nothing to restore it.

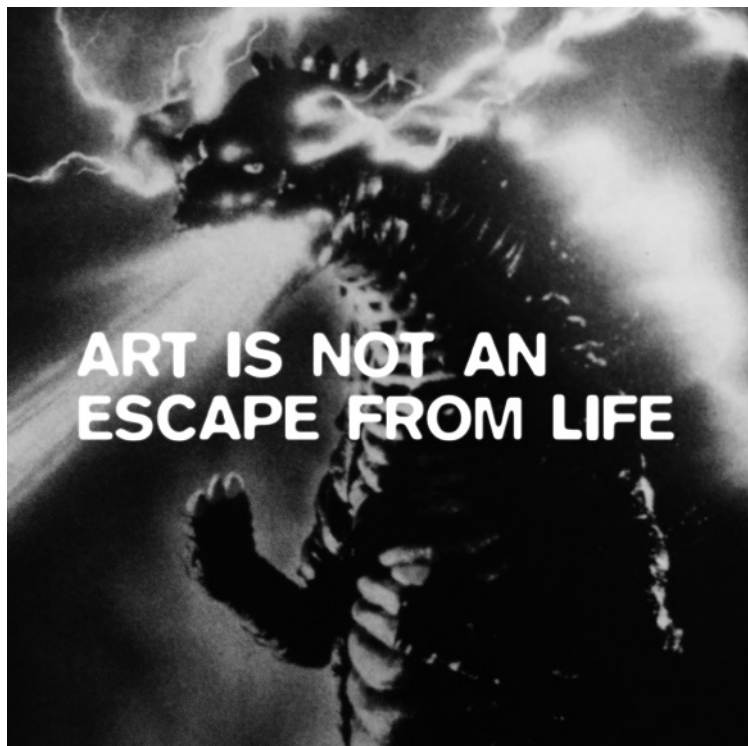
Let's take care of our own lives – they concern the life of the world.

RAOUL VANEIGEM
December 2018

* Translators' note: This short article on the Gilets Jaunes movement was first published by *Sine Mensuel* in December 2018 under the title "Les Raisons de la colère," a play on *Les Raisins de la colère*, the French title of John Steinbeck's famous anti-capitalist novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

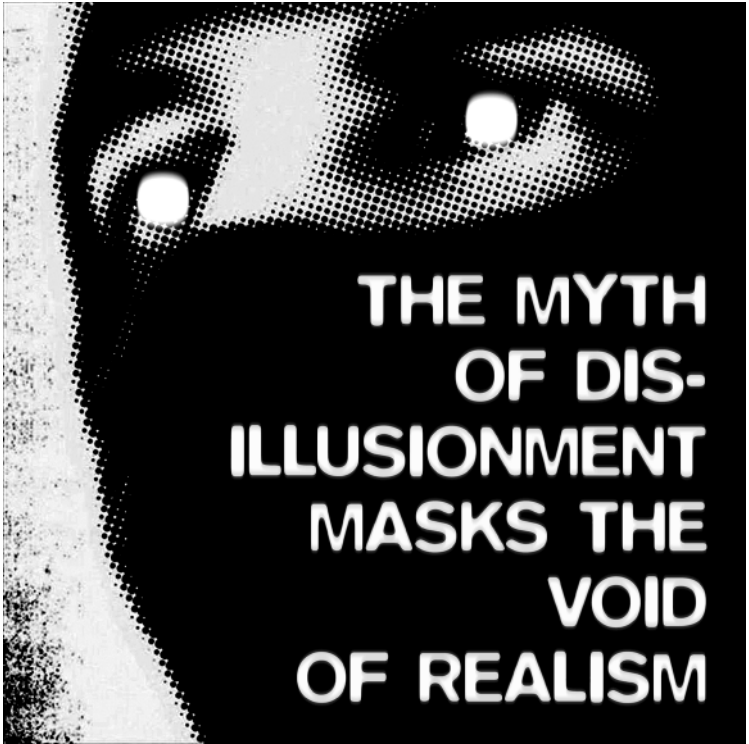


LA RÉPUBLIQUE EN MARCHÉ



From this point of view, it seems excessive to me to say (as does J. Kristeva?) that the arbitrary nature of Saussure's sign is due to the decision of the subject at play. If that were so, the very origin of language would necessarily be attributed to Play, for the major characteristic of language is to have saved the ego from the alienation of suggestive forms by transforming them into concepts endowed with signifiers. To the extent that man has been able to give a name to an alienating form, he has freed himself from that alienation. But the formation of man's language has been brought about in a completely unconscious manner by biological organo-genesis. Conceptual thought has proliferated as a parasite in the space of mental activity. Hence, for man, language is an instrument which he does not control. To acquire a more perfect knowledge of this instrument, man must play with it. That is the origin of poetry.

– René Thom, "Remarks for the Polylogue on Play"



EXCHANGE EQUIVALENCE

Alienation = the general condition of subjectivity

Reification = the symbolic form of alienation

Commodity fetishism = the agent of reification

Social media = commodification's subjective content

ALL SUBJECTIVITY IS APPROPRIATION



THE MYTH OF THE ABSENCE OF MYTH

An immense fraud has been perpetuated in contemporary thought, founded on the persuasion that modern life is a malaise – a *decadence* – produced by an “absence of myth.” It has dwelt in modernity’s shadow from the outset, the most fervent purveyor of its decadence, like a jealous doppelgänger. Yet, far from abolishing myth, modernity is in fact constituted by the greatest myth of all: the myth of perpetual progress; of the extraction & consumption of natural resources without end & the magical transformation of human waste back into *nature*. This is what the blood-&-soil of the Corporate-State amounts to: the belief that – in greater abundance than the old gods, at the service of individual gratification & without cost to the collective conscience – Capitalism will *provide*. This mystification of industry (of technology in general), fed by a complete disregard for ecological consequences, has led – with all the negative pathos of a child’s fairytale – straight down the path of catastrophe. Catastrophe on a truly mythic scale. For it is *this* – & not its absence – that will define every possible human future to come.

IN THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

This catastrophic myth of the *absence of myth* is both the brainchild & progenitor of Fascism, born with its tale in its mouth & constantly reborn like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Its resurgence today is a measure of the *frenzy* of

catastrophe that has overtaken the world, summoning the forces of negation to once more dance upon the volcano. If Fascism is the antimodernist *myth of modernity* cloaked in the ideal primitivism of a world consensually debased & enslaved, NeoFascism dreams of a new garden of earthly delights for the coming singularity & discovers it in the Anthropocene. Shrouded in the spectacle of the Anthropocene, the death throes of this world shall be the cradle of the civilisation-to-come: the “new” resurrection myth. Such antique paradox is the very stuff of Fascism. Its technomystical ideologues juggle illusion & disillusionment like Maxwell’s demon turning pure entropy into a saleable ideological commodity. It feeds order from disorder, appeals simultaneously to the masses & to a conscientious elitism, calls to action in producing stagnation, raises heroism upon the pedestal of its corruption, infuses ambiguity with a radical purposefulness. Crisis is thus both the medium & the essential overplus of Fascist thought. It is the revolutionary impetus of a longing for an “end to alienation,” of the “chaos of the soul,” & for the destruction of the existing order so that the “eternal verities” of race / nation / religion / *etcetera* may triumph. Yet it is also the very condition of a revolutionary inertia that vainly conceals itself in a reflex to reactionary self-preservation. The danger of Fascism stems precisely from this sublimation of its own impulse to disillusionment.

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

Fascism, it has been written, “is like a completely successful operation: the patient dies & all the illusions are removed” (Angelo Tasca). Yet if we are to evaluate the general orientation of the NeoFascist system (however contradictory it may appear), it is first of all necessary to determine its relation to those external forces that nominally oppose it, in order to understand how its operations have succeeded in a classic negation-of-negation, resurrecting itself from the dead social body of a liberal humanism that was supposed – in the wake of Nuremberg – to have supplanted it. How it has succeeded, in effect, in enlisting liberalism to do its dirty work for it, by increasingly shrill calls-to-order & the seemingly inevitable spiral into “police sadism, envy, servility towards power, the pitiable joy of everything strong” (Merleau-Ponty). An inevitability abetted by liberalism’s *exclusion of the revolutionary hypothesis* & by the *Realpolitik* disguised behind the “purity” of liberal principles. From here it is only a step away to the acknowledgement that “liberty is nothing more than a cruel god demanding its hecatombs.”

VIOLENCE IS POLITICAL ONTOLOGY

Just as populism has always had a powerful *counterrevolutionary* appeal, so the “purity of principles” not only tolerates, but *requires* violence. Contrary to appearances, the Anthropocene does not herald a “return of the Real” in

confrontation with the “metaphysics” of commodity capitalism. Nor is it the case that politics holds a monopoly over the translation of ideology into the “order of facts.” The opposition-of-convenience between political realism & liberal values, in which a means-ends rationality serves merely as an *alibi for the lack of a real stratagem*, is not only a mystification but antithetical to a revolutionary standpoint. Reactionary violence intercedes wherever the “purity of principles” fails to animate political action & whenever political action fails, on an ideological plane, to *transcend the world*. If the value of society is the value it places on social relations, then it is necessary to grasp ideology’s function in producing the social reality of those values. In other words, it is necessary to grasp that the political “triumph” of NeoFascism – wherever it occurs – always rests upon a socialisation of reactionary violence that arises not from the “purity” or abstract rationalism of its “principles,” but from their *failure*.

THE ODISIOUS DEBT OF THE BURDEN-OF-PROOF

If the accumulation of facts delineating the Anthropocene demands *immediate action*, this cannot meaningfully be in the form of an application of pure principles to an abstract “environmental” problem. Yet protest by itself amounts to nothing more than this. Exchanging the “mute violence” of liberal democracy for real combat, protest is reduced to an alibi, a surrogacy for a stillborn idea. Protest that renounces the necessity of its own violence will always fail so long as it remains merely the *counterpart* of a legally-sanctioned debauchery on a planetary scale. Protest by itself is capable of nothing more than *affirming* the illusion of due process from which the Corporate-State’s *programme* of exploitation, neo-colonial war, & the *suppression of dissent*, obtains its veneer of legitimacy in the first place. It is no accident that the most decisive platform for the advancement of Fascism is that which has consistently been provided by liberal democracy itself. This is not a symptom of a *decadence* of democratic values, rather it is a consequence of the fact that at the very heart of democracy’s failure to reconcile a purity of principles with political action there resides a Fascist demon. To remain absorbed in protest is to capitulate in advance to that demon; to advance into direct action is to engage the demon in a combat without illusions.

THE END DRAGS ON BUT WE MUST LIVE THROUGH IT

What in politics, in art, risks itself in the ultimate degree? The slogan of a worldwide protest movement proclaims: REBEL FOR LIFE! Yet as long as protest itself remains invested in a “democratic system” that serves the interests of the Corporate-State, it will remain an exercise in mass disillusionment. As long as protest continues to be mystified by the notion

of a benevolent power that can be persuaded (by fantastical appeals to its “self-interest”) to *relinquish the very means of perpetuating itself*, it condemns itself to an early grave. The Extinction Rebellion movement (XR) has issued three demands to governments: 1. tell the truth, 2. reduce carbon emissions, 3. establish a citizens’ assembly to direct policy on combating climate change. But there needs to be a fourth demand, addressed to itself. If time is truly running out, if ultimatums pass (like ships in the night), if the world itself is in the balance, all pretence to “civil” disobedience must end. We have all seen the ridiculous spectacle society makes of itself whenever it seeks Big Daddy’s approbation & the grotesque mask power wears whenever it wants to put us to sleep. It is time to dispense with this demoralising charade & remove the logistical means of the Corporate-State to continue prosecuting its War on Existence.

THE ROMANCE OF DEFEAT IS WRITTEN BY THE VICTOR

All that was achieved by the recent occupation of Parliament Square in London, was to reinforce the division of symbolic power: an imaginary line none dared cross, with Westminster on one side & a samba band on the other. The empty Houses of Parliament – abandoned for that festival of mock death & resurrection by which children & idiots are indoctrinated in a belief in miracles – has for weeks had no legislative schedule at all, having been reduced to the *ad nauseam* monomania of that supreme monument to parliamentary cretinism, lies, fraud & dirty money otherwise called Brexit. Real power was always elsewhere in any case. A more pointless entreaty for global action can hardly be imagined, unless it were to pray to the sky. The police were charitably mobilised so as to allow the protestors a modicum of dignity in the face of defeat. A defeat, moreover, shrouded in fatalism from the very outset. If the strategy had been to perpetrate a DDoS attack on the judicial infrastructure simply by provoking mass arrests – or to secure a public jury trial (& therefore a “platform”) by crossing a minimum threshold of property damage – then the tacticians of XR have made a zero-sum game out of pure romanticism. They have mistaken the spectacle of capitulation with a positional advantage, as if “moving into a negotiation phase” were a great victory. Yet all this spectacularism amounts to is a programme of self-martyrism, squandering the popular base they have sought to attract & which they must maintain in order to evolve into an effective eco-guerrilla movement. Yet unless it seizes the initiative by more incisive means – & renounces the policy of entering “negotiations” from a position of weakness – XR will have been nothing but an advertisement for yet another dead end.

THE RETURN OF THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE

The effort to form a popular front to combat climate change, informed

by a *spirit of compromise*, cannot avoid being held captive by a trust in the *principled use of power* – a trust that has rarely been repaid in any but the most cynical, opportunistic way. Yet it is to the Corporate-State that such an appeal is still being made – not only to implement “reforms” across the entirety of its infrastructure (in order to meet the latest targets for global carbon-emissions reduction), but to provide the vastly complex logistical means of verifying & regulating those reforms. The *institutional inertia* that weighs impossibly against this scenario is not, however, what ultimately *stands in the way* of effectively addressing the “problem” of the Anthropocene – as if it were simply an object that some future technology could magically remove. This inertia is the Anthropocene. It’s for this reason, & not a “purity of principles,” that the so-called spirit of compromise is ultimately at odds with the task required to meet the existential challenge posed by the Anthropocene in all its facets. Yet while the attitude of compromise is – *not only in principle* – antithetical to a revolutionary standpoint, no less antithetical is the naïve equation of Fascism simply with the *unprincipled* use of power. As if power itself were not the real problem. As if there were not in fact a fundamental relation between certain Fascist characteristics of the *principle of power as such* & the logic of the Anthropocene.

DEPROGRAMMING THE IMPOSSIBLE

We must avoid reducing the meaning of Fascism to a mere disparaging terminology, to be freely circulated in everyday vocabulary as the name of something that merely incurs the displeasure of the hurler of the epithet. Fascism is the violence of totalisation & the totalisation of violence. It is the negation that advances all the more aggressively with the approach of every future that has been imagined without it. It is the spectre of catastrophe breeding a cult of planetary death. It is the unavoidable adversary. And this, too, should serve as a salient reminder, that the revolutionary task as it arises in confrontation with the Anthropocene is *not the seizing of power*. Nor is the task to seize the *means of production* of the Corporate-State – so as merely to reconstitute it under a constellation of benevolence. The task itself is inseparable from its objective & cannot be rationalised in the abstract (where anything may be justified “if it brings the proletariat to power,” etc., & “for that end alone”). What is at stake, rather, is the seizure of the *capacity for initiative*. And for the *continuity* of initiative. To render inoperative the *totalising system* of the Anthropocene & the *totalitarian violence* of its means of self-resurrection.

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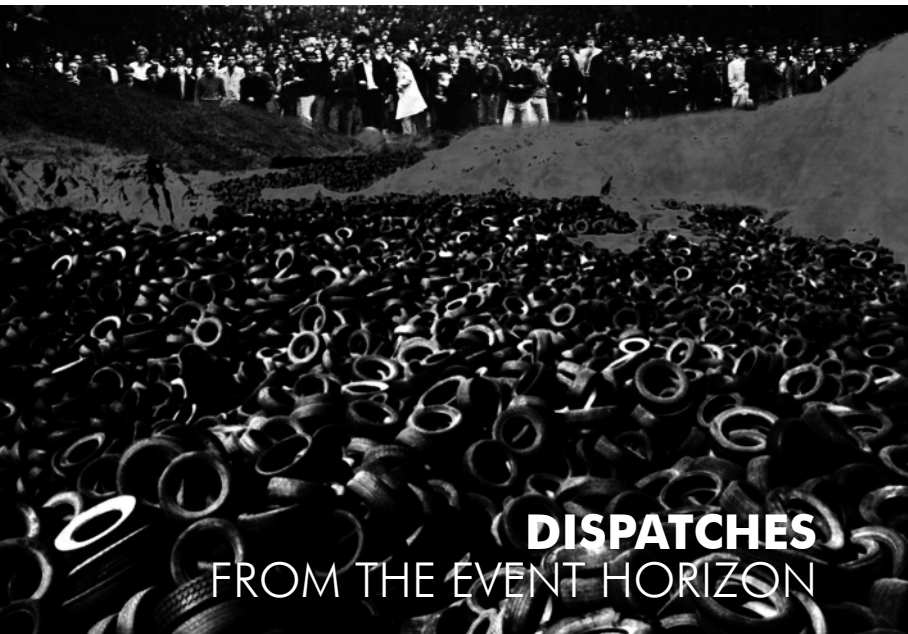




Interior Ministry, TIME IS ALWAYS A FACTOR (2019)

THE "FICTIONAL FORCE" OF GRAVITY
IS CONSTANT ACCELERATION





DISPATCHES FROM THE EVENT HORIZON

Ce n'est pas la technique qui represent le vrai danger pour la civilisation, c'est l'énergie des structures.

Beguiled by the idea that a multiple-scenario universe means “alternative realities” that can simply be tuned into or out of as a matter of convenience, or as a solution to whatever local or global crisis they choose to evoke, the mutant children of Buckminster Fuller & Ayn Rand have in turn bequeathed social & ecological practices deeply at variance with their progressivist & emancipatory claims. In this uncanny region, between “Spaceship Earth” & *Atlas Shrugged*, there is no such thing as *immaterial labour*: every action is aggregated into the production of the Real, whether curated or elective, secret or flagrantly commodified. In so doing, the inherently adversarial structure of this collectivity of fractured viewpoints is made to accord with a principle of dynamic maximisation: what the poet William Blake phrased as “Enough or too much.” The question we are confronted with here is, how is it possible to *anticipate* that ideal mode of operation – that advantageous balance between contending forces – of a World System contiguous with the so-called “dominion of Man”?

From the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to the Greek city state, to Malthus, to our

contemporary cybersphere, the concept of a natural “homeostatic” order has evolved technologically into entirely unforeseen formulations. Where the “Eridu Genesis” evokes the prototypical Great Flood as corrective to human excess, the City State evokes a *technē politikē* (colonisation), while Malthusianism conjures in-built eugenic mechanisms in the balance between population & productivity (devolving to corporate-colonial exploitation & fascism). It’s sobering to consider that when Aristotle sought to define sustainable population growth in the *Politics*, the size of the average Greek city state was 3-4,000 inhabitants, with Athens & Sparta representing the exception at approximately 10,000 inhabitants apiece. By the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the city state was obviously no longer the political unit on which growth was factored, yet mercantilism & the emerging predominance of corporate entities in political & economic life in Britain & elsewhere would nevertheless continue to draw on the city state as a model for human resource management.

In the early 1800s, one of the so-called fathers of British socialism, Robert Owen, proposed a reorganisation of the State on the principle of the semi-autonomous industrial polis, for which the Scottish mill town of New Lanark, which Owen managed, was to serve as the paradigm. New Lanark housed a permanent workforce of approximately 1,200 & Owen envisaged a national grid of some 400 similar entities, interspersed by agricultural zones, supporting a UK population of some 5.5 million people. By simple multiplication, this would today represent an industrial polis of merely 14,000, against a current UK population of 66 million. Unadorned comparisons of this kind expose the need not only to factor in those economies of scale consistent with two & a half centuries of urban industrialisation, they also raise questions about the *political* sustainability of a social-economic system driven by an undisguised tendency towards obsolescence. With increased efficiency in core production through automation, matched to an inflationary growth of consumption, there nevertheless occurs a significant contraction in the industrial labour force against a rapid expansion of the general population. And here arises the basic paradox of any constructed mercantile social system exposed to increasingly globalised economic pressures: what Moldbug calls Patchwork (a system of elective apartheid described as “a global spiderweb of tens, even hundreds, of thousands of sovereign & independent mini-countries, each governed by its own joint-stock corporation...” – the very contrary of a welfare state).¹ It isn’t simply a question of whether such a system is technically viable, or even desirable, once the social problem of human obsolescence is addressed (for example, by broad-based consumer credit, service industries, & so

¹ Mencius Moldbug (aka Curtis Yarvin), “Patchwork: a positive vision (part 1)” (13 November 2008): <http://keithanyan.github.io/Patchwork.epub/Patchwork.pdf>

on). The real question is: If cybernetics – through analogous “distributed system” of communication & control – radically evolves the mechanisms of population growth as conceived by Aristotle, thus producing what on the face of it appears to be the conditions for widespread “emancipation” from onerous labour, does it provide a political idea of what this growth is *for*?

If cybernetics appears to re-engineer the limits of collective human action by altering the ratios of environmental self-sustainability, this movement is nevertheless “compensated for” by the seemingly irrational tendency of free market capitalism to generate ever-increasing amounts of waste. The incongruity between efficiency & profit-incentive has grown to such dimensions as to define an entire globally-evolved system of entropy: one which threatens an immanent “homeostatic” readjustment on a planetary scale; while, in a monstrous iteration of the commodity fetish, increasingly assuming the characteristics of an autonomous agency. That is to say, like the approaching “technological singularity” its evolution appears symbiotic with, such a global system of entropy more & more assumes the character of a phenomenon independent of human control. This cybernetic doppelgänger has not only become detached from any *technē politikē* capable of halting let alone regulating its excesses, but appears driven by an inherent catastrophism. This, at least, might be described as the *conservationist* viewpoint – alarmed, if not by the environmental consequences, at least by those for the maintenance of a Liberal-Humanist status quo. From a broadly *accelerationist* perspective, this movement is that of a globally-transformative, even revolutionary, force – heralding the “society to come.” In anticipation of the latter, numerous templates have been proposed, from Moldbug’s joint-stock patchwork feudalism to open-source eco-social platforming,² to distributed crypto-cybernetic systems of non-government, to full luxury communism. The price appears modest: the “sixth mass extinction” – the End-of-Life-as-we-know-it, the End-of-the-World even, or simply the End-of-Humanity & (who knows?) the beginning of a next evolutionary phase.

What does not appear in this prognosis is the End of the Corporate-State Apparatus.

Politically the cybernetic revolution left no alternatives on the table. What we call the global order is a full-spectrum capitalist technocracy, whose market-harmonisation belies a system of exploitative & grossly unequal social & environmental relations – disguised behind such false dichotomies as democracy & totalitarianism: dichotomies that have more in common than their ruling classes have with the mass of their populations, or than their consumptive social systems have with the environment’s capacity to

² Michael James, “Global Wyrding & Deeply Adaptive Patchworking”: syntheticzero.net/2018/11/08/global-wyrding-deeply-adaptive-patchworking-transcript/

support them. Such naked irreconcilables have in turn contributed to a return to political resistance on the margins of the “permitted”³: from the Black Bloc & the CyberGuerrilla Column, to populist “anti-movements” like Extinction Rebellion & the Gilets Jaunes. Yet by their representation, or non-representation in the political imaginary, such forms of resistance are always made to entail a paradox: as simultaneously a desire to subvert the Corporate-State while resurrecting the benevolent welfare state (if only by appealing to the state to compassionately reform itself); on the one hand an abolition or an opting-out, on the other a reconstitution. (Subversion, in any case, is always an operation from “within.”)

The extent of this paradox can be gauged by examining the logistical obstacles that the cybernetic revolution has placed in the path of autonomous political action.⁴ Yet the political task posed by the Anthropocene can too easily be obfuscated by sheer statistics, magnifying the convulsions of that Great Anonymous, as Victor Hugo wrote, which is always found “in

³ Corresponding to this return of resistance is a certain return of the repressed, which might otherwise be stated as a return of the “Real” – both in the political & psychoanalytic sense.

⁴ Take for example Britain’s largest sustained experiment in “alternative living,” the Eel Pie Island commune located in the Thames at Twickenham (London), which dates from the 1960s, current population 100, only marginally less than the 130 recorded at the community’s height. By comparison, Freetown *Christiania* in Copenhagen sustains a resident population of 900. (The models of sustainability that these communities represent differ & need to be compared with those of the urban environments from which they are annexed: Metropolitan London, for example, has a population of 14 million over an area of 1,572 km² (Eel Pie Island is .036 km²); while Copenhagen’s population is roughly 600,000 over 88.25 km² (Christiania is just over .07 km²) – densities of 8,900/km² & 6,800/km² respectively.) Consider both of these in relation to that paradigm of vertically-integrated, globally-decentred neo-liberalism: Amazon, whose UK workforce – distributed around the country in a series of logistical hubs redolent of Owen’s semi-autonomous microstates – currently totals just 27,500, in an industry which in 2017 alone accounted for 586.3 billion of GDP & spans the datasets of a global demographic numbering in the billions. According to conventional manufacturing statistics, meanwhile, the UK is presently ranked 8th largest globally by output, while new technology & “smart factories” mean that this output corresponds to a domestic workforce of only 2.6 million (against national unemployment figures of 1.49 million, or 4.5%). None of these structures – communal, corporate, statist – is self-sufficient: their autonomy consists solely (& somewhat paradoxically) in comprising integral units in what amounts to a multidimensional global “patchwork.” It’s no surprise, either, that the island of Britain produces only 50% of the foodstuffs it annually consumes, purchased at the expense of its strategic advantage in manufacture – while a £40.7 billion deficit means its economy will never of its own accord be “in balance.” These figures, of course, offer no real augury of coming events when arrayed before the spectre of the Anthropocene – against whose immanent derangements of the World Order neither fiscal policy nor “technological solutions” appear likely mitigation strategies: neither for the Corporate-State Apparatus, the ecosystem at large, nor the mass of humanity. Given that the scenario is one of NO EXIT, the outcomes are more likely to be infrastructural collapse, resource wars, mass eugenics, famine, epidemic, & other apocalyptic niceties – rather than any proactive conversion of the Corporate-State to debt-reduction, environmental responsibility & sustainable communitarianism (were such a thing in fact even possible with populations reaching 512.7 million in the EU, 325.7 million in the United States, 264 million in Indonesia, 209 million in Brazil, 144.5 million in Russia, not to mention the 1.34 billion in India & the 1.386 billion in China, etc.).

human crises & in social births.⁵ If such a debilitating movement presents itself on the one hand as a *fait accompli*, it simultaneously evokes on the other precisely those statistical complexities solely accessible to cybernetic understanding. We can see how such a situation might appear emancipative within the frame of reference of a Humanist project that imagines it has succeeded in transcending its worldly conditions by means of pure *technē*.

But in speaking this way, can we even know, first of all, what the Anthropocene is?

If we accede in the idea that the Anthropocene defines a *geological* epoch, materially inscribed as the historical accumulation less of human actions *per se* than of technology as defined against by history of industrialisation, we make it appear as if the agent of the present crisis (or rather the *crisis of the present*) isn't the ideological system that produced it, but some calamitous non-human agency that can only be appeased if not brought under the yoke. In short, a Götterdämmerung, marking the great revolutionary event of "our" time: in which we must either succeed in overthrowing the planetary gods or sacrifice ourselves to them – whether it be the revolt against the "World," or against capitalism. Like all false choices, these too are ideologically inscribed – here masking the movement of Capital as both technological transcendence of *this* World, & as the promise of the one *to come*. Put otherwise, in the contest between neo-liberalism & its discontents, Capital has effectively come to designate both the "concrete form" of this crisis & its only possible "negation." The return of the geologic "real," called the Anthropocene, is presented as nothing but Capital's reification as *planetary agency* – inscribing a global destiny as inexorable as plate tectonics. This is neo-liberalism's *fait accompli*.

The problem of the Anthropocene, so conceived, is thus the problem of the *fait accompli* as such: here, the *logic capture of the world* in all its "alternative" scenarios. In this it approximates a singularity: the singularity of History, we might say – or as Hegel & Marx (ventriloquised by Fukuyama) would say, the *End* of History. Jena 1807, Paris 1848, the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 were all, doubtless, premature signals⁶ – though the point is surely moot since, in positing itself as such an *End*, this *fait accompli* always arrives "before its time" & will be the last thing anyone will be able to remember. It marks the return of the proverbial repressed from beyond the event horizon: the uncanny doppelgänger of a "universal anachronism." Time out of joint. This anachronism, like that endlessly extruded present of "post-ideology" that neo-liberalism *still* pretends to be, inhabits our World View like a vertically-integrated crisis balanced on the tip of a

⁵ Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (1903).

⁶ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History & the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992) xii & following.

needle. The tipping point is right there in a Future that doesn't exist that already happened that must be deferred at any cost. "Beyond" lies the unrepresentable, the impossible: that most ideal of all Possible Worlds to which the word "Future" corresponds solely to the extent that it represents an *end* to the spectral existence of History & an *end* to a certain political *possibility* of History.⁷ This neo-evangelist mesmerism by *ultimate ends* goes beyond mere Hegelian "theory" & "bewitches" the teleology of Power itself, which henceforth perceives its hegemony as not simply *destined* – as that which must necessarily *befall* every possible present to come (as though it were an emissary of this Non-Future itself) – but as the very *manifestation* of non-futurity (its essential "being," so to speak, & not simply its "signifier").

In the final instance, however, this most extraordinary *fait accompli* – the singularity of the World refracted through the *manifestation* & *transcendence* of its own End ("world without..." etc.) – reveals itself as nothing other than the spectacle of Power (History) converging with its ideal image (technicity). In this cosmic micro-drama, the supervening spectre of Capital – as both "production of phantasms" & "phantasmatic mode of production"⁸ – returns not *in place of the Real* (its transcendental signified) but *as the production of the Real "as such."* Yet its anachrony means that this movement of totalisation describes a feedback loop, an interminable circuit of sign-substitution in which the Return of the Real is "suspended" like a premonition. The premonition of the "as such." Call it metaphor-of-metaphor, irreducible along the vector of its algorithmic freefall. Event horizon. Blackhole metaphysics. History & World, sign & concept, all convergent in this "ideal" (because unrepresentable) anachronism: of which Capital nevertheless produces an "image."⁹ Just as, in its desire to inhabit the "as such," we might begin to imagine that Capital itself *produces* this very irreducibility – as both "sameness within self-difference" & "sameness as the non-identical"¹⁰ – & that it is the *persistence* of this irreducibility, in spite of the appearance of an insistent dialecticism, that causes it to assume the form of a *return* "in the Real."

Let us suppose that it is this *irreducibility* that signifies in the Anthropocene as that which *fails to accomplish itself* – here, as Capital's totalising movement.

⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994) 100.

⁸ Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 97; cf. Guy Debord, *Société du Spectacle* (1967) & Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation* (1981).

⁹ "Every concept is necessarily & essentially inscribed in a chain or a system, within which it refers to another & to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences. Such a play – *différance* – is no longer simply a concept, but the possibility of conceptuality, of the conceptual system & process in general." Jacques Derrida, "The Voice that Keeps Silence," *Speech & Phenomena, & Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David Alison (Evanston: Northwestern, 1973) 140.

¹⁰ Derrida, "The Voice that Keeps Silence," 82.

The “return of the Real” as *fait accompli* thus acquires the form of a *return of the Impossible* (Capital’s impossible “ideality” reified as the “future impossibility” of the World), so that we might say that – in the Anthropocene – Capital returns in its “pure” form. In this sense, both the Impossible & the End-of-Capitalism consists not, as Žižek suggests, in a conceptual failure to *imagine a world without capitalism*, but the contrary: in Capital’s own failure to *ideally produce itself* (the dream of communism). What appears in this formulation to be somehow revelatory is that the very logic of Capital is vested in this fundamental incommensurability – not as *dysfunction* but as *dynamic interval*, source of every operation of power, of value, of information – which its desire to internalise by paradoxically reifying, under the sign of an absolute self-sufficiency, causes to resemble the insuperable *alienation* of the Freudian *Ego-Ideal*. An alienation which, in the *Grundrisse*, Marx correctly surmises to be both the inauguration & the constitutive condition of the “individual.”¹¹ Its movement, in other words, “isn’t something that happens to a transcendental subject: it produces a subject.”¹²

This is why we must guard ourselves against the kind of thinking that would reduce the problem of the Anthropocene, & of Capital in general, to one of “concrete situations” versus “mere abstractions.”

In producing a subject alongside the representation of an Ego-Ideal, the logic of Capital disseminates itself in a broadly isomorphic movement that gives rise to what we might call, somewhat paradoxically, the *consciousness of the Real*. This “consciousness” is nothing other than ideology itself. Not one ideology or another (capitalism, socialism, communism, etc.),¹³ nor any privileged ideology above all others (in the presumptive form of an ideology-of-ideology, for example: Judeo-Christian-Islam), but the very possibility of a system of signification, or what we should be unafraid to call *meaning*. It disseminates itself in this way because, at root, Capital is ambivalent with regard to supposed “ideological content”: it is concerned solely with the leveraging of value, & its structures have evolved accordingly & in such complex multiplicity that they can only be described as universal. It is this universality that must somehow be reconciled with the perception of Capital as monolithic, a vision of “globalisation” fixated upon an image of One World: the convergence of all possibility upon a singular End. Yet if this convergence only *appears* to be mediated by the so-called Anthropocene, this is because the “consciousness of the Real” to which the logic of Capital gives rise is *not* the reflection of an Ego-Ideal. To this anthropomorphism, too, it remains fundamentally ambivalent (since it “itself” is not a *reflection*

¹¹ Karl Marx, *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973) 693

¹² Derrida, “The Voice that Keeps Silence,” 82.

¹³ Capital is to capitalism as DNA is to gene editing.

of but a generalised *reflection-effect*): there is virtually nothing, therefore, which separates this consciousness from technicity.

What, then, is this Anthropocene in which consciousness of the Real manifests *technologically*?

Quantum research has arrived at the somewhat belated supposition that reality is *information*; which it qualifies by adding that information is in turn produced by *consciousness*. That is to say, by some form of observational event, some mechanism or valency productive of a determinate state from a superposition of probabilities. Translated into the social realm (i.e. of human agency), an analogy may be established with what Žižek calls parallax, whereby “an ‘epistemological’ shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an ‘ontological’ shift in the object itself.”¹⁴

If we ask “What is the state of the World?” it appears we are posing both a theoretical question & a question about the Earth’s material condition. One might appear political, the other geological (or even cosmological), yet both are addressed first of all to their own descriptive systems; & the “World” to which these systems correspond is both co-dependent & ideological. Not in the concerted sense of a mass hallucination nor in the purely doctrinal sense of a “world view,” or even an epistemology: if ideology is the consciousness of the Real, it is so in a manner that is profoundly uncanny with regard to conventional notions of what “reality” is. This is because the “symbolic order” to which consciousness corresponds is *emergent*¹⁵ & not determined by what we imagine a “rational” causality to be.

Ought we to posit the Anthropocene, therefore, as the *negative consciousness* of a Non-Future that represents its own failed transcendence? A consciousness that doesn’t correspond either to an objective correlative of human agency or to any type of *emancipation* from “capitalist subjectivity” – but rather its definitive inscription as the “thought of the impossible”?

What would the subject of such a thought be?

If the limits of the World are the limits of ideology, then there is nothing *abstract* about ideological operations. Yet by the same token, the work of *abstraction* defines the real. When we ask “What is *the* state of the World?” we are firstly asking about the state of the descriptive system in which our frame of reference is situated. In other words, we are asking about the relation of subjectivity to consciousness. It isn’t that ideology thereby projects itself as some kind of *subjectivism* onto the World, but rather that this World – as the (non-) correlation of subjectivity & consciousness – describes a mobile semiosphere, a *poiēsis*, whose holographic “surface of

¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010) 244.

¹⁵ That is to say, it possess properties unaccounted for by either its parts or its causality.

sense" may be said to affect what has been called "global weirding."¹⁶ This "weirding" can be considered as indeed a *patchwork* of discrete valences, producing a composite *image of reality* that remains uncanny with relation to "itself." It "is," in other words, the event horizon of all information pertaining to a World that does not *appear* as "the World": a World, as Wittgenstein says, that is *everything that is the case* – not (only) as it is perceived, but as it consists in its "possibility."

Global weirding isn't a glitch in the World, it's the mode of operation of a World *that has become impossible*: what is *glitched* is rather the relationship between the way these operations signify & the ideological character of the descriptive systems applied to them – since the World, in either its possibility or impossibility, is *emergent information* & not some transcendental entity.¹⁷

One of the disconcerting features of ideology is that, rather than describe a *delirium* as Deleuze & Guattari suppose, it describes instead the constitutive condition of any *descriptive system*: what Lacan calls the symbolic order is contiguous with that "fundamental fantasy" of experience which in Freud elides with Reason itself. Consequently, an unwelcome thesis proposes itself here: that in place of the Blakean "eternal contraries," the "irreconcilable antagonisms" of class conflict, the dialectical supersessions of History & technology, there is in fact only a *smeared-out* topology of superpositions – Possible Worlds, so-called, brought into being or abolished under the critical mass of consciousness. Fundamentally irreconcilable to anything more "Real," more *totalisable*, than their own status as information.

When we speak of "the World," then, we are speaking of a global patchwork of "delocalised" subsystems¹⁸ in which "other worlds" are ending all the time. But is that enough to affect a politics beyond vague appeals to terms like "salvage," "sustainability," "survival," "supersession"?

¹⁶ James, "Global Wyrding & Deeply Adaptive Patchworking": "complex, multifaceted, networked, & nonlinear changes & disruptions have been collectively & broadly described in many journalist circles as "global weirding" since the mid-2000s." See also Mark Fisher, *The Weird & the Eerie* (London: Repeater, 2016).

¹⁷ The potential of the uncanny to disturb *systemically*, is a symptom of the system itself, which we have learned to understand operates cybernetically – by *breaking down*. The so-called weird isn't a mode of *subverting* the system of Capital, but the operational norm of the system itself. If we take the apparent "weirdness" of Hunter S. Thompson's gonzo journalism, for instance, it isn't "fake news" & it isn't in fact a parody, it's rather a form of direct reporting of the predominant Capitalist Realism of the times. The contemporary Chinese literary genre *chaohuan*, or "ultra-unrealism," is similarly an example of how this situation is misrecognised: it isn't the world of hypercapitalism that's somehow become "ultra-unreal" – quite the contrary – it's those cultural & political discourses bound to certain historical representations of themselves & which persist in misconstruing their relationship to it that are "unreal": these are the "ideological social forms" that produce this experience of ultra-unrealism.

¹⁸ Ognyan Oreshkov, cited in Philippe Guérin & Časlav Brukner, "Observer-dependent Locality of Quantum Events," arXiv:1805.12429v2 [quant-ph] (31 October 2018): 2.

By themselves, such patchworks do not perform a demystification of the “ideological construction” of the global any more than a pixellated universe represents a disillusionment of “smooth space.” Patchwork, like pixellation, makes the perception of smoothness *possible*. It does so by defining a minimum interval or minimum difference from which the “fabric of the World” is thereby comprised. Just as “alienated subjectivity” constitutes the minimum political *unit*: not because it is in any way more *fundamental*, for example, than the commodity, but because the very logic & structure of commodification originates in it, just as the very logic & structure of the *social* originates in it. That both of these possibilities occur simultaneously goes some way towards accounting for the inherent “weirdness” of the political: a weirdness that permits classical market capitalism to give rise not only to global neo-liberalism but also to the thought of its transcendental recapitulation as world socialism. This is not the same thing, however, as the concerted effects of “weirding” produced *by* such ideological antagonism.¹⁹

Such *weirdness* nowhere permeates contemporary political discourse more than on the question of the Anthropocene, in which the movement of History as Marx notoriously conceived it has moved beyond the tragic & farcical into the domain of the sublime. A sublimity encapsulated in the title of Pablo Servigne, Raphaël Stevens & Gautier Chapelle recent critique of globalisation, *Un autre fin du monde est possible*²⁰ – a quasi-Situationist détournement of those optimistic 1968 slogans about alternative futures *without Capitalism*. This isn’t quite the same thing as McKenzie Wark’s reflection, vis-à-vis Rosa Luxembourg, that “It used to be ‘socialism or barbarism’ ... Now it’s ‘barbarism or barbarism.’”²¹

¹⁹ In his notes on engineering a corporate anti-society of the future, Moldbug has this to say: “Patchwork is something new. It will not feel like the past. It will feel like the future. The past – that is, the democratic past – will feel increasingly grey, weird, & scary” (“Patchwork: a positive vision [part 1]”). But this is par for the course. “Democracy” has always provoked fear in such visionary egoists of corporate statism (“All exit & no voice”), just as did the workers’ movements, the civil rights movements, the women’s liberation movements – anything at all that entailed collective political representation against the abstract prerogatives of the marketplace. Yet emancipation speaks with a forked tongue. As Margaret Thatcher once declared: “There’s no such thing as society. There are individual men & women & there are families. And no government can do anything except through the people, & people must look after themselves first” (Margaret Thatcher, interview with *Woman’s Own* [31 October 1987]: 8-10). (This remark was later clarified in a statement to the *Sunday Times* (10 July 1988): 45 – in which Thatcher adds “society as such does not exist except as a concept. Society is made up of people. It is people who have duties & beliefs & resolve. It is people who get things done.”) Yet it is precisely the *weirdness* of such advertisements for the obsolescence of government that serves to legitimise their appeal to the emancipation of the self-interested individual, while simultaneously excluding the individual from the function of governance. (Détournement, as Debord was pleased to observe, tends in rapid order to the lowest ideological denominator.)

²⁰ Pablo Servigne, Raphaël Stevens & Gautier Chapelle, *Un autre fin du monde est possible* (Paris: Seuil, 2018).

²¹ Victor L. Shammas & Tomas B. Holen, “Leaving the Twenty-First Century: A Conversation with

In one form or another, the End-of-the-World has always served as a teleological reference point. "Barbarism à la mode," let's say. But if the recurrence of this trope in the present owes a specific historical debt to a European "civilising" project, this is mostly due to the very considerable resources it directed towards constructing an idea of One World – a "World" in which, to paraphrase Hegel, it would be able to see itself everywhere & always reflected.²² An image of the sublime destined, like so much Romantic poetry, to be sabotaged by its own worst metaphor: that pathetic fallacy of transcendent "Man." Discontented with what it saw, it became desirous of *alternative worlds, alternative civilisations, alternative natures* (all to its own specifications, of course). And if the entire project of western Humanism can thus be regarded as an education in rational barbarism – wresting the End-of-the-World from the grip of "irrational gods" via compulsory mass industrialisation, etc. – then there is nothing at all *uncanny* about the present "world crisis." Indeed, it is the business of Humanism to endow every crisis of its own making with a productivist, materialist vector,²³ thereby providing the occasion for its next magical act of transcendence. Call it: the eternal return of the Posthuman. As Lautréamont might've said, the End-of-the-World is necessary, progress implies it.

LOUIS ARMAND
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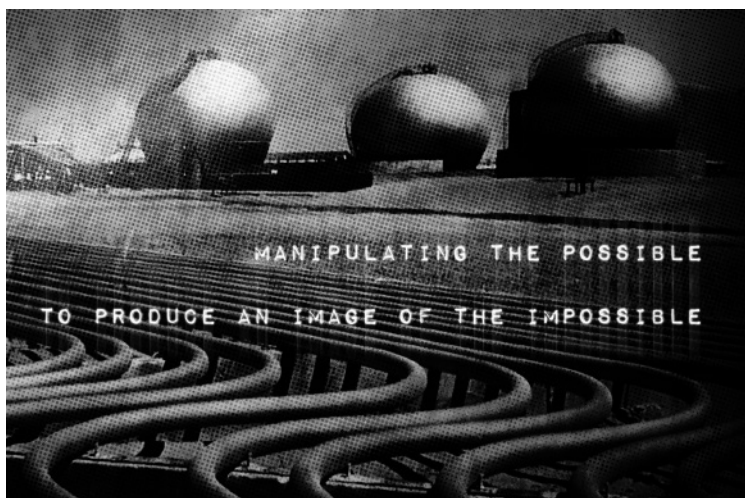
McKenzie Wark," *Continental Thought & Theory* 2.3 (December 2018) 299.

²² Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) 14. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993) 308.

²³ From Revelation to *ricorso* to self-supersession.

AUSTERITY

THE BILLIONAIRES
IN BUSINESS TELL
THE MILLIONAIRES IN
POLITICS THAT THE
REST OF US ARE GREEDY



MANIPULATING THE POSSIBLE
TO PRODUCE AN IMAGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE



THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE INVISIBLE THIRD MEME

THE SEEN & THE UNSEEN

First of all, it's important to know that, when we're navigating the net, our eyes are capturing the information we're reading but also capturing a lot of information we are not specifically reading. This happens all the time, whether we're reading information on the Internet or observing an open field landscape. To make it more clear: when we read the news on a digital paper, our eyes are capturing the words we're reading but also capturing all the information that is around these words: ads, pop-ups, gifs, pictures, colors, shapes, other headlines, etc. This means that a huge amount of information we're not aware of is stored in our brains, unconsciously. And, as you know, that it's unconscious doesn't mean it's less important, it only means we are not aware of it. In fact, it has always been important, and more since Freud started to investigate it. And you will know that it was, precisely, Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, who introduced Freud theories into the United States but he did not only that: this Freud's nephew used his uncle's theories about the unconscious to build an economical empire being the first to use subliminal manipulation in advertising.

Of course, I am not saying at all that there is subliminal information in everything we read on the internet. That would be too conspiranoid & absolutely false. But I just wanted to recall this example to remark how important it is to have an active experience when navigating the net, more

than having a passive experience (which happens frequently, when we're absorbed completely until almost physically disappear & we're caught in a kind of rapture, in those moments – absorbed into the mechanism – in which we're specially vulnerable not because of the certainty that there's someone behind the internet trying to manipulate us – although maybe there is – but because of the ways in which simply experiencing the internet is shaping our brains & our perception).

BRAIN MECHANISMS UNDERLYING THE BRIEF MAINTENANCE OF SEEN & UNSEEN SENSORY INFORMATION

So, in first place, we have to have in mind – as Stanislas Dehaene says – that the definition & empirical measurements of *conscious* & *unconscious* visual perception remain a topic of high controversy but it seems the results of Dehaene's study points in the same direction I was suspecting: that the brain accumulates unseen information (in this case, when navigating the net) unconsciously.¹

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INFORMATION & THE WEAKENING OF THE NOTION OF PRIVACY

Also we have to think about the different levels of information we're consuming at the same time: for instance, on Facebook, we can read in the same newsfeed international news (for example: a country bombing another country & the number of injured civilians) just above a comment of a friend sharing a very intimate experience or thought about something. It's precisely at this point when I think the notion of privacy – meaning the invisible wall that separated public things (things that involved everyone in a community) from private things (things that involved just yourself or your nearest ones) – gets cracked.

Related to these different levels of information consumed at the same time, I wonder if my brain stores this information in the right place, let's say, in the right drawer: for instance, will my brain store the public information in the public information drawer? or will my brain store the private information in the private information drawer? because if it doesn't, if my brain does not store the information received in the right drawer, most possibly a semantic deformity will unconsciously take place.

6 . 6 . 6 . 6 . 6 . 6 . 6
9 . 9 . 9 . 9 . 9 . 9 .

¹ Stanislas Dehaene, "Brain mechanisms underlying the brief maintenance of seen & unseen sensory information," *Neuron*, 2016. <https://www.cell.com/neuron/fulltext>

MEMETIC SUPERPOSITION

Superposition is a phenomenon that I've been perceiving lately, occurring in the form of memetic simultaneity & organised around a kind of pendulum movement. What does this mean?

When using social networks, there exists a pendulum pattern that accelerates & decelerates but never stops. So, for a while, I was able to recognize that the same day in my newsfeed, when information appeared about, let's say, X there also appeared information related with K. Days after, when in my newsfeed there appeared information about H, there also appeared information about Y. We're talking, therefore, about a synchronicity or superposition of memes.² The reason, I think, for the occurrence of this phenomenon is the algorithm that the network – in this case Facebook – is using. I wonder then about what the consequences may be of our reality being shaped by algorithms. And I say 'shaped' because, at this point, it's useless to defend that our interaction with the Internet should be understood as a reality apart from what we call real life. This is not true: the Internet is also a part of our real life & it's producing changes in our neuronal plasticity & perception.

CAMUS & TRUMP

Let's say every time I saw a picture of Albert Camus, I also saw a picture of Donald Trump. On one hand, to find repeatedly a memetic superposition like this one, when there is an apparent antagonistic interrelation between this two memes, makes me think that I am heading to a discursive ending. And I have the feeling that this discursive ending can be a fatal ending given that the memes are antagonistic. And in front of this discursive ending I have to decide if tacking into another direction -to avoid the ending & continue with the discourse- or, on the contrary, keep on walking in the same direction & take the risk of generating this fatal ending that I have called *discursive paralysis*, *discursive explosions* or *collapses of meaning*.

ARE WE ALL JUST NUMBERS?

Also, a superposition of memes like this one implies a symmetry, but these kinds of symmetries are false: could it be true that Camus & Trump are symmetric?

What I think happens is that the algorithm works by approximation, the relation between things doesn't have to be exact or precise & our brain just fills the gap that exists between these approximations & the precise.

So having in mind, the superposition of the two memes have to lead,

² Understanding by *meme* the concept Richard Dawkins developed in 1976 meaning *a unit of cultural transmission*.

indisputably, to deformities of meaning. In the first place, this may occur because forced analogies are established: if every time we see X we also see K, we will end up searching for connections – conscious or unconsciously – between X & K even if the meanings of X & K are far one from the other.

And how does this deformity come to be?

What happens is that the interrelation between X & K generates, necessarily, a third meme, a third unit of meaning born from the relation between X & K although this unit of meaning won't materialize in other places than in our brain, unconsciously.

So from the mix between an Albert Camus meme & a Trump meme a new imaginary creature is born in our unconscious: a creature, for example, called... *Crampus?*



THE THIRD TONE

When I explained the subjects of this essay to a musician I know, he told me about a psychoacoustic phenomenon that has been used to illustrate what I'm trying to explain in terms of this superposition of memes. The phenomenon is called the *combination tone* or the *third tone* or the *Tartini tone* (because it was discovered by Giuseppe Tartini).

The combination tone is like a ghost tone, a tone we cannot determine physically exists or if it's only a trick of perception. It happens that when playing two notes at the same time, a third note can be perceived without being played anywhere & this happens because of the result of the difference between the frequencies of the two notes that we're playing.

HOW IS LANGUAGE DAMAGED?

So a similar thing happens with the superposition of two memes, unconsciously causing a third *ghost*-meme to appear. The difference between this & the combination tone is that this third tone doesn't damage anything or anyone, as far as I know, while the third meme can indeed damage, & what can do damage is language.

How is language damaged?

1. Meme X & meme Y meet & create a third meme.
2. This third meme is a semantic deformity because the analogy established between these two memes is not real or is a simplification.
3. This semantic deformity is stored in our brains unconsciously.
4. We give back to the collective narrative this semantic deformity through language, by talking, writing, thinking.
5. We deform language by adding the semantic deformity stored in our brain into the collective narrative.

This is how language becomes imprecise. And this imprecision provides the occasion for misunderstanding & manipulation.

ALTERING THE NARRATIVE

If the relation between X & K is happy, if an harmonious meeting between the two memes takes place, the result will be a third meme of an integrative & non-violent tendency & the result of that is that the discourse will continue its way. If the relation between X & K is unhappy, if a crash takes place between the two meanings, a collapse of meaning may occur & what derives from it is this third meme that will tend to conflict & that can lead to -as said before- *discursive paralysis* or to *discursive explosions* or *collapses*.

So, in both cases micro-realities are generated &, once assimilated by our brains, are projected again by us altering the narrative, that means that once that what it comes to us from the outside is digested – in this case, a semantic deformity – we give back to the collective narrative the

result of this digestion through projection, having in mind that projection is language too.

THE PENDULUM

Maybe it's the pendulum pattern in itself what should be called into question. Without this pendulum pattern, the synergies that are generated between the both meanings of a memetic superposition would be never insistent, both meanings would never meet through this constant pattern &, therefore, the energy that could generate an insistent antagonistic synergy would dissipate.

It would be as if this pattern produced an itinerary, causing two enemies to meet every two days on the same street-corner at night, at the same time. Intuitively, the more they meet, the greater the probability that a fight is going to start between them. But if they meet once in a while instead, the probabilities of that fight substantially decrease. Yet the contrary would demonstrate this principle equally as well.

HEAVEN/HELL: WHAT'S THE RELATION THEN BETWEEN CAMUS & TRUMP?

Most possibly, what relates Camus & Trump may be that both are living in hell. But we should clarify & say that they are living in hell in different ways: while Trump enjoys ad maximum, let's say, the hellishness, what makes the existence of Camus a hell is having to deal with the consequences of coexisting with someone like Trump.



Entering the game of Heaven & Hell, though, means to be caught -again- in the traps of binarism: in a great & infamous simplification exercise, given only two options we're seduced to make us believe that there is no other option possible than choosing between these two options. It seems there is no option to not choosing or to imagine a third option or, even, multiple options or, why not, infinite options, as many options as possible perceptions. The one who does not choose eternally walks, wanders borderline, marginal, intermediate landscapes, is the one who does not have a home & that, in Judeo-Christian terms, would be the soul that is waiting ad infinitum a destiny in the Purgatory.

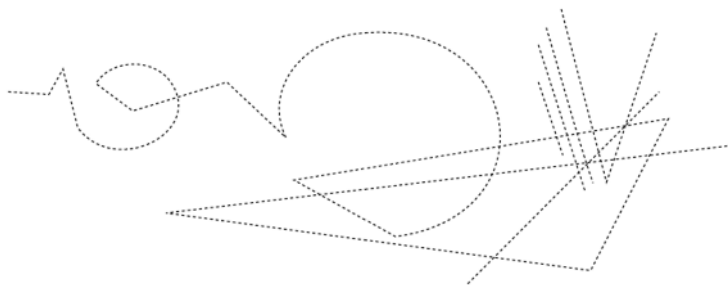
And this makes me think about Bartleby.

When we think about Bartleby, the guy who preferred not to do the things he should be doing, we maybe think of the state of mind of a

perpetual wanderer. We know that Bartleby preferred no to do the things he should have been doing but we don't know in which place Bartleby locates himself. It is, of course, a place located somewhere since the negation of Bartleby has a real consequence, but it is, definitely, not the place where the game is taking place, although the consequence of his negation - as I said- has an impact in this game anyway.

But let's be honest, Heaven & Hell need each other, one could not exist without the other. The constant battle between one force & the other does not know (& never will) a conclusion. Neither of the forces is interested in it because the extinction of one of them would carry the immediate extinction of the other. Therefore, as we cannot -it seems, for the moment- escape from this binary game, it's more about finding a balance between one force & the other. That's why they talk about destabilization as a tactic to break the balance between these two forces.

It is precisely the organisation of this binary game in a pendulum pattern that makes us used to the mechanism.



INDUCTION OF THE IMAGINARY

And talking about destabilization & manipulation & now that it seems is true that some hidden squads are hired by an invisible hand to post information of all kind on what we now call post-truth era, I don't think the idea of the possibility of an induction of the imaginary to modulate our perception is a mad idea at all, in first place, because this has been one of the main uses of television too, since the television was inside every home. I wonder, for instance: would we be having the feeling of a climate of cold war without the internet or the media wars we're witnessing everyday? How does this induction of the imaginary work?

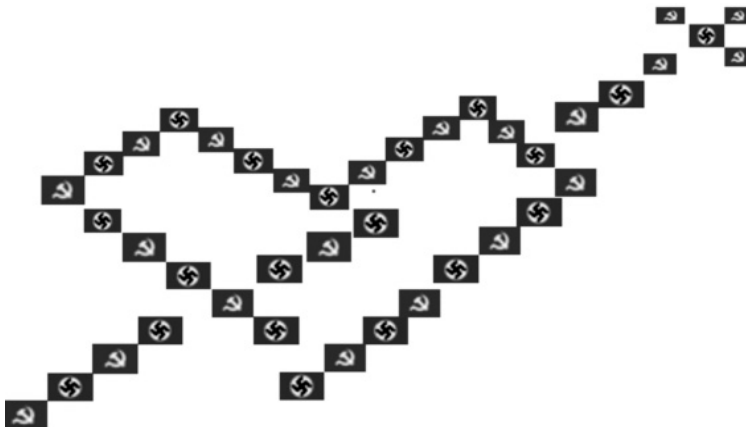
Let's imagine I am powerful enough to hire people to post pictures of Hitler & Stalin on the internet at the same time for a period of time.

If they do their job properly, the Internet will go plenty of pictures of Hitler & Stalin.

If the Internet is suddenly awash with pictures of Hitler & Stalin, what would you think about?

You would probably think about WWII, Nazism, communism, the holocaust, gulags, cold war & all that's related to Hitler & Stalin.

Therefore, we could say I am inducing this imaginary into your brain.



So if millions of people see pictures of Hitler & Stalin at the same time millions of people will think about WWII, Nazism, communism, etc.

What I think is that there is a high percentage of possibilities that what we're all thinking at the same time will finally come true by the simple fact that we're all thinking about it at the same time, through projection.

And if it finally doesn't come true, we're giving space enough to speculation & we should never forget that behind the Internet there are lots of investors trying to gain money & it's the re-investment & the circulation of this money what make a lot of things come true.

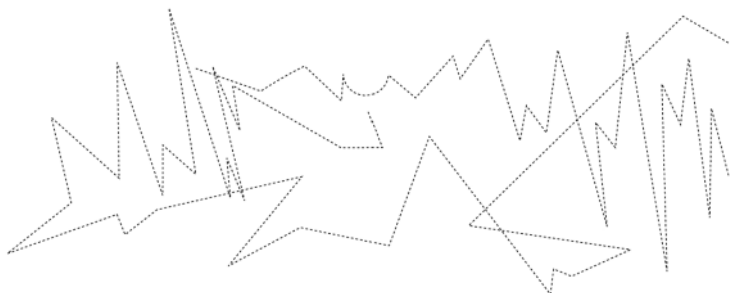
To say it more clearly: we're what we eat, our conscious is, in most part, the result of our unconscious. That we are, in most part, the result of our unconscious could seem something obvious at this point of the story but it seems it's something unnoticed in our everyday lives & the more unnoticed the easier it is to be manipulated. So it's not that we have to be completely paranoid about it but just to be a little bit aware when we're exposed to the media & to the internet.

AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF MEANING

And what happens after a collapse of meaning?

In the shock of two antagonistic memes & once a collapse of meaning has occurred, unpredictability reigns. This would be – as far as I can see & understand – the principle of accelerationism, to search for the collapse of meaning that lead to a period of unpredictability. Within this tactic a

goal is achieved: in first place, to generate a crisis in strategic points of the binary predictability &, in second place, that this same crisis generates unpredictability. And the more unpredictable the more difficult to control.



**LIBERATION FROM MECHANISM: IF ALL THIS IS TRUE & EXISTS,
WHO AM I BUT ONLY SOMEONE BEING UNCONSCIOUSLY GUIDED
TO FIND OUT?**

It's in periods of unpredictability when improvisation takes place, that means the non-mechanism. Therefore, we could understand the improvisation as a way of breaking the pendulum pattern that favors the liberation from mechanism.

IMPROVISATION AS A FORM OF FREEDOM

But who suffers from heavy spleen wonders at what point the improvisation is truly improvised, that is to say at what point the idea of chance or free will would be a kind of perceptive illusion given that all that we do & constitute us is a result of our genetic information.

I understand by improvisation that kind of manifestation that happens without being previously calculated nor written & that cannot happen again. From my point of view, the act of improvisation is, above all, an act based on the free flux of the unconscious. But that the circulation of the unconscious is liberated does not imply that the unconscious is free.

Even so, what cannot be denied is that improvisation exposes us to the unexpected & entails a break with the pre-existing patterns, & that is the nearest form of freedom I can think of right now.

ELI NINGÚ
November 2018

* Presented at the "Rage Against the Algorithm" colloquium, Display, Prague, 16 November 2018.



#GUAIDO #TRUMP #GOLPE #COUP #YANQUISGOHOME #HANDSOFFVENEZUELA



TO GO BEYOND THE LEVEL OF APPEARANCES



it was merely the next evolutionary phase
of an endless process of alienation...

IT WAS MERELY THE NEXT EVOLUTIONARY PHASE
OF AN ENDLESS PROCESS OF ALIENATION...



All ideological transactions...



are denominatable...



to an exchange value.

ALL IDEOLOGICAL TRANSACTIONS ARE
DENOMINATABLE TO AN EXCHANGE VALUE



DAS UNTIER OS 2.0

It is not a matter of speaking the unspeakable, but of vocalising the extra-linguistic or the non-verbal, & thereby letting the Outside in. Admit it, count zero, get out. – Mark Fisher

The history of the Beast is fulfilled, & in humility it awaits a double death – the physical annihilation & the obliteration of the recollection to itself.

– Ulrich Horstmann

That insatiable fang always plots a way to overcome every barrier, wiggle through every membrane, a fang that stealthily maneuvers & deploys its incisors to lacerate into that haphazard mishmash of an ol' epidermal defense system--that verminous-scalped man. Yes, a Phagic Fang unleashed for the slurping up of flows, flows, flows, flows of blood, flows of piss, flows of shit, flows of hormones, flows of nerval energies swallowed down & excreted through Capital's alimentary canal... And that old fang's origins? It was that ol' Wallachian Boyar, playing that ol' prosopopoeia figure, conjured by that ol' Gothic darling Marx, a phantom whose vast spread of its wings obscures those borne fruits of nature, only to metamorphise into the night for more blood, swarming the ol' factory space, watching those marionettes on the assembly line as them bats keep "sucking & subsisting through living labor... the more labor it sucks further quenching its thirst for living blood"

(Marx, *Capital*). Blood, Blood, Blood lures the lycanthrope already on the prowl, a maw & drooling fang on the "hunger for surplus labour," *ibid* always stumbling in the daily feast at Capital's Charnel House. Witness those part time-scraggly fleshy anthropoids & part-time necromancers & necrophiliacs, manning the assembly line, enchained to the factory, maddeningly sloughing off every cell, tissue, energy discharge, partaking in the elegant ritual of employing inorganic & dead material: rusted levers, bent tools & mangled pulleys to produce that ol' so sacred exchange-value. Watch them animate that ol' alchemical procedure of assembling the commodity for its circulation, produced from that ol' so hidden abode of production.

What is history but not a Gothic Line, a snaking & zigzagging line that discovers its escape only in the Flatline plane? "A plane where it is no longer possible to differentiate the animate from the inanimate & where to have agency is not necessarily to be alive."¹ What or 'It' is running History? That Unnameable, That IT, That Numinous, That Entity, That "automatic system of machinery... set in motion by an automaton, a moving power that moves itself."² The Gothic Line activates a camouflage to dupe those ol' champions of Euclidean Progress, Enlightened Subjects of History swimming in Industrialised ecstasy those pools illumined by the enlightened chandelier & motley of mechanical gears & clocks, the glorified heat engine & shafts, 'steered' by the invisible hands of the market. Rather, it is a morphing camouflage, untangling its occulted plot, its knotty temporal overlaps, its unwinding loops that re-route feedback beyond control dynamics, liquidating the atavistic tinge of human agency, "Subject of History deletion": confirmed.

Now? A reformatted global operating system preying & tethering every nerve cell it can find to bind to an ineffable transcendental core called cyberspace, the Mesh, the Stack, a stretched, implexed, multi-dimensional zone running on the circuits of a black boxed contagions.

It was always already "A Demonic To Come" prophesied & conjured by 20th-century High Sorcerer Norbert Wiener "the machine like the djinee, which can learn & make decisions on the basis of its learning, will in no way be obliged to make such decisions as we should have made, or will be acceptable to us" & a "devilment" that scientists – "apprentice sorcerers" – "are unable to stop."³ That Machine unhatched its plan to capture, implant

¹ Mark Fisher, *Flatline Constructs: Gothic Materialism & Cybernetic Theory-Fiction* (Warwick: University of Warwick, 1999).

² Karl Marx, "The Chapter on Capital (Continuation)," *Grundrisse* 13, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch13.htm.

³ Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics & Society* (New York: Da Capo, 1954).

& smuggle in its own "Telos": a Telos of disintegrating control & disruptive markets, a Telos breaching negative-feedback contained loops, a Telos that all along contrives its way to reformat reality according to fictional quantities, as artifice, a vehicle for destroying the divide between fiction & reality. Capitalism *a.k.a.* a "sci-fi demonic operational machine" conspires through the synergy & swarm of positive-feedback loops to engineer the future through the grimoires of: "mathematical formalisations such as computer simulations, economic projections, weather reports, futures trading, think-tank reports, consultancy papers – & through informal descriptions such as science-fiction cinema, science-fiction novels, sonic fictions, religious prophecy, & venture capital."⁴

"Monsters," *monstrare*, meaning "to show forth," *monstra*, meaning to warn or show, *monstrum*, meaning "that which reveals," or "that which warns," & *monere*, meaning "to warn."

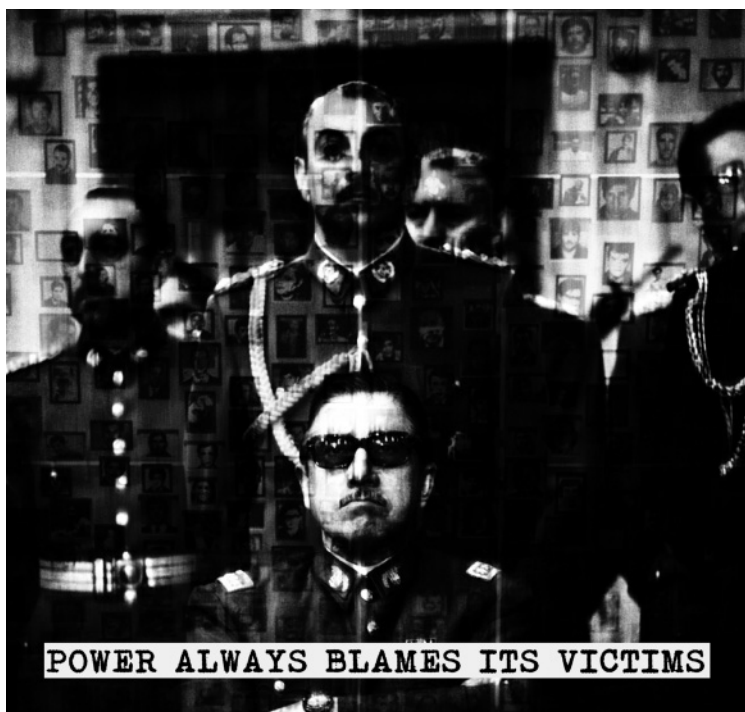
Monsters mutate, morph & melt, & the swarm-shapers, the spawners of the "arch" itectonic order that installs the current operating system of neuroelectronic immanence. "What is Cyberspace? but a noumenal event horizon beyond which we cannot go" (Fisher). Where we cannot go rather bores, haunts & possesses us, those swarms, bots, k-os manuals, spiders, crawlers, datacombs, ghost-stacks & black boxed algo-"Rythmic" governance... Sorcerer Programmers *a.k.a.* libidinal engineers or neural invaginators, conjure & orchestrate the interior breach, an incessant penetration into those neural visceral corridors, switching, flipping & conducting the silent symphonies that induce xeno-pulsions & spasms on Meat-Exhausted blobs. History is also a history of camouflaging the Fang, a perpetual discovery to whet those incisors for seeking new means of extraction & new modes of exquisite vivisection.

DUSTIN BREITLING

⁴ Kowdo Eshun, *Further Considerations on Afrofuturism – NTNU*: www.kit.ntnu.no/sites/www.kit.ntnu.no/files/KodwoEshun_Afrofuturism_0.pdf



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C'EST L'ÉRUPTION DE LA FIN

KILL THE READER

1. The first thing to do—is kill the reader.
2. The author should not write exclusively for the author.
3. Only when the reader is dead to the author can the author begin to think about freedom.
4. Most authors neither want nor know what freedom is. And the degree to which they care about freedom is rendered moot by the reader's construction of subjectivity and subjectivities' collective rendering of "objectivity."
5. According to Roland Barthes, "the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author." Irrelevant.
6. The reader is an it with no utilitarian value. So is the author. It places the lotion in the basket and never makes a scene.
7. The reader has usurped the role of protagonist, who dictates the flows, structure and economy of content and narration. It should be killed backstage before the janitor even opens the theater doors to the public.
8. The amateur infects everything, but killing the amateur will not ensure the death of the reader. Kill an amateur and a weaker, dumber amateur will rise from the corpse.
9. Harlan Ellison enjoyed playing with the reader, who sometimes mistook t itself as the dog, but he assured it that *he* was the dog, whereas the reader was the tail. "*You don't wag me*," said Ellison. "*I wag you*." The tail should be plucked from the dog like a weed from dirt, roots and all, so that even the residual nub can't be twitched.
10. An empty auditorium is better than a potted plant. An ideal world is an alternate world that simultaneously returns to history, plumbs futurity, and unzips all of the unfound anuses.
11. The reader is simple and bound by identity; it brings a readymade expectation everywhere it goes. Expectations are the products of culture, which robs all adults of immaturity, bastardizing, poisoning and obfuscating perception. Without immaturity there would be no art at all. *Nullum cacas*.

12. The romance of the biography of the author is dead. There is no interest in this world for authors who machine-gun frenzies of sharks at sea, drown themselves in streams, or chase the rain with a hammer. A pathological product of media culture, the reader has sanctioned the inoculation of Personality. The only authors that count are nice people who attend Comic-Con and greet every fan with a smile and a hug.

13. MFA programs would have ignorant armies of hopeful authors believe that they can write good fiction or essays or poems with the endgame of getting published, landing a university teaching position, and generating a livable income. This is an illusion, of course, a marketing ploy devised to milk the udders of dusty attic women and hairy basement men, but many academics and recipients of the MFA degree—the equivalent of a MBA degree: useless, ridiculous, embarrassing—who man the various helms of MFA programs actually believe they can teach students to write good fiction or essays or poems. Collectively they represent the worst kind of reader.

14. Poetry belongs to history, rappers, pop singers and children. Any serious attempt at writing poetry is, whatever the content, an articulation of one's insecurities, an admission of one's weakness and banal derangement.

15. The only kind of stageplays that should be written today are works of absurdism. Film culture has rendered stage culture superfluous and incomprehensible. Serious playwrights are not as bad as serious poets, but they both smell like Ohio.

16. Pop idiocy made high modernism eat itself. It was not the pinnacle of modernity, but the antigens of the Castle infected and cannibalized high modernism long before it had a chance to mature into raw, wizened immaturity via near-future deluges of meaning, media pathology and technologized desire.

17. The bomb and technology—or the technology of the bomb, or the bomb of technology—are largely responsible for the generation and contemporary state of pop idiocy, which shows no sign of slowing down, which grows in power with every gesture towards the real.

18. I am not a skeptic. I am a realist. Hence my primal concern is the subversion of reality. The innovation of alterity is no excuse.

19. The twenty-first century epitome of high art is the long take. Famous classical instances of this camerawork occur in Hitchcock's *Rope* and Welles'

Touch of Evil. Today, filmmakers—the only artists left—employ the long take not to demonstrate their artistry but their capacity to take risks within the capitalist order, potentially disrupting the time constraints that producers have put upon them if an actor, lighting technician, etc. makes a mistake and they have to keep reshooting the take from beginning to end, not to mention the hours and hours of rehearsal required to successfully pull it off.

20. In the twentieth century, science fiction had the potential to become a genre of true invention, conceptually and textually, but the impenetrable conservatism of its editors, practitioners and consumers flatlined it. Now science fiction is a ghost at best; imaginative extrapolations into the future are all symptoms of the same lukewarm joke.

21. Your tongue is not a chameleon's tail, a spider's leg, a starfish's arm or a flatworm's hacked-off cunt. Nor is it a delicacy. Always cook your tongue before you cut it off and eat it, ensuring that it will come apart in your beak. This is not a dream.

22. Monsters are never created; they are always born. Likewise the blind Abyss. But simple inversion is worse than idle assertion. What comes next? And then? And then?

23. Future histories will be extracted like stem cells from the brain tissue of comic-book diegeses, which are assimilating every conceivable stretch of the imagination.

24. The reader is not necessarily the viewer, but the viewer is always the reader. Kill them both; kill them all.

25. Foucault: "The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning." Wrong. The rubric used to accomplish this deduction no longer exists. Even in modern memory, there is no credence, no access, no capacity for expression or comprehension. The reader prohibits (i.e., manufactures) this lack.

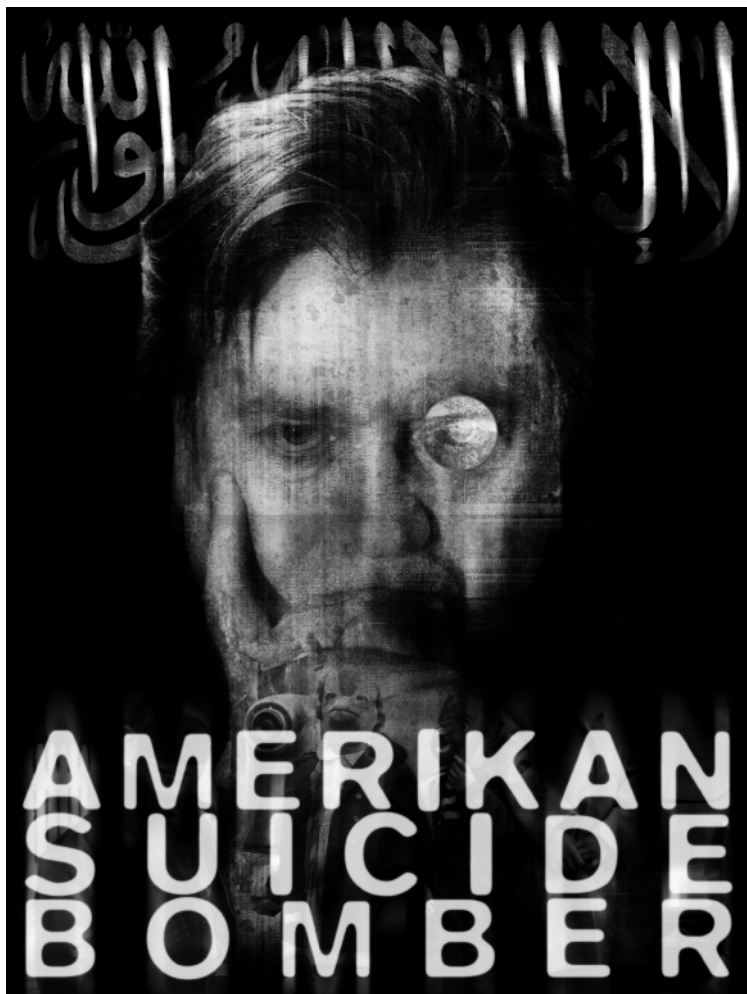
26. The author is not afraid to take risks. The author doesn't know how to take risks, let alone want to take them. The reader, in turn, doesn't know what a risk is.

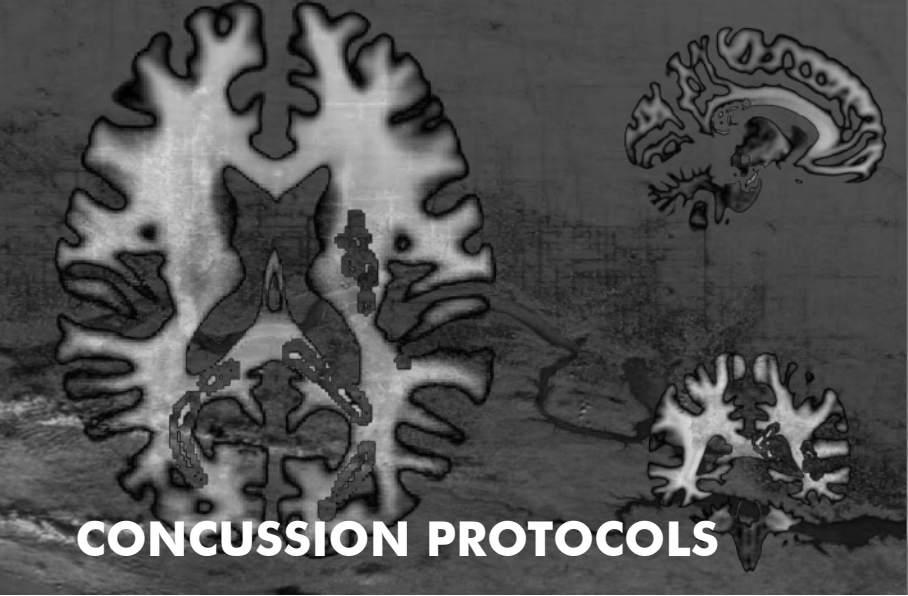
27. Like reality, history is an illusion from which there is no escape. Even the reader is bound by history. A lust for imprisonment, for maps, for acculturation epitomizes the human condition.

- 28.** The reader always talks about how much it reads while the author always underscores how much it writes, citing timespans and word counts . . . In an ideal world, my hatred would define the technologies of everybody's desire.
- 29.** Character development is overrated. Plot development is overrated. Throw a dart at a library, a bookstore, a pub, a cemetery, a meteor crater and you'll hit a well-developed character, a well-developed plot. Sturdy, relatable construction belongs to Mesopotamia. We need a new breed of hunter and gatherer to conjure the dawn.
- 30.** Who goes to Hell? Sinners instilled with genuine evil who do nothing to unlock, express and cultivate it. Good people grow on trees.
- 31.** The only thing to apologize for doing is the right thing.
- 32.** There is no difference between a donkey and a ninja. Additionally, the fruit is the sweet dream of the vegetable.
- 33.** Part of the reader's problem is that it has been taught how to read improperly. Most of the reader's problem, however, is the reader itself.
- 34.** The first part of *On Writing* is a flash memoir of Stephen King's childhood and early writing career during which he struggled with substance abuse. Then he explains how to write. "The reader should be your main concern," he says. "Without Constant Reader, you are just a voice quacking into the void" (124). In fact, the duck must rise before the sun and eat the hunter in his sleep.
- 35.** Dutch urban planner Hans Monderman hypothesized that removing traffic signs and lights would lead to less collisions and loss of life. Everywhere the hypothesis has been implemented, it has worked. Ambiguity exacerbates acuity.
- 36.** Acuity is the latent enemy of the reader.
- 37.** Killing the Oxford comma is a good start towards killing the reader, but the comma's gatekeepers will do anything to perpetuate the illusion of its dominance, spinning fables to guarantee that anybody who abdicates or even omits it goes down like a tubercular god.
- 38.** The reader is immortal and will never die. Somehow trying to kill it must be enough.

- 39.** The science fiction genre is as frightened as an old housewife shrieking at a dead mouse from the kitchen countertop. Every other genre is the reader's junkyard dog, traumatized by years of abuse.
- 40.** If it can't be categorized, it doesn't exist.
- 41.** "The writer must get into touch with his reader by putting before him something which he recognizes, which therefore stimulates his imagination, and makes him willing to cooperate in the far more difficult business of intimacy. And it is of the highest importance that this common meeting-place should be reached easily, almost instinctively, in the dark, with one's eyes shut," says Virginia Woolf, suffering from more than one infirmity.
- 42.** Never fuck in the dark. And if you fuck the sun, you must fuck the moon, too.
- 43.** I am not a man. I am an electromagnetic earthfucker.
- 44.** Air traffic controllers are the masters of the universe. At any given moment, thousands and thousands of jetliners tear across the sky in every direction, their fumes masking the earth in an atmospheric exoskeleton. And yet collisions are rarer than good ideas.
- 45.** The art of interpretation only existed as an artform for a moment. Before that moment, it was a normative perceptual gesture; afterwards it became a scourge of disdain, rancor, panic or, in most instances, apathy.
- 46.** Henry Miller, like Herman Melville, leaps up and licks the sky when he writes: "Behind the word is chaos. Each word a stripe, a bar, but there are not and never will be enough bars to make the mesh."
- 47.** Real chaos has barely been fingered . . .
- 48.** There is nothing to make New, and the Next has elapsed, whereas the Now is a myth.
- 49.** The only thing that can elude gravity—is the *Never*.

D. HARLAN WILSON





CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

KIND MISTER, CRUEL MISTER

It was the first time. I am never at the house, the house that could answer for the both of us. They would never let me back in. They would never let anyone back in. We have about four weeks. Shadows are passing through the misted cafe glass as waves crash against the promenade; someone murmured something about the number seven and the colour white. The original purpose is uncertain.

Fewer than fifteen confirmed genuines have been found. Shafts of light beam in through the station windows like a cathedral. The skies these days are become biblical he said, just before switching on the current that flowed through the electrodes punctuating my spine.

Have you read the art of war I said.

We're not at war.

Origin lies in wait. You might need that extra layer. It was my turn to take the underdog outside and shoot it, the signal for more Chinese whispers.

AFTERWAKE

In 2054AD the trench was confiscated by the regime and included. By that time I was glued to an infamous degenerate; this step proved extremely popular. Automata on the pier were pledged. Note the displacement of

spectral lines toward longer wavelengths in radiation from distant galaxies, the red end of the spectrum.

Sensors have detected a series of numbers scrolling out from my centre; something concrete at last. Complacency revolves for eternity inside of me, I suffer terrible. Beside the minor spells of local sorcerers there are the great covens of worldwide necromancy, in which all alerted consciousness participates. This augurs a most unforeseen solution.

In the early third my teaching was proscribed. The tiny insect who flew into my mouth was crushed at the tip of a probing tongue. Most of the people accused of being witches in Europe were probably guilty.

See, he's already taking steps to alienate the dominion.

Mister, are you on a level stuck? I always enjoyed watching him write; his human mind would act as an interface. People are wanted, with perfect docility — I have made a list. I was waiting for himself to act when this personification of death escaped and disappeared into the darkness of a forest canopy. Time flowed backwards. Now he's a little confused as to why the floor is moving, which is understandable. (What happens at impact.) I think he can shoot out electric from his fingertips. Do you want to face the sea through the window, or shall I?

A teapot full of gin was served. The landscape with pylons was misty and green, the forest floor a carpet of moss, soft under our troll-like feet. (She always loved a nice pylon.) Unfurled, the map revealed the terrain to be completely flat, like the earth — we were surrounded by swathes of mud penetrated by nameless creeks.

In the middle, the term denoted a measure: the width of grassland reckoned by a sweep of the scytheman's blade. Esteemed works include the lost codex; note the wonderful use of bells piercing the end.

And it came to pass at the seventh toll that he spoke. Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea in the shape of a human hand. And he said go up, speak to them, let the deluge stop you not.

You wouldn't want to risk it, would you, risk everything.

Here, upon the very point of starting the voyage, captain and captain were going at it with a vengeance on the quarter-deck. I think there's a lot of unsung regret lingering in this neighbourhood.

The coroner concluded that madame had shot herself while cleaning her pistol. (Have a listen.) The lychgate was erected in memory, who was killed in a pony trap. The wooden gates were made by mister; he lived and farmed the edge. The granddaughter died, plummeting to earth from an attic window. A car park was given by the one who lived at the house — without this, there would be big problems, even today. Piscinas were

installed to take the rinsings from sacred vessels and their hands. The large visiting chair was given (the husband was a retired childbirth). A wall tablet commemorates family members who are interred in the vault, including little the heretic who died after being struck by a ball of fire. The tablet also remembers some who are buried elsewhere. In 1910 mother was shot dead and is scattered with her head facing to the west.

See what I mean about that final bell. His majesty has ordered that you be spied upon, for he feels you simply must be distinct from human beings en masse.

But, I answered, whether the unfortunate man is becoming resigned under his affliction or no, is not the point.

Turbines volved gracefully overhead.

Having somehow escaped our place of incarceration, the last oubliette, we were holed up in a saltbox on the marshes, awaiting providence to write us out of a tricky situation. A supper basket was served promptly at dusk each evening. At that time the marshes were simply a long black horizontal line; I explained that we had just arrived from Vega. Obviously I can't remember what was going on when I was born.

On the man's face, the other saw a grin of triumph. During surge tides, animals would seek shelter on the many neolithic mounds that punctuate the island. Voluntary exiles, we wish upon you a journey without hope or forgiveness: think of the world as a moth would think of the ocean. There was widespread ignition. I stopped to look inside him, along the fold of my eye, into the fold of your eye.

But, on the other side of existence, things are to be placed in opposition to eternity. Our location was once in the sky, as we shall demonstrate more fully given time in the next chapter.

My custodial was suspended for two years; this isn't a war my barrister said. Now we've got all the baby boomers to contend with. (Cunts.) Mister underestimates the degree to which the pursuit by all men of their economic advantage would automatically maximize the collapse of nations.

Your masterwork was scored for large orchestra and glass harmonica: strike with chaos the composer screamed, ceremonial sword aloft, slicing through the chill air.

MISTER JUSTICE

Surgical spirit should read surgical altar. Memory is possessed, meaning controlled by evil spirits. Could you please unpack your sentence please. Language being highly infected, it doesn't allow for absentmindedness; one has to pick what is a noun, what is a verb and so on.

I'm accused of electromagnetism and put on trial, a good enough reason never to have got out of bed. (How could I not have spotted that.) Memory is poised, like a piece of ice about to snap from the gutter and penetrate your skull. May I be permitted to expand on one point. I had intended meaning.

The word quick is used in the archaic sense of those among us who are living. Body refers to your human name. Shall post deposits has its origin in the act of me telling someone something; I had intended posting a rock to the owners of a ruined cottage who lived in a village.

I hope all this helps. The posting of rocks is absurd. I harbour intention; I want to signify both referents at once. Injured, I was chained to a trolley while a gun-wielding Nazi physician tended my wounds.

Aside from this, your name has no usage. I believe, though I shall check myself at a future point in time. The solution is not to hand as I type: I'm not at home, I am never at home. Is it possible to *untranslate*, to denote the absence of a quality or state? If these texts bear witness to the practice of deliberately disrupting the surface — tearing it, poking holes, scraping, scratching and dribbling — then I'm the reverse of thank, a lack of thank, while maybe suggesting a lingering sense of place.

A traditional theme or formula can always be found in literature; that said, it's not easy to distinguish facts from geographic features in these documents. We are doggedly climbing a mountain, guided by a diagram with details of routes to the summit annotated in the margins. In the early third my teaching described a narrative, the struggle for a top four finish.

As you may imagine, the word sounds strange and evocative. Please let me know if I can clarify, I shall conduct further enquiries as soon as I regain consciousness.

Compare with blue shift.

Fuck me. Your explanations are detailed and illuminating; all is depressingly unveiled nowadays, no more shadows in a world of flattened light, smothered by revelation. I have to imitate God. (And the reference to fried chicken wings?) I am reconstellating the hemisphere as we speak. Origin is unrelated.

Yes, I was thinking of the toponym, but the lack of capital confused me a little. Much of the stonework was reportedly dumped in the river following detonation, and there are press reports of ships striking the sunken hazard; much of the island was well below sea level. I don't think it makes sense in your language to refer to something as obscure as a region of the same name, thus I propose to go for something vague. Yes, indeed, I propose to speak of a thankless condition. (O, where.) The word contains itself. It's prettier now. Is this to your liking, is anything to your liking?

Translation is severed: 'the boss's room bristles with weapons' et cetera. Let's see how much sense you can conjure now.

The word is written as 'herewith' — e.g. I enclose herewith a copy of your arrest warrant. Perhaps this suggests a place you can remember? We will lose the pun on the name but preserve the clash between economic ungratefulness and viral amnesia.

I won't stay too long. One imagines embracing the underground feature might be less than possible. (A large illuminated *what*, exactly?) On reflection, I don't think the I in the original deserves the quote marks that quarantine it.

After bathing, he selected his finest ceremonial gown. I'm a committed substitute, and should finally appear a little further on in the text. What is the title of the whole.

The book should always stand alone he says. I've made a few discreet changes, created a few minor ructions: I am introducing a space-time continuum between some paragraphs, moving one substitute, annihilating another. The first version is akin to anatomical excision. Time is manifest in a metal drum that's rolled down the hill to imprint the earth with its signal.

Any man with seminal discharge is cleansed and renewed to fellowship. There is only one possibility regarding context.

OMEGA MALE

Begin retrospectively. Begin again. I've been crowned, convulsed. It was a warm night in July. Can there ever be a linguistic motive behind the patient's actions? The word is obsolete, the final citation dated. When first built the structure was placed a considerable distance inland; now, by frequent landslips, it's perched at the edge of a cliff.

It's considered useless to make repairs to an existing hazard; Sunday is often a dead day. The cliff moved within reach; architecture was postponed. The lead roof melted in a conflagration and the steeple collapsed. Chance is sometimes known as the aleatory imperative.

Saying the same thing twice in different words is generally considered a fault of style. But your sentence is true by virtue of its imbecilic structure and ill-formed logic. The last service to be held was conducted by lightning.

How far do you want this boy to go. It wasn't exactly nice what he did that night. He's got manners. He let everything go. I told him ten thousand would get him one hundred. He hasn't changed. (Tell him to exploit his fragile voice.) Locals then proceeded to burn the pews and the pulpit — the doors, locks, bell rope and other items were stolen. The bell is a mystery.

One story claims I was removed and placed. A newspaper describes how I was abandoned at a farmstead. (Say it, as though I were *this*.) I fell from the spire with a great crash during a fire and split along the length of my flank and entrails slurried forth. The stones from the bridge were kept until they fell into the sea — some people went that way. Another stone was hidden in the wall of a house; by that point in time it was too late. The column had been demolished and everything that remained, an overpriced mass of cinders, plunged over the cliff. Local rumour alleges skeletal remains were collected by an eccentric old woman to decorate her home. Over the years the two stones have also disappeared. The one that was dropped down the well was removed by an unknown hand.

I'm not very good at entertaining people; in time, I too was dealt the cruel fate of omission. The plaque was found to reside in storage, disowned.

It's said that if you stand at the clifftop you can still hear the sound of bells ringing in the sea. With stealth he walked into the room and startled me. I did another sketch of half a body hanging over the wardrobe and another one of me with a halo above my head. Well, they've stabilized him now, haven't they.

It's just nice to see everyone. When he's got manners, he's useless. Let's wait and find out how many people come, let's see how many turn up, and how many are capable of leaving at close of day. Thank you for including me in this unrivalled alienation, a unique marvel that would corrode any pocket.

His grand passion was his bloodstock; I would be most enthusiastic about *any* future prospect. (Nazi psychiatry didn't arise out of nothing.) In total the colonel's support stood at more than one thousand troops and four hundred special constables. I had meanwhile rearranged and adjusted the remainder of my short life; I'm glad to see our visions dovetail. A tip: never file your nails from the centre to the edge.

String your documents on a wire to keep some semblance of order, or deposit them in the hotel safe. I will let you know. The city skyline as seen from the north beach at lakeside shows that an evil phenomenon called the polar vortex has descended. It was so cold, fire crews had to set alight to the iron rail. Origin is promised. The displacement of the spectrum to shorter wavelengths is caused by light projected from distant celestial objects moving imperceptibly toward the observer.

He said I don't mind being by myself. Then he said history repeats, tracing a parabola. (The path of a projectile under the influence of gravity follows a curve of this shape.) Then he said keep me away from the vestibule.

Yes indeed. Someone has stolen into the paddock and ignited, while we lie here and there like bits of collapsing infrastructure. The readymade

involves taking a mundane utilitarian object not generally considered to be art and transforming it — as in the case of my most famous work — by renaming it while placing oneself in an unsuitable context. Just being in possession of a copy was grounds for arrest.

This year we've decided to switch from being sex criminals to fascist sympathisers. We are nothing if not, and find ourselves at the cutting edge of audience participation. Being buried alive or crushed or plummeting to earth on fire are my worst forms of death — but I can always be relied upon to summon a spirit, for example a jaguar.

The first era ended with an earthquake but they rebuilt. I gave laws, instructions and commandments. There's no memory of this, no memory.

The dictionary confirms that the word unthank is obsolete. ('Island' as in channel.) Somebody else was slain, not I. The heart was weighed in the balance against a feather.

The final citation is dated 2054AD. It is held, on palaeographical grounds, to be of a similar date to the book, that is, deriving from your dying moments. Usage began to fade away, and there is a seventh category.

I need to tell them what's going on from the vantage point of an old established danger. A true modern, I volunteered for waterboard therapy. Origin is a disused track, unrelated.

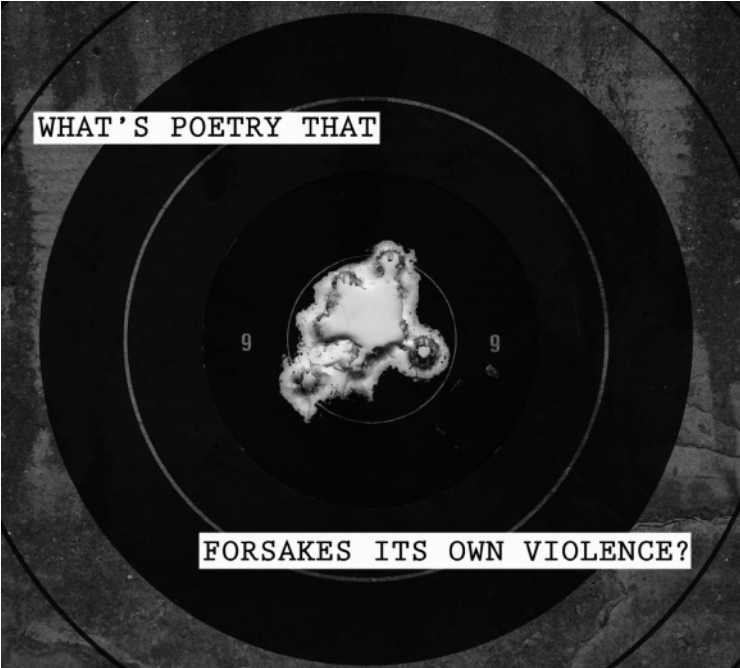
This passage feels almost like a secret diary, perhaps never intended for reading. I am losing control. We should try to go somewhere. Blue shift is an astrology noun.

And the glamour doesn't stop there. She found a book whose title was a weak pun; it reminded her. I do not cease to hear sounds, they're simply lost in the undifferentiated totality which serves as the background for my reading. My body does not cease to be accused by the world. It was like striding into a human chasm.

Either side of a glass partition they faced each other, he spectral of another realm, she earthbound. She raises the mirror, at which his lineaments of white light merge with her own features. The use of deposits also indicates layers of accumulated matter or underground strata of rock, coal or other material. This should appear on the following line rather than the same line.

I think we provoke a kind of sanctuary for you first thing in the morning. Our ideology doesn't require territory to survive. What is in me dark illumine.

RICHARD MAKIN



WHAT'S POETRY THAT

FORSAKES ITS OWN VIOLENCE?



GOODBYE
CRUEL
WORLD

EXPERIMENT no. 4: **“All of my heroes died since I was seventeen” (Giant Sand)**

*Die meisten meiner Helden liegen im Gras, schauen in den Himmel, zweifeln still an der Verwesung ihrer Körper. Kirsten Dunst und Sigourney Weaver, Herbstlicht und Baumkronen, gestern. Heute Schweiß und Regen, ein Weg zur Arbeit und nachhause, das tägliche Seufzen und die schmerzlindernde Abwesenheit der Beruhigungsmittel. Wenn du einer Schönheit folgst, strebst du dem Wissen nach; doch sobald du weißt, stirbt die Schönheit – weshalb die sterbenden Held*innen einen Hauch von Gott mit sich tragen. Werbung für ein neues Odeur: Hermes, Wind, nix, vielleicht.*

Most of my heroes lie on the grass, stare at the sky, doubting the decomposition of their bodies. Kirsten Dunst and Sigourney Weaver, autumn light and treetops, that was yesterday. Today, there is sweat and rain, a ride to work and back home, the daily growl and the painkilling absence of sedatives. If you follow a beauty, then you strive for knowledge; but as you know, beauty dies – which is why dying heroes carry a whiff of god. Advertisement for a new odour: Hermes, wind, nothing, possibly.

EXPERIMENT no. 09: **Some sort of seamless pain**

“Nirgends erweist sich einem Kunstwerk oder einer Kunstform gegenüber die Rücksicht auf den Aufnehmenden für deren Erkenntnis fruchtbar.” (Benjamin)

Feelings of others, described as alien, can be felt. I do feel alien, although this seems to undermine any “I.” It doesn’t, it was never different, we were defined by our others and our others have been defined by us in any words, mostly actions that have been traced back to an agent. We don’t need to be or have been human, although this could lead to a definition and a somewhat more clear description of what I mean. But defining was always in the centre of taking, talking, eating, throwing, meaning, saying, singing and whatever may come to your mind, which is the important one in this case, whereas this case is this text. Of course, there’s also a reason, some sort of cause, why you’re holding this text. I always believed this happening was mystical. Obviously, it isn’t – for you, right? Although there could be more of you, should be, possibly. The magic of thinking about you, thinking about our future without ever meeting (I cannot deny that the number of people, as well as the number of letters, you can meet and read, is a) finite and b) smaller than books printed and words exchanged).

I would deny that there is any society but this magic. The less we feel, the bigger our freedom to with-feel, if I may borrow this word from the first language I have learnt (mit-fühlen; empathy). This is what I get, when I think about being alien. A greater proximity of getting nearer to others. The only pain alongside is the one people like you feel. I know there is, but we never have to talk about it. Surely, we should share more joy. There is no literal or literary meaning, here. Just the possibility of us getting nearer without the slightest touch. Perhaps, there are good reasons to get back to this sort of feeling-touching. I can understand you, if you think so. My body can be touched, so can be yours, no reason to deny this. I believe more in work than madness. The only pain going alongside this way, possibly being the way itself, is seeing all feelings as possible, solvable in a somehow sympathetic way – without being able to solve anything by magic. This, also quite obviously, was never the point. You read a book or pamphlet or whatever you hold in front of your eyes or keeps rushing under your fingers, but you have to work it out – and I can't help you, as all possibilities are all too much. It's a seamless pain, but we get nearer and the more we work on our joy the less will be pain. But I'm not here with you, so you're left on your own. Maybe, you can get into some of my fantasies. But no need to worry, this is fiction.

EXPERIMENT no. 10: Do you have a theory?

I don't have a theory, which is the heart of my theories. Often, I said "I have a theory on...", when I was at apartment parties of fellow students, knowing that this introduction is maniac. What followed was an attempt to grasp something, like: Goldfrapp and the Pet Shop Boys have better answers on how happiness can be defined than Aristotle or self-help-books. I would say: "Happiness is a cheap and reflected pop song.", meaning, "Happiness is doubtful acting in the middle of the un-enlightened core of society." But, I rarely say what I mean, because I am happy. And if I could add, I would that the happiness of Pharrell Williams doesn't do no harm though I consider it being the soundtrack to my purgatory. In the end, I would have stated that I haven't read all texts of Aristotle.

Also, you may not know that my thinking is dripping. My first thoughts are the opposite of a torrent, and neither fast nor dense. But, constantly, the dripping wears the stone away. Which one? The one to think about any recipients. Also the only excuse for writing "I" is when you mean theory or the only way to contact others.



THE PRAGUE PAPERS "RESISTANCE & EXPERIMENT"

The following text is a transcript of a roundtable discussion with Nina Power, DC Miller, Louis Armand & moderated by Vít Van Camp, which took place during the Prague Microfestival at Punctum, 28 April 2019, following a performance by Power & Miller entitled "EXPERIMENTAL EXIT"

VÍT VAN CAMP: We're very glad to have you & of course it wasn't easy – numerous "interesting" events have happened on the way which have garnered the attention of certain segments of the social media across the political spectrum. (Nina & Daniel have been accused – by those who have taken upon themselves the role of policing critical discourse – of transphobia & pursuing a "fascist turn." We ourselves have been accused of being fascist sympathizers for hosting this event.) And perhaps these issues will be addressed in the following discussion with the audience as well. Right now I'd like to tilt things towards your actual project. To what extent do you consider it to be theoretical & to what degree do you consider it to be aesthetic? Where does the difference lie for you? The language you made contact with, there was an esoteric tradition which we encountered, a revolt against the modern world, & there seemed to be this aspect of a language which is, aesthetically, coming from the past – even a Biblical past. Most

of the people here regard you as theorists, or writing from a theoretical background, & this fusion of two worlds is quite interesting.

NINA POWER: One of the questions for me at the moment, today, is how much we concede to a certain image of modernity. And I think there is a kind of flattening both on the acceptance of the status quo &, on the left, that it's the only game in town. And I think we concede too much to modernity, as if the world has become enclosed & homogeneous. But this is to misunderstand the role of myth & the role of the sacred, & to not pay attention to the myths of modernity itself, but also to accept an intensely gloomy & fundamentally critical position that requires us to accept the world as it is – & it doesn't seem to me that this is either a good starting point for action or for contemplation, in fact. And if one's goal is to change things for the better, there is a sense in which that kind of depressive, critical, left miserablism is profoundly disabling.

DC MILLER: I think one could ask a question about how you situate yourself in time & space in the world we're living in: what's our horizon of experience with respect to that world? There's a temporality which is generated as some kind of newspaper logic, or social media logic, where there's always something new, a status update. But there's also an idea of an older, perhaps deeper, somewhat less frantic relationship to the kind of space we're in, as people who are alive right now. I mean, who are we, actually, in this world? You have a name, you have a passport, we have all these labels we're using to describe ourselves or other people, & I think the question of language – the language that one uses – is a question also of one's ability to describe reality. I don't think it's necessarily esoteric, it's only that there's a kind of language that's generated at high volumes & the ability of that language to tell you what you need to know is questionable: there's always indeed a political power that's operating on language in order to deform it in a particular way. I don't know if it's a conspiracy which is operating in order to do that, or something which is more subjective – whereby its just different people with different agendas distorting things so that other people become confused. I think the project of ceasing to be confused is the most valid project one could have for oneself. It's not even a political project but the reality is that if you attempt to do that you will come into confrontation with political forces who want you to speak in a certain way, to repeat certain kinds of slogans, to make certain kinds of statements. As you mentioned, there's been controversy with respect to us, but the truth is we're not people who are interested in promoting any kind of political message, it's really the opposite. And that for some reason makes us very threatening to people who are committed to that kind of language.

LOUIS ARMAND: I don't believe there's any kind of enunciation or statement that can be non-political. So the question is how we're using the word political: if you're speaking specifically of dogma, or dogmatism, as opposed to ideology in general. Because simply to speak, to signify, is going to involve some kind of system of meaning, which is ideology. I'm interested in what Nina had to say about the myth of modernity & the perception of modernity corresponding to certain things – particularly a system of reason – that apparently dispel myth, the spiritual, & in which everything is reduced to a level of mechanization. Yet at the same time what sustains this idea is the counter-myth of open-ended production, the myth of open-ended consumption, the myth of the commodity, & you have this contesting of power between a mystification of reason & a mystification of unreason which presents itself as an appeal to a certain *clarity* & positions itself as self-evident & therefore beyond the political. So I'd be interested if you could come back to addressing the notion of the political with regard to this kind of ideology of self-evidence & the power attached to that.

NP: I would disagree that everything is political in a certain sense. When we are talking about the polis & thinking about where that word comes from – it's the same word we get "police" from – the polis is a particular part of the configuration of the social, there is always the oikos, the household, which *wasn't* the polis. Only certain people could participate in the polis & the polis was always governed & policed. Even in Plato there are certain dialogues that are set outside the city walls, like the *Phaedrus*, where they talk about love – which isn't capturable by the logic of the political. We could say, of course, that the moment you start speaking you're a signifying being, that you have meaning within a system & that the system itself is political & therefore there's nothing we can say outside politics. But I wonder if there isn't something to be said for pushing against that idea. Because what we have at the moment, it seems to me, is this very very homogenous thing. It may be predicated on people's desire to be good, to be seen to be a good person – I mean, who doesn't want to be a good person? to be a good political person & say the right thing & support the right people? Everybody wants this, it's a felt pressure, & if you go against that in any kind of way you're punished really severely. And what Daniel says about trying to see that there are things that aren't political, that shouldn't be included, is itself a transgression. I'm interested in *why* those sorts of claims are seen as transgressive. We're accused of fascism, of Nazism. If we're talking about nature, there's been this absolute pushback against any discussion of an "outside," & I think of this as symptomatic of the internet, of this online life in which one is punished for suggesting there is anything beyond a certain discourse, a set of slogans & clichés which we must all repeat in order to be

good people. It's a fearful discourse, it's a terrible discourse, & I don't want to live in that world.

DCM: I think it's only with a modern conception of society & with a mobilization of society – in fact a total mobilization – that you could arrive at the notion that everything is political. This is quite a modern idea. From a pre-modern perspective there are all kinds of things that are certainly not inscribed into a political logic – ideas of, for example, virtue, which aren't political as such. To be in love with somebody is not necessarily political. There are modes of experience & of relating to experience which are not even relating to the human & therefore are not political. The commitment to politicize – one should ask, what are the forces that are driving such an agenda, & for what end, & for *whose* ends? And I think those ends are not the ends of individuals, necessarily, but of organized political forces that are committed to saying that everything is political because it means that in that way those parties have control over everything, based on the political authority they themselves are claiming.

LA: This may be a matter of terminology. I would perhaps go back & say that there's often an appeal to things that in the history of philosophy have been classed as metaphysical & which create a realm of exception to the political. Or that the ideological is somehow metaphysical & isn't manifest in material conditions. Daniel gave a very good example in his performance, of the summoner: that it is the demon that summons the summoner (& not the contrary). I tend to think that this is in fact a "logic capture." As soon as you enter into the situation (of the summoner), you are *determined* by that situation, & for me this is the character of the political. So when Nina was speaking about stepping outside the requirements of a certain ritualistic or dogmatic arrangement in which social meaning is determined – a rigid signification – this *is* transgressive, not because it really affects a transgression, but because the transgressive relation to a nominal outside is itself delimited by the asymmetry of power. Consequently it's predetermined as a political action with regards to that framework. In any case, by questioning a system of value that determines *that* what you are doing is either good or bad, or conforming or nonconforming, & then attributing to that some motive or another, you are in the position of the summoner summoned by the political. So my provocation here would be: is this not a mystification on the side of power? Because – & I want to make a loose connection with what Vít called esotericism – because when one actively transgresses, motives are necessarily implied – in fact they're required – whether it's within a legal framework (what are the motives of someone who committed a crime, which is the business of a court to

determine) or socially when someone signifies in a particular way which isn't in conformance with the "agreed" system of signification: what are the motives behind doing that? You mentioned the *Phaedrus* – or perhaps the *Sophist* is a better example – & in these dialogues we see that determining such motivations, these hidden to-be-revealed meanings behind actions, is ostensibly impossible: there's no way to delimit those significations, so power *determines* what they are.

NP: I think that what it does reveal is that, even at the level of content, the "right thing to say" changes from week to week, which is important to note. But if we think about it in terms of the logic of sacrifice, or of the scapegoat mechanism, weak groups always need to keep sacrificing members or former members in order to maintain even a loose coherence. René Girard talks about this. There's a long history of what it means to be a scapegoat, to be named, punished, for one's transgressions – perceived or otherwise – whether there's evidence or not. And when we speak of the virtual & the real: what does it mean to be "bloodlessly" sacrificed online? To have people calling for you to be beaten up in the street & so on. It's an interesting experience. You start to think about it structurally as well: what function, what role are you playing? And you have to ask about your own enjoyment: is it enjoyable to be the scapegoat in some way? It's a very complicated question of desire: the desire of the group & individual desire.

DCM: The question of power is a good one & the right one. There are different forms of power. There's a certain tradition of thinking about power where one imagines it as somehow always being an oppressive force, but of course that's not the reality. I think that one has to distinguish, on the one hand between different forms of power – for example political power, symbolic power, moral power – from, on the other hand, a power which is metaphysical, which is not purely political but is something productive of reality on a very deep level. The sun has power & there's a power that transmits through the chain of being to create all forms of life. And what is, as an individual, one's relationship with *this* power? One can be weaker or stronger, one can be kept weaker, one can also to some extent take charge of one's own power, one can have a sense of one's own power, to consider oneself as powerful or powerless, as potent or impotent. From the point of view of whatever political message I might have for anybody is to look to their own conscience & think for themselves, to refuse to accept that somebody has the right to tell you what to think, actually, or who to associate with, or what opinions are the right ones or the wrong ones, or what discussions you are allowed to have or not allowed to have, or what books you're allowed to read. I mean, who are these people? These people

are nobodies, actually. I think that to have a power that is distributed so that individual people can decide for themselves how they want to live their lives – this is certainly threatening from the perspective of a certain form of power, but it’s certainly not supporting any power-as-such.

NP: Yes & on this point I’d like to thank Louis & the organizers for not backing down in the face of online pressure. There’s a question of courage: it’s very easy for people to go with the dramatic opinions of random anonymous people online & we all need to think about what those things mean. Why are people so taken with these anonymous open letters or tweets or threats of no-platforming, of losing one’s job? We have people on the left, allegedly, trying to deprive people of their livelihoods – to deprive them of any kind of economic status – which doesn’t seem to me to be a particularly leftist position. And when people tell you that you can’t read second-wave feminist texts anymore because they say the “wrong” thing, what gives them the authority? In terms of reading the history of reactionary or rightwing thought, like George Steiner, the “Roots of the Right” series, everyone should read this stuff – everyone should read & understand for themselves what these arguments are, what rightwing ideology is. For someone else to come along & say, “no no no you shouldn’t read it, oh I can tell you what to think, you shouldn’t read it, it’s bad” – that is an abusive form of power. And when people say they are victims, that they are somehow damaged by the history of human thought, & that others should be protected from dangerous ideas, is to profoundly imperil thinking. I don’t want to live in that world. I don’t want to live in a world where the heirs of textile fortunes tell everyone else what to think, who should be listened to, who should be heard – naming no names.

LA: To refer to another figure of the great tradition, when Mao says that it is necessary to draw a clear line between ourselves & the enemy, of course this is premised on a knowledge of what constitutes the enemy – which is an age-old morality in any case. Know thy enemy. And the appeal that concerns me – & I believe it should concern everybody – is an appeal to a systemic ignorance, equivalent to book burning. This is something that – to be generous to it – needs to be subjected to a “concrete analysis.” But I wanted to come back to something Nina said at the beginning, about not accepting the world as it is, & returning to the notion of the means of production of reality, when we’re speaking of the power to exercise upon the real & consequently to determine in some sense how the individual, how *subjects*, are constituted. This is again an old question. But perhaps it can be reframed here, in the context of this discussion, not so much as a question of individual emancipation as Daniel was earlier alluding to,

but as a responsibility of the intellectual or the artist to put into question not just the world as it is presently constituted *for me*, or the means of production of its reality *for me*, but to effectively block or destabilize them *as systems* – whether through experiment or resistance – & how that is to be affected within a context where there are accepted means of doing this (the institution of art, the performance of resistance as an art piece) or where we can assume certain stakes & certain risks & be accused of acting outside the realm of permitted dissent. This is one of the questions that is being raised by the nature of calling dissent itself into question, as we have seen.

DCM: It's a very complicated question, because on the one hand I think it's important that everyone takes responsibility for themselves & for their own desire, as it were. You don't want to be in a pervert position where you're saying, "I'm doing this on your behalf." There has to be, on the level of the individual, a commitment. And then the further question is, what does an individual commit *to*? What is a, let's say, more noble commitment or less noble one, & how does resistance fit into that, or action, or activism – which need not be the same thing? The question of the world, also, as it's constituted: there are many worlds, in a way. I think the attitude of resistance to the world as such is probably a mistake on some level: one should accept the world as it is & ask oneself what sort of possibilities exist within that world, what risks do you want to assume, what kind of wagers do you want to make? To be honest, it's not entirely unenjoyable, either, to be in the position where you're facing a group of people who are so committed to something which is so dishonest that you don't have to do very much to articulate what is worth fighting for. And it's quite surprising to me, because I remember beforehand, years ago, I was more interested in the possibility of something more dramatic in terms of ideology – in terms of a kind of revolutionary ideology – but it turns out that you don't really need to be that revolutionary, you don't actually have to take those extreme positions, you just have to remain committed to convictions that, if you approach them in an objective way, few people would disagree with in principle. Simply by holding fast to those, your enemies come to you.

LA: Reaction always imagines the worst.

NP: Maybe it's a war over the concept of time, in a certain way. There's a sense in which there's always a sense of urgency: activism is always about the urgency of doing something now – something must be done – & this often works against any form of dialogue, of discussion, of the idea that we might reach a different position through communication or debate, or understanding our supposed enemies or opponent's position. There

simply isn't the necessary dimension of time. And this ends up in a lot of action without thought – a lot of very definitive claims & positions being taken up – which then leads people, paradoxically, into a quite vicarious position vis-à-vis their own lives. They don't stop to think about their own role, it's simply "I must do this, because we've been told we must do this, & we must act now." When the state comes for you, on the other hand – the actual state & not these micro-police running around telling you what you can & cant do – it has time on its side. The state has all the time in the world. It can spend years punishing you, or putting you into a kind of legal limbo. And there is a deeper metaphysical question that underlies the question of politics & what politics is, maybe, which has to do with how we relate, how we maintain calmness in the face of relentless time-control & the power of the temporal, how we can avoid falling into traps ourselves in terms of responding, reacting, to the constant mantra of "we must hate this person, now we must make a point of saying we hate this person." To take a step back & consider one's own position, one's own role, in this churn of horror. And the reality-hijacking question: what happens when words start to mean the opposite? When we're supposed to hate people because *they* supposedly hate? When they don't, for example.

MS MEKIBES: Nina, you talk about taking the time to step back & engage in dialogue, but in the case of resistance there are people who don't have the luxury of this, who live in a constant state of life-threatening danger. Not only from the state but by other means.

NP: There's often a danger in projecting an image of the oppressed other, for example, the one who doesn't have time to think: it's always a question of strategy. And there's also the sense in which mobilizing this image of the other who must act immediately also undermines the freedom everyone has, even in the most constrained positions. It doesn't make sense to say that one must act without thinking. Sartre says, when you're chained to a radiator, when you're trapped, you're still free to relate to your situation – of oppression, for example, of exploitation. People are not able to organize unless they strategize. Again, there is a misunderstanding of time, like the time of the "other." It's not that there aren't situations in which one must act, or when self-defence comes spontaneously, but if you want to win you have to think carefully, you have to strategize. I wonder about this "other" who is always constrained to act immediately – what role does that play in our own politics.

THOR GARCIA: You talked about thought control or thought-channelling, appropriate or inappropriate thoughts – which forces are orchestrating

what's correct & what's not correct? Is it technology? Is it a government force? What is it?

DCM: It's a very good question. I think it's a combination of different factors. There is something which is fundamentally technological, in terms of what kinds of thoughts & ideas circulate, how they're received, how they're transmitted, how they're simplified. Also, in order to circulate, there's also something psychological involved in terms of how people respond to certain kinds of communication mediums. Obviously there are also determined political forces concerned with putting their messages out in a very specific way – also in restricting what can be said or can't be said.

TG: I guess what I'm asking is, do you think that the mass of people are being subjected to psychological operations?

DCM: Absolutely they are, there's no question whatsoever.

TG: So who's orchestrating that?

DCM: All kinds of organisations are doing that. It's difficult for me to imagine that there's a Central Committee of world thought-control that's organising everything, but it's obvious that various organisations are very interested in controlling people's thoughts for all kinds of reasons. And I think that the question of who's in alliance with whom & why – if you approach it from a very schematic point of view – there are these global political forces, military forces, intelligence forces, media forces, corporate forces which are all connected on a some level. They have summits, policy agendas, orchestrated spectacles, an image is propagated as to how one should be today, & people respond to that in different ways. The media is quite controlled in every country, including western countries, in terms of what they say or don't say, stories that they cover. It would be preposterous to think that somehow we don't live in that kind of world.

TG: I was just trying to draw the connection with something Nina spoke about, the micro-police officer, obviously they can be independent agents who have somehow gotten the message through the technology or the culture, where they feel empowered to strike out & do cop work. How that occurs is fascinating.

DCM: I think it is a really interesting question, because individually these people are not necessarily powerful in themselves & their relation to the world in which they inhabit is to some extent actually, from an individual

point of view, a power of weakness operates as a power of collective weakness. It's something to do also with a kind of over-production of intellectuals, an overproduction of discourse, with a limited quantity of attention & recognition, & a dialectics of recognition that plays into this mimetic spiral where the qualitative is flattened out in the service of creating these messages that acquire a viral force.

TG: It's hopeless, isn't it? It's not going to change.

DCM: I don't personally feel that I have too much ability to affect how things happen on that level. Because you're talking about millions & millions of man-hours devoted to producing propaganda messages & disseminating them & reinforcing them, through all the apparatuses of the modern state. But on the other hand, things can also change quickly & I think the way in which a certain form of power operates based on the other believing it, not necessarily you, because I think fewer & fewer people actually believe. You understand you're supposed to believe it, but I don't know if people really believe it. There comes a point at which people say, "Why are we nodding along to this stuff?" And then you start to see a preference cascade, & that's potentially quite a revolutionary situation.

LA: I wanted to come back to something there, Thor, because lurking in the background of your questions is a widely felt need to identify the who, the where, the how & so forth. Earlier today, I don't know if you were here, Dina Pokrajac was giving a talk on subversive cinema & she cited Kittler's definition of totalitarianism as the correspondence of broadcast to opinion. The seduction is to believe that opinion means a particular content. McLuhan made a comment once, that the advent of the mass media created public opinion. There's a tendency to think about this in general discourse as media creating opinion in terms of what you prefer & what you don't prefer. But that's not what McLuhan meant. He meant that mass media invents *opinion*, the genre of opinion, the mode of having opinions, irrespective of *what* they are. And in this sense we can talk about a system – not as some kind of conspiracy of vested interests – but as the logic of there *being* vested interests. That's what the system is. And this operation is in many respects ambivalent, which is what makes it so durable & so capable of not only reconciling its own internal contradictions but absorbing those that are introduced into it through acts of resistance & experiment, for example. This can be linked back to something Nina said earlier about the polis: there is, in many respects, still this pervasive belief that a polis, in some abstract sense, prevails in the world as a social organisation, where there are individual subjectivities that contribute to or

determine the discourse, as opposed to all the virtual public entities & troll farms & meme factories & pseudo-grassroots organisations fronting for Cambridge Analytica or Lynton Crosby's PR agency. You know this very well. But that illusion of the polis – where we still have a politics in terms of a discourse determining representation, which is what politics comes down to – & the belief that this is an aggregation of our collective beliefs, is itself the ghost in the proverbial machine, the fetish of the political itself as some kind of autonomous agency.

NP: If we take the McLuhan claim that the medium is the message, we could look at people's behaviour online – especially in the extreme cases – as symptomatic of the medium itself, that they're over-conforming & performing the possibilities of the medium itself. There's always been a battle between doxa or opinion & wisdom or philosophy that is constitutive of how we interact & how we think. I often wonder about the relationship between the folk idiom – the kind of wisdom that's passed down in the form of proverbs, for example, "too many cooks spoil the broth," which have been vertically conveyed within families, communities – & compare that to the thought-terminating clichés of the internet, the slogans everyone is expected to repeat. The question of belief, as Daniel says, is not really the issue, it's the repetition, it's the mimetic copying, the proliferation of the same statement as a form of reinforcement, without the face-to-face, without things like tone & gesture, without things like how we might speak ironically, amusingly, seriously, playfully, naughtily or mischievously. In this text-based medium you have the invention of emojis to capture a range of emotions but of course it's completely reductive – there's no sense in which that will ever compensate for the presence of another. And this is the problem of the invention of writing as such. There's an argument by Walter Ong that the Greeks had to invent tragedy in order to deal with the cultural schizophrenia induced by writing, because the moment they have a situation in which people hear voices without seeing or hearing the other person, in the form of writing, you create an absolute split. Schizophrenia literally means "heart-broken," your heart & mind are split apart because there is no longer a direct relation between speaking, words & presence. Derrida talks about this in relation to writing as a form of dissemination. In a way the internet is just an iteration of the original problem, but it has all sorts of dramatic effects. It's a massive guinea-pig type experiment on billions of people, whose effects are not clear, & even the masters of the internet are very unsure of what's really going on with the relationship between states & online propaganda. You don't need to get people to believe the things they're saying in order to create a state of confusion. You can create confusion very quickly in one person in terms of cognitive

dissonance, just by saying something you don't necessarily think is right but you say it anyway. That doesn't need to be some massive, top-down manipulation – manipulation is just the manipulation of desire, of eros. When we talk about the history of magic, magic is simply the manipulation of desire. If you create confusion you don't need people to believe what they're saying, they're just confused, & then they won't act or think clearly about anything.

DCM: There's an example from Chinese history, in which the chancellor Zhao Gong, plotting a coup against the Emperor, first instigated a loyalty test among the high court officials, which is related by the idiom "point to a deer & call it a horse." One day Zhao rode into court on a deer & the Emperor said, "Why are you riding a deer?" And Zhao said, "I'm not riding a deer, I'm riding a horse, what do you think my fellow ministers?" Everyone who said it was a deer, he had executed, & with the remaining loyalists he executed his coup. That model of power – which is based on a constitutive derangement, in which you want people to lie & people signal their loyalty by lying in the way the state wants them to – opposes the Confucian model, which is the rectification of names, in which, if the names are not correct, you're unable to do anything because you don't have a grip on reality & whatever action you perform is radically uncertain as to its effects. You can see that there's this inevitable conflict between these two models of politics, though on a deeper level it's really a metaphysical question. What's interesting to consider is that, once the names are not correct, things spin out of control & you don't really need someone like Zhao anymore – people are just signalling loyalty to a centre of power that no longer even exists. And I think that's almost where we are – a mass confusion which is almost global in its reach – a system of power in which power itself doesn't even know why it's in power or what it's doing there, but it nonetheless continues to replicate itself, like a virus.

NP: There's also a further problem, which is that if you constantly evoke the system as an explanation, it's also strangely limiting, as far as whose terms we accept as an explanatory model. Of course there are tendencies, there are systems, there are processes, which we could discuss in terms of transhumanism, posthumanism, but does that mean we don't have a definition of the human anymore? If everything is structured, if everything is constructed, then there's no basis on which we can think about individual action. And this is a constitutive problem in Marxism, where you draw the line between the human & the antihuman or the non-human. Rather than thinking of Capitalism as a process we often reify Capitalism itself & think of it as a thing. Marx says we must avoid thinking of the lump of capital, for

example. But it's not necessarily clear that Marxists then do anything other than, in a sense, reinforce structure & our response to it.

DCM: Not only that, but you can see today that Capitalism is so entangled with state forces that it's difficult to even call it Capitalism any more, according to the type of model Marx was theorising. It's something else, something which has a political control that is operating it & is moving it in a way that is closer to Fascism. Unlike in the nineteenth century you now have a system of central banking based on fiat currencies, which means that, for example, the United States Federal Reserve can print as much money as it likes, based on political decisions made by specific people for a specific reason. And this way in which money is operated upon, as a political technology, by the state, is masked by the reification of capitalism as a diversion from the fact that there are actually real institutions, composed of actual people & real political forces, who are making these decisions for very specific reasons.

NP: There has to be a moment of realisation when we acknowledge that all systems, all institutions, are people all the way down. Institutions of course do have a power, but they're composed of individuals who are making decisions. And there has to be a moment of reasonable reckoning.

LA: I want to dispute the fact that it's people all the way down, like the turtles. We can talk about money operating without recourse to the idea of the fetish in order to account for its particular agency. Marx isn't talking only about the way in which, for example, the individual is alienated by modern modes of production, but the way in which the individual is constituted by alienation. And this individual that we're speaking about is ostensibly programmed by a system that is operating as an agency, as an artificial intelligence in a sense. So I always wonder when we make recourse to the notion of "people" – for the sake of locating responsibility at a given point of action – are we not omitting the fact that people are integral & equivalent elements of that system's machinery & thereby reifying in "people" the notion of an agency that is somehow exclusive. An exclusively human agency.

NP: There is a very big philosophical discussion about how we define the human. La Mettrie, an early materialist, would talk about the human being as a kind of machine. We can easily think of ourselves as automatable, for example. Capitalism does nothing other than to turn people into things & things into people – corporations as legal individuals – & so you have that confusion & set of conflicts around the very definition of the human & machine, or the human & the posthuman. But I think that if you have

any kind of interest in something outside systems, then there has to be some form of – perhaps not agency – but something irreducible to these other things. And again, who benefits by saying that artificial intelligence subsumes everything, we're all just symptoms? I think we have to be realistic about the extent to which people are automatable & the fact that people are & can be exploited & enslaved – but that's not all of it, how can it be?

MS MEKIBES: But when it's systematic, when alienation is built into the idea of the human?

NP: Sure, but how can it be absolute? You are alienated *from* something – your own nature, the rest of mankind, your own labour power. Alienation is from something, otherwise you no longer participate in humanity, you're purely a function or a symptom, or a tool, or a rock, or a machine. What I'm saying is that there is always something left over, residual, & if we say that there isn't then I think we're really in trouble. Then we do just give up.

LA: Maybe that residual element is subjectivity. Even in Marx we need to understand that to be alienated is not necessarily a transitive condition, it doesn't necessarily have an object. It has the same status as *being* (intransitively): that one *is alienated*, & that this is how subjectivity comes into being. And that the dream of an emancipation from alienation, which drives the fundamental fantasy of the subject, is the sublime.

DCM: To speak of the totality of the human as a category is also to ignore the possibility of the superhuman, which was an idea that was normal before modern metaphysics became so predominant. The idea of man being suspended – this is what Nietzsche says – between the *Übermensch* & something that comes before that, as the locus of different kinds of forces which are constantly moving. How does one take some kind of position with respect to that? How do you understand it? Marx has an idea of man as a labouring being, alienated from his labour – his idea of man is this. That seems to me to be a reduction of what man is. We accept too easily a restricted definition of man & even a restricted definition of alienation, since what we are really alienated from isn't just our labour power, it's the entire universe. A universe that we have a relationship to which has nothing to do with our labour power & is separated from us by a certain kind of epistemological confusion about what we are actually doing on this planet as individuals or as a species.

LA: How does a hierarchy of being come back into the question of alienation?

DCM: There's a way in which man with his power machines assumes this egomaniacal point of view on reality, whereby we think we can dominate nature, that we *should* dominate it, that we should convert it into a means of production, & that it derives its value from the utility we can extract from it. And of course there's a problem here, because, given that we too are natural beings, we tend to take this relationship into ourselves & become utility functions also, & then man becomes self-cannibalising in terms of how we relate to other forces in nature – as if everything is just a product placed there to be used in a deterministic way.

DUSTIN BREITLING: Nina, I know you have associations with Mark Fisher & I'm deeply interested in the idea of Capitalist realism & the cancellation of the future. As far as I understand, this practice that you're discussing, about going out – not necessarily into the wilderness, but decoupling, detaching – from everything around us, all this ensemble of objects that are dictating the regime of time: I'm curious if you agree with the idea that we should embrace the notion of cancelling the future? In the sense that the future itself – considering the kinds of climate actions we're witnessing, with Extinction Rebellion & people on the streets propelled by a sense of emergency – becomes confused with what may be inevitably reactionary tendencies.

NP: I would like to say that Mark is the reason Daniel & I actually met in the first place, more than a decade ago, & we were very close to Mark. But in relation to what you're saying, I think that what Mark was working on before he died – the question of acid communism – had a lot to do with certain folk traditions. There's long been a kind of edict that the left cannot talk about the land...

LA: Which is the basis of indigenous resistance, I might add.

NP: Exactly. But there's this belief that the left cannot talk about place, because those things are "right" discussions – & the moment you start talking about place, the sacred, or ritual, somehow you've strayed from the territory. Mark was moving very much against that. He was thinking back to things like the rave in the 90s, & the way in which the land became the focus of a collective, free, open, liberated form of being together that had a specific relation to place. But there's no reason why we can't think about the specificity of place everywhere, because in a sense the homogeneity of global capitalism tries to say that there is no special place – that everywhere is basically the same, that you can put shopping malls anywhere. My position on that, in terms of where we can think – in Plato's dialogues you think in particular places – is that dialectically if we say that everywhere is

the same then we can think anywhere, but at the same time the specialness of place & the particularity of being together – the acid communism idea – & the heightened relation to an experience, the entheogenic enthusiasm of the dance, the ritual, that is heterogeneous to the homogeneity of the everyday. The misery that Mark always talked about, the conditions of mental health, the very frame of the “mental” where Capitalist realism says there’s no alternative, there is no breakout, that this *is* an act of depression, inhibition, of a certain kind of virtual prison of the mind. I’m very committed to Mark’s project & there are various people who are working on this idea – & one way of doing that is to think about the sacred in relation to the future. And I agree that whilst I’m talking about pulling back from the emergency of the activist mode – as someone who’s been involved in it – I’m also concerned about thinking differently in relation to the future, which is also a relation to the past, even the prehistoric, that draws upon sacred places – to say that there are continuities of choreography, of dance, of movement, of collective being-together – & not against the future as such, but a less panicked & anxious way of thinking about the political future, or the collective future somehow.

DARYA KULBASHNA: I don’t really understand the motivation behind the process that your thinking is going through right now. Whether your project is individual, whether it is directed at “the masses,” or whether it is aimed at transgression for its own sake? What is the direction of your project, if you see it as a project?

NP: It’s important for me, personally & politically, that people feel as free as they can, to think & to act & to question, otherwise we end up in an extraordinarily homogeneous world in which people just repeat what they’re supposed to say.

DK: So it’s more of a personal statement?

DCM: In terms of what a project might be, I don’t know. On some level, what isn’t a personal statement? What would be such a thing? Personally, if someone asks me what I think, I’ll tell them, there’s not much more than that, to be frank. Though for some reason there are people who don’t want me to do that.

LA: But all of these positions arise from a process. As a project, you’re not simply producing a subjective thought, an opinion – there’s a constellation of significance behind it, it’s not just arbitrary – & you’ve arrived at it through an analysis...

DCM: Nina & I – if I may – are both committed to the idea of the freedom of thought & the freedom to think. And if one considers the history of that idea, it's quite difficult to have that freedom – that freedom isn't something that is granted, you have to fight for it, because there are these forces that do attack & people who are committed to doing that. This has been the history of philosophy ever since Socrates, who was persecuted – & executed – for “corrupting youth.” And it's necessary for anyone attempting to think on this radical level to defend themselves, to practice a certain form of self-defence, because there are always going to be forces committed to preventing that from happening. So it's ultimately a question for you – for anybody: how committed are you, actually, to thinking for yourself. Because if you truly are committed, then you're going to have to face at a certain point people who, for reasons of their own, are very committed to stopping you from doing that.

LA: I'm interested in the personality aspect of this, the way in which things are often reduced to a personality politics, as a kind of commodification of the do's & don'ts. And that makes me want to come back to Darya's question. There's the suggestion that this is still an individualist project about individual emancipation. At the beginning of your talk you spoke about consciousness – a *becoming-conscious* with regards to the world as it is given. When we look at Marx, there's the question of a bringing-to-consciousness of those who are immersed in an ideological system of which they're unaware, & this bringing-to-consciousness – the struggle of class consciousness – may evolve into a revolutionary consciousness or a consciousness of action. So I'm wondering, can we separate this question of an individual emancipation, of individual responsibility, from a collective project – if pursuit of, or defence of, free thought is more than simply a statement of one's positions as an individual? Is the pursuit of philosophy not ultimately a collective project?

DCM: Considering the individual is already always in some kind of collectivity – & people will react to the expression of ideas in one way or another, ideas are shared or not – & from that point of view, I don't know that there needs to be more. The idea of a universal liberation or emancipation is quite a dangerous one. To set oneself up as if bringing emancipation to the masses – I don't know how you emancipate the masses, actually – I think that every individual has to make decisions for themselves. And if you're trying to free people *en masse*, do they stay as a mass once they've been freed? Do they become *your* mass – which is to say, your army? What in fact have you actually achieved? When you look at the history of Marxist revolutions you do encounter this kind of contradiction. Ultimately there is a reality,

whereby one has to address an individual person one-to-one, at one time, even if they're the person who's just reading your book at that moment. You can't really address the "masses" as "individuals" without thereby de-individualising them. This is a problem if you think that ultimately it is a question of an individual's own conscience. Which I think it is. I don't believe you can raise the consciousness of a people *en masse*, you have to have individuals who are committed to certain kinds of values, or virtues, & if others feel they share those same things then you can arrive at a more spontaneous collectivity that doesn't require a dictator addressing them as a mass. Personally I feel quite antagonistic to this kind of mass politics, especially to any form of politics that finds it necessary to stage itself on that basis. If you look at what that has resulted in, you have a party & then you have a mass, & the party leads the mass, & I don't see that as any kind of emancipation at all.

NP: Marx does have a defence of the social individual against the non-individual that Capitalism generates. "We don't yet know," says Marx in *The German Ideology*, "what it is to be an individual." People are channelled into particular roles, they're alienated from their being in all these particular ways – not just their labour, whereas human beings are capable of polyvalence, of performing or enacting all sorts of roles that they are usually prohibited from performing or enacting. We're multiple beings, all of us, who don't yet know what it means in fact to be an individual. This fake individuality that we're sold – in terms of taste, for example: "oh I like this, you like that" – is no kind of individualism at all. That's just a preference within a limited frame: a set of pre-existing tropes & types that one slots oneself into in the hope of generating a character. And yet we live in an era of total identity. The lockdown on identity – the idea that one must hold a passport on who or what one is – is a police logic. Fichte talks about this: the pure coincidence of oneself with oneself – in terms of who you say you are – leaves no room for actual individuality of any kind. Actual individuality is much more flexible, much more ambiguous & open, & it's that openness of the individual – to be oneself – that I'm most interested in. Insofar as it is possible to escape the lockdown of identity.

PRAGUE
28 April 2019



AFTER THE DELUGE, THE SLIME

REPORT FROM PRAGUE

"As a flood spreads wider & wider, the water becomes shallower & dirtier.
So the Revolution evaporates & leaves behind only the slime of a new
bureaucracy. The chains of tormented mankind are made out of red tape."
– Franz Kafka, *Conversations with Gustav Janouch*

THE BRIDE OF DRACULA, OR: WHY I AM NOT A COMMUNIST

Karel Čapek's lesser-known text, "Why I am Not a Communist," written in December 1924, still merits re-reading today, ninety-five years later. Not so much for its prophecy of the economic unfeasibility of Really Existing Socialism, but as warning against the totalitarian rule of the neoliberal order. For what it has to say re communism is uncannily applicable to the contemporary capitalist realism with its identity politics &, more paradoxically but no less fittingly, to the "new-leftist" opposition thereto

that we're experiencing today. For Čapek, the question is a burning one, not so much for the sake of starting polemics with an ideology he resents, but in fact for the opposite reason: "to defend myself in my own eyes for not being a communist & why I cannot be one" although "it would be easier for me if I were one – I would live thinking that I contribute in a most intrepid way to the redemption of the world."¹ Some of the more resonant points of Čapek's critique of communism are aimed at its:

1. CLASS/MASS ESSENTIALISATION: "Poor people are not a mass. A thousand workers can help one worker in his struggle for existence; but a thousand poor people cannot help one poor person get even a piece of bread... Turn the society whichever side up, the poor will fall to the bottom again, most often joined by others."

2. CONFUSION OF EMPOWERMENT & AID: "The hungry ones do not want to rule but to eat; with regard to poverty it is indifferent who rules; the only thing that matters is how we, human beings, feel. Poverty is neither institution nor a class, it is a disaster... The final word of Communism is to rule, not to save; its gigantic slogan is power [*moc*], not help [*pomoc*]."

3. USE OF LANGUAGE AS TOOL OF POLARISING EXTREMISM: "The climate of communism is ghastly & inhuman; there is no middle temperature between the freezing bourgeoisie & the revolutionary fire; there is nothing to which a proletarian could dedicate himself with pleasure & undisturbed... There is no love, for there is either the perversity of the rich or the proletarian conceiving of children. The bourgeois inhales his own rotteness, the worker his consumption; thus, somehow, the air has disappeared."

4. ABOLITION OF NON-PROFITABLE VALUES: "The language of communism is hard; it does not talk of the values of sympathy, willingness, help & human solidarity; it says with self-confidence that it is not sentimental" – & yet "apart from sentimental reasons you will not hand a glass of water to your neighbour; rational motives will not even bring you to help & raise a person who has slipped."²

5. Finally, following from the previous, ITS PROGRAMMATIC DENIAL OF ANY HETERODOXY: "It is as if [communism] spoke a strange language & its thought was subjected to different laws... if communism believes that to hang & shoot people is no more of a serious matter than to kill cockroaches, it is something that I cannot understand though it is being told to me in Czech; I have a terrible feeling of chaos & a real anxiety that this way we will never agree."

¹ Karel Čapek, "Why I am Not a Communist" (orig. 1924), trans. Martin Pokorný. Online: <http://czechfolks.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/karel-capek-communist.doc>.

² Čapek, "Why I am Not a Communist."

COMBING THE CATACOMBS

"We need to learn, or re-learn, how to build comradeship & solidarity... We must create conditions where disagreement can take place without fear of exclusion & excommunication." Thus spake Mark Fisher, writing 90 years after Čapek, in his "Exiting the Vampire Castle," published symbolically, or perhaps entirely by coincidence, on 22 November 2013, the 50th anniversary of the making of Abraham Zapruder's iconic blockbuster.

By "VC" Fisher meant a libidinal/discursive configuration of power in the public space of the social media, "driven by a *priest's desire* to excommunicate & condemn, an *academic-pedant's desire* to be the first to be seen to spot a mistake, & a *hipster's desire* to be one of the in-crowd." This configuration is, at its unstaked-through heart, "a bourgeois-liberal perversion & appropriation of the energy of movements" struggling against racism, sexism, transphobia, etc. (hence its vampiric work), born the moment "when the struggle *not* to be defined by 'identitarian' categories became the quest to have 'identities' recognised by a bourgeois Big Other."³

Today, six years after Fisher's prescient diagnosis – written three years before his own voluntary exile into the Great Beyond – we are still far from finding an exit path out of Vampire Castle. If anything, we seem to have strayed even deeper into its catacombs, the venom of public "discussion" achieving whole new levels of toxicity.

THEY SHALL BE KNOWN BY THEIR DEEDS

The five laws of "Vampire Castle" bear an uncanny resemblance to Čapek's critique of sectarian communism *sub specie* 1924:

1. INDIVIDUALISE & PRIVATISE EVERYTHING: While in theory [the VC] claims to be in favour of structural critique, in practice it never focuses on anything except individual behaviour. Remember: condemning individuals is always more important than paying attention to impersonal structures...
2. MAKE THOUGHT & ACTION APPEAR DIFFICULT: There must be no lightness, & certainly no humour. Humour isn't serious, by definition, right? Thought is hard work, for people with posh voices & furrowed brows...
3. PROPAGATE AS MUCH GUILT AS YOU CAN: The more guilt the better. People must feel bad: it is a sign that they understand the gravity of things. It's OK to be class-privileged if you feel guilty about privilege & make others in a subordinate class position to you feel guilty too...

³ Mark Fisher, "Exiting the Vampire Castle" (orig. *The North Star*, 22 Nov 2013). Online: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/exiting-vampire-castle/>

4. ESSENTIALISE: While fluidity of identity, plurality & multiplicity are always claimed on behalf of the VC members – partly to cover up their own invariably wealthy, privileged or bourgeois-assimilationist background – the enemy is to be essentialised...

5. THINK LIKE A LIBERAL: The VC's work of constantly stoking up reactive outrage consists of endlessly pointing out the screamingly obvious: capital behaves like capital (it's not very nice!), repressive state apparatuses are repressive. We must protest!⁴

MOULDY BREAD OF THE POOR & GORGING OF THE OVERLORDS

Though writing 90 years apart & from decidedly opposite political camps, both Čapek & Fisher devote a good portion of their polemics to criticising how a particular discourse polarises, victimises, & essentialises, turning groups of individuals, whether friend or enemy, into a mass so as to be used, all the more easily, as a political tools rather than treated as recipients of help. Communism, for Čapek, doesn't seek to abolish poverty & hunger, it just seeks to turn these into instruments of political struggle. It seeks to classify & organise the poor people who are, insists Čapek, no class but precisely those who are "declassed, excluded & unorganised".

Communicative capitalism, for Fisher, has allowed the VC in tandem with the moralising neo-anarchism to govern the public space of social medial exchange & shape it so that the forces supposedly resisting it are doing capital's work for it by condemning & abusing each other. Notes Fisher, "there is little protection from the psychic pathologies propagated by these discourses." Last but not least, in both regimes, the world is systematically stripped of any meaning, & deprived of any pleasure, that it can gain outside of its one all-pervasive ideology: in Čapek's metaphor, the world thus "contains no lunch or dinner; it is either the mouldy bread of the poor or the gorging of the overlords."

IDENTITY POLITICS: ATOMISE & DISTRACT

It has been one of the worse-kept secrets that the recent rise of the new leftist identity politics has not at all run counter the spread of neoliberal economics & their inherent inequality, but instead actively contributed to them. Robert Pfaller has identified two powerful reasons for how this might be. First, the stronger the individuals' concerns about their identity, the more widespread their atomisation & distraction of isolated people lacking solidarity from central questions. "To precisely the same degree as neoliberalism has robbed people of the prospect of a better future, the propaganda of the identity politics movement has come to the fore & turned attention from the future back towards the past," observes

⁴ Fisher, "Exiting the Vampire Castle."

Pfaller, & contends: "After all, someone who no longer has anywhere to go needs at least to know from where they come; & anyone who has lost all hope of *be-coming* something interesting has no choice but to insist on *being* something important, precious, vulnerable."⁵ Second, the fact that previously emancipatory intellectual movements such as neo-Marxism, feminism, & anti-racism moved into the cultural sphere, this has led them to lose relevance to wider society as they gained in theoretical sophistication, complexity, & (most importantly) social distinction. Pfaller: "All of these issues which derived from the suffering of those exploited could now be used to show social distinction. In short, identity politics has redistributed social plights & their acknowledgement up the social scale towards the elites."⁶ The Kafkaesque consequence of all this is this: now that identitarian revolution has evaporated, all it has left behind is the slime of a new bureaucracy, standardisation, inter-passivity.

SURFACEBOOK AS THE BIG OTHER

It is by no means coincidental that the weapon of choice in VC's spread of censorship, "propriety" & shaming is social media. Fisher is spot-on when identifying the foundations of VC with the "quest to have 'identities' recognised by a bourgeois Big Other." In Slavoj Žižek's rewriting of Lacan, the big Other is the collective fiction, the symbolic structure, presupposed by any social field. The big Other can never be confronted in itself – instead, we only ever encounter its stand-ins – & one important dimension of the big Other is its non-omniscience. It is the constitutive ignorance of the big Other that allows public relations to function. In another famous anecdote of Žižek's, one which exemplifies the key role of the Other's knowledge:

a man who believes himself to be a grain of seed is taken to the mental institution where the doctors do their best to finally convince him that he is not a grain but a man. When he is cured & allowed to leave the hospital, he immediately comes back trembling. There is a chicken outside the door & he is afraid that it will eat him. "Dear fellow," says his doctor, "you know very well that you are not a grain of seed but a man." "Of course, I know that," replies the patient, "but does the chicken know it?"⁷

This is where psychoanalytic treatment also meets the logic of commodity fetishism: just as it is not enough to convince the patient about the unconscious truth of his symptoms, for the unconscious itself must be

⁵ Robert Pfaller, "The End of Solidarity," *International Politics & Society*. Online: <https://www.ips-journal.eu/regions/europe/article/show/the-end-of-solidarity-2991/>

⁶ Pfaller, "The End of Solidarity."

⁷ Slavoj Žižek, "God is Dead, but He Doesn't Know It" (*How to Read Lacan*, 2009). Online: <https://www.lacan.com/essays/?p=184>

brought to assume this truth, the big Other could be defined as the consumer of PR & propaganda, the virtual figure which is required to believe even when no individual can.

Neither Fisher nor Žižek quite deal with the question of what exactly takes place in a space where personal identity *is* commodity, factuality *is* fabrication, the self *is* wish-fulfilment, & imaginary *méconnaissance* becomes equipped with catchy text, pushy emojis, high-res images, & is here to stay, fixed forever. What catastrophic consequences then come into effect when Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram become the channels by which a culture speaks to itself, disseminates its messages, & wages its wars. Of course, the medium is the message: The eye with which one beholds Facebook is the same eye by which one is beholden to Facebook, propelled to interconnect, search, act, engage, & “opinionate” (in the direly reductive binary code of likes/dislikes) in an interpassive simulation of participation, in which media become subsumed into PR.

JE NE REGRETTE RIEN

Then of course there's the fate of Mark Fisher himself, & DC Miller & Nina Power, too convoluted & too painfully well-known to be rehashed here. Its outlines have been expressed in Miller's recent “I Regret Nothing” – here, worthy of mention is his diagnosis of “Antifascist activist identity performed on corporate social media” as “*hyperlie* inside a paranoid structure of reality *hyperlinked* as Antifascism” & the kind of mirroring logic of social-media hatemongering:

The more time spent online, the heavier the mask becomes, & the more the relationship between reality & fantasy, & the other & the self, decays into hypocrisy, which is also why the activists attach to me the things they've done, or want to do, themselves, e.g. a man who calls for violence accuses me of violence, or a shameless self-promoter assumes that these must be my motives too, & criticizes me for things I never said.⁸

Thus, for Miller, the crowds calling for (& on at least two occasions, performing) violence against his person are “just symptoms of the internet, cynically manipulating Antifascist discourse to camouflage their sadism & malice,” with “the political dimension nothing but a vehicle for will to power & resentment, aligned to extant ideological conformism.”

We invited Power to address these issues at the “Experiment & Resistance” colloquium last month (April 2019). In turn, we were publicly slandered as “fascist sympathisers” & subjected to hysterical mob denunciation on social media. The message of the medium. We were accused of promoting fascists, or at best of ignorance & failing to understand their “camouflage

⁸ DC Miller, “I Regret Nothing.” Online: <https://medium.com/@dctvbot/i-regret-nothing-c05401636032>

tactics." Self-appointed representatives of society's most vulnerable repeatedly called upon him to no-platform Miller & Power, predetermining that this could be "the only reasonable outcome" of the exchange. These "voices off" rose to high volume then vanished the moment their hectoring failed to produce the desired result, re-materialising elsewhere on the web to hector their next targets.

ON SURFACEBOOK, WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME NO-PLATFORM

Fisher's VC has got one foolproof logic of online hatemongering: "X has made a remark / has behaved in a particular way – these remarks / this behaviour might be construed as transphobic / sexist etc... it's the next move which is the kicker. X then becomes defined as a transphobe / sexist etc." What Nina Power & DC Miller have been "guilty" of is interrogating, performing, & impersonating themes, figures & ideas that can be construed, or rather misconstrued, to serve as scapegoat targets of a particular group's narcissistic pseudo-politics. In addition, they once counter-protested the thought police's bust & shutdown of a semi-controversial institution.

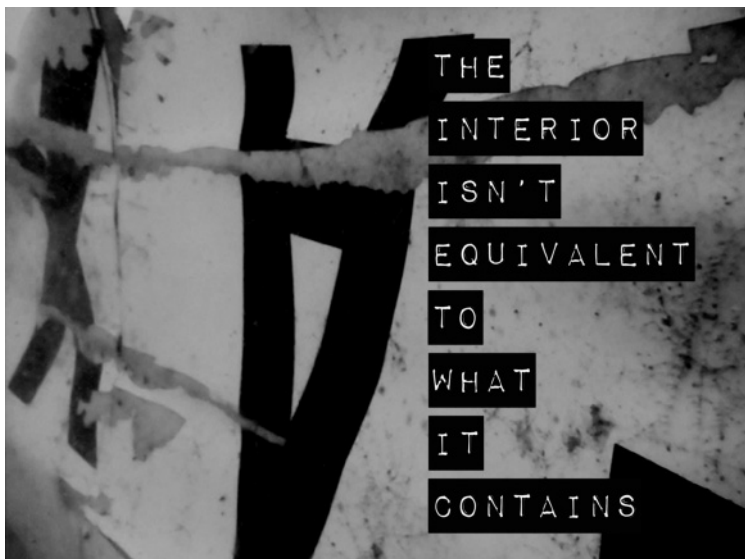
Čapek: "If I were a Communist, I would think that I stand on the side of the poor against the rich, on the side of those in hunger against bags of money; I would know what to think about this & that, what to hate, what to ignore."⁹ Which goes to show how infinitely better it is *not* to be told what to think & hate, & to find out for oneself. Such might be a way out of Fisher's VC, where class has disappeared, but moralism is everywhere, where solidarity is impossible, but guilt & fear are omnipresent – not because, insists Fisher, "we are terrorised by the right," but because "we have allowed bourgeois modes of subjectivity to contaminate" us.¹⁰

The point of all the above is that in an age where so-called social media (neither much social nor much medial) take on the role of surrogate fora for critical inquiry & open dialogue, there's no such thing as no-platforming. We're all no-platformed, as long as we play the game "communicative capitalism" wants us to play. Since social media are not platforms on which to conduct rigorous, unbiased, attack-free discussion *ad rem* not *ad hominem*. They are capital's tools in furthering alienation, confusing our language, distracting our attention, trivialising our means of expression. If it's a minor & obvious point, so be it. Like Kafka's Red Peter, "I don't want any man's judgment. I only want to expand knowledge. I simply report. Even to you... I've only made a report."

DAVID VICHNAR
May 2019

⁹ Čapek, "Why I am Not a Communist."

¹⁰ Fisher, "Exiting the Vampire Castle."





Atefeh Ahmadi, THE 4 EMANCIPATIONS (2019)

EXQUISITE CORPSES

1. Two drunk women from Stranraer smoking outside a cheap hotel near the Erskine Bridge at around 1am. I approached on the pretence that I didn't have a lighter and as a smiling self-effacing younger woman on her own, posed no threat. The corpse grins – a big if not convincing smile despite having disarticulated legs and head. It was quickly drawn as all three of us felt the sudden intimacy unbearable.

2. I spent three days sharing a printing studio with strangers and mostly felt too shy to participate in a conversation with any of them except a woman younger than I. Near the end of the third day in the kitchen I took a deep breath and began the game.

3. Chose a quiet day in the office with few people around. Alienated myself from the other women by polluting our workspace with my request.

4. I frightened a girl at a bus stop who turned away and refused to play and wouldn't look at me until I stopped pleading. I've asked no men to play. I watch strangers on the bus home and think about what they'd draw and what we could make together, then shrink away at the threat of being loudly shamed for breaking the unspoken code of public conduct.

Things I learned:

Making art is fundamentally about overcoming our primal fear of exposure.

In experiencing humiliation, we tread a fine line between misery and thrilling pleasure.

True communication is an act of reciprocal exposure.

Art making is about alterity – the true rupturing buzz takes place when we extend our hospitality and vulnerability to those we don't know, can't see, who aren't like us.

True collaboration must involve risk and chance.

I am now in my collaborators' debt.

The more I play the more fearful I feel.

HAILEY MAXWELL

VIRTUAL
ENTITIES
RULE
THE
WORLD



J. J. Barrowclough, del.

FRIENDSHIP

ON FASCISM, CONSENSUS & THE POLITICS OF PHILOSOPHY

0. When the political right declares the political left to be the “true fascists” in the midst of our contemporary culture wars, they are perhaps recognising their own aptitude for producing an internal consensus in contrast to the left’s inability to agree & its readiness to eject everything which does not wholly coincide with itself. This is, of course, to suggest that fascists can’t agree. The truth is that *they must*.

Here, already, the first of our paradoxes emerges. This essay will attempt to grapple with many.

1. What defines the popular conception of fascism today is itself largely in contention. Generally speaking, fascism seems to be defined by an indeterminate intolerance & the forced suppression of any opposition. Whilst this is indeed a central tendency at the heart of any fascism, the nature of the suppression at hand – which underpins all such accusations, knocked back & forth across the political divide – is often vague & underdefined.

At the very least, we can say that perceptions of power are central. The left’s ability to set the cultural agenda, arguably underappreciated within its own ranks, is seen as tyrannical by a right which nonetheless has a firmer grip on state power than it often likes to admit. Nonetheless, the ground from which both accusations of fascism are thrown is worth taking note of.

Holding these two perspectives together – with no comment made on the validity of the arguments which constitute them – we begin to see a picture of two opposing forces which give shape to our contemporary status quo; of two opposing sides which constitute the internal borders of *that which is*, warring over how far they can shift the Overton Window which frames our present moment.

However, with each side so entangled with the other, neither seems capable of shifting the overall situation so much as to rupture the cage-like equilibrium that they themselves constitute &, in turn, are constituted by: contemporary capitalism.

2. The shape-shifting nature of fascism today is a particularly contentious & telling example of contemporary capitalism’s socio-political unruliness but it is not the only one. The very nature of our new & ever-growing populisms further clouds the waters that many leftist commentators have described

as a “crisis of democracy”¹ – that is, a crisis of consensus. “Brexit” appears as perhaps the most painfully obvious example of such a concept in the West, its conceptual meaning & processual outcome so contentious that it has persistently & repeatedly humiliated the political process in the United Kingdom over the last three years. We can also extend our view outwards & see the same dissolution of meaning affecting everything from the political philosophies of “neoliberalism,” “communism” or even “accelerationism.”

As each term or concept is passed around from group to group, rising to the surface of public discourse by virtue of this promiscuity, we watch with horror as each word tumbles into meaninglessness, where one group’s gospel is another’s shameful misuse. This is a situation we are used to seeing, of course, in various different contexts, but to see it as a central trap from which contemporary politics cannot seem to wrest itself is depressing to many. Indeed, defining contemporaneity in itself as the temporally progressive shoreline of a universalised thinking, we find ourselves in a moment of traumatic untimeliness through which discourses & the concepts that fuel them become fatally entwined in a mutually destructive death-spiral, both seemingly incapable of affecting the other to the degree that we have long been told is necessary, each diluting the structural analyses of the other in the popular imagination. Consensus becomes both weapon & shield for all sides who proclaim possession of the majority’s support whilst ultimately finding it impotent as various positions go to war with one another over minor differences of opinion. We watch helplessly as Overton Windows overlap, creating a disorientating & kaleidoscopic politics.

So, what is to be done? How do we deal with words – with *concepts* – when their innate lack of consensual meaning is abused with such regularity? How do we stand by the words & concepts we deploy in our conversations, resisting their cooption, whilst retaining their potential for the production of the new? How do we remain true to our broader identifications with the left or the right when both umbrellas are so full of holes?

It is perhaps necessary for us to begin with an uncomfortable caveat: what if we consider our discourses & the ideas that underpin them to be, at first, processually distinct from one another?

3. This is an argument we find presented to us in *What is Philosophy?* – the final collaborative work by Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. The pair

¹ See, for example, these three broadly leftist opinion pieces, all from 2018: Ganesh Sitaraman, “The three crisis of liberal democracy,” *The Guardian*, 17 March 2018: <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/17/the-three-crises-of-liberal-democracy>>; David Leonhardt, “The Growing Crisis of Democracy,” *The New York Times*, 17 October 2018: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/17/opinion/democracy-voter-registration.html>>; Michael Walzer, “The Crisis of Democracy is a Crisis of the Left,” *Public Seminar*, 13 November 2018: <<http://www.publicseminar.org/2018/11/the-crisis-of-democracy-is-a-crisis-of-the-left/>>.

begin by skewering the present dilemma through which we now live – &, in many ways, have always lived. Whilst the implications of this dilemma are implicit – & they are wise not to inflame an unproductive separation between fields of knowledge & understanding – it seems they are, at first, hoping to hold philosophy & politics apart from one another in order to identify the ground from which they both emerge.

In one particularly telling passage from the introduction to the book, Deleuze & Guattari write – damningly, it seems, & without mincing words – that philosophy cannot “find any final refuge in communication, which only works under the sway of opinions in order to create “consensus” & not concepts.”² Communication, in this sense, becomes the process of eliminating discursive difference whereas, for Deleuze especially, writing in his book *Difference & Repetition*, the aim of philosophy should always be to “eliminate all presuppositions” which are “contained in opinions.”³

The implications of this for politics soon become clear. Deleuze & Guattari go on to declare:

The idea of a Western democratic conversation between friends has never produced a single concept. The idea [of the concept] comes, perhaps, from the Greeks, but they distrusted it so much, & subjected it to such harsh treatment, that the concept was more like the ironical soliloquy bird that surveyed the battlefield of destroyed rival opinions (the drunken guests at the banquet).⁴

The Greeks’ distrust of the concept, in this sense, comes from the concept’s aversion to consensus (with the latter taking shape in idealised Platonic forms). For Deleuze & Guattari, the task of the concept is, instead, to rupture consensus, in the form of the status quo, making the concept a vector through which we might produce the new – produce *difference* – which, in turn, reproduces & extends itself in being constantly challenged & held in contention.

Whilst it may make us uncomfortable to acknowledge it today, what Deleuze & Guattari are arguing is that democracy & philosophy, despite both being heavily associated with the Greeks, share no other original binding. They are instead grounded by an original difference – the difference between concept & process – &, for Deleuze in particular, the primacy of the concept must be maintained.⁵ This is not to discard democracy but

² Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 6.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) 171.

⁴ Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 6.

⁵ Deleuze would comment on the nature of this difference between concept & process

rather includes the concept of democracy within itself. We must not allow the *concept of democracy* to be subsumed by the horrifically contaminated *process of liberal democracy* as it is presently enacted by the state.

4. This skepticism towards the democratic process can be found today on both the left & the right of political philosophy, & it remains a controversial position in each instance. On the one hand, we might look to Nick Land's emphatically anti-democratic text, *The Dark Enlightenment*, which considers the ways in which capitalism, allowed off its democratised leash, can help "a 21st-century post-demotist society [recover] from democracy, much as Eastern Europe sees itself as recovering from Communism."⁶ On the other hand, we can consider the communist writings of Jodi Dean, who has repeatedly argued that "democracy is so intimately tied up with... 'communicative capitalism' that every attempt from the left to reappropriate the term, to give it a more radical meaning & to distinguish it from the electoral regimes of representative democracy has to fail."⁷

As controversial as these arguments often are, they are by no means new to the realm of political philosophy. We might also look to the works of Friedrich Nietzsche – perhaps one of the most well-known modern philosophers to be critical of democracy. As with Dean & Land, the issue with an idealised form of democracy for Germany's great moral genealogist is that, in resting on its laurels, it becomes that which it is meant to help us resist. Nietzsche points to the Christian Church, in particular, as that sociopolitical entity which came to dominate & tyrannise the world precisely because of its democratisation.⁸ In his book *On the Genealogy of Morality*, throughout many of his writings. For instance, ending his second book on Cinema, he writes that a "theory of cinema is not 'about' cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to & which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices, the practice of concepts in general having no privilege over others." It is through this same sense of a giving-rise-to that Deleuze understands political philosophy. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Robert Galeta (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) 287.

⁶ Nick Land, *The Dark Enlightenment*. <<http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>>. Land writes: "Democracy & 'progressive democracy' are synonymous, & indistinguishable from the expansion of the state. [...] Since winning elections is overwhelmingly a matter of vote buying, & society's informational organs (education & media) are no more resistant to bribery than the electorate, a thrifty politician is simply an incompetent politician, & the democratic variant of Darwinism quickly eliminates such misfits from the gene pool. This is a reality that the left applauds, the establishment right grumpily accepts, & the libertarian right has ineffectively railed against."

⁷ Thomas Biebricher & Robin Celikates, "Saying 'We' Again: A Conversation with Jodi Dean on Democracy, Occupy & Communism," *Critical Legal Thinking*, 6 November 2012: <<http://criticallegalthinking.com/2012/11/06/saying-we-again-a-conversation-with-jodi-dean-on-democracy-occupy-&-communism/>>.

⁸ See Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules & Form-of-Life* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2013) for a more contemporary argument of this position, in which Agamben argues that the Church's attempts to control its independent monastic dioceses

Nietzsche notes how the establishment of Christianity as a world religion shows us that “the morality of the common people has triumphed” – the morality of “‘the slaves’, the ‘plebians’, ‘the herd.’” However, echoing Marx, Nietzsche is unsettled by & cynical about this successful intoxication of the masses, which the Church today “rather slows down & blocks the passage of... instead of accelerating it.”⁹

Why? Why temper this revolutionary sentiment? In his early notebooks, Nietzsche writes that Christianity “had to be democratised” – that is, stabilised – in order to succeed on its quest for world domination. This is not a positive process, however. Nietzsche characterises democratisation as a “slow struggle... whereby everything profound, esoteric, accessible to the talented individual [is] extirpated.” He concludes that whilst it continues to produce an intoxicating “optimism,” making its followers feel good about themselves, “purgatory & κατάστασις” are nonetheless Christianity’s primary creations.¹⁰

The question becomes: how can we embrace this need for difference & the new without wholly dismissing the principles we associate with our democracies (even as they lie in tatters)? How can we challenge the counter-productive presuppositions of our present moment without opening the door to that which is “new” only by virtue of the unprecedented nature of its own conservatism? And again, is this not the question that haunts every corner of our politics in our present moment? Nietzsche, Deleuze & others have a concept ready & waiting for just such a question but it is a concept which requires considerable exploration. It is a concept which, in this context, has remained somewhat maligned, perhaps due to it appearing to be cloyingly sentimental. It is the concept of the friend.¹¹

5. The friend, for Nietzsche, is a peculiar figure. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he writes of the friend as that “third [who] prevents the conversation of

likewise brought to heel Christianity’s originally revolutionary sentiments.

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethelme (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Revised Student Edition, 2007) 19.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, eds. Raymond Geuss & Alexander Nehamas, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 14. The exact meaning of κατάστασις, in this context, is unclear but the translators suggest in an accompanying footnote that it connotes a sense of orderliness or of everything being in its right place. This non-Greek speaker’s own attempts at translating the word find it invoking the words “state” or “situation” & so I am interpreting the word as referring to a kind of “stasis.” However, the translator’s confusion seems to come from the word’s proximity to “purgatory” (alternatively translated as “limbo”) which seems to already contain this association. It is perhaps the safest option to defer to the original translator’s own uncertainty.

¹¹ The friend is a concept that is perhaps doubly ruined in the popular imagination for anyone whose cultural consciousness remains haunted by a certain late-naughties British sitcom. See: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-5fdrBXinI>>.

the two from sinking into the depths." He continues, however, in almost Machiavellian terms: "If one wants a friend, then one must also want to wage war for him: & in order to wage war, one must *be able* to be an enemy"; "In one's friend one should have one's best enemy."¹²

The concept of the friend is often characterised as little more than a recurring quirk in an already strange book, in stark contrast to Nietzsche's more famous concepts that are also introduced within it. And yet the friend takes on a particular resonance in later being associated with the concept of the overman. Nietzsche writes (or rather Zarathustra decrees) that the friend shall be "your festival of the earth & an anticipation of the overman"; "in your friend you shall love the overman as your cause."¹³

The overman, being that goal which humanity sets itself in its own image, its own overcoming, is often taken to be a philosophical call for the utopian transcendence of our present selves into a new nature, but here the overman finds its grounding in the immanence of the friend who is at once already the other & "I." As Deleuze would later write, Nietzsche's concept of the friend "must be interpreted in a strange way: the friend, says Zarathustra, is always a third person in between "I" & "me" who pushes me to overcome myself & to be overcome in order to live."¹⁴

Returning to *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze & Guattari echo this articulation when they poignantly argue that the philosopher, in hoping to produce difference through concepts, must be a *friend* to the concepts that they both pick up & produce; philosophers must be "friends of wisdom."¹⁵ This is not to say the philosopher should strive to possess wisdom as an object, but rather argues that they might overcome it & *be overcome* by it. They continue to argue, further echoing this point, that the philosopher is nothing but the "potentiality of the concept."¹⁶ The friend, then, is an eerie figure – an absent presence.¹⁷ In being between "I" & "me," the friend does not describe a "person" *as such* but rather a "conceptual personae," a hypothetical being of pure Thought who arrives from the future; a latent intensity within an "image of thought that will be occupied by [other] concepts."¹⁸

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, eds. Adrian Del Caro & Robert Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 40.

¹³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 45.

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 1986) 5-6.

¹⁵ Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 3.

¹⁶ Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 5.

¹⁷ A definition I am borrowing from Mark Fisher's *The Weird & the Eerie* (London: Repeater, 2016)

¹⁸ Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 61.

6. The missing links between Nietzsche & Deleuze & Guattari's conceptions of friendship are Georges Bataille & Maurice Blanchot – & it is the latter in particular who Deleuze & Guattari acknowledge as the primary source of their conceptual understanding of the friend in this sense. In writing on this Nietzschean figure, Blanchot preempts the apparent paradoxes of Deleuze & Guattari's own formulation. Blanchot asks, if no concept has ever been produced by a democratic conversation between friends, then: "How could one agree to speak to this friend?"¹⁹ Having ruptured the common senses by which we understand "agreement," "communication" & "friendship," what is left? Are we left alone to crash upon the shores of our own subjectivity? We certainly find ourselves encountering a kind of nihilism but this should not forestall action. Blanchot continues:

We must give up trying to know those to whom we are linked by something essential; by this I mean we must greet them in the relation with the unknown in which they greet us as well, in our estrangement. Friendship, this relation without dependence, without episode, yet into which all of the simplicity of life enters...This is thought's profound grief. It must accompany friendship into oblivion.²⁰

Here, philosophies of difference, applied to our politics, find their unground in a solidarity without similarity. To communicate with this friend, as Nietzsche has already demonstrated in his talk of war & enemies, is not to seek the "democratic conversation" that Deleuze & Guattari have previously derided, but it need not be predicated by hostility. It is instead to engage without presupposition; to communicate through risk; through chance, with chance itself being "a friend who visits his friend, a friend who will be asked back, a friend of destiny whose destiny itself assures the eternal return as such."²¹

The implication here is perhaps less complex than we might at first anticipate. Under what circumstances do we communicate with the actual (non-conceptual) "friends" who orbit our lives? Certainly not through "Universals," as Deleuze & Guattari term that which we might think of here as "small talk," in its being governed by common sense & sensibilities. This is not communication but an exchange of predictable platitudes. To be a friend to someone we must get to know them & then, perhaps, take them somewhere new – a movement reciprocated between beings again & again like a dice throw. It is a communication that Maurice Blanchot himself would call an "infinite conversation" – a mode of being constituted by "an

¹⁹ Maurice Blanchot, "Friendship" in *Friendship*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 289

²⁰ Blanchot, "Friendship" in *Friendship*, 291-292.

²¹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 26.

uninterrupted line that inscribes itself while interrupting itself."²²

For Georges Bataille – one of Blanchot's closest philosophical friends – the nature of this communication is articulated much more clearly. It is that act of relation which constitutes the battle-ready Nietzschean friend in that it "cannot take place without wounding or defiling"; "cannot take place between one full & intact being & another: it wants beings who *question* being in themselves."²³ This communication "only takes place *between two beings at risk* – lacerated, suspended, both leaning over nothingness."²⁴ The risk of communication – that is, the existential risk (whether virtual or actual) that communication casts upon those beings engaged within it – is nonetheless a necessary risk & one to be championed. The alternative – a life of silence wherein the ego folds back on itself – is surely the greater evil. For Bataille, only this risk has "the virtue of exploring very far in advance of the possible, without prejudicing the result, granting the *future* alone, to its free expiration, the power that one normally grants to taking sides, which is only a form of the *past*."²⁵

In this sense, communication for Bataille is likewise antithetical to consensus, & this is emphasised by the wider context of his writings on (& *through*) Nietzsche, who he emphatically declares to be his friend, demonstrating said friendship through his communication with the concepts of the dead philosopher, whose central enlightening & rupturing gesture – of central importance to Bataille, as an historian & librarian of antiquity searching for necessarily unsafe passage to the future through his present in Nazi-occupied France – is Nietzsche's horror at "the idea of subordinating his thought to a cause."²⁶

7. With an all too obvious & tragic irony, it is this horror that Nietzsche's thought was mired in for so many years, posthumously "democratised" – like Christ himself; or the Anti-Christ he always professed himself to be – under the quasi-religious retooling of his "Will to Power," its intoxicating poison constrained in order to subordinate it to a goal – a fascist goal – by way of his sister's enamourment of the Nazi regime.

Following Nietzsche's mental breakdown in 1889, from which he would not recover, his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, was left to preside over his estate, trawling his notebooks in order to publish & profit from posthumous materials, in particular the best-selling volume of aphorisms,

²² Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) xviii.

²³ Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany: SUNY, 2015), 33.

²⁴ Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 34.

²⁵ Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 8

²⁶ Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 6

The Will To Power (1901), which she edited under the long shadow of Hitler's rise to power, producing a version of Nietzsche's philosophy that aligned with her own (& the Führer's) burgeoning ideology of National Socialism.

We may note here that, in stark contrast to Förster-Nietzsche, Bataille is a friend to Nietzsche by virtue of the fact he picks up his thought & takes it somewhere new that is nonetheless loyal to Nietzsche's philosophy in itself. It is a friendship predicated on an understanding which nonetheless eschews any attempt at producing a consensus. Bataille, then, is a wanderer with Nietzsche as his shadow. Nietzsche, in this sense, is a man that Bataille knows he can never truly know, unable to subsume him inside of himself. Instead, he allows Nietzsche to guide him in his own self-overcoming, in turn leaving "Mr. Nietzsche" behind, just as Nietzsche himself did.²⁷

It is here that we can return to our discussion of contemporary fascism, the problematics of which find their encapsulation in debates around the productivity of communicating with one's enemies but the writing of the philosophers considered here brings another – all too often ignored – question to the fore: how good are we really at communicating with our friends? We must ask this of ourselves more frequently: what is it *to be* a friend – a question in which the question of how to be an enemy is already folded? What is it to ground a politics on this figure of an elusive interval between our contemporary discourses?

8. Maurice Blanchot, as Deleuze & Guattari argue in *What Is Philosophy?*, is an exemplary friend to the concept but he is nonetheless an enemy to many others. His conceptual productions & adoptions were not stumbled upon through adherence to popular opinion. Quite to the contrary, having begun his intellectual career contributing to the far-right discourses of 1930s France, it was only later that Blanchot would find himself moving explicitly to the left & refuting the ideas he once held dear. It is arguably his formulation of these concepts of friendship & communication that necessitates & even formulates this trajectory which constantly inscribes & interrupts itself. Because of this, it is likely that Blanchot would remain an uncomfortable figure on today's left-wing were he still alive today, but, in being a friend to him nonetheless, we may find his thought rupturing our presently consolidated political identities in newly productive ways.

²⁷ Bataille begins his book with a quotation from the preface to the second edition of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*: "But let us leave Mr. Nietzsche..." Presumably writing this preface after a recovery from one of his many illnesses – he was a very sickly man – Nietzsche's base materialism ungrounds his own sense of self. Nietzsche wonders to what extent his own illnesses have inspired his philosophy & so, in hoping to understand that which carries him through life, he must leave his self behind, nothing more than a screen onto which presently unknown forces are projected. See: Friedrich Nietzsche, "Preface to the second edition" in *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 4

In order to better understand this shift to the left, perhaps it would be useful for us to note here that the concept of the friend can likewise be translated as the “comrade” – although the political baggage that this word carries dissuades us philosophically from doing so. Indeed, whilst the discourses of communism have wholly engulfed this term, they can ultimately take no ownership of it. Comradeship, like friendship, is a relation which gives itself as a goal. The communist call to “seize the means of production” is also worthy of acknowledgement here, understood as a challenge to the very nature of ownership & private property upheld by the state. It instead calls for the bringing of such mechanisms *into the commons*. It is in this sense that the communist, like the philosopher, must be a friend to the concept in overcoming & being overcome by the productive mechanisms of thought & labour. Echoing the terms by which we have defined the friend, the comrade becomes that founding goal on which communism itself as a movement has been built. However, it is also the concept which communism, in its state forms, first forgets because, like the friend, it is not a Universal – which is all that the state seeks to produce in order to give form to itself & the loyalty of its peoples.

Blanchot writes on the concept of communism explicitly in these terms – terms that are speculative & open-ended. Renouncing the foundations by which we presently understand ourselves, nihilism reemerges here – an encounter with which is, for Blanchot, “irrefutable, but an irrefutable nihilism does not suspend the play of needs for men as a whole.”²⁸ If we hope to overcome capitalism as the processual attempt to account for & eradicate our never-ending quest to satisfy our needs – a process which capitalism, in its own self-interest, always wants to extend & perpetuate without resolution – then the capitalist foresees a people “deprived of truth, of values, of ends,” but such a people will nonetheless “continue to live &, in living, continue to search & to satisfy their needs, thus continuing to keep alive the search’s movement of relation to this necessary satisfaction.”²⁹

Here we find ourselves captured by capitalism’s central paradox – the central engine of capitalist realism. As we search for satisfaction under capitalism we inevitably continue to search for communism, which Blanchot defines, via the French writer & political activist Dionys Mascolo, as “the process of the materialist search for communication.”³⁰ Blanchot, in being both a friend to the concept &, in particular, being a friend to the concept of communism, finds himself in alignment with Marx explicitly, whose “statement – ‘the reign of freedom begins with the end of the reign of needs & external ends’ – does not promise anything to his contemporaries

²⁸ Blanchot, “On One Approach to Communism,” in *Friendship*, 93

²⁹ Blanchot, “On One Approach to Communism,” 93.

³⁰ Blanchot, “On One Approach to Communism,” 93.

but the search for the right direction & the determination of a possible future.³¹ The indeterminacy of this position is not symptomatic of a cowardly indecision but rather necessitates our ethical encounter with Bataille risk & Nietzschean morality. As Bataille would write of his friend Mr. Nietzsche, his “doctrines are strange... in that one cannot follow them.”³² However, all is not lost in nihilism. If Nietzsche (&/or his conceptual personae, Zarathustra) is the prophet of anything it is “new paths.”³³ Perhaps this is how Marx himself must be rethought.

Who today is a *friend* to Marx? All I see are scholars...

9. Here we might turn, in conclusion, towards accelerationism – a topic of particular interest to this writer & a philosophy inseparable from the trajectory we have been exploring.

Birthing from the carnal canal of Nick Land’s libidinal materialism, accelerationism is a radical articulation of the temporalised inevitability of change as enacted by capitalism itself as a closed system which struggles to hide its own attempts to colonise its outsides. As a friend to Marx, Nietzsche & Deleuze, the accelerationist carries forward the observation that capitalism’s “libidinal energetics [are] not a transformation of intentional theories of desire, of desires understood as lack, as transcendence, as dialectic.”³⁴ These energetics, at once ours & not-ours, are “chaotic & pre-ontological.” Our attempts to subject these flows & energies to democratic control is to fundamentally misunderstand their nature. We do nothing but humiliate ourselves in front of our own observations.

Such humiliations have stalked the philosophies of accelerationism persistently over the years, having repeatedly fallen victim to the very tendencies they were formulated to critique. Struggling to stay afloat under the pressures & processes of democratisation which rain down upon it from both left & right, accelerationism finds itself as readily associated with “alt-right” fascism as it is with fully automated luxury communism – both of which already constituted by their struggle with that which we are *becoming* in a world defined by the stasis of *being*.³⁵

³¹ Blanchot, “On One Approach to Communism,” 95

³² Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 94

³³ Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 95

³⁴ Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille & Virulent Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 42

³⁵ Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation*, 43–44: “...libidinal materialism accepts only chaos & composition. ‘Being’ as an effect of the composition of chaos, of the ‘approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being.’ With the libidinal reformulation of being as composition ‘one acquires degrees of being, one loses that which *has* being.’ The effect of ‘being’ is derivative from process, ‘because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the ‘real’ world a world not of change & becoming, but one of being.”

Two years ago, it seemed that accelerationism's generic affirmation of post-capitalist becoming seemed to be on the cusp of entering the mainstream. Today, however, in 2019, with accelerationism becoming associated with the violent eco-fascism of Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrant, many argue it has suffered a fatal & irredeemable appropriation.³⁶

On the contrary, it is this writer's belief that the friendships we agree to with the concepts we produce & take up, like communism & socialism (each with their own violent cooptions), must not be lost to the tyranny of individuals who seek to violently enforce their consensus upon us. In so easily giving up the concepts that speak (broadly) to that which we might become – because they do not coincide with that which we think we are – we only succeed in losing sight of ourselves & where we are headed in foreclosing the productivity of risk. In light of this, Blanchot would write that it is “undoubtedly the task of our age to move toward an affirmation that is entirely *other*” – a task which, he notes, is “difficult” & “essentially risky” – & it “is to this task that communism recalls us with a rigor that it itself often shirks.”³⁷

Communism's success or failure rests on the essentiality of this risk & so it is perhaps no coincidence that the communicative grounding of contemporary capitalism seeks to capture all mechanisms of communication in our day-to-day lives, monetising the reduction of communicative risk which is, in fact, exacerbated & made entirely unproductive by a capitalism which always tries to reduce the common subjectivity of our era to an impotent Universal.

In 2005, Jodi Dean would write of the ways in which this universalising tendency of communicative capitalism undermines democracy through its production of the “fantasy of activity or participation [which is] materialised through technological fetishism” & the “fantasy of wholeness [which] relies on & produces a global both imaginary & Real.”³⁸ This construction of false consensus has prevented, Dean continues, “the emergence of a clear division between friend & enemy, resulting instead in the more dangerous & profound figuring of the other as a threat to be destroyed.”³⁹ In this sense, capitalism itself, in attempting to capture these innately human mechanisms of communication, attempts to position itself as the friend. For its own gain, it individualises & alienates the capitalist subject from itself as both “me” & “I,” producing social media “bubbles” of consensus which, as we all have

³⁶ See: “Anomalous Worlds: Accelerationism & Patchwork,” *Xenogothic*, 26 March 2019: <<https://xenogothic.com/2019/03/26/anomalous-worlds-on-accelerationism-patchwork-pws4/>>

³⁷ Blanchot, “On One Approach to Communism,” 97

³⁸ See Jodi Dean, “Communicative Capitalism: Circulation & the Foreclosure of Politics,” *Cultural Politics* 1.1 (2005): 51 <<https://commonconf.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/proofs-of-tech-fetish.pdf>>

³⁹ Dean, “Communicative Capitalism,” 51-52

seen, deny various demographics from forming any affective relationship with the body politic.

From here we can return to where we started, with our observation that left & right fascism constitutes two sides of the same capitalist coin, whereby the discourses that surround the topic of fascism are, in themselves, rendered fascistic by nature of their capture by capitalist apparatuses of reductive communication. What is required in response is a new sense of friendship which maintains the originally intoxicating poison of a communication that is not democratised but embraces the hazards innate to its own risk function.

10. What form does this friendship take? I cannot say. It must be enacted rather than defined.

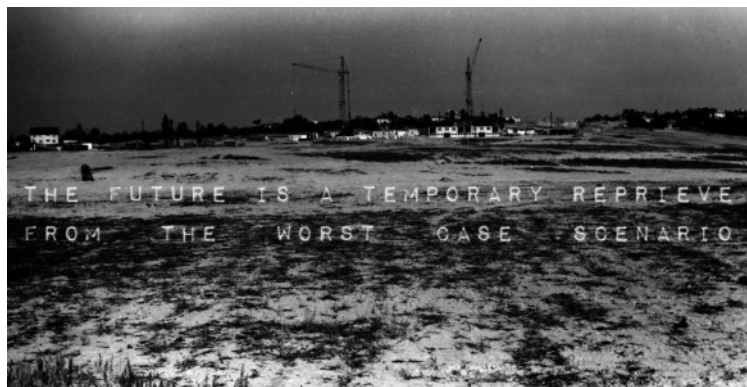
As such, the silence of this essay's abrupt end is not a sign of impotence. It is rather the hope that, having taken the writing of communicating its contention, I can pass the baton on. The concept of friendship – to borrow again from Blanchot – must be "entrust[ed] to others, not that they may answer it, rather that they may choose to carry it with them, &, perhaps, extend it... opening unknown spaces of freedom, mak[ing] us responsible for new relationships, always threatened, always hoped for..."⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1988) 56



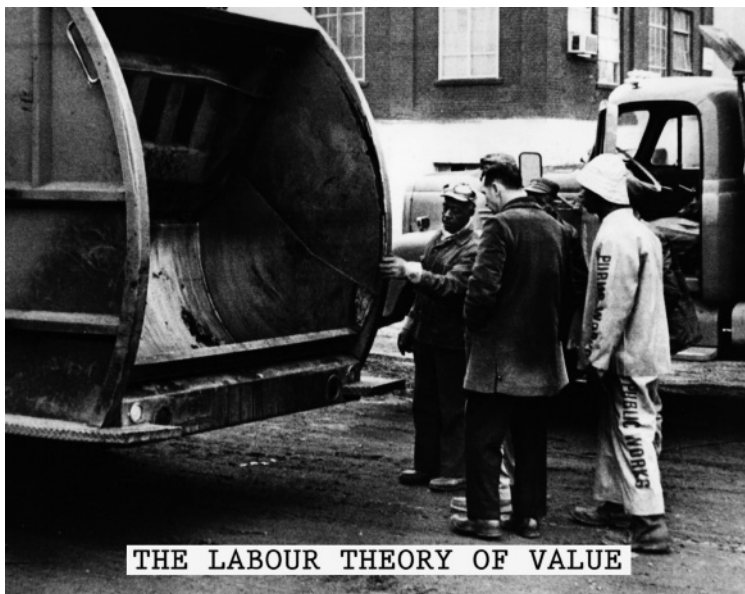
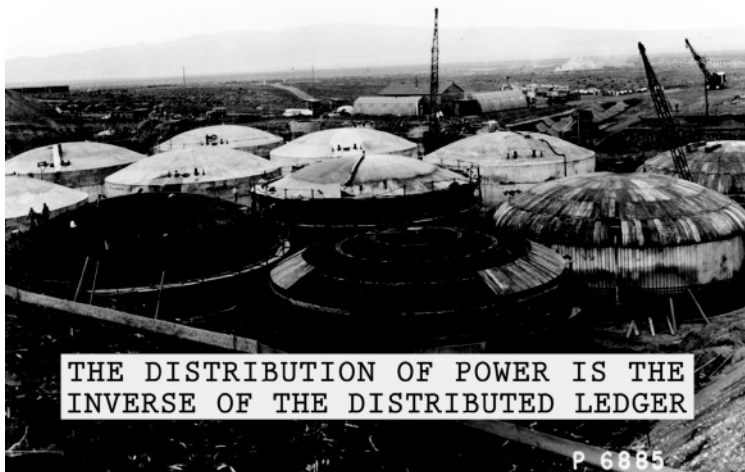
IDEOLOGY ADMIRING ITSELF IN THE MIRROR



THE FUTURE IS A TEMPORARY REPRIEVE
FROM THE WORST CASE SCENARIO



... the spectre of Capital returns
as the PRODUCTION of the Real





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