

TIQQUN

VOL. 2

Whoever leaves the party is considered dead by party members.

– Jacques Camatte, *Notice Biographique*

Mankind conspires to ignore the fact that death is also the youth of things. Blindfolded, we refuse to see that only death guarantees the fresh upsurging without which life would be blind. We refuse to see that life is the trap set for the balanced order, that life is nothing but instability and disequilibrium. Life is a swelling tumult continuously on the verge of explosion. But since the incessant explosion constantly exhausts its resources, it can only proceed under one condition: that beings given life whose explosive force is exhausted shall make room for fresh beings coming into the cycle with renewed vigour.

– Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, p. 59

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INTRODUCTION TO CIVIL WAR

PRELIMINARY NOTES

We decadents have frayed nerves. Everything, or almost everything, wounds us, and what doesn't will likely be irritating. That's why we make sure no one ever touches us. We can only stand smaller and smaller—these days, nanometric—doses of truth, and much prefer long gulps of its antidote instead. Images of happiness, tried and true sensations, kind words, smooth surfaces, familiar feelings and the innermost intimacy, in short, narcosis by the pound and above all: no war, above all, no war. The best way to put it is that this whole preemptive, amniotic environment boils down to a desire for a *positive anthropology*. We need THEM to tell us what “man” is, what “we” are, what we are allowed to want and to be. Ultimately, our age is fanatical about a lot of things, and especially about the question of MAN, through which ONE¹ sublimates away the undeniable fact of Bloom.² This anthropology,

¹ The French indefinite pronoun ON is translated several ways depending on con- text: “it,” “we,” “they” and, at times, “one.” The word appears frequently here in all capitals, indicating a special emphasis. We have on occasion decided to translate ON as “THEY.” In doing so, we echo the conventions of certain French translators of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, who render *Das Man* by “l’On.” Heidegger’s English translators propose “the ‘They.’” But this solution is inadequate, and at times we have simply used “ONE,” in the sense of “someone.”

² Modeled in part after Leopold Bloom from James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, “Bloom” is a conceptual persona who figures prominently in the work of Tiqqun. See in particular Tiqqun, *Théorie du Bloom* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2004), from which we extract a provisional description: “Last man, man

insofar as it is dominant, is not only positive by virtue of an irenic, slightly vacuous and gently pious conception of human nature. It is positive first and foremost because it assigns “Man” qualities, determined attributes and substantial predicates. This is why even the pessimist anthropology of the Anglo-Saxons, with its hypostasis of interests, needs and the struggle for life plays a reassuring role, for it still offers some practicable convictions concerning the essence of man.

But we—those of us who refuse to settle for any sort of comfort, we who admittedly have frayed nerves but also intend to make them still more resistant, still more unyielding—we need something else entirely. We need a *radically negative* anthropology, we need a few abstractions that are just empty enough, just transparent enough to prevent our usual prejudices, a physics that holds in store, for each being, its disposition toward the miraculous. Some concepts that crack the ice in order to attain, or *give rise to*, experience. To make ourselves handle it.

There is nothing we can say about men, that is, about their coexistence, that would not immediately act as a tranquillizer. The impossibility of predicting anything about this relentless freedom forces us to designate it with an undefined term, a blind word, that

on the street, man of the crowds, man of the masses, mass-man, this is how THEY have represented Bloom to us: as the sad product of the time of multitudes, as the catastrophic son of the industrial era and the end of enchantments. But in these designations we also feel a shudder, THEY tremble before the infinite mystery of the ordinary man. Everyone senses that the theater of his qualities hides pure potentiality: a pure power we are supposed to know nothing about” (16-17).

ONE has the habit of using to name whatever ONE knows nothing about, because ONE does not *want* to understand it, or understand that *the world cannot do without us*. The term is *civil war*. This move is tactical; we want to reappropriate, in advance, the term by which our operations will be *necessarily covered*.

CIVIL WAR, FORMS OF LIFE

Whoever does not take sides in a civil war is struck with infamy, and loses all right to politics.

– Solon, The Constitution of Athens

1

The elementary human unity is not the *body*—the individual—but the form-of-life.

2

The form-of-life is not *beyond* bare life, it is its intimate polarization.³

³ To be polarisé can mean to be obsessed with something or someone; more generally, it refers to the convergence of a field of energy or forces around a single point. When in English one speaks of a “polarizing” figure or event, it indicates the production of irreconcilable differences between groups or parties. Here, the term evokes a process in which a body is affected by a form-of-life in such a way as to take on a charge that orients it in a specific manner: it is attracted by certain bodies, repulsed by others. responds with the same disengagement, each time slipping away from the situation. Bloom is therefore a body distinctively affected by a proclivity toward nothingness.

3

Each body is affected by its form-of-life as if by a clinamen, a leaning, an attraction, a *taste*. A body leans toward whatever leans its way. This goes for each and every situation. Inclinations go both ways.

GLOSS:

To the inattentive observer, it may seem that Bloom offers a counterexample: a body deprived of every penchant and inclination, and immune to all attractions. But on closer inspection, it is clear that Bloom refers less to an absence of taste than to a special *taste for absence*. Only this penchant can account for all the efforts Bloom makes to *persevere* in Bloom, to keep what leans his way at a distance, in order to *decline* all experience. Like the religious, who, unable to oppose *another worldliness* to “this world,” must convert their absence within the world into a critique of worldliness *in general*, Bloom tries to flee from a world that has no outside. In every situation he responds with the same disengagement, each time slipping away from the situation. Bloom is therefore a body distinctively affected by a *proclivity toward nothingness*.

4

This taste, this clinamen, can either be warded off or embraced. To take on a form-of-life is not simply to know a penchant: it means to *think* it. I call *thought* that which converts a form-of-life into a *force*, into a sensible effectivity. In every situation there is one line that stands out among all the others, the line along which *power grows*. Thought is the capacity for singling out and following this line. A form-of-life can be embraced only by following this line, meaning that: *all thought is strategic*.

GLOSS:

To latecomer's eyes like ours, the conjuring away of every form-of-life seems to be the West's peculiar destiny. Paradoxically, in this civilization that we can no longer claim as our own without consenting to self-liquidation, conjuring away forms-of-life most often appears as a *desire for form*: the search for an archetypal resemblance, an Idea of self placed before or in front of oneself. Admittedly, this *will to identity*, wherever it has been fully expressed, has had the hardest time masking the icy nihilism and the aspiration to nothingness that forms its spine.

But the conjuring away of forms-of-life also has a minor, more cunning form called *consciousness* and, at its highest point, *lucidity*—two “virtues” THEY prize all the more because these virtues render bodies increasingly powerless. At that point, THEY start to call “lucidity” the knowledge of this weakness that offers no way out.

Taking on a form-of-life is completely different from the striving of the consciousness or the will, or from the effects of either. Actually, to assume a form-of-life is a letting-go, an abandonment. It is at once fall and elevation, a movement and a staying-within-oneself.

5

“My” form-of-life relates not to *what* I am, but to *how* I am what I am. GLOSS: This statement performs a slight shift. A slight shift in the direction of a taking leave of metaphysics. Leaving metaphysics is not a philosophical imperative, but a physiological necessity. Having now reached the endpoint of its deployment, metaphysics gathers itself into a planetary injunction to absence. What Empire demands is not that each conforms to a common law, but that each conforms to its own particular identity. Imperial power depends on the adherence of bodies to their supposed qualities or predicates in order to leverage control over them.

“My” form-of-life does not relate to *what* I am, but to *how*, to the specific *way*, I am what I am. In other words, between a being and its qualities, there is the abyss of its own presence and the singular experience *I* have of it, at a certain place and time. Unfortunately for Empire, the form-of-life animating a body is not to be found in any of its predicates— big, white, crazy, rich, poor, carpenter, arrogant, woman, or French—but in the singular *way* of its presence, in the irreducible event of its being-in-situation. And it is precisely where predication is most violently applied—in the rank domain of morality—that its failure fills us with joy: when, for example, we come across a completely abject being whose *way* of being abject nevertheless touches us in such a way that any repulsion within us is snuffed out, and in this way proves to us that *abjection itself is a quality*.

To embrace a form-of-life means being more faithful to our penchants than to our predicates.

6

Asking why this body is affected by this form-of-life rather than another is as meaningless as asking why there is something rather than nothing. Such a question betrays only a rejection, and sometimes a fear, of undergoing contingency. And, a fortiori, a refusal even to acknowledge it.

GLOSS α :

A better question would be to ask *how* a body takes on substance, how a body becomes *thick*, how it *incorporates* experience. Why do we sometimes undergo heavy polarizations with far-reaching effects, and at other times weak, superficial ones? How can we extract ourselves from this dispersive mass of Bloomesque bodies, from this global Brownian motion where the most vital bodies proceed from one petty abandonment to the next, from one attenuated form-of-life to another, consistently following a principle of prudence—never get carried away, beyond a certain level of intensity? In other words, how could these bodies have become so *transparent*?

GLOSS β :

The most Bloomesque notion of freedom is the freedom of *choice*, understood as a methodical abstraction from every situation. This concept of freedom forms the most effective antidote against every real freedom. The only substantial freedom is to follow right to the end, to the point where it vanishes, the line along which power grows for a certain form-of-life. This raises our capacity to then be affected by other forms-of-life.

7

A body's persistence in letting a *single* form-of-life affect it, despite the diversity of situations it passes through, depends on its crack. The more a body cracks up—that is, the wider and deeper its crack becomes—the fewer the polarizations compatible with its survival there are, and the more it will tend to recreate situations in which it finds itself involved in its familiar polarizations. The bigger a body's crack grows, the more its absence to the world increases and its penchants dwindle.

GLOSS:

Form-of-life means therefore that my relation to myself is only one *part* of my relation to the world.

8

The experience one form-of-life has of another is not communicable to the latter, even if it can be translated; and we all know what happens with translations. Only facts can be made clear: behaviors, attitudes, assertions—*gossip*. Forms-of- life do not allow for neutral positions, they offer no safe haven for a universal observer.

GLOSS:

To be sure, there is no lack of candidates vying to reduce all forms-of-life to the Esperanto of objectified “cultures,” “styles,” “ways of life” and other relativist mysteries. What these wretches are up to is, however, no mystery: they want to make us play the grand, one-dimensional game of identities and differences. This is the expression that the most rabid hostility toward forms-of-life takes.

9

In and of themselves, forms-of-life can be neither said nor described. They can only be shown—each time, in an always singular context. On the other hand, considered locally, the play between them obeys rigorous signifying mechanisms. If they are thought, these determinisms are transformed into *rules* which can then be amended. Each sequence of play is bordered, on either edge, by an *event*. The event disorders the play between forms-of-life, introduces a fold within it, suspends past determinisms and inaugurates new ones through which it must be reinterpreted. In all things, we start with and from the middle.

GLOSS α :

The distance required for the description *as such* of a form-of-life is, precisely, the distance of enmity.

GLOSS β :

Every attempt to grasp a “people” as a form-of-life— as race, class, ethnicity, or nation—has been undermined by the fact that the ethical differences *within* each “people” have always been greater than the ethical differences between “peoples” themselves.

10

Civil war is the free play of forms-of-life; it is the principle of their coexistence.

11

War, because in each singular play between forms-of-life, the possibility of a fierce confrontation—the possibility of violence—can *never* be discounted.

Civil, because the confrontation between forms-of-life is not like that between States—a coincidence between a population and a territory— but like the confrontation between *parties*, in the sense this word had before the advent of the modern State. And because we must be precise from now on, we should say that forms-of- life confront one another as *partisan war machines*.

Civil war, then, because forms-of-life know no separation between men and women, political existence and bare life, civilians and military; because whoever is neutral is *still a party* to the free play of forms-of-life; because this play between forms-of-life has no beginning or end that can be *declared*, its only possible end being a physical end of the world that precisely no one would be able to declare; and above all because I know of no body that does not get hopelessly carried away in the excessive, and perilous, course of the world.

GLOSS α:

“Violence” is something new in history. We decadents are the first to know this curious thing: *violence*. Traditional societies knew of theft, blasphemy, parricide, abduction, sacrifice, insults and revenge. Modern States, beyond the dilemma of adjudicating facts, recognized only infractions of the Law and the penalties administered to rectify them. But they certainly knew plenty about foreign wars and, within their borders, the authoritarian disciplining of bodies. In fact, only the timid atom of imperial society—Bloom—thinks of “violence” as a radical and unique evil lurking behind countless masks, an evil which it is so vitally important to identify, in order to eradicate it all the more thoroughly. For us, ultimately, violence is *what has been taken from us*, and today we need to take it back.

When Biopower starts speaking about traffic accidents as “violence on the highways,” we begin to realize that for imperial society the term violence only refers to its own vocation for death. This society has forged this negative concept of violence in order to reject anything within it that might still carry a certain intensity or charge. In an increasingly explicit way, imperial society, in all its details, experiences itself *as violence*. When this society hunts down violence everywhere, it does nothing other than express its own desire to *pass away*.

GLOSS β:

THEY find speaking of civil war repugnant. But when THEY do it anyway, THEY assign it a circumscribed place and time. Hence you have the “civil war in France” (1871), in Spain (1936-39), the civil war in Algeria and maybe soon in Europe. At this point one should mention that the French, exhibiting the emasculation that comes so naturally to them, translate the American “Civil War” as “The War of Secession.” They do so to demonstrate their determination to side unconditionally with the victor whenever the victor is also the State. The only way to lose this habit of giving civil war a beginning, end and territorial limit—this habit of making it an exception to the normal order of things rather than considering its infinite metamorphoses in time and space—is to shine a light on the sleight of hand it covers up.

Remember how those who wanted to suppress the guerilla war in Columbia in the early '60s preemptively gave the name “la Violencia” (the Violence) to the historical period they wanted to close out?

12

The point of view of civil war is the point of view of the political.

13

When, at a certain time and place, two bodies affected by the same form-of-life meet, they experience an objective pact, which precedes any decision. They experience *community*.

GLOSS:

The deprivation of such an experience in the West has caused it to be haunted by the old metaphysical phantasm of the “human community”—also known under the name *Gemeinwesen* by currents working in the wake of Amadeo Bordiga. The Western intellectual is so far removed from any access to a real community that he has to confect this amusing little fetish: the human community. Whether he wears the Nazi-humanist uniform of “human nature” or the hippy rags of anthropology, whether he withdraws into a community whose power has been carefully disembodied, a purely potential community, or dives head-first into the less subtle concept of “total” man—through which all human predicates would be totalized—it is always the same terror that is expressed: the terror of having to think one’s singular, determined, *finite* situation; this terror seeks refuge in the reassuring fantasy of totality or earthly unity. The resulting abstraction might be called the multitude, global civil society or the human species. What’s important is not the name, but the operation performed. All the recent inanities about THE cyber- communist community or THE cyber-total man would not have gotten off the ground without a certain strategic opportunity that opened up at the very moment a worldwide movement was forming to refute it. Let’s remember that sociology was born at the very moment the most irreconcilable conflict ever witnessed—the class struggle—emerged at the heart of the social, and this discipline was born in the very country where the struggle was most violent, in France in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was born as a response to this struggle.

Today, when “society” is nothing *more* than a hypothesis, and hardly the most plausible one at that, any claim to defend this society against the supposed fascism lurking in every form of community is nothing more than a rhetorical exercise steeped in bad faith. Who, after all, still speaks of “society” other than the citizens of Empire, who have come or rather *huddled* together against the self-evidence of Empire’s final implosion, against the ontological obviousness of civil war?

14

There is no community except in singular relations. The community doesn't exist. There is only community, community that circulates.

15

There can be no community of *those who are there*.

16

When I encounter a body affected by the same form-of-life as I am, this is community, and it puts me in *contact* with my own power.

17

Sense is the element of the Common, that is, every event, as an irruption of sense, institutes a common. The “body” that says “I,” in truth says “We.”

A gesture or statement endowed with sense carves a *determined* community out of a mass of bodies, a community that must itself be taken on in order to take on this gesture or statement.

18

When two bodies animated by forms-of-life that are absolutely foreign to one another meet at a certain moment and in a certain place, they experience *hostility*. This type of encounter gives rise to no relation; on the contrary, it bears witness to the original absence of relation.

The hostis can be identified and its situation can be known, but it *itself* cannot be known for what it is, that is, *in its singularity*. Hostility is therefore the impossibility for bodies that don't go together to know one another as singular.

Whenever a thing is known in its singularity, it takes leave of the sphere of hostility and thereby becomes a friend—or an enemy.

19

For me, the hostis is a nothing that demands to be annihilated, either through a cessation of hostility, or by ceasing to exist altogether.

20

A hostis can be annihilated, but the sphere of hostility itself cannot be reduced to nothing. The imperial humanist who flatters himself by declaring “nothing human is foreign to me” only reminds us how far he had to go to become so foreign *to himself*.

21

Hostility is practiced in many ways, by different methods and with varied results. The commodity or contractual relation, slander, rape, insult, and pure and simple destruction all take their places side-by-side as practices of *reduction*: even THEY understand this. Other forms of hostility take more perverse and less obvious paths. Consider potlatch, praise, politeness, prudence or even hospitality. These are all what ONE rarely recognizes as so many practices of *abasement*, as indeed they are.

GLOSS:

In his *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Benveniste was incapable of explaining why the Latin word *hostis* could simultaneously signify “foreigner,” “enemy,” “host,” “guest,” and “he who has the same rights as the Roman people,” or even, “he who is bound to me through potlatch,” i.e. the *forced* reciprocity of the gift.⁴ It is nevertheless clear that whether it be the sphere of law, the laws of hospitality, flattening someone beneath a pile of gifts or an armed offensive, there are many ways to *erase* the *hostis*, of making sure he does not become a singularity for me. That is how I keep the *hostis* foreign. It is our weakness that keeps us from admitting this. The third article of Kant’s *Towards Perpetual Peace*, which proposes the conditions for a final dissolution of particular communities and their subsequent formal reintegration into a Universal State, is nevertheless unequivocal in insisting that “Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal *hospitality*.”⁵ And just recently, didn’t Sebastian Roché, that unacknowledged creator of the idea of “incivility” and French fanatic of zero tolerance, that hero of the impossible Republic, didn’t he give his most recent (March 2000) book the Utopian title *The Society of Hospitality*?⁶ Does Sebastian Roché read Kant, Hobbes

⁴ Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, tome 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 87, 92-94.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 328 [AK 8:357].

⁶ Sebastian Roche, *La société d’hospitalité* (Paris: Sew, 2000).

and the pages of *France-Soir*, or does he simply read the mind of the French Interior Minister?

22

Anything we usually blanket with the name “indifference” does not exist. If I do not know a form-of-life and if it is therefore nothing to me, then I am not even indifferent to it. If I do know it and it exists for me as if it did not exist, it is in this case quite simply and clearly hostile for me.

23

Hostility distances me from my own power.

24

Between the extremes of community and hostility lies the sphere of friendship and enmity. Friendship and enmity are ethico-political concepts. That they both give rise to an intense circulation of affects only demonstrates that affective realities are works of art, that the play between forms-of-life can be *elaborated*.

GLOSS α :

In the stockpile of instruments deployed by the West against all forms of community, one in particular has occupied, since around the twelfth century, a privileged and yet unsuspected place. I am speaking of the concept of *love*. We should acknowledge that the false alternative it has managed to impose on everything—“do you love me, or not?”—has been incredibly effective in masking, repressing, and crushing the whole gamut of highly differentiated affects and all the crisply defined degrees of intensity that can arise when bodies come into contact. In this set of false alternatives, love has functioned as a way to reduce the extreme possibility of an elaborate working out of the play among forms-of-life. Undoubtedly, the ethical poverty of the present, which amounts to a kind of permanent coercion into coupledness, is due largely to this concept of love.

GLOSS β :

To give proof, it would be enough to recall how, through the entire process of “civilization,” the criminalization of all sorts of passions accompanied the sanctification of love as the one true passion, as the passion par excellence.

GLOSS γ :

All this of course goes only for the notion of love, not for all those things it has given rise to, despite itself. I am speaking not only of

certain momentous perversions, but also of that little projectile “I love you,” which is *always* an event.

25

I am bound to the friend by some experience of election, understanding or *decision* that implies that the growth of his power entails the growth of my own. Symmetrically, I am bound to the enemy by election, only this time a disagreement that, in order for my power to grow, implies that I confront him, that I undermine his forces.

GLOSS:

This was the brilliant reply of Hannah Arendt to a Zionist who, after the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and during the subsequent scandal, reproached her for not loving the people of Israel: "I don't love peoples. I only love my friends."

26

What is at stake in confronting the enemy is never its existence, only its power, its potentiality. Not only can an annihilated enemy no longer recognize its own defeat, it always ends up coming back to *haunt* us, first as a ghost and later as *hostis*.

27

All differences among forms-of-life are *ethical* differences. These differences authorize play, in *all* its forms. These kinds of play are not political in themselves, but become political at a certain level of intensity, that is, when they have been *elaborated to a certain degree*.

GLOSS:

We reproach this world not for going to war too ferociously, nor for trying to prevent it by all means; we only reproach it for reducing war to *its most empty and worthless forms*.

I am not going to demonstrate the permanence of civil war with a starry-eyed celebration of the most beautiful episodes of social war, or by cataloguing all those moments when class antagonism achieved its finest expressions. I am not going to talk about the English, Russian or French revolutions, the Makhnovshchina, the Paris Commune, Gracchus Babeuf, May '68 or even the Spanish Civil War. Historians will be grateful: their livelihoods aren't threatened. My method is more twisted. I will show *how* civil war continues even when it is said to be absent or provisionally brought under control. My task will be to display the means used by the relentless process of depoliticization that begins in the Middle Ages and continues up to today, just when, as we all know, "everything is political" (Marx). In other words, the whole will not be grasped by connecting the dots between historical summits, but by following a low-level, unbroken, existential sequence.

GLOSS:

If the end of the Middle Ages is sealed by the splitting of the ethical element into two autonomous spheres, morality and politics, the end of “Modern Times” is marked by the reunification of these two abstract domains—*as separate*. This reunification gave us our new tyrant: THE SOCIAL.

29

Naming can take two mutually hostile forms. One wards something off, the other embraces it. Empire speaks of “civil wars” just as the Modern State did, but it does so in order to better control the masses of those who will give anything to avert civil war. I myself speak of “civil war,” and even refer to it as a foundational fact. But I speak of civil war in order to embrace it and *to raise it to its highest forms*. In other words: according to my taste.

30

I call “communism” the real movement that elaborates, everywhere and at every moment, civil war.

31

At the outset, my own objective will not be obvious. For those familiar with it, it will be felt everywhere, and it will be completely absent for those who don't know a thing about it. Anyway, programs are only good for putting off what they claim to promote. Kant's criterion for a maxim's morality was that its public formulation not prevent its realization. My own moral ambitions will therefore not exceed the following formulation: *spread a certain ethic of civil war, a certain art of distances.*

THE MODERN STATE, THE MODERN SUBJECT

The history of the state formation in Europe is a history of the neutralization of differences –denominational, social, and otherwise–within the state.

– Carl Schmitt, “Neutralität und Neutralisierungen”

32

The modern State is not defined as a set of institutions whose different arrangements would provide a stimulating pluralism. The modern State, insofar as it still exists, defines itself *ethically* as the theater of operations for a twofold fiction: the fiction that when it comes to forms-of-life both neutrality and centrality can exist.

GLOSS:

We can recognize the fragile formations of power by their relentless attempts to posit fictions as *self-evident*. Throughout Modern Times, one of these fictions typically emerges as a *neutral center*, setting the scene for all the others. Reason, Money, Justice, Science, Man, Civilization, or Culture— with each there is the same phantasmagoric tendency: to posit the existence of a center, and then say that this center is ethically neutral. The State is thus the historical condition for the flourishing of these insipid terms.

33

Etymologically the modern State stems from the Indo-European root *st-* which refers to fixity, to unchangeable things, to what *is*. More than a few have been fooled by this sleight of hand. Today, when the State does nothing more than outlive itself, the opposite becomes clear: it is civil war—*stasis* in Greek—that is permanence, and the modern State will have been a mere *reaction process* to this permanence.

GLOSS α:

Contrary to what THEY would have us believe, the historicity specific to the fictions of “modernity” is never that of a stability gained once and for all, of a threshold finally surpassed, but precisely that of a process of *endless mobilization*. Behind the inaugural dates of the official historiography, behind the edifying epic tale of linear progress, a continuous labor of reorganization, of correction, of improvement, of papering over, of adjustment, and even sometimes of costly reconstruction has never stopped taking place. This labor and its repeated failures have given rise to the whole jittery junk heap of the “new.” Modernity: not a stage where ONE comes to rest, but a task, an *imperative to modernize*, frenetically and from crisis to crisis, only to be finally overcome by our own fatigue and our own skepticism.

GLOSS β:

“This state of affairs stems from a difference, which too often goes unnoticed, between modern societies and ancient societies, with regard to the notions of war and peace. The relation between the state of peace and the state of war has been, if one compares the past to the present, exactly reversed. For us peace is the normal state of affairs, which warfare happens to interrupt; for the ancients, warfare is normal, which peace happens to bring to an end.” –Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*

34

In both theory and practice, the modern State came into being in order to put an end to civil war, then called "wars of religion." Therefore, both historically and by its own admission, it is secondary vis-à-vis civil war.

GLOSS:

Bodin's *The Six Books of the Commonwealth* [1576] was published four years after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, and Hobbes' *Leviathan* of 1651 eleven years after the start of the Long Parliament. The continuity of the modern State—from absolutism to the Welfare State—shall be that of an endlessly unfinished *war*, waged against civil war.

35

In the West, the unity of the traditional world was lost with the Reformation and the “wars of religion” that followed. The modern State then bursts on the scene with the task of reconstituting this unity—secularized, this time—no longer as an organic whole but instead as a *mechanical* whole, as a *machine*, as a conscious artificiality.

GLOSS α:

What couldn't help but ruin all organicity of customary mediations during the Reformation was the gulf opened up by a doctrine professing the strict separation between faith and deed, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, between inner man and outer man. The religious wars thus present the absurd spectacle of a world that travels to the abyss just for having glimpsed it, of a harmony that breaks apart under the pressure of a thousand absolute and irreconcilable claims to wholeness. Indeed in this way, through sectarian rivalries, religions introduce the idea of ethical plurality despite themselves. But at this point civil war is still conceived by those who bring it about as something that will soon end, so that forms-of-life are not taken on but given over to conversion to this or that existing patron. Since that time the various uprisings of the Imaginary Party have taken it upon themselves to render obsolete Nietzsche's remark from 1882 that "the greatest progress of the masses up till now has been the religious war, for it proves that the mass has begun to treat concepts with respect."⁷

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 128.

GLOSS β:

Having run its historical course, the modern State rediscovers its old enemy: “sects.” But this time it is not the State that is the ascendant political force.

The modern State put an end to the trouble that Protestantism first visited on the world by taking over its very mission. By instituting the fault between inner self and outer works identified by the Reformation, the modern State managed to extinguish the civil wars “of religion,” and with them the religions themselves.

GLOSS:

Henceforth there shall be on the one hand an “absolutely free,” private, moral conscience and on the other hand public, political action “absolutely subject to State Reason.” And these two spheres shall be distinct and independent. The modern State creates itself from nothing by extracting from the traditional ethical tissue the morally neutral space of political technique, sovereignty. Such creative gestures are those of a mournful marionette. The further away men have moved from this foundational moment, the more the meaning of the original act is lost. It is this same calm hopelessness that shines through in the classical maxim: *cuius regio, eius religio*.⁸

⁸ “Whose realm, his religion” — a Latin expression meaning whoever is sovereign dictates the religion of the land.

The modern State renders religions obsolete because it takes over for them at the bedside of the most atavistic phantasm of metaphysics: the One. From this point forward the order of the world will have to be ceaselessly restored and maintained at all costs, even as it constantly slips away from itself. Police and publicity⁹ will be the purely fictive techniques that the modern State will employ to artificially maintain the fiction of the One. Its entire reality will be concentrated in these techniques, through which it will ensure the maintenance of Order, only now that of an outside order, a *public* order. And so all the arguments it advances in its own defense will in the end boil down to this: "Outside of me, disorder." Quite untrue: without it, *a multiplicity of orders*.

⁹ *Publicité* is connected to the German *Öffentlichkeit* and means "public sphere" or "public opinion." The German root *offen-* suggests openness, clarity, transparency and manifestness. Yet instead of translating *publicité* as "public sphere," which carries specific connotations in political theory, we use "publicity," following the convention established by Kant's translators. Note however that "publicity" does not just mean advertising in a narrow sense, but rather the whole sphere of "publicness"

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The modern State, which purports to put an end to civil war, is instead its continuation by other means.

GLOSS α:

Is it necessary to read *Leviathan* to know that “because the major part hath by consenting voices declared a sovereign, he that dissented must now consent with the rest, that is, be contented to avow all the actions he shall do, or else justly be destroyed by the rest. [...] And whether he be of the congregation or not, and whether his consent be asked or not, he must either submit to their decrees or be left in the condition of war he was in before, wherein he might without injustice be destroyed by any man whatsoever.”¹⁰ The fate of the communards, of the Action Directe prisoners or the June 1848 insurgents tells us plenty about the bloody origins of republics. Herein lies the specific character of and obstacle to the modern State: it only persists through the practice of the very thing it wants to ward off, through the actualization of the very thing it claims to be absent. Cops know something about this, paradoxically having to *apply* a “state of law,” which in fact depends on them alone. Thus was the destiny of the modern State: to arise first as the apparent victor of civil war, only then to be vanquished by it; to have been in the end only a parenthesis, only one party among others in the steady course of civil war.

GLOSS β:

Wherever the modern State extended its reign, it exploited the same arguments, using similar formulations. These formulations are gathered together in their purest form and in their strictest logic in

¹⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 112.

the writings of Hobbes. This is why all those who have wanted to confront the modern State have first had to grapple with this singular theoretician. Even today, at the height of the movement to liquidate the nation- state system, one hears open echoes "Hobbesianism." Thus, as the French government finally aligned itself with a model of imperial decentralization during the convoluted affair of "Corsican autonomy," the government's Interior Minister resigned his position with the perfunctory pronouncement: "France does not need a new war of religion."

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What at the molar scale assumes the aspect of the modern State, is called at the molecular scale the economic subject.

GLOSS α:

We have reflected a great deal on the essence of the economy and more specifically on its “black magic” aspects.¹¹ The economy cannot be understood as a system of exchange, nor, therefore, as a relation between forms-of-life, unless it is grasped ethically: the economy as the production of a certain type of forms-of-life. The economy appears well prior to the institutions typically used to signal its emergence—the market, money, usury loans, division of labor—and it appears as a kind of possession, that is, as possession by a psychic economy. It is in this sense that the true black magic exists, and it is only at this level that the economy is real and concrete. This is also where its connection with the State is empirically observable. By flaring up like this the State ends up progressively creating economy in man, creating “Man” itself as an economic creature. With each improvement to the State the economy in each of its subjects is improved as well, and vice versa.

It would be easy to show how, over the course of the seventeenth century the nascent modern State imposed a monetary economy and everything that goes along with it in order to glean fuel for the rapid development of its machinery and its relentless military campaigns. Such work has already been performed elsewhere. But this approach only scratches the surface of the linkage between the State and the economy.

The modern State means, among other things, a progressively increasing monopoly on legitimate violence, a process whereby all

¹¹ See “On the Economy as Black Magic” Tiquun 1 (1999).

other forms of violence are delegitimized. The modern State serves the general process of pacification which, since the end of the Middle Ages, only persists through its continuous intensification. It is not simply that during this evolution it always more drastically hinders the free play of forms-of-life, but rather that it works assiduously to break them, to tear them up, to extract bare life from them, an extraction that is the very activity of "civilization." In order to become a political subject in the modern State, each body must submit to the machinery that will make it such: it must begin by casting aside its passions (now inappropriate), its tastes (now laughable), its penchants (now contingent), endowing itself instead with interests, which are much more presentable and, even better, representable. In this way, in order to become a political subject each body must first carry out its own autocastration as an economic subject. Ideally, the political subject will thus be reduced to nothing more than a pure vote, a pure voice.

The essential function of the representation each society gives of itself is to influence the way in which each body is represented to itself, and through this to influence the structure of the psyche. The modern State is therefore first of all the constitution of each body into a molecular State, imbued with bodily integrity by way of territorial integrity, molded into a closed entity within a self, as much in opposition to the "exterior world" as to the tumultuous associations of its own penchants—which it must contain—and in the end required to comport itself with its peers as a good law-abiding subject, to be dealt with, along with other bodies, according to the universal proviso of a sort of private international law of "civilized" habits. In this way the more societies constitute themselves in States, the more their subjects embody the economy. They monitor themselves and each other, they control their

emotions, their movements, their inclinations, and believe that they can expect the same self-control from others. They make sure never to get carried away where it might prove fatal, and stay cooped up in a room of their own where they can “let themselves go” at their leisure. Sheltered there, withdrawn within their frontiers, they calculate, they predict, they become a waypoint between past and future, and tie their fate to the most probable link between the two. That’s it: they link up, put themselves in chains and chain themselves to each other, countering any type of excess. Fake self-control, restraint, self-regulation of the passions, extraction of a sphere of shame and fear—bare life—the warding off of all forms-of-life and a fortiori of any play established between them.

And so the dense and doleful intimidation of the modern State produces the economy, primitively and existentially, through a process that one could trace back to the twelfth century, and to the establishment of the first territorial courts. As Elias has pointed out exceedingly well, the most emblematic example of this incorporation of the economy was the induction of the warrior class into the society of the court, beginning with the twelfth-century codes of courtly conduct, then primers on civility, prudence, and manners, and finally with the rules of courtly etiquette at Versailles, the first substantial realization of a perfectly spectacular society in which all relations are mediated by images. As with all the forms of wild abandon on which medieval knighthood was founded, violence was slowly domesticated, that is, isolated as such, deprived of its ritual form, rendered illogical, and in the end cut down through mockery, through “ridicule,” through the shame of fear and the fear of shame. Through the dissemination of this self-restraint, this dread of getting carried away, the State succeeded in creating the economic subject, in containing each being within its

Self, that is, within his body, in extracting bare life from each form-of-life.

GLOSS β:

“[T]he battlefield is, in a sense, moved within. Part of the tensions and passions that were earlier directly released in the struggle of man and man, must now be worked out within the human being. [...] [T]he drives, the passionate affects, that can no longer directly manifest themselves in the relationships between people, often struggle no less violently within the individual against this supervising part of themselves. And this semi-automatic struggle of the person with him or herself does not always find a happy resolution” (Norbert Elias, “State Formation and Civilization”).¹²

As has been witnessed throughout “Modern Times,” the individual produced by this process of economic embodiment carries within him a crack. And it is out of this crack that his bare life seeps. His acts themselves are full of cracks, broken from the inside. No self-abandon, no act of assumption can arise where the State’s campaign of pacification—its war of annihilation directed against civil war—is unleashed. Here, instead of forms-of-life, we find an overproduction branching out in all directions, a nearly comical tree-like proliferation of subjectivities. At this point converges the double misfortune of the economy and the State: by caching civil

¹² Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 375.

war inside each person, the modern State put everyone at war against himself. This is where we begin.

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The founding act of the modern State—that is, not the first act but the one it repeats over and over—is the institution of the fictitious split between public and private, between political and moral. This is how it manages to crack bodies open, how it grinds up forms-of-life. The move to divide internal freedom and external submission, moral interiority and political conduct, corresponds to the institution as such of bare life.

GLOSS:

We know from experience the terms of the Hobbesian transaction between the subject and the sovereign: “I exchange my liberty for your protection. As compensation for my unwavering obedience, you must offer me safety.” Safety, which is first posed as a way to shelter oneself from the prospect of death menaced by “others” takes on a whole new dimension during the course of Leviathan. From Chapter xxx: “by safety here is not meant a bare preservation, but also all other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself.”¹³

¹³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 219.

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Depending on the side of the crack from which it is seen, the State's method of neutralization sets up two chimerical, distinct and interdependent monopolies: the monopoly of the political and the monopoly of critique.

GLOSS α:

Certainly on the one hand the State claims to assume the *monopoly of the political*, of which the well-known expression “monopoly on legitimate violence” is merely the most vulgar indication. For the monopolization of the political requires the degradation of the differentiated unity of a world into a *nation*, then to degrade this nation into a *population* and a territory. It requires the disintegration of the entire organic unity of traditional societies in order to then submit the remaining fragments to a principle of *organization*. Finally, after having reduced society to a “pure indistinct mass, to a multitude decomposed into its atoms” (Hegel), the State assumes the role of artist giving form to these raw materials, and this according to the legible principle of the Law.¹⁴

On the other hand, the division between private and public gives rise to this second unreality, which matches the unreality of the State: critique. Of course it was Kant who crafted the general motto of critique in his *What is Enlightenment?* Oddly enough the motto was also a saying of Frederick II: “You are allowed to think as much as you want and on whatever topic you wish; as long as you obey!” Mirroring the political, “morally neutral” realm of State Reason,

¹⁴ The quotation is probably a reference to one of the two following passages: “the simple compactness of their individuality has been shattered into a multitude of separate atoms,” in G.WF. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 289; or, “as a simple undifferentiated mass or as a crowd split up into atomic units,” in G.WF. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 343.

critique establishes the moral, “politically neutral” realm of free usage of Reason. This is what is meant by “publicity,” first identified with the “Republic of Letters” but quickly appropriated as a State weapon against any rival ethical fabric, be it the unbreakable bonds of traditional society, the Cour des Miracles, or the language of the street. Thereafter another abstraction would respond to the State’s abstract sphere of autonomous politics: the critical sphere of autonomous discourse. And just as the gestures of State reason had to be shrouded in silence, the idle chatter and the flights of fancy of critical reason will have to be shrouded in the condemnation of these gestures. Critique would therefore claim to be all the purer and more radical the more it alienated itself from any positive grounding for its own verbal fabrications. In exchange for renouncing all its directly political claims, that is, in abdicating all contestations of the State’s monopoly on politics, critique will be granted a *monopoly on morality*. It will now have free reign to *protest*, as long as it does not pretend to exist in any other way. Gesture without discourse on the one hand and discourse without gesture on the other—the State and Critique guarantee by the techniques specific to each (police and publicity, respectively) the neutralization of every ethical difference. This is how THEY conjured away, along with the free play of forms-of-life, the political itself.

GLOSS β:

After this it will come as little surprise that the most successful masterpieces of critique appeared exactly where “citizens” had been most fully deprived of access to the “political sphere,” indeed, to the realm of practice as a whole; when all collective existence had

been placed under the heel of the State, I mean: under the French and Prussian absolute monarchies of the eighteenth century. It should scarcely surprise us that the country of the State would also be the country of Critique, that France (for this is what we really mean) would be in every way, and even often avowedly, so perfectly at home in the eighteenth century. Given the contingency of our theater of operations, we are not averse to mentioning the constancy of a national character, which has been exhausted everywhere else. However, rather than show how, generation after generation, for more than two centuries, the State has produced critics and the critics have, in turn, produced the State, I think it more instructive to reproduce descriptions of pre- Revolutionary France made during the middle of the nineteenth century, that is, shortly after the events, by a mind at once detestable and quite shrewd:

“The government of the old regime had already taken away from the French any possibility, or desire, of helping one another. When the Revolution happened, one would have searched most of France in vain for ten men who had the habit of acting in common in an orderly way, and taking care of their own defense themselves; only the central power was supposed to take care of it.”

“France [was] the European country where political life had been longest and most completely extinct, where individuals had most completely lost the practical skills, the ability to read facts, the experience of popular movements, and almost the very idea of the people.”

“Since there no longer existed free institutions, and in consequence no political classes, no living political bodies, no organized political

parties with leaders, and since in the absence of all these organized forces the direction of public opinion, when public opinion was reborn, devolved uniquely on the *philosophes*, it was to be expected that the Revolution be directed less by certain particular facts than by abstract principles and very general theories.”

“The very situation of these writers prepared them to like general and abstract theories of government and to trust in them blindly. At the almost infinite distance from practice in which they lived, no experience tempered the ardors of their nature.”

“We had, however, preserved one liberty from the destruction of all the others; we could philosophize almost without restraint on the origin of societies, on the essential nature of government, and on the primordial rights of the human species.” All those injured by the daily practice of legislation soon took up this form of literary politics.”

“Every public passion was thus wrapped up in philosophy; political life was violently driven back into literature.”

And finally, at the end of the Revolution: “You will see an immense central power, which has devoured all the bits of authority and obedience which were formerly divided among a crowd of secondary powers, orders, classes, professions, families, and individuals, scattered throughout society.” –Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, 1856¹⁵

¹⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Volume 1, trans. Alan Kahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 243, 242, 197, 198, 98.

If certain theses such as “the war of each against each” are elevated to the level of governing principles, it is because they enable certain operations. So in this specific case we should ask: How can the “war of each against each” have begun before each person had been produced *as each*. And then we will see how the modern State presupposes the state of things that it produces; how it grounds the arbitrariness of its own demands in *anthropology*; how the “war of each against each” is instead the impoverished *ethic of civil war* imposed everywhere by the modern State under the name of the economic, which is nothing other than the universal reign of hostility.

GLOSS α:

Hobbes used to joke about the circumstances of his birth, claiming it was induced after his mother had experienced a sudden fright: “Fear and I were born twins,” as he put it.¹⁶ But to my mind it makes more sense to attribute the wretchedness of the Hobbesian anthropology to excessive reading of that moron Thucydides than to his horoscope. So let us instead read the patter of our coward in a more appropriate light:

“The comparison of the life of man to a race [holdeth]. [...] But this race we must suppose to have no other goal, nor no other garland, but being foremost.” — Hobbes, *Human Nature*, 1640¹⁷

“Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man. For WAR consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting,

¹⁶ The reference is to lines 24–28 of Hobbes’ verse autobiography: “My native place I’m not ashamed to own; I Th’ill times, and ills born with me, I bemoan. / For fame had rumour’d that a fleet at sea, / Would cause our nations catastrophe. / And hereupon it was my mother dear / Did bring forth twins at once, both me and fear” (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Irv). “The true and perspicuous explication of the Elements of Laws, Natural and Politic [...] dependeth upon the knowledge of what is human nature.”

¹⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic: Human Nature and de Corpore Politico with Three Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21, 59.

but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known.”

“Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company where there is no power able to overawe them all.” — Hobbes, *Leviathan*¹⁸

GLOSS β:

Here Hobbes gives us the anthropology of the modern State, a positive albeit pessimistic anthropology, political albeit economic, that of an atomized city-dweller: “when going to sleep, he locks his doors,” and “when even in his house, he locks his chests” (*Leviathan*).¹⁹ Others have already shown how the State found it in its *political* interest to overturn, during the last few decades of the seventeenth century, the traditional ethics, to elevate *avarice*, the economic passion, from the rank of private vice to that of social virtue (cf. Albert O. Hirschmann). And just as this ethics, the ethics of equivalence, is the most worthless ethics that men have ever shared, the forms-of-life that correspond to it—the entrepreneur and the consumer—have distinguished themselves by a worthlessness that has become ever more pronounced with each passing century.

¹⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76, 75.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

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Rousseau thought he could confront Hobbes “on how the state of war springs from the social.”²⁰ In so doing he proposed the Noble Savage in place of the Englishman’s ignoble savage, one anthropology to replace another, only this time an optimistic one. But the mistake here was not the pessimism, it was the anthropology, and the desire to found a social order on it.

²⁰ The phrase refers to the Rousseau text of the same name, “*Que l’état de guerre naît de l’état social,*” in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 601-612. The English translation is available in variant form as “The State of War,” *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. III, trans. Christopher Kelly and Judith Bush (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 61-73.

GLOSS α:

Hobbes did not develop his anthropology merely by observing the problems of his age: the Fronde, the English Civil War, the nascent absolutist State in France, and the difference between them. Travelogues and other reports from New World explorers had been circulating for two centuries already. Less inclined to take on faith “that the condition of mere nature (that is to say, of absolute liberty, such as is theirs that neither are sovereigns nor subjects) is anarchy, and the condition of war,” Hobbes attributed the civil war that he observed in “civilized” nations to a *relapse* into a state of nature that had to be averted using any means possible.²¹ The savages of America and their state of nature, mentioned with horror in *De Cive* as well as in *Leviathan*, furnished a repulsive illustration: those beings who “(except the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust) have no government at all, and live at this day in [a] brutish manner” (*Leviathan*).²²

GLOSS β:

When one experiences thought in its barest form, the interval between a question and its answer can sometimes span centuries. Thus it was an anthropologist who, several months before killing himself, gave a response to Hobbes. The age, having reached the other side of the river of “Modern Times,” found itself fully enmeshed in Empire. The text appeared in 1977 in the first issue of

²¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*. 233.

²² *Ibid.*, 77.

Libre under the title “Archeology of Violence.” THEY tried to understand it, as well as the piece that follows, “Sorrows of the Savage Warrior,” in isolation from the confrontation during the same decade that pitted the urban guerrilla against the old dilapidated structures of the bourgeois State, independently from the Red Army Faction, independently from the Red Brigades and the diffuse Autonomia movement.²³ And yet even with this craven reservation, the texts of Clastres still create a disturbance. “What is primitive society? It is a multiplicity of undivided communities which all obey the same centrifugal logic. What institution at once expresses and guarantees the permanence of this logic? It is war, as the truth of relations between communities, as the principal sociological means of promoting the centrifugal force of dispersion against the centripetal force of unification. The war machine is the motor of the social machine; the primitive social being relies entirely on war, primitive society cannot survive without war. The more war there is, the less unification there is, and the best enemy of the State is war. Primitive society is society against the State in that it is society-for-war.”

“Here we are once again brought back to the thought of Hobbes. [...] He was able to see that war and the State are contradictory terms, that they cannot exist together, that each implies the negation of the other: war prevents the State, the State prevents war. The enormous error, almost fatal amongst a man of this time, is to have believed that the society which persists in war of each against each is not truly a society; that the Savage world is not a

²³ For these two essays see Pierre Clastres, *Archeology of Violence*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1994), 139-200.

social world; that, as a result, the institution of society involves the end of war, the appearance of the State, an anti-war machine par excellence. Incapable of thinking of the primitive world as a non-natural world, Hobbes nevertheless was the first to see that one cannot think of war without the State, that one must think of them in a relation of exclusion.”²⁴

²⁴ Ibid., 166-167.

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The inability of the State's juridico-formal offensive to reduce civil war is not a marginal detail rooted in the fact that there is always a pleb to pacify, but appears centrally in the pacification procedure itself. Organizations modeled after the State characterize as "formless" that which within them derives in fact from the play of forms-of-life. In the modern State, this irreducibility is attested to by the infinite extension of the police, that is to say, of all that bears the inadmissible burden of realizing the conditions of possibility of a state order as vast as it is unworkable.

GLOSS α :

Ever since the creation of the Paris Lieutenancy by Louis XIV, the practices of police institutions have continuously shown how the modern State has progressively *created its own society*. The police is that force that intervenes “wherever things are amiss,” that is to say, wherever antagonism appears between forms-of- life— wherever there is a jump in *political* intensity. Using the arm of the police ostensibly to protect the “social fabric,” while using another arm to destroy it, the State then offers itself as an existentially neutral mediator between the parties in question and imposes itself, even in its own coercive excesses, as the pacified landscape for confrontation. It is thus, according to the same old story, that the police *produced* public space as a space that it has taken control of; that is how the language of the State came to be applied to almost every social activity, how it became the *language of the social* par excellence.

GLOSS β :

“The aim of oversight and provisions on the part of the police is to mediate between the individual [*Individuum*] and the universal possibility which is available for the attainment of individual ends. The police should provide for street-lighting, bridge-building, the pricing of daily necessities, and public health. Two main views are prevalent on this subject. One maintains that the police should have oversight over everything, and the other maintains that the police should have no say in such matters, since everyone will be guided in his actions by the needs of others. The individual [*der Einzelne*]

must certainly have a right to earn his living in this way or that; but on the other hand, the public also has a right to expect that necessary tasks will be performed in the proper manner." –Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Addition to paragraph 236), 1833²⁵

²⁵ Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 262-263.

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At each moment of its existence, the police reminds the State of the violence, the banality, and the darkness of its origins.

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The modern State fails in three ways: first, as the absolutist State, then as the liberal State, and soon after as the Welfare State. The passage from one to the other can only be understood in relation to three successive corresponding forms of civil war: the wars of religion, class struggle, and the Imaginary Party. It should be noted that the failure here is not in the result, but is the entire duration of the process itself.

GLOSS α:

Once the first moment of violent pacification had passed, and the absolutist regime was established, the figure of the embodied sovereign lived on as the useless symbol of a bygone war. Rather than favoring pacification, the sovereign instead provoked confrontation, defiance, and revolt. It was clear that the taking on of this singular form-of-life—“such is my pleasure”²⁶—came at the cost of repressing all the others. The liberal State corresponds to the surpassing of this aporia, the aporia of personal sovereignty, but only the surpassing of it *on its own ground*. The liberal State is a frugal State, which claims to exist only to ensure the free play of individual liberties, and to this end it begins by extorting interests from each body, so that it can attach them to these bodies and reign peacefully across this new abstract world: “the phenomenal republic of interests” (Foucault).²⁷ It claims it exists only to keep things in good order, for the proper functioning of “civil society,” which is absolutely a thing of its own creation. Intriguingly, the glorious age of the liberal State, stretching from 1815 to 1914, would come to coincide with a multiplication of apparatuses of control, with the continuous monitoring and widespread disciplining of the population, and with society’s complete submission to the police and publicity. “I have drawn attention to the fact that the

²⁶ “*Tel est mon bon plaisir*,” a reference to “*car tel est notre bon plaisir*,” the expression instituted by Francis I and used by monarchs when signing law.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978- 1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 46.

development, dramatic rise, and dissemination throughout society of these famous disciplinary techniques for taking charge of the behavior of individuals day by day and in its fine detail is exactly contemporaneous with the age of freedoms” (Foucault).²⁸ Security is the primary condition of “individual freedom” (which means nothing, because such a freedom must end where that of others begins). The State that “wishes to govern just enough so that it can govern the least” must in fact *know* everything, and it must develop a set of practices and technologies to do it. The police and publicity are the two agencies through which the liberal State gives transparency to the fundamental opacity of the population. Witness here the insidious way in which the liberal State will perfect the modern State, under the pretext of needing to penetrate everywhere in order to avoid being everywhere in actuality, that in order to leave its subjects alone it must know everything. The principle of the liberal State could be stated like this: “If control and discipline are everywhere, the State does not have to be so.” “Government, initially limited to the function of supervision, is only to intervene when it sees that something is not happening according to the general mechanics of behavior, exchange, and economic life. [...] The Panopticon is the very formula of liberal government” (Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*).²⁹ “Civil society” is the name given by the liberal State for that which is both its own product and its own outside. It will not be surprising then to read that a study on French “values” concludes (without seeming to sense the contradiction) that in 1999 “the French are increasingly attached to personal freedom and public order” (*Le Monde*,

²⁸ Ibid., 67.

²⁹ Ibid.

November 16, 2000). Among the morons who respond to polls, that is, among those who still believe in *representation*, the majority are unhappy, emasculated lovers of the liberal State. In sum, “French civil society” only indicates the *proper functioning* of the set of disciplines and regimes of subjectivization *authorized* by the modern State.

GLOSS β:

Imperialism and totalitarianism mark the two ways in which the modern State tried to leap beyond its own impossibility, first by slipping forward beyond its borders into colonial expansion, then by an intensive deepening of the penetration inside its own borders. In both cases, these desperate reactions from the State— which claimed to encompass *everything* just as it was becoming *nothing*— came to a head in the very forms of civil war the State claims *preceded it*.

47

Ultimately the “state-ification” of the social had to be paid for by the socialization of the State, and thus lead to the mutual dissolution of both the State and society. What THEY called the “Welfare State” was this indistinction (between society and state) in which the obsolete State-form survived for a little while within Empire. The incompatibility between the state order and its procedures (the police and publicity) expresses itself in the current efforts to dismantle the Welfare State. And so, on the same note, society no longer exists, at least in the sense of a differentiated whole. There is only a tangle of norms and mechanisms through which THEY hold together the scattered tatters of the global biopolitical fabric, through which they prevent its violent disintegration. Empire is the administrator of this desolation, the supreme manager of a process of listless implosion.

GLOSS α:

There is an official history of the State in which the State seems to be the one and only actor, in which the advances of the state monopoly on the political are so many battles chalked up against an enemy who is invisible, imaginary, and precisely *without history*. And then there is a counter-history, written from the viewpoint of civil war, in which the stakes of all these “advancements,” the *dynamics* of the modern State, can be glimpsed. This counter-history reveals a political monopoly that is constantly threatened by the recomposition of autonomous worlds, of non-state collectivities. Whenever the State left something to the “private” sphere, to “civil society,” whenever it declared something to be insignificant, non-political, it left just enough room for the free play of forms-of-life such that, from one moment to the next, the monopoly on the political appears to be in dispute. This is how the State is led, either slowly or in a violent gesture, to encompass the totality of social activity, to take charge of the totality of man’s existence. Thus, “the concept of the healthy individual in the service of the State was replaced by that of the State in the service of the healthy individual” (Foucault).³⁰ In France, this reversal was already established prior to the law of April 9, 1898 governing “Accident Liability—In Which the Victims Are Workers Practicing Their Profession” and *a fortiori* to the law of April 5, 1910 on retirement plans for peasants and laborers, which sanctioned *the right to life*. In taking the place, over the centuries, of all the heterogeneous mediations of traditional

³⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Crisis of Medicine or the Crisis of Anti-medicine?” trans. Edgar C. Knowlton, Jr., et al., *Foucault Studies* 1 (December 2004): 5-19, 6.

society, the State ended up with the opposite of its aim, and ultimately fell prey to its own impossibility. That which wanted to concentrate the monopoly of the political ended up politicizing everything; all aspects of life had become political, not in themselves as singular entities, but precisely insofar as the State, by taking a position, had there too formed itself into a party. Or how the State, in waging everywhere its war against civil war, above all propagated hostility toward itself.

GLOSS β:

The Welfare State, which first took over for the liberal State within Empire, is the product of a massive diffusion of disciplines and regimes of subjectivation peculiar to the liberal State. It arises at the very moment when the concentration of these disciplines and these regimes—for example with the widespread practice of risk management—reaches such a degree in “society” that society is no longer distinguishable from the State. Man had thus become socialized to such an extent that the existence of a separate and personal State power becomes an obstacle to pacification. Blooms are no longer subjects—not economic subjects and even less legal subjects. They are creatures of imperial society. This is why they must first be taken on *as living beings* so that they may then continue existing fictitiously *as legal subjects*.

EMPIRE, CITIZEN

Therefore the sage takes his place over the people yet is no burden; takes his place ahead of the people yet causes no obstruction. That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never tires of doing so. It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him.

– Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

48

The history of the modern State is the history of its struggle against its own impossibility — that is, the history of its being overwhelmed by the profusion of techniques it has deployed to ward off this impossibility. Empire is, to the contrary, the *assumption of both this impossibility* and these techniques. To be more exact, we will say that Empire is the *turning inside out* of the liberal State.

GLOSS α:

We have, then, the official history of the modern State, namely the grand juridico-formal narrative of sovereignty: centralization, unification, rationalization. And also there is a counter-history, which is the history of its impossibility. You have to look into this other history—the growing mass of practices that must be adopted, the apparatuses put in place to keep up the fiction—to grasp a genealogy of Empire. In other words, the history of Empire does not take up where the modern State leaves off. Empire is what, at a certain point in time (let's say 1914), allows the modern State to live on *as a pure appearance*, as a lifeless form. The discontinuity here is not in the passage from one order to another, but cuts across time like two parallel but heterogeneous planes of consistency, just like the two histories of the State.

GLOSS β:

When we speak of a turning inside out, we are referring to the final possibility of an exhausted system, which folds back onto itself in order, in a mechanical fashion, to collapse in on itself. The Outside becomes the Inside, and the Inside now has no limits. What was formerly *present* in a certain defined place now becomes *possible everywhere*. What is turned inside out no longer exists in a positive way, in a concentrated form, but remains in a suspended state as far as the eye can see. It is the final ruse of the system, the moment when it is most vulnerable and, at the same time, most impervious to attack. The operation whereby the liberal State is imperially folded back can be described as follows: The liberal State developed

two sub-institutional practices that it used to control and keep at bay the population. On the one hand, there was the police in the original sense of the term (“The police keeps watch over the well-being of men [...] the police keeps watch over the living”³¹) and, on the other hand, publicity, as a sphere equally accessible to all and therefore independent of every form-of-life. Each of these instances or agencies is in fact a set of practices and apparatuses with no real continuity other than their convergent effects on the population—the first on its “body,” the second on its “soul.” All that was needed to consolidate power was to control the social definition of happiness and to maintain order in the public sphere. These concerns allowed the liberal State to remain thrifty. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the police and publicity developed in a way that both served and yet exceeded the institutions of the nation-state. It is only with World War I that they become the key nexus for how the liberal State is folded up into Empire. Then we witness something curious. By connecting them to each other in view of the war effort, and in a manner largely independent of national States, these sub-institutional practices give birth to the two super-institutional poles of Empire: the police becomes Biopower, and publicity is transformed into the Spectacle. From this point on, the State does not disappear, it is simply *demoted* beneath a transterritorial set of autonomous practices: Spectacle, Biopower.

³¹ N. De La Mare, *Traité de la police*, 1705

GLOSS γ :

The liberal hypothesis collapses in 1914, at the end of the “Hundred Years’ Peace” that resulted from the Congress of Vienna. When the Bolshevik coup d’État occurred in 1917, each nation found itself torn in two by the global class struggle, and all illusions about an inter-national order had seen their day. In the global civil war, the process of polarization penetrates the frontiers of the State. If any order could still be glimpsed, it would have to be super-national.

GLOSS δ :

If Empire is the assumption of the modern State’s impossibility, it is also the assumption of the impossibility of imperialism. Decolonization was an important moment in the establishment of Empire, logically marked by the proliferation of puppet States. Decolonization means: the elaboration of new forms of horizontal, sub-institutional power that *function better* than the old ones.

49

The modern State's sovereignty was fictional and personal. Imperial sovereignty is pragmatic and impersonal. Unlike the modern State, Empire can legitimately claim to be democratic, insofar as it neither banishes nor privileges *a priori* any form-of-life.

And for good reason, since it is what assures the simultaneous attenuation of *all* forms-of-life, as well as their free play *within this attenuation*.

GLOSS α:

Amidst the ruins of medieval society the modern State tried to reconstitute this unity around the principle of representation—that is, on the presumption that one part of society would be able to *incarnate* the totality of society. The term “incarnate” is not used here arbitrarily. The doctrine of the modern State *explicitly* secularizes one of the most fearsome operations of Christian theology: the one whose dogma is expressed by the Nicene Creed. Hobbes devotes a chapter to it in the appendix of *Leviathan*. His theory of personal sovereignty is based on the doctrine that makes the Father, Son and Holy Ghost the three *persons* of God, “meaning that each can play its own role but also that of the others.” This makes it possible for the Sovereign to be defined as an actor on behalf of those who have decided to “appoint one man or assembly of men to bear their person” and thus “every one to own and acknowledge himself to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person shall act, or cause to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety, and therein to submit their wills” (*Leviathan*).³² If, in the iconophilic theology of Nicea, Christ or the icon manifests not the presence of God but his essential absence, his sensible withdrawal, his unrepresentability, then for the modern State the personal sovereign manifests the *fictive* withdrawal of “civil society.” The modern State is conceived therefore as a part of society that takes no part in society, and can for this reason represent it as a whole.

³² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 109.

GLOSS β:

The various bourgeois revolutions never tampered with the principle of personal sovereignty, insofar as an assembly or leader, elected directly or indirectly, never deviated from the idea of a possible representation of the social totality, i.e. of society *as a totality*. As a result, the passage from the absolutist State to the liberal State only managed to liquidate the one person—the King—who liquidated the medieval order from which he emerged, and whose last living vestige he seemed to be. It is only as an obstacle to his own historical processes that the king was judged: he composed his own sentence, his death the period at the end of it. Only the democratic principle, promoted from within by the modern State, was able finally to bring down the modern State. The democratic idea—the absolute equivalence of all forms-of- life—is also an imperial idea. Democracy is imperial to the extent that the equivalence among forms-of-life can only be implemented *negatively*, by preventing, with all the means at its disposal, ethical differences from attaining in their play an intensity that makes them political. This would introduce lines of rupture, alliances and discontinuities into the smooth space of democratic society that would ruin the equivalence of form-of-life. This is why Empire and democracy are nothing, positively, other than the free play of attenuated forms-of-life, as when one speaks of an attenuated virus that is used as a vaccine. In one of his only texts on the State, the *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"* Marx in this way defended

the imperial perspective of the “material State,” which he opposed to the “political State,” in the following terms:

“The *political* republic is democracy within the abstract form of the state. Hence the abstract state-form of democracy is the republic.”

“*Political life* in the modern sense is the *Scholasticism* of popular life. *Monarchy* is the fullest expression of this estrangement. The *republic* is the negation of this estrangement within its own sphere.”

“[A]ll forms of the state have democracy *for* their truth, and for that reason are false to the extent that they are not democracy.” “In true democracy *the political state disappears.*”³³

GLOSS γ:

Empire can only be understood through the *biopolitical* turn of power. Like Biopower, Empire does not correspond to any positive juridical framework, and is not a new institutional order. It instead designates a *reabsorption* or retraction of the old substantial sovereignty. Power has always circulated in microphysical, familiar, everyday, material and linguistic apparatuses. It has always cut across the life and bodies of subjects. What is novel about Biopower is that *it is nothing more than this*. Biopower is a form of power that no longer rises up over against “civil society” as a sovereign hypostasis, as a Great Exterior Subject. It can no longer be *isolated* from society. Biopower means only that power adheres

³³ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 31, 32, emphasis Tiqqun.

to life and life to power. Thus, from the perspective of its classical form, power is changing radically before our eyes, from a solid to a gaseous, molecular state. To coin a formula: *Biopower is the SUBLIMATION of power.* Empire cannot be conceived outside of this understanding of our age. Empire is not and cannot be a power separated from society. Society won't stand for that, just as it crushes the final remnants of classical politics with its indifference. Empire is immanent to "society." It is "society" *insofar as society is a power.*

50

Empire exists “positively” only in crisis, only as negation and reaction. If we too belong to Empire, it is only because it is impossible to get outside it.

GLOSS α :

The imperial regime of pan-inclusion always follows the same plot: something, for whatever reason, manifests its foreignness to Empire, or shows itself trying to escape from it, trying to have done with it. This state of affairs constitutes a crisis, and Empire responds with a *state of emergency*. It is at this passing moment, during one of these reactive operations, that THEY can say: "Empire exists."

GLOSS β :

It is not that imperial society represents an achievement, a plenitude without remainder. The space left free by the deposing of personal sovereignty remains just that, empty vis-à-vis society. This space, the place of the Prince, is currently occupied by the Nothing of an imperial *Principle* that materializes and comes into focus only when it strikes like lightning at anything pretending to remain outside of it. This is why Empire is not only without a government, but also without an emperor: there are only *acts of government*, all equally *negative*. In our historical experience, the phenomenon that comes closest to this state of affairs is still the Terror. Where "universal freedom ... can produce neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only *negative* action; it is merely the fury of destruction" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 359).

GLOSS γ :

Empire functions best when crisis is ubiquitous. Crisis is Empire's regular mode of existence, in the same way that an insurance company comes into being only when there's an accident. The temporality of Empire is the temporality of emergency and catastrophe.

51

Empire is not the crowning achievement of a civilization, the endpoint of its ascendent arc. Rather it is the tail-end of an inward turning process of disaggregation, as that which must check and if possible arrest the process. Empire is therefore the katechon. “‘Empire’ in this sense meant the historical power to restrain the appearance of the Antichrist and the end of the present eon” (Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, 59-60). Empire sees itself as the final bulwark against the eruption of chaos and acts with this minimal perspective in mind.

52

At first glance, *Empire* seems to be a parodie recollection of the entire, frozen history of a “civilization.” And this impression has a certain intuitive correctness. *Empire* is in fact civilization’s last stop before it reaches the end of its line, the final agony in which it sees its life pass before its eyes.

53

With the liberal State being turned inside out into Empire, ONE has passed from a world partitioned by the Law to a space polarized by norms. The Imaginary Party is the *other, hidden side* of this turning inside out.

GLOSS α:

What do we mean by Imaginary Party? *That the Outside has moved inside.* This turning inside out happened noiselessly, peacefully, like a thief in the night. At first glance, it seems nothing has changed, ONE is simply struck by the sudden futility of so many familiar things, and the old divisions that can no longer account for what is happening are now suddenly so burdensome.

Some nagging little neurosis makes ONE still want to distinguish just from unjust, healthy from sick, work from leisure, criminal from the innocent and the ordinary from the monstrous. But let's admit the obvious: these old divisions no longer have any meaning.

It is not as if they have been suppressed, though. They are still there, but they are *inconsequential*. The norm hasn't abolished the Law, it has merely voided the Law and commandeered it for its own purposes, putting it in the service of its own immanent practices of calculation and administration. When the Law enters the force-field of the norm, it loses the last vestiges of transcendence, from now on functioning only in a land of indefinitely renewed state of exception.

The state of exception is the *normal* regime of the Law.

There is no visible Outside any more—nothing like *a* pure Nature, *the* Madness of the classical age, *the* Great Crime of the classical age, or *the* Great *classical* Proletariat with its actually-existing Homeland of Justice and Liberty. These are all gone, mostly because they have lost their imaginary force of attraction. The Outside is now gone precisely because today there is exteriority at every point of the

biopolitical tissue. Madness, crime or the hungry proletariat no longer inhabit a defined or recognized space, they no longer form a world unto themselves, their own ghetto with or without walls. With the dissipation of the social, these terms become reversible modalities, a violent latency, a possibility *each and every body* might be capable of. This suspicion is what justifies the continuous socialization of society, the perfecting of the micro- apparatuses of control. Not that Biopower claims to govern men and things directly—instead, it governs *possibilities* and *conditions* of possibility.

Everything that had its source in the Outside—illegality, first of all, but also misery and death—is *administered* and therefore taken up in an *integration* that *positively* eliminates these exteriorities in order to allow them to recirculate. This is why there is no such thing as death within Biopower: there is *only murder* and its circulation. Through statistics, an entire network of causalities embeds each living being in the collection of deaths his own survival requires (the dropouts, the unfortunate Indonesians, workplace accidents, Ethiopians of all ages, celebrities killed in car crashes, etc.). But it is also in a *medical* sense that death has become murder, with the proliferation of “brain dead corpses,” these “living dead” who would have passed away a long time ago if they weren’t kept alive artificially as organ banks for some absurd transplant, if they weren’t being kept alive in order *to be passed away*. The truth is that now there is no outside that can be identified as such, since the threshold itself has become *the intimate condition of all that exists*.

The Law sets up divisions and institutes distinctions, it circumscribes what defies it and recognizes an orderly world to which it gives both form and duration. The Law ceaselessly names

and enumerates what it outlaws. The Law *says its outside*. The inaugural gesture of the Law is to exclude, and first of all its own foundation: sovereignty, violence. But the norm has no sense of foundation. It has no memory, staying as close as possible to the present, always claiming to be on the side of immanence. While the Law gives a face and honors the sovereignty of what is outside it, the norm is acephalous—headless—and is delighted every time a king's head gets cut off. The norm has no *hieros*, no place of its own, acting invisibly over the entirety of the gridded, edgeless space it distributes. No one is excluded here or expelled into some identifiable outside. What is called "excluded" is, for the norm, just a modality of a generalized inclusion. It is therefore no longer anything but a single, solitary field, homogenous but diffracted into an infinity of nuances, a regime of limitless integration that sets out to maintain the play between forms-of-life at the lowest possible level of intensity. In this space, an ungraspable agency of totalization reigns, dissolving, digesting, absorbing and deactivating all alterity *a priori*. A process of omnivorous immanentization—reducing everything to nothing—deploys itself on a planetary scale. The goal: *make the world into continuous biopolitical tissue*. And all this time, the norm stands watch.

Under the regime of the norm, nothing is normal, but everything must be *normalized*. What functions here is a *positive* paradigm of power. The norm produces all that is, insofar as the norm is itself, as THEY say, the *ens realissimum*. Whatever does not belong to its mode of unveiling is not, and whatever is not cannot belong to its mode of unveiling. Under the regime of the norm, negativity is never recognized as such, but reduced to a simple *default* in relation to the norm, a *hole* to mend into the global biopolitical tissue. Negativity, this power that is not *supposed* to exist, is thus logically

abandoned to a traceless disappearance. Not without reason, since the Imaginary Party is the Outside of the world without Outside, the essential discontinuity lodged at the heart of a world rendered continuous.

The Imaginary Party is the *seat*, and the *siege*, of potentiality.

GLOSS β:

There is no better illustration of how the norm has subsumed the Law than to consider how the old territorial States of Europe “abolished” their borders after the Schengen Agreement. This abolition of borders, which is to say the abandonment of the most sacred aspect of the modern State, does not mean of course that the States themselves will disappear, but rather it signals the permanent possibility of their restoration, if the circumstances demand it. In this sense, when borders are abolished, customs checkpoints in no way disappear but are extended to virtually all places and times. Under Empire borders come to resemble what are called “mobile” customs checkpoints, which can be placed, *impromptu*, at any point within a territory.

54

Empire has never had any juridical or institutional existence, *because it needs none*. Unlike the modern State, which pretended to be an order of Law and of Institutions, Empire is the *guarantor* of a reticular proliferation of norms and apparatuses. Under normal circumstances, Empire *is* these apparatuses.

GLOSS α :

Every time Empire intervenes, it leaves behind norms and apparatuses that allow the crisis site to be *managed* as a transparent space of circulation. This is how imperial society makes itself known: as an immense articulation of apparatuses that pump an electrical life into the fundamental inertia of the biopolitical tissue. Because the reticular gridwork of imperial society is always threatened with breakdowns, accidents and blockages, Empire makes sure to eliminate resistances to circulation, liquidating all obstacles to penetration, making everything transparent to social flows. Empire is also what secures transactions and guarantees what might be called a *social superconductivity*. This is why Empire has no center: it makes it possible for each node of its network to be a center. All we can ever make out along the global assemblage of local apparatuses are the condensations of forces and the deployment of *negative operations* that ensure the progress of imperial transparency. Spectacle and Biopower assure not just the intensive continuity of flows, but the transitive normalization—their being made equivalent—of all situations as well.

GLOSS β :

There are no doubt “overwhelmed” zones where imperial control is denser than elsewhere, where each small segment of what exists pays its due to the general panopticism, and where at a certain point the population can no longer be distinguished from the police. Inversely, there are also zones where Empire seems absent and lets everyone know it “doesn’t dare set foot there.” This is

because it *calculates*, weighs, evaluates and then *decides* to be here or there, to show up or withdraw, all for tactical reasons. Empire is not everywhere, and nowhere is it absent. Unlike the modern State, Empire has no interest in being the summit, in being the always visible and resplendent sovereign. Empire only claims to be the *last resort* in each situation. Just as there is nothing natural about a “nature park” created by the administrators of artificialization who have *decided* it is preferable to leave it “intact,” so too Empire is present even when it is effectively absent, present as withdrawn. Empire is such that it *can* be everywhere. It resides in each point of the territory, in the gap between normal and exceptional situations. Empire has the *power* to be weak.

GLOSS γ :

The logic of the modern State is a logic of the Law and the Institution. Institutions and the Law are deterritorialized and, in principle, abstract. In this way, they distinguish themselves from the customs they replace, customs which are always local, ethically permeated, and always open to existential contestation. Institutions and the Law loom over men, their permanence drawn from their transcendence, from their own inhuman self-assertion. Institutions, like the Law, establish lines of partition and give names in order to separate and put things in order, putting an end to the chaos of the world, or rather corralling chaos into the delimited space of the *unauthorized*— Crime, Madness, Rebellion. And both Law and Institutions are united in the fact that neither has any need to justify itself to anyone, no matter what. “The Law is the Law,” says the man.

Even if it does not mind using them as *weapons*, as it does with everything else, Empire knows nothing about the abstract logic of the Law and the Institution. Empire knows only *norms* and *apparatuses*. Like apparatuses, norms are local. They take effect in the here and now insofar as they *function*, empirically. Norms hide neither their origin nor their reason for existing—these are to be found outside the norms themselves, in the conflicts which give rise to them. What is essential today is not some preliminary declaration of universality that would then strive to enforce itself. Attention must be paid to *operations*, to the pragmatic. There is indeed a totalization here as well, but it does not emerge out of a desire for universalization. It takes place through the *articulation* of apparatuses, through the continuity of the circulation between them.

GLOSS 8:

Under Empire we witness a proliferation of the legal, a chronic boom in juridical production. This proliferation, far from confirming some sort of triumph of the Law instead verifies its total devaluation, its definitive obsolescence. Under the regime of the norm, the Law becomes but one instrument among many for retroactively acting on society, an instrument that can be as easily customized—and subject to reversal of sense—as all the others. It is a *technique of government*, a way of putting an end to a crisis, nothing more. What the modern State elevated to the sole source of right—the Law—is now nothing more than one of the expressions of the social norm. Even judges no longer have the subordinate task of qualifying facts and applying the Law, but the sovereign function of evaluating the opportunity such and such a judgment

affords. The vagueness of laws, which increasingly have recourse to the nebulous criteria of normality, are no longer seen as hindering the laws' effectiveness; to the contrary, this vagueness becomes a condition for the survival of these laws and for their applicability to any and every case that might come before them. When judges "legislate from the bench" and the social is increasingly juridicized, they are doing nothing other than ruling in the name of the norm. Under Empire, an "anti-mafia" trial does nothing but celebrate the triumph of one mafia—the judges—over another—the judged. Here, the sphere of Law has become one weapon among others in the universal deployment of hostility. If Blooms can only connect and torture one another in the legal terms, Empire by contrast doesn't take well to this same language, nevertheless making use of it from time to time when the opportunity is right; and even then it continues to speak the only language it knows, the language of *effectiveness*, of the effective capacity to *re-establish the normal situation*, to produce public order, the smooth general functioning of the Machine. Two increasingly similar figures of this sovereignty of effectiveness make their presence felt thus in the very convergence of their functions: the *cop* and the *doctor*.

GLOSS Ε:

"The law should be used as just another weapon in the government's arsenal, and in this case it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public. For this to happen efficiently, the activities of the legal services have to be tied into the war effort in as discreet a way as

possible.” –Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-Keeping* (1971).

“Citizen” is anything that shows some degree of ethical neutralization, some attenuation that is compatible with Empire. *Difference* is not done away with completely, as long as it is expressed against the backdrop of a general equivalence. Indeed, difference is the elementary unit used in the imperial management of identities. If the modern State reigned over the “phenomenal republic of interests,”³⁴ Empire can be said to reign over the phenomenal republic of differences. It is through this depressing masquerade that all expressions of forms-of-life get conjured away. Imperial power stays impersonal because it has the power that personalizes. Imperial power totalizes because it is itself what individuates. We are dealing not so much with individualities and subjectivities, but with individuations and subjectivations—transitory, disposable, modular. *Empire is the free play of simulacra.*

³⁴ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 46.

GLOSS α:

Empire's unity is not imposed on reality as an extra, supplementary form. It comes about at the lowest level, on a molecular scale. The unity of Empire is nothing other than the global uniformity of attenuated forms-of-life produced through the conjunction of Spectacle and Biopower. Its unity is more a moiré pattern than multicolored: made up of differences, but only *in relation to the norm*. Normalized differences. Statistical deviations. Under Empire, nothing forbids you from being a little bit punk, slightly cynical, or moderately S & M. Empire tolerates all transgressions, provided they remain *soft*. We are no longer dealing with a voluntaristic *a priori* totalization, but with molecular calibrations of subjectivities and bodies. "[A]s power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*).³⁵

GLOSS β:

"And the whole inhabited world, as it were attending a national festival, has laid aside its old dress, the carrying of weapons, and has turned, with full authority to do so, to adornments and all kinds of pleasures. And all the other sources of contention have died out in the cities, but this single rivalry holds all of them, how each will appear as fair and charming as possible. Everything is full of gymnasiums, fountains, gateways, temples, handicrafts, and

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977), 193.

schools. And it can be said in medical terms that the inhabited world was, as it were, ill at the start and has now recovered. [...] the whole earth has been adorned like a pleasure garden. Gone beyond land and sea is the smoke rising from the fields and the signal fires of friend and foe, as if a breeze had fanned them away. There has been introduced instead every kind of charming spectacle and a boundless number of games. [...] Therefore those outside your empire, if there are any, alone should be pitied since they are deprived of such advantages." –Aelius Aristides, "Regarding Rome," 144 CE

56

From here on out, citizen will mean: citizen of Empire.

GLOSS:

In the Roman empire, citizenship was not limited to Romans. It was open to anyone who, in each province of the Empire, demonstrated a sufficient ethical conformity with the Roman model. Citizenship, in its juridical sense, merely corresponded to someone's own labor of self-neutralization. As you can see, the term "citizen" does not belong to the language of the Law, but to that of the norm. All appeals to the citizen are, and have been since the French Revolution, emergency measures: a practice that corresponds with a state of exception ("the Homeland is in danger," "the Republic is threatened," etc.). The appeal to the citizen is therefore never an appeal to a legal subject, but an injunction imposed on the legal subject to go beyond itself and give up its life, to behave in an exemplary fashion, and *to be more than a legal subject in order to remain one.*

57

The only thought compatible with Empire—when it is not sanctioned as its official thought—is deconstruction.

Those who celebrated it as “weak thought” were right on target. Deconstruction is a discursive practice guided by one unique goal: *to dissolve and disqualify all intensity, while never producing any itself.*

GLOSS:

Nietzsche, Artaud, Schmitt, Hegel, Saint Paul, German romanticism, and surrealism: deconstruction's task is, apparently, to produce fastidious commentaries targeting anything that, in the history of thought, has carried any intense charge. This new form of policing that pretends to be a simple extension of literary criticism beyond its date of expiration is, in fact, quite effective in its own domain. It won't be long before it has managed to rope off and quarantine everything from the past that is still a little virulent within a *cordon sanitaire* of digressions, reservations, language games and winks, using its tedious tomes to prevent the prolongation of thought into gesture—in short, to struggle tooth and nail against the event. No surprise that this wave of global prattle emerged out of a critique of metaphysics understood as privileging the “simple and immediate” presence of speech over writing, of life over the text and its multiplicity of significations. It would certainly be possible to interpret deconstruction as a simple Bloomesque reaction. The deconstructionist, incapable of having an effect on even the smallest detail of his world, being literally *almost no longer in the world* and having made absence his permanent mode of being, tries to embrace his Bloomhood with bravado. He shuts himself up in that narrow, closed circle of realities that still affect him at all—books, texts, films, and music—because these things are as insubstantial as he is. He can no longer see anything in what he reads that might relate to life, and instead sees what he lives as a tissue of references to what he has already read. Presence and the world as a whole, insofar as Empire allows, are for him purely hypothetical. Reality and experience are for him nothing more than dubious appeals to authority. There is something *militant* about

deconstruction, a militancy of absence, an offensive retreat into the closed but indefinitely recombinable world of significations. Indeed, beneath an appearance of complacency, deconstruction has a very specific political function. It tries to pass off anything that violently opposes Empire as *barbaric*, it deems *mystical* anyone who takes his own presence to self as a source of energy for his revolt, and makes anyone who follows the vitality of thought with a *gesture* a *fascist*. For these sectarian agents of preventive counter-revolution, the only thing that matters is the extension of the epochal suspension that fuels them. Immediacy, as Hegel has already explained, is the most abstract determination. And our deconstructionists know well that the *future of Hegel is Empire*.

Empire perceives civil war neither as an affront to its majesty nor as a challenge to its omnipotence, but simply as a *risk*. This explains the preventive counter-revolution that Empire continues to wage against anyone who might puncture *holes* in the biopolitical continuum. Unlike the modern State, Empire does not deny the existence of civil war. Instead, it *manages* it. By admitting the existence of civil war, Empire furnishes itself with certain convenient means to steer or contain it. Wherever its networks are insufficiently intrusive, it will ally itself for as long as it takes with some local mafia or even a local guerilla group, on the condition that these parties guarantee they will maintain order in the territory they have been assigned. Nothing matters less to Empire than the question, “who controls what?”—provided, of course, that *control has been established*. As a result, *not reacting is, in this way, still a reaction*.

GLOSS α:

It is amusing to see the absurd contortions Empire's incursions require of those who want to oppose Empire but are skittish of outright civil war. The imperial operation in Kosovo was not directed against the Serbs but against civil war itself, having become all too visible in the Balkans. And so the good souls of the world, compelled *to take a position*, were forced to side with either NATO or Milosevic.

GLOSS β:

On the heels of Genoa and its scenes of Chilean-style repression, a high-ranking official of the Italian police offered this touching admission to *La Repubblica*: "Look, I'm going to tell you something that's not easy for me and that I have never told anyone. [...] The police aren't there to put things in order, but to govern disorder."

Ideally, the cybernetic reduction would posit Bloom as a transparent conductor of social information. Empire would gladly represent itself, then, as a *network* in which everyone would be a *node*. In each of these nodes, the norm makes up the element of social conductivity. Even before the circulation of information, a *biopolitical causality* passes through it with more or less resistance, depending upon the gradient of normality. Each node—country, body, firm, political party—is held *responsible* for its resistance. This is even the case to the point of the absolute non-conductivity, to the point of the refraction of flows. The node in question will then be declared guilty, criminal, inhuman, and will become the object of an imperial intervention.

GLOSS α :

Because no one is ever depersonalized enough to be a perfect conductor of these social flows, everyone is always- already, as the very condition of survival, *at fault* in the eyes of the norm, a norm that will only be established after the fact, after the intervention. We call this state a *blank blame*.³⁶ It is the moral

GLOSS β :

The networks informality, plasticity, and opportunistic incompleteness offer a model of weak solidarity from whose loose bonds imperial “society” is woven.

GLOSS γ :

What is finally made clear by the planetary circulation of responsibility—when the world is cross-examined to the point where even “natural disasters” are perpetrated by some guilty party—is how all causality is essentially *constructed*.

³⁶ “Faute blanche.” This phrase can evoke “carte blanche” or “blank check.” In condition of the citizen of Empire. It is the reason why there are, in fact, no citizens, but only proofs of citizenship.

GLOSS δ:

Empire has the habit of launching “public awareness campaigns.” These amount to a deliberate heightening of the sensitivity of those social sensors alert to this or that phenomenon—that is, in the creation of this phenomenon as a phenomenon, and in the construction of the causal chains that allow for its materialization.

60

The jurisdiction of the imperial police, of Biopower is limitless, since what it must circumscribe and put a stop to does not exist at the level of the actual but *at the level of the possible*. The discretionary power here is called prevention and the risk factor is *this possible, existing everywhere in actuality as possible*, which is the basis for Empire's universal right to intervene.

GLOSS α :

The enemy of Empire is within. The enemy is the event. It is everything that *might* happen, everything that might disturb the mesh of norms and apparatuses. Logically therefore the enemy, in the form of *risk*, is omnipresent. And concern is the only *acknowledged* reason for the brutal imperial interventions against the Imaginary Party: “Look how ready we are to protect you, since as soon as something exceptional happens—obviously without taking into account quaint customs like law or jurisprudence—we are going to intervene using any means necessary” (Foucault).

GLOSS β :

There is obviously a certain Ubuesque quality to imperial power, which paradoxically seems ill-fit to undermine the effectiveness of the Machine. In the same way, there is a these cases, the term “*blanche*” refers to something *unspecified*, a quantity of money or an offense, crime or “*fault*.” *baroque* aspect to the juridical framework under which we live. In fact, it seems vital to Empire that it maintain a certain amount of permanent confusion around enforced rules, rights, and the various authorities and their competencies. It is this confusion that enables Empire to deploy, when the time comes, *any means necessary*.

61

It is no use distinguishing between cops and citizens. Under Empire, the difference between the police and the population is abolished. At any moment each citizen of Empire can, through a characteristically Bloomesque reversal, reveal himself a cop.

GLOSS α :

Foucault dates back to the second half of the eighteenth century the origin of the idea that “the delinquent is the enemy of society as a whole.” Under Empire, this notion extends to the totality of the reconstructed social cadaver. Both for himself and for others, and in virtue of his status as blank blame, each person is a risk, a potential hostis. This kind of schizoid situation explains the revival, under Empire, of mutual monitoring and informing, of policing both within and among citizens. For it is not only that the citizens of Empire denounce anything that seems “abnormal” to them with such fervor that even the police can no longer keep up, it is that they sometimes denounce themselves in order to have done with the blank blame they feel, so that their still unresolved status, and the uncertainty as to their membership within the biopolitical tissue, might be cleared up with the fell swoop of judgment. And it is through this mechanism of generalized terror that all risky individuals are everywhere pushed out, quarantined, spontaneously isolated—all those who, being subject to imperial intervention, could bring down with them, through capillary action, the adjoining links in the network.

GLOSS β :

“—How would you define the police?”

The police come from the public and the public forms a part of the police. Those on the police force are paid to devote all their time to carrying out their duties, but these duties are equally those of all their fellow citizens.

—What is the primary role of the police?

They have an expanded mission, focused on the resolution of problems, what is known as 'problem-solving policing.'

—How do you measure the effectiveness of the police?

The lack of crime and lawlessness.

—What specifically do the police take care of?

The problems and concerns of the citizens.

—What determines the effectiveness of the police?

The cooperation of the public.

—How do you define professionalism in a police force?

An ability to remain in contact with the population in order to anticipate problems.

—What opinion do the police have of judicial proceedings?

They are one means among many."

—Jean-Paul Brodeur, Professor of Criminology, Montréal. Quoted in *Guide pratique de la police de proximité*,³⁷ Paris, March 2000.

³⁷ Practical Guide to Community Policing

62

Imperial sovereignty means that no point of space or time and no element of the biopolitical tissue is safe from intervention. The electronic archiving of the world, generalized traceability, the fact that the means of production are becoming just as much a means of control, the reduction of the juridical edifice to a mere weapon in the arsenal of the norm—all this tends to turn everyone into *a suspect*.

GLOSS:

A portable phone becomes a black box, a mode of payment a record of your buying habits, your parents turn into snitches, a telephone bill becomes a file on your acquaintances: the whole overproduction of useless personal information ends up being critically important simply because at any moment it is *usable*. This *available* is what bathes every gesture in the shadow of threat. That Empire leaves this information relatively unexploited indicates precisely its own sense of security, how little, for now, it feels threatened.

63

Empire is scarcely thought, and perhaps hardly thinkable, within the western tradition, that is, within the limits of the metaphysics of subjectivity. The best THEY have been able to do is to think the surpassing of the modern State on its own grounds. This has spawned a number of unsustainable projects for a universal State, whether in the form of the speculations on cosmopolitan right that would establish perpetual peace, or as the ridiculous hope for a global democratic state, which is the ultimate goal of Negriism.

GLOSS α :

Those who cannot manage to imagine the world except through the categories allotted to them by the liberal State, commonly pretend to confuse Empire, here denounced as “globalization,” with one or another super-national organization (the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO or the UN, or less often NATO and the European Commission). From counter-summit to counter-summit, we see our “anti-globalization” movement consumed more and more by doubt: What if inside these pompous edifices, behind these proud facades, there WAS NOTHING? Intuitively they realize that these grand global shells are empty, and this is, moreover, why they besiege them. These palace walls are made from nothing but good intentions. They were constructed each in their time as a *reaction* to some world crisis, and since then have been left there, uninhabited, unusable for anything, to serve, for example, as a decoy for the dissenting herds of Negriism.

GLOSS β :

It is hard to understand what someone is driving at when, after a lifetime of disavowals, he asserts in an article titled “‘Empire,’ The Ultimate Stage of Imperialism” that “in the current imperial phase, there is no more imperialism,”³⁸ or when he proclaims that the dialectic is dead and that we must “theorize and act both *within* and *against* Empire at the same time”: someone who takes by turns the

³⁸ Antonio Negri, “L’Empire, stade suprême de l’impérialisme,” *Le Monde Diplo- matique* (January, 2001): 3.

masochist's position of demanding that these institutions dissolve themselves and that of imploring them to exist. And so, one should not begin with his writings, but with what he has actually done. Even when it comes to understanding a book like *Empire*—a certain variety of theoretical mishmash that achieves in thought the same ultimate reconciliation of all incompatibilities that *Empire* dreams of realizing in deeds—it is more instructive to observe the practices that claim to represent it. In this way, in the discourse of the spectacular bureaucrats of the White Overalls, the phrase “people of Seattle” has been replaced, for some time now, with “multitude.” “The *people*,” Hobbes reminds us, “is somewhat that is *one*, having *one will*, and to whom *one action* may be attributed; none of these can properly be said of a multitude. The *people* rules in all governments. For even in *monarchies* the *people* commands; for the *people* wills by the will of *one man*; but the multitude are citizens, that is to say, subjects. In a *democracy* and *aristocracy*, the citizens are the *multitude*, but the *court* is the *people*.”³⁹ The entire Negrian perspective boils down to this: to force *Empire* to take on the form of a universal State, by staging the emergence of a so-called “global civil society.” Coming from people *who have always aspired to hold institutional positions, who thus have always pretended to believe in the fiction of the modern State*, the absurdity of this strategy becomes clear; and the evidence to the contrary in *Empire* itself acquires historical significance. When Negri asserts that the multitude produced *Empire*, that “sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule,” that “*Empire* is the political subject that effectively regulates these global exchanges, the sovereign power

³⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991), 250.

that governs the world,” or again that “[t]his order is expressed as a juridical formation,” he gives an account, not of the world around him, but of his own ambitions.⁴⁰ The Negrians *want* Empire to take a juridical form, they *want* to have a personal sovereignty sitting across from them, an institutional subject with which to enter into contract or take over power. The “global civil society” that they call for merely betrays their *desire* for a global State. Sure, they proffer some proof, or what they believe to be proof, for the existence of a coming universal order: the imperial interventions in Kosovo, in Somalia, or in the Gulf, and their spectacular legitimization in “universal values.” But even if Empire could endow itself with a fake institutional facade, its actual reality would still remain concentrated in worldwide police and publicity, or, respectively, Biopower and Spectacle. The fact that the imperial wars present themselves as “international police operations” implemented by “intervention forces,” the fact that war itself is put outside the law by a form of domination that wants to pass off its own military offensives as little more than domestic administration, that is, as a police and not a political matter—to ensure “tranquility, security, and order”—all this Schmitt had already anticipated sixty years ago, and in no way does it contribute to the gradual development of a “right of the police,” as Negri would like to believe. The momentary spectacular consensus against this or that “rogue State,” this or that “dictator” or “terrorist” only validates the temporary and reversible legitimacy of any imperial intervention that appeals to this consensus. The restaging of degraded Nuremberg Trials for any and every reason, the unilateral decision

⁴⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), xii, xi, 3.

made by the national judiciaries to judge crimes that have taken place in countries where the judiciaries are not even recognized as such does not confirm the advancement of a nascent global right, but the complete subordination of the juridical order to a state of emergency wrought by the police. In conditions like this, it is not a question of agitating in support of a salutary universal State, but instead of demolishing Spectacle and Biopower.

64

As we are beginning to recognize, imperial domination can be described as *neotaoist*, since it is only in this tradition that it has been completely thought through. Twenty- three centuries ago a Taoist theoretician asserted the following: “Means the sage employs to lead to political order are three. The first is said to be profit; the second, authority; and the third, fame. Profit is the means whereby the people’s hearts are won; authority is the means whereby to enforce orders; denomination is the common way linking superior and inferior. [...] this can be said to abolish government by means of government, abolish words by means of words.”⁴¹ Mincing no words, he concluded: “In the perfect government, inferiors have no virtue” (Han Fei Tzu).⁴² Indeed government is quite likely perfected.

⁴¹ Han Fei Tzu, *Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu*, Vol. II, trans. W. K. Liao (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1959), 229, 324. Some passages have been modified in accordance with the French translation Tiquun uses.

⁴² Han Fei Tzu, *Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu*, Vol. I, trans. W. K. Liao (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1959), 58.

GLOSS:

There are those who have wanted to describe the imperial period as a time of slaves without masters. Even if this is not entirely false, it would be better to describe it as a time of *Mastery without masters*, of the nonexistent sovereign, like Calvino's nonexistent knight, who was nothing but an empty suit of armor. The place of the Prince remains, invisibly occupied by *the principle*. There is in this both an absolute rupture with and a fulfillment of the old personal sovereignty: the Master's greatest dismay has always been to have nothing but slaves for subjects. The reigning Principle carries off the paradox to which substantive sovereignty had had to yield: *to have one's slaves be free men*. This empty sovereignty is not, properly speaking, an historical novelty, even if it is in the West. The task here is to break with the metaphysics of subjectivity. The Chinese, who established themselves outside of the metaphysics of subjectivity between the sixth and third century BCE, at that time formed a theory of impersonal sovereignty that is not unhelpful for understanding the current motives of imperial domination. Closely associated with this theory is the name of Han Fei Tzu, the key figure in the school known as "legalism," although this is misleading as his contributions concern more the norm than the Law. His teachings, today collected under the title "The Tao of the Sovereign," are what motivated the founding of the first truly unified Chinese Empire, and what brought an end to the period of the "Warring States." Once the Empire was established, the Emperor, the Ch'in sovereign, had the works of Han Fei burned in 213 BCE. Only in the twentieth century was the text unearthed, a text that had prescribed the practices of the Chinese Empire at the very moment it was collapsing.

Han Fei's Prince, he who holds the Position, is Prince solely because of his impersonality, because of his absence of qualities, because of his invisibility, his inactivity; he is only Prince to the extent that he is absorbed in the Tao, into the Way, into the flow of things. He is not a Prince in the sense of a person, he is a Principle, a pure void, that occupies the Position and dwells in non-acting. For a "legalist" Empire, the State should be completely immanent to civil society: "keeping the state safe is like having food when hungry and clothes when cold, not by will but by nature,"⁴³ explains Han Fei. The function of the sovereign is here to articulate the apparatuses that will make him unnecessary, that will allow cybernetic self-regulation. If, in some respects, the teachings of Han Fei evoke certain formulations from liberal thought, it refuses their false naïveté: the teachings present themselves as a theory of absolute domination. Han Fei exhorts the Prince to abide by the Way of Lao Tzu: "Heaven and Earth are ruthless; they treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs. The sage is ruthless; he treats the people as straw dogs."⁴⁴ Even his most faithful ministers must know how insignificant they are in the eyes of the Imperial Machine—the same ministers, who only yesterday believed themselves masters—must dread that some crusade to "moralize public life" might swoop down on them, some craving for transparency. The art of imperial domination entails being absorbed in the Principle, fading away into nothingness, seeing everything by becoming invisible, holding everything by becoming ungraspable. The withdrawal of the Prince is here nothing but the withdrawal of the Principle: establish the norms by which beings will be judged and evaluated, make sure

⁴³ Ibid., 262

⁴⁴ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D. C. Lau (New York: Knopf, 1994), 53.

that things are named in the “appropriate” way, regulate rewards and punishments, govern identities and attach men to them. Keep to this and remain opaque: such is the art of empty and dematerialized domination, of the *imperial* domination of withdrawal.

“Tao exists in invisibility; its function, in unintelligibility. Be empty and reposed and have nothing to do. Then from the dark see defects in the light. See but never be seen. Hear but never be heard. Know but never be known. If you hear any word uttered, do not change it nor move it but compare it with the deed and see if word and deed coincide with each other. Place every official with a censor. Do not let them speak to each other. Then everything will be exerted to the utmost. Cover tracks and conceal sources. Then the ministers cannot trace origins. Leave your wisdom and cease your ability. Then your subordinates cannot guess at your limitations.

“Keep your decision and identify it with the words and deeds of your subordinates. Cautiously take the handles and hold them fast. Uproot others’ want of them, smash others’ thought of them, and do not let anybody covet them. [...] The Tao of the lord of men regards tranquility and humility as treasures. Without handling anything himself, he can tell skilfulness from unskilfulness [sic]; without his own concerns of mind, he can tell good from bad luck. Therefore, without uttering any word himself, he finds a good reply given; without exerting his own effort, he finds his task accomplished.” — Han Fei Tzu, “The Tao of the Sovereign”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Han Fei Tzu, Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu, Vol. I, 32-33, 34.

“The sceptre should never be shown. For its inner nature is non-assertion. The state affairs may be scattered in the four directions but the key to their administration is in the centre. The sage holding this key in hand, people from the four directions come to render him meritorious services. He remains empty and waits for their services, and they will exert their abilities by themselves. With the conditions of the four seas clearly in mind, he can see the Yang by means of the Yin. [...] He can go onward with the two handles without making any change. To apply them without cessation is said to be acting on the right way of government.

“Indeed, everything has its function; every material has its utility. When everybody works according to his special qualification, both superior and inferior will not have to do anything. Let roosters herald the dawn and let cats watch for rats. When everything exercises its special qualification, the ruler will not have to do anything. [...] “The way to assume oneness starts from the study of terminology. When names are rectified, things will be settled. [...] Therefore, he promotes them through an examination of names. [...] “If his own wisdom and talent are not discarded, it will be hard for him to keep a constant principle of government. [...]

“The ruler of men should often stretch the tree but never allow its branches to flourish.” — Han Fei Tzu, “Wielding the Sceptre”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid., 52-53, 54, 61.

All imperial strategies—whether the spectacular polarization of bodies toward various suitable absences

or the constant terror THEY doggedly maintain—seek to ensure that Empire never appears as such, namely, as *party*. This peculiar kind of peace, this *armed* peace characteristic of imperial order, is felt to be all the more oppressive because it is itself the result of a total, mute, and continuous war. The stakes of the offensive are not to win a certain confrontation, but rather to make sure that the confrontation *does not take place*, to eliminate the event at the source, to prevent any surge of intensity in the play of forms-of-life through which the political might occur. It is a huge victory for Empire if nothing happens. Faced with “whatever enemy,” faced with the Imaginary Party, its strategy is to “replace the events that one would like to be decisive but which remain unpredictable (i.e. battle) with a series of minor but statistically consistent actions that we call, by contrast, non-battle” (Guy Brossollet, *Essai sur la non-bataille*, 1975).⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Guy Brossollet, *Essai sur la non-bataille* (Paris: Belin, 1975), 78.

66

Empire does not confront us like a subject, facing us, but like an *environment* that is hostile to us.

AN ETHIC OF CIVIL WAR

*New form of community, asserting itself in a warlike manner. Otherwise the spirit grows soft. No “gardens” and no sheer “evasion in the face of the masses.” War (but without gunpowder!) between different thoughts!
And their armies!*

– Nietzsche, “Posthumous Fragments”

67

All those who cannot or will not conjure away the forms-of-life that move them must come to grips with the following fact: they are, we are, the pariahs of Empire. Anchored somewhere within us, there is a lightless spot, a mark of Cain filling citizens with terror if not outright hatred. This is the Manichaeism of Empire: on one side there is the glorious new humanity, carefully reformatted, thrown open to all the rays of power, ideally lacking in experience, and oblivious to themselves until they become cancerous. These are citizens, the citizens of Empire. *re.* And then there's *us*. *Us*—it is neither a subject, nor something formed, nor a multitude. *Us*—it is a heap of worlds, of sub-spectacular and interstitial worlds, whose existence is unmentionable, woven together with the kind of solidarity and dissent that power cannot penetrate; and there are the strays, the poor, the prisoners, the thieves, the criminals, the crazy, the perverts, the corrupted, the overly alive, the overflowing, the rebellious corporealities. In short, all those who, following their own line of flight, do not fit into Empire's stale, air-conditioned paradise. *Us*—this is the fragmented plane of consistency of the Imaginary Party.

Insofar as we stay in contact with our own potentiality, even if only in thinking through our experience, we represent a danger within the metropolises of Empire. We are *whatever enemy* against which all the imperial apparatuses and norms are positioned. Conversely, the resentful ones, the intellectual, the immunodeficient, the humanist, the transplant patient, the neurotic are Empire's model citizens. From these citizens, THEY are certain there is nothing to fear. Given their circumstances, these citizens are lashed to a set of artificial conditions of existence, such that only Empire can guarantee their survival; any dramatic shift in their conditions of existence and they die. They are born collaborators. It is not only power that passes through their bodies, but also the police. This kind of mutilated life arises not only as a consequence of Empire's progress, but as its *precondition*. The equation *citizen = cop* runs deep within the crack that exists at the core of such bodies.

Everything allowed by Empire is for us similarly limited: spaces, words, loves, heads, and hearts. So many nooses around the neck. Wherever we go quarantine lines of petrification spring up almost spontaneously all around us; we feel it in how they look and act. The slightest thing is all it takes to be identified as a suspect by Empire's anemic citizens, to be identified as a *risky dividual*. There is a never ending haggling over whether we will renounce the intimate relationship that we have with ourselves, something for which they have given us so much flak. And indeed, we will not hold out forever like this, in this tormented role of the domestic deserter, of the stateless alien, of such a carefully concealed hostis.

70

To the citizens of Empire, we have nothing to say. That would mean we shared something in common. As far as they are concerned, the choice is clear: either desert, join us and throw yourself into becoming, or stay where you are and be dealt with in accordance with the well-known principles of hostility: reduction and abasement.

71

For us, the *hostis* is this very hostility that, within Empire, orders both the non-relation to self and the generalized non-relation between bodies. Anything that tries to arouse in us this *hostis* must be annihilated. What I mean is that the sphere of hostility itself must be reduced.

72

The only way to reduce the sphere of hostility is by spreading the ethico-political domain of friendship and enmity. This is why Empire has never been able to reduce this sphere of hostility, despite all its clamoring in the name of peace. The becoming-real of the Imaginary Party is simply the formation—the *contagious* formation—of a plane of consistency where friendships and enmities can freely deploy themselves and make themselves legible to each other.

73

An agent of the Imaginary Party is someone who, wherever he is, from his own *position*, triggers or pursues the process of ethical polarization, the differential assumption of forms-of-life. This process is nothing other than *tiqqun*.

74

Tiqqun is the becoming-real, the becoming-*practice* of the world. Tiqqun is the process through which everything is revealed to be practice, that is, to take place within its own limits, within its own immanent signification. Tiqqun means that each act, conduct, and statement endowed with sense— act, conduct and statement as *event*—spontaneously manifests its own metaphysics, its own community, its own *party*. Civil war simply means the world is practice, and life is, in its smallest details, heroic.

75

The defeat of the revolutionary movement was not, as Stalinists always complain, due to its lack of unity. It was defeated because the civil war within its ranks was not worked out with enough force. The crippling effects of the systematic confusion between hostis and enemy are self-evident, whether it be the tragedy of the Soviet Union or the groupuscular comedy.

Let's be clear. Empire is not the enemy with which we have to contend, and other tendencies within the Imaginary Party are not, for us, so many hostis to be eliminated. The opposite is, in fact, the case.

76

Every form-of-life tends to constitute a community, and as a community tends to constitute a world. Each world, when it thinks itself—when it grasps itself strategically in its play with other worlds— discovers that it is structured by a particular metaphysics which is, more than a system, *a language, its language*. When a world thinks itself, it becomes infectious. It knows the ethic it carries within, and it has mastered, within its domain, the art of distances.

77

For each body, the most intense serenity is found by pushing its present form-of-life to the limit, all the way to the point where the line disappears, the line along which its power grows. Each body wants to exhaust its form-of-life and leave it for dead. Then, it passes on to another. This is how a body gets thicker, nourished with experience. But it also becomes more supple: it has learned how to get rid of one figure of the self.

There where bare life was, the form-of-life should come to be. Sickness and weakness do not really happen to bare life in its generic sense. They are affections that touch, in a singular way, specific forms-of-life, and are scripted by the contradictory imperatives of imperial pacification. If we manage to bring everything THEY exile to the confused language of bare life back home to the terrain of forms-of-life, we can invert biopolitics into a *politics of radical singularity*. We have to reinvent the field of health, and invent a *political* medicine based on forms-of-life.

Under the current conditions imposed by Empire, an ethical grouping has to turn itself into a war machine.

The object of the *war machine* is not war. To the contrary, it can “make war only on the condition that they simultaneously create something else, if only new nonorganic social relations” (Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*).⁴⁸ Unlike an army or revolutionary organizations, the war machine has a *supplemental* relation to war. It is capable of offensive exploits and can enter into battle; it can have unlimited recourse to violence. But it does not *need* this to lead a full, complete existence.

⁴⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 423, emphasis removed.

This is where the question of taking back both violence and all the intense expressions of life stolen from us by biopolitical democracies has to be posed. We should start by getting rid of the tired idea that death always comes at the end, as the final moment of life. Death is *everyday*, it is the continuous diminution of our presence that occurs when we no longer have the strength to abandon ourselves to our inclinations. Each wrinkle and each illness is some taste we have betrayed, some infidelity to a form-of-life animating us. This is our real death, and its chief cause is our lack of strength, the *isolation* that prevents us from trading blows with power, which forbids us from letting go of ourselves without the assurance we will have to pay for it. Our bodies feel the need to gather together into war machines, for this alone makes it possible *to live and to struggle*.

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It should now be clear that, in the biopolitical sense, there is no such thing as a “natural” death. All deaths are *violent*.

Both existentially and historically speaking. Under the biopolitical democracies of Empire, everything has been socialized, and each death is inserted into a complex network of causalities that make it a *social* death, a murder. Today, there is only murder, whether it is condemned, pardoned, or, most often, denied. At this point, there is no longer any question about the *fact* of murder, only about *how* it happens.

The fact is nothing, the *how* is all. The proof is that facts must be *qualified* beforehand, in order to be facts. Spectacle's genius is to have acquired a monopoly over qualifications, over the *act of naming*. With this in hand, it can then smuggle in its metaphysics and pass off the products of its fraudulent interpretations as facts. Some act of social war gets called a "terrorist act," while a major intervention by NATO, initiated through the most arbitrary process, is deemed a "peacekeeping operation." Mass poisonings are described as epidemics, while the "High-Security Wing" is the technical term used in our democracies' prisons for the legal practice of torture. *Tiqqun* is, to the contrary, the action that restores to each fact its *how*, of holding this how to be the *only real* there is. A death by duel, a fine assassination, or a last brilliant phrase uttered with pathos would be enough to clean up the blood and humanize what THEY say is the height of inhumanity—murder. In murder more than anything, the fact is absorbed by the *how*. Between enemies, for example, no firearms are allowed.

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This world, is pulled between two tendencies: Lebanonization and Swissification. These tendencies can coexist and alternate zone by zone. Indeed, these two seemingly opposed yet reversible tendencies represent two ways of warding off civil war. After all, before 1974, wasn't Lebanon nicknamed the "Switzerland of the Middle East"?

In the becoming-real of the Imaginary Party, we will no doubt cross paths with those ghastly parasites, the professional revolutionaries. Even though the only beautiful moments of the last century were disparagingly called “civil wars,” they will no doubt still denounce in us “the conspiracy of the ruling class to break down the revolution by a civil war” (Marx, *The Civil War in France*).⁴⁹ We do not believe in the revolution, we believe a bit more in “molecular revolutions,” and wholeheartedly believe in the differentiated ways of taking up civil war. The professional revolutionaries—whose repeated disasters have hardly discouraged them—will first of all smear us as dilettantes and as traitors to the Cause. They will want us to think that Empire is the enemy. We will answer Their Stupidity by pointing out that Empire is not the enemy, it is the *hostis*. It is not a matter of defeating Empire, it has to be annihilated; and if need be we can do without their Party, following the advice of Clausewitz on the subject of popular war: “A general uprising, as we see it, should be nebulous and elusive; its resistance should never materialize as a concrete body, otherwise the enemy can direct sufficient force at its core, crush it, and take many prisoners. When that happens, the people will lose heart and, believing that the issue has been decided and further efforts would be useless, drop their weapons. On the other hand, there must be some concentration at certain points: the fog must thicken and form a dark and menacing cloud out of which a bolt of lightning may

⁴⁹ Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*(Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1998), 117.

strike at any time. These points for concentration will, as we have said, be mainly on the flanks of the enemy's theater of operations. [...] They are not supposed to pulverize the core but to nibble at the shell and around the edges" (*On War*).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 482, 480-481.

The preceding phrases will usher in a new era that will be shadowed, in ever more tangible ways, by the threat of a sudden unleashing of reality. At some point, the “Invisible Committee” was the name given to the ethic of civil war expressed in these pages. It refers to a specific faction of the Imaginary Party, its revolutionary-experimental wing. We hope that with these lines we can avoid some of the cruder inanities that might be formulated about the nature of our activities and about the era just now dawning. Can’t we already hear this predictable chatter in the opinion held of the Muromachi period at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, described so well by one of our enemies: “This era of civil wars, precisely because of its turmoil and the swelling of its out-sized ambitions, turned out to be the freest ever known in Japan. All sorts of shady figures let themselves get caught up in it. And this is why so many have stressed the fact that it was simply the most violent of eras”?

**FINAL
WARNING TO THE
IMAGINARY
PARTY**

ARTICLE THE FIRST

Public space is intended for the exchange and circulation of commodities. Like all other commodities, people may move about freely within it.

ARTICLE 2

Public space is space that belongs to no one. What belongs to no one belongs to the State. The State grants to commodity semiocracy the occupation of said space.

ARTICLE 3

Offices are made for working in. The beach is made for tanning on. Those who desire entertainment have leisure spaces, discotheques and other amusement parks set up for such purpose. In libraries there are books. In hospices there are old folks. In stadiums there are families. Life is made up of detachable moments. Every moment in its proper place. Everything is in order. No one complains.

ARTICLE 3 BIS.

Disorder also has its own special function. It fits back into the Whole, in the place pre-established for unforeseen events. For the well-being of all, citizens are invited to enter the public way during festivals organized for their attention, at regular intervals, by service teams under the charge of the Ministry of the Interior and

the Ministry of Culture. Our ambiance agents are there to serve you. And you could be nice to them, you know, even if you are under their rule; that's not forbidden.

Every child is assigned an adult-in-charge. That adult is responsible before the law for the behavior of the child attributed to him or her. Because of their still-incomplete psycho-social training, and in the interest of their proper development, children are not to play in public space without surveillance from their assigned adults-in-charge. In any case, children are classed into two groups: hyperactive ones, who receive Ritalin, and hypo-active ones, who are to be put on Prozac.

ARTICLE 5

In the interest of preserving the landscape and respecting the social environment, bodies not conforming with the ruling aesthetic/sanitary norms, as published daily in the national press, will please refrain from circulating in public areas between the hours of nine a.m. and eight thirty p.m. During this time period, however, beggars will be tolerated during the hours of greatest affluence, when they will participate in the common edification of all, by the repulsive example they constitute.

ARTICLE 6

The purpose of life is happiness. Happiness is an objective datum measurable in exact quantities. These days everyone knows: where there's transparency, there's happiness; those who don't seek to

show themselves off are just trying to hide, and everything that tries to hide must be considered suspect. Consequently, it is the duty of Biopower to intervene and help make all the opacity in our lives disappear. Biopower wants you to be happy. And if it must, it will want it in spite of you.

ARTICLE 7

For everyone's safety, public space must be kept entirely under surveillance. Where control is still imperfect, the masses are invited to please keep to themselves all behavior contrary to human dignity. All anonymous gatherings and all abnormal behavior should be reported to the nearest Preventive Surveillance Action (PSA) patrol. Denouncing agents of the Imaginary Party in our midst is the duty of all citizens; do it for your own good and for the good of all.

ARTICLE 8

Public space is neutral space, meaning that therein, all manifestations of singular existence mean an attack on the integrity of others. All available resources are now to be put to work — urban furniture, suitable decors, Continual Control Monitoring (CCM), etc. — to render impossible such demonstrations and the intolerable nuisance they cause to our fellow citizens.

ARTICLE 9

We thank all those who have contributed by their good behavior to making these principles go without saying.

ARTICLE 10

NOTHING IS EVER TO HAPPEN AGAIN.

THE CYBERNETIC HYPOTHESIS

“We can imagine a time when the machine of governance would replace — for better or worse, who knows? — the insufficiency of the minds and devices of politics that are customary today.”

— Father Dominique Dubarle, *Le Monde*, December 28th, 1948

“There is a striking contrast between the conceptual refinement and dedication characterizing scientific and technical reasoning and the summary and imprecise style that characterizes political reasoning... One even asks oneself whether this is a kind of unsurpassable situation marking the definitive limits of rationality, or if one may hope that this impotence might be overcome someday and collective life be entirely rationalized.”

— An encyclopedist cybernetician writing in the 1970s

I

“There is probably no domain of man’s thinking or material activity that cybernetics will not come to have a role in someday.”

– Georges Boulanger, Dossier on Cybernetics: utopia or science of tomorrow in the world today, 1968

“The world circumscribing us⁵¹ aims to have stable circuits, equal cycles, the expected repetitions, and trouble-free compatibility. It intends to eliminate all partial impulses and immobilize bodies. Parallel to this, Borges discussed the anxiety of the emperor who wanted to have such an exact map of the empire that he would have to go back over his territory at all its points and bring it up to scale, so much so that the monarch’s subjects spent as much time and energy detailing it and maintaining it that the empire ‘itself’ fell into ruins to the exact extent that its cartographical overview was perfected — such is the madness of the great central Zero, its desire to immobilize bodies that can only ever ‘be’ as representation.”

– Jean-Francois Lyotard, Libidinal Economy, 1973

“They wanted an adventure, and to live it out with you. In the end all that’s all that can be said. They believed resolutely that the future would be modern: different, impassioning, and definitely difficult. Peopled by cyborgs and bare handed entrepreneurs, frenzied stock-marketeers and turbine-men. And for those that are willing to see it, the present is already like that. They think the future will be

⁵¹ The “circumverse” –tr.

human, feminine even — and plural; so that everyone can really live it, so that everyone participates in it. They are the Enlightenment men we've lost, infantrymen of progress, the inhabitants of the 21st century. They fight against ignorance, injustice, poverty, and suffering of all kinds. They go where it's happening, where things are going on. They don't want to miss out on a thing. They're humble and courageous, at the service of interests that are far beyond them, guided by a higher principle. They can pose problems, and they can find solutions. They'll have us traversing the most perilous of frontiers, they'll reach out a hand to pull us up onto the shore of the future. They're History marching forth, at least what's left of it, because the hardest part is over. They're the saints and the prophets, true socialists. They've known for a long while that May 1968 wasn't a revolution. The true revolution is the one they're making. Now it's just a matter of organization and transparency, intelligence and cooperation. A vast program! Then..."

Excuse me? What? What'd you say? What program? The worst nightmares, you know, are often the metamorphoses of a fable, fables PEOPLE tell their kids to put them to sleep and perfect their moral education. The new conquerors, who we'll call the cyberneticians, do not comprise an organized party — which would have made our work here a lot easier — but rather a diffuse constellation of agents, all driven, possessed, and blinded by the same fable. These are the murderers of Time, the crusaders of Sameness, the lovers of fatality. These are the sectarians of order, the reason-addicts, the go-between people. The Great Legends may indeed be dead, as the post-modern vulgate often claims, but domination is still comprised of master-fictions. Such was the case

of the Fable of the Bees published by Bernard de Mandeville in the first years of the 18th century, which contributed so much to the founding of political economy and to justifying the advances made by capitalism. Prosperity, the social order, and politics no longer depended on the catholic virtues of sacrifice but on the pursuit by each individual of his own interests: it declared the “private vices” to be guarantees of the “common good.” Mandeville, the “Devil-Man” as PEOPLE called him at the time, thus founded the liberal hypothesis, as opposed to the religious spirit of his times, a hypothesis which would later have a great influence on Adam Smith. Though it is regularly re-invoked, in a renovated form given it by liberalism, this fable is obsolete today. For critical minds, it follows that it’s not worth it anymore to critique liberalism. A new model has taken its place, the very one that hides behind the names “internet,” “new information and communications technology,” the “new economy,” or genetic engineering. Liberalism is now no longer anything but a residual justification, an alibi for the everyday crimes committed by cybernetics.

Rationalist critics of the “economic creed” or of the “neo-technological utopia,” anthropologist critics of utilitarianism in social sciences and the hegemony of commodity exchange, marxist critics of the “cognitive capitalism” that oppose to it the “communism of the masses,” political critics of a communications utopia that resuscitates the worst phantasms of exclusion, critics of the critiques of the “new spirit of capitalism,” or critics of the “prison State” and surveillance hiding behind neo-liberalism — critical minds hardly appear to be very inclined to take into account the emergence of cybernetics as a new technology of government, which federates and associates both discipline and bio-politics,

police and advertising, its ancestors in the exercise of domination, all too ineffective today. That is to say, cybernetics is not, as we are supposed to believe, a separate sphere of the production of information and communication, a virtual space superimposed on the real world. No, it is, rather, an autonomous world of apparatuses so blended with the capitalist project that it has become a political project, a gigantic "abstract machine" made of binary machines run by the Empire, a new form of political sovereignty, which must be called an abstract machine that has made itself into a global war machine. Deleuze and Guattari link this rupture to a new kind of appropriation of war machines by Nation-States: "Automation, and then the automation of the war machine, only came truly into effect after the Second World War. The war machine, considering the new antagonisms running through it, no longer had War as its exclusive object, but rather it began to take charge of and make Peace, policy, and world order into its object; in short: such is its goal. Thus we see the inversion of Clausewitz's formula: politics becomes the continuation of war, and peace will release, technologically, the unlimited material process of total war. War ceases to be the materialization of the war machine, and rather it is the war machine that itself becomes war itself materialized." That's why it's not worth it anymore to critique the cybernetic hypothesis either: it has to be fought and defeated. It's just a matter of time.

The Cybernetic Hypothesis is thus a political hypothesis, a new fable that after the second world war has definitively supplanted the liberal hypothesis. Contrary to the latter, it proposes to conceive biological, physical, and social behaviors as something integrally programmed and re-programmable. More precisely, it conceives of

each individual behavior as something “piloted,” in the last analysis, by the need for the survival of a “system” that makes it possible, and which it must contribute to. It is a way of thinking about balance, born in a crisis context. Whereas 1914 sanctioned the decomposition of the anthropological conditions for the verification of the liberal hypothesis — the emergence of Bloom and the bankruptcy, plain to see in flesh and bone in the trenches, of the idea of the individual and all metaphysics of the subject — and 1917 sanctioned its historical contestation by the Bolshevik “revolution,” 1940 on the other hand marked the extinction of the idea of “society,” so obviously brought about by totalitarian self-destruction. As the limit-experiences of political modernity, Bloom and totalitarianism thus have been the most solid refutations of the liberal hypothesis. What Foucault would later call (in a playful tone) “the death of Mankind,” is none other than the devastation brought about by these two kinds of skepticism, the one directed at individuals, and the other at society, and brought about by the Thirty Years’ War which had so effected the course of Europe and the world in the first half of the last century. The problem posed by the *Zeitgeist* of those years was once again how to “defend society” against the forces driving it towards decomposition, how to restore the social totality in spite of a general crisis of presence afflicting it in its every atom. The cybernetic hypothesis corresponds, consequently, to a desire for order and certitude, both in the natural and social sciences. The most effective arrangement of a constellation of reactions animated by an active desire for totality — and not just by a nostalgia for it, as it was with the various variants of romanticism — the cybernetic hypothesis is a relative of not only the totalitarian ideologies, but also of all the Holisms,

mysticisms, and solidarities, like those of Durkheim, the functionalists, or the Marxists; it merely takes over from them.

As an ethical position, the cybernetic hypothesis is the complement, however strictly opposed to it, of the humanist pathos that has been back in vogue since the 1940s and which is nothing more than an attempt to act as if “Man” could still think itself intact after Auschwitz, an attempt to restore the classical metaphysics on the subject in spite of totalitarianism. But whereas the cybernetic hypothesis includes the liberal hypothesis at the same time as it transcends it, humanism’s aim is to extend the liberal hypothesis to the ever more numerous situations that resist it: It’s the “bad faith” of someone like Sartre, to turn one of the author’s most inoperative categories against him. The ambiguity that constitutes modernity, seen superficially either as a disciplinary process or as a liberal process, or as the realization of totalitarianism or as the advent of liberalism, is contained and suppressed in, with and by the new governance mentality emerging now, inspired by the cybernetic hypothesis. This is but the life-sized experimentation protocol of the Empire in formation. Its realization and extension, with the devastating truth-effects it produces, is already corroding all the social institutions and social relations founded by liberalism, and transforming both the nature of capitalism and the possibilities of its contestation. The cybernetic gesture affirms itself in the negation of everything that escapes regulation, all the escape routes that existence might have in the interstices of the norms and apparatuses, all the behavioral fluctuations that do not follow, in fine, from natural laws. Insofar as it has come to produce its own truths, the cybernetic hypothesis is today the most consequential

anti-humanism, which pushes to maintain the general order of things, all the while bragging that it has transcended the human.

Like any discourse, the cybernetic hypothesis could only check to verify itself by associating the beings or ideas that reinforce it, by testing itself through contact with them, and folding the world into its laws in a continuous self-validation process. It's now an ensemble of devices aspiring to take control over all of existence and what exists. The Greek word *kubernèsis* means "the act of piloting a vessel," and in the figurative sense, the "act of directing, governing." In his 1981–1982 classes, Foucault insisted on working out the meaning of this category of "piloting" in the Greek and Roman world, suggesting that it could have a more contemporary scope to it: "the idea of piloting as an art, as a theoretical and practical technology necessary for existence, is an idea that I think is rather important and may eventually merit a closer analysis; one can see at least three types of technology regularly attached to this 'piloting' idea: first of all medicine; second of all, political government; third of all self-direction and self-government. These three activities (healing, directing others, and governing oneself) are quite regularly attached to this image of piloting in Greek, Hellenic and Roman literature. And I think that this 'piloting' image also paints a good picture of a kind of knowledge and practice that the Greeks and Romans had a certain affinity for, for which they attempted to establish a *tekhnè* (an art, a planned system of practices connected to general principles, notions, and concepts): the Prince, insofar as he must govern others, govern himself, heal the ills of the city, the ills of the citizens, and his own ills; he who governs himself as if he were governing a city, by healing his own ills; the doctor who must give his advice not only about the ills of

the body but about the ills of individuals' souls. And so you see you have here a whole pack of ideas in the minds of the Greeks and Romans that have to do I think with one and the same kind of knowledge, the same type of activity, the same type of conjectural understanding. And I think that one could dig up the whole history of that metaphor practically all the way up to the 16th century, when a whole new art of governing, centered around Reasons of State, would split apart — in a radical way — self-government/medicine/government of others — not without this image of 'piloting,' as you well know, remaining linked to this activity, that activity which we call the activity of government."

What Foucault's listeners are here supposed to know well and which he refrains from pointing out, is that at the end of the 20th century, the image of piloting, that is, management, became the cardinal metaphor for describing not only politics but also all human activity. Cybernetics had become the project of unlimited rationalization. In 1953, when he published *The Nerves of Government* in the middle of the development of the cybernetic hypothesis in the natural sciences, Karl Deutsch, an American university social sciences academic, took the political possibilities of cybernetics seriously. He recommended abandoning the old concept that power was sovereign, which had too long been the essence of politics. To govern would become a rational coordination of the flows of information and decisions that circulate through the social body. Three conditions would need to be met, he said: an ensemble of capturers would have to be installed so that no information originating from the "subjects" would be lost; information handling by correlation and association; and a proximity to every living community. The cybernetic

modernization of power and the expired forms of social authority thus can be seen as the visible production of what Adam Smith called the “invisible hand,” which until then had served as the mystical keystone of liberal experimentation. The communications system would be the nerve system of societies, the source and destination of all power. The cybernetic hypothesis thus expresses no more or less than the politics of the “end of politics.” It represents at the same time both a paradigm and a technique of government. Its study shows that the police is not just an organ of power, but also a way of thinking.

Cybernetics is the police-like thinking of the Empire, entirely animated by an offensive concept of politics, both in an historical and metaphysical sense. It is now completing its integration of the techniques of individuation — or separation — and totalization that had been developing separately: normalization, “anatomopolitics,” and regulation, “bio-politics,” as Foucault calls it. I call his “techniques of separation” the police of qualities. And, following Lukács, I call his “techniques of totalization” the social production of society. With cybernetics, the production of singular subjectivities and the production of collective totalities work together like gears to replicate History in the form of a feigned movement of evolution. It acts out the fantasy of a Same that always manages to integrate the Other; as one cybernetician puts it, “all real integration is based on a prior differentiation.” In this regard, doubtless no one could put it better than the “automaton” Abraham Moles, cybernetics’ most zealous French ideologue, who here expresses this unparalleled murder impulse that drives cybernetics: “We envision that one global society, one State, could be managed in such a way that they could be protected against all the accidents

of the future: such that eternity changes them into themselves. This is the ideal of a stable society, expressed by objectively controllable social mechanisms." Cybernetics is war against all that lives and all that is lasting. By studying the formation of the cybernetic hypothesis, I hereby propose a genealogy of imperial governance. I then counterpose other wisdom for the fight, which it erases daily, and by which it will be defeated.



“Synthetic life is certainly one of the possible products of the evolution of techno-bureaucratic control, in the same way as the return of the whole planet to the inorganic level, is -rather ironically — another of the results of that same revolution, which has to do with the technology of control.”

– James R Beniger, *The Control Revolution*, 1986.

Even if the origins of the Internet device are today well known, it is not uncalled for to highlight once again their political meaning. The Internet is a war machine invented to be like the highway system, which was also designed by the American Army as a decentralized internal mobilization tool. The American military wanted a device which would preserve the command structure in case of a nuclear attack. The response would consist in an electronic network capable of automatically retaking control over information itself if nearly the whole of the communications links were destroyed, thus permitting the surviving authorities to remain in communication with one another and make decisions. With such a device, military authority could be maintained in the face of the worst catastrophes. The Internet is thus the result of a nomadic transformation of military strategy. With that kind of a plan at its roots, one might doubt the supposedly anti-authoritarian characteristics of this device. As is the Internet, which derives from it, cybernetics is an art of war, the objective of which is to save the head of the social body in case of catastrophe. What stands out historically and politically during the period between the great wars, and which the cybernetic hypothesis was a response to, was the metaphysical problem of creating order out of disorder. The whole of the great

scientific edifice, in terms of what it had to do with the determinist concepts of Newton's mechanical physics, fell apart in the first half of the century. The sciences, at that time, were like plots of territory torn between the neo-positivist restoration and the probabilist revolution, and slowly inching its way towards a historical compromise so that the law could be re-established after the chaos, the certain re-established after the probable. Cybernetics passed through this whole movement – which began in Vienna at the turn of the century, and was transported to England and the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, and constructed a Second Empire of Reason where the idea of the Subject, up to that time considered indispensable, was absent. As a kind of knowledge, it brought together an ensemble of heterogeneous discourses all dealing with the practical problems of mastering uncertainty. Discourses fundamentally expressing, in the various domains of their application, the desire for a restoration of one order, and furthermore the maintenance thereof.

Underlying the founding of Cybernetics was a context of total war. It would be in vain to look for some malicious purpose or the traces of a plot: one simply finds a handful of ordinary men mobilized by America during the Second world war. Norbert Wiener, an American savant of Russian origin, was charged with developing, with the aid of a few colleagues, a machine for predicting and monitoring the positions of enemy planes so as to more effectively destroy them. It was at the time only possible at the time to predict with certitude certain correlations between certain airplane positions and certain airplane behaviors/movements. The elaboration of the "Predictor," the prediction machine ordered from Wiener, thus required a specific method of airplane position

handling and a comprehension of how the weapon interacts with its target. The whole history of cybernetics has aimed to do away with the impossibility of determining at the same time the position and behavior of bodies. Wiener's innovation was to express the problem of uncertainty as an information problem, within a temporal series where certain data is already known, and others not, and to consider the object and the subject of knowledge as a whole, as a "system." The solution consisted in constantly introducing into the play of the initial data the gap seen between the desired behavior and the effective behavior, so that they coincide when the gap closes, like the mechanism of a thermostat. The discovery goes considerably beyond the frontiers of the experimental sciences: controlling a system would in the end require a circulation of information to be instituted, called feedback, or retro-action. The wide implications of these results for the natural and social sciences was exposed in 1948 in Paris in a work presented under the foreboding name of Cybernetics, which for Wiener meant the doctrine of "control and communication between animal and machine."

Cybernetics thus emerged as a simple, inoffensive theory of information, a theory for handling information with no precise origin, always potentially present in the environment around any situation. It claims that the control of a system is obtained by establishing an optimum degree of communication between the parties to it. This objective calls above all for the continuous extortion of information — a process of the separation of beings from their qualities, of the production of differences. In other words, as it were, mastery of a uncertainty would arise from the proper representation and memorization of the past. The

spectacular image, binary mathematical encoding — invented by Claude Shannon in Mathematical Theory of Communication in the very same year that the cybernetic hypothesis was first expressed — on the one hand they've invented memory machines that do not alter information, and put incredible effort into miniaturizing them (this is the determinant strategy behind today's nanotechnology) and on the other they conspire to create such conditions on the collective level. Thus put into form, information would then be directed towards the world of beings, connecting them to one another in the same way as commodity circulation guarantees they will be put into equivalence. Retro-action, key to the system's regulation, now calls for communication in the strict sense. Cybernetics is the project of recreating the world within an infinite feedback loop involving these two moments: representation separating, communication connecting, the first bringing death, the second mimicking life.

The cybernetic discourse begins by dismissing as a false problem the controversies of the 19th century that counterposed mechanist visions to vitalist or organicist visions of the world. It postulates a functional analogy between living organisms and machines, assimilated into the idea of "systems." Thus the cybernetic hypothesis justifies two kinds of scientific and social experiments. The first essentially aimed to turn living beings into machines, to master, program, and determine mankind and life, society and its "future." This gave fuel for a return of eugenics as bionic fantasy. It seeks, scientifically, the end of History; initially here we are dealing with the terrain of control. The second aims to imitate the living with machines, first of all as individuals, which has now led to the development of robots and artificial intelligence; then as collectives

— and this has given rise to the new intense circulation of information and the setting up of “networks.” Here we’re dealing rather with the terrain of communication. However much they may be socially comprised of highly diversified populations — biologists, doctors, computer scientists, neurologists, engineers, consultants, police, ad-men, etc. — the two currents among the cyberneticians are perfectly in harmony concerning their common fantasy of a Universal Automaton, analogous to Hobbes’ vision of the State in *Leviathan*, “the artificial man (or animal).”

The unity of cybernetic progress arises from a particular method; it has imposed itself as the world-wide method of universal enrollment, simultaneously a rage to experiment, and a proliferating oversimplification. It corresponds to the explosion of applied mathematics that arose subsequent to the despair caused by the Austrian Kurt Godel when he demonstrated that all attempts to give a logical foundation to mathematics and unify the sciences was doomed to “incompleteness.” With the help of Heisenberg, more than a century of positivist justifications had just collapsed. It was Von Neumann that expressed to the greatest extreme this abrupt feeling that the foundations had been annihilated. He interpreted the logical crisis of mathematics as the mark of the unavoidable imperfection of all human creations. And consequently he laid out a logic that could only come from a robot! From being a pure mathematician, he made himself an agent of scientific crossbreeding, of a general mathematization that would allow a reconstruction from below, in practice, of the lost unity of the sciences of which cybernetics was to be the most stable theoretical expression. Not a demonstration, not a speech, not a book, and no place has not since then been animated by the

universal language of explanatory diagrams, the visual form of reasoning. Cybernetics transports the rationalization process common to bureaucracy and to capitalism up onto the plane of total templating (modeling). Herbert Simon, the prophet of Artificial Intelligence, took up the Von Neumann program again in the 1960s, to build a thinking automaton. It was to be a machine equipped with a program, called expert system, which was to be capable of handling information so as to resolve the problems that every particular domain of technique had to deal with, and by association, to be able to solve all the practical problems encountered by humanity! The General Problem Solver (GPS), created in 1972, was the model that this universal technique that gathered together all the others, the model of all models, the most applied intellectualism, the practical realization of the preferred adage of the little masters without mastery, according to which "there are no problems, there are only solutions."

The cybernetic hypothesis progresses indistinctly as theory and technology, the one always certifying the other. In 1943, Wiener met John Von Neumann, who was in charge of building machines fast and powerful enough to carry out the Manhattan Project that 15,000 scholars and engineers, and 300,000 technicians and workers were working on, under the direction of the physicist Robert Oppenheimer: the modern computer and the atomic bomb, were thus born together. From the perspective of contemporary imagining, the "communications utopia" is thus the complementary myth to the myth of the invention of nuclear power and weaponry: it is always a question of doing away with being-together (the ensemble of beings) either by an excess of life or an excess of death, either by terrestrial fusion or by cosmic suicide.

Cybernetics presents itself as the response most suited to deal with the Great Fear of the destruction of the world and of the human species. And Von Neumann was its double agent, the “inside outsider” par excellence. The analogy between his descriptive categories for his machines, living organisms, and Wiener’s categories sealed the alliance between cybernetics and computer science. A few years would pass before molecular biology, when decoding DNA, would in turn use that theory of information to explain man as an individual and as a species, giving an unequalled technical power to the experimental genetic manipulation of human beings.

The way that the systems metaphor evolved towards the network metaphor in social discourse between the 1950s and 1980s points towards the other fundamental analogy constituting the cybernetic hypothesis. It also indicates a profound transformation of the latter. Because if PEOPLE talked about “systems,” among cyberneticians it would be by comparison with the nervous system, and if PEOPLE talk today about the cognitive “network” sciences, THEY are thinking about the neuronal network. Cybernetics is the assimilation of the totality of the phenomena that exist into brain phenomena. By posing the mind as the alpha and omega of the world, cybernetics has guaranteed itself a place as the avant-garde of all avant-gardes, the one that they will now all forever be running after. It effectively implements, at the start, the identity between life, thought, and language. This radical Monism is based on an analogy between the notions of information and energy. Wiener introduced it by grafting onto his discourse the discourse of 19th century thermodynamics; the operation consisted in comparing the effect of time on an energy system with the effect of

time on an information system. A system, to the extent that it is a system, is never pure and perfect: there is a degradation of its energy to the extent that it undergoes exchanges, in the same way as information degrades as it is circulated around. This is what Clausius called entropy. Entropy, considered as a natural law, is the cybernetician's Hell. It explains the decomposition of life, disequilibrium in economy, the dissolution of social bonds, decadence... Initially, speculatively, cybernetics claimed that it had thus opened up a common ground on which it would be possible to carry out the unification of the natural and human sciences.

What would end up being called the "second cybernetics" was the superior project of a vast experimentation on human societies: anthropotechnology. The cybernetician's mission is to fight the general entropy threatening living beings, machines, and societies; that is, to create the experimental conditions for a permanent revitalization, endlessly restoring the integrity of the whole. "The important thing isn't that mankind is present, but that it exists as a living support for technical ideas," says Raymond Ruyer, the humanist commentator. With the elaboration and development of cybernetics, the ideal of the experimental sciences, already at the origins of political economy via Newtonian physics, would once again lend a strong arm to capitalism. Since then, the laboratory the cybernetic hypothesis carries out its experiments in has been called "contemporary society." After the end of the 1960s, thanks to the techniques that it taught, this 'second cybernetics' is no longer a mere laboratory hypothesis, but a social experiment. It aims to construct what Giorgio Cesarano calls a stabilized animal society, in which "[concerning termites, ants, and bees] the natural presupposition is that they operate automatically, and that the

individual is negated, so the animal society as a whole (termite colony, anthill, or beehive) is conceived of as a kind of plural individual, the unity of which determines and is determined by the distribution of roles and functions — all within the framework of an ‘organic composite’ where one would be hard pressed to not see a biological model for the teleology of Capital.”



“You don’t have to be a prophet to acknowledge that the modern sciences, in their installation within society, will not delay in being determined and piloted by the new basic science: cybernetics. This science corresponds to the determination of man as a being the essence of which is activity in the social sphere. It is, in effect the theory whose object is to take over all possible planning and organization of human labor.”

– Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thought*, 1966

“But cybernetics on the other hand, sees itself as forced to recognize that a general regulation of human existence is still not achievable at the present time. This is why mankind still has a function, provisionally, within the universal domain of cybernetic science, as a “factor of disturbance.” The plans and acts of men, apparently free, act as a disturbance. But very recently, science has also taken over possession of this field of human existence. It has taken up the rigorously methodical exploration and planning of the possible future of man as an active player. In so doing, it figures in all available information about what there is about mankind that may be planned.”

Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of Art and the Destination of Thought*, 1967

In 1946, a conference of scientists took place in New York, the objective of which was to extend the cybernetic hypothesis to the social sciences. The participants agreed to make a clear disqualification of all the philistine philosophies that based

themselves on the individual or on society. Socio-Cybernetics was to concentrate on the intermediary phenomena of social feedback, like those that the American anthropological school believed it had found at the time between “culture” and “personality,” to put together a characterization of the various nations, intended for use by American soldiers. The operation consisted in reducing dialectical thought to an observation of processes of circular causality within what was considered a priori to be an invariable social totality, where contradiction and non-adaptation merged, as in the central category of cybernetic psychology: the double bind. As a science of society, cybernetics was intended to invent a kind of social regulation that would leave behind the macro-institutions of State and Market, preferring to work through micro-mechanisms of control — preferring devices. The fundamental law of socio-cybernetics is as follows: growth and control develop in inverse proportion to each other. It is thus easier to construct a cybernetic social order on the small scale: “the quick re-establishment of balance requires that inconsistencies be detected at the very location where they are produced, and that corrective action take place in a decentralized manner.” Under the influence of Gregory Bateson, the Von Neumann of the social sciences, and of the American sociological tradition, obsessed by the question of deviance (the hobo, the immigrant, the criminal, the youth, me, you, him, etc.), socio-cybernetics was aimed, as a priority, towards studying the individual as a feedback locus, that is, as a “self-disciplined personality.” Bateson became the social editor in chief of the second half of the 20th century, and was involved in the origins of the “family therapy” movement, as well as those of the “sales techniques training” movement developed at Palo Alto. Since the cybernetic hypothesis as a whole calls for a radically new

physical structuring of the subject, whether individual or collective, its aim is to hollow it out. It disqualifies as a myth individual inwardness/internal dialogue, and with it all 19th century psychology, including psychoanalysis. It's no longer a question of removing the subject from the traditional exterior bonds, as the liberal hypothesis had intended, but of reconstructing the social bonds by depriving the subject of all substance. Each person was to become a fleshless envelope, the best possible conductor of social communication, the locus of an infinite feedback loop which is made to have no nodes. The cyberneticization process thus completes the "process of civilization," to where bodies and their emotions are abstracted within the system of symbols. "In this sense," writes Lyotard, "the system presents itself as an avant-garde machine that drags humanity along after it, by dehumanizing it so as to rehumanize it at another level of normative capacities. Such is the great pride of the deciders, such is their blindness... Even any permissiveness relative to the various games is only granted on the condition that greater performance levels will be produced. The redefinition of the norms of life consists in an amelioration of the skills of the system in matters of power."

Spurred on by the Cold War and its "witch hunts," the socio-cyberneticians thus tirelessly hunted down the pathological couched behind the normal, the communist sleeping in everybody. In the 1950s, to this effect, they formed the Mental Health Federation, where an original and quasi-final solution was elaborated to the problems of the community and of the times: "It is the ultimate goal of mental health to help people to live with their peers in the same world... The concept of mental health is co-

extensive with international order and the global community, which must be developed so as to make men capable of living in peace with each other." By rethinking mental problems and social pathologies in terms of informatics, cybernetics gave rise to a new politics of subjects, resting on communication and transparency to oneself and to others. Spurred on by Bateson, Wiener in turn began thinking about a socio-cybernetics with a scope broader than the mere project of mental hygiene. He had no trouble affirming the defeat of the liberal experimentation: on the market information is always impure and imperfect because of the lying implicit in advertising and the monopolistic concentration of the media, and because of the ignorance of the State, which as a collective contains less information than civil society. The extension of commodity relations, by increasing the size of communities and feedback chains, renders distortions of communication and problems of social control ever more probable. The past processes of accumulation had not only destroyed the social bonds, but social order itself appeared cybernetically impossible within capitalism. The cybernetic hypothesis' stroke of luck can thus be understood in light of the crises encountered by 20th century capitalism, which questioned once again the supposed "laws" of classical political economy — and that was where the cybernetic discourse stepped into the breach.

The contemporary history of economic discourse must be looked at from the angle of this increasing problem of information. From the crisis of 1929 to 1945, economists' attention was focused on questions of anticipation, uncertainty regarding demand, adjustments between production and consumption, and forecasts of economic activity. Smith's classical economics began to give out

like the other scientific discourses directly inspired by Newton's physics. The preponderant role that cybernetics was to play in the economy after 1945 can be understood in light of Marx's intuitive observation that "in political economy the law is determined by its contrary, that is, the absence of laws. The true law of political economy is chance." In order to prove that capitalism was not a factor in entropy and social chaos, the economic discourse gave primacy to a cybernetic redefinition psychology starting in the 1940s. It based itself on the "game theory" model, developed by Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944. The first socio-cyberneticians showed that homo economicus could only exist on the condition that there would be a total transparency of his preferences, regarding himself and others. In the absence of an ability to understand the whole ensemble of the behaviors of other economic actors, the utilitarian idea of a rationality of micro-economic choices is but a fiction. On the impetus of Friedrich von Hayek, the utilitarian paradigm was thus abandoned in preference to a theory of spontaneous mechanisms coordinating individual choices, acknowledging that each agent only has a limited understanding of the behaviors of others and of his or her own behaviors. The response consisted in sacrificing the autonomy of economic theory by grafting it onto the cybernetic promise of a balancing of systems. The hybrid discourse that resulted from this, later called "neo-liberal," considered as a virtue the optimal market allocation of information — and no longer that of wealth — in society. In this sense, the market is but the instrument of a perfect coordination of players thanks to which the social totality can find a durable equilibrium. Capitalism thus becomes unquestionable, insofar as it is presented as a simple means — the best possible means — of producing social self-regulation.

Like in 1929, the planetary movement of contestation of 1968, and, moreover, the post-1973 crisis present for political economy once more the problem of uncertainty, this time on an existential and political terrain. High-flown theories abound, with the old chatterbox Edgar Morin and “complexity” theory, and Joel de Rosnay, that eccentric simpleton, and “society in real-time.” Ecologist philosophy as well was nourished by this new mystique of the Great Totality. Now totality was no longer an origin to be rediscovered, but a future to build. For cybernetics it is no longer a question of predicting the future, but of reproducing the present. It is no longer a question of static order, but of a dynamic self-organization. The individual is no longer credited with any power at all: his knowledge of the world is imperfect, he doesn’t know his own desires, he is opaque to himself, everything escapes him, as spontaneously cooperative, naturally empathetic, and fatally in interdependent as he is. He knows nothing of all this, but THEY know everything about him. Here, the most advanced form of contemporary individualism comes into being; Hayekian philosophy is grafted onto him, for which all uncertainty, all possibilities of any event taking place is but a temporary problem, a question of his ignorance. Converted into an ideology, liberalism serves as a cover for a whole group of new technical and scientific practices, a diffuse “second cybernetics,” which deliberately erases the name it was originally baptized with. Since the 1960s, the term cybernetics itself has faded away into hybrid terms. The science explosion no longer permits any theoretical unification, in effect: the unity of cybernetics now manifests itself practically through the world itself, which it configures every day. It is the tool by which capitalism has adjusted its capacity for disintegration and its quest after profit to one another. A society threatened by permanent

decomposition can be all the more mastered when an information network, an autonomous “nervous system” is in place allowing it to be piloted, wrote the State lackeys Simon Nora and Alain Minc, discussing the case of France in their 1978 report. What PEOPLE call the “New Economy” today, which brings together under the same official nomenclature of cybernetic origin the ensemble of the transformations that the western nations have undergone in the last thirty years, is but an ensemble of new subjugations, a new solution to the practical problem of the social order and its future, that is: a new politics.

Under the influence of informatization, the supply and demand adjustment techniques originating between 1930–1970 have been purified, shortened, and decentralized. The image of the “invisible hand” is no longer a justificatory fiction but is now the effective principle behind the social production of society, as it materializes within computer procedures. The Internet simultaneously permits one to know consumer preferences and to condition them with advertising. On another level, all information regarding the behavior of economic agents circulates in the form of headings managed by financial markets. Each actor in capitalist valorization is a real-time back-up of quasi-permanent feedback loops. On the real markets, as on the virtual markets, each transaction now gives rise to a circulation of information concerning the subjects and objects of the exchange that goes beyond simply fixing the price, which has become a secondary aspect. On the one hand, people have realized the importance of information as a factor in production distinct from labor and capital and playing a decisive role in “growth” in the form of knowledge, technical innovation, and distributed capacities. On the other, the sector specializing in

the production of information has not ceased to increase in size. In light of its reciprocal reinforcement of these two tendencies, today's capitalism should be called the information economy. Information has become wealth to be extracted and accumulated, transforming capitalism into a simply auxiliary of cybernetics. The relationship between capitalism and cybernetics has inverted over the course of the century: whereas after the 1929 crisis, PEOPLE built a system of information concerning economic activity in order to serve the needs of regulation — this was the objective of all planning — the economy after the 1973 crisis put the social self-regulation process came to be based on the valorization of information.

IV

“If motorized machines constituted the second age of the technical machine, cybernetic and informational machines form a third age that reconstructs a generalized regime of subjection: recurrent and reversible ‘humans-machines systems’ replace the old nonrecurring and nonreversible relations of subjection between the two elements; the relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication, and no longer on usage or action. In the organic composition of capital, variable capital defines a regime of subjection of the worker (human surplus value), the principal framework of which is the business or factory. But with automation comes a progressive increase in the proportion of constant capital; we then see a new kind of enslavement: at the same time the work regime changes, surplus value becomes machinic, and the framework expands to all of society. It could also be said that a small amount of subjectification took us away from machinic enslavement, but a large amount brings us back to it.”

– Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980

“The only moment of permanence of a class as such is that which has a consciousness of its permanence for itself: the class of managers of capital as social machine. The consciousness that connotes is, with the greatest coherence, that of apocalypse, of self-destruction.”

– Giorgio Cesarano, *Survival Manual*, 1975

Nothing expresses the contemporary victory of cybernetics better than the fact that value can now be extracted as information about information. The commodity-cybernetician, or “neo-liberal” logic,

extends over all activity, including that which is still not commodified, with an unflagging support of modern States. More generally, the corollary to the precarization of capitalism's objects and subjects is a growth of circulation in information on their subject: this is as true for unemployed workers as it is for cops. Cybernetics consequently aims to disturb and control people in one and the same movement. It is founded on terror, which is a factor in its evolution — the evolution of economic growth, moral progress — because it supplies an occasion for the production of information. The state of emergency, which is proper to all crises, is what allows self-regulation to be relaunched, and to maintain itself as a perpetual movement. Whereas the scheme of classical economy where a balance of supply and demand was to permit "growth" and thusly to permit collective well-being, it is now "growth" which is considered an endless road towards balance. It is thus just to critique western modernity as a "infinite mobilization" the destination of which is "movement towards more movement." But from a cybernetic point of view, the self-production that equally characterizes the State, the Market, robots, wage workers, or the jobless, is indiscernible from the self-control that moderates and slows it down.

It comes across clearly then that cybernetics is not just one of the various aspects of contemporary life, its neo-technological component, for instance, but rather it is the point of departure and arrival of the new capitalism. Cybernetic Capitalism — what does that mean? It means that since the 1970s we've been dealing with an emerging social formation that has taken over from Fordist capitalism which results from the application of the cybernetic hypothesis to political economy. Cybernetic capitalism develops so

as to allow the social body, devastated by Capital, to reform itself and offer itself up for one more process of accumulation. On the one hand capitalism must grow, which implies destruction. On the other, it needs to reconstruct the "human community," which implies circulation. "There is," writes Lyotard, "two uses for wealth, that is importance-power: a reproductive use and a pillage use. The first is circular, global, organic; the second is partial, death-dealing, jealous... The capitalist is a conqueror, and the conqueror is a monster, a centaur. His front side feeds off of reproducing the regulated system of controlled metamorphoses under the law of the commodity-talion, and its rear side off of pillaging overexcited energies. On the one hand, to appropriate, and thus preserve, that is, reproduce in equivalence, reinvest; on the other to take and destroy, steal and flee, hollowing out another space, another time." The crises of capitalism, as Marx saw them, always came from a dearticulation between the time of conquest and the time of reproduction. The function of cybernetics is to avoid crises by ensuring the coordination between Capital's "front side" and "rear side." Its development is an endogenous response to the problem posed to capitalism — how to develop without fatal disequilibrium arising.

In the logic of Capital, the development of the piloting function, of "control," corresponds to the subordination of the sphere of accumulation to the sphere of circulation. For the critique of political economy, circulation should be no less suspect than production, in effect. It is, as Marx knew, but a particular case of production as considered in general. The socialization of the economy — that is, the interdependence between capitalists and the other members of the social body, the "human community" —

the enlargement of Capital's human base, makes the extraction of surplus value which is at the source of profit no longer centered around the relations of exploitation instituted by the wage system. Valorization's center of gravity has now moved over to the sphere of circulation. In spite of its inability to reinforce the conditions of exploitation, which would bring about a crisis of consumption, capitalist accumulation can still nevertheless survive on the condition that the production-consumption cycle is accelerated, that is, on the condition that the production process accelerates as much as commodity circulation does. What has been lost to the economy on the static level can be compensated on the dynamic level. The logic of flows is to dominate the logic of the finished product. Speed is now taking primacy over quantity, as a factor in wealth. The hidden face of the maintenance of accumulation is the acceleration of circulation. The function of the control devices is thus to maximize the volume of commodity flows by minimizing the events, obstacles, and accidents that would slow them down. Cybernetic capitalism tends to abolish time itself, to maximize fluid circulation to the maximum: the speed of light. Such is already the case for certain financial transactions. The categories of "real time," of "just in time," show clearly this hatred of duration. For this very reason, time is our ally.

This propensity towards control by capitalism is not new. It is only post-modern in the sense that post-modernity has been confused with the latest manifestation of modernity. It is for this reason that bureaucracy developed at the end of the 19th century and computer technology developed after the Second World War. The cybernetization of capitalism started at the end of the 1870s with the growing control of production, distribution, and consumption.

Information regarding these flows has since then had a central strategic importance as a condition for valorization. The historian James Beniger states that the first control-related problems came about when the first collisions took place between trains, putting commodities and human lives in peril. The signalization of the railways, travel time measurement and data transmission devices had to be invented so as to avoid such “catastrophes.” The telegraph, synchronized clocks, organizational charts in large enterprises, weighing systems, roadmaps, performance evaluation procedures, wholesalers, assembly lines, centralized decision-making, advertising in catalogues, and mass communications media were the devices invented during this period to respond, in all spheres of the economic circuit, to a generalized crisis of control connected to the acceleration of production set off by the industrial revolution in the United States. Information and control systems thus developed at the same time as the capitalist process of transformation of materials was growing and spreading. A class of middlemen, which Alfred Chandler called the “visible hand” of Capital, formed and grew. After the end of the 19th century, it was clear enough to PEOPLE that expectability [had] become a source of profit as such and a source of confidence. Fordism and Taylorism were part of this movement, as was the development of control over the mass of consumers and over public opinion via marketing and advertising, in charge of extorting from them by force, and then putting to work, their “preferences,” which according to the hypotheses of the marginalist economists, were the true source of value. Investment in organizational or purely technical planning and control technologies became more and more salable. After 1945, cybernetics supplied capitalism with a new infrastructure of machines — computers — and above all with an intellectual

technology that permitted the regulation of the circulation of flows within society, and making those flows exclusively commodity flows.

That the economic sectors of information, communication, and control have taken ever more of a part in the economy since the Industrial Revolution, and that “intangible labor” has grown relative to tangible labor, is nothing surprising or new. Today these account for the mobilization of more than 2/3 of the workforce. But this isn’t enough to fully define cybernetic capitalism. Because its equilibrium and the growth depend continually on its control capacities, its nature has changed. Insecurity, much more than rarity, is the core of the present capitalist economy. As Wittgenstein understood by looking at the 1929 crisis — and as did Keynes in his wake — there is a strong bond between the “state of trust” and the curbing of the marginal effectiveness of Capital, he wrote, in chapter XII of *General Theory*, in February 1934 — the economy rests definitively on the “play of language.” Markets, and with them commodities and merchants, the sphere of circulation in general, and, consequently, business, the sphere of production as a place of the anticipation of coming levels of yield, do not exist without conventions, social norms, technical norms, norms of the truth, on a meta-level which brings bodies and things into existence as commodities, even before they are subject to pricing. The control and communications sectors develop because commodity valorization needs to have a looping circulation of information parallel to the actual circulation of commodities, the production of a collective belief that objectivizes itself in values. In order to come about, all exchanges require “investments of form” — information about a formulation of what is to be exchanged — a formatting that

makes it possible to put things into equivalence even before such a putting of things into equivalence has effectively taken place, a conditioning that is also a condition of agreement about the market. It's true for goods, and it's true for people. Perfecting the circulation of information will mean perfecting the market as a universal instrument of coordination. Contrary to what the liberal hypothesis had supposed, to sustain a fragile capitalism, contracts are not sufficient unto themselves within social relations. PEOPLE began to understand after 1929 that all contracts need to come with controls. Cybernetics entered into the operation of capitalism with the intention of minimizing uncertainties, incommensurability, the kinds of anticipation problems that can interfere in any commodity transaction. It contributes to consolidating the basis for the installation of capitalism's mechanisms, to oiling Capital's abstract machine.

With cybernetic capitalism, the political moment of political economy subsequently dominates its economic moment. Or, as Joan Robinson understands it looking from the perspective of economic theory, in her comments on Keynes: "As soon as one admits the uncertainty of the forecasts that guide economic behavior, equilibrium has no more importance and History takes its place." The political moment, here understood in the broader sense of that which subjugates, that which normalizes, that which determines what will happen by way of bodies and can record itself in socially recognized value, what extracts form from forms-of-life, is as essential to "growth" as it is to the reproduction of the system: on the one hand the capture of energies, their orientation, their crystallization, become the primary source of valorization; on the other hand, surplus value can be extracted from any point on the

bio-political tissue on the condition that the latter reconstitutes itself incessantly. That the ensemble of expenditures has a tendency to morph into valorizable qualities also means that Capital permeates all living flows: the socialization of the economy and the anthropomorphosis of Capital are two symbiotic, indissoluble processes. In order for these processes to be carried out, it suffices and is necessary that all contingent action be dealt with by a combination of surveillance and data capture devices. The former are inspired by prison, insofar as they introduce a centralized system of panoptical visibility. These have for a long while been monopolized by the modern State. The latter, the data capture devices, are inspired by computer technology, insofar as they are part of the construction of a decentralized real-time gridding system. The common intent of these devices is total transparency, an absolute correspondence between the map and the territory, a will to knowledge accumulated to such degree that it becomes a will to power. One of the advancements made by cybernetics has consisted in enclosing its surveillance and monitoring systems upon themselves, guaranteeing that the surveillers and the monitorers are themselves surveilled and/or monitored, with the development of a socialization of control which is the trademark of the so-called "information society." The control sector becomes autonomous because of the need to control control, since commodity flows are overlaid by their double, flows of information the circulation and security of which must in turn be optimized. At the summit of this terracing of control, state control, the police, and the law, self-legitimizing violence, and judicial authority play the role of controllers of last resort. The surveillance one-upmanship that characterizes "control societies" is explained in simple terms by Deleuze, who says: "they have leaks everywhere." This

incessantly confirms the necessity for control. "In discipline societies, one never ceased to recommence (from school to barracks, etc...) [the disciplinary process], whereas in control societies nothing is ever finished."

Thus there is nothing surprising about the fact that the development of cybernetic capitalism has been accompanied by the development of all the forms of repression, by hyper-securitarianism. Traditional discipline, the generalization of a state of emergency — *emergenza* — are transplanted to grow inside a whole system focused on the fear of any threat. The apparent contradiction between the reinforcement of the repressive functions of the State and the neo-liberal economic discourse that preaches "less State" — and permits Loïc Wacquant for instance to go into a critique of the liberal ideology hiding the increasing "penal State" — can only be understood in light of the cybernetic hypothesis. Lyotard explains it: "there is, in all cybernetic systems, a unity of reference that permits one to measure the disparity produced by the introduction of an event within the system, and then, thanks to such measurement, to translate that event into information to be fed into the system; then, in sum, if it is a regulated ensemble in homeostasis, to annul that disparity and return the system to the quantities of energy or information that it had before... Let's stop here a moment. We see how the adoption of this perspective on society, that is, of the despotic fantasies of the masters, of placing themselves at the supposed location of the central zero, and thus of identifying themselves with the matrix of Nothingness... must force one to extend one's idea of threat and thus of defense. Since what event would NOT be a threat from this point of view? All are; indeed, because they are disturbances of a

circular nature, reproducing the same, and requiring a mobilization of energy for purposes of appropriation and elimination. Is this too 'abstract'? Should I give an example? It is the very project that is being perpetrated in France on high levels, the institution of an operational Defense of the territory, already granted an operating Center of the army, the specific focus of which is to ward off the 'internal' threat, which is born within the dark recesses of the social body, of which the "national state" claims to be the clairvoyant head: this clairvoyance is called the national identification registry; ... the translation of events into information for the system is called intelligence, ... and the execution of regulatory orders and their inscription into the "social body," above all when the latter is racked by some kind of intense emotion, for instance by the panicked fear which would seize hold of it if a nuclear war were to be triggered (or if some kind of a wave of protest, subversion, or civil desertion considered insane were to hit) — such execution requires an assiduous and fine-grained infiltration of the transmission channels in the social 'flesh,' or, as some superior officer or other put it quite marvelously, the 'police of spontaneous movements.'" Prison is thus at the summit of a cascade of control devices, the guarantor of last resort that no disturbing event will take place within the social body that would hinder the circulation of goods and persons. The logic of cybernetics being to replace centralized institutions and sedentary forms of control by tracing devices and nomadic forms of control, prison, as a classical surveillance device, is obviously to be expanded and prolonged with monitoring devices such as the electronic bracelet, for instance. The development of community policing in the English speaking world, of "proximity policing" in France, also responds to a cybernetic logic intended to ward off all events, and organize

feedback. Within this logic, then, disturbances in a given zone can be all the better suppressed/choked off when they are absorbed/deadened by the closest system sub-zones.

Whereas repression has, within cybernetic capitalism, the role of warding off events, prediction is its corollary, insofar as it aims to eliminate all uncertainty connected to all possible futures. That's the gamble of statistics technologies. Whereas the technologies of the Providential State were focused on the forecasting of risks, whether probabilized or not, the technologies of cybernetic capitalism aim to multiply the domains of responsibility/authority. Risk-based discourse is the motor for the deployment of the cybernetic hypothesis; it is first distributed diffusely so as then to be internalized. Because risks are much more accepted when those that are exposed to them have the impression that they've chosen to take them on, when they feel responsible, and most of all when they have the feeling that they control them and are themselves the masters of such risks. But, as one expert admits, "zero risk" is a non-existent situation: "the idea of risk weakens causal bonds, but in so doing it does not make them disappear. On the contrary; it multiplies them. ...To consider danger in terms of risk is necessarily to admit that one can never absolutely protect oneself against it: one may manage it, tame it, but never annihilate it." It is in its permanence in the system that risk is an ideal tool for affirming new forms of power, to the benefit of the growing stranglehold of devices on collectives and individuals. It eliminates everything that is at stake in conflicts by obligatorily bringing individuals together around the management of threats that are supposed to concern all of them in the same way. The argument that THEY would like to make us buy is as follows: the more security there is, the more

concomitant production of insecurity there must be. And if you think that insecurity grows as prediction becomes more and more infallible, you yourself must be afraid of the risks. And if you're afraid of the risks, if you don't trust the system to completely control the whole of your life, your fear risks becoming contagious and presenting the system with a very real risk of defiance. In other words, to fear risks is already to represent a risk for society. The imperative of commodity circulation upon which cybernetic capitalism rests morphs into a general phobia, a fantasy of self-destruction. The control society is a paranoid society, which easily explains the proliferation of conspiracy theories within it. Each individual is thus subjectivized, within cybernetic capitalism, as a Risk Dividual, as some enemy or another⁵² of the balanced society.

It should not be surprising then that the reasoning of France's François Ewald or Denis Kessler, those collaborators in chief of Capital, affirms that the Providential State, characteristic of the Fordist mode of social regulation, by reducing social risks, has ended up taking responsibility away from individuals. The dismantling of social protection systems that we've been seeing since the start of the 1980s thus has been an attempt to give responsibility to each person by making everyone bear the "risks" borne by the capitalists alone towards the whole "social body." It is, in the final analysis, a matter of inculcating the perspective of social reproduction in each individual, who should expect nothing from society, but sacrifice everything to it. The social regulation of catastrophes and the unexpected can no longer be managed by simple social exclusion, as it was during the Middle Ages in the

⁵² A "whatever enemy" –tr.

time of lepers, the logic of scapegoating, containment, and enclosure. If everybody now has to become responsible for the risks they make society run, it's only because they couldn't exclude so many anymore without the loss of a potential source of profit. Cybernetic capitalism thus forcibly couples the socialization of the economy and the increase of the "responsibility principle." It produces citizens as "Risk Dividuals" that self-neutralize, removing their own potential to destroy order. It is thus a matter of generalizing self-control, a disposition that favors the proliferation of devices, and ensures an effective relay. All crises, within cybernetic capitalism, are preparations for a reinforcement of devices. The anti-GMO protest movement, as well as the "mad cow crisis" of these last few years in France, have definitively permitted the institution of an unheard of tracking of Dividuals and Things. The accrued professionalization of control — which is, with insurance, one of the economic sectors whose growth is guaranteed by cybernetic logic — is but the other side of the rise of the citizen as a political subjectivity that has totally auto-repressed the risk that he or she objectively represents. This is how Citizen's Watch contributes to the improvement of piloting devices.

Whereas the rise of control at the end of the 19th century took place by way of a dissolution of personalized bonds — which gave rise to PEOPLE talking about "the disappearance of communities" — in cybernetic capitalism it takes place by way of a new soldering of social bonds entirely permeated by the imperative of self-piloting and of piloting others in the service of social unity: it is the device-future of mankind as citizens of the Empire. The present importance of these new citizen-device systems, which hollow out the old State institutions and drive the nebulous citizen-

community, demonstrates that the great social machine which cybernetic capitalism has to comprise cannot do without human beings no matter how much time certain incredulous cyberneticians have put into believing it can, as is shown in this flustered epiphany from the middle of the 1980s:

“Systematic automation would in effect be a radical means of surpassing the physical or mental limitations that give rise to the most common of human errors: momentary losses of vigilance due to fatigue, stress, or routine; a provisional incapacity to simultaneously interpret a multitude of contradictory information, thus failing to master situations that are too complex; euphemization of risk under pressure from circumstances (emergencies, hierarchical pressures...); errors of representation giving rise to an underestimation of the security of systems that are usually highly reliable (as might be the case of a pilot who categorically refuses to believe that one of his jet engines is on fire). One must however ask oneself whether removing the human beings — who are considered the weakest link in the man/machine interface — from the circuit would not definitely risk creating new vulnerabilities and necessarily imply the extension of those errors of representation and losses of vigilance that are, as we have seen, the frequent counterpart of an exaggerated feeling of security. Either way, the debate deserves to remain open.”

It certainly does.

V

“The eco-society is decentralized, communitarian, and participatory. Individual responsibility and initiative really exist in it. The eco-society rests on the plurality of ideas about life, life styles and behaviors in life. The consequence of this is that equality and justice make progress. But also there is an upheaval in habits, ways of thinking, and morals. Mankind has invented a different kind of life, in a balanced society, having understood that maintaining a state of balance is more of a delicate process than maintaining a state of continual growth is. Thanks to a new vision, a new logic of complementarity, and new values, the people of eco-society have invented an economic doctrine, a political science, a sociology, a technology, and a psychology of the state of controlled equilibrium.”

– Joel de Rosnay, *The Macroscope*, 1975

“Capitalism and socialism represent two kinds of organization of the economy, deriving from the same basic system, a system for quantifying value added. ... Looking at it from this angle, the system called ‘socialism’ is but the corrective sub-system applied to ‘capitalism.’ One may therefore say that the most outdated capitalism is socialist in certain ways, and that all socialism is a ‘mutation’ of capitalism, destined to attempt to stabilize the system via redistribution — the redistribution considered necessary to ensure the survival of all, and to incite everyone to a broader consumption. In this sketch we call a kind of organization of the economy that would be designed so as to establish an acceptable balance between capitalism and socialism ‘social capitalism.’”

– Yona Friedman, *Realizable Utopias*, 1974.

The events of May 68 gave rise to a political reaction in all western societies that PEOPLE hardly recall the scope of today. Capitalism was very quickly restructured, as if an army were being put on the march to war. The Rome Club — multinationals like Fiat, Volkswagen, and Ford — paid sociologists and ecologists to determine what products corporations should give up manufacturing so that the capitalist system could function better and be reinforced. In 1972, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology issued a report commissioned by said Rome Club, called Limits to Growth, which made a big splash because it recommended stopping the process of capitalist accumulation, including in the so-called developing countries. From the lofty heights of domination, THEY demanded “zero growth” so as to preserve social relations and the resources of the planet, introducing qualitative components into their analysis of development, against the quantitative projections focusing on growth, and demanding — definitively — that it be entirely redefined; that pressure grew until it burst in the 1973 crisis. Capitalism seemed to have made its own self-critique. But I’m only bringing up the army and war again because the MIT report, put together by the economist Dennis H. Meadows, was inspired by the work of a certain Jay Forrester, who in 1952 had been assigned by the US Air Force to the task of putting together an alert and defense system — the SAGE system — which would for the first time coordinate radars and computers in order to detect and prevent a possible attack on American territory by enemy rockets. Forrester had assembled infrastructure for communications and control between men and machines, for the first time allowing them a “real time” interconnection. After that he had been named to the MIT school of management, to extend his skills in matters of systems

analysis to the economic world. He applied the same principles of order and defense to business; he then went over cities and finally the whole of the planet with these principles, in his book *World Dynamics*, which ended up an inspiration to the MIT reporters. And so, the “second cybernetics” was a key factor in establishing the principles applied in this restructuring of capitalism. With it, political economy became a life science. It analyzed the world as an open system for the transformation and circulation of energy flows and monetary flows.

In France, an ensemble of pseudo-savants — the eccentric de Rosnay and the blathering Morin, but also the mystic Henri Atlan, Henri Laborit, René Passet and the careerist Attali — all came together to elaborate, in MIT’s wake, *Ten Commandments for a New Economy*, an “eco-socialism,” as they called it, following a systematic, that is, cybernetic, approach, obsessed by the “state of equilibrium” everything and everyone. It is useful, a posteriori, when listening to today’s “left” and the “left of the left,” to remember certain of the principles de Rosnay posited in 1975:

1. Preserve the variety of spaces and cultures, bio-diversity and multi-culturality.
2. Beware not to open or allow leakage of the information contained in the regulation loops.
3. Re-establish the equilibrium of the system as a whole through decentralization.
4. Differentiate so as to better integrate, since as Teilhard de Chardin, the visionary in chief of all cyberneticians said, “all real

integration is based on prior differentiation. ...Homogeneity, mixture, syncretism: this is entropy. Only union within diversity is creative. It increases complexity, and brings about higher levels of organization."

5. To evolve: let yourself be attacked.
6. Prefer objectives and projects to detailed programming.
7. Know how to utilize information.
8. Be able to keep constraints on the system elements.

It is no longer a matter — as PEOPLE could still pretend to believe in 1972 — of questioning capitalism and its devastating effects; it is more a question of "reorienting the economy so as to better serve human needs, the maintenance and evolution of the social system, and the pursuit of a real cooperation with nature all at once. The balanced economy that characterizes eco-society is thus a 'regulated' economy in the cybernetic sense of the term." The first ideologues of cybernetic capitalism talked about opening a community-based management of capitalism from below, about making everyone responsible thanks to a "collective intelligence" which would result from the progress made in telecommunications and informatics. Without questioning either private property or State property, THEY invite us to co-management, to a kind of control of business by communities of wage-workers and users. The cybernetic reformist euphoria was at such extremes in the beginning of the 1970s that THEY could even evoke the idea of a "social capitalism" (as if that hadn't been what we've had since the 19th century) without even trembling anymore, and defend it as did

the architect ecologist and graphomaniac Yona Friedman, for instance. Thus what PEOPLE have ended up calling “third way socialism” and its alliance with ecology — and PEOPLE can clearly see how powerful the latter has become politically in Europe today — was crystallized. But if one had to refer to just one event that in those years exposed the torturous progress towards this new alliance between socialism and liberalism in France, not without the hope that something different would come out of it, it would have to be the LIP affair. With those events all of socialism, even in its most radical currents, like “council communism,” failed to take down the liberal arrangement and, without properly suffering any real defeat to speak of, ended up simply absorbed by cybernetic capitalism. The recent adherence of the ecologist Cohn-Bendit — the mild-mannered ‘leader’ of the May 68 events — to the liberal-libertarian current is but a logical consequence of a deeper reversal of “socialist” ideas against themselves.

The present “anti-globalization” movement and citizen protest in general show no break with this training by pronouncements made thirty years ago. They simply demand that it be put into place faster. Behind the thundering counter-summits they hold, one can see the same cold vision of society as a totality threatened by break-up, one and the same goal of social regulation. For them it is a matter of restoring the social coherence pulverized by the dynamics of cybernetic capitalism, and guaranteeing, in the final analysis, everyone’s participation in the latter. Thus it is not surprising to see the driest economism impregnate the ranks of the citizens in such a tenacious and nauseating manner. The citizen, dispossessed of everything, parades as an amateur expert in social management, and conceives of the nothingness of his life as an uninterrupted

succession of “projects” to carry out: as the sociologist Luc Boltanski remarks, with a feigned naiveté, “everything can attain to the dignity of a project, including enterprises which may be hostile to capitalism.” In the same way as the “self-management” device was seminal in the reorganization of capitalism thirty years ago, citizen protest is none other than the present instrument of the modernization of politics. This new “process of civilization” rests on the critique of authority developed in the 1970s, at the moment when the second cybernetics crystallized. The critique of political representation as separate power, already co-opted by the new Management into the economic production sphere, is today reinvested into the political sphere. Everywhere there is only horizontality of relations, and participation in projects that are to replace the dusty old hierarchical and bureaucratic authority, counter-power and decentralization that is supposed to defeat monopolies and secrecy. Thus the chains of social interdependence can extend and tighten, chains which are sometimes made of surveillance, and sometimes of delegation. Integration of civil society by the State, and integration of the State by civil society more and more work together like gears. It is thus that the division of the labor of population management necessary for the dynamics of cybernetic capitalism is organized — and the affirmation of a “global citizenship” will, predictably, put the finishing touches on it.

After the 1970s socialism was just another democratism anymore, now completely necessary for the progress of the cybernetic hypothesis. The ideal of direct democracy and participatory democracy must be seen as the desire for a general expropriation by the cybernetic system of all the information contained in its

parts. The demand for transparency and traceability is but a demand for the perfect circulation of information, a progressivism in the logic of flux that rules cybernetic capitalism. Between 1965 and 1970, a young German philosopher, presumed to be the inheritor of “critical theory,” laid the foundations for the democratic paradigm of today’s contestation by entering noisily into a number of controversies with his elders. Habermas countered the socio-cybernetician Niklas Luhmann, hyper-functional systems theoretician, by counterposing the unpredictability of dialogue, arguments irreducible to simple information exchanges. But it was above all against Marcuse that this project of a generalized “ethics of discussion” which was to become radicalized in the critique of the democratic project of the Renaissance. Marcuse explained, commenting on Max Weber’s observations, that “rationalization” meant that technical reasoning, based on the principles of industrialization and capitalism, was indissolubly political reasoning; Habermas retorted that an ensemble of immediate intersubjective relations escaped technology-mediated subject-object relations, and that in the end it was the former that framed and guided the latter. In other words, in light of the development of the cybernetic hypothesis, politics should aim to become autonomous and to extend the sphere of discourse, to multiply democratic arenas, to build and research a consensus which in sum would be emancipatory by nature. Aside from the fact that he reduced the “lived world” and “everyday life” — the whole of what escaped the control machine, to social interactions and discourses, Habermas more profoundly ignored the fundamental heterogeneity of forms-of-life among themselves. In the same way as contracts, consensus is attached to the objective of unification and pacification via the management of differences.

In the cybernetic framework, all faith in “communicational action,” all communication that does not assume the possibility of its impossibility, ends up serving control. This is why science and technology are not, as the idealist Habermas thought, simply ideologies which dress the concrete tissue of inter-subjective relations. They are “ideologies materialized,” a cascade of devices, a concrete government-mentality that passes through such relations. We do not want more transparency or more democracy. There’s already enough. On the contrary — we want more opacity and more intensity.

But we can’t be done dealing with socialism (expired now as a result of the cybernetic hypothesis) without mentioning another voice: I want to talk about the critique centered around man-machine relations that has attacked what it sees as the core of the cybernetics issue by posing the question of technology beyond technophobia — the technophobia of someone like Theodore Kaczynski, or of Oregon’s monkey-man of letters, John Zerzan — and technophilia, and which intended to found a new radical ecology which would not be stupidly romantic. In the economic crisis of the 1970s, Ivan Illich was among the first to express the hope for a re-establishment of social practices, no longer merely through a new relations between subjects, as Habermas had discussed, but also between subjects and objects, via a “reappropriation of tools” and institutions, which were to be won over to the side of general “conviviality,” a conviviality which would be able to undermine the law of value. Simondon, philosopher of technology, used this same reappropriation as his vaulting stick to transcend Marx and Marxism: “work possesses the intelligence of the elements; capital possesses the intelligence of

groups; but it is not by uniting the intelligence of elements and of groups that one can come up with an intelligence of the intermediary and non-mixed being that is the technological individual... The dialogue of capital and labor is false, because it is in the past. The socialization of the means of production cannot alone give rise to a reduction in alienation; it can only do so if it is the prior condition for the acquisition, on the part of the human individual, of the intelligence of the individuated technological object. This relationship of the human individual to the technological individual is the most difficult to form and the most delicate." The solution to the problem of political economy, of capitalist alienation, and of cybernetics, was supposed to be found in the invention of a new kind of relationship with machines, a "technological culture" that up to now had been lacking in western modernity. Such a doctrine justified, thirty years later, the massive development of "citizen" teaching in science and technology. Because living beings, contrary to the cybernetic hypothesis' idea, are essentially different from machines, mankind would thus have the responsibility to represent technological objects: "mankind, as the witness of the machines," wrote Simondon, "is responsible for their relationship; the individual machine represents man, but man represents the ensemble of machines, since there is no one machine for all the machines, whereas there can be a kind of thinking that would cover them all." In its present utopian form, seen in the writings of Guattari at the end of his life, or today in the writings of Bruno Latour, this school claimed to "make objects speak", and to represent their norms in the public arena through a "parliament of Things." Eventually the technocrats would make way for the "mechanologues," and other "medialogues"; it's hard to see how these would differ from today's technocrats, except for that they

would be even more familiar with technological life, citizens more ideally coupled with their devices. What the utopians pretended not to know was that the integration of technological thinking by everybody would in no way undermine the existing power relations. The acknowledgement of the man-machines hybridity in social arrangements would certainly do no more than extend the struggle for recognition and the tyranny of transparency to the inanimate world. In this renovated political ecology, socialism and cybernetics would attain to their point of optimal convergence: the project of a green republic, a technological democracy — “a renovation of democracy could have as its objective a pluralistic management of the whole of the machinic constituents,” wrote Guattari in the last text he ever published — the lethal vision of a definitive civil peace between humans and non-humans.

VI

“Just like modernization did in a prior era, today’s post-modernization (or informatization) marks a new way of becoming human. Regarding the production of souls, as Musil put it, one would really have to replace the traditional technology of industrial machines with the cybernetic intelligence of information and communications technologies. We will need to invent what Pierre Levy has called an ‘anthropology of cyberspace.’”

– Michael Hardt & Toni Negri, *Empire*, 1999.

“Communication is the fundamental ‘third way’ of imperial control... Contemporary communications systems are not subordinate to sovereignty; on the contrary, it is sovereignty that appears to be subordinate to communications... Communication is the form of capitalist production in which capital has succeeded in entirely and globally subjugating society to its regime, suppressing all the possible ways of replacing it.”

– Michael Hardt & Toni Negri, *Empire*, 1999.

The cybernetic utopia has not only sucked all the blood out of socialism and its force as an opposition by making it into a “proximity democratism.” In the confusion-laden 1970s, it also contaminated the most advanced Marxism, making its perspective inoffensive and untenable. “Everywhere,” wrote Lyotard in 1979, “in every way, the Critique of political economy and the critique of the alienated society that was its corollary are used as elements in the programming of the system.” Faced with the unifying

cybernetic hypothesis, the abstract axioms of potentially revolutionary antagonisms — class struggle, “human community” (Gemeinwesen) or “social living” versus Capital, general intellect versus the process of exploitation, “multitudes” versus “Empire,” “creativity” or “virtuosity” versus work, “social wealth” versus commodity value, etc. — definitively serve the political project of a broader social integration. The critique of political economy and ecology do not critique the economic style proper to capitalism, nor the totalizing and systemic vision proper to cybernetics; paradoxically, they even make them into the engines driving their emancipatory philosophies of history. Their teleology is no longer that of the proletariat or of nature, but that of Capital. Today their perspective is, deeply, one of social economy, of a “solidarity economy,” of a “transformation of the mode of production,” no longer via the socialization or nationalization of the means of production but via a socialization of the decisions of production. As writers like for example Yann Moulier Boutang put it, it is in the end a matter of making recognized the “collective social character of the creation of wealth,” that the profession of living as a citizen be valorized. This pretend communism is reduced to no more than an economic democratism, to a project to reconstruct a “post-Fordist” State from below. Social cooperation is presented as if it were a pre-ordained given, with no ethical incommensurability and no interference in the circulation of emotions, no community problems.

Toni Negri’s career within the Autonomia group, and the nebula of his disciples in France and in the anglo world, show just how much Marxism could authorize such a slippery slide towards the will to will, towards “infinite mobilization,” sealing its unavoidable

eventual defeat by the cybernetic hypothesis. The latter has had no problem plugging itself into the metaphysics of production that runs throughout Marxism and which Negri pushed to the extreme by considering all affects, all emotions, all communications — in the final analysis — as labor. From this point of view, autopoiesis, self-production, self-organization, and autonomy are categories which all play a homologous role in the distinct discursive formations they emerged from. The demands inspired by this critique of political economy, such as the demand for a guaranteed minimum income and the demand for “citizenship papers for all” merely attack, fundamentally, the sphere of production. If certain people among those who today demand a guaranteed income have been able to break with the perspective of putting everyone to work — that is, the belief in work as a fundamental value — which formerly still had predominance in the unemployed workers’ movements, it was only on condition — paradoxically — that they’d be able to keep the restrictive definition of value they had inherited, as “labor value.” Thus they were able to ignore just how much they contributed, in the end, to the circulation of goods and persons.

It is precisely because valorization is no longer assignable to what takes place solely in the production sphere that we must now displace political gestures — I’m thinking of normal union strikes, for example, not even to mention general strikes — into the spheres of product and information circulation. Who doesn’t understand by now that the demand for “citizenship papers for all” — if it is satisfied — will only contribute to a greater mobility of the labor force worldwide? Even American liberal thinkers have understood that. As for the guaranteed minimum income, if that were obtained,

would it not simply put one more supplementary source of income into the circuit of value? It would just represent a formal equivalent of the system's investment in its "human capital" — just another loan in anticipation of future production. Within the framework of the present restructuring of capitalism, the demand for a guaranteed minimum income could be compared to a neo-Keynesian proposal to relaunch "effective demand" which could serve as a safety net for the hoped-for development of the "New Economy." Such reasoning is also behind the adherence of many economists to the idea of a "universal income" or a "citizenship income." What would justify such a thing, even from the perspective of Negri and his faithful flock, is a social debt contracted by capitalism towards the "multitudes." When I said, above, that Negri's Marxism had in the end operated, like all other Marxisms, on the basis of an abstract axiom concerning social antagonism, it's only because it has a concrete need for the fiction of a united social body. In the days when he was most on the offense, such as the days he spent in France during the unemployed workers' movement of winter 1997–1998, his perspectives were focused on laying the foundation for a new social contract, which he'd call communist. Within classical politics, then, Negriism was already playing the avant-garde role of the ecologist movements.

So as to rediscover the intellectual circumstances explaining this blind faith in the social body, seen as a possible subject and object of a contract, as an ensemble of equivalent elements, as a homogeneous class, as an organic body, one would need to go back to the end of the 1950s, when the progressive decomposition of the working class in western societies disturbed marxist theoreticians since it overturned the axiom of class struggle. Some of them

thought that they could find in Marx's Grundrisse a demonstration, a prefiguring of what capitalism and its proletariat were becoming. In his fragment on machines, Marx envisaged that when industrialization was in full swing, individual labor power would be able to cease being the primary source of surplus value, since "the general social understandings, knowledge" would become the most immediate of productive powers. This kind of capitalism, which PEOPLE call "cognitive" today, would no longer be contested by a proletariat borne of large-scale manufacturing. Marx supposed that such contestation would be carried out by the "social individual." He clarified the reasoning behind this unavoidable process of reversal: "Capital sets in motion all the forces of science and nature; it stimulates cooperation and social commerce so as to liberate (relatively speaking) the creation of wealth from labor time... These are the material conditions that will break up the foundations of capital." The contradiction of the system, its catastrophic antagonism, came from the fact that Capital measures all value by labor time, while simultaneously diminishing it because of the productivity gains granted it by automation. Capitalism is doomed, in sum, because it demands — at the same time — more labor and less labor. The responses to the economic crisis of the 1970s, the cycle of struggles which in Italy lasted more than ten years, gave an unexpected blow of the whip to this teleology. The utopia of a world where machines would work instead of us appeared to be within reach. Creativity, the social individual, the general intellect - student youth, cultivated dropouts, intangible laborers, etc. — detached from the relations of exploitation, would be the new subject of the coming communism. For some, such as Negri or Castoriadis, but also for the situationists, this meant that the new revolutionary subject would reappropriate

its “creativity,” or its “imagination,” which had been confiscated by labor relations, and would make non-labor time into a new source of self and collective emancipation. Autonomia was founded as a political movement on the basis of such analyses.

In 1973, Lyotard, who for a long while had associated with Castoriadis within the Socialism or Barbarism group, noted the lack of differentiation between this new marxist, or post-marxist, discourse and the discourse of the new political economy: “The body of machines which you call a social subject and the universal productive force of man is none other than the body of modern Capital. The knowledge in play within it is in no way proper to all individuals; it is separate knowledge, a moment in the metamorphosis of capital, obeying it as much as it governs it at the same time.” The ethical problem that is posed by putting one’s hopes in collective intelligence, which today is found in the utopias of the autonomous collective use of communications networks, is as follows: “we cannot decide that the primary role of knowledge is as an indispensable element in the functioning of society and to act, consequently, in place of it, if we have already decided that the latter is itself just a big machine. Inversely, we can’t count on its critical function and imagine that we could orient its development and spread in such a direction if we’ve already decided that it is not an integral whole and that it remains haunted by a principle of contestation.” By conjugating the two nevertheless irreconcilable terms of such an alternative, the ensemble of heterogeneous positions of which we have found the womb in the discourse of Toni Negri and his adepts (which represents the point of completion of the marxist tradition and its metaphysics) is doomed to restless political wandering, in the absence of any destination

other than whatever destination domination may set for it. The essential issue here — an issue which seduces many an intellectual novice — is that such knowledge is never power, that this understanding is never self-understanding, and that such intelligence always remains separate from experience. The political trajectory of Negriism is towards a formalization of the informal, towards rendering the implicit explicit, making the tacit obvious, and in brief, towards valorizing everything that is outside of value. And in effect, Yann Moulier Boutang, Negri's loyal dog, ended up dropping the following tidbit in 2000, in an idiotic cocaine-addict's unreal rasp: "capitalism, in its new phase, or its final frontier, needs the communism of the multitudes." Negri's neutral communism, the mobilization that it stipulates, is not only compatible with cybernetic capitalism — it is now the condition for its effectuation.

Once the propositions in the MIT Report had been fully digested, the "growth" economists highlighted the primordial role to be played by creativity and technological innovation — next to the factors of Labor and Capital — in the production of surplus value. And other experts, equally well informed, learnedly affirmed that the propensity to innovate depended on the degree of education, training, health, of populations — after Gary Becker, the most radical of the economists, PEOPLE would call this "human capital" — and on the complementarity between economic agents (a complementarity that could be favored by putting in place a regular circulation of information through communications networks), as well as on the complementarity between activity and environment, the living human being and the non-human living thing. What explains the crisis of the 1970s is that there was a whole cognitive and natural social base for the maintenance of capitalism

and its development which had up to that time been neglected. Deeper still, this meant that non-labor time, the ensemble of moments that fall outside the circuits of commodity valorization — that is, everyday life — are also a factor in growth, and contain a potential value insofar as they permit the maintenance of Capital's human base. PEOPLE, since then, have seen armies of experts recommending to businesses that they apply cybernetic solutions to their organization of production: the development of telecommunications, organization in networks, "participatory" or project-based management, consumer panels, quality controls — all these were to contribute to upping rates of profit. For those who wanted to get out of the crisis of the 1970s without questioning capitalism, to "relaunch growth" and not stop it up anymore, would consequently need to work on a profound reorganization of it, towards democratizing economic choices and giving institutional support to non-work (life) time, like in the demand for "freeness" for example. It is only in this way that PEOPLE can affirm, today, that the "new spirit of capitalism" inherits the social critique of the years 1960–1970: to the exact extent that the cybernetic hypothesis inspired the mode of social regulation that was emerging then.

It is thus hardly surprising that communications, the realization of a common ownership of impotent knowledge that cybernetics carries out, today authorizes the most advanced ideologues to speak of "cybernetic communism," as have Dan Sperber or Pierre Levy — the cybernetician-in-chief of the French speaking world, collaborator on the magazine *Multitudes*, and author of the aphorism, "cosmic and cultural evolution culminate today in the virtual world of cyberspace." "Socialists and communists," write

Hardt and Negri, have for a long time been demanding free access and control for the proletariat over the machines and materials it uses to produce. However, in the context of intangible and biopolitical production, this traditional demand takes on a new aspect. Not only do the masses use machines to produce, the masses themselves become more and more mechanical, and the means of production more and more integrated into the bodies and minds of the masses. In this context, reappropriation means attaining free access to (and control over) knowledge, information, communication, and feelings/emotions, since those are some of the primary means of biopolitical production." In this communism, they marvel, PEOPLE wouldn't share wealth, they'd share information, and everybody would be simultaneously a producer and consumer. Everyone will become their own "self-media"! Communism will be a communism of robots!

Whether it merely breaks with the individualist premises about economy or whether it considers the commodity economy as a regional component of a more general economy — which is what's implied in all the discussions about the notion of value, such as those carried out by the German group *Krisis*, all the defenses of gift against exchange inspired by Mauss, and 'the anti-cybernetic energetics of someone like Bataille, as well as all the considerations on the Symbolic, whether made by Bourdieu or Baudrillard — the critique of political economy, in fine, remains dependent on economicism. In a health-through-activity perspective, the absence of a workers' movement corresponding to the revolutionary proletariat imagined by Marx was to be dealt with by the militant labor of organizing one. "The Party," wrote Lyotard, "must furnish proof that the proletariat is real and it cannot do so any more than

one can furnish proof of an ideal of thought. It can only supply its own existence as a proof, and carry out a realistic politics. The reference point of its discourse remains directly unrepresentable, non-ostensible. The repressed disagreement has to do with the interior of the workers' movement, in particular with the form taken by recurring conflicts on the organization question." The search for a fighting class of producers makes the Marxists the most consequential of the producers of an integrated class. It is not an irrelevant matter, in existential and strategic terms, to enter into political conflict rather than producing social antagonism, to be a contradictor within the system or to be a regulator within it, to create instead of wishing that creativity would be freed, to desire instead of desiring desire — in brief, to fight cybernetics, instead of being a critical cybernetician.

Full of a sad passion for one's roots, one might seek the premises for this alliance in historical socialism, whether in Saint-Simon's philosophy of networks, in Fourier's theory of equilibrium, or in Proudhon's mutualism, etc. But what the socialists all have in common, and have for two centuries, which they share with those among them who have declared themselves to be communists, is that they fight against only one of the effects of capitalism alone: in all its forms, socialism fights against separation, by recreating the social bonds between subjects, between subjects and objects, without fighting against the totalization that makes it possible for the social to be assimilated into a body, and the individual into a closed totality, a subject-body. But there is also another common terrain, a mystical one, on the basis of which the transfer of the categories of thought within socialism and cybernetics have been able to form an alliance: that of a shameful humanism, an

uncontrolled faith in the genius of humanity. Just as it is ridiculous to see a “collective soul” in the construction of a beehive by the erratic behavior of bees, as the writer Maeterlinck did at the beginning of the century from a Catholic perspective, in the same way the maintenance of capitalism is in no way dependent upon the existence of a collective consciousness in the “masses” lodged within the heart of production. Under cover of the axiom of class struggle, the historical socialist utopia, the utopia of the community, was definitively a utopia of One promulgated by the Head on a body that couldn’t be one. All socialism today — whether it more or less explicitly categorizes itself as democracy-, production-, or social contract-focused — takes sides with cybernetics. Non-citizen politics must come to terms with itself as anti-social as much as anti-state; it must refuse to contribute to the resolution of the “social question,” refuse the formatting of the world as a series of problems, and reject the democratic perspective structured by the acceptance of all of society’s requests. As for cybernetics, it is today no more than the last possible socialism.

VII

“Theory means getting off on immobilization... What gives you theoreticians a hard on and puts you on the level with our gang is the coldness of the clear and the distinct; of the distinct alone, in fact; the opposable, because the clear is but a dubious redundancy of the distinct, expressed via a philosophy of the subject. Stop raising the bar, you say! Escaping pathos — that’s your pathos.”

– Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 1975

When you’re a writer, poet or philosopher it’s customary to talk about the power of the Word to hinder, foil, and pierce the informational flows of the Empire, the binary enunciation machines. You’ve heard the eulogists of poetry clamoring that they’re the last rampart against the barbarism of communication. Even when he identifies his position with that of the minor literatures, the eccentrics, the “literary lunatics,” when he hunts down the idiolects that belabor their tongues to demonstrate what escapes the code, so as to implode the idea of comprehension itself, to expose the fundamental misunderstanding that defeats the tyranny of information, the author who knows himself to be acted through, spoken through, and traveled through by burning intensities, is for all that no less animated, when seated before his blank page, by a prophetic concept of wording. For me, as a “receiver,” the shock effect that certain writings have deliberately dedicated themselves to the quest for starting in the 1960s are in this sense no less paralyzing than the old categorical and sententious critical theory was. Watching from my easy chair as Guyotat or Guattari get off on each line, contorting, burping,

farting, and vomiting out their delirium-future makes me get it up, moan, and get off only very rarely; that is, only when some desire sweeps me away to the shores of voyeurism. Performances, surely, but performances of what? Performances of a boarding school alchemy where the philosopher's stone is hunted down amid mixed sprays of ink and cum. Proclaiming intensity does not suffice to engender the passage of intensity. As for theory and critique, they remain cloistered in a typeface of clear and distinct pronouncements, as transparent as the passage ought to be from "false consciousness" to clarified consciousness.

Far from giving into some mythology of the Word or an essentialization of meaning, Burroughs, in his *Electronic Revolution* proposed forms of struggle against the controlled circulation of pronouncements, offensive strategies of enunciation that came to light in his "mental manipulation" operations that were inspired by his "cut-up" experiments, a combination of pronouncements based on randomness. By proposing to make "interference/fog" into a revolutionary weapon, he undeniably introduced a new level of sophistication to all prior research into offensive language. But like the situationist practice of "détournement"/media-hijacking, which in its modus operandi is in no way distinguishable from "recuperation"/co-optation — which explains its spectacular fortune — "interference/fog" is merely a relative operation. This is also true for the contemporary forms of struggle on the Internet which are inspired by these instructions of Burroughs': piracy, virus propagation, spamming... all these can in fine only serve to temporarily destabilize the operation of the communications network. But as regards the matter we are dealing with here and now, Burroughs was forced to

agree, in terms inherited — certainly — from theories of communication that hypostatized the issuer-receiver relationship: “it would be more useful to try to discover how the models of exploration could be altered so as to permit the subject to liberate his own spontaneous models.” What’s at issue in any enunciation is not whether it’s received but whether it can become contagious. I call insinuation — the *illapsus*, according to medieval philosophy — a strategy consisting in following the twists and turns of thought, the wandering words that win me over while at the same time constituting the vague terrain where their reception will establish itself. By playing on the relationship of the sign to what it refers to, by using clichés against themselves, like in caricatures, by letting the reader come closer, insinuation makes possible an encounter, an intimate presence, between the subject of the pronouncement and those who relate to the pronouncement itself. “There are passwords hidden under slogans,” write Deleuze and Guattari, “words that are pronounced as if in passing, components of a passage; whereas slogans mark points of stoppage, stratified and organized compositions.” Insinuation is the haze of theory and suits a discourse whose objective is to permit struggles against the worship of transparency, attached at its very roots to the cybernetic hypothesis.

That the cybernetic vision of the world is an abstract machine, a mystical fable, a cold eloquence which continually escapes multiple bodies, gestures, words — all this isn’t enough to conclude its unavoidable defeat. What cybernetics needs in that regard is precisely the same thing that maintains it: the pleasure of extreme rationalization, the burn-scars of “tautism,” the passion for reduction, the orgasm of binary flattening.

Attacking the cybernetic hypothesis — it must be repeated — doesn't mean just critiquing it, and counterposing a concurrent vision of the social world; it means experimenting alongside it, actuating other protocols, redesigning them from scratch and enjoying them. Starting in the 1950s, the cybernetic hypothesis has been the secret fascination of a whole generation of "critical" thinkers, from the situationists to Castoriadis, from Lyotard to Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. One might map their responses in this way: these first opposed it by developing their thought process outside it, overhanging it, and these second by thinking within the heart of it, on the one hand "a metaphysical type of disagreement with the world, which focuses on super-terrestrial, transcendent worlds or utopian counter-worlds" and on the other hand "a poietic type of disagreement with the world, which sees the path to freedom within the Real itself," as Peter Sloterdijk summarizes. The success of all future revolutionary experimentation will essentially be measured by its capacity to make this conflict obsolete. This begins when bodies change scale, feel themselves deepen, are passed through by molecular phenomena escaping systemic points of view, escaping representations of their molarity, make each of their pores into a seeing machine clinging to the temporal evolutions of things instead of a camera, which frames, delimits, and assigns beings. In the lines that follow I will insinuate a protocol for experimentation, in an attempt to defeat the cybernetic hypothesis and undo the world it perseveringly persists in constructing. But like for other erotic or strategic arts, its use isn't something that is decided on nor something that imposes itself. It can only originate in something totally involuntary, which implies, of course, a certain casual manner.

VIII

“We also lack that generosity, that indifference to fate, which, if it doesn’t give any great joy, does give one a familiarity with the worst of degradations, and will be granted us by the world to come.”

– Roger Caillois

“The Imaginary pays an ever higher price for its strength, while from beyond its screen the possible Real shines through. What we have today, doubtless, is but the domination of the Imaginary, having made itself totalitarian. But this is precisely its dialectical and ‘natural’ limit. Either, even desire itself and its subject, the process of attaining corporeality of the latent Gemeinwesen, will be burnt away at the final stake, or all simulacra will be dispelled: the extreme struggle of the species rages on against the managers of alienation and, in the bloody sunset of all these ‘suns of the future’ a truly possible future will at last begin to dawn. Mankind, in order to truly Be, now only needs to make a definitive break with all ‘concrete utopias.’

– Giorgio Cesarano, *Survival Manual*, 1975

All individuals, groups, all lifestyles/forms-of-life, cannot fit into the feedback loop. There are some that are just too fragile. That threaten to snap. And there are some that are just too strong... that threaten to break shit.

These temporal evolutions,
as an instance of breakage,
suppose that at a given moment of lived experience, bodies go

through the acute feeling that it can all abruptly come to an end,
from one moment to the next,
that the nothingness,
that silence,
that death are suddenly within reach of bodies and gestures.
It can end.
The threat.

Defeating the process of cybernetization, toppling the empire, will take place through opening up a breach for panic. Because the Empire is an ensemble of devices that aim to ward off all events, a process of control and rationalization, its fall will be perceived by its agents and its control apparatus as the most irrational of phenomena. The lines that follow here give a cursory view of what such a cybernetic view of panic might be, and indicate a contrario its effective power: "panic is thus an inefficient collective behavior because it is not properly adapted for danger (real or supposed); it is characterized by the regression of mentalities to an archaic, gregarious level, and gives rise to primitive, desperate flight reactions, disordered agitation, physical violence, and general acts of self- or hetero-aggressivity: panic reactions show the characteristics of the collective soul in a altered state of perception and judgment; alignment on the basis of the most unsophisticated behaviors; suggestibility; participation in violence without any idea of individual responsibility."

Panic makes the cyberneticians panic. It represents absolute risk, the permanent potential threat that the intensification of relations between lifestyles/forms-of-life presents. Because of this, it should be made as terrifying as the appointed cybernetician himself endeavors to show it being: "panic is dangerous for populations; it

increases the number of victims resulting from an accident by causing inappropriate flight reactions, which may indeed be the only real reason for deaths and injuries; every time it's the same scenario: acts of blind rage, trampling, crushing..." the lie in that description of course is that it imagines panic phenomena exclusively from a sealed environment: as a liberation of bodies, panic self-destructs because everyone tries to get out through an exit that's too narrow.

But it is possible to envision that there could be, as happened in Genoa in July 2001, panic to a degree sufficient to fuck up the cybernetic programming and pass through various social groups/milieus, panic that would go beyond the annihilation stage, as Canetti suggests in *Mass and Power* : "If we weren't in a theater we could all run away together like a flock of threatened animals, and increase the energy of our escape with our movement in the same direction. An active mass fear of this kind is the great collective event lived by all herd animals and who save themselves together because they are good runners." In this sense I see as political fact of the greatest importance the panic involving more than a million persons that Orson Welles provoked in 1938 when he made his announcement over the airwaves in New Jersey, at a time when radiophonics were still in early enough a state that people gave its broadcasts a certain truth value. Because "the more we fight for our own lives the more it becomes obvious that we are fighting against the others hemming us in on all sides," and alongside an unheard of and uncontrollable expenditure, panic also reveals the naked civil war going on: it is "a disintegration of the mass within the mass."

In panic situations, communities break off from the social body, designed as a totality, and attempt to escape it. But since they are still physically and socially captive to it, they are obliged to attack it. Panic shows, more than any other phenomenon, the plural and non-organic body of the species. Sloterdijk, that last man of philosophy, extends this positive concept of panic: “from a historical perspective, the fringe elements are probably the first to develop a non hysterical relationship with the possible apocalypse. ...Today’s fringe consciousness is characterize by something that might be called a pragmatic relationship with catastrophe.” To the question: “doesn’t civilization have as a precondition the absence or even exclusion of the panic element, to the extent that it must be built on the basis of expectations, repetitions, security and institutions?” Sloterdijk counters that “it is only thanks to the proximity of panic experiences that living civilizations are possible.” They can thus ward off the potential catastrophes of the era by rediscovering a primordial familiarity with them. They offer the possibility of converting these energies into “a rational ecstasy through which the individual opens up to the intuitive idea: ‘I am the world’.” What really busts the levees and turns panic in into a positive potential charge, a confused intuition (in con-fusion) of its transcendence, is that each person, when in a panic situation, is like the living foundation of his own crisis, instead of undergoing it like some kind of exterior inevitability. The quest after active panic — the “panic experience of the world” — is thus a technique for assuming the risk of disintegration that each person represents for society, as a risk dividual. It is the end of hope and of all concrete utopias, forming like a bridge crossing over to a state of waiting for/expecting nothing anymore, of having nothing more to lose. And this is a way of reintroducing — through a particular

sensibility to the possibilities of lived situations, to their possibilities of collapse, to the extreme fragility of their organization — a serene relationship with the flight forward movement of cybernetic capitalism. In the twilight of nihilism, fear must become as extravagant as hope.

Within the framework of the cybernetic hypothesis, panic is understood as a status change in the self-regulating system. For a cybernetician, any disorder can only come from there having been a discrepancy between the pre-set behaviors and the real behaviors of the system's elements. A behavior that escapes control while remaining indifferent to the system is called "noise," which consequently cannot be handled by a binary machine, reduced to a 0 or a 1. Such noises are the lines of flight, the wanderings of desires that have still not gone back into the valorization circuit, the non-enrolled. What we call "the Imaginary Party" is the heterogeneous ensemble of noises which proliferate beneath the Empire, without however reversing its unstable equilibrium, without modifying its state, solitude for instance being the most widespread form of these passages to the side of the Imaginary Party. Wiener, when he laid the foundation for the cybernetic hypothesis, imagined the existence of systems — called "closed reverberating circuits" — where the discrepancies between the behaviors desired by the whole and the real behaviors of those elements would proliferate. He envisaged that these noises could then brutally increase in series, like when a driver/pilot's panicked reactions make him wreck his vehicle after he's driven onto an icy road or hit a slippery spot on the highway. The overproduction of bad feedbacks that distort what they're supposed to signal and amplify what they're supposed to contain — such situations point the way to a pure

reverberatory power. The present practice of bombarding certain nodal points on the Internet network with information — spamming — aims to produce such situations. All revolt under and against Empire can only be conceived in starting to amplify such “noises,” capable of comprising what Prigogine and Stengers — who here call up an analogy between the physical world and the social world — have called “bifurcation points,” critical thresholds from which a new system status becomes possible.

The shared error of Marx and Bataille with all their categories of “labor power” or “expenditure” was to have situated the power to overturn the system outside of the circulation of commodity flows, in a pre-systemic exteriority set before and after capitalism, in nature for the one, and in a founding sacrifice for the other, which were the springboards from which one could think through the endless metamorphosis of the capitalist system. In issue number one of the *Great Game*,⁵³ the problem of equilibrium-rupture is posed in more immanent, if still somewhat ambiguous, terms: “This force that exists, cannot remain unemployed in a cosmos which is full like an egg and within which everything acts on and reacts to everything. So then there must be some kind of trigger or lever that will suddenly turn the course of this current of violence in another direction. Or rather in a parallel direction, but on another plane thanks to a sudden shift. Its revolt must become the Invisible Revolt.” It is not simply a matter of the “invisible insurrection of a million minds” as the celestial Trocchi put it. The force that we call ecstatic politics does not come from any substantial outsideness, but from the discrepancy, the small variation, the whirling motion

⁵³ *Le Grand Jeu* –tr.

that, moving outward starting from the interior of the system, push it locally to its breaking point and thus pull up in it the intensities that still pass between the various lifestyles/forms-of-life, in spite of the attenuation of intensities that those lifestyles effectuate. To put it more precisely, ecstatic politics comes from desires that exceed the flux insofar as the flux nourishes them without their being trackable therein, where desires pass beneath the tracking radar, and occasionally establish themselves, instantiating themselves among lifestyles that in a given situation are playing the role of attractors. It is known that it is in the nature of desire to leave no trace wherever it goes. Let's go back to that moment when a system at equilibrium can topple: "in proximity to bifurcation points," write Prigogine and Stengers, "where the system has a 'choice' between two operating regimes/modes, and is, in proper terms, neither in the one nor the other, deviation from the general law is total: the fluctuations can attain to the same heights of grandeur that the average macroscopic values can... Regions separated by macroscopic distances correlate together: the speed of the reactions produced there regulate one another, and local events thus reverberate through the whole system. This is when we truly see a paradoxical state, which defies all our 'intuition' regarding the behavior of populations, a state where the smallest differences, far from canceling each other out, succeed one another and propagate incessantly. The indifferent chaos of equilibrium is thus replaced by a creative chaos, as was evoked by the ancients, a fecund chaos from which different structures can arise."

It would be naive to directly deduce, in this scientific description of the potential for disorder, a new political art. The error of the philosophers and of all thought that deploys itself without

recognizing in itself, in its very pronouncement, what it owes to desire, is that it situates itself artificially above the processes that it is aiming to discuss, even when it is based on experience; something Prigogne and Stengers are not themselves immune to, by the way. Experimentation, which does not consist in completed experiences but in the process of completing them, is located within fluctuation, in the heart of the noise, lying in wait for the bifurcation. The events that take place within the social, on a level significant enough to influence fates in general, are comprised of more than just a simple sum of individual behaviors. Inversely, individual behaviors can no longer have, alone, an influence on fates in general. There remain, however, three stages, which are really one, and which, even though they are not represented, are felt by bodies anyway as immediately political problems: I'm talking about the amplification of non-conforming acts, the intensification of desires and their rhythmic accord; the arrangement of territory, even if "fluctuations cannot invade the whole system all at once. They must first take place within a particular region. Depending on whether this initial region has smaller than critical dimensions or not... the fluctuation will either regress, or, contrarily, it will invade and overtake the whole system." So there are three questions, then, which require investigation in view of an offensive against the Empire: a question of force, a question of rhythm, and a question of momentum.

IX

“That’s what generalized programs sharpen their teeth on; on little bits of people, on little bits of men who don’t want any program.”

Philippe Carles, Jean-Louis Comolli, “Free Jazz: Out of Program, Out of Subject, in Out Field”, 2000

“The few active rebels should have the qualities of speed and endurance, be ubiquitous, and have independent sources of provisions.”

– T.E. Lawrence, “Guerrilla” Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume X, 1926

These questions, seen from the neutralized and neutralizing perspective of the laboratory observer or of the chat-room/salon, must be reexamined in themselves, and tested out. Amplifying the fluctuations: what’s that mean to me? How can deviance, mine for example, give rise to disorder? How do we go from sparse, singular fluctuations, the discrepancies between each individual and the norm, each person and the devices, to futures and to destinies? How can what capitalism routs, what escapes valorization, become a force and turn against it? Classical politics resolved this problem with mobilization. To Mobilize meant to add, to aggregate, to assemble, to synthesize. It meant to unify little differences and fluctuations by subjecting them to a great crime, an un-rectifiable injustice, that nevertheless must be rectified. Singularities were already there. They only had to be subsumed into a unique predicate. Energy was also already there. It just needed to be organized. I’ll be the head, they’ll be the body. And so the

theoretician, the avant-garde, the party, have made that force operate in the same way as capitalism did, by putting it into circulation and control in order to seize the enemy's heart and take power by taking off its head, like in classical war.

The invisible revolt, the "coup-du-monde" that Trocchi talked about, on the contrary, plays on potential. It is invisible because it is unpredictable in the eyes of the imperial system. Amplified, the fluctuations relative to the imperial devices never aggregate together. They are as heterogeneous as desires are, and can never form a closed totality; they can't even form into a "masses," which name itself is just an illusion if it doesn't mean an irreconcilable multiplicity of lifestyles/forms-of-life. Desires flee; they either reach a clinamen or not, they either produce intensity or not, and even beyond flight they continue to flee. They get restive under any kind of representation, as bodies, class, or party. It must thus be deduced from this that all propagation of fluctuations will also be a propagation of civil war. Diffuse guerrilla action is the form of struggle that will produce such invisibility in the eyes of the enemy. The recourse to diffuse guerrilla action taken by a fraction of the Autonomia group in 1970s Italy can be explained precisely in light of the advanced cybernetic character of the Italian governmentality of the time. These years were when "consociativism," which prefigured today's citizenism, was developing; the association of parties, unions, and associations for the distribution and co-management of Power. This sharing is not the most important thing here; the important thing is management and control. This mode of government goes far beyond the Providential State by creating longer chains of interdependence between citizens

and devices, thus extending the principles of control and management from administrative bureaucracy.

It was T.E. Lawrence that worked out the principles of guerrilla war from his experience of fighting alongside the Arabs against the Turks in 1916. What does Lawrence tell us? That the battle itself is no longer the only process involved in war, in the same way as the destruction of the heart of the enemy is no longer its central objective; a fortiori if this enemy is faceless, as is the case when dealing with the impersonal power materialized in the Empire's cybernetic devices: "The majority of wars are contact based; two forces struggling to remain close to one another in order to avoid any tactical surprises. The war of the Arabs had to be a rupture based war: containing the enemy with the silent threat of a vast desert unknown to it and only revealing themselves at the moment of attack." Deleuze, though he too rigidly opposed guerrilla war, posed the problem of individuality and war, and that of collective organization, clarified that it was a question of opening up space as much as possible, and making prophecies, or rather of "fabricating the real instead of responding to it." The invisible revolt and diffuse guerrilla war do not sanction injustices, they create a possible world. In the language of the cybernetic hypothesis, I can create invisible revolt and diffuse guerrilla war on the molecular level in two ways. First gesture: I fabricate the real, I break things down, and break myself down by breaking it all down. This is the source of all acts of sabotage. What my act represents at this moment doesn't exist for the device breaking down with me. Neither 0 nor 1, I am the absolute outsider/third party. My orgasm surpasses devices/my joy infuriates them. Second gesture: I do not respond to the human or mechanical feedback loops that attempt to encircle

me/figure me out; like Bartleby, I'd "prefer not to." I keep my distance, I don't enter into the space of the flows, I don't plug in, I stick around. I wield my passivity as a force against the devices. Neither 0 nor 1, I am absolute nothingness. Firstly: I cum perversely. Secondly: I hold back. Beyond. Before. Short Circuiting and Unplugging. In the two cases the feedback does not take place and a line of flight begins to be drawn. An external line of flight on the one hand that seems to spread outwards from me; an internal line of flight that brings me back to myself. All forms of interference/fog come from these two gestures, external and internal lines of flight, sabotage and retreat, the search for forms of struggle and for the assumption of different forms-of-life. Revolution is now about figuring out how to conjugate those two moments.

Lawrence also tells how it was also a question that it took the Arabs a long time to resolve when fighting the Turks. Their tactics consisted basically in "always advancing by making small hits and withdrawing, neither making big drives, nor striking big blows. The Arab army never sought to keep or improve their advantage, but to withdraw and go strike elsewhere. It used the least possible force in the least possible time and hit the most withdrawn positions." Primacy was given to attacks against war supplies, and primarily against communications channels, rather than against the institutions themselves, like depriving a section of railway of rail. Revolt only becomes invisible to the extent that it achieves its objective, which is to "deny all the enemy's goals," to never provide the enemy with easy targets. In this case it imposes "passive defense" on the enemy, which can be very costly in materials and men, in energies, and extends into the same movement its own

front, making connections between the foci of attack. Guerrilla action thus since its invention tends to be diffuse. This kind of fighting immediately gives rise to new relationships which are very different than those that exist within traditional armies: "we sought to attain maximum irregularity and flexibility. Our diversity disoriented the enemy's reconnaissance services... If anyone comes to lack conviction they can stay home. The only contract bonding them together was honor. Consequently the Arab army did not have discipline in the sense where discipline restrains and smothers individuality and where it comprises the smallest common denominator of men." However, Lawrence did not idealize the anarchist spirit of his troops, as spontaneists in general have tended to do. The most important thing is to be able to count on a sympathetic population which then can become a space for potential recruitment and for the spread of the struggle. "A rebellion can be carried out by two percent active elements and 98 percent passive sympathizers," but this requires time and propaganda operations. Reciprocally, all offensives involving an interference with the opposing lines imply a perfect reconnaissance/intelligence service that "must allow plans to be worked out in absolute certainty" so as to never give the enemy any goals. This is precisely the role that an organization now might take on, in the sense that this term once had in classical politics; serving a function of reconnaissance/intelligence and the transmission of accumulated knowledge-powers. Thus the spontaneity of guerrilleros is not necessarily opposed to organizations as strategic information collection tanks.

But the important thing is that the practice of interference, as Burroughs conceived it, and after him as hackers have, is in vain if

it is not accompanied by an organized practice of reconnaissance into domination. This need is reinforced by the fact that the space where the invisible revolt can take place is not the desert spoken of by Lawrence. And the electronic space of the Internet is not the smooth neutral space that the ideologues of the information age speak of it as either. The most recent studies confirm, moreover, that the Internet is vulnerable to targeted and coordinated attacks. The web matrix was designed in such a way that the network would still function if there were a loss of 99% of the 10 million routers — the cores of the communications network where the information is concentrated — destroyed in a random manner, as the American military had initially imagined. On the other hand, a selective attack, designed on the basis of precise research into traffic and aiming at 5% of the most strategic core nodes — the nodes on the big operators' high-speed networks, the input points to the transatlantic lines — would suffice to cause a collapse of the system. Whether virtual or real, the Empire's spaces are structured by territories, striated by the cascades of devices tracing out the frontiers and then erasing them when they become useless, in a constant scanning sweep comprising the very motor of the circulation flows. And in such a structured, territorialized and deterritorialized space, the front lines with the enemy cannot be as clear as they were in Lawrence's desert. The floating character of power and the nomadic dimensions of domination thus require an increased reconnaissance activity, which means an organization for the circulation of knowledge-powers. Such was to be the role of the Society for the Advancement of Criminal Science (SASC).

In *Cybernetics and Society*, when he foresaw, only too late, that the political use of cybernetics tends to reinforce the exercise of

domination, Wiener asked himself a similar question, as a prelude to the mystic crisis that he was in at the end of his life: "All the techniques of secrecy, interference in messages, and bluffing consist in trying to make sure that one's camp can make a more effective use than the other camp of the forces and operations of communication. In this combative use of information, it is just as important to leave one's own information channels open as it is to obstruct the channels that the opposing side has at its disposal. An overall confidentiality/secrecy policy almost always implies the involvement of much more than the secrets themselves." The problem of force reformulated as a problem of invisibility thus becomes a problem of modulation of opening and closing. It simultaneously requires both organization and spontaneity. Or, to put it another way, diffuse guerrilla war today requires that two distinct planes of consistency be established, however meshed they may be — one to organize opening, transforming the interplay of lifestyles/forms-of-life into information, and the other to organize closing, the resistance of lifestyles/forms-of-life to being made into information. Curcio: "The guerrilla party is the maximum agent of invisibility and of the exteriorization of the proletariat's knowledge-power; invisibility towards the enemy cohabiting with it, on the highest level of synthesis." One may here object that this is after all nothing but one more binary machine, neither better nor worse than any of those that are at work in cybernetics. But that would be incorrect, since it means not seeing that at the root of these gestures is a fundamental distance from the regulated flows, a distance that is precisely the condition for any experience within the world of devices, a distance which is a power that I can layer and make a future from. It would above all be incorrect because it would mean not understanding that the alternation between

sovereignty and unpower cannot be programmed, that the course that these postures take is a wandering course, that what places will end up chosen — whether on the body, in the factory, in urban or peri-urban non-places — is unpredictable.

X

“The revolution is the movement, but the movement is not the revolution”

– Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 1977

*“In a world of regulated scenarios,
minutely pre-calculated programs,
impeccable music scores,
well-placed choices and acts,
what puts up any obstacles, what
hangs back, what wobbles?
Wobbliness indicates the body.*

Of the body.

This limping/wobbling indicates a weak-heeled man.

*A God held onto him there. He was God by the heel. The Gods limp
whenever they aren’t hunchbacked.*

*The dysfunction is the body. What wobbles, hurts, holds up poorly, the
exhaustion of breath, the miracle of balance. And music holds up no more
than man.*

Bodies have still not been properly regulated by the law of commodities.

They don’t work. They suffer. They get worn out. They get it wrong.

They escape.

Too hot, too cold, too near, too far, too fast, too slow.”

Philippe Carles, Jean-Louis Comolli, *“Free Jazz: Out of Program,
Out of Subject, in Out Field”*, 2000

People have often insisted — T.E. Lawrence is no exception — on
the kinetic dimensions of politics and war as a strategic

counterpoint to a quantitative concept of relations of force. That's the typical guerrilla perspective as opposed to the traditional perspective. It's been said that if it can't be massive, a movement should be fast, faster than domination. That was how the Situationist International formulated their program in 1957: "it should be understood that we are going to be seeing and participating in a race between free artists and the police to experiment with and develop the new techniques of conditioning. The police already have a considerable head start. The outcome depends on the appearance of passionate and liberating environments, or the reinforcement — scientifically controllable and smooth — of the environment of the old world of oppression and horror... If control over these new means is not totally revolutionary, we could be led towards the police-state ideal of a society organized like a beehive." In light of this lattermost image, an explicit but static vision of cybernetics perfected as the Empire is fleshing it out, the revolution should consist in a reappropriation of the most modern technological tools, a reappropriation that should permit contestation of the police on their own turf, by creating a counter-world with the same means that it uses. Speed here is understood as one of the important qualities of the revolutionary political arts. But this strategy implies attacking sedentary forces. In the Empire, such forces tend to fade as the impersonal power of devices becomes nomadic and moves around, gradually imploding all institutions.

Conversely, slowness has been at the core of another section/level of struggles against Capital. Luddite sabotage should not be interpreted from a traditional marxist perspective as a simple, primitive rebellion by the organized proletariat, a protest action by

the reactionary artisans against the progressive expropriation of the means of production given rise to by industrialization. It is a deliberate slow down of the flux of commodities and persons, anticipating the central characteristic of cybernetic capitalism insofar as it is movement towards movement, a will to potential, generalized acceleration. Taylor conceived the Scientific Organization of Labor as a technique for fighting "soldiering/go-slow" phenomena among laborers which represented an effective obstacle to production. On the physical level, mutations of the system also depend on a certain slowness, as Prigogine and Stengers point out: "The faster communications within the system are, the bigger is the proportion of insignificant fluctuations incapable of transforming the state of the system: therefore, that state will be all the more stable." Slowdown tactics thus have a supplementary potential in struggles against cybernetic capitalism because they don't just attack it in its being but in its process itself. But there's more: slowness is also necessary to putting lifestyles/forms-of-life that are irreducible to simple information exchanges into relation with each other. It expresses resistance of relations to interaction.

Above and beyond speed and slowness in communications, there is the space of encounters which allow one to trace out an absolute limit to the analogy between the social world and the physical world. This is basically because two particles never encounter one another except where their rupture phenomena can be deduced from laboratory observations. The encounter is that durable instant where intensities manifest between the forms-of-life present in each individual. It is, even above the social and communications, the territory that actualizes the potentials of bodies and actualizes itself

in the differences of intensity that they give off and comprise. Encounters are above language, outside of words, in the virgin lands of the unspoken, in suspended animation, a potential of the world which is also its negation, its "power to not be." What is other people? "Another possible world," responds Deleuze. The Other incarnates the possibility that the world has of not being, of being otherwise. This is why in the so-called "primitive" societies war takes on the primordial importance of annihilating any other possible world. It is pointless, however, to think about conflict without also thinking about enjoyment, to think about war without thinking about love. In each tumultuous birth of love, the fundamental desire to transform oneself by transforming the world is reborn. The hate and suspicion that lovers excite around them is an automatic defensive response to the war they wage, merely by loving each other, against a world where all passion must misunderstand itself and die off.

Violence is the first rule of the game of encounters. And it polarizes the various wanderings of desire that Lyotard invokes the sovereign freedom of in his book *Libidinal Economy*. But because he refuses to admit that enjoyments agree together on a particular territory to precede them and where forms-of-life can mix and move together; because he refuses to understand that the neutralization of all intensities is itself a kind of intensification — that of the Empire, no less — because he can't deduce from this that while they are inseparable, life impulses and death impulses are not neutral relative to a singular Other, Lyotard in the end cannot go beyond the most cybernetization-compatible hedonism: relax, let yourself go, let out your desires! Enjoy, enjoy; there'll always be something left! There's no doubt that conduction, abandon, and

mobility in general can heighten the amplification of deviations from the norm as long as they acknowledge what interrupts flows within the very heart of circulation itself. In light of the acceleration that cybernetics gives rise to, speed and nomadism can only be secondary developments beside the primary slow-down policies.

Speed upholds institutions. Slowness cuts off flows. The kinetic problem, properly speaking, in politics, thus isn't about choosing between two kinds of revolt but about abandoning oneself to a pulsation, of exploring other intensifications besides those that are commanded by the temporality of urgency. The cyberneticians' power has been their ability to give rhythm to the social body, which tends to prevent all respiration. Canetti proposes that rhythm's anthropological genesis is associated with racing: "Rhythm is at its origin a rhythm of feet; it produces, intentionally or not, a rhythmic noise." But this racing is not predictable as a robot's would be; "the two feet never land with the same force. The difference between them might be more or less vast, depending on personal dispositions and moods. But you can also go faster or more slowly, run, suddenly stop, jump..." This means that rhythm is the opposite of a program, that it depends on forms-of-life, and that speed problems can be dealt with by looking at rhythm issues. All bodies, insofar as they are wobbly, have a certain rhythm that shows that it is in their nature to hold untenable/unholdable positions. This rhythm, which comes from the limping/wobble of bodies, the movement of feet, Canetti adds, is — furthermore — at the origins of writing, in the sense that it started with the tracks left by animals in motion, that is, of History in motion. Events are the appearance of such traces and making History means improvising in search of a rhythm. Whatever credit we give to Canetti's

demonstrations, they do indicate — as true fictions do — that political kinetics can be better understood as the politics of rhythm. This means, a minima, that the binary techno-rhythm imposed by cybernetics must be opposed by other rhythms.

But it also means that these other rhythms, as manifestations of ontological wobbliness, have always had a creative political function. Canetti himself also discusses how on the one hand “the rapid repetition by which steps are added onto steps gives the illusion that there’s a larger number of beings present. They do not move from place to place, they carry on their dance always in the same location. The noise made by their steps does not die, it is repeated and echoes out for a long time, always with the same resonance and the same vivacity. They make up for their small size in number by their intensity.” On the other hand, “when their trampling is reinforced, it is as if they had called for backup. They exercise a force of attraction on everybody in the area, a force that doesn’t stop as long as they continue their dance.” Searching for good rhythm, then, opens things up for an intensification of experience as well as for numerical increase. It is an instrument of aggregation as well as an exemplary action to be imitated. On the individual scale as well as on the social scale, bodies themselves lose their sense of unity in order to grow as potential weapons: “the equivalence of the participants ramifies out into the equivalency of their members. Everything mobile about a human body takes on a life of its own, each leg, each arm lives as if for itself alone.” The politics of rhythm is thus the search for a reverberation, another state, comparable to trance on the part of the social body, through the ramification of each body. Because there are indeed two possible regimes of rhythm in the cybernetized Empire. The first,

which Simondon refers to, is that of the technician-man, who “ensure the integrative function and prolong self-regulation outside of each monad of automatism,” technicians whose “lives are made up of the rhythm of the machines surrounding them, and that connect them to each other.” The second rhythm aims to undermine this interconnective function: it is profoundly disintegrating, rather than merely noisy. It is a rhythm of disconnection. The collective conquest of this accurate dissonant tempo must come from a prior abandon to improvisation.

“Lifting the curtain of words, improvisation becomes gesture,
an act still unspoken,
a form still unnamed, un-normed, un-honored.
To abandon oneself to improvisation
to liberate oneself already — however beautiful they may be -
from the world’s already-present musical narratives.
Already present, already beautiful, already narratives, already a
world.
To undo, o Penelope, the musical bandaging that forms
our cocoon of sound,
which is not the world, but is the ritual habit of the world.

Abandoned, it offers itself up to what floats outside and around
meaning,
around words,
around the codes;
it offers itself up to the intensities,
to reserve, to enthusiasm, to energy,
in sum, to the nearly-unnamable.
...Improvisation welcomes threats and transcends them,
it dispossesses them of themselves and records their potential and
risk.”

XI

"It's the haze, the solar haze, filling space. Rebellion itself is a gas, a vapor. Haze is the first state of nascent perception and produces the mirage in which things climb and drop, like the movement of a piston, and men rise and hover, suspended by a cord. Hazy vision, blurred vision; a sketch of a kind of hallucinatory perception, a cosmic gray. The gray splits in two, and gives out black when shadow wins out or light disappears, but also gives out white when the luminous itself becomes opaque."

– Gilles Deleuze, "Shame and Glory: T.E. Lawrence," *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1993.

"No one and nothing gives an alternative adventure as a present: there's no possible adventure besides that of conquering a fate. You can't wage this conquest without starting from that spatio-temporal place where 'your' things stamp you as one of theirs."

– Giorgio Cesarano, *Survival Manual*, 1975

From the cybernetic perspective, threats cannot be welcomed and transcended a fortiori. They must be absorbed, eliminated. I've already said that the infinitely renewed impossibility of this annihilation of events is the final certainty that practices of opposition to the device-governed world can be founded on. Threat, and its generalization in the form of panic, poses an unsolvable energetic problem for the holders of the cybernetic hypothesis. Simondon thus explains that machines with a high information outflow and control their environment with precision have a weak energetic output. Conversely, machines that require

little energy to carry out their cybernetic mission produce a poor rendering of reality. The transformation of forms into information basically contains two opposing imperatives: "information is in one sense that which brings a series of unpredictable, new states, following no predefined course at all; it is thus that which requires absolute availability from an information channel with respect to all the aspects of modulation that it routes along; the information channel should in itself have no predetermined form and should not be selective... On the opposite hand, information is distinct from noise because information can be assigned a certain code and given a relative uniformization; in all cases where noise cannot be immediately/directly brought down to below a certain level, a reduction of the margin of indetermination and unpredictability in information signals is made." In other words, for a physical, biological, or social system to have enough energy to ensure its reproduction, its control devices must carve into the mass of the unknown, and slice into the ensemble of possibilities between what is characterized by pure chance, and has nothing to do with control, and what can enter into control as hazard risks, immediately susceptible to a probability calculation. It follows that for any device, as in the specific case of sound recording devices, "a compromise should be made that preserves a sufficient information output to meet practical needs, and an energy output high enough to keep the background noise at a level that does not disturb the signal levels." Or take the case of the police as another example; for it, this would just be a matter of finding the balance point between repression — the function of which is to decrease social background noise — and reconnaissance/intelligence — which inform them about the state of and movements in society by looking at the signals it gives off.

To provoke panic first of all means extending the background interference that imposes itself when the feedback loops are triggered, and which makes the recording of behavioral discrepancies by the ensemble of cybernetic apparatuses costly. Strategic thinking grasped the offensive scope of such interference early on. When Clausewitz was so bold as to say, for example, that “popular resistance is obviously not fit to strike large-scale blows” but that “like something vaporous and fluid, it should not condense anywhere.” Or when Lawrence counterposed traditional armies, which “resemble immobile plants,” and guerrilla groups, comparable to “an influence, an idea, a kind of intangible, invulnerable entity, with no front or back, which spreads everywhere like a gas.” Interference is the prime vector of revolt. Transplanted into the cybernetic world, the metaphor also makes reference to the resistance to the tyranny of transparency which control imposes. Haze disrupts all the typical coordinates of perception. It makes it indiscernible what is visible and what is invisible, what is information and what is an event. This is why it represents one of the conditions for the possibility of events taking place. Fog makes revolt possible. In a novel called “Love is Blind,” Boris Vian imagined what the effects of a real fog in existing relations. The inhabitants of a metropolis wake up one morning filled by a “tidal wave of opacity” that progressively modifies all their behaviors. The needs imposed by appearances quickly become useless and the city is taken over by collective experimentation. Love becomes free, facilitated by a permanent nudity of all bodies. Orgies spread everywhere. Skin, hands, flesh; all regain their prerogative, since “the domain of the possible is extended when one is no longer afraid that the light might be turned on.” Incapable of prolonging a fog that they did not

contribute to the formation of, they are relieved when “the radio says that experts have noted that the phenomenon will be returning regularly.” In light of this everyone decides to put out their own eyes so that life can go on happily. The passage into destiny: the fog Vian speaks of can be conquered. It can be conquered by reappropriating violence, a reappropriation that can even go as far as mutilation. This violence consists entirely in the clearing away of defenses, in the opening of throughways, meanings, minds. “Is it never pure?” asks Lyotard. “Is a dance something true? One could still say yes. But that’s not its power.” To say that revolt must become foglike means that it should be dissemination and dissimulation at the same time. In the same way as the offensive needs to make itself opaque in order to succeed, opacity must make itself offensive in order to last: that’s the cipher of the invisible revolt.

But that also means that its first objective must be to resist all attempts to reduce it away with demands for representation. Fog is a vital response to the imperative of clarity, transparency, which is the first imprint of imperial power on bodies. To become foglike means that I finally take up the part of the shadows that command me and prevent me from believing all the fictions of direct democracy insofar as they intend to ritualize the transparency of each person in their own interests, and of all persons in the interests of all. To become opaque like fog means recognizing that we don’t represent anything, that we aren’t identifiable; it means taking on the untotalizable character of the physical body as a political body; it means opening yourself up to still-unknown possibilities. It means resisting with all your power any struggle for recognition. Lyotard: “What you ask of us, theoreticians, is that we constitute

ourselves as identities, as managers. But if there's one thing we're sure of, it's that this operation (of exclusion) is just a cheap show, that incandescences are made by no one, and belong to no one." Nevertheless, it won't be a matter of reorganizing a few secret societies or conquering conspiracies like free-masonry, carbonarism, as the avant-gardes of the last century envisioned — I'm thinking mostly of the College of Sociology. Establishing a zone of opacity where people can circulate and experiment freely without bringing in the Empire's information flows, means producing "anonymous singularities," recreating the conditions for a possible experience, an experience which will not be immediately flattened out by a binary machine assigning a meaning/direction to it, a dense experience that can transform desires and the moments where they manifest themselves into something beyond desire, into a narrative, into a filled-out body. So, when Toni Negri asked Deleuze about communism, the latter was careful not to assimilate it into a realized and transparent communication: "you ask whether societies of control or communication would give rise to forms of resistance capable of giving a new chance for a communism conceived as a 'transverse organization of free individuals.' I don't know; perhaps. But this would be impossible if minorities got back hold of the megaphone. Maybe words, communication, are rotten. They're entirely penetrated by money: not by accident, but by their nature. We have to detourn/misuse words. Creating has always been something different from communicating. The important thing is maybe to create vacuoles of non-communication, interrupters who escape control." Yes, the important thing for us is to have opacity zones, opening cavities, empty intervals, black blocs within the cybernetic matrix of power. The irregular war waged against the Empire, on the level of a given place, a fight, a

riot, from now on will start with the construction of opaque and offensive zones. Each of these zones shall be simultaneously a small group/nucleus starting from which one might experiment without being perceptible, and a panic-propagating cloud within the ensemble of the imperial system, the coordinated war machine, and spontaneous subversion at all levels. The proliferation of these zones of offensive opacity (ZOO), and the intensification of their interrelations, will give rise to an irreversible disequilibrium.

As a way of showing the kinds of conditions needed to “create opacity,” as a weapon and as an interrupter of flows, it is useful to look one more time to the internal criticisms of the cybernetic paradigm. Provoking a change of status/state in a physical or social system requires that disorder, deviations from the norm, be concentrated into a space, whether real or virtual. In order that behavioral fluctuations become contagious, it is necessary that they first attain a “critical mass,” the nature of which is clarified by Prigogine and Stengers: “It results from the fact that the ‘outside world,’ the environment around the fluctuating region, always tends to deaden the fluctuation. Critical mass measures the relationship between the volume, where the reactions take place, and the contact surface, the place of linkage. Critical mass is thus determined by a competition between the system’s ‘power of integration’ and the chemical mechanisms that amplify the fluctuation within the fluctuating subregion.” This means that all deployment of fluctuations within a system is doomed to fail if it does not have at its disposition a local anchor, a place from which the deviations that arise can move outwards, contaminating the whole system. Lawrence confirms it, one more time: “The rebellion must have an unassailable base, a place sheltered not only from

attack but from the fear of attack." In order for such a place to exist, it has to have "independent supply lines," without which no war is conceivable. If the question of the base is central to all revolt, it is also because of the very principles on the basis of which systems can attain equilibrium. For cybernetics, the possibility of a contagion that could topple the system has to be absorbed/deadened by the most immediate environment around the autonomous zone where the fluctuations take place. This means that the effects of control are more powerful in the periphery closest to the offensive opacity zone that creates itself around the fluctuating region. The size of the base must consequently grow ever greater as proximity monitoring is upheld.

These bases must also be as inscribed in the space itself as in people's minds: "The Arab revolt," Lawrence explains, "was to be found in the ports of the red sea, in the desert, or in the minds of the men who supported it." These are territories as much as they are mentalities. We'll call them planes of consistency. In order that offensive opacity zones can form and be reinforced, there need to be planes like that, which connect deviations together, which work like a lever and fulcrum to overturn fear. Autonomy, historically — the Italian *Autonomia* group of the 1970s for example, and the Autonomy that is possible is none other than the continual movement of perseverance of planes of consistency that establish themselves as unrepresentable spaces, as bases for secession from society. The reappropriation by the critical cyberneticians of the category of autonomy/self-rule — along with the ideas deriving from it, self-organization, auto-poiesis, self-reference, self-production, self-valorization, etc. — is from this point of view the central ideological maneuver of the last twenty years. Through the

cybernetic prism, giving oneself one's own laws, producing subjectivities, in no way contradict the production of the system and its regulation. By calling for the multiplication of Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ) in the real world and in the virtual world ten years ago, Hakim Bey became the victim of the idealism of those who wanted to abolish politics without having thought about it first. He found himself forced to separate out a place for hedonistic practice within the TAZ, to separate out a place for the "anarchist" expression of forms-of-life from the place of political resistance, from the form of the struggle. If autonomy is here thought of as something temporary, it is because thinking about its duration would require conceiving of a struggle that merges with all of life; envisioning for example the transmission of warrior knowledge. Bey-type Liberal-anarchists are unaware of the field of intensities in which their sovereignty cries out to be deployed and their project of a social contract with no State at root postulates the identity of all beings since in the end it is about maximizing pleasures in peace until the end of time. On the one hand. On the one hand the TAZ are defined as "free enclaves," places whose law is freedom, good things, the Marvelous. On the other, the secession from the world that they issue from, the "folds" that they lodge themselves in between the real and its encoding, would not come into being until after a succession of "refusals." This "Californian Ideology," by posing autonomy as an attribute of individual or collective subjects, deliberately confuses two incommensurable planes: the "self-realization" of persons and the "self-organization" of society. This is because autonomy, in the history of philosophy, is an ambiguous notion that simultaneously expresses liberation from all constraints and submission to higher natural laws, and can

serve to feed the hybrid and restructuring discourses of the “anarcho-capitalist” cyborgs.

The autonomy I’m talking about isn’t temporary nor simply defensive. It is not a substantial quality of beings, but the very condition of their becoming/future. It doesn’t leave the supposed unity of the Subject, but engenders multiplicities. It does not attack merely the sedentary forms of power, like the State, and then skim over the circulating, “mobile,” “flexible” forms. It gives itself the means of lasting and of moving from place to place, means of withdrawing as well as attacking, opening itself up as well as closing itself off, connecting mute bodies as bodiless voices. It sees this alternation as the result of an endless experimentation. “Autonomy” means that we make the worlds that we are grow. The Empire, armed with cybernetics, insists on autonomy for it alone, as the unitary system of the totality: it is thus forced to annihilate all autonomy whenever it is heterogeneous. We say that autonomy is for everyone and that the fight for autonomy has to be amplified. The present form taken on by the civil war is above all a fight against the monopoly on autonomy. That experimentation will become the “fecund chaos,” communism, the end of the cybernetic hypothesis.

THE CONQUERORS HAD WON EASILY

The conquerors had won easily; they'd taken a city that had rid itself of its gods. Nobody among the insurgents of the time can remember anymore today what exactly it was that happened at the beginning. As a response, some people tell some kind of legend, but most just say "everybody is a beginning." It began in the heart of the metropolises of yesteryear. There, there reigned a sort of frozen agitation, with breaking points where everyone rushed around, preferably on board little metal boxes called "automobiles." And so it started like that, with a few gatherings without object, silent gatherings of masks on the margins of the general rushing madness. There was a great idleness among these little groups of masked men all together, playing chess⁵⁴ and other, more enigmatic games, who carried obscure messages on immobile banners, who distributed petrifying texts without a word; but it was an idleness that was full, inhabited, disturbing, but discreet. The first of these gatherings had to come about one day. But they proliferated so quickly that their memory was drowned in their numbers. It is claimed that it took place first in Lutèce,⁵⁵ one carnival day. And since then the carnival has never ended. First they sent out the police. But they had to give up pretty quickly; as soon as one of these strange aggregations would disperse, another would form elsewhere. It seemed that they even multiplied with every arrest. It was as if these men had been imperceptibly won over, contaminated, by silence and by the game, by anonymity and idleness. It was Spring, and there were so many of these gatherings that they started circulating, wandering from place to place, from street to street, from corner to corner. There was a great joy,

⁵⁴ "Playing at defeat" –tr.

⁵⁵ Formerly known as Paris

relaxedness and a curious determination in these wandering processions. A secret convergence seemed to guide them, even. When evening would come, they would amass in silence before the places of power: newspaper headquarters, government buildings, mutinationals, media empires, banks, ministries, police stations, prisons – soon nothing was left out of this quiet encirclement. A great threat at the same time as a great derision was felt from these mute masked crowds with their gazes fixed on the entrenched conquerors. And they were not wrong to feel it, because soon it came out that it was the conspiracy of a certain Invisible Committee. There was even talk of a major danger to civilization, democracy, order, and the economy. But in their castles, the conquerors were scared. They felt more and more alone with all their victory. A world that even yesterday had appeared to them as entirely their own, was incomprehensibly escaping their grip, piece by piece. And so they ended up opening the doors of their castles, thinking that they might appease the unexplainable jacquerie by showing that they had nothing to hide. But no one entered, except inadvertently, because the masks emanated a power that was more desirable than the old one. The conquerors themselves, for their part, must have all suddenly gotten rather world-weary... because no one knows what's become of them.

**THESES
ON THE
TERRIBLE
COMMUNITY**

Everyone knows the terrible communities, whether because they've spent some time in them or because they're still there. Or simply because they're still stronger than the others, and so some of us have still partly remained in them — while at the same time being outside of them. The family, the school, work, prison — these are the classical faces of this contemporary form of hell, but they are the least interesting because they belong to a bygone depiction of commodity evolution, and are at present merely surviving on. There are some terrible communities, however, that fight against the existing state of things, and that are simultaneously quite attractive and much better than “this world.” And at the same time their way of approximating truth — and thus joy — distances them more than anything else from freedom.

The question that arises for us, in a final manner, is more of an ethical than a political nature, because the classical forms of politics are at the low water-mark, and their categories are leaving us, like the habits of childhood. The question is whether we prefer the possibility of unknown dangers to the certainty of the present misery. That is, whether we want to go on living and talking in accord (in a dissident manner, of course, but always in accord) with what has been done up to now — and thus with the terrible communities — or whether we want to really put to the test that little part of our desires that culture has still not managed to infest with its cumbersome quagmire and try to start out on a different path — in the name of a totally new kind of happiness.

This text was born as a contribution to that new journey.

I. GENESIS

Or, the history of a story

“There’s something to having had a poor and short childhood, something to that lost happiness that one never does find again; but there’s also something to today’s active life, to its little, incomprehensible, yet always present vivaciousness, which one would never be able to kill.”

– F. Kafka

“Lay roses in the abyss and say: ‘here is my thanks to the monster that didn’t manage to swallow me.’”

– F. Nietzsche, Posthumous Fragments

1

“Whatever has for a time been understood has also for a time been forgotten. To where no one perceives anymore that history has no eras. In fact, nothing happens. There are no more events. There’s only news. Look at the characters that sit at the summits of empires. And turn around Spinoza’s words. There’s nothing to understand. Only to laugh and to cry.”

– Mario Tronti, *Politics at Twilight*

1 BIS.

The time of heroes is over. The epic space of pronouncements that we love to say and hear, which speak to us of what we could be but are not, has disappeared.

The irreparable is now our being-*thus*, our being-*nobody*. Our Bloom-being.

And it is from the irreparable that we must depart, now that the most ferocious nihilism holds sway even in the ranks of the rulers.

We must depart, because “Nobody” is Ulysses’ other name, and because no one should care to go back to Ithaca or to be shipwrecked.

2

It is no longer time to *dream* of what we will be, what we will make, now that we can be *everything*, now that we can do *everything*, now that all our power is granted us, with the certainty that our forgetting of joy will prevent us from making any use of it.

This is where we must get free or let ourselves die. Humanity is indeed something to be transcended, but to do so we must first listen to what is most exposed and most rare about humanity, so that its *remains* are not lost in passing. Bloom, that pathetic residue of a world that never ceases to betray and exile him, demands to go out armed; Bloom demands *exodus*.

But most often he who departs never rediscovers his own, and his exodus becomes exile once again.

2 BIS.

All voices come out from the depths of this exile, and in this exile all voices are lost. The Other does not welcome us, it sends us back to the Other inside of us. We abandon this world in ruins with no regrets and no pain, pressed on by a vague feeling of urgency. We abandon it like rats abandoning a ship, but without necessarily knowing whether it's moored to the pier. Nothing "noble" about this flight, nothing grand that can bond us to one another. In the end, we are alone with ourselves, because we haven't made the decision to fight but merely to preserve ourselves. And that's still not an action; it is but a *reaction*.

3

A crowd of people fleeing is a crowd of solitary people.

4

Not to find oneself is impossible; fates have their clinamen. Even at the threshold of death, even in absence from ourselves, others never cease to come up against us on the liminal terrain of flight.

We and the others: we separate ourselves out of disgust, but we do not manage to reunite ourselves by choice. And still, we find ourselves united. United and outside of love, uncovered and with no mutual protection. We were such before our flight, and such have we always been.

5

We don't just want to escape, even if we have indeed left this world because it appeared so intolerable to us. No cowardice here: we have gone out armed. What we wanted was to not fight *against* someone anymore, but to fight *with* someone. And now that we are no longer alone, we will quiet this voice from inside us; we will become companions to someone, and we will no longer be *the undesirables*.

We will have to force ourselves, we will have to hold our tongues, because though no one has wanted us up to now, things have now

changed. No longer to ask questions, but to learn silence, to learn to learn. *Because freedom is a kind of discipline.*

6

Speech advances, prudently; it fills in the spaces between singular solitudes, it swells human aggregates into groups, pushes them together against the wind; effort reunites them. It's almost an exodus. Almost. But no pact holds them together, except the spontaneity of smiles, inevitable cruelty, the accidents of passion.

7

This passage, similar to that of migrating birds, to the murmur of wandering pains, little by little gives form to the terrible communities.

II. EFFECTIVITY

On why schizophrenia is more than just an illness

And how, while dreaming of ecstasy, we end up self-policing.

1

"We are told: anyway, does schizophrenia have a mother and father? We regret to have to say no, it does not have any as such. It only has a desert, and the tribes that live there, a full body and multiplicities that cling to it."

– Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

1 BIS

The terrible community is the only form of community compatible with this world, with Bloom. All the other communities are imaginary, not *truly* impossible, but possible only in moments, and in any case never in the fullness of their actualization. They emerge in struggles, and so they are heterotopias, opacity zones free of any cartography, perpetually in a state of construction and perpetually moving towards disappearance.

2

The terrible community is not only possible, it is *already real*, and is always already there *in acts*. It is the community of *those that stay behind*. It is never there *potentially*, it has no future or becoming, nor any ends truly outside of itself nor any desire to become other than what it is, only to *persist*. It is the community of betrayal, because it goes against its own becoming, it betrays itself without transforming itself or transforming the world around it.

2 BIS

The terrible community is the community of Blooms, because within it all desubjectivation is unwelcome. Anyway, to enter it, it is first necessary to put oneself in parentheses.

3

The terrible community does not *ek-sist*, except in the dissent that at certain moments passes through it. The rest of the time the terrible community *is*, eternally.

4

In spite of this, the terrible community is the only community one can find, since the world as the physical place of what is common and of sharing has disappeared, and there's nothing left of it but an imperial sectoral distribution of police to travel across. Even the lie itself of "mankind" no longer finds any more liars to affirm it.

The non-men, the no longer men, the Blooms, no longer manage to *think*, as they once could, since thought was a movement within time, and the consistency of the latter has now changed. Moreover, the Blooms have renounced dreaming; they live in organized dystopias, placeless places, the dimensionless interstices of a commodity utopia. They are flat and one-dimensional since, unable to recognize themselves anywhere, neither in themselves or in others, they can't recognize either their past or their future. Day

after day, their resignation effaces the present. And these no-longer-men populate the crisis of presence.

5

The time of the terrible community is spiraloid and of a muddy consistency. It is an impenetrable time where the planned-form and the habit-form weigh on lives, leaving them paper-thin. One might define it as the time of naïve freedom where everyone does what they want, since the times wouldn't permit anyone to want anything aside from what's already there.

One might say that it is the time of clinical depression, or rather, the time of exile and prison. It is an endless wait, a uniform expanse of disordered discontinuities.

6

The concept of order has been abolished in the terrible community in preference for the effectiveness of force relations, and the concept of form to the profit of the practice of formalization, which, having now grip on the content that it's applied to, is eternally reversible. Around false rituals, false timeframes (demonstrations, vacations, 'mission accomplisheds,' various assemblies, meetings, more or less festive), the community coagulates and formalizes itself without ever *taking form*. Because form, being sensitive and corruptible, exposes becoming.

6^{BIS}

Within the terrible community, informality is the most appropriate medium for the disavowed construction of pitiless hierarchies.

7

Reversibility is the sign under which all events that *take place* within the terrible community happen.

But it is this reversibility itself, with its solemn procession of fears and dissatisfactions, which is really irreversible.

8

The time of infinite reversibility is an illegible time, non-human. It is the time of things, of the moon, of animals, of the tides; not of men, and even less of the no-longer-men, since the latter no longer know how to think about themselves, while the former still manage.

The time of reversibility is but the time of what cannot know itself.

9

Why don't men abandon the terrible community, one might ask? An answer could be that it's because the no-longer-a-world world is still more uninhabitable than it is, but such an answer would

mean falling into the trap of appearances, into superficial truths, since the world is woven of the same agitated non-existence that the terrible community is; there is among them a hidden continuity which, for the inhabitants of the world as well as for those of the terrible community, remains indecipherable.

10

What must be remarked, instead, is that the world draws its minimal existence, which allows us to decipher the substantial non-existence in it, from the *negative* existence of the terrible community (as marginal as it may be), and not the contrary, as one might believe.

11

The negative existence of the terrible community is in the last resort a counter-revolutionary existence, since in the face of the merely residual subsistence of the world, the former is content to claim a greater fullness.

12

The terrible community is terrible because it's self-limiting while at the same time it rests in no form; this is because it doesn't know ecstasy. It reasons with the same moral categories that the no-longer-a-world world does; at least it has the same reasons for doing so. It knows about rights and injustices, but it always parses them on the basis of the lacking coherence of the world it opposes.

It criticizes the violation of a *right*, brings it out into the light of day, brings attention to it. But who was it that established (and violated) that right? It was the world, to which the terrible community refuses to belong. And to whom is its discourse addressed? To the attention of the world that it denies. What does the terrible community want, then? *The improvement of the existing state of things*. And what does the world desire? *The same thing*.

13

Democracy is the cell culture medium of all terrible communities. The no-longer-a-world world is the world where the primordial and founding dispute at the root of politics is erased to the benefit of a management vision of life and the living: biopolitics. In this sense, the terrible community is a biopolitical community, since its mass and quasi-military unanimity is also based on the repression of the foundational dispute at the root of politics, the dispute between forms-of-life. The terrible community cannot permit the existence of a *bios*, an unconforming life lived freely, within it; it can only permit survival *within* its ranks. Just as well, the hidden continuity between the biopolitical tissue of democracy and the terrible communities has to do with the fact that argument is abolished therein by the imposition of an unanimity which is at the same time unequally shared and violently enclosed within a collectivity which is supposed to make freedom possible. It happens, then, paradoxically, that the ranks of biopolitical democracy are more comfortable than those of the terrible community; the space of play, the freedom of subjects, and the constraints imposed by the political-form find themselves to be inversely proportional in a biopolitical regime/system of truth.

14

The more a regime of biopolitical truth claims to be open to freedom, the more it will be policelike, and furthermore, by delegating to the police the task of repressing insubordinations, it will leave its subjects in a state of relative unconsciousness and quasi-infancy. On the other hand, in a regime of biopolitical truth, where PEOPLE claim to *realize* freedom while never discussing its form, PEOPLE will demand that those who participate in it will introject the police into their *bios*, on the powerful pretext that *they have no choice*.

Choosing the individual pseudo-freedom granted by biopolitical democracies — whether out of necessity, out of play, or out of a thirst for enjoyment — is equivalent, for someone who's part of a terrible community, to a *real* ethical degradation, since the freedom of biopolitical democracies is never anything more than the freedom to buy and be sold.

15

In the same way, from the perspective of the biopolitical democracies unified to form the Empire, those who take sides with the terrible communities move out of the political system of commodity exchange (management) to a military political system (repression). By shaking the specter of police violence, biopolitical democracies are able to militarize the terrible communities, and make the discipline within them even harder than it is anywhere else; this achieves the production of a spiral growth which is

supposed to make the commodity preferable to the struggle; to make the freedom to circulate, so warmly recommended by the police and commodity propaganda — “move on, nothing to see here!” — to the freedom to see *something else*, a riot for instance.

For those who accept bartering off the highest freedom, the freedom to struggle, for the most reified freedom, the freedom to purchase, political democracies have, for the past twenty years, organized very comfortable places for biopolitical entrepreneurs, who are necessarily quite hip/“plugged in” — what would they be without their networks, after all? Until *fight clubs* proliferate universally, start-ups, advertising firms, hip bars, and cop cars will never stop spreading everywhere in exponential growth. And the terrible communities shall be the model for this new direction of commodity evolution.

16

Terrible communities and biopolitical democracies can co-exist in a vampire-like relationship because the two are lived either like no-longer-a-world-worlds or like worlds with no outside. Their being-without-an-outside is not some terrorist conviction shaken at the subjects that take part in biopolitical democracy or in the terrible community to guarantee their loyalty, but rather, it is a reality to the extent that these are two human formations that intersect one another *almost entirely*.

There is no conscious participation in biopolitical democracy without unconscious participation in a terrible community, and vice-versa. Because the terrible community is not just the

community of social or political protest, the militant community, but also tends to be everything that seeks to exist as a community within biopolitical democracy (the company, the family, the association, the group of friends, the adolescent gang, etc.). All such communities tend to be terrible communities to the extent that all sharing *without purpose*, all *endless* sharing (in both senses of 'without end/to no end') is an *effective* threat to biopolitical democracy, which is based on such total separation that its subjects are not even individuals anymore, but simply individuals, split between participating in two necessary, yet contradictory things; their terrible community and biopolitical democracy. And one or the other of those must inevitably be participated in clandestinely, basely, incoherently.

The civil war, which is expelled from all publicity/advertising, has taken refuge inside of individuals. The front lines, which no longer pass through the fine milieu of society, now pass through the fine milieu of Blooms. Capitalism *demand*s schizophrenia.

17

The imaginary party is the form that this schizophrenia takes when it goes on the offensive. You're in the Imaginary Party, not when you're neither in a terrible community nor in biopolitical democracy, but when you act to destroy both of them.

18

What disintegrates disintegrates, but can't be destroyed. However, life among the ruins is not only possible but effectively present. The superior intelligence of the world *is* in the terrible community. The health of the world as a world, as persisting in its state of relative decomposition, thus resides in the enemy that has sworn to destroy it. But how can it destroy this adversary if not at the price of its own disappearance as an adversary? It could constitute itself positively, we are told; give itself a foundation, make itself some laws of its own. But the terrible community has no *autonomous* life; nowhere does it find access to becoming. It is simply the final ruse of a world in decomposition to survive just a little bit longer.

III. AFFECTIVITY

on why we often desire what makes us miserable (to where we often come to regret the good old days of arranged marriages)

and on why women don't say what they think.

We also talk about the insufficiency of good intentions.

Warning! This chapter is dangerous reading, since it attacks everybody.

Jocasta: What is exile? What does the exiled person suffer from?

Polynices: From the worst of all evils: not having the right to parrhesia.

Jocasta: It is the condition of slaves, not being able to say what one thinks.

Polynices: And to have to bow to the idiocy of those in charge...

Jocasta: Yes, that's it: act the fool among the fools.

Polynices: Out of interest, we force our temperament.

– Euripides, *The Phoenicians*

1

Parrhesia is the *dangerous*, emotional (affective) use of discourse, the act of truth which questions power relations as they are *hic et nunc* in friendships, politics, and in love. The parrhesiaste is not he who tells the most painful truth so as to break the bonds that unite the others, who anchor themselves in the refusal to accept that truth as unavoidable. He who makes use of parrhesia, before all else, puts himself in danger through a gesture wherein he exposes himself *within* the chainlinks of relationships. Parrhesia is the act of truth *which escapes abstract/cursory perspectives*.

Where parrhesia is not possible, beings are in exiled, and they act like slaves. Even if for its inhabitants the terrible community is like a cathedral in the desert, within it one endures the most bitter exile. Because, as an omnilateral war machine which must keep a vital equilibrium of a homeostatic nature with what is external to it, the terrible community cannot tolerate the circulation of any discourse dangerous to it within its ranks. In order to perpetuate itself, the terrible community needs to relegate danger to the exterior: it's the Outsiders, the Competition, the Enemy, the cops. And so the terrible community applies the strictest discourse-policing within itself, and becomes its own censorship.

2

Where the mute speech of repression makes its voice heard, no other speech has the right to a place, to such an extent that it is cut off from immediate effectiveness. The terrible community is a response to the aphasia that all biopolitical regimes impose, but it is an insufficient response, since it perpetuates itself by internal censorship, and is thus still symbolically salaried by/approving of the symbolic patriarchal order. It is thus often just another kind of police, another place where one can remain emotionally illiterate or in a state of infantile minority, on the pretext of external threats. Because children are not so much those that do not speak as those that are excluded from the games of truth.

3

The no-longer-a-world world, this *squared off / gridded* world, lives in a pathetic self-celebration that PEOPLE still call "Spectacle." The Spectacle chews away at all doubts, and reduces consciousness to an anesthetic passivity. What biopolitical democracy demands of consciousness is that it assist in destruction, not as effective destruction, but as spectacle. Whereas the terrible community demands to assist in destruction *as destruction*, and thus to make it alternate with short periods of collective reconstruction so as to make it last.

3 BIS

There is no discourse of truth, there are only *devices* of truth. The Spectacle is the device of truth that manages to make *all other* devices of truth operate to its benefit. Spectacle and biopolitical democracy converge in the acceptance of any system of false discourse proffered by any type of subject at all, so long as it allows the continuation of the armed peace in force. The proliferation of insignificance aims to totally blanket the whole of what exists.

4

The terrible community knows the world, but doesn't know *itself*. That's because in its affirmative aspect it *is*, of a stagnant, and not a reflective, nature. On the other hand, in its negative aspect, it *exists*, insofar as it denies the world and thus denies itself, since it's made in the latter's image. There is no consciousness before existence, and no self-consciousness before activity, but there is above all no consciousness in the activity of unconscious self-destruction. From the moment that the terrible community perpetuates itself by acting under the hostile gaze of others, by introjecting/unconsciously adopting that gaze and setting itself up as an object, and not the subject, of that hostility, it can only love and hate *out of reaction*.

5

The terrible community is a human agglomerate, not a group of comrades. The members of the terrible community encounter each

other and aggregate together by accident more than by choice. *They do not accompany one another, they do not know one another.*

6

The terrible community is traversed by all kinds of complicities — and how could it survive otherwise? — but, unlike the case of the ancestors it claims to descend from, in no case do these complicities determine its form. Its form is, rather, one of SUSPICION. The members of the terrible community are suspicious of one another because they don't know anything about themselves or about each other, and because no one among them knows the community he's part of; it's a community with no possible narrative, and thus an impenetrable community, and one that can only be experienced in immediacy; but it is an inorganic immediacy that reveals nothing. The displays that take place in it are mundane and not political: in everything, even the heroic solitude of the window-smashing rioter, what one experiences there is bodies in movement, rather than any kind of coherence between said bodies and their discourse. That's why clandestinity, balaclavas, the games of nit-picking, simultaneously fascinate and fool people: the provocateur cop is a window-smashing rioter too...

6^{BIS}

“We’re dealing with an apparatus of total and circulating suspicion, because there are no absolute points in it, no threshold to it. The perfection of surveillance is a sum of malice, of ill wills [Malveillances].”

– Foucault on the *Panopticon*

7

Nevertheless, since there are complicities in it, the members of the terrible community assume that there’s a plan/project to it as well, but that it’s being kept secret from them. That’s where the suspicion comes from. The mistrust, the suspicion that the members of the terrible community have towards one another is far bigger than that which they have towards the rest of the world’s citizens: the latter in effect never hide that they have a lot to hide; they know what image they’re *supposed* to have and give to the world that they’re part of.

8

If in spite of its internal panopticism the terrible community doesn’t know itself, that’s only because it is unknowable, and to that extent it is as dangerous for the world as it is for itself. It is the community of anxiety, but it is also the first victim of that anxiety.

8 BIS.

The terrible community is a sum of solitudes that watch over each other without protecting each other.

9

Love between members of the terrible community is an inexhaustible tension, which feeds off what the other hides and does not reveal: its banality. The very invisibility of the terrible community to itself has permitted it to love itself *blindly*.

10

The public, external image of the terrible community is what least interests the community itself, since it knows that it's deliberately faked. Equally pathetic is its image of itself, the specific publicity that the community deploys within it, but that no one's duped by.

Because what holds the terrible community together is precisely that which is found *underneath* its publicity, which it lets its members read between the lines and hardly lets anyone outside understand. It is informed by the *banality of its private existence, by the emptiness of its secret and the secret of its emptiness*; also, in order to perpetuate itself, it produces and secretes the public community.

10 BIS

The banality of the private life of the terrible communities hides itself away, because that banality is the banality of evil.

11

The terrible community doesn't rest upon itself, but in the desire that what is external to it has towards it, and which inevitably takes the form of misunderstandings.

12

The terrible community, like all human formations in advanced capitalist society, operates on a sado-masochist economy of pleasure. The terrible community, unlike everything that is not it, does not admit to its fundamental masochism, and the desires it participates in organize themselves on the basis of this misunderstanding.

What is "feral" in effect whips up a certain desire, but that desire is a desire for domestication, and thus for annihilation, in the same way as an ordinary creature, comfortably seated within its everyday life, is erotic only to the extent that one would like to make some atrocious stain or mark upon it. The fact that this emotive metabolism remains hidden is an inexhaustible source of suffering for the members of the terrible community, who become incapable of evaluating the consequences of their emotional

gestures (consequences that systematically contradict their expectations). The members of the terrible communities thus progressively unlearn how to love.

13

Within the terrible community, emotional education is based on systematic humiliation, and the pulverization of its members' self-esteem. *No one must be able to believe themselves* to be a carrier of that kind of affectivity which would have the right to a place inside the community. The hegemonic type of affectivity inside the terrible community corresponds, paradoxically, to what is seen outside of it as the most backwards form. The tribe, the village, the clan, the gang, the army, the family; these are the human formations universally acknowledged as being the most cruel and the least gratifying, and yet *in spite of all* they persist within the terrible communities. And in them, women must take on a kind of virility that even males disclaim now in biopolitical democracies, all the while seeing themselves as women whose femininity has lost out to the masculine fantasy dominant at the very heart of the terrible community: the fantasy of plastic "sexy" woman (in the image of the Young-Girl, that carnal envelope) ready for use and consumption by genital sexuality.

14

In the terrible communities, women, because they cannot *actually* become men, must become *like* men, while remaining furiously heterosexual and prisoners of the most worn-out stereotypes. If

nobody has the right, in the terrible community, to say the truth about human relations, that's doubly true for women: any woman that undertakes parrhesia within the terrible community will be immediately classed as just some hysteric.

14^{BIS}

Within all terrible communities, we experience a surprising *silence on the part of women*. The terrible community's pathophobia in effect often manifests itself as the indirect repression of any female speech, which is foreign and disturbing because it is the speech of *flesh*. It's not that women are made to shut up; it's simply that the limit-space bordering madness where their words of truth could come out gets discretely erased a little more every day.

15

"It's not that women have a hard time carrying out actions; they were indeed more courageous, more capable, more prepared and had more conviction than the men did. They were just given less autonomy on the level of initiatives: it was as if there was an instinctive difference that came out in the preparation and collective discussion of the work to be done, and their voices counted less.

“The problem was in the group: it was the anodyne behavior, the unsaid, or even just someone blurting out ‘shut up!’ in the middle of a discussion... This shitty kind of discrimination wasn’t the result of any a priori decision, it was rather something that had been brought in from outside, something partly unconscious, something that came about without anyone really wanting it. Something that couldn’t be resolved by any ideological declaration or rational choice.”

– I. Faré, F. Spirito, *Mara and the Others*.

15 ^{BIS}

Because the terrible community is based on surreptitious relationships, it ends up inevitably sinking into the most residual and “primitive” kinds of relations. Women in the terrible community get assigned to the management of concrete things, to everyday matters, and men to violence and leadership. In this oppressive, devastating reproduction of obsolete sexual clichés, *the only possible relations between men and women are relations of seduction*. But since generalized seduction would make the terrible community explode, it is strictly confined to the heterosexual and monogamous couple-form, which dominates in it.

16

“It’s true that gangs are undermined by highly differentiated forces which set up internal centers of the conjugal and familial type within them, or of the governmental type, which allow them to enter into a completely different kind of sociability, replacing the herd affect by family emotions or

State intelligibility. The center, or internal black hole, takes on the primary role. It is there that evolutionism can progress, in this adventure that thus comes about in human groupings when they reconstitute a group familism, or even authoritarianism, a kind of herd fascism."

– Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

16^{BIS}

Friendships as well, within the terrible community, re-enter the stylized, underdeveloped imaginary world proper to all monogamous heterosexual society. Because interpersonal relations must never be discussed and are supposed to “go without saying,” the question of man-woman relationships doesn’t get approached, and is systematically resolved “like in the olden days,” that is, in a proto-bourgeois and proletarian-barbarian manner. Friendships thus remain rigorously monosexual, with the men and women mingling in an irreducible foreignness that allows them, once the right moment comes, to eventually comprise... a couple.

17

Familism does not in any way imply the existence of real families; on the contrary, its mass diffusion arises at the very moment that the family as closed entity bursts, contaminating with its fallout the whole sphere of relations which up to then escaped it. “Familism,” says Guattari, “consists in magically denying the social reality, avoiding all connection with real flows.” (*The Molecular Revolution*). When the terrible community, to reassure us, tells us that it’s

basically just “one big family,” all the arbitrariness, the confinement, morbidity and moralism that have always gone hand in hand with the family institution over the course of its historical existence are brought back into play; except that now, on the pretext of saving us, all of that is imposed on us *less the institution*; that is, *without our being able to denounce it*.

17^{BIS}

Humanity’s share of humiliation and degradation consists in the obligation they are made to assume to *constantly* exhibit their capacities by some form or other of mannish/viriloid performance. The *countertype* has no place in the emotional economy of the terrible community, where in the final analysis only stereotypes prevail; only the Leader, in fact, is *objectively* desirable. All other positions are untenable without the implicit avowal of a fundamental incapacity to exist in a singular sense; but the deviations from the stereotype are ceaselessly fed by the pitiless emotional metabolism of the terrible community. When the countertype, for instance, seeks to be freed from itself, it will be violently pushed back in the solitary confinement chamber of its “insufficiency.” The scapegoat-countertype operates as a kind of circus mirror deforming everyone, which reassures them while disturbing them.

Implicitly, one remains in the terrible community because of one’s not being either the Leader or the countertype, whereas these latter two remain in it *because they don’t have any choice*.

18

Each terrible community has its Leader, and vice-versa.

19

The Leader doesn't need to affirm himself; he can even *play the role* of the countertype or joke ironically about virility. His charisma doesn't need to be of the competitive/high-performance type, because it's objectively attested to by the terrible community's biometric desire parameters, and by the *effective* submission of other men and women. The terrible community is a community of cuckolds.

20

The fundamental sentiment that bonds the terrible community to its Leader isn't one of submission, but of *availability*, that is, a sophisticated variant of obedience. The time of the terrible community's members must permanently be filtered through the screen of availability: sexual availability towards the Leader, physical availability for the greatest variety of tasks, emotional availability to undergo whatever kind of injury from the inevitable distraction of others. In the terrible community, availability is the artistic introjection of discipline.

21

Both the desire of the Leader and the *desire to be* a Leader know themselves to be damned to inevitable defeat. Because the Leader's woman (no one fails to figure out) is the only one that isn't fooled by his seductive masquerading, to the extent that she sees the nothingness behind it every day: the private life of the rulers is always the most miserable of anyone's. In fact, within the terrible community the Leader is desirable like a sophisticated and haughty woman is in biopolitical democracy. The sexual desire that men and women feel towards the Leader, which wraps him in so intense an aura that it brings all gazes to spontaneously turn towards him, is none other than a desire for humiliation. One wants to strip the Leader naked, to see the Leader, without his dignity, really satisfy the solemn procession of the desires he excites — and prevail. Everyone hates the Leader, like men have hated women for millennia. At root, everyone wants to *tame* the Leader, because everyone hates the loyalty given him.

EVERYONE HATES HIS OWN LOVE FOR THE LEADER.

22

The personal, in the terrible community, *isn't* political.

23

The Leader is most often a man, since he acts in the name of the Father.

24

He who *sacrifices himself* acts in the name of the father. The Leader is, in effect, he who perpetuates the sacrificial form of the terrible community with his own sacrifice, and weighs upon others with his demands that they too make sacrifices. But since the Leader is not a Tyrant — while all the same being in every respect highly tyrannical — *he does not openly tell* others what to do; the Leader does not impose his will, he lets it impose itself by secretly guiding the desire of others, which in the final analysis is always simply the desire to please him. To the question, “what should I do?” the Leader will respond “Whatever you want,” since he knows that his existence within the terrible community in fact *prevents* others from wanting anything but what he wants.

25

He who acts in the name of the Father cannot be questioned. Where force sets itself up as an argument, discourse withdraws into small talk and idle chatter, or into making excuses. As long as there is a Leader — and his terrible community — there will be no parrhesia, and men, women, and the Leader himself will remain in exile. The Leader’s authority cannot enter into the discussion as long as the

facts prove that people love him while at the same time detesting their own love for him. It may happen that the Leader will put himself in question, and that's when another will take his place, or when the terrible community, now left *headless*, dies of a heart-rending hemorrhage.

26

The Leader *really* is the best of his group. He doesn't usurp anyone's place, and everyone knows it. He doesn't have to fight to win consensus, since it's him who sacrifices the most, or is the most sacrificed.

27

The Leader is never alone, since everyone's *behind* him, but at the same time he is the pure picture of solitude itself, the most tragic and duped figure in the terrible community. It is only by virtue of the fact that he is *already* at the mercy of the cynicism and cruelty of others (those who are not in his shoes) that the Leader is at times truly loved and cherished.

IV. FORM

On the reasons for the existence of the hated ones and how today's brothers become tomorrow's enemies.

On the discreet charm of illegality and its hidden traps.

1

The terrible community is a post-authoritarian power apparatus. It doesn't have any bureaucracy or constraint about it in appearances, but the fact that it produces so much verticality within its informal nature it needs to take recourse to archaic configurations, the bygone roles that still survive in the congested crevices of the collective unconscious. In this sense the family is not so much its organizational model as it is its direct antecedent in the production of informal constraint and of the indissoluble cohabitation of hatred and love.

2

As post-authoritarian formations, the corporations of the "new economy" constitute terrible communities in the fullest sense. And no one should see any contradiction in the similarity between capitalism's avant-gardes and the avant-gardes of its opposition: they are both prisoners of the same economic principle, the same need for efficiency and organization, even if they set themselves up on different terrain. *They in fact serve the same modalities of the circulation of power, and in that sense they are politically quite near one another.*

3

The terrible community, in that sense similar to biopolitical democracy, is a device that governs the passage from potential to

action among individuals and groups. Within this device, only the ends and the means to attain them appear, and *the means to no end* that surreptitiously preside over this process never appears because it is none other than ECONOMY. The roles, rights, possibilities, and impossibilities are distributed within it on the basis of *economic* criteria.

4

As long as the terrible community uses its enemy's economic performance practices as an alibi to justify its own, it will never escape a single one of its impasses.

“Strategy,” that hobbyhorse of terrible communities, in reality only betrays the incestuous proximity between critique and its object, a proximity which most often ends up becoming a familiarity — a family relation even — one so tight that it's difficult to untangle them.

The aimed-for demands, insofar as they don't involve destroying the context that gave birth to them, or in other words, the exposures of the gearworks of power that don't seek to demolish them, end up sooner or later going down the poetry-less path of management, and thus bring us back to the roots of all terrible communities.

5

Informality, in the terrible community, is always ruled by a very rigid implicit distribution of responsibilities. It is only on the basis

of an *explicit modification of responsibilities and their priorities* that the circulation of power can be modified.

6

The terrible community is the continuation of classical politics by other means. I call “classical politics” the politics that puts at its center a closed subject, one that in its right-wing variants is full and sufficient unto itself, and, in its left-wing variants, a subject that is in a state of contingent incompleteness due to circumstances to be transformed so as to regain a kind of monadic sufficiency.

7

The terrible community, in the end, can't *exclude* anybody, because it doesn't have any explicit laws or form. It can only include.

In order to renew itself, it must thus gradually destroy those who are part of it, on pain of complete stagnation. It lives off sacrifice, since sacrifice is the condition for belonging to it. That alone, after all, is the basis for its members' ephemeral and reciprocal trust in each other. If it were otherwise, would it have such a great need for action? Would it deserve such a dedication to its renewal through such frenetic agitation?

7 BIS

The less a community feels the sensation of its own existence, the more it will feel the need to actualize its own simulacrum outside

itself, in activism, in compulsive gathering, and finally in permanent, metastatic self-accusation. The nearly insatiable collective self-critique that both the management of the avant-gardes and the groups of informal neo-militants more and more visibly give themselves over to, shows clearly enough how decisively weak their feeling that they exist is.

8

Certain terrible communities of struggle were founded by the survivors of a shipwreck, a war, or any kind of devastation at all, as long as it had a certain breadth of impact. The survivors' memory is thus not the memory of the vanquished, but the memory of *those that were made to sit out the fight*.

8 BIS

For this reason, the terrible community is born as an exile within an exile, a memory at the heart of forgetting, an incommunicable tradition. The survivor is never he who was at the center of the disaster, but he who managed to keep out of it, who lived on the margins of it. In the time of the terrible community, the margin has become the center and the concept of a center has lost all its validity.

9

The terrible community has no foundation because it has no consciousness of its beginning and has no fate; it records itself as it goes along, like something that was always already past, and so it

only sees itself through others' eyes, through repetitions, anecdotes: "do you remember that time when..."

10

The terrible community is a present that passes by and does not transcend itself, and that's why it has no tomorrow. It has crossed the faint line that separates resistance from persistence, the *deja-vu* of amnesia.

11

The terrible community only feels its own existence when it has crossed over into illegality. And anyway, all sado-masochistic human exchanges *outside of commodity relations* are devoted in the end to illegality, as the violent metaphor for the surreptitious misery of this era. It's only in illegality that the terrible community perceives itself and ek-sists, negatively of course, as something outside the sphere of legality, as a creation freeing itself from itself. While never recognizing legality as something legitimate, the terrible community has nevertheless still managed to make the negation of it the space of its existence.

11 BIS

The terrible community forms fleeting alliances with the oppressed on a masochistic basis, even if it means finding itself quickly put back in the unassumable role of the sadist. It thus accompanies the excluded down the road of integration, and watches them distance

themselves, full of ingratitude, and become that which it had wanted to defeat.

12

(on being deprived of secrecy. Remorse — Infamy).

The strength and fragility of the terrible community is the way it inhabits risk. In effect, it only lives intensely when it finds itself to be endangered. This danger has to do with the remorse of its members. This remorse — *from the point of view of the hated* — is far from being illegitimate since he who has regrets is he who has had an “illumination”: under the gaze of the inquisitor’s suspicious eye, it suddenly recognizes itself as a member of the suspected project. It affirms a truth that it has never really lived out, one that it hadn’t even thought that any such inquisition would require of it.

12 BIS

All repenters are essentially mythomaniacs (just like those who claim to have seen the virgin Mary); they act out their own schizophrenia for authority. In so doing, they become *individuals*, but without having faced up to their dividuality; they think themselves — or rather they’d like to think themselves — to finally be in the right, to be coherent. They exchange their real past complicity for a non-existent complicity with the same enemy as always; they take themselves for the enemy. And this becomes effective as soon as they start to repent/regret things, it should be said in passing. But the hated ones can only trade out their

unconscious and moderately destructive sado-masochism for another sado-masochism, which this time is consciously and ethically disgraceful. They sacrifice the duplicity of the schizophrenic only to fall into that of the traitor.

13

“Women were treated like sex objects, except when they were participating in actions; then they were treated like men. Only then were there any kind of equal relations. They often did more than the men, they really had more courage. ...And that’s how, for the first time, the traitor problem arose: because of the group’s insensibility. ... Hella and Anne-Katrine said nothing about me; I was the only one in the group that didn’t get busted. I had a different kind of relationship with them; it was the great love they both had for me...”

– Bommi Baumann, *How It All Began*

13 BIS

Once the repentant has revealed the truth about the terrible community, he is condemned because the community lives off the ignorance of its secret, and is protected by its shadow instead of protecting it. The shameful secrets of the terrible communities end up in the indifferent mouths of the Lawmen, and the surrounding hypocrisy that had maintained them pretends not to have known those secrets. The accomplices of yesterday are scandalized, and enter their future hatred as an informer or deserter.

And so, pedophilia, spousal rape, corruption, mafia-style blackmail — which were all accepted as founding behaviors of the dominant ethos until just yesterday — are today denounced as criminal behaviors.

14

The need for justice is a *need for punishment*. And here we can see the full flowering out of the common, sado-masochistic roots that rule over the ethical conformity of terrible communities and their unspoken bond with the Empire.

15

(On being deprived of danger: legalization — the betrayal of ideals)

The embrace that holds together the ruins of biopolitical democracies, the grip of biopower, resides in the possibility of depriving terrible communities of their freedom to live in risk at any given moment. This is done with a double move: a simultaneous movement of subtraction and repression, either: violence, and addition-legitimation, or: condescension. By these two movements biopower deprives the terrible community of its space of existence and condemns it to persistence because it is biopower that delimits the zone that will be reserved for the terrible communities. By operating in this way it transforms utopia into atopia, and heteropia into dystopia. Localized and clearly identified, the terrible community, which does all it can to escape any mapping, becomes *a space like any other*.

15^{BIS}

It is by synchronizing the muddy and informal time of the terrible community to the temporality outside it that biopower deprives the terrible community of the space of risk and danger. It is enough for biopower to simply *recognize* the terrible community for it to lose the power to break the well-ordered course of the disaster with the eruption of its clandestinity. From the moment that the terrible community falls under the same head as so many other cracks in publicity, it is immediately located and territorialized within a place outside-of-legality which is immediately encompassed *as something outside*.

16

Once again it is the invisibility of the terrible community to itself that puts it at the mercy of a unilateral recognition with which it *cannot interact* in any way.

16^{BIS}

Though the terrible community refuses the principle of representation, it does not for all that escape it. The terrible community's invisibility to itself makes it infinitely vulnerable to the gaze of others, since, and this is well-known, the terrible community *only exists in the eyes of others*.

V. THOSE THAT REMAIN, THOSE THAT DEPART

People that live like sleepwalkers.

Broken hearts and heartbreakers.

Another few notes on the bad use of good intentions.

*(Like how strategy alone is not enough, and human relations are not a
“matter of psychoanalysis”)*

“Aber Freunde! Wir kommen zu spat!”

(My friends, we’ve come too late!)

— Hölderlin

1

One enters the terrible community because anyone who goes looking in the desert finds nothing else. One traverses the rickety and provisional human architecture. At first one falls in love. And upon first entering it one feels that it was built with tears and suffering, and that it needs still more in order to go on existing, but that doesn't matter much. The terrible community is above all a space of self-sacrifice, and that's disturbing; it awakens the "reflex of concern."

2

But relationships within the terrible community are all worn out; they're not so young anymore (alas!) when we arrive. Like the pebbles in the bed of a fast-flowing creek, the gazes, gestures, and attention have already been eroded, consumed. Something's tragically amiss in life within the terrible community, since indulgence doesn't have any place in it anymore, and friendship, so often betrayed, is only granted with an oppressive stinginess.

Whether we like it or not, those who pass through, those who enter in, pay for the misdeeds of others. And those they'd like to love are already quite visibly too damaged to give an ear to their good intentions.

"It will pass in time..." And so the mistrust of others has to be defeated, and more precisely, one must learn to be mistrustful *like the others* in order that the terrible community might yet open up its

emaciated arms. And it is by one's capacity to be *hard* on the new initiates that one demonstrates one's solidarity with the terrible community.

2 BIS

"This cruelty could be found in their laughter, in what made them happy, in the way they communicated with one another, in the way they lived and died. The misfortune of others was their greatest source of joy, and I asked myself whether in their minds that reduced or increased the probability that they might see that misfortune strike they themselves. But personal misfortune was in fact not so much a probability but a certainty. Cruelty was thus inherently part of them, of their humor, their relationships, their thoughts. And yet, so great was their isolation as individuals, that I don't think they could ever have imagined that their cruelty had any effect on others."

– Colin Turnbull, *The Iks*

2 TER

In the terrible community one always arrives *too late*.

3

The terrible community draws its strength from its violence. Its violence is its true logic and its true challenge. But it does not arrive at an understanding of the consequences, since instead of making use of it to charm people, it makes a use of it to drive away

everything that is outside of it, and to rip apart that which is inside of it. The extreme justice of its violence is undermined by its refusal to examine the origins of that violence, because though PEOPLE say that it does, it doesn't come from a hatred of the enemy.

4

The terrible community is a hemorrhagic community. Its *temporality* is hemorrhagic, because the time of heroes is a time lived out as if it were a lapse, a degradation, a missed chance, a *deja-vu*. Beings do not make events take place therein, but wait for them as spectators. And in this waiting their life bleeds out in an activism that's supposed to occupy and prove the existence of the present until it's totally exhausted.

Rather than talking about passivity here, we should talk about a kind of agitated inertia. Because no position presents itself as definitively acquired in the decomposition of the social body for which biopolitical democracy is a synonym, a maximum inertia and a maximum mobility are also possible in it. But in order to permit mobility, a "structure of movement" has to be put in place to constitute an architecture that people can traverse. In the terrible community, this is done with the use of singularities that accept inertia even if in so doing they make the community possible and radically impossible at the same time. The Leader alone has the thankless task of *managing* and regulating the unobtainable balance between the inert and the agitated.

4 BIS

To the precise extent that the terrible community is based on the division between its static and mobile members, it has already lost its bet; it has failed as a community.

5

The faces of the inert ones bring up the most painful memories for those who have passed through the terrible community. Fated to teach something that they themselves have not managed to take on, the inert ones often watch over others like melancholic policemen stationed on the edges of desert territories.

They live in a space that certainly does belong to them, but since it is structurally public, they are just there, at each moment, *just like anyone else is*. They cannot demand the right to a place in that space, because the prior renunciation of such a right was what allowed them to get there in the first place. The inert ones live in the community like homeless people living in the train station, but every step treads upon them, because they themselves are the train station, and its construction is congruent with the construction of their lives.

The inert ones are hopeless, absent-minded angels, who having found no life in any recess of the world, have taken up residence in a place of passage. They may immerse themselves in the community for a certain indeterminate period of time, but their solitude is infinitely impervious.

6

Everybody knows those who still remain there. They are appreciated and detestable, like anyone who takes care of and remains in places where others live and pass through (the nurse, the mother, the old folks, the public park watchmen). They are the false mirror of freedom, they, the regulars, the slaves of an abnormal servitude that fills them with a resplendent light: the fighters, the diehards, those with no private life, no peace. They end up seeking the rage they need for the fight in their mutilated lives; they attribute their wounds to noble and imaginary battles, when they've really just hurt themselves by preparing themselves for them to the point of exhaustion. Truth be told, they've never had the chance to go down into the field of battle: the enemy does not acknowledge them, and takes them for simply some kind of interference, and with its indifference to them pushes them to madness, to ordinary insignificance, to suicidal offensives. The alphabet of biopower lacks the letters to spell their names; for it, they have already disappeared, but remain like restless phantoms. They are dead, and survive only in the transit of the faces that traverse them, upon which they get more or less of a grip, with whom they share their table, their bed, their struggle, until the passers-by leave, or until they themselves begin to fade and remain there, becoming the inert ones of tomorrow.

6 BIS

"Many of the women in the groups had had experience as employees or secretaries. They brought all the efficiency of professionalism with them to

the groups when they left work. Nothing had changed for them from that perspective, aside from the fact that they were now undertaking armed struggle. ...The meetings were the houses' vital and center, their center of "meaning." For the rest, since the material conditions of everyday life focused entirely on the external struggle, there were no problems. We make enormous shopping runs to the supermarket, and when we'd ensured that we'd have food and somewhere to sleep, there weren't any internal issues."

– I. Faré, F. Spirito, *Mara And The Others*

7

The most dead and the most implacable of the inert ones are those who have been abandoned. Those whose friend or lover had left them stay behind, because all that's left of the person that had disappeared remained in the terrible community, and in the eyes of those who had seen him or her there. Someone who's lost the person he or she loves has nothing left to lose, and often they give that nothing to the terrible community.

7 BIS

"...the war against an external enemy pacifies those who are engaged in the same struggle, more or less by a forced necessity; belonging to a group unified by absolute revolt does not leave any room for differences or internal struggles; fraternity becomes indispensable daily bread in those moments when the deepest contradictions are not exploding. Internal pacification is a moment of asepsis projected on the gigantic screen of the struggle 'against.'"

– I. Faré, F. Spirito, *Mara And The Others*

8

The horizon, for militants, is the line towards which they must always march. Because all the ones they've lost are over there somewhere, far away.

VI. NOTES TOWARDS A KIND OF TRANSCENDENCE

*a few prescriptions for transcending the present misery: non-exhaustive,
non-programmatic mentions...*

“Oh, my brothers, my children, my comrades; I loved you for all my anger but didn’t know how to tell you, I didn’t know how to live with you, I couldn’t manage to reach you, to touch your cold souls, your deserted hearts! I found no words of good cheer, no living words to force your chests full of air with laughter! I had lost the vicious rage to see you stand up, the rage to gaze upon you with open eyes, I had lost the language to express to you my refusal to see you growing old before having really lived at all, letting down your arms without having lifted them first, going down without having wanted to go up. I wasn’t strong enough to fight off sleep, to keep it from throwing you out of the world and out of time, to drive it far away from you, because myself in turn, season by season, I too was weakening; I felt my limbs softening, my thoughts coming apart, my anger disappearing, and your non-existence winning me over...”

– J. Lefebvre, *The Consolation Society*

1

Whatever it may be, the terrible community is *like* everything else, because it is *in* everything else.

2

Biopolitical democracy and terrible community — the one insofar as it is a self-evident part of the distribution of force relations, and the other insofar as it is the effective substrate beneath immediate relations — constitute the two poles of the present domination. To where the power relations that rule over biopolitical democracies cannot, properly speaking, realize themselves *without* terrible communities, which form the ethical groundwork for that realization. More precisely, the terrible community is the *passionate* form of this self-evidence, which alone allows it to be deployed in concrete territories.

In the final analysis it is only by means of the terrible community that the Empire manages to parse the most heterogeneous social relations semiotically in the *form* of biopolitical democracy: in the absence of terrible communities, the social self-evidence of political democracy would have no *body* upon which to exert itself. None of the phenomena where the archaic and the hypersophisticated are entangled within the Empire (neo-slavery, globalized prostitution, corporate neo-feudalism, human trafficking of all kinds) can be explained without reference to that mediation.

This in no way means that there's any kind of subversive value to the gestures of destruction aimed at the terrible community. As a regime of effectuation of that self-evidence, the terrible community has no vitality of its own. There's nothing about it that puts it into any kind of condition to morph into anything else, to put beings in a dramatically changed relationship to the state of things; *nothing to be saved*. And it's a fact that the present is now so completely saturated with terrible communities that the emptiness that any partial, voluntary rupture with them comes to be filled in again with a terrifying quickness.

If it is therefore absurd to ask what to do with the terrible communities, since they're always already made and always already in a process of dissolution, and reduce to silence all internal non-submission (parrhesia and everything else along with it), it is on the other hand of vital importance that one understand in what concrete conditions of solidarity the biopolitical democracies and terrible communities might be destroyed. A certain kind of perspective on them has to be taken up, a "thief's gaze," which from the interior of the apparatus materializes the possibility of escaping it. Sharing this gaze, the most lively bodies will bring about that which the terrible community, even in spite of itself, blindly exudes: its own dissolution.

Because the terrible communities are never really duped by their own lie, they are just attached to their blindness, which allows them to subsist.

2 BIS

We have given the name of *terrible community* to all milieus that are constituted on the basis of the sharing of the same ignorances — and *also* the ignorance, it so happens, of the evil that produced them. Vitalist criteria, which would consider the malaise felt inside a human formation as the touchstone for seeing a terrible community in it, are quite often inoperable. The most “successful” of terrible communities teach their members to love their own failings and to make them likeable. In this sense, the terrible community is not the place where one suffers the most, but just the place where one is the least free.

3

The terrible community is a presence within absence, because it is incapable of existing in and of itself, but only relative to something else, something outside of it. It is thus by unmasking not just the compromises or failures, but the surreptitious family relations of the terrible community that we can abandon them as false alternatives to the dominant socialization. It is by turning its *slanderous* schizophrenia — “you’re not *only* with us; you’re not pure enough” — back into a *infectious* schizophrenia — “everyone is with us *too*, and that is what will undermine the present order” — that the members of the terrible community can escape the *double bind* that they’re walled up in.

4

It's not by getting rid of some particular leader that one can get free of the terrible community; the vacant place will soon be taken up by another, because the Leader is merely the personification of everybody else's desire to be led. Whatever anyone may say, the Leader participates in the terrible community much more than he leads it. He is its secretion and its tragedy, its model and its nightmare. It only takes the emotional education of each person to subjectivize and desubjectivize the Leader differently than he himself does. Desire and power are never chained to any particular unique configuration; it's enough just to make them waltz together to throw their whole dance out of whack.

Often, a certain skeptical look is enough to demolish the Leader *as such* in a lasting way, and in so doing, to destroy his place.

5

All the weakness of the terrible community has to do with its closure, its incapacity to get out of itself. Since it's not a living whole, just a wobbly construction, it is as incapable of acquiring an interior life as it is of feeding it with joy. And thus the mistake of having confused happiness with transgression is paid for, because it is by starting from the latter that the system of unwritten, and thus all the more implacable, rules of the terrible community continually re-form themselves.

6

The fear of “recuperation” so typical of the terrible community can be explained as follows: it is the best justification for its closure and moralism. On the pretext that “we won’t sell out,” we prohibit ourselves from understanding that we’ve been bought off already *so that we’ll stay where we are*. Resistance, here, thus becomes retention: the old temptation to chain beauty to her sister, death, which made the Orientals fill their birdcages with magnificent birds who would never again see the open skies, which made jealous fathers keep their prettiest daughters locked away at home, and the greedy to fill up their cupboards with gold bullion, finally ends up invading the terrible community. So much imprisoned beauty withers away.

And even the princesses shut away in their towers know that the arrival of prince charming is but the prelude to spousal segregation, that what must be done is to abolish both the prisons and the liberators at the same time, that what we need isn’t programs for liberation but *practices of freedom*.

No escape is possible from the terrible community without the creation of an insurrectionary situation, and vice-versa. Now, far from preparing insurrectionary conditions, the definition of the self as an illusory difference, as a *substantially other* being, is but a conscience-related remnant determined by the absence of such conditions. The demand for a coherent identity for each person is equivalent to the demand for a generalized castration, a diffuse self-policing.

6 BIS

The end of the terrible community coincides with its opening to events: and it is around events that singularities aggregate, and learn to cooperate and touch one another. The terrible community, as an entity animated by an inexhaustible desire for self-preservation, filters all possibilities through the sieve of compatibility with its existence instead of organizing itself around their outpouring.

This is why all terrible communities have a defensive conspiracy relationship with events and conceive of their relationship with the possibilities in terms of production or exclusion, always tempted as it is by the optional possibility that it might master them, always secretly drawn by their totalitarian latency.

7

“A man’s worth is not determined according to the useful labor he supplies, but according to the contagious force that he has to draw others into the free expenditure of their energy, their joy, and their lives: a human being is not merely a stomach to be filled but an excess of energy to be lavished.”

– Bataille

We know from experience that in passionate life — and thus in life itself — nothing’s paid for, the one that wins out is always the one that gives the most, the one who knows how best to enjoy it.

Organizing the circulation of other forms of pleasure means feeding a power that is the enemy of all the logic of oppression. It is true, then, that *in order to not lose power one must have a lot of it*.

Counterposing to the combinations of power another register, one of *play*, is not equivalent to condemning oneself to not being taken seriously, but to making oneself the bearer of another economy of expenditure and recognition. The margin of enjoyment that exists within the games of *power* feeds off reciprocally exchanged sacrifices and humiliations, the pleasure of commanding is a pleasure *one pays for*, and in that sense the model of biopolitical domination is completely compatible with all the religions that flayed the flesh, with the work ethic, with the prison system, just as much as commodity and hedonist logic are compatible with the absence of desire that such logic mitigates.

In reality the terrible community never manages to contain the potential becoming inherent in each and every form-of-life, and that's what permits it to damage their internal force relations, and question even power's post-authoritarian forms.

8

All human aggregations that set themselves up in an exclusively offensive or siege-related perspective *is* a terrible community.

To finish with the terrible community, we must first renounce *defining* ourselves as the substantial 'outside' of what, in so doing, we *create* as an 'outside' — "society," "competition," "the Blooms," or whatever else. The true 'elsewhere' left to us to create cannot be

sedentary; it is a new coherence between beings and things, a violent dance that gives its rhythm to life, cadenced at present by the macabre rhythms of industrial civilization, a reinvention of play between singularities — a new art of distances.

9

Evasion is like opening a sealed-off door: first you get the impression that your eyes have to adjust to a shorter distance; then you take your eyes off the horizon and start arranging the details in order to get out.

But evasion is simply escape: It leaves the prison intact. What we need is total *desertion*, an escape that simultaneously annihilates the whole prison.

There is no individual desertion, properly speaking. Each deserter takes away with him a bit of the troops' morale. By his simple existence, he is the refusal in acts of the official order, and all the relationships that he enters into are contaminated by the radical nature of his situation.

For the deserter it's a matter of life or death, and the relationships he enters do not fail to know his solitude, his finiteness, nor his exposedness.

10

The fundamental presupposition of a human aggregation freed of the grip of the terrible community is a new conjugation of these

three fundamental coordinates of *physical* existence: solitude, finiteness, and exposedness. In the terrible community, these coordinates come together on the plane of fear along the axis of the imperatives of survival. Because it is fear that supplies the necessary consistency to all the phantoms which accompany an existence folded under those imperatives — in the first rank of which fall the phantom of penury which is so often introjected as the a priori, supra-historical horizon of the “human condition.”

In his *Presentation of Sacher-Masoch*, Deleuze demonstrates that beyond the psychiatric fixation of masochism on perversion and the caricature of the masochist in the sadist counter-type, Masoch's novels stage a systematic game of the disparagement of the symbolic order of the Father, a game which implies — that is, which presupposes it at the same time as it puts it into acts — a community of affections transcending the sharing of bodies between men and women; all the elements that comprise the masochist scene converge in the sought-after effect: the practical ridicule of the symbolic order of the Father and the deactivation of its essential attributes — the indefinite suspension of grief and the systematic rarefaction of the object of desire.

All devices which aim to produce among us a personal identification with practices characterized by domination are equally intended — even if it is not their exclusive intent — to produce in us a feeling of shame, the shame of being ourselves as much as just of being a human being, a resentment that aims to make us identify with domination. And it's this shame and resentment that supply the vital space for the continual replication of the order and action of the Leader.

Here we find confirmation of the existence of the inextricable *nexus* between fear and superstition which is seen at the dawn of all revolutions; between the crisis of presence and the indefinite suspension of grief, between the *economy of need* and the *absence of desire*. We say that in passing, and only to remind the reader of how deep the stratification runs within the process of subjugation that upholds the existence of the terrible community at the present time.

In what way can we generalize “Masoch’s game,” and, dismissing the choice between domination and submission, evolve towards a *human strike*?

In what way can the act of playing with the *nexus* of domination produce a transcendence of the theatrical staging phase, and leave an open range for the free expression of practicable forms-of-life?

And, to return to our original question, in what way can such forms-of-life once again bring together solitude, finiteness, and exposedness?

This question is a question for a new kind of emotional education to address, one that will inculcate a sovereign contempt for all positions of power, undermine the injunction to desire it, and liberate us from the feeling that we are *responsible* for our whatever-being, and thus solitary, finite, and exposed.

No one is responsible for the place they occupy, only for their identification with their own role.

The potential of every terrible community is thus a potential to exist *inside* of its subjects in its absence.

To free ourselves from it, we'll have to start by learning to inhabit the gap between us and ourselves, which, left open, becomes the space filled by the terrible community.

Then, to free ourselves from our identifications, to become unfaithful to ourselves, to *desert ourselves*.

Training ourselves to become the space for such a desertion for one another,

Finding in each encounter a chance to decisively subtract ourselves from our own existential space,

Measuring to find that only an infinitesimal fraction of our vitality has been removed from us by the terrible community, and been installed within the enormous machinery of devices,

Feeling in ourselves the foreign being that has always already deserted us, who gives us the basis for all possibility of living out solitude as the precondition for encounters, finiteness as the precondition for unprecedented pleasures, exposedness as the precondition for a new geometry of passions,

Offering ourselves as a space of infinite flight,

The masters of a new art of distances.

Aber das Irrsal hilft.

(But it helps to wander.)

— Hölderlin

UNTITLED NOTES ON IMMIGRATION

1

All movements go beyond the final aims they give themselves, by their simple existence in acts. The content of the struggle whose slogan is “citizenship papers for all!” obviously goes beyond this slogan; otherwise there would be no way of explaining why it mobilizes so many militants who, themselves, have citizenship. If someone were actually to limit themselves to demanding citizenship for everyone and pretended that that was all they wanted, they’d find themselves in a contradiction: if everyone had citizenship, the green cards themselves would be worthless. So anyone asking for “citizenship papers for all” is also, from an objective point of view, also asking that citizenship papers themselves ultimately be made worthless, destroyed. In other words, the real content of the demand “citizenship papers for all!” could also be formulated as: everyone must have citizenship papers so that we can all burn them.

2

The existence of the proletariat, of the man dispossessed of everything, such as the “illegal immigrants,” since he has no acknowledged rights, represents a figure, and as such is an occasion for a total indictment of the society that produced it, or the way to make everything that it produces desirable. An “illegal” who would really ask for no more than the right to be part of an essentially worthless world must not think that he’s worth any more than that.

3

Identity papers comprise the archaic form of an oppression that has now become much more subtle. By furnishing a person with an identity, Power, in appearances, acknowledges that person’s existence. In fact, it is only acknowledging itself, that is, one of the identities it allows for. In order to exert itself, Power needs to make an identity for everyone, then to file them under that identity. Liberalism has no problem with such kinds of control mechanisms, which are the furthest thing from “liberal.”

4

Refusing the “case by case” or the “regularization upon demand” approaches, means refusing such a Power as that, which operates through individualization, by subjectivation. The refusal to be, paradoxically, ID’ed as someone non-ID’ed.

5

The necessary solidarity between the carded and non-carded, between those that have citizenship papers and those that don’t, must take place against the principle of ID’ing, against the principle of citizenship papers. The present struggle tactically aims to give everyone citizenship papers, then strategically it aims to abolish them as such.

THE PROBLEM OF THE HEAD

Democracy reposes upon a neutralization of antagonisms relatively weak and free; it excludes all explosive condensation... the only free society full of life and force, the sole free society is the bi or polycephal society that gives to the fundamental antagonisms of life a constant explosive outlet, but limited to the richest forms. The duality or the multiplicity of heads tends to realize in the same movement the acephalous character of existence, for the principle even of the head is reduction to unity, reduction of the world to God.

— *Acephale*, January 1937

I consider all the acts of the “avant-gardes” in their supposed succession. They all come out with an injunction, with a commandment: a commandment regarding how to understand them. The “avant-gardes” demand to be treated in a certain fashion; I do not believe that they ever were anything else, all told, than this demand, and the submission to this demand.

I listen to the history of the Red Brigades, of the Situationist International, of Futurism, of Bolshevism or Surrealism. I refuse to grasp them cerebrally, I raise my finger to search for a contact: I feel nothing. Or rather I do feel something: the sensation of an empty intensity.

I observe the defile of avant-gardes: they never cease to exhaust themselves in tension against themselves. The scandalous actions, purges, grand dates, noisy ruptures, orientation debates, campaigns of agitation, and splits are milestones on the road to their termination. Torn between the present state of the world and the final state toward which the avant-garde must guide the human

herd, ripped apart in the suffocating tension between that which is and that which must be, waylaid in the organizational auto-theatricalization of itself, in the verbal contemplation of its own power projected into the heavens of the masses and of History, failing, without stop, to live nothing if it is not by the mediation of the always already historical representation of each of its movements, the avant-garde turns round in the ignorance of self that consumes it. Then it collapses on this side of birth, yet without even coming to its proper beginning. The most ingenuous question on the subject of avant-gardes — that of knowing as the avant-garde of what, exactly, they regard themselves — finds there its response: the avant-gardes are first in the avant-garde of pursuing themselves.

I speak here in so much as a participant in the chaos that develops at present around Tiqqun. I do not say “us”; no one can, without usurpation, speak in the name of a collective adventure. The best that I can do is to speak anonymously, not of but in the experience I take part in. The avant-garde, at all costs, will not be treated as an exterior demon that one must always guard against.

There is therefore an avant-garde comprehension of “avant-gardes”, an act of “avant-gardes” that is in no manner distinct from the avant-garde itself. One could not explain without this, as the articles, studies, essays and hagiographies of which they are still the object can invariably leave even the impression of second hand work, of supplemental speculation. For one only does the history of a history, that upon which one discourses is in already a kind of discourse.

Whoever was one day seduced by one among the avant-gardes, whoever let themselves be filled by their autarchic legend had not missed experiencing, in contact with one or the other layman, this vertigo: the degree of indifference of the mass of humans to their good work, the impenetrable character of this indifference and beneath all this the insolent happiness that the laity dare, all the same, to manifest in their ignorance. The vertigo of which I speak is not that which separates two divergent consciousnesses of reality, but two distinct structures of presence — the one that reposes on itself, the other that is suspended in an infinite projection behind itself. Thenceforth one understands that the avant-garde is a subjective regime, and not a substantial reality.

Useless to specify as to characterize this regime of subjectivation, it would be necessary at first to extract it; and what consents to this division exposes itself to the loss of a great number of enchantments, and is rarely long in being taken with a permanent melancholy. In effect, seen from this angle, the brilliant, virtuous universe of avant-gardes offers rather the aspect of a ghostly idealization of a noisome heap of wrinkled corpses. Those who would like to find something palatable in this vision must therefore place themselves in sort of a calculated naivety, done well, so as to dissipate such a compact haze of nothingness. To this reasonable understanding of avant-gardes corresponds an abrupt sentiment of our common humanity.

THREE WATCHWORDS

In all domains, the avant-gardist regime of subjectivation signals itself by the recourse to a “watchword”. The watchword is the discourse of which the avant-garde is the subject. “Transform the world”, “change life”, and “create situations” form a trinity, the most popular trinity of watchwords launched by the avant-garde in a century. One could remark with some ill-wishing that in the same interval nothing has transformed the world, changed life or created situations save commodity domination, that is to say the declared enemy of avant-gardes, as it becomes imperial; and that this permanent revolution Empire has most often led without phrases; but in resting there, one deludes oneself as to the target. What must be remarked is rather the unequalled power of inhibition of these watchwords, their terrible power of sideration. In each of them, the dynamic effect expected rebounds according to an identical principle. The avant-garde exhorts the mass-man, the Bloom, to take for its object something always already understood — the situation, life, the world — and to place in front of him that which is by essence all around him, to affirm themselves in so much as subject against that which is precisely neither subject nor object, but rather the indiscernability of the one and the other. It is curious that this avant-garde never sounded the injunction to be a subject as violently as between the 1910’s and 1970’s, that is to say in the historic moment where the material conditions of the illusion of the subject tended to disappear the most drastically. At the same time, this evidences well enough the reactive character of the avant-garde. This paradoxical injunction thus must not have had the effect of throwing Occidental Man into the assault of the diffuse

Bastilles of Empire, but more rather obtained in him a split, a rupture, a schizoid destruction of me in the confine of myself, a confine where the world, life, and situations, in brief his proper existence, would be henceforth apprehended as estranged, as purely objective. This precise constitution of subject, reduced to contemplate itself in the midst of that which surrounded it, could be characterized as aesthetic, in the sense where the arrival of the Bloom also corresponds to a generalized aestheticization of experience.

GOING TO THE MASSES RATHER THAN STARTING FROM SELF

In June 1935, Surrealism came to the last supportable limits of its project of forming the total avant-garde. After eight years passed trying to hold itself in the service of the French Communist Party, a too-thick flood of camouflages made it take note of its definitive disaccord with Stalinism. A discourse written by Breton, but read by Eluard at the "Congress of writers in defense of culture" must thus mark the last contact of importance between Surrealism and the PCF, between the artistic avant-garde and the political avant-garde. Its conclusion has remained famous: "'Transform the world' said Marx; 'change life' said Rimbaud: for us these two watchwords are one". Breton did not only formulate the frustrated hope of a rapprochement, he also expressed the intimate connection between artistic and political avant-gardism, their common aesthetic nature. Ergo, in the same manner as Surrealism held itself towards the PCF, the PCF held itself towards the proletariat. In *The Militants*, written in 1949, Arthur Koestler delivers precious evidence of this form of schizophrenia, of the ventriloquism of class that is so remarkable in the discourse of Surrealism, but less often recognized in the delinquent KPD of the start of the 30's: "A particular trait of the life of the Party, in this era, was the 'cult of the proletarian' and the hatred of intellectuals. That was the distress and obsession of all the Communist intellectuals who had issued from the middle class. We were tolerated in the Movement, but we did not have full rights: we had to convince them day and night...an intellectual could never become a veritable proletarian, but his duty was to approximate this as much as possible. Certain attempted to renounce ties,

wearing working-class sweaters and keeping their nails black. But such a snobbish imposture was not officially encouraged." He adds for its own sake: "In as much as I had only suffered from hunger, I considered myself as a provisional offshoot of the *déclassé* bourgeoisie. But since in 1931 I finally assured myself of a satisfactory situation, I felt that the hour had come to expand the ranks of the proletariat." Therefore, if there is a watchword, certainly unformulated, that the avant-garde never failed, it is this: go to the masses rather than start from self. It is also relevant that the man of the avant-garde, after having gone to the masses for a whole life without ever finding them — at least where he waited for them — consecrates his old age to deriding them. The man of the avant-garde could be the sort, advancing in years, to take the advantageous pose of the man of the *Ancien Regime* and to make of his rancor a profitable business. In this manner he will always live under certainly changing ideological latitudes, but always in the shadow of the masses that he himself invented.

TO BE TOTALLY CLEAR

Our time is a battle. This begins to be known. At stake is the bypassing of metaphysics, or more exactly the *Verwindung* of this, a bypassing that will in the first place remain close at hand. Empire designates the ensemble of forces that work to conjure this *Verwindung* to indefinitely prolong the suspension of the epoch. The wiliest strategy put in the service of this project, that which must be suspected everywhere there is a question of “post-modernity”, is to push for a so-called aesthetic surpassing of the metaphysical. Naturally, one who knows to what aporetic metaphysics this logic of surpassing would lead us, and who thus perceives in what deceitful manner aesthetics can serve from now on as refuge for the same metaphysics — the “modern” metaphysics of subjectivity — will guess without trouble exactly where Empire would like to arrive by this maneuver. But what is this menace, this *Verwindung* that Empire concentrates so many apparatuses to conjure? This *Verwindung* is nothing other than the ethical assumption of the metaphysical, and by that as well of the aesthetic, in so much as it is the ultimate form of aesthetics. The avant-garde appears precisely at this point as center of confusion. On one side, the avant-garde is led to produce the illusion of a possible aesthetical surpassing of the metaphysical, but on another side there is always, in the avant-garde, something that exceeds it and is of an ethical order; which, thus, tends to the configuration of a world, to the constitution of an ethos of a shared life. This element is the essential repressed of the avant-garde, in measuring all the distance that, in the first Surrealism for example, separated the Rue Fontaine from the Rue du Chateau. It is in this manner that since

the death of Breton, those who have not renounced laying claim to Surrealism tend to define it as a “civilization” (Bounoure) or more soberly as a “style” in the manner of baroque, classicism, or romanticism. The word constellation is perhaps the most just. And in fact, it is incontestable that Surrealism did not stop subsisting, in so much as it was living, on the repression of its propensity to make itself the world, to give itself a positivity.

MUMMIES

Since the start of the century, one cannot miss recognizing in France, notably in Paris, a rich terrain of study in the manner of auto-suggestion of the avant-garde. Each generation seems to need to give birth to new conjurers who wait their turn to perform sleight-of-hand tricks so that they can make themselves believe in magic. But naturally, from generation to generation, the candidates for the role of Grand Charlatan only end by tarnishing their reputation, covering themselves each season with new layers of dust and pallor from miming the mimes. It has happened, to me and my friends, to cross paths with these people who distinguish themselves in the literary market as the most laughable pretenders to avant-gardism. In truth, we have no more business with this corpse: it was already for specters, for mummies. In a past era, they had launched a Manifesto for a Literary Revolution; which was only judicious: their brain — all avant-gardes have a brain — published his first novel. The novel was titled *My Head in Freedom*. It was very bad. It commenced by these words: "They want to know where I have put my body". We say that the problem of the avant-garde is the problem of the head.

THE REASONS FOR THE OPERATION AND THOSE OF ITS DEFEAT

With the end of the Hundred Years' War there was posed the question of founding a modern theory of the State, a theory of the conciliations of civil rights and royal sovereignty. Lord Fortescue was one of the first thinkers to attempt such a foundation, notably in his *De Laudibus legum anglie*. The celebrated 13th chapter of this treatise contests the Augustinian definition of the people — *populus est cetus hominum iurus consensu et utilitatis communion sociatus* — A people is a body made by men that reunites assenting to laws and a community of interests: "Such a people does not merit being called a body because it is acephalous, that is to say without a head. Because the same as a natural body after a decapitation does not remain a body, but what we call a trunk, so in the body-politic a community without a head is in no case a body." The head, after Fortescue, is the king. The problem of the head is the problem of representation, the problem of the existence of a body that represents society in so much as a body, of a subject that represents society in so much as subject — no need to distinguish here between existential representation as it is performed by the monarch or fascist leader and the formal representation of the "democratically" elected president. The avant-garde hence does not solely come to accuse the artistic crisis of representation — in refusing that "the image be the semblance of another thing that it represents in its absence" (Torquemada), but that it be itself a thing — the avant-garde comes also to precipitate the crisis of the instituted political representation, that it puts on trial in the name of instituting avant-gardist representation of the masses. So doing,

the avant-garde effectively surpasses politics or classical aesthetics, but it surpasses them on their own terrain. The exclusive rapport of negation in which it places itself vis-a-vis representation is the same that it retains inside itself. All the currents in advertising their direct democracy, notably councilist avant-gardism, take from it their stumbling block; opposing themselves to representation, and by this opposition place representation in their heart, no longer as principal but this time as problem. Imperative mandates, delegates revocable at any instant, autonomous assemblies, etc., there is a whole councilist formalism that results from the fact that it is still the classical question of better government that they wish to answer, and by that answer to the problem of the head. It may be that these currents will always arrive at overcoming their congenital anemia by favor of exceptional historic circumstances; it will be thus for representing the departure of representation. After all, politics also has a right to its own *Las Meninas*. In all things, it is in the operation that it completes whereby one recognizes the avant-garde: putting its body far away, facing itself, then attempting vainly to rejoin it. While the avant-gardes go to the masses or deign to mix themselves in the affairs of their times, it is always in taking care, at first, to distinguish themselves. It thus sufficed that the Situationists began to have a semblance of what they called "a practice" in Strasbourg, in the student milieu, in 1966, so that they could tend brutally towards workerism, thirty years after the historic collapse of the workers' movement.

THE AVANT-GARDE AS SUBJECT AND REPRESENTATION

It is curious, but in all very natural, that those who have the profession of glossing over the avant-garde, and who have never been short of an anecdote upon the least gesture of those who, in the Occident, have lived for them, I would like to say upon the thin handful of avant-gardists of the century; it is curious, therefore, that these people here, hold themselves back on this point, on the destiny of the avant-garde in Russia in between the two wars, that is to say the only historic realization of the avant-garde. The fable says that after an embarrassed period of toleration in the 20's, the Bolsheviks being metamorphosed into terrifying Stalinists, the political avant-garde liquidated the free and creative proliferation of the artistic avant-garde, and tyrannically imposed the reactionary, retrograde, and to sum up vulgar doctrine of "socialist realism". Naturally this is a little short. From the top, then: in 1914 collapsed the liberal hypothesis, in so much as an answer to the problem of the head. As regards the cybernetic hypothesis, it will be necessary to wait until the end of the Second World War for it to impose itself completely. This interregnum, which thus must be understood as 1914 to 1945, will be the golden age for the avant-garde, of the avant-garde as the project of differently answering the problem of the head. This project will be that of the total re-creation of the world by the artist of the avant-garde; what one has called more modestly, later, "the realization of art". It will be notably carried, and in an ever more mystical manner, by the successive currents of the Russian avant-garde, from the LEF to Opoaiz, from suprematism to productionism in passing by constructivism. It was

thus a question of the radical modification of the conditions of existence, to forge a new humanity, "the blank humanity" of which Malevitch spoke. But the avant-garde, being tied by a rapport of negation of traditional culture and thus with the past, could not realize this program. Like Moses, it could carry its dream, but not accomplish it. The role of the "architect of the new life", of "engineer of the human soul" never came back to it, precisely because it was attached, even be it by rejection, to ancient art. Its project, which only the Party could realize, of which the avant-garde never stopped to advertise was that it would put to work, that it would utilize, that it would make it serve the construction of the new socialist society. Mayakovsky demanded without malice that "the pen be assimilated as the bayonet and that the writer be able to, like no other soviet enterprise, balance accounts with the Party in raising 'a hundred volumes of Party cards'". Nothing shocking here, as the resolution of the Central Committee of the Party on April 23, 1932, that pronounced the dissolution of all the artistic groupings had been saluted by a large part of the Russian avant-gardists. The Party, in its first Five Year Plan, did it not take up with its watchword "transformation of all life" the maximum aesthetic project of the avant-garde? In consenting to repress and thus to recognize the activities and aesthetic deviations of the avant-garde as political, did not the Party endorse the role of the collective artist, for which the entire country would be hereafter nothing more than the material with which it was to impose the shape of its general plan of organization? In fact, that which one interprets most often as the authoritarian liquidation of the avant-garde, and that one must consider more exactly as its suicide, was instead the debut of the realization of its program. "The aestheticization of politics was only, for the leadership of the Party,

a reaction to the politicization of aesthetics by the avant-garde” (Boris Groys, *Staline oeuvre d’art totale*). Hence, with this resolution, the Party explicitly became the head, the head which, lacking a body, would come itself to form a new one, ex nihilo. The immanent circularity of Marxian causality, which would have it that the conditions of existence determine human consciousness and that humans themselves make, though unconsciously, their conditions of existence, only left to the Party the point of view, for justifying its demiurgic pretension for a total reconstruction of reality, of a sovereign Creator, of an absolute aesthetic subject. Socialist Realism, in which one feigns to see a return to folkloric figuration, to classicism in artistic matters, and as Groys observes more generally, “Stalinist culture, if we consider it in the perspective of a theoretical reflection of the avant-garde upon itself, appears rather as its radicalization and formal surpassing”. The recourse to classical elements, condemned by the avant-garde, did but mark the sovereignty of this surpassing, of the great leap forward of post-historical times, where all the aesthetic elements of the past can be equally borrowed, put to profit, at the whims of a utility that finds a totally new society, without connections, and by that without hate, towards past history. All the posterior avant-gardism will never renounce this promethean perspective, this project of a total remaking of the world; and by that to envisage itself as a sovereign subject, at the same time contemporaneous with its time and separated from it by a necessary aesthetic distance. The growing comedy of the matter certainly holds for the aspiring avant-gardists who have not understood that since 1945 the cybernetic hypothesis, in decapitating the liberal hypothesis, has suppressed the problem of the head, and therefore it is each day more vain to flatter oneself to respond to it. The ultimate goals of

the avant-garde were thus to be all uniformly marked by the same stamp of grotesque unreality, of a failed remake. This is without doubt what the authors of the sole internal critique of the Situationist International to appear in its time wanted to say, since they wrote in *L'unique et sa propriété* "All the avant-gardes are dependent on the old world of which they mask the decrepitude under their illusory youthfulness...The Situationist International is the conjunction of the avant-gardes in avant-gardism. It has mixed the amalgam of all the avant-gardes with the synthesis and reprise of all the radical currents of the past." The brochure, published in Strasbourg in 1967, was subtitled *For a critique of avant-gardism*. It denounced the ideology of coherence, of communication, of internal democracy and of transparency by which a spectral groupuscule maintained itself, surviving artificially with the help of voluntarism.

THE AVANT-GARDE AS REACTION

No doubt Futurism has contributed in a considerable manner to the contemporary definition of the avant-garde. Consequently it is not bad to resume the lecture at a point where the avant-garde can no longer be more than an object of raillery or nostalgia:

“We dictate our first wishes to all the men living on the earth...Poetry must be a violent assault against unknown forces, to summon them to bow down before man. We are at the extreme promontory of centuries! What good to regard behind us, in the moment when we must smash the mysterious windows of the Impossible? Time and Space were dead yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created the eternal omnipresent speed. We want to glorify war — sole hygiene of the world — militarism, patriotism, the destructive acts of the anarchists, beautiful Ideas that kill, and disdain of women...We will sing of the great crowds agitated by work, pleasure, or revolt.”

It is nowhere here a question of irony, even less of morality, but solely of comprehension. Of understanding, as a type, that the avant-garde was born as a masculine reaction to the inhabitable character of the world such that the Imperial Machine had commenced to develop, as the wish to re-appropriate the non-world of autonomous technique. The avant-garde was born as a reaction to the fact that all determination had become ridiculous in the midst of universal commodity equivalency. To the intolerable human marginality in the Spectacle, the avant-garde responded by proclamation, by the proclamation of the self as center; a proclamation besides which only illusorily abolished its peripheral

character. From thence comes the frenzied competition, the syndrome of chronic obsolescing, and the tragi-comic fetishism of tiny differences which agitates the miniscule universe of the avant-gardes, and which also finally offers a spectacle as painful as those terrible fights of the hobos in the Metro at the hour of the last train. That the avant-garde was essentially an affair of men must be comprehended in close relation to that. The movement of the avant-garde is largely negative, it is the retreat in advance, the forced march of classical virility, in peril, towards a final blindness, towards an ignorance of self more sophisticated still than that which had for so long distinguished the occidental male. The need of mediating his rapport with self by a representation — that of his place in the History of politics or art, in the “revolutionary movement” or more commonly in the avant-gardist group itself — corresponds solely to the incapacity of the man of the avant-garde to LIVE IN DETERMINITY, to his real acosmism. In his empty affirmation of self, the profession of a personal originality advantageously substitutes itself for the assumption of his derisory singularity. By singularity, I understand here a presence that does not concern itself only with space and time, but of a signifying constellation and of the happenings in its heart. And this is well because this singularity finds nowhere access to its proper determinity, to its body, because as the avant-garde pretends to the most exact, to the most magisterial representation of life, that is to say to strike this singularity, absurdly, of its name — one is therefore right to question oneself, outside of the managerial hypothesis of a collective exercise in auto-persuasion, on the meaning of the Situationist conclusion that “our ideas are in everyone’s heads”: in what proportion can an idea in everyone’s head belong to anyone? But happily for us, number 7 of the

Situationist International has the last word on this enigma: "We are the representatives of the overpowering idea of the great majority". As we know, all of this admirably accommodates a Hegelianism that is merely the puffed-up expression of an inaptitude for assuming its own singularity of its normal character — one opportunely remembers above all on this subject the start of the Phenomenology of Spirit, of which the inaugural gesture, a veritable trick of a one-armed juggler, is to disqualify determinity: "The universal is thus in fact the true of sensible certitude...since I say me, this singular me here, I say in general all the me's" That the implosion and dissolution of the SI coincided exactly with the historic possibility to lose itself in its time, to participate in a determining fashion, is the foreseeable lot of those who hurried themselves to write on the subject of May 1968: "The Situationists...had for many years very exactly foreseen the current explosion and its results...Radical theory has been confirmed." (Situationists and Enrages in the Occupations Movement). We see it there: the avant-gardist utopia has never been anything else than this final annulling of life in discourse, of the appropriation of an event by its representation. If thus one must characterize the avant-gardist regime of subjectivation, one could say it is that of the petrifying proclamation, that of an agitated impotence.

On September 1st 1957, that is to say a little before the foundation of the Situationist International, Guy Debord sent Asger Jorn, his favorite alter ego of those days, a letter where he affirms the necessity of forging around this grouping a "new legend". The "avant-garde" never designates a determined positivity, but always the fact of a pretend positivity: first, to maintain itself durably in negativity, and second to award itself its own character

of negativity, of “radicality”, its own revolutionary essence. In this way the avant-garde has never had a substantial enemy, despite that it makes a great show of its diverse enmity in regard to this or that; the avant-garde only proclaims itself the enemy of this or that. Such is the projection that it operates behind itself to earn the place that it intends for itself in the system of representation. Naturally, for this the avant-garde commences to spectralize itself, that is to say represent itself in all its aspects, therefore discouraging the enemy from doing so. Its mode of being positive is hence always a pure paranoiac negativity, at the mercy of any trivial appreciation on its account, upon the curiosity of the first imbecile to arrive; a Bourseiller, for example. It is why the avant-gardes so often have the sentiment of a failed encounter, of a rickety assemblage, ill-at-ease, of monads waiting to discover, through this or that shock, their lack of affinity, their intimate dereliction. And this is why in all avant-gardes the sole moment of truth is that of their dissolution. There is always at the base of avant-gardist relations this substratum of contempt, this unshakeable hostility that characterizes the terrible community. The suicide of Crevel, the resignation letter of Vaneigem, the circular for the auto-dissolution of Socialisme ou Barbarie, the end of the Red Brigades, always the same knot of icy hatred. In the injunction, in the scarlet letters of “one must...”, in the manifesto, identically resounds the hope of a pure negation that could give birth to a determination, that a discourse could miraculously make a world. But the actions of the avant-garde are not very good. None can ever hold themselves towards “practice”, “life”, or the “community” for the simple reason that each one is always already present, and it is merely a question of taking responsibility for what practice, what life, what community there is; and to make oneself the bearer of the proper

techniques to modify these. But what is there is precisely unassumable in the avant gardist regime of subjectivation.

THE QUESTION OF HOW

Since the famous "Poetry must be made by all, not by one" of Lautremont until its interpretation of the "creative" wing of the movement of 77 — "the mass avant-garde" — everything attests to the curious propensity of the avant-garde artist to recognize in the O.S. their look-alike, their brother, their veritable addressee. The constancy of this propensity is all the more curious in that it has almost never paid in return. As if this constancy expressed nothing else than a bad conscience, of the "head" for its supposed body, for example. Really, it is that there is effectively a solidarity in existence, of art as separated sphere from the rest of social activity, and the inauguration of work as the common lot of humanity. The modern invention of work as abstract work, without qualifications, as indifferentiation of all the activities under this category affects itself according to a myth: that of the pure act, of the act without a how, that reabsorbs itself entirely in its result, and of which the accomplishment exhausts all signification. Still today, where the term remains employed, "work" designates all that is lived in the imperative degeneration of how. Everywhere the question of how acts, things, or words, is suspended, derealized, displaced, there is work. Now there is also a modern invention of art, simultaneous and symmetrical to that of work, which is an invention of art in so much as special activity, producing oeuvres and not simple commodities. And it is in this sector that will concentrate itself henceforth all attention previously denied to the how, that will be as a collection of all the lost signification of productive acts. The art will be this activity that, as the inverse of work, will never exhaust itself in its own accomplishment. It will be the sphere of the

enchanted gesture, where the exceptional personality of the artist will give, under the form of Spectacle, to the rest of humanity the example of forms of life that it is henceforth forbidden to them to undertake. To Art will be thus confided, for the price of its complicity and silence, the monopoly of the how of acts. The inauguration of an autonomous sphere where the how of each act is without end weighed, analyzed, commented upon, has since then not ceased to nourish proscription in the rest of the alienated social rapports of all evocation of the hows of existence. There, in everyday life, productive, normal, there must not be but pure acts, without hows, without any other reality than their raw result. The world in its desolation can only be peopled by objects that never return to themselves, never come to presence other than as the title of products, not configuring anything other than a constellation of the presence of this kingdom that has used them as tools. So that the how of certain acts can become artistic, it necessarily follows that the hows of all the other acts cease to be real, and inversely as well. The figure of the avant-garde artist and that of the O.S. are polar figures of modern alienation, as ghostly as they are interdependent. The offensive return of the question of how finds them facing self as that from which they must equally protect themselves.

THE WORLD THAT IS NO LONGER A WORLD

The innate part of the failure that determines a collective enterprise like the avant-garde is its incapacity to make a world. All the splendors, all the actions, all the discourses of the avant-garde unceasingly fail to give it a body; it all happens in the head of the few, where the unity, the organic content of the ensemble flourish, but only for thinking, that is to say externally. Common ties, weapons, a unique temporality, a shared elaboration of everyday life, all sorts of determined things are necessary so that a world can arrive. Ergo it is justice if all the manifestations of the avant-garde finish up in the museum, because they are already there before being exposed as such. Their experimental pretension designates nothing else: the fact that an ensemble of gestures, practices, and relations — as transgressive as they may be — does not make a world; Weiner Aktionismus knew something. The museum is the most striking form of the world-that-is-no-longer-a-world. All that rests in a museum results from the tearing away of a fragment, of a detail from its organic milieu. He might have suggested it, but he never understood it — what Heidegger was so heavily fooled by in *The Origin of the Work of Art* in placing the work of art at the origin of itself: to be a work of art does not signify “creating a world” but rather to carry on mourning-; the work, to the difference of the thing, is but the melancholy refuse of something that once lived. But the museum only collects “works of art” and one sees here in what manner the “work of art” is right away the death of art: a thing right away produced as a work brings with it its lack of the world, and by that its insignificant destiny — it pretends also, through the history of art, to reconstruct for them an abstract dwelling, to make

a world fit for them, where they will find themselves in good company among those who have succeeded, like all the nouveaux riches meet one another in their clubs on Friday night. But between the “works of art” there is nothing, nothing but the pedantic discourse of the most frigid of the philosophies of history: the history of art. I say frigid because it is on all points identical to capitalist valorization.

TRY TO BE PRESENT!

One has had the custom, for several years, to give the avant-garde grief for a too-visible complicity with “modernity”; one reproaches it for sharing with this modernity a too shallow idea of history, a new cult that is at bottom a faith in Progress. And it is certain, in effect, that the avant-garde is in its essence teleological — that one could represent the synoptic history of the different artistic movement and that of the radical political groupuscules by the same type of diagram is here more shocking than this or that common Hegelian hobby-horse, the death of Art or the end of History. But it is first of all because it determines by the mode of being perceptible, and by the fashion of living as always-already posthumous, that the historicism of the avant-gardes condemns itself. In this way one periodically observes this curious phenomenon: an avant-garde occupies in its own time a more-than-marginal position even if it occupies it with the pretension of being the center of history; its time past, all the actuality of this retires as well; and it is while the avant-garde comes to be uncovered that it emerges from its epoch as the most pure substratum. In this manner operates a sort of resurrection of the avant-garde — Debord and the situationists offer an illustration of this, almost too exemplary, and so foreseeable — which makes itself pass for the heart, for the key of its epoch, if not for its epoch itself. At the base of the avant-gardist regime of subjectivation, there is therefore this confusion between history and the philosophy of history, a confusion that permits the avant-garde to take itself for history. In fact, everything happens as if the avant-garde had, in sheltering itself in its own

times, made an investment and that it sees itself accordingly, posthumously, remunerated in terms of historical consideration.

THE MUSEUMIFICATION OF THE WORLD

In 1931 in *Le Travailleur*, Junger noted: "We live in a world that on one side exactly resembles a workshop and on the other looks exactly like a museum". A dozen years later, Heidegger exposed in his course on Nietzsche the hypothesis of the achievement of metaphysics: "The end of metaphysics that must be thought of here is the debut of its 'resurrection' in derived forms: these are no longer left to history, properly speaking, and now they complete fundamental metaphysical positions as the economic role of furnishing the materials of construction with which, transformed in a corresponding fashion, the world of 'knowing' will be reconstructed anew...According to all appearance, we are at the equalizing of different fundamental positions, of their elements and their doctrinal concepts." Our time is the general recapitulation of all past history. The imperial project to finish with history concordantly takes the form of an historical appropriation of all past events, and hopes with that to neutralize them. The institution of the museum does but sectorally realize the project of a general museumification of the world. All the attempts of the avant-garde have taken place in this, at the same time, real and imaginary theatre. But this recapitulation is equally well the dissipation of the historicist illusion in which the avant-garde lives, with its pretension to novelty, to uniqueness, to originality without replica. In such a movement where the element of time reabsorbs itself into the element of meaning, where all past history gathers itself in a topology of positions amongst which, for lack of these being known to everyone, we must learn to orient ourselves, we assist in the progressive accretion of constellations. Men like Aby Warburg with

his drawing boards, or Georges Duthuit, in his Unimaginable Museum, began to sketch such constellations, to liberate each aesthetic from its ethical content. Those of our days who move closer, in the same cavalier fashion, to the punk of certain para-existential circles of the after-war years, then those of the Gnostic effervescence of the first centuries of our era, do nothing else as well. Beyond the temporal spacing which separates them from the points of illusion, each of these constellations understands gestures, rituals, enunciations, uses, practical arts, determined forms of life, in brief: a proper *Stimmung* . It assembles by attraction all the details of a world, which advertises being animated, being inhabited. In the context where the avant-gardes affirmed themselves and a fortiori today, the question has, for a long time, not been to make a novelty, but to make a world. Each thing, each being, that coming into presence brings with it an economy given by presence configures a world. Going from that, it is a question solely of inhabiting the determinity of the constellation which deploys itself always-already in our presence, to follow our derisory, contingent, and finite taste. All revolt that goes from self, of the *hic et nunc* where it reposes, of the inclinations that traverse it, goes in this sense. The movement of 77 in Italy remains, as such, a promising failure.

REALIZATION OF THE AVANT-GARDE

One of the most feeble books on the avant-gardes of the second half of the twentieth century certified, in 1980, *The Auto-dissolution of the Avant-Gardes*. The author, Rene Lourau, the founder of the totally laughable “institutional analysis”, omits, needless to say, the essential: to say in what the avant-gardes were dissolved. The most recent progress of the occidental neurosis has long since been confirmed: the avant-garde was dissolved in the totality of social relations. The henceforth banal characterization of our times as “post-modern” evokes nothing else, even if it is only another way to purge modernity of all its trimmings to save the fundamental act: that of surpassing — it is not fortuitous, in this, that even the term “post modernism” made its first appearance in 1934 in the circles of the Spanish avant-garde. Equally well, the best definition that Debord gave to the Spectacle — “a social relation between persons, mediated by images” — and that today defines the dominant social relation, only takes note of the generalization of the mode of avant-gardist being. The Bloom is thus those for whom all the relations, to self as to others, are entirely mediated by autonomous representations. It is the careerist who organizes his permanent auto-promotion, the cynic who menaces at each instant to let themselves be absorbed by one of their discursive excrescences or to disappear in a chasm of bathmological irony. The paranoia of the avant-garde has also been diffused, with this diffuse manner of carrying itself as the exception to itself at each instant of life; with this general disposition to build itself its own personal, remote-controlled little legend. Enzensberger was not all wrong to see in the *Bild-Zeitung* the achieved realization of the avant-garde, as

much from the point of view of formal transgression as from collective elaboration. A certain dose of Situationism also seems demanded for all well-paid work, at present. The particular appropriately incisive tone of this intervention meets here its content: it is only a matter of liberating ethical signification from the avant-garde.

EPILOGUE

As epilogue to this, it does not seem superfluous to evoke a point of reversal for the avant-garde. Acephale, symbol of the crowd without a leader, names one of its extreme points. Acephale tends to liberate itself from the problem of the head. All the agitation, all the gesticulation of the avant-garde, be it artistic or political, Acephale would like to erase this in erasing itself, in renouncing a form of action "that is but the placing of existence for later". Acephale would like to be this secret existential society, this elective community that would assemble "the individuals truly decided to undertake the struggle, at a small scale to the need, but on the efficacious path where their attempt risks becoming epidemic, to the end of measuring itself with society on its own terrain and to attack it with its own arms, that is to say to constitute themselves in a community, more still, in ceasing to make the values that they defend the perquisite of rebels and insurgents, regarding them in the inverse as the first values of the society that they would like to see installed and that as the most social of all they must be somewhat implacable...To the constitution in groups presides the desire to combat society in so much as society, the plan to confront it as the most dense and solid structure tending to install itself as a cancer in the heart of a structure more unstable and loose, although incomparably more voluminous." (Caillois, *Le Vent d'hiver*). The papers of Henri Dussat, member of Acephale, contains a note dated march 25 1938 "To tend to ethics, there is the resolution that one recognizes, or of that which is wicked to recognize the Christian as the supreme value. Another thing is to move oneself in ethics." Looking explicitly to constitute itself as a world, Acephale did not

only break with the avant-garde, it retook also that which, in the avant-garde, had been something other than the avant-garde, that is to say precisely the desire that was aborted there: "Since the end of the dada period the project of a secret society charged with giving a sort of active reality to the aspirations that were defined in part under the name of surrealism has always rested an object of preoccupation, at least in the background." Recalled Bataille in the conference of the College of Sociology on March 19, 1938. Acephale, however, would not come to exist so much as to contaminate. Although being full of rites, of habits, of sacred texts and ceremonies, the proclamatory politics that, externally, had disappeared remained internally; so much so that the watchword of community, of secret society, finally will absorb the reality of these terms. Acephale was almost exclusively, and more reasonably than Surrealism for example, an affair of men. Acephale did not know, to crown it all, how to pass by the head and how to not be, from one end to the other, the community of only Bataille: as he alone wrote the genealogy, the "internal journal" which gave birth to Acephale, as he alone defined the rites of this order, he finished alone, imploring his pale companions to sacrifice at the foot of his scared tree: "It was very beautiful. But we all had the sentiment of participating in something that happened on the part of Bataille, in the head of Bataille." (Klossowski).

It would not seem opportune to take a conclusion, even less a program, from what is going to be said.

Following from what I know, a certain relation must be able to be established with the Invisible Committee; be it only in the sense of a generalization of insinuation.

It must be said in passing: there is not a problem of the head, there is but a paralysis of the body, of the act.

**PROGRESS
DOESN'T WANT
THOSE WHO
DON'T WANT
PROGRESS**

Residents of Montreuil:

We hear from our local detachment that in spite of the obvious merits of Jean-Pierre Brard, a few muffled stragglers of subversion may be threatening to hatch and tarnish, or even sabotage his re-election to the position of mayor for the nth time. We don't know exactly who the individuals in question are, nor what their motives may be. But we can certainly give them our answer right off the bat: there is no question that Jean-Pierre Brard, the United Progress Party's candidate, will be re-elected. It is absolutely inadmissible in these times – what with Internet, the new economy, wireless connectivity, biotechnologies and hipster bars – that a handful of isolated dissidents with scandalously reactionary motives could disturb the plans, twenty years in the making, for our community's modernization.

In courageously pre-empting the quasi-totality of the terrain of the Lower Montreuil region; the mayor ran a considerable risk of total bankruptcy naturally involved in any straight-dealing investment policy, and showed an unbendable will to rocket Montreuil into the 21st century. But if we want to bring this immense project of ours to a fruitful completion – office buildings in the proper imperial format, big corporations of an international scale (such as we already have with Decathlon, Ubi Soft, Disney Studios, and soon Air France), grand rectilinear avenues with numerous lanes, hotels with a world-welcoming capacity, and next to all that, sparkling new “contemporary” neighborhoods, picturesque, well museumified, and exclusive to residents of high social standing – if, in other words, we want to deserve the future, we'll have to do our part. Because in Montreuil we have a whole parasitic population that only works in spite of their wishes to the contrary, which only

barely consumes, and which offends our city's reputation and the look of our streets. There are people living in unhealthy old buildings, and others who, in spite of all hygiene, even live collectively. People on the margins of everything. People that are out of the loop.

The healthy upsurge that Montreuil has been enjoying must not be allowed to be impeded by such residual dregs of society. Montreuil is a city made for offices and the people that work in them. A city of forward-thinking executives that are simultaneously hip and high-performance. A city of people that are comfortable in their skin and in their times, capable of handling – with a smile – having a job, a family, a heavy rate of consumption, and heavy taxation. In brief: a modern, bright, harmonious city. And those that don't share this vision are really just a drag, you know; a real ball and chain, a bunch of lice that we'll have to eradicate from our healthy organism. May it please public hucksters everywhere: when it comes to progress, it won't take long for those who aren't friends to become enemies, and so we'll be better off nipping the problem in the bud before it's too late...

So, get out of here, you poor people, you outmoded ones, you guttersnipes, you lovers of passing time! Just leave, you frugal spenders, you unmotivated employees, second class citizens, fake artists, lazy bums!

Get out of Montreuil you angry people you, you fight-pickers, you depressed mourners, you malcontents! We'll make ourselves clear: we will crush your shantytowns, we'll demolish your memories, we'll spit on your melancholy, and on this rotten terrain we will build our great flamboyant skyscrapers and the five-star humanity that comes with them.

WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU VOTE!

**A CRITICAL
METAPHYSICS
COULD EMERGE
AS A SCIENCE OF
APPARATUSES**

"The first philosophies furnished power with its formal structure. More precisely speaking, 'metaphysics' designates the apparatus whose actuation requires a principle: associating words, things, and actions. At the time of the Turning Point, when presence as ultimate identity turns into presence as irreducible difference, its actuation appears to be without principle."

– Reiner Schürmann, "What is to be made of the end of metaphysics?"



This text was the document written for the foundation of the SASC, the Society for the Advancement of Criminal Science. The SASC is a non-profit dedicated to the anonymous collection, classification, and diffusion of all knowledge-powers useful to anti-imperial war machines.



At the beginning there was the vision, on some floor or other of one of those sinister glass beehives of the tertiary sector; an endless vision through the panopticed space, of dozens of *seated* bodies, in line, distributed according to a modular kind of logic; dozens of bodies apparently without any life to them, separated by thin glass walls, tapping away on their computers. In this vision, in turn, there was a revelation of the brutally *political* character of this forced immobilization of bodies. And the obvious but paradoxical fact of these bodies being all the more immobile as their mental functions were activated, captivated, *mobilized*, as they bustled and responded in real time to the fluctuations of the information flows crossing the screens. We went with this vision, *taking what we'd*

found in it, and we spread it around at an exposition at the MoMA in New York, where enthusiastic cyberneticians, freshly converted to making artistic excuses, had resolved to present to the public all their apparatuses for neutralization and normalization by work that they'd come up with for the future. The exposition was called *Workspheres*: they were demonstrating how an iMac can transform work, which itself had become as superfluous as it was intolerable, into leisure; how a "convivial" environment can make the average Bloom more disposed towards coping with the most desolate existence and can maximize his social output; or how PEOPLE might arrange things in such a way as to ensure that said Bloom's tendencies towards anxiety could be done away with once all the parameters of his physiology, his habits and his character had been integrated into his personalized workspace. From the concurrence of these "visions" one got the feeling that PEOPLE had finally managed to *produce* minds, and to produce bodies as waste, as inert and cumbersome masses, the condition for - but above all the *obstacle to* - the progress of *purely cerebral* processes. The chair, the desk, the computer: it could all become just part of an apparatus. A search-and-seizure of production. A methodical enterprise for attenuating all forms-of-life. Jünger spoke of a kind of "spiritualization of the world," but in *not necessarily so flattering* a sense.

We can imagine another beginning, another genesis. This time, at the beginning, there was an inconvenience; an annoyance linked to the general spread of surveillance machinery in the shops, specifically to the anti-theft gates. There was a slight anxiety at the moment one passed through them, not knowing whether they were going to go off or not, whether we'd be picked out of the anonymous flow of consumers as "an undesirable customer," as

"thieves." And so there was the annoyance - who knows, maybe the resentment? - of getting yelled at once in a while, and the clear foreknowledge that these apparatuses indeed had for some time now *actually been working*. That the task of surveillance, for example, was more and more exclusively confided to a mass of watchmen *who knew what to look for*, because they themselves were former thieves. Who in all their gestures were merely *walking human apparatuses*.

Now let's imagine a really improbable kind of genesis for the sake of the most incredulous. Here the starting point would be the question of *determinity*, the fact that there is, unavoidably, predetermination; but that this inevitability could *also* take on the sense of a formidable freedom: *playing* with the determinations. An inflationist subversion of cybernetic control.

All in all, at the beginning there was nothing. Nothing but the refusal to innocently play along with any of the games that PEOPLE had planned to manipulate us with.

And - who knows? – the FIERCE

desire to perhaps

dizzy a few of them.

I.

What exactly is going on in *Bloom Theory*? It's an attempt to *historicize* presence, to acknowledge the present state of our being-in-the-world, as a start. There had been other attempts of the same nature before *Bloom Theory*, the most remarkable after Heidegger's *Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics* certainly being De Martino's *The Magical World*. It was sixty years before *Bloom Theory* when this Italian anthropologist made his contribution to the history of presence, which until today remains unequalled. But that's where the philosophers and anthropologists *ended up*, with the observation of where we're at relative to the world, with the observation of our own collapse; and we'll grant them that, because we're *starting from there*.

A man of his times in that sense, De Martino pretended to believe in the whole modern fable of the classical subject, the objective world, etc. He then distinguished between two eras of presence, the one taking place in the "magical," primitive world, and the world of "modern man." The whole western misconception about the subject of magic and more generally about traditional societies, De Martino says in essence, has to do with the fact that we claim to understand them from outside, starting from the modern presupposition of an acquired presence, a guaranteed being-in-the-world, propped up by a clear distinction between the self and the world. In the traditional-magical universe, the frontier where the modern subject turns into a solid, stable substrate, assured of his being-there, before whom a whole world stretches out, a world stuffed with objectivity, still presents a problem. It's there to be conquered, to be fixed; and human presence there is constantly

threatened, and is experienced in a state of perpetual danger. And this liability puts it at the mercy of all violent perceptions, all emotion-saturated situations, all unassimilable events. In extreme cases, known by various names in primitive civilizations, being-there is totally swallowed up by the world, by an emotion, by a perception. This is what the Malays call *latah*, what the Tungusic peoples call *olon*, or what certain Melanesians call *atai*, and which for those same Malays is linked with the *amok*. In such states, singular presence completely collapses, becomes indistinct from phenomena, and comes apart into a simple, mechanical echo of the surrounding world. And so a *latah*, a body stricken by *latah*, puts its hand into the fire, while no one can clearly make out his gesture of doing so, or, finding himself suddenly face to face with a tiger at the summit of a path, he starts to furiously imitate it, possessed as he is by this unexpected perception. We also have the case of the collective *olon*: when a Russian officer was training a Cossack regiment, the men in the regiment, instead of carrying out the colonel's orders, suddenly start just repeating them in a chorus; and the more the officer howled insults at them and got more and more irritated by their refusal to obey, the more they returned his insults to him and mimicked his anger. De Martino characterizes *latah* as follows, making use of approximative categories: "Presence tends to remain polarized by some content or other; it doesn't manage to go beyond it, and consequently it disappears and abdicates as presence. The distinction between presence and the world making itself present falls apart."

Thus for De Martino there is an "existential drama," a "historical drama of the magical world," which is a drama of presence: and the ensemble of the magical beliefs, techniques, and institutions are

there to respond to it: to save, protect, or restore the presence it had initiated. That ensemble is thus imbued with an effectiveness of its own, an objectivity inaccessible to the classical subject. One of the ways the indigenous people of Mota have to overcome the crisis of presence provoked by any kind of a lively emotional reaction was thus to associate to whoever had fallen victim to it the thing that had caused it, or something resembling it. Over the course of a ceremony, then, the thing would be declared *atai*. The Shaman would then institute a community of destiny between these two *bodies*, which from then on would be indissolubly and ritually bonded to each other, to where *atai* quite simply means *soul* in the indigenous language. "Presence that risks losing all its horizons reconquers itself by attaching its problematic unity to the problematic unity of the thing itself at hand," concludes De Martino. This banal practice, of inventing an object *alter ego*, is what the Westerns concealed with the little nickname "fetishism," refusing to understand that the "primitive" man recomposes himself and reconquers a presence for himself with the use of magic. By replaying the drama of his dissolving presence, but this time accompanied and supported by the Shaman – in a trance for instance – he plays out this dissolution in such a way as to make himself master of it again. What modern man so bitterly reproaches "primitive" man for, after all, is not so much his practice of magic as his audacity in giving himself a right that the former judges obscene: the right to *invoke* the mutability of presence, and thus render it potentially *participatory*. The "primitives" had given themselves the *means* of overcoming the kind of dereliction that we see so commonly among hipsters who've had their cell phones stolen, petty bourgeois families deprived of their TVs, car drivers whose cars have been keyed, executives with no offices,

intellectuals who don't have the floor, or Young-Girls who've lost their purses.

But De Martino committed an immense error, a fundamental error, doubtless one inherent *to all anthropology*. De Martino did not fully grasp the breadth of the concept of presence; he still conceived of it *as an attribute of the human subject*, which inevitably led him to counterpose presence to the "world making itself present." The difference between the modern man and primitive man does not consist, as De Martino says, in the latter's *lacking* something relative to the former, having still not acquired the self-assurance of the former. On the contrary, it consists in the fact that the "primitive" shows a greater openness, a greater *attention* to the BECOMING PRESENT OF BEINGS, and so, consequently is more vulnerable to the fluctuations of presence. The modern man, the classical subject, is not some giant leap ahead of the primitive, he is himself but a primitive that has become indifferent to the *event* of being, who no longer knows how to observe the entry into presence of things, who is *world-poor*. In fact, an unfortunate love for the classical subject runs throughout the whole of De Martino's oeuvre. Unfortunate because De Martino, like Janet, had too intimate an understanding of the magical world and too rare a Bloom-sensibility to fail to secretly feel the effects. It's only that as a male in Italy in the 1940s, you were far better off suppressing that sensitivity and dedicating a boundless passion to the majestic and now *perfectly kitsch* plasticity of the classical subject. And so it cornered De Martino into the comic posture of denouncing the methodological error of wanting to grasp the magical world from the perspective of self-assured presence, all the while retaining that magical world as his reference horizon. In the final analysis he takes as his own the

modern utopia of an objectivity unsullied by any subjectivity and a subjectivity free of all objectivity.

In reality, presence is so little an attribute of the human subject that it's something *the subject gives himself*. "The phenomenon that should be focused on here is not that simple being-there, nor a mode of being present, but *entry into* presence, an always-new entry, whatever historical apparatus the given may appear in." (Reiner Schürmann, *The Principle of Anarchy*). Thus is defined the ontological ek-stasy of human being-there, its co-belonging to *each lived situation*. Presence in itself is INHUMAN. An inhumanity that triumphs in the crisis of presence, when being-there imposes itself in all its crushing insistence. The gift of presence thus can no longer be accommodated; all forms-of-life, that is, all manners of *accommodating* such a gift, dissipate. What should be historicized, thus, is not the progress of presence towards some final stability, but the different manners in which it takes place; the different *economies of presence*. And though today, in the Bloom era, there is certainly a generalized crisis of presence, it is only because of how generalized the crisis of economy has become:

THE WESTERN, MODERN, HEGEMONIC ECONOMY OF CONSTANT PRESENCE.

The economy whose nature is the negation of the very possibility of crisis by a blackmailing of the classical subject, that regent and measure of all things. Bloom historically points out the end of the social/magic effectiveness of this blackmail, this fable. The crisis of presence returns again to the horizons of human existence, but PEOPLE don't respond to it in the same way as they did in the traditional world; PEOPLE don't see it for what it is.

In the Bloom era, the crisis of presence is chronicized and objectivized in an immense accumulation of *apparatuses*. Each apparatus operates as an ek-sistential prosthesis impersonally administered to Bloom to permit him to survive through the crisis of presence without knowing it; to remain in it day after day, without however succumbing to it - a cellphone, a shrink, a lover, a sedative, or a cinema make perfectly suitable crutches, as long as you can change them out often. Considered singularly, apparatuses are merely ramparts erected to keep things from happening; considered as a whole, they are the dry ice that PEOPLE scatter over the fact that each and every thing, in their arrival to presence, carries a world with it. The objective: maintain the dominant economy, whatever the cost, by the authoritarian management everywhere of the crisis of presence, and install just *one present*, against the whole free play of arrivals to presence. In a word: THE WORLD IS TENSING UP.

Ever since Bloom-ness insinuated itself into the heart of civilization, PEOPLE have done all they can to isolate it, to neutralize it. Most often, and quite biopolitically, it is treated as a sickness: this was first called *psychaesthesia*, by Janet, and then *schizophrenia*. Today PEOPLE prefer to speak of it as *depression*. Qualifiers change, or course, but the maneuver is always the same: to reduce any Bloom-manifestations that are too extreme to purely "subjective problems." By circumscribing it as a disease, PEOPLE can individualize it, localize it, and repress it in such a way as to *make it no longer collectively appropriable* for the most part. If we look closely, this has always been the only objective of biopolitics: to guarantee that worlds, techniques, shared dramatizations, *magics*, within which the crisis of presence can be appropriated and

overcome, become a center of energy, a war machine. The rupture in the transmission of experience, the rupture in historical tradition, is there and ferociously maintained, in order to ensure that Bloom will remain forever left up to and handed over to himself in everything, to his own solitary mockery, to his crushing and mythical "freedom." *There is a whole biopolitical monopoly on the remedies for presence in crisis, which is always ready to defend itself with the utmost violence.*

The politics that defies this monopoly takes as its point of departure and center of energy the crisis of presence, that is: Bloom. We call this *ecstatic* politics. Its objective is not to abstractly bail out the sinking boat of human presence in dissolution with the use of re/presentations, but rather to elaborate participatory magicks, techniques for inhabiting not a given territory but *a world*. And it is this development, that of play among the different economies of presence, between different forms-of-life, that requires the subversion and *liquidation* of all apparatuses.

Those who still clamor for a theory of the subject, as if for one last deferment of their passivity, would do well to understand that in the Bloom era *a theory of the subject is no longer possible except as a theory of apparatuses.*

II.

I have for a long time believed that what distinguishes theory from, say, literature, is its impatient urge to convey content, its dedication to *making* itself understood. This effectively specifies theory, theory as the only form of writing *that is not practice*. Thus infinity emerges from theory, which can say whatever it wants to without ever having any consequence; for bodies, that is. Our texts are neither theory, nor negation; they are simply *something else*.

What is the perfect apparatus, the model-apparatus which, after looking it, no misunderstanding is possible about the very notion of what we mean by an apparatus? The perfect apparatus, it seems to me, is the HIGHWAY. There, *maximum circulation coincides with maximum control*. Nothing moves there which is not simultaneously unquestionably "free" and strictly registered, identified, and individuated on an exhaustive record of registrations. Organized into a network, given its own dedicated refueling points, its own police, and its own autonomous, neutral, empty, and abstract zones, the highway system represents the territory itself, laid out in strips through the countryside; a heteropia, the cybernetic heteropia. Everything has been carefully set up so that *nothing happens* ever. And the undifferentiated passing of everyday life is only punctuated by the statistical series, expected and predictable, of *accidents* of which we are informed more than we'll ever see them, and which thus are lived not as events, as *deaths*, but as a passing disturbance all traces of which will be erased within the hour. Anyway, PEOPLE die much less on the highways than they do on the interstate freeways, says the Highway Patrol; and from the crushed corpses of animals, mostly

indicated merely by the slight movement around them that they cause in the flow of traffic, we are hardly reminded - if at all - what it means TO TRY TO LIVE WHERE OTHER PEOPLE PASS BY. Each atom of the molecularized flux, each of the impermeable monads of the apparatus, has no need at all, anyway, to be reminded that it's in their best interest to *move on*. The highway is entirely made, with its sweeping turns, its calculated and signaled uniformity, to make all *behavior* (driving) conform to just one: zero surprises, a smooth and calm trip, ending at a destination point, with the whole distance traveled at an average and consistent speed. There's a slight feeling of absence, all the same, from one end to the other of the trajectory; it's as if you can't remain within an apparatus unless you're caught up in getting out of it, and you're never really *there* when you're there. In the end, the pure space of the highway expresses the abstraction of every *place* more than it does of all distance. Nowhere have PEOPLE so perfectly carried out the replacement of places by *names*; nowhere have THEY so perfectly carried out such *nominalist reduction*. Nowhere is separation so mobile, so convincing, and even armed with a language of its own, highway signage, and less susceptible to subversion. The highway, thus, as *concrete* utopia of the cybernetic Empire. And to think, some people really still talk about "information highways" without foreseeing the promise of total policing!

The metro, the *metropolitan* network, is another sort of mega-apparatus, underground this time. There's no doubt, considering the police frenzy that never departed from the RATP⁵⁶ since the

⁵⁶ Autonomous Parisian Transit Administration

Vichy era, that a certain consciousness of this fact has insinuated itself on all its levels, even its mezzanine passageways. And so, a few years back, in the tunnel walkways of the Paris metro, one could read a long public notice from the RATP, decorated with a lion striking a royal pose. The title of the notice, written in fat, stunning letters, stipulated "THE ORGANIZERS OF PLACES ARE THEIR MASTERS." And whoever deigned to stop and read it would be informed of the intransigence with which the Administration was dedicated to protecting its monopoly over the management of their apparatus. Since then it seems that the *Weltgeist* has made progress among the imitators at the RATP Communications department, since all the ad campaigns now are signed "RATP, the free spirit." Oh the "free spirit." What a fate for that phrase, which has gone from Voltaire to ads for new bank services by way of Nietzsche - *to have* a free spirit more than to *be* a free spirit: that's what Blooms with a hankering for ever further bloomification demand. *Having a free spirit* means the apparatus takes charge of those who submit to it. There's a certain comfort attached to that, and it comes from being able to forget, until further notice, that we are in the world.

Within each apparatus, there is a prior decision hidden. The Kind Cyberneticians of the CNRS⁵⁷ spin it this way: "The apparatus can be defined as the concretization of an intention via the installation of landscaped environments." (*Hermes*, no. 25) *Flow* is necessary for the maintenance of apparatuses, because behind it there's that hidden decision. "Nothing is more fundamental to the shopping center's survival than a regular flow of customers and products,"

⁵⁷ National Scientific Research Center

observed the offensive bastards from the Harvard Project on the City. But ensuring the permanence and direction of the molecularized flow, connecting the different apparatuses to one another, requires a principle of equivalence, a *dynamic* principle different from the ongoing norm in place for each apparatus. This principle of equivalence is the commodity. The commodity, that is, *money*, as that which individuates, separates all social atoms, places them alone faced with their bank accounts like christians alone before their God; money that at the same time allows us to continually enter into all apparatuses and at every entry to record a *trace* of our position, of our passage. The commodity, that is, *work*, which allows the greatest possible number of bodies to be contained within a certain number of standardized apparatuses and allows them to be forced to pass through there and to *remain* there, with everyone organizing their own trackability with their résumés -- isn't it true after all that to work today is not so much to *do* something as it is to *be* something, and above all to be *available*? The commodity, that is, *the recognition* thanks to which each person self-manages their submission to the police of qualities and maintains a magic distance from other bodies, a distance big enough to neutralize them but not to exclude them from social valorization. And so, guided along by the commodity, the flow of Blooms gently imposes upon him the necessity for the apparatus that includes him. A whole fossilized world survives in this architecture, which no longer needs to celebrate sovereign power *because it itself is now a sovereign power*: it only has to configure the space - the crisis of presence does the rest.

In the Empire, the classical forms of capitalism still live on, but as hollow forms, as pure vehicles in the service of the maintenance of the apparatuses. Their afterglow shouldn't lure us in: they are no longer to be found within themselves; they have become a function of something else. THE POLITICAL NOW DOMINATES THE ECONOMIC. The supreme issue is no longer the extraction of surplus value, but *Control*. The levels of surplus value extraction themselves now only indicate the level of Control which is the condition for it locally. Capital is now but a *means* in the service of generalized Control. And though there is still an imperialism of the commodity, it operates above all as an imperialism of apparatuses; imperialism that responds to just one necessity: the need for a TRANSITIVE NORMALIZATION OF ALL SITUATIONS. It's about extending circulation *between* apparatuses; it's what forms the best vector of universal trackability and *orderly flows*. There as well, our Kind Cyberneticians have a knack for phrasing: "In general, the autonomous individual, seen as a carrier of his own intentionality, appears as the apparatus' central figure... We don't orient individuals anymore; the individuals orient themselves within the apparatus."

There is nothing mysterious about the reasons why Blooms submit so massively to apparatuses. Why on certain days I don't steal anything from the supermarket; either because I feel too weak or I'm lazy: to not steal is comfortable. To not steal is to absolutely melt into the apparatus, to conform to it to not have to uphold the force relations underlying it: the force relationship between a body and the aggregate of employees, the security guards, and possibly the police. Stealing forces me into presence, makes me pay attention, puts me on a level of exposedness over the physical

surface of my body which some days I just don't have it in me to go for. Stealing forces me to *think through my situation*. And sometimes I don't have the energy. So I pay, I pay to be rid of the very experience of the apparatus in all its hostile reality. It is my *right to absence*, in fact, that I'm claiming.

III.

What can be shown cannot be said.

– Wittgenstein

The statement is not the said.

– Heidegger

There is a materialist approach to language which starts with the fact that what we perceive is never separable from what we know about it. *Gestalt* long ago showed how, when faced with a confused image, the fact of our being told that it shows a man sitting on a chair or a half open can is enough to make those things appear to us. The nervous reactions of a body, and thus certainly of its metabolism, are strictly linked to, if not directly dependent on, the whole of its representations. Admitting this is necessary not so much for establishing the value of, but more the *vital significance* of each metaphysic, and its incidence in terms of forms-of-life.

Let's now imagine, after all that, a civilization where grammar would have at its center, namely in the use of the most popular word in its vocabulary, a sort of defect, a failure such that everything would be perceived not only from a falsified perspective, but in the majority of cases from a *morbid* perspective. Let's imagine then what the standard psychology of its users would be, their mental and relational pathologies, the diminished life that they'd be exposed to. Such a civilization would

certainly be unlivable, and would only spread disaster and desolation everywhere it extended itself to. And western civilization is just such a civilization, and this word is quite simply the verb *to be*. The verb *to be*, not in its auxiliary or existence related uses - "that's" - which are relatively inoffensive, but in its attributive uses - this rose *is* red - and its identity uses - a rose *is* a flower - which authorize the purest falsifications. For example, in saying "this rose is red," I give to the subject, "rose," a predicate that is not its own, one that is rather a predicate of *my perception*: it's me - I'm not colorblind, I'm "normal," and I perceive this particular light wavelength as "red." To say "I perceive the rose to be red" would be less objectionable. As for the statement "a rose is a flower," it allows me to erase myself opportunely from behind the classification operation that *I* am carrying out. It would thus be more suitable to say "I class the rose as among the flowers," which is a standard formulation in Slavic languages. It is quite evident, next, that the identity effects of *to be* have a totally different emotional scope when they allow one to say of a man with white skin "he is White," or to say of someone with money "he is rich" or of a woman who behaves in a slightly more free manner "she is a slut." We aren't making some denunciation of the supposed "violence" of such statements and thus preparing the advent of a new language police of some kind, an expanded *political correctness* which would see to it that each phrase carried with it its own scientific accuracy gauge. This is about knowing what we're doing, what PEOPLE are doing *to us*, when we speak: and knowing it *together*.

The logic underlying these uses of the verb *to be* is qualified as *aristotelian* by Korzybski; we simply call it "metaphysics" - and in fact we aren't far from thinking, like Schürmann, that "metaphysical

culture as a whole shows itself to be a universalization of the syntactic operation called predicative attribution." What is at play in metaphysics, and notably in the social hegemony of the identifying "is," is equally the negation of becoming, of the *event* of things and beings. "'Am I tired?' That doesn't mean much at first. Because my tiredness is not my own, it's not me that's tired. 'There's something tiring.' My fatigue is part of the world in the form of an objective consistency, a dull thickness in things themselves, the sun and the road uphill, and the dust and the potholes." (Deleuze, *Sayings and Profiles*, 1947.) In place of the event, "there's something tiring TIE A RING," metaphysical grammar forces us to declare a subject and then to bring its predicate back to it: "I am tired" – that's the arrangement of a position of retreat, an ellipsis of being-in-the-situation, the erasing of the form-of-life announcing itself from behind its announcement, behind the autarchic pseudo-symmetry of the subject-predicate relationship. Naturally, the *Phenomenology of Mind*, that vault key to the western repression of determinity and forms-of-life, that basic training course for all future absence, opens with a justification for this disappearance. "To the question, *what is the now*," writes our Bloom-in-chief, "we reply, for example: *now is nighttime*. To prove the truth of this perceptible certainty a simple experiment will suffice. We note, in writing, this truth: a truth loses nothing by being written down and just as little in being preserved. If we now return to that truth at noon, we must say that it has gone stale." The glaring bait and switch here consists in the reducing the air of nothingness, the statement, to the said; to postulating the equivalence of the pronouncement made by a body in a situation, the said *as an event*, and the objectivized, written pronouncement, which remains, *like a footprint*, in indifference to all

situations. From the one to the other, it is time, it is *presence* that falls through the trapdoor. In Wittgenstein's last written piece, *On Certainty*, whose title sounds like a kind of response to the first chapter of the *Phenomenology of Mind*, he went deeper into the issue. Paragraph 588: "But by using the words 'I know that it is a ___', am I not saying that I find myself in a certain state of being, whereas the simple affirmation "It is a ___" does not. And nevertheless I'm often asked, after an affirmation of this kind: 'how do you know?' - 'Well, first of all for the simple reason that the fact of my affirming it lets you know that I think I know it.' This could also be explained as follows: in a zoo, one could put up a sign saying 'this is a zebra,' but not a sign saying 'I know this is a zebra.' 'I know' only means anything when it's coming out of a person's mouth."

The Power which has made itself the inheritor of all western metaphysics, Empire, draws all its strength from it, and all the immensity of its weaknesses as well. The extravagant control machinery, all the equipment for constantly stalking people that it's set up all over the planet, by the very excess of its watching betrays the excess of its blindness. With all the "intellects" it self-flatteringly thinks it has mobilized into its ranks it only confirms the obvious fact of its stupidity. It's striking to see how beings slide along among their predicates more and more from one year to the next, among all the identities PEOPLE make for them. Bloom certainly is making progress. Things are becoming indistinguishable. PEOPLE have an ever-harder time making people who think into "intellectuals," making people who work into "wage laborers," making people who kill into "murderers," making politically militant people into "militants." Formalized language – the arithmetic of norms – doesn't engage with any substantial

distinctions. Bodies don't let themselves be reduced anymore to the qualities PEOPLE would like to attribute to them. They refuse to *incorporate* themselves into them anymore. They just leave, silently. Recognition, which first of all is the name for *a certain distance between bodies*, has overflowed at all points. It can no longer account for what is happening *between bodies*. Apparatuses are thus necessary; more and more apparatuses: to stabilize the relationship between the predicates and the "subjects" that obstinately escape them; to counteract the diffuse creation of asymmetrical, perverse, complex relationships with these predicates – in order to produce information and to produce the real *as information*. Obviously the deviations that the norm allows, and with the use of which bodies are individualized/distributed, are not sufficient anymore to maintain order; and moreover they have to make terror reign, the terror of *too much* deviation from the norm. There's a whole new police of qualities, a whole ruinous network of micro-surveillance, micro-surveillance at all moments and of all spaces, which have now become necessary to ensure the artificial stability of an imploding world. Obtaining self-control by everyone requires a new densification, a mass spread of ever more integrated, ever more underhanded control apparatuses. "The apparatus: an identity-crisis aid" wrote the fucks over at the CNRS. But whatever PEOPLE do to ensure the dreary linearity of the subject-predicate relationship, to subject every being to his or her representation in spite of the underlying detachment between them, in spite of *Bloom*, won't do any good. The apparatuses can try to fix and preserve expired economies of presence, make them persist beyond their happening, but they are powerless to stop the *siege of phenomena*, which will eventually drown them. For the time being, the fact that it's not a being itself that is most often the carrier of the qualities we

attribute to it, but rather it's that our perception proves more and more clearly the fact that our metaphysical poverty, the poverty of *our art of perception*, makes us experience everything as quality-less, and makes us *produce the world as deprived of any qualities*. In this underlying collapse, things themselves, free from all attachments, come more and more instantly into presence.

In fact, *each detail* of a world that has become foreign to us precisely in its details now appears to us as an *apparatus*, as an *apparatus*.

IV.

Our reasoning is the differentiation of discourse, our history the differentiation of time, our self the differentiation of masks.

– Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*

It's part of a hugely overarching paradigm of thought that such thought wants to *know what it's doing*, to know *what kinds of operations it's engaged in*. Not in aiming to arrive at some final, prudent, measured Reason, but on the contrary to *intensify* the dramatic enjoyment attached to the game of existence, even in its inevitabilities. It's obscene, obviously. And I must say that wherever one goes, in any milieu one moves within, all *situation-based* thinking is immediately seen and warded off as perversion. To obviate this unfortunate reflex, it's true that there is always at least one presentable way out, which is to make such thinking out as a *critique*. In France, that's something PEOPLE are avid for. By showing myself to be hostile to that which I have penetrated the functioning and determinisms of, I protect from myself exactly what I want to annihilate, make it safe from *my practice*. And it is precisely that, this innocuousness, that PEOPLE expect of me by exhorting me to declare myself to be a critic.

The freedom of play that the acquisition of a knowledge-power leads to fills people with terror on all sides. This terror, the terror of crime, is endlessly emanated by the Empire among bodies, thus ensuring its preservation of its monopoly on knowledge-powers, meaning - in the end - its monopoly on *all powers*. Domination and Critique have always formed an apparatus unavowably directed

against a common *hostis*: the conspirator, he who acts *under cover*; he who makes use of everything PEOPLE give him and recognize him as *like a mask*. The conspirator is hated everywhere, but PEOPLE's hate for him can never be as great as is the *pleasure* he gets out of his game. Assuredly, a certain dose of what is commonly called "perversion" enters into the conspirator's pleasure, because what he plays on, among other things, is his opacity. But that's not the reason why PEOPLE never cease to push the conspirator to make himself a critic, to *subjectivize* himself as a critic, nor is it the reason for the hatred PEOPLE so typically have for their subject. The reason is, quite stupidly, the fact that he incarnates *danger*. Danger, for the Empire, is the war machines: for when men transform into war machines, they ORGANICALLY BIND TOGETHER THEIR TASTE FOR LIFE AND THEIR TASTE FOR DESTRUCTION.

The moralism of all critique isn't worth critiquing; it's enough for us to know how little a penchant we have for what is really happening in it: the exclusive love for sad emotions, powerlessness, contrition, a desire *to pay*, to expiate, to be punished, the passion for indictment, hatred of the world, hatred of life, gregarious impulse, expectation of martyrdom. This whole "consciousness" business has never really been understood. There is, effectively, a *need* for consciousness which is not at all a need for "self-elevation," but a need to elevate, refine, and whip up *our enjoyment*, to increase tenfold *our pleasure*. A science of apparatuses, a critical metaphysics, is thus indeed necessary, but not to depict some pretty picture of certainty behind which to erase yourself, nor even to *add* to the life of such thinking, as it speaks out. We need to think about our lives in order to dramatically *intensify them*. What do I care about any refusal that is not at the same time a precisely measured

knowledge about destruction? What do I care for knowledge that doesn't increase my potential, like what PEOPLE perfidiously call "lucidity," for example?

As for the apparatuses themselves, the uncouth propensity of bodies that *do not know joy* would be to reduce the present revolutionary perspective to a perspective of their immediate destruction. Then these apparatuses would become no more than a kind of object scapegoat that everyone could univocally have the same opinion on again. We'd just be stuck again with the oldest of modern fantasies, the romantic fantasy that *Steppenwolf* ends with: the fantasy of a war of men versus machines. Reduced to that, the revolutionary perspective would become mere frigid abstraction again. *But the revolutionary process is a process of a general growth in potential or nothing.* Its Hell is the experience and science of apparatuses, its Purgatory the division between that science and the exodus out of the apparatuses, and its Paradise insurrection, the destruction of those apparatuses. And it's up to *each person* to pass through this divine comedy, like an experimentation without any turning back.

But for the time being the petty-bourgeois terror of language still reigns uniformly. On the one hand, in the "everyday" sphere, PEOPLE tend to think things are just words, that is, that they are, supposedly, *what they are* - "a cat is a cat," "a coin is a coin," "I am I." On the other, as soon as the impersonal (PEOPLE) has been subverted and language suddenly becomes a potential agent of disorder within the clinical reality of the already-known, PEOPLE project that regularity out into all the cloudy regions of "ideology," "metaphysics," "literature," or, more commonly, "small talk." However, there have been and will be insurrectionary

moments where, under the effects of a flagrant derangement of the everyday, common sense will overcome that terror. PEOPLE will then perceive that what is real about words isn't what they designate - a cat is not "a cat," a coin is - less than ever - "a coin," and I am not "myself." *What is real about language is the operation it carries out.* Describing some being as an *apparatus*, or as being produced by an apparatus, is a practice of *denaturing* the given world, an operation of *taking a step back from* what is familiar to us, or wants to be considered so. And you know it.

Distancing the given world, up to now, was always the property of critique. Only critics believed that once that was done church was over. Because at bottom it was more important to critique to put the world at a distance than to put itself outside of its reach, precisely within those cloudy regions. It intended to make PEOPLE know its hostility to the world, its innate transcendence. It wanted PEOPLE to believe it, to think that it was *out there somewhere*, in some Grand Hotel of the Abyss, or in the Republic of Letters. What we're about is the opposite. We impose a distance between ourselves and the world, not to make it understand that we are elsewhere, but to *be there in a different way*. The distance we introduce is the playing area that our gestures need; engagements and disengagements, love and overkill, sabotage and abandon. Thinking about apparatuses - critical metaphysics - prolongs the critical act that had so long been crippled, and by prolonging it *annuls it*. In particular, it annuls what for more than 70 years has been the center of energy for anything really living still contained within marxism; I'm thinking of that famous chapter in *Das Kapital* about "the fetishistic character of the commodity and its secret." Just how much Marx failed to do any thinking that went beyond that of the Enlightenment, just how much his *Critique of*

Political Economy was effectively *no more than a critique*, appears nowhere as regrettably as in those few paragraphs.

In 1842 Marx discovered the concept of fetishism by reading the classic Enlightenment work, *On the Cult of the Fetish Gods*, by President De Brosses. Ever since his famous article on "wood thieves," Marx compared gold to a fetish, basing that comparison on an anecdote drawn from De Brosses' book. De Brosses was the historical inventor of the concept of fetishism, the one who extended the illuminist interpretation of the activity of certain African cults to the totality of all civilizations. For him, fetishism is the cult proper to "primitives" in general. "Many similar facts, or facts about the same race, establish with the utmost clarity that what is today the Religion of the Black Africans and other Savages was formerly that of more ancient peoples; and that in all centuries, and all over the earth, we have seen the reign of this direct, faceless cult of animal and vegetable products." What scandalized Enlightenment man the most about fetishism, especially Kant, was the actual African person's way of seeing it. Bosman, for instance, in his *Voyage in Guinea* (1704), states: "we make and unmake Gods, and... we are the inventors and masters of what we make our offerings to." Fetishes are these objects or these beings, these *things* in any case, to which the "primitive" magically bonds himself to restore the presence that some strange phenomenon or other, whether violent or just unexpected, had made vacillate. And effectively, this thing can be anything that the Savage "directly divinizes," as the appalled writers of *Aufklärer* put it, who only see things in all this, and not the magic operation of the restoration of presence. And if they are unable to see that operation, it's because *for them just as much as for the "primitive" - not including the sorcerer, of course - the vacillation of presence, the dissolution of the self, are not*

appropriable. The difference between the modern and the primitive is merely that the former *forbids* the vacillation of presence and establishes himself *within the existential denial* of his fragility, whereas the latter accepts such vacillations and fragility as long as he can use all means available to remedy them. That's why *Aufklärer* has such a frenzied, polemical relationship with the "magical world"; just the *possibility* of it fills them with fear. And this is also where we get the invention of "madness," for those who cannot submit to such harsh discipline.

Marx's position in this first chapter of *Capital* is no different than President de Brosses' position; it is the standard gesture of *Aufklärer* and critique itself. "Commodities have a secret; I unmask it. You'll see, they won't keep their secret much longer!" Neither Marx nor marxism ever moved on from the metaphysics of subjectivity; that's why feminism, or even cybernetics, had no trouble at all undoing them. Because he historicized everything *except human presence*, because he studied all economies *except economies of presence*, Marx saw exchange value like Charles de Brosses saw fetish cults among "primitives" back in the 18th century. He did not want to understand *what is at play* in fetishism. He did not see by what *apparatuses* PEOPLE make commodities exist *as* commodities, how, materially - by the accumulation of *stockpiles* in the factory; by the special, individualizing placement of *best-sellers* in shops, behind a storefront window, or on an ad; by the devastation of any possibility of immediate use and of all intimacy with places - PEOPLE produce objects *as objects*, and commodities *as commodities*. He acts *as if* none of this, nothing having to do with perceptible experience, had to do at all with the famous "fetishistic character"; as if the plane of phenomenality which makes commodities exist *as commodities* was not itself *materially*

produced. And Marx counterposes his classical-subject-assured-of-his-presence incomprehension, which sees "commodities as material, that is, as use values," to the effectively mysterious general blindness of the exploited. Even if he did understand that the exploited had to be immobilized one way or another as spectators on the circulation of things in order that their relations amongst themselves could appear as relations among things, he did not see the *apparatus* character of the capitalist mode of production. He did not want to see what was happening from the point of view of a being-in-the-world, between these "men" and these "things"; he who wanted so badly to explain the need for everything did not understand the need for this "mystical illusion," and how it is anchored in the vacillation of presence, and *in the repression of presence*. He could only dismiss that fact by writing it off as obscurantism, as a theological and religious backwardness of some kind, as "metaphysics." "In general, the religious reflection of the real world will only disappear when the conditions of labor and of practical life finally present to man a kind of transparent and rational relation with his peers and with nature." Here we see the ABCs of the Enlightenment catechism; that is, what it supposes to be programmatic for the world *as it has been built since then*. Since people can't recall their own relationship to presence, the singular modality of their being-in-the-world, nor even what they're engaged in *here and now*, they inevitably call upon the same worn out crap as their ancestors: entrusting to a teleology as implacable as it is cast-off the execution of even the very sentences they are speaking. The failure of marxism, as well as its historical successes, are absolutely tied to the *classical* posture of withdrawal that it authorizes, to the fact - in sum - that it's still suckling at the bosom of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. Even the most cursory

discussion with a marxist is enough to demonstrate the real reasons for his beliefs: marxism operates as an existential crutch for a lot of people who are frightened that they can no longer take their world for granted. On the pretext of materialism, it allows the smuggling through of the most *vulgar* metaphysics draped in the costume of the haughtiest dogmatism. It is certain that without the practical, *vital* contribution of blanquism, marxism would never have been able to accomplish its October "revolution."

What's at issue for a science of apparatuses is thus not to denounce the fact that these apparatuses *possess us*, or that there's *something magical about them*. We know well that at the wheel of a car it's quite rare for us not to behave like automobile drivers, and we don't need anyone to explain to us how a television, a playstation, or a "planned environment" condition us. *A science of apparatuses, a critical metaphysics, acknowledges the crisis of presence; and it's getting ready to vie with capitalism on the terrain of magic.*

WE WANT NEITHER VULGAR MATERIALISM NOR
"ENCHANTED MATERIALISM"; WHAT WE ARE
ELABORATING IS A MATERIALISM OF ENCHANTMENT.

V.

A science of apparatuses can only be *local*. It can only consist in the regional, circumstantial, and detailed reading of how one or many such apparatuses operate. And no new additions can come about without its cartographers knowing, since its unity doesn't reside in

an extorted systematicity, but in the question that each of its advancements gives rise to, the question "*how does that work?*"

The science of apparatuses puts itself in a relation of direct rivalry with the imperial monopoly on knowledge-powers. That's why its sharing and communication, the circulation of its discoveries, is essentially *illegal*. In this sense it is different from *DIY*. The *DIY*-er, as he who accumulates knowledge about apparatuses so as to better arrange them, so as to make a niche for himself in them, who - thus - accumulates whatever knowledge *that is not power* that he can about the apparatuses. From the dominant perspective, what we call a science of apparatuses or critical metaphysics is in the end nothing but the science of crime. And there as elsewhere, there's no initiation that isn't immediately experimentation and practice. **NOBODY GETS INITIATED INTO AN APPARATUS, ONLY TO ITS OPERATION.** The three stages on the path of this singular science are, successively: crime, opacity, and insurrection. Crime corresponds to the necessarily dividual moment when you learn how an apparatus operates. Opacity is the condition for the sharing, communization, and circulation of the knowledge-powers acquired in that study. In the Empire, zones of opacity where that kind of communication can come about are naturally going to be uprooted and forbidden as much as possible. This second stage thus requires an increased coordination. All the activity of the SASC is part of this opaque phase. The third stage is insurrection, the moment when the circulation of knowledge-powers and cooperation among forms-of-life in view of the destruction-enjoyment of imperial apparatuses can take place freely, out in the open. In light of this perspective,

this text can only have a purely preliminary character, somewhere between silence and tautology.

The need for a science of apparatuses is felt at the moment when men, human *bodies*, complete their integration into a world that is entirely produced. Few among those who find fault with the expensive poverty that PEOPLE would like to impose on us have still not grasped what living in a world that is *entirely produced* really means. First of all it means that even what had appeared "authentic" at first glance reveals itself upon contact to be no more than a product: its very non-production is a valorizable modality within production in general. What the Empire carries out, both from its Biopower and Spectacle angles -- and this brings to mind an altercation I had once with a Negriist from *Chimeras*, an old sorceress with a rather nice Goth style, who upheld as if it were an unquestionable fact of feminism and of her own materialist radicalness the idea that she had not *raised* her two children but that she had *produced* them -- is indeed the metaphysical interpretation of Being as either being *produced* or nothing at all, "produced" meaning having been brought into being in such a way that its creation and its active self-manifestation were one and the same thing. Being "produced" always means having been *at the same time* created and made visible. Entering into presence, in western metaphysics, was never distinct from entering into visibility. It is thus inevitable that the Empire, which is propped up on production-hysteria, is also propped on transparency-hysteria. The surest method to prevent the free arrival into presence of things is still to provoke it at all moments, tyrannically.

Our ally, in this world delivered over to the most ferocious, constant search-and-seizure, delivered over *to apparatuses*, in this

world that revolves fanatically around a management of everything visible that aims to be a total management of Being, is none other than Time. *Time* is on our side. The time of our experience, the time that guides and shreds our intensities, time which smashes, rots, destroys, breaks, deforms; time that is surrender, the very element of surrender, time that condenses and thickens into a bundle of *moments* where all unification is defied, ruined, truncated, and scratched all over its surface *by bodies themselves*. WE HAVE TIME. And where we don't have it, we can still take our time. Taking the time to do it; that's the condition for any communizable study of apparatuses. Locating the regularities, the sequences, the dissonances. Each apparatus has a little music of its own, and it's a matter of slightly detuning it, distorting it in passing, making it enter into decadence, perdition; pulling it off its hinges. This music is never noticed by those who *rush along* within the apparatus; their pace is too obedient to the cadence to hear it distinctly. To really hear it you have to start from a different temporality, a rhythmicity of your own, so as to become attentive to the *ambient norm* while passing through the apparatus. This is what thieves, what criminals learn -- to make their exterior and internal reasoning differ from their behavior; to unfold and page through their consciousness, to be at the same time mobile and stopped, to be on the lookout while deceptively appearing distracted. Accepting the dissolution of presence as a simultaneous, asynchronous gearing-down of its modalities. Hijacking the imposed schizophrenia of self-control and making it into an offensive instrument of conspiracy.

BECOMING A SORCERER.

"To stop the dissolution, there is one path: going deliberately to the limit of your own presence, and taking that limit as the coming object of a specific *praxis*; placing yourself in the heart of limitation and becoming its master; identifying, representing, calling up 'spirits,' acquiring the power to call upon them at will and make use of their work for the benefit of a professional practice. The sorcerer follows precisely that path: he transforms critical moments of being-in-the-world into moments of courageous and dramatic decision, the decision to situate himself within the world. Considered as a *given*, his being-in-the-world risks dissolving: it is still not really given. With the beginning of the vocation - with his initiation - the magician unmakes this given in order to *remake* it in a second birth; he goes back down to the limit of his presence so as to reconstruct himself in a new and well-delimited form: the techniques proper to favoring the mutability of presence, like trance itself and similar states, express precisely this being-*there* that unmakes itself to remake itself, which goes back down to its *there* so as to rediscover itself in a dramatically sustained and guaranteed presence. Moreover, the mastery that he has attained to allows the magician to plunge not only into his own mutability, but equally into that of others. The magician is he who knows how to *go beyond himself*, not in the ideal sense, but in the truly existential sense. He for whom being-in-the-world constitutes itself as a problem, and who has the power to procure his own presence for himself, is not just a presence among others but a being-in-the-world that can make itself present among all others, decode their existential drama and influence its course." This is the starting point for the communist program.

Crime, contrary to what Justice insinuates, is never an act, a deed, but a *condition of existence*, a modality of presence common to all the agents of the Imaginary Party. To prove it, just think of the experience of theft or fraud, the most elementary and standard forms of crime – TODAY, EVERYBODY STEALS. The experience of theft is phenomenologically something *totally different* than the so-called motives that are reputed to "drive" us to it, and which we ourselves put forth. Theft is not a transgression except from the perspective of representation: it is *an operation on presence*, a reappropriation, an *individual* re-conquest of presence, a re-conquering of the self *as a body within space*. The *how* of "theft" has nothing to do with its apparent act relative to law. This *how* is the *physical* consciousness of space and the environment, of the *apparatus*, that I am cornered into by theft. It is the extreme attention I give to bodies when cheating my subway fare, alert to the slightest sign that could indicate a ticket-inspectors' patrol. It's the almost scientific knowledge of the conditions I'll be operating in that is required for the preparation of any sizable crime. There's a certain incandescence of the body contained in crime, a transformation of the body into an ultra-sensitive impact surface, that's the real experience of crime. When I steal, I split myself in two, into an apparent, evanescent presence without thickness, absolutely ordinary – and a second one, a whole, intensive, and internal presence, where every detail of the apparatus surrounding me comes to life, with its cameras, its security guards, the *gaze* of its guards, the axes of vision, the other customers, the *gait* of the other customers. Theft, crime, and fraud are the conditions for a solitary existence at war against bloomification, against bloomification *by the apparatuses*. It is the non-submission proper to the isolated body; the resolution to escape, by playing a pro-active kind of game –

even all alone and in a precarious manner – from a certain state of shock, a half-sleep, from the absence from the self which is the basis for all "life" within the apparatuses. The question, starting from that *necessary* experience, is how to move forward into conspiracy, and start organizing a real circulation of illegal knowledge, a criminal science. The purpose of the SASC is to facilitate that passage into the collective dimension.

VI.

Power speaks of "apparatuses": the vigipirate (national security alert system) apparatus, the RMI (minimum guaranteed income) apparatus, the educational apparatus, the surveillance apparatuses... And that lets it give its incursions an air of reassuring precariousness. Then, as time makes the novelty of what it's introduced begin to fade, the apparatus enters into the "order of things," and it becomes the precariousness of those whose lives take place in them that's remarkable. The sell-outs that write for the magazine *Hermes*, particularly those that wrote issue number 25, did not expect it would be them that would be asked, in order to contain and spread thin the general social implosion, to start the simultaneously discreet and massive work of legitimating domination. "Society," they say, "is seeking new modes of regulation in order to be able to face these difficulties. Apparatuses appear to be one of these attempts at a response. They allow adaptation to these fluctuations while at the same time tagging and signposting them... They are the product of a new proposition for articulation between the individual and the collective, ensuring that minimal interdependence will be maintained, based on a generalized fragmentation."

When confronted with any apparatus, for example a entry gate on the Paris subway, the wrong question to ask is "what's that for?" and, in that case, the wrong answer is: "it's for preventing fraud." The correct question to ask is the materialist question, the *critical-metaphysical* question, which on the contrary is: "what act, what *operation* does this apparatus carry out?" And the answer then would be "this apparatus singularizes and extracts illegal bodies

from the indistinct mass of 'users' by forcing them to make some kind of easily spotted movement (jumping over the turnstile, or slipping past just behind a 'legal user'). Thus the apparatus *brings into existence* the predicate 'fare-cheater,' that is, it brings a particular body into existence *as a fare-cheater*." The essential thing is that "*as*." Or, more precisely: the manner in which the apparatus *naturalizes* and *hides* that "*as*." Because the apparatus has a way of making itself forgotten, of *erasing* itself behind the flow of bodies passing through it, its permanence is based on the continual updating of the submission of bodies to its operation – to its existence – which is *posed* every day and definitively. The apparatus installed thus configures space in such a way that this configuration itself remains out of the picture, like a pure given. From its manner of being taken for granted arises the fact that what it brings into existence does not appear as having been materialized by it. Thus the "anti-fraud gate" *realizes* the predicate "fare-cheater," more than it actually keeps people from getting out of paying their train fare.

AN APPARATUS PRODUCES A GIVEN BODY,
QUITE MATERIALLY, AS *THE SUBJECT*
OF THE INTENDED PREDICATE.

The fact that each being is now produced by apparatuses as a *specific kind* of being defines a new power-paradigm. In *The Abnormals*, Foucault says that the historical model for this new kind of power, the *productive* power of apparatuses, can be found in the city in times of plague. It is thus at the very heart of administrative monarchies that the form of power that was to supplant them was first experienced. It's a form of power that no longer operates by exclusion, but by inclusion; no longer by public executions, but by therapeutic punishments; no longer by arbitrary removal, but by

vital maximization; not by personal sovereignty, but by the impersonal application of faceless norms. The emblem of this mutation of power, according to Foucault, is the *management* of the plague carriers, as opposed to the *banishment* of the lepers. The plague carriers, in effect, were not excluded from the cities and relegated to somewhere outside them like the lepers were. On the contrary; they took the plague as an opportunity to deploy a whole ensemble of interlocking equipment; to spread out a whole gigantic architecture of surveillance, identification, and selection apparatuses. The city, says Foucault, "was divided into districts; the districts were divided into neighborhoods, and then in those neighborhoods the streets were separated out. The streets had watchmen assigned to them, the neighborhoods had inspectors, each district had district managers, and the city itself had either a governor named for these purposes, or had aldermen who, at the moment the plague was first seen, had received an expansion of their powers. It was an analysis of the territory even to its smallest elements, and the organization, over the whole of the territory thus analyzed, of an uninterrupted power... a kind of power that was also contained in its exercise, and not just in its hierarchical pyramid, since surveillance had to be exercised in a continual manner. The sentinels had to always be present at the ends of the streets, and the neighborhood inspectors had to carry out inspections twice a day every day to ensure that nothing that was happening in the city would escape their notice. And everything that was thus observed had to be recorded in a permanent manner, both in that space of visual examination, and also in the transcribing of all the information on large ledgers. When the quarantine process began, all the citizens that were present in the city had to give their names. Their names were written on a series

of ledgers... And every day the inspectors had to drop by every house, stop there, and call out. Each individual had a window to appear at, and when their names were called they had to present themselves at that window. If they did not appear there, that was taken to mean that they were in bed; if they were in bed they must be sick; and if they were sick they were dangerous – and, consequently, action would have to be taken." What Foucault is describing here is the operation of a paleo-apparatus: the anti-plague apparatus, whose nature, far beyond fighting the plague, was to produce bodies *as plague-stricken*. With apparatuses, thus, there is an evolution "from a technology of power that hunts down, excludes, banishes, marginalizes and represses people to a positive power, a power that fabricates, observes, knows; a power that multiplies itself on the basis of its own effects... A kind of power that does not act by separation on large confused masses, but by distribution according to differentiated individualities."

For a long time now western dualism has consisted in positing two opposing entities: the divine and the worldly, the subject and the object, reason and madness, soul and flesh, good and evil, inside and outside, life and death, being and nothingness, etc. Having posed things that way, civilization built itself up as the struggle between the one and the other. It was an excessively costly logic. The Empire, obviously, goes about things differently. It still moves within these dualities, *but it no longer believes in them*. In fact, it is content to merely *make use* of each of these couplets from classical metaphysics for the purpose of maintaining order, that is: as a binary machine. An "apparatus," thus, means a space polarized by a false contradiction in such a way as to make everything that happens within it and passes through it *reducible* to one of two terms. The most gigantic apparatus of this kind ever created was

obviously the geo-strategic "East vs. West" macro-apparatus, where the "socialist bloc" was directly opposed to the "capitalist bloc." All rebellion, all otherness that manifested itself *anywhere at all* thus had to be in allegiance to one of the identities proposed, or find itself lumped in with the pole that was officially the enemy of the power structure it was fighting against. In comparison to the residual power of the Stalinist rhetoric, "you're just playing the ____ game," – Le Pen, the right wing, globalization, whatever – which is but a reflex transposition of the old "class against class" logic, consider the violence of the currents that pass through all apparatuses, and the incredible noxiousness of western metaphysics in its putrefaction. A commonplace thing among geopoliticians is to scoff at those ex-guerrilla Marxist-Leninists of the "Third World" who, after the collapse of the East-West macro-apparatus, became simply mafias, or adopted an ideology considered demented just because these Political Science academics don't understand their language. In fact, what we're seeing here is the rather unsustainable effect of reduction, obstruction, formatting, and disciplining that all apparatuses exercise on the *savage anomaly* of phenomena. *A posteriori*, national liberation struggles appear less like ruses set up by the USSR, that conventional costume, than they do the ruse of *something else*, defying the system of representation and refusing to take a place in it.

What must be understood is that all apparatuses operate on the basis of *couples*. Conversely, experience shows that a couple that *functions* is a couple that *forms an apparatus*. And it's couples, and not pairs or doubles, since all couples are asymmetrical and have a major and minor part. The major and minor are not just nominally distinct - two "contrary" terms can work perfectly to designate the

same property. Indeed, in one sense this is what happens most commonly: they designate two *different modalities of the aggregation of phenomena*. The major part of the apparatus is the norm. The apparatus incorporates what is compatible with the norm by the simple act of *not distinguishing it*, leaving it immersed in the anonymous mass bearing the attribution "normal." And so, in a movie theater, whoever doesn't scream, doesn't sing, doesn't undress, who doesn't whatever, will remain indistinct, incorporated into the hospitable mass of spectators, *significant as insignificant*, and unrecognizable. The minor part in the apparatus is thus *the abnormal*. That's what the apparatus brings into existence, singularizes, isolates, recognizes, distinguishes, and then reincorporates, *but as unincorporated, as separate, as differentiated from the rest of the phenomena*. Here we have the minor part, comprised of this ensemble of what the apparatus individuates, predicates, and thus disintegrates, spectralizes, suspends; and PEOPLE have to secure that ensemble to ensure that it will never condense, *discover itself*, and eventually begin to conspire. It's at this point that the elementary mechanics of Biopower connect directly to the logic of representation such as it dominates in western metaphysics.

The logic of representation is to *reduce* all otherness, to make what is *there* disappear; it comes into presence in pure haecceity, and *provides you with things to think about*. All otherness, all radical differences in the logic of representation, is grasped as the negation of the Sameness that the latter began by positing. Anything that sharply differs from and comes to have nothing in common with that Sameness, is thus pushed back to or projected onto a common plane that *does not exist*, into which a *contradiction* has now been introduced that it is one of the terms of. In apparatuses, what is *not* the norm is thus determined to be its negation, the *abnormal*. What

is merely *other* is reintegrated as the other of *the norm*, as its *opposite*. The healthcare-system apparatus thus brings the "sick" into existence as whoever *is unhealthy*. The school apparatus the "dunce" as whoever *is not obedient*. The legal apparatus "crime" as whatever *is not legal*. In biopolitics, what is not normal will thus be handled as pathological, when we know from experience that pathology itself, for the sick organism, is *a norm of life*, and that health is not a particular norm of life but a state of *high normativity*, to a capacity to confront and create *other* norms of life. The essence of all apparatuses is thus to impose an authoritarian division of the perceptible where everything that enters into presence confronts the blackmail of its binarity.

The horrifying aspect of all *apparatuses* is that they are based on the primordial structure of human presence: that we are called, *asked for* by the world. All our "qualities," our "own being," are established in our interplay with beings that we would not be primarily *disposed towards* playing with. For all that, it often happens that, within the most banal apparatuses, like on a Saturday evening drinking among petty-bourgeois couples in a suburban house, you get a sense not of invitation, but of *possession*, and even of the extreme *possessiveness* that all apparatuses have about them. And it's in the superfluous discussions that punctuate that pitiful get-together that you get that sense. One of the Blooms "present" will begin with a tirade against these civil-servants-always-going-on-strike; that having been posited, and the role being well-known, a counter-polarization of the social-democrat type will then appear from another of the Blooms, who will play his part more or less happily, etc., etc. Here it's not bodies that are speaking, *it's an apparatus that's functioning*. Each of the protagonists activates in series the various little ready-to-use signifier-machines

that are always already registered in the *standard* language; in grammar, in metaphysics, in the impersonal "what PEOPLE think." The only satisfaction that we could draw from such an *exercise* is to have performed brilliantly within the apparatus. *Virtuosity is the only pathetic "freedom" offered by submission to signifier determinisms.*

Whoever speaks, acts, "lives" in an apparatus is in some way *authorized* by it. He is made the author of his acts, his words, his behavior. The apparatus ensures the integration and conversion *into identities* of heterogeneous groups of discourses, gestures, attitudes: of haecceities. It is through the reversion of all events to identities that apparatuses impose a tyrannical local order on the global chaos of the Empire. The production of differences, of subjectivities, also obeys a binary imperative: imperial pacification rests entirely on the staging of so many false antinomies, of so many simulated conflicts: "For or against Milosevic," "for or against Saddam," "for or against violence." ... Their invocation, as we know, has quite a bloomifying effect, and in the end obtains from us the omnilateral indifference that is the basis for the full-tilt intrusion of the imperial police. It's the same feeling we get when watching any kind of televised debate, however rarely the actors have any kind of talent: pure amazement while watching the game be so impeccably played; such autonomous life; such artistic mechanics of apparatuses and signifiers. So, the "anti-globalization" people will oppose their predictable arguments against the "neo-liberals." The "unions" will endlessly replay 1936, faced with an eternal Comité des Forges.⁵⁸ The police will combat

⁵⁸ A major steel & armaments industry group

the hoodlums. The “fanatics” will confront the “democrats.” The cult of illness will believe itself to defy the cult of health. And all this binary agitation will be the best guarantee of the global sleep. Thus, day after day, PEOPLE will carefully save us the tiresome task of existing.

Janet, who studied all the precursors of Bloom a century ago, devoted a volume to what he called “psychological automatism.” In it he discussed all the positive forms of the crisis of presence: suggestion, somnambulism, obsessions, hypnosis, mediumism, automatic writing, mental breakdown, hallucinations, possession, etc. He saw the cause, or rather the *condition* for all these heterogeneous manifestations in what he called “psychological poverty.” By “psychological poverty,” he meant a general weakness of being, inseparably physical and metaphysical, which corresponds completely to what we call *Bloom*. This state of weakness, he remarks, is also the terrain of healing, notably healing through hypnosis. The more bloomified the subject is, the more suggestible he is, and the more likely it is that he can be cured this way. And the more he conceals his health, the less this medicine is operative, and the less suggestible he will be. Bloom is thus the condition for the operation of apparatuses, and our own vulnerability to them. But, contrary to suggestion, apparatuses never aim to obtain any kind of return to health, but rather to integrate themselves into us as a prosthesis indispensable to our presence, as a *natural* crutch. Apparatuses only quench the thirst for apparatuses in order to make that thirst all the worse. To quote the corpse-chewers over at the CNRS, apparatuses “*encourage the expression of individual differences.*”

We have to learn to erase ourselves, to pass unnoticed through the grey areas in each apparatus, to *camouflage* ourselves behind their majority part. Even in spite of the fact that our first spontaneous impulse would be to counterpose a taste for the abnormal to the desire for conformity, we must learn the art of becoming perfectly anonymous, of offering an appearance of pure conformity. We must acquire the pure art of surfaces, *in order to carry out our operations*. This comes back down to dismissing the pseudo-transgressions of the - no less "pseudo" - social conventions, and giving up playing the part of revolutionary "sincerity," "truth," and "scandal" to the benefit of a tyrannical politeness, with which we can keep the apparatus and those possessed of it at a distance. Transgression, monstrosity, abnormality, when *demanded*, form the most devious trap that apparatuses set for us. Our desire for *being* - that is, our wanting to be singular - within an apparatus is our *primary weakness*, by which it holds us fast and enmeshes us within it. Conversely, the desire *to be controlled*, which is so common among our contemporaries, expresses above all the *desire for being*. For us, this desire is rather a desire to be insane, or monstrous, or criminal. But this desire is itself how PEOPLE take control over us and neutralize us. Devereux showed that each culture furnishes those who would like to escape it with a *model negation*, a signposted exit route, with which that culture can channel the driving energy in all transgression into the service of a greater stabilization. Among the Malays it's *amok*, and in the West, it's schizophrenia. The Malay is "pre-conditioned by his culture, perhaps even without his knowledge, but certainly in a nearly automatic manner, to react to almost any kind of violent tension, whether internal or external, with an amok crisis. In the same sense, modern western man is conditioned by his culture to react to

all kinds of states of stress with a behavior that in appearance is quite schizophrenic... Schizophrenia is the 'respectable' way of going mad in our society." (*Schizophrenia, an ethnic psychosis; or, schizophrenia without tears*).

RULE No. 1: All apparatuses produce singularity as monstrosity. That's how they reinforce themselves.

RULE No. 2: You can never free yourself from an apparatus by getting engaged within its minor part.

RULE No. 3: When PEOPLE apply predicates to you, subjectivize you, assign you, never react to it and never refuse it. The counter-subjectivation that PEOPLE would extract from you then will *always* be the hardest prison to escape from.

RULE No. 4: The superior freedom is not in the absence of predicates, in anonymity *by default*. The superior freedom results on the contrary from *saturation* by predicates, from their anarchic proliferation. Super-predication annuls itself automatically in a definitive unpredictability.

"When we have no more secrets, we have nothing left to hide. We ourselves have become the secret, and it's us that are hidden."
(Deleuze-Parnet, *Dialogues*)

RULE No. 5: Counter-attacks are never really a response; they're just a new hand being dealt.

VII.

"The possible implies the corresponding reality plus something joined to it, because the possible is the combined effect of a reality once it's appeared and an apparatus that pushes it back."

– Bergson, *Thought and Motion*

Apparatuses and Bloom imply one another like the two cooperating poles of the suspended animation of our times. Nothing ever happens in an apparatus. Nothing ever happens – that is, EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS WITHIN AN APPARATUS EXISTS IN THE MODE OF POSSIBILITY. Apparatuses even have the power of dissolving into its possibility an event that has already effectively taken place, what PEOPLE call “catastrophes,” for instance. That an defective airliner explodes in mid-flight and PEOPLE immediately deploy a whole showy abundance of apparatuses, setting in motion masses of facts, timelines, declarations, and statistics to reduce an event where hundreds of persons have died to a mere *accident*. In no time at all, THEY will have dissipated the obvious fact that the invention of railway lines was thus necessarily also the invention of railway catastrophes; and that the invention of the Concorde was also the invention of its explosion in mid-air. In this way PEOPLE will separate out, in every instance of “progress,” what is part of its *essence*, and what just has to do with an *accident*. And thus PEOPLE will remove the fact of that unity from it. After a few weeks, PEOPLE will have reduced the event of the crash to its *possibility* again, to a statistical contingency. And from then on it wasn't any more that a crash actually took place, IT WAS MERELY THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF

A CRASH, NATURALLY REMOTE, WAS ACTUALIZED. In a word, nothing happened; the essence of technological progress is safe. The monument - significant, colossal, and composite - that PEOPLE will have built for the occasion thus accomplishes the aim of all apparatuses: *the maintenance of the phenomenological order*. Because such is the intent of all apparatuses within the Empire: *managing and controlling a certain plane of phenomenality, ensuring the persistence of a particular economy of presence*, keeping the suspended animation of our times within its assigned space. That's where the character of absence, of lethargy, which is so striking about existence within the apparatuses comes from, that bloomish feeling of being carried away by the comfortable flow of phenomena.

We say that the mode of being for everything within the apparatuses is *possibility*. The possibility is on the one hand different from the act, and on the other from the potential. The potential - in the activity involved in writing this text, for instance - is language, as the generic ability to signify ideas and communicate. The possibility is language, that is, the ensemble of declarations considered correct according to English syntax, grammar, and vocabulary as they are at present. The act is speech, enunciation, the production *here and now* of a particular proclamation. Unlike potential, possibility is always the possibility of something. Saying that *within the apparatus, everything exists in the mode of possibility* means that everything that happens in the apparatus takes place only *as the actualization of a possibility that preceded it*, which is thus MORE REAL than it is. All acts, all events, are thus reduced to their possibility, and appear as the predictable consequence, the pure contingency of the latter. What happens becomes just as real as awareness of it is. Thus apparatuses exclude

events, and they exclude them *by how they include them*, for example by declaring them possible after the fact.

What apparatuses materialize is but the most notorious of western metaphysics' impostures, the imposture contained in the saying "essence precedes existence." For metaphysics, existence is but a predicate of essence; according to it, all existing things merely actualize an essence which preceded it. According to this aberrant doctrine, the possibility, that is, the *idea* of things always precedes them; each reality is merely a possibility that *moreover* has *come into existence*. When we flip thinking back onto its feet, we see that this is the fully developed reality of a thing positing its own possibility *in the past*. It is necessary, properly speaking, that an event come about in the totality of its determinations in order to isolate some of them, and extract from that event the representation that will then paint it as *having been possible*. "The possible," says Bergson, "is but the real plus an act of the mind that projects its image into the past once it's already happened." "To the extent," Deleuze adds, "that the possible offers its 'realization,' it itself is already conceived of as the image of the real, and the real as the resemblance of the possible. This is why people so rarely understand what existence adds to concepts, as they couple the similar with the similar. Such is the defect of the possible, a defect that shows it to be produced after the fact, fabricated retroactively in the image of what resembles it."

Everything that exists, within an apparatus, is either just the norm or an accident. As long as the apparatus holds, nothing can take place within it. Events, *those acts that keep their own potential about them*, can only take place outside them, as what pulverizes exactly what was supposed to ward them off. When noise music burst

onto the scene, PEOPLE said: “that’s not music.” When ‘68 erupted, PEOPLE said: “that’s not politics.” When ‘77 brought Italy to its knees, PEOPLE said: “that’s not communism.” Confronted with old man Artaud, PEOPLE said: “that’s not literature.” And then, once they’d been around for a long while, PEOPLE said: “well, I’ll be damned, it was possible, it’s *a* possibility for music, politics, communism, literature.” And finally, after the first moment shocked by the inexorable *labor of potential*, the apparatus re-forms itself: PEOPLE then include, defuse, and reterritorialize the event. THEY assign it to a possibility, to a *local* possibility, the possibility of the literary apparatus for example. The assholes at the CNRS, who wield words with such Jesuitical discretion, conclude quietly: “Though the apparatus organizes things and renders them possible, it does not however guarantee that they will actually happen. They merely bring a particular space into existence where such ‘things’ could possibly come about.” THEY couldn’t have made themselves any clearer.

If the imperial perspective had a slogan it would be “ALL POWER TO THE APPARATUSES!” And true enough, in the coming insurrection it will be most often enough merely to liquidate the apparatuses, which, instead of having to slaughter them as before, now tolerate their enemies in order to better break them. And this slogan is not so much about cybernetic utopianism as it is imperial pragmatism: the fictions of metaphysics, those grandiose desert-like constructions that no longer force faith nor admiration, can now no longer unify the debris from the universal breakdown. In the Empire, the old Institutions deteriorate one by one into cascades of apparatuses. What’s happening – and this is the task of the Empire – is a concerted dismantling of each Institution into a multiplicity of apparatuses, an arborescence of relative and ever-

changing norms. School, for instance, no longer even makes any effort to present itself as a coherent order. It's no more than an aggregate of classes, schedules, subjects, buildings, courses of study, programs, and projects, which are no more than apparatuses intended to immobilize bodies. Thus, what corresponds to the imperial extinction of all events is the planetary, administrative dissemination of apparatuses. A number of voices have bemoaned these detestable times. Some denounce a "loss of meaning" which has now become visible everywhere, while others, the optimists, swear every morning that they'll "give meaning" to whatever misery or other, and invariably fail. All of them, in fact, are in agreement; they *want meaning without wanting anything to happen*. They pretend that they can't see that apparatuses are by their very nature hostile to meaning, which they are indeed only in place to manage the absence of. *Anyone who talks of "meaning" without taking up the means to destroy the apparatuses are our direct enemies*. Taking up the means sometimes means no more than merely giving up the comfort of bloomish isolation. The majority of apparatuses are vulnerable to just about any kind of collective resistance, having not learned how to resist it. A few years back, it was enough to merely have around a dozen determined people in a Social Welfare Fund office or a Social Aid Office to extort from them the benefit of a thousand francs per person right then and there. And even today you don't really need many more than that to carry out a DIY price reduction in a supermarket. The separation of bodies, the atomization of forms-of-life: such are the conditions for the survival of most of the imperial apparatuses. "Wanting meaning" today immediately implies the three stages that we discussed above, and necessarily implies insurrection. Outside of zones of opacity and the insurrection, all that spreads out before us

is the reign of apparatuses, devices, the sorry empire of *meaning machines; machines that assign meaning* to everything that happens within them, according to whatever system of representations is in force locally.

Certain people, who consider themselves quite clever – the same ones who had to ask a century and a half ago what communism *would be like* – ask us today what our famous “finding each other, beyond our importance” looks like. Have so many bodies in these times never known abandon, the drunkenness of sharing, the familiar contact of other bodies, perfect repose in the self, that such questions can still be asked with such a knowing air? And indeed, what interest can there be in events, in moving beyond importances, in breaking the systematic correlations, for those who have never known the ek-static retraining of attention? What can ‘let it be’ mean, what can the destruction of what builds screens between us and things mean, for those who have never perceived the world’s *invitation*? What can those who are incapable of living without reasons why understand about the reasonless existence of the world? Will we be strong enough, and numerous enough, in the insurrection, to elaborate rhythms that will prohibit the apparatuses to re-form, and re-absorb all awareness of what’s to happen? Will we be full enough of silence to find the point of scansion, the point of application that will guarantee a true POGO effect? Will we be able to bring our acts into harmony with the pulsations of potential, the fluidity of phenomena?

In one sense, the revolutionary question is now a *musical* one.

HELP THE ADVANCEMENT OF CRIMINAL SCIENCE!

YOU, WHO THE RANDOM CHANCE OF A TRAINING SESSION, A JOB, AN EXPERIENCE OR AN ENCOUNTER HAS PUT IN POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE – COMMUNIZE IT! PUT IT IN WRITING, OR WHATEVER FORM YOU WISH, AND SEND IT IN ANONYMOUSLY TO:

sasc@boum.org

[here the article originally had the address of a squat the authors lived in. Create your own SACS locally, reproduce this text, and insert your address here.]

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DIFFUSION GUARANTEED

**STOP
DOMESTIC-
(CAF)TION**

(CAF: Family Allocations Office; provides government money for births, adoptions, housing aid, handicapped adults and children, etc.)

Getting allocations is already hell: We never properly correspond to the criteria, we never have all the necessary papers, our smiles aren't quite up to the regulation whiteness, and we always have to come back five Thursdays from now...

And once we've obtained them, we always end up getting them drained away: Because we never sent in some paper we never got, because they've been checking in on us without us knowing, because after cross-referencing various files (taxes and health insurance, for instance) it would appear that we're living a bit beyond our means (as if it were possible to live with the minimum income from the welfare system), because we've been out of work for too long, or because we worked twelve hours and seventeen minutes in the last nine and a half months, which makes a whole six minutes too many.

If, by some stroke of luck, we manage to keep the allocations, we always end up having to go through residential inspections: what can we say about what an inexpressible pleasure it is to have a visit from an inspector that rifles through our mail, incites our neighbors to inform on us in all kinds of ways, and even hassles our ex-lovers to get them to admit that we're living such dissolute lives?

All these little episodes bring us together here, lined up single file for hours. The bovine gaze of the security guard patiently scans our faces for the slightest sign of impatience, in case we make any

spontaneous scowl that would indicate we find something reprehensible about the functioning of the Administration's marvelous wonderland. Being uncooperative, eh? That's pretty suspicious! Anyway, there will be no disturbances; the apparatuses of social control are there to ferret out the slightest lapse: take one step too many beyond the security guards' cabin and the over-enthusiastic social worker will be all too happy to trip you up! Whether they're just trying to corner us or working for our well being, what they want to obtain from us is material proof of our willingness to be "integrated." All these administrative files to put together; all this documentation to provide about our ways of living and thinking – just so many apparatuses to reduce us to the proper adherence to the ideology of power, that is, to lead a functional life, meeting the needs of the market. It's a mechanism that's constantly making "progress," as is proven by the emergence of all these new professions (big-box store shopping-bag packer, automatic door-closer, accountability-enforcer/informant, etc...) the absurdity of which is only equaled by the extreme submission that they are intended to force us into, and which make security policing and domestic servitude into high-expansion sectors in the post-industrial economy. With the PARE (the "Return-to-Employment Aid Plan," concocted so as to force any reticent "excluded ones" to reintegrate themselves into the misery of wage labor) and its trail of legal slavery contracts (hard-earned bonuses for these bosses who always exude such good will!), they are already hastening to impose a better world on us, where each deserves to serve with dignity and bully people responsibly.

They never stop telling us over and over again that any attempt to escape would be fatal. Yet for some time now we've been feeling

rather disintegrative, so we're gathering to make it known. Every other Tuesday we pay an offensive visit to these places, which have haunted our lives for all too long. Next it'll be ASSEDIC* or the ANPE**, the CAF or the temporary employment agency, and lots more. Bring something to stave off your hunger and pass the time!

MEET TUESDAY MAY 22, 2001 AT 2 PM In front of the Picpus ANPE office (15 Blvd de Picpus, Métro Bel-Air)

* Association for Employment in Industry and Trade

** National Employment Agency

A QUOTE

“First the flames burst out onto the scene, like some amusing special effect that was just part of the show. Some people had started only all too soon to applaud and shout ‘bravo,’ when they suddenly realized, whether from the paleness in the faces around or from some whisper of fright – inaudible to the ear but perceptible to the soul – that indeed it was a real flame that had leapt up, a monster, an evil beast that was no joke at all. There were still a few however that didn’t grasp anything about the tiger that had brusquely pounced out into the world, and was now the master of the evening. The actors on the stage cried out and abandoned the artistic realm, at which point the public in turn began to scream. In the balconies, another sort of unworldly beast had reared its head: fear. Each passing moment seemed to give birth to new monsters.”

– R. Walser

**REPORT
TO THE SASC
CONCERNING AN
IMPERIAL
APPARATUS**

(A report written in June 2001 on the basis of observations made in July 1999)



Every time I visit London I ask myself the same question: How can so many people still tolerate living in a city like this?

Nothing that comprises the every day life of its inhabitants seems to work properly. Here, every day, millions of people absurdly risk their lives by taking near-defunct means of transport; if their trip doesn't come to an end in some grimy and overcrowded hospital, and they manage to arrive at their

destination, it'll only be after an unavoidable sequence of delays; these transportees (to use a word that has in the past had other, even more hellish implications⁵⁹) have lost even the strength to complain; they make a mockery of their own misfortune and joke about the fact that in 1950, for example, going to York only took two and a quarter hours, and that now you need more than six. Along other celebratory lines, to mark the advent of the new millennium, a number of highly expensive festive and cultural events were held here; the result was quite edifying: a big Ferris wheel aptly called The London Eye, the one eye of the cannibal Cyclops the metropolis

⁵⁹ transport. v. to send a convict to a penal colony – tr.

has become, was shut down sine die due to a construction defect on the eve of its inauguration; the Millenium Dome, that sagging scoop of custard with little bread sticks sticking out of it sprawling out over the east side of the hipster neighborhood of the old docks, causes a general aesthetic repulsion and has proven so technically deficient that its designers had to admit shortly after its opening that its structure would not last more than fifty years and that then it would become necessary to demolish it; as for the Millenium Bridge, the new walkway over the Thames, the construction was so delayed that they've even been talking about just abandoning it.⁶⁰ All these failures are reminiscent of the old countries of the East and a fatalist disenchantment overtaking minds. Will the legacy of Soviet humor one day soon give a second wind to English humor?

And yet, even amid this celebratory chaos, capitalism is more powerful and thriving than ever. The stock market's doing good, the population is working and consuming, revolts are rare and subdued. And although the trains fail a bit too often to stay on their rails a bit too often, the cell phones buried with their owners' corpses in their twisted steel coffins don't fail to ring. On the one hand you have the obvious chaos constantly pointed out, baldly flaunted catastrophe, and on the other the bright shining horizon of capitalism. A doubt then arises, one that goes beyond merely the English example and concerns the whole of imperial society: perhaps we should not so much ask ourselves why it is that the railways or any other industrial or cultural infrastructure, like libraries, function so poorly these days, but rather why, for whom,

⁶⁰ The bridge was eventually completed and then shutdown not long afterwards due to its wobbling. – tr.

and at what cost they were able to function correctly in the old days, and at the same time what that proper function really meant, which some people have such nostalgia for at present. The reason is simple: as domination progresses, apparatuses transform and priorities change. Some, though they don't so much disappear, just lose their importance and their maintenance becomes secondary; others, over this time, get thrown out of order, and thus prove that this society has leeway to absorb its defeats; others still, without any scandalous effect but with general approval, take over for the old ones because of their greater effectiveness. Among the latter, a few are hardly cumbersome at all, and are immaterial even, but are extremely pervasive, and insinuate themselves even into the interstices of that space that it no longer makes any sense to call "private"; others, inscribed into the territory, exercise a powerful attraction on bodies, whose flows they densify and channel. This simultaneously permits enthusiasm to be injected into bodies, allows their tendency to inertia to be combated, and allows them to be controlled; among other things, these are the shopping malls, airports, highways, the high speed train lines. And one of these apparatuses will be the subject of the present report.

On March 16th, 1999, some thirty kilometers east of London, in the direction of the Chunnel, a vast commodity-circulation complex was inaugurated, a model that seems destined for export – with the necessary adjustments – to everywhere that the conditions of domination allow guaranteed safe passage to new levels of mass consumption. This new level corresponds to the spread of the social-democratic lifestyle of the imperial citizen-consumer, whose every moment of social life – work, shopping, entertainment – is decompartmentalized, and is rendered as undifferentiated as possible. We're not talking about a simple shopping mall here, like

the Forum des Halles in Paris or the *malls* in the big American cities, but a new way of formatting space.

This complex was baptized with the lyrical name “Bluewater” by its promoters. Just the name announces to us that we are going to be entering into what Benjamin called a *phantasmagoria; blue water* – a designation referring to no pre-existing place name at all, which is but *the reflection of a reflection*, that of a pure open sky in calm water, permitting in one single word the invocation - by condensation - of a picture of peaceful, idyllic, primordial nature, and the evocation of a dream-world, a realized utopia.

Yesterday a friend and I took a trip to Bluewater. We left London in the morning and took the freeway towards Dover. Around twenty minutes later, a few miles before Dartford, the first billboards indicating our destination on a yellow background, quite different from the normal signage in the cities and villages, began to appear. A mile away from the M25, that super-beltway that wraps around Greater London, we took an off-ramp of a specially landscaped type. We arrived at the edges of a gigantic crater more than a kilometer in diameter, enclosed by white cliffs some fifty meters high. Its center was occupied by a disturbing glass and steel construction spiked with little conical roofs. Its architecture is incomparable to that of any identifiable type of building. We hesitate to describe it as somewhere between a train station concourse, a tropical greenhouse, or a spaceship, or perhaps all three at once. The highway off-ramp led us into the bottom of the crater, from which we were ineluctably guided by arrows and signs into an immense parking lot where we left the car. It should be remarked that the building, with which we were now level, is surrounded by little artificial pools and a few bunches of trees.



About a hundred meters away, we saw an entrance, which we then moved towards. We were not alone. We weren't alone; that summer day, many dozens of citizens of all kinds dressed in basketball shorts or wearing suits and ties, entered, exited, and crossed paths; it was as if one were watching a ballet danced by little single-celled organisms in a jar. Penetrating into the building, I soon felt a contradictory sensation of suffocation and vertigo, but a somehow horizontal vertigo. Stretching out before us was a long, two level corridor with quite a high ceiling. Contrary to the atmosphere that reigns in the supermarkets and shopping malls that we are used to seeing, our ears were not offended by some falsely "lively" muzak or any announcements proffered in a hysterical tone to incite shoppers to hurry over to the cash registers. We were simply plunged into a kind of muffled murmur, the mingled sound of thousands of voices and thousands of footsteps. It was like we'd just entered a beehive or one of those industrial chicken-coops bathed in a diffuse light. The second impression that grabbed us was of a visual nature: a kind of *déjà-vu*. We had already traversed these vast ambulatories of the commodity, but it was in another century. Obviously the Bluewater architects consciously slapped together the architecture of the passageways

or “arcades” of Paris, the grand shopping corridors of the 19th century that one can see in Brussels or Milan, certain large shops, and palaces reserved for world’s fairs, like the famous Crystal Palace built in London in 1851. But what comes quickly to your attention there is that this déjà vu feeling results from a kind of era clash: the general handling of the space is borrowed from the first half of the 19th century, but the ornamentation is inspired by banalities of the era of “modern style,” where bourgeois architecture from the Belle Epoque, profiting from the period of continuous prosperity preceding the war of 1914, attained its apogee. While the glass roofs of the Parisian arcades harbored all the severity of neo-classical architecture, here a more curved form and floral and vegetable motifs dominate, like in the guardrails running the length of the first floor corridor and the stairs that lead to it: they are adorned with the interlacing hop leaves typical of the Kent beer producing region. By the effect of false recognition⁶¹ that these architectural elements borrowed from various eras aim to produce, but which everyone has at some time or other seen representations of, a soothing familiarity is created which

⁶¹ In his essay *The Memory of the Present*, Paolo Virno makes a few enlightening remarks on the phenomenon of déjà vu as an integral aspect of the antiquarian sensibility of the modernariat; “déjà vu is certainly a pathology, but it must also be added that it is a *public* pathology... ‘modernariat’ means the systematic development of an antiquarian sensibility concerning the *hic et nunc* [here and now] that each of us lives out in turn. On the one hand, the modernariat is a symptom of the split of the present into an illusory ‘something that’s already been’; on the other it actively contributes to always re-effectuating such split.”



compensates for the effects of the foreignness felt by visitors when they first observe the building from the outside. However, these first impressions are still insufficient to reveal all the resources of the Bluewater apparatus. A very banal gesture ended up really showing us what was going on. Sensing that we stood a chance of observing an interesting environment there, we had brought a camera along with us. Since that foresight didn't fail us, we decided to photograph the area. My friend took out her camera and started taking a few pictures. Two minutes later, we were stopped – very courteously, in the English style – by a member of the security personnel who had come out of nowhere, and whose presence we had not even had the slightest inkling of: the behavior control teams are quite invisible here, as if they were melded in with the décor. And so, this full-fledged Bloom informed us, without the arrogance of an entry-level cop or even the barking of a supermarket security

guard, that taking photos within the confines of Bluewater is strictly prohibited. Normally this kind of prohibition is applied in



military areas, or is indicated by clearly visible signs. We should have been astonished by this, but enough time had already passed for the insidiously authoritarian Stimmung of the place to impose itself upon us; so we didn't feel surprised by this restriction foisted on our most basic rights as loiterers, since it was as if it were simply inscribed within the logic of things. Preferring evasion to confrontation that would have been lost before it started, my friend gave the excuse

that she was making some vague study of cultural geography. Against all expectations, the simple mention of the university apparatus opened a breach within the police apparatus. Soon enough we were politely requested to follow this benevolent Cerberus up to the second floor, where we were taken through a few unobtrusive doors and into his office. There, without asking for any proofs or identity cards, he soon issued us an authorization to do what he had forbidden us from doing five minutes before, as long as we wore a couple little badges that would ensure that his colleagues would not stop us again. We were furthermore given some documentation, an apologetic comprised of a luxurious looking color portfolio containing a description of the project and a sketch of its history.

This incident can be likened to the definition Walter Benjamin gives of the "dialectic of the loiterer": "on the one hand, you have the man that feels he is being watched by everything and everyone, like

a real suspect; on the other you have the man that manages not to be found, the man that's totally inconspicuous, concealed. It's probably this dialectic that's elaborated by 'mass man.'" (*Paris, Capital of the 20th Century*). What we experienced was that with the control techniques in force in Bluewater, concealment among the crowd becomes impossible and this dialectic is reduced to its first term: the loiterer is *a prioria* high-risk individual. The difference is that today, the indifference of all towards each greatly reduces the feeling of being the object of anyone else's attention. In the end, the only gaze the loiterer is subject to is that of the hidden panoptical machines and their watchers.

Bluewater was built with a triangular layout: two corridors of equal length forming a right angle are connected by a longer corridor, bent like an arch. It is a circuit closed in on itself where the mode of displacement quite obviously has nothing to do with that of the abovementioned arcades, which were linear and passed through an urban ensemble: here on the contrary we are underhandedly invited to *go around and around endlessly*. Each of the corridors



has a name: the first two are called the Grand Hall and the Rose Gallery, and the third is called Thames Walk, where the gray marble walking surface on the ground floor has a picture of the layout of the Thames river, going from its source to its mouth, with the names of the different places it flows past written in copper lettering. On the second floor folk song *Old Father Thamesis* written on the wall in immense characters. The documents we received



specify the different types of clientele expected in these corridors: Guild Hall is for the “informed and demanding consumer,” that is, the man of the Old Regime, who stocks up on quality products, only trusts a sure value, eats his lunch in high end restaurants, and here can finish out the day in a reconstructed traditional pub with a real fireplace, not at all surprising in such a locale. The Rose Gallery, on the other hand, is intended for “families, with toy shops and children’s clothing, a play area and family dining.” This zone is obviously frequented by those members of the middle class with the lowest income. Finally, the third corridor, the most popular, boasts a high concentration of bars and hipster cafes, and the branches of King’s Road and Covent Garden boutiques: it is “intended for a young clientele with a fancy for fashion.” These three corridors were not named at random; their semiotics conceal a range of emotional effects as broad as it is consensual. Glorification of the diversity of professions, romantic naturalism, rootedness in the local area. It is a watered down, citizenist version of the old Vichy fascist slogan “work, family, fatherland,” acceptable by both the conservative voter and the gay liberal or environmentalist who appreciates fine work. The perfection of the apparatus is likewise expressed in the specific attention paid to the masculine Young Girl, now handled as a special target market, similar to 19th century female clientele: “around 90 retail outlets were specially chosen to attract male clientele; from sporting boutiques to men’s clothing outlets, music and books to computers

and gadgets." To expand the clientele into more the modest sectors of the populace, there are big "anchor stores" from chains well-known in England and even in the rest of Europe located at each corner of the triangle: Marks & Spencer, John Lewis, and House of Fraser. By gathering in the same place three non-specialized stores and three hundred and twenty specialized boutiques, Bluewater inscribes into its geography a cyberneticized equilibrium between the contradictory tendencies towards concentration and dissemination that have been at work since the beginning of the history of capitalism. Entertainment, culture, and leisure comprise the second pole of attraction at Bluewater, and they are all arranged into one last ternary compound which completes the apparatus. In the image of the mall corridors, these places have names that make explicit their specific nature: Village, Water Circus, and Winter Garden. From Guild Hall, an alley bordered by luxury boutiques, emulating the famous Burlington Arcade in London leads to the Village, where bookstores and fine groceries can be found, in quite a "middle class" symbiosis of literature and the stomach. Bluewater's designers clarify that they wanted to recreate a villager atmosphere here, "the opposite of a mega-mall ambiance." From the outside, said Village looks like a provincial casino of some kind, bridged over by a triangular pediment and a pointed turret, and opens out onto a rose garden and a little lake where our duly reinvigorated Bloom can go boating. The Water Circus, which looks out onto another pool, spotlights the mass arts: music, with the inevitable Virgin Megastore; cinema, with a twelve theater multiplex; and public performances, with an open air theater. Finally, you have the Winter Garden, an atrium inspired by the greenhouses of Kew Gardens, and is the biggest greenhouse built in the United Kingdom in the 20th century. To top off this

construction, a whole tropical forest, embellished with ponds and waterfalls, was imported from Florida. It is in this area that parents can rid themselves of their cumbersome progeny and go enjoy the whole fine program: “Great dining, entertainment, and shopping to make your day with an ideal outing.” I almost forgot to mention the most important thing: a space for conviviality like this, whose triangular floor plan itself symbolizes steadfast panoptic tracking, must at all times be presentable, clean, and pacified. The brochure that was obligingly furnished to us by the cop we were hassled by clarifies this quite soberly: “A police station with six officers permanently present. No blind spots nor dead angles, for optimal surveillance.”

For us, since we’d only come to this shopping center to observe the place and soak up its *Stimmung*, the most striking thing was the massive presence of decorative elements in the form of ornaments, bas-reliefs, and statutes which configure space at Bluewater as a kind of theater where every day the profane drama of retail commerce is played out again and again. And so, shortly after our momentary arrest, we entered into the western corridor, the Guild hall (that is, the Hall of Corporations), and gazed upon the stupefying spread of bas-reliefs in reconstituted stone covering either wall, representing bodies in various different professions, each designated with an inscription, where in the benevolent unity of the postmodernized universe, one can see a mix of the professions of traditional artisanship, and more contemporary occupations: airline pilots, referees, manufacturers of scientific instruments, computer technicians, or ...janitors! One hundred and six bas-reliefs in an art-deco style, described by the project promoters themselves as “austere” – clearly what one sees here does not fall within the realm of eulogies for festive values, but



rather has to do with a certain protestant strictness corresponding to the ethos of that particular shopping mall corridor consumer-type – which “celebrates the history of commerce,” and contributes to giving a museum style presentation to the commodities exposed. At the end of the Guild Hall we entered into an area devoted to dining, where a pizzeria bumps elbows with a handful of luxury restaurants. There is a large

inscription like a headband around the entrance to these various eateries, written in the historical language of Empire, reading UBI PIRANDIUM IBI PRETIUM (which can be translated as “lunching is a sacred thing”), doubtless put there to stir up in their Cambridge or Oxford educated clientele some vague memory of their Humanities. Beneath this there is a long frieze sculpted in white stone representing the contemporary everyday emptiness, where, between the traditional symbols of Alpha and Omega, in the greatest imaginable disorder there appears a skull, a telephone, some musical instruments, a clothespin, some pens, various animals like insects, a rat, rabbits, a parrot, some watering cans, dice, a rolling pin, a horseshoe, teacups, a pair of scissors, a candlestick, a knife and fork, some oysters, and a pie tin. It’s an ironic inventory, where everyone can find the particular objects assigned to their singular bloomitude. Inside the building we counted some fifty works of art in all. There are sculptures of wildlife, a curious automaton clock in the form of a puzzle, a

zodiacal rotunda centered around a pastiche of the Carpeaux Fountain, holding not a terrestrial globe, but a celestial sphere; there are also phrases and poems engraved in the walls in monumental letters, amongst which certain Shakespeare sonnets can be found. Such a dedication to ornamentation, which must have incurred quite the significant additional cost for such a vast project, breaks with the miserly focus on functionality of the typical shopping centers built around the world over the last half-century. When Adolf Loos, in his 1908 essay *Ornament and Crime*, said that “the evolution of culture moves towards the expulsion of ornamentation from the useful object,” that affirmation –which inscribed itself within the metaphysics of Progress that dominated at that time –was only avant-garde inasmuch as it anticipated the productivist rationalism that became *de rigueur* after the destruction wreaked by World War One. In the end it was the cold, efficient, functional style that was to triumph after the fifties; and it quickly began to be felt as an intolerable uniformity quite conducive to depression and boredom. However, ornamentation, that is, the aesthetic but useless, was not always incompatible with capitalist rationality, in its liberal or statist versions. Indeed it is even the sign of its imperial affirmation. The triumph of the neo-gothic in England and in its colonies marks the apogee of Victorian sovereignty, much like the magnificence of the Moscow Metro illustrates the all-powerful nature of the Stalinist dictatorship. Closer to home, it was in the Reagan era, with its reaffirmation of American power after the years of recession after the Vietnam war, that atriums – those immense landscaped spaces at the bases of the skyscrapers -began to be built in the big cities, the most famous of which is the atrium at Trump Tower in New York. In such atria, power is symbolized by “lost” space; the immense ceiling height



that likens it to some kind of profane cathedral; the use of profusion of aristocratic materials like marble or bronze; the presence of artwork and water fountains. Pierre Missac, who analyzed this new architectural concept, justly highlights that it is “it not necessary to travel in thought to archaic or utopian worlds in order to render homage to uselessness. That kind of rehabilitation appears right in the very heart of the capitalist world.” (P. Missac, Walter Benjamin’s Passages)

We should add that it appears as a manifestation of its imperial hegemony. So now we can see more clearly that what is called postmodern architecture is only ever merely the return of a tendency that was already present over the course of the Industrial Revolution and that in France for example is illustrated by the eclectic kitsch of Napoleon III or the style of the world’s fairs, which was already playing on this mania for citation and patchwork. “The Arcades Project suggests that it makes no sense to divide the era of capitalism into formalist ‘modernism’ and historically eclectic ‘postmodernism,’ as these tendencies have been there from the start

of industrial culture. The paradoxical dynamics of novelty and repetition simply repeat themselves anew. Modernism and postmodernism are not chronological eras, but political positions in the century-long struggle between art and technology.” (Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*). The difference is that today this aesthetic reinvestment isn’t an expression of the whim of some patron of the arts, or a celebration of personal sovereignty. It is first and foremost the product of a market psychology that took a lesson from the defeat of an international style that limited itself to planting everywhere buildings that all looked the same without the slightest concern for what effect they would have on the general conditions of existence, one where the primary objective is to tend to the visitor’s capacity to consume while polarizing all of his or her inclinations in that direction: “At Bluewater, our concern is to find out the consumers’ real desires. Marketing research has contributed the response elements that allow us to create a feeling of comfort and community. A recent quantitative poll carried out by Gallup, and qualitative surveys run by Alistairs Burns Research and Strategy showed that a mediocre design discourages consumers. More than 50% of youths interviewed between the ages of 16 and 24 say they are distracted from making purchases by mediocre aesthetics... The qualitative research has brought to the foreground the role that aesthetics play in mood management... According to the consumer behaviorist David Peek, clients want to feel like they’re in a natural environment, an experience that all our ‘villages’ offer. “Ornamentation plays a decisive role in this: it permits the imperial apparatus, by nature an expression of global domination by Capital, to take root in the very local traditions that are destroyed by that selfsame mode of domination. And so, the curious conical roofs all aligned at the building’s summit are

replicas of the Kentish hop fields, whose ancient local breweries have now all fallen into the hands of the beer multinationals. It's not insignificant that this technique of aesthetic conditioning with pacification as its goal was baptized with the name Civic Art, a kind of art specifically intended to silhouette citizens: "with Civic Art," clarifies Eric Kuhne, Bluewater's architect, "we tried to grasp the spirit of the region rather than imposing an international concept... First and foremost we had to build something functional; then we added on the leisure component, and only then did we add what for us was the most important thing – the cultural component." The aesthetics of proximity, for efficiency's sake, here rediscovers the favored themes of citizen culturalism, where it's ever so pleasant to "live and work in the country." In both cases, the values fed to you are those of packaged tradition

In 1956, plans drawn up by the American architect Victor Gruen were the basis for the construction of the Southdale Shopping Center in Minneapolis, the first modern shopping mall. This was a decisive mutation, where mass distribution definitively left behind the model of the large department store, which since then has only survived in a residual manner in historical urban centers. The "mall" grew into the big "forums," multiple story commercial centers, like the Forum des Halles in Paris, or the duty free shopping areas in the big international airports. From the arcades of the first half of the 19th century to the big department stores of the Second French Empire, to the malls of the last fifty years, the general tendencies in shopping involved – with the setup of a private public space – a kind of cutting yourself off from the outside world, and enclosing yourself in ever more confined spaces, separated from the circumstances of nature and urban life, both considered as sources of trouble. The glass roofs of the arcades

protected consumers from bad weather, plus they could avoid the inconvenience of dealing with vehicles in circulation; with the development of artificial lighting, with gas and then with electricity, the limits of the traditional boutique could be surpassed, and the surfaces for the display of products on sale could be expanded to cover many floors, with the dimensions of a vast building. In the large shops thus created, the “department stores,” windows were no longer useful, since artificial light could replace natural light everywhere and even add a fairyland ambiance conducive to the creation of the final enchantment permitted under capitalism: the enchantment produced by an abundance, variety, exoticism, and novelty of commodities. On the ground floor, the windows, turned inside out like a glove, took the form of the storefront window, where the street itself becomes the inside. Everyone knows the kind of power of attraction an animated Christmas storefront window has exercised on generations of children, educated thus from the youngest age in the fairyland of consumption. Finally, thanks to the invention of air conditioning, which Le Corbusier called “correct air,” a new and final stage in this process of cutoff from the outside world was reached. This is what favored the creation of malls: climate control techniques permitted the organization of very vast surface areas, sometimes underground like in Montreal, in shopping zones which are totally independent from the outside world. Although they are often situated on the periphery of cities, malls offer no escape to nature. Between 1960-1970, PEOPLE compensated for that with fake plastic plants before new illusionist techniques (called Replascap) permitted the installation, in the earth itself, of real trees, embalmed and rootless, placed in gardens, which then didn’t need any watering.

With Bluewater this tendency has been radically reversed. The interior was designed as a function of the exterior. The hopping space generally opens out onto a fully recreated nature. The borders



between the inside and outside are attenuated thanks to a system of glass roofs and walls and light shafts. Above all, the spaces intended for passage and for entertainment, the café and restaurant terraces, picnic areas, lakes – there are seven, where one can go boating – and wooded zones passed through by a network of paths that can be traveled on bicycle, closely circumscribe the whole of the building. It is a matter of regulating people's

strolling passage *as strolling passage*, not so much just consuming a lot, but *spending a lot of time there as a consumer*, and feeling good while you're there. Today's "luxury" is what one might call *situational luxury*: it is no longer defined by the quality or originality of this or that product, but by the possibility of enjoying (one's) time, space, and calm. Blooms are not treated like ordinary consumers, like in traditional shopping centers; here, rather, micro-apparatuses proliferate to persuade the Blooms of their humanity, make them believe that they are not commodities, and – supreme luxury – that they are not integrated from the get-go into the overall apparatus: "Bluewater's philosophy is simple: to make shopping a pleasant, stress-free experience, and treat our customers as guests... Every visitor is a invited guest." Two hundred and fifty employees are especially devoted to this noble task. As a social phantasmagoria, Bluewater pursues the dreamed-of unity of the

commodity world and the non-commodity world, market values and values of authenticity, the metropolis and the village, the individual and the community. This dream of unity only expresses the Empire's fantasy of a final harmony, which integrates into itself, in its construction of a cybernetic utopia, the essential aspects of citizen democracy's favorite themes of protest. Now, in order to optimize the circulation of commodities, moments, spaces, situations, and products stamped as "non-commodity" need to be allowed to subsist, be recreated, and be invented. The imperialist tendency towards total commodification finds its total fulfillment in that imperial "good behavior, "self-controlled commodification: certain things have to be proclaimed as non-commodity, such as bodies for example, even while the organs themselves are subject to all kinds of trafficking and even in spite of the blatantly obvious universal prostitution. It is certain that drumming out, in the tone of radical demand, the affirmation "I am not a commodity" is only possible in a world entirely colonized by the commodity. Hardly a half century ago, when the majority of products had entered into the commodity circuit already even, such a slogan would have been unthinkable or would not have echoed at all inhuman relations, the ethos of the great mass of the population still largely escaped it. Today the slightest gesture betrays its commodity essence: in the Young Girl's question "do you love me?" it's necessary to hear a preliminary "how much are you worth? "An apparatus of the Bluewater type functions both as a space of consumption and as a moment of biopolitical production. This cathedral of good buys is equally a bloom factory, a machine to produce beings strangely capable of showing the same juvenile enthusiasm for a portable phone, a new line of perfumes, DHEA, or a pizza served in hip surroundings where you wait on leather stools for some sales rep

to call you by your first name when he's found you a table. Here it's not commodities that are exposed to consumers, but the opposite. It's not that people are exposed to commodities through their material appearance as market objects, they are exposed to the commodity essence of those objects; they are exposed in all their nudity to the market itself. Exposure of bare life to the sovereign commodity is the dominant form taken today in the exposure of bare life to sovereignty. And this is possible to the extent that Biopower, the Spectacle, and the market are three differentiated but inseparable moments of this sovereignty. The commodity is not a mere social relationship crystallized in an object stirring consumer desire, and susceptible to purchase by consumers, as if the latter were still formed of someone-commodity substantiality of their own: the commodity, today, is the very being itself of Bloom, whose life is cut up into slices of time that can be exchanged for moments, emotions, or objects. Bluewater is a utopian apparatus where the citizen-democratic ideal of non-class (which puts all substantial distinctions into parentheses) is being tested out. It's utopian because it is built in a non-place, an old open-air limestone quarry, a zone which by definition is absolutely deserted, vegetation-free, and where all animal and human habitats have been eradicated. The use of abandoned quarries to create artificial landscapes with phantasmagoric effect (the term "magic" is brought in as a leitmotif in the promoters' presentation of Bluewater) is nothing new. The famous Buttes-Chaumont park in Paris was laid out by the engineer Alphand in a gypsum quarry, and a slick-looking landscape architecture made it possible to inspire strollers, even with means that were totally artificial and obviously so, with a feeling of nature as profound as it is evanescent, like certain dreams whose impression remains indelibly marked on the mind, but which are

obviously unreal. As a realized apparatus, utopia here denies itself as utopia and enters into the vast category of those “other” spaces that Foucault called heterotopias. Among these, there are certain spatial configurations of the Empire that act on Blooms as powerful attractors, and by contrast make the rest of the space they traverse into something indifferent or repellent to them. I call these attractors hypertopias, places where one simply must go, such as Bluewater or Disneyland. The relationship that political utopias in literature had with travel was the translation into spatial terms of the time that separates the utopian project from its realization. Unlike utopias the voyage to which is imaginary, but nevertheless still a voyage, hypertopias signify the impossibility of all voyage, of all travel whether real or imaginary. There is, in effect, no travel, just transfer, a destination to be reached. Furthermore, distance figures into hypertopias themselves as a primary constituent. To get to them you have to make use of some kind of apparatus: the automobile, or public transit. Even if a train station is specially set up for them, and shuttle buses assigned, their distance is a deterrent to those modern plebeians, the vagabonds and beggars; if they do show up, of course, they’ll be gently removed. Such remoteness has the advantage of reducing costs for surveillance and repression, and is an integral part of managing control.



Bluewater is an establishment solely devoted to the *temporary* harboring of commodities, but it's one that was designed *to last*. People cannot inhabit it, but commodities have taken up lodging there. The true Bluewater guest is the authoritarian commodity. Bluewater is a city built exclusively for the authoritarian commodity, and in this regard its monumentality excludes, by vocation, all expression of the political. The Parisian arcades were designed as galleries for showing off merchandise, set among residential buildings; they were where Fourier got his idea for the phalanstery, but he entirely dismissed the commodity from it and gave primacy to residence. "In the arcades, Fourier recognized the architectural characteristics fundamental to the phalanstery. The arcades, which primitively found themselves to serve commercial ends, became in Fourier's conception houses for living in. The phalanstery is a city made of arcades. In this 'city of passageways' the engineer's construction gives the effect of a characteristic of phantasmagoria. The city of passageways (the city in passing) is a dream that attracted the gaze of men even long before the second half of the century." (Benjamin, *Paris, Capital of the 19th Century*). Whereas the arcades were laid out in the heart of the urban tissue, the fourierist phalanstery is an urban unity of its own, where the various passions that structure the harmonian society arrange themselves. At Bluewater, on the other hand, there are all sorts of insignificant activities, but no passion. Any form of intensity has been preventively banned. Since nothing can live there, we can't

sleep or dream there either. Whereas Fourier demanded that the harmonians have a maximum intensification of the passionate, a permanent erethism of desire, places like Bluewater are places for the channeling and attenuation of passions. No more than one could make love there could one be able to play the flit-about, the composite, or the cabbalist. We don't even have the right to be ostensibly bored there. All you can do is extinguish yourself, and melt into the décor in turn. Whereas the so-called "private" space is supposed to operate as a wrinkle in public space, a wrinkle that permits condensation or, contrarily, a desertion of the self in a relationship with the other, and thus a possible desubjectivation, here everything takes place under the tireless eye of the surveillance cameras; that is, nothing can happen. A place with no wrinkles is a place with no possibility for ecstasy. It's not that ecstasy can only come about in the "sphere of private life" or in the intimacy of the wrinkle, but that in order to find the sources of its potential it needs a withdrawn, opaque situation to erupt and surge forth from. Places with no wrinkles are created to ward off chance, to do away with events, and as we saw with the micro-event discussed above, to absorb it if one happens to arise. It operates as a conditions, emotion, and behavior smoothing apparatus. The impossibility of intimacy, the prohibition on opacity and withdrawal, give rise to the impossibility of secession and thus of all forms of politics. The citizen, here, appears for what he always already was: a being that is devoted to total availability. Under the watchful eye of the surveillance camera, all human presence becomes exposable like an animal perpetually exposed in its natural nudity. This is doubtless why, over the course of my visit, thrust on by this feeling of foreignness to what surrounded me, a disturbing daydream came over me: suddenly these passageways

had nothing to do with the 19th century arcades, the Crystal Palace, the waiting lounges of ancient train stations. No, on

the contrary, here every step you take is recorded, accounted for, even the most useless; it's more like an immense equating lounge.⁶² Spreading out before my eyes I could see it as the great gallery of the Natural History Museum, with all its naturalized animals. And the animals were moving about in all directions, but each of them, thinking they were going in a specific direction, were only traversing a tiny segment on the axis of time, guided from the indifferent point of their birth to the equally indifferent point of their death; there they go, in the zoological park of postmodernity, reduced to no more than bare life, constantly invited to change skins at all the ready-made designer clothes shops, graze at the restaurant feedlots, drink at the troughs of the cafes and bars, and frolic about like sea lions on the seven little pools of water laid out around the site.

The installation of apparatuses like Bluewater is inscribed in the imperial logic of differentiated territorial control. The Keynesian project that aimed to realize its Capital-utopia *in vivo*, by propping itself up on the myth of progressive access by all to a society of abundance where inequalities would be corrected by state interventionism, has today been replaced by the Empire's cybernetic project propped up on an optimum management of

⁶² This line is a play on words: a waiting lounge is called, literally translated, a hall of lost steps, referring to the fact that since there's a waiting room you don't have to pace back and forth, you can sit down. The author(s) write, 'it is not a hall of lost steps, it is an immense hall of counted steps.

chaos. The Empire realizes the same Capital-utopia *in vitro*, in limited spaces, nodes of exception in the biopolitical tissue, a process it has already initiated with the reconquest of the historic city centers by the neo-bourgeoisie, with the colonization of zones decreed as “hipster” areas, or with the Californian ‘gated communities’ model. High surplus-value Blooms who live or can get themselves into these “privileged” zones cannot fail to be aware that *if they don’t play the game* they’ll be pitilessly thrown out, because at the same time the unmanageable portions of the territory (the sizes of which range from “difficult” neighborhoods to region-wide, or even the size of whole countries) are now set up as national places of exile ruled by the brute authority of the police. But Bloom’s sociologically unassignable nature of makes it so one can find Blooms on both sides of these borders. Blooms can even be told that they are “guests” at Bluewater, that they can feel at home there; they remain nonetheless *nowhere*, both there and everywhere else, and above all in their own homes. And this exile, this ostracism, is reconstituted in the Empire’s “privileged” zones just as much as anywhere, because they cater to Bloom’s fundamental reversibility.

Thanks to their rapid commodity disqualification, in the twenties, nearly a century after their construction, the Parisian arcades became places charged with a singular aura, mythical enclaves re-encharmed by surrealist wandering. Because Bluewater is not inscribed within an urban tissue, it will never be able to be subject to any kind of a similar reappropriation by wandering or loitering.⁶³ It won’t grow old like the arcades did, falling under the spell of enchantment cast by a long escheat or abandonment of such

⁶³ *dérive* or *flânerie* –tr.

property. Only a decisive reversal of Empire could change its fate. It is to be expected that, during the next qualitative leap forward into chaos, a horde of offensive nomads will most definitely take possession of it. And by their mere act of taking up lodging and habitual presence in it, in brief, *squatting*, they'll be giving it an uncivil, ecstatic usefulness. They'll whimsically, unpredictably devastate the facilities, and they will not fail to transform the whole place into a joyous and formidable playground of miracles.

NOTES ON THE LOCAL

Everything that today is acceptable as a landscape for us is the fruit of bloody violence and conflicts of a rare brutality.

That could be thought of as a summary of what the democratic government wants to make us forget. Forget that the suburbs have devoured the countryside; forget that the factories have devoured the suburbs, that the deafening, restless, sprawling metropolis has devoured everything.

Acknowledging this doesn't necessarily mean feeling sorry about it. Acknowledging it means grasping its possibilities, both in the past and the present.

The sectioned-off, policed territory where our everyday life takes place, between the supermarket and the digital code for the downstairs door, between the traffic lights and crosswalks, comprises us. We are inhabited by the space we live in. And this is all the more so now that everything in it, or almost everything in it, operates like a subliminal message. We don't do certain things in certain places, because such things just aren't done.

Urban furniture, for example, is almost completely useless – haven't you ever asked yourself who could possibly sit on the benches in one of today's urban neo-squares without succumbing to the most violent despair? There's just one meaning, one function: and that meaning and function are totally prohibitive: "you're only at home when you're at home, or wherever you've paid to be, or wherever you are under surveillance," it reminds us, as if it were its sole purpose to do so.

The world is getting globalized, but it's shrinking.

The physical landscape we pass through every day at high speeds (in cars, in public transport, on foot, in a rush) basically has such an unreal character to it because in it no one experiences anything at all, and in it nothing can live. It is a kind of micro-desert where we're like exiles, moving about between one piece of private property and the other, between one obligation and another.

The virtual landscape, on the other hand, looks much more appealing. The liquid crystal computer screen; Internet navigation; the televised or playstation universes — these are infinitely more familiar to us than the streets of our own neighborhoods are, peopled in the evenings by the lunar light of the street lamps and the metal curtains and gates on the closed stores.

The opposite of the local isn't the global; it's the virtual.

The global is indeed so not opposed to the local that the global in fact produces the local. The global only refers to a certain distribution of differences based on a norm that homogenizes them all. Folklore is the effect of cosmopolitanism. If we don't know the local as something truly local, it ends up being a little mini global whole. The local appears to the extent that the global makes itself possible and necessary. Going to work, going shopping, traveling far away from home; that's what makes the local something truly local; otherwise it would be — much more modestly — merely the place you live in.

Furthermore, we don't really live anywhere at all, properly speaking.

Our existence is merely divided up into sectors delimited by topological and time-schedule lines, into little slices of personalized life.

But that's not all; PEOPLE would now also like to make us live in the virtual — to have us definitively deported. There, life will be reconstituted, into a curious unity of non-time and non-place, as the life PEOPLE wish us to have; a Virtual Life, which, an ad for the Internet says, is "a place where you can do everything that you can't do in real life." But there, where "everything is permissible," the mechanism of the passage from potential to acts is under total surveillance. In other words: the virtual world is the place where possibilities never become real, but remain indefinitely in a state of virtuality. Here prevention wins out over intervention: although everything is possible in the virtual world, that's only because the apparatus itself ensures that everything will remain unchanged in our real lives.

Soon, PEOPLE say, we'll be tele-commuting (tele-working) and tele-consuming. In this "tele-life," we will no longer be afflicted by the painful feeling we had in public space that our possibilities were being aborted, every time eyes would meet and then turn so quickly away. The annoyance of being immersed among our contemporaries, who most often are strangers to us — in the streets or elsewhere — will be abolished. The local, expelled from the global, will itself be projected into the virtual, so as to make us believe, once and for all, that nothing but the global exists. To make the pill easier to swallow, it will be necessary to drape that uniformity in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural trappings.

While waiting for the advent of tele-life, we suggest the hypothesis that our bodies, in space, have a political meaning, and that domination constantly works to hide it.

Shouting a slogan at home isn't the same as shouting it out in a stairwell or out in the street. Doing it alone isn't the same as doing it with a number of people, and so on and so forth.

Space is political and space is living, because space is inhabited; it is inhabited by our bodies, which transform it by the simple fact that they are contained within it. And that's why it is put under surveillance, and why it is closed off.

The idea of space that represents it as something empty that is then filled up with objects, bodies, and things is a false one. On the contrary, that is just the idea of space obtained by mentally removing from a given concrete space all the objects, bodies, and things that inhabit it. Power as it is today has certainly materialized this idea in its esplanades, its highways, and in its architecture. But it is constantly being threatened by its original defect. When something takes place in a space controlled by the global order, when part of that space actually becomes a place, due to an event arising there, an unexpected turn has occurred, and the global order wants nothing more than to suppress that kind of thing. Against this, it has invented the "local," in the sense that it continually adjusts all its control, data capture, and management devices to fit each particular location.

That's why I say that the local is political: because it is the place where the present confrontation occurs.

**THE LITTLE GAME
OF THE MAN OF
THE OLD REGIME**



First and foremost what we abhor on the whole is not just the image of some ultimate substance, some indivisible density; it is also and above all (at least for me) bad form.

– Roland Barthes, *Digressions*

1. INITIATION

Little subversions make for big conformities.

2. PROVISIONAL DEFINITION

The man of the Old Regime is the figure of bourgeois subjectivity at the moment of its liquidation and hollowing out by cybernetic domination, which historically was issued from that bourgeoisie itself. Defunct, bourgeois subjectivity survives itself indefinitely in the myth of the free, autonomous, strong individual, self-assured and sure of his world, a world that contains in its fenced-in yard a set of values and established experiences that our “individual” *wholly* inhabits, as well as the consumption of a certain number of cultural commodities that serve him as a system of references. From being the *object* of social critique during the whole of the 19th century, and a good part of the 20th, the man of the Old Regime has now become the *subject* of such critique, in a reconstitution process internal to commodity domination which now requires the maintenance of the man of the Old Regime as a false alternative to the *American way of life*. What we’re talking about here is a *form of life*, and not an attributable class of individuals: hence we are inferring him from our singular inclinations, no less than from the empirical summary of character traits, cultural practices, sediments of habit, and institutional skeletons that justify him. The man of the Old Regime functions as a womb for socially produced, possible habituses; for us this isn’t about critiquing a “way of life,” but about

putting ourselves on a plane of consistency that would allow reality to be read in terms of an ensemble of ethical and political confrontations between forms-of-life. We are not going to dissect nor judge them, but merely take a material measurement of their lines of flight and the playing area they offer. The man of the Old Regime is a special kind of Bloom whose guarded escape from the world is his sole and unique line of flight.

3. METHOD

The walk-on role relationship that Bloom has with his own life, has no reason for it; that means that we can't undo the tangle of "psychological" and social forces that constitute the essence of Old Regime humanity. It would be as illusory as it would be useless to claim to be able to say what the Old Regime man "is," so we'll just content ourselves with describing what happens to him everyday. A sociological analysis and criticism of the ideology there, one founded in a comprehension of the real interests and strategies pursued by individuals and in a will to dissipate the social effects of the interference with and travesty of these interests, in spite of the occasional clarifications it might offer, is just part of a struggle to outline this domain of *habitus-incorporation*, one that can't be justified, not even subtly, as something taken up out of social self-interest. The man of the Old Regime can only be handled with a formal description that would update both the defense mechanisms of his individual *art of living* while also updating our evaluation of the political institutions prerequisite for his persistence, namely the monopoly on public violence by what's called the "state"

authorities, and by their corollary, bourgeois publicity, which interrupts all the real consequences of thought. The Old Regime *posture* can only ever exist as a particular internal modality of the New Cybernetic Regime, as a *liberalness* granted by the latter, and must be understood, in bureaucratic sociological terms, as a strategy for the distinction and affirmation of a non-bloomized habitus in an era when Bloom is a transcendental aspect of all critical theory on social being. More than just a particular vision or theory of the world, the “discourse” of the Old Regime is an epistemological apparatus that decrypts reality by means of a system of classic and general categories (man, the passions, interest, history, action, negativity, difference, Spectacle, etc.), which always permits a warding off and neutralizing of all events by bringing them down to the safety of “been there done that.” Moreover, it permits those Blooms that play more or less masterfully the Old-Regime-man role to silence their own *singular* implication in what’s happening to them; by thus splitting hairs about everything that happens, the man of the Old Regime pardons himself from ever thinking about his own real situation. The passion for critique that animates him thus often expresses itself in a simple reflex of distancing: he doesn’t need to fabricate new concepts in order to think about any given event; he needs to do so in order to actively deny any and all events, by fitting them in with some already-known essence.

4. AN APPARATUS INCARNATE

The man of the Old Regime is a responsive type; he's perhaps the first in history to live in a state of *total* resentment, since he can't resign himself to completing the inevitable labor of finally interring the habitus culturally associated with the bourgeois ethic on pain of indicting himself. A real experience of the contemporary situation is forbidden to him, because – and in this sense he's profoundly autistic – he speaks, or rather, he *discourses* about the present advances of the involitional process of capitalist subsumption and on the morals that sketch themselves out therein from above -- from a *bird's eye view*, carefully secured by safety tape of both the police and linguistic kinds. In no circumstances can he let himself fully go into experience and be contaminated by such contemptible realities; rather he lays a blanket rejection on anything *unheard-of*, whatever is not validated by the *classical* forms of existence. This is a question of his survival, pure and simple. In effect, in the more or less long term, this attenuated form- of-life is doomed to disappearance, undermined by the evaporation of its conditions of existence and the unavoidable shrinkage of peaceful space for its expression. Politically, this decline manifests itself in the terror this strange, frightened citizen lives in, nostalgically longing for the good old days of submission to the limited sovereignty of a Nation-State, a submission which he could plainly and fully fathom on sight, and from which he could always escape and take refuge in his *inner conscience*, a liberated zone, the homeland of the Self where self-ignorance could easily pass itself off as moral conscience. Dispossessed of his little stock of anecdotes and violently removed from his natural *milieu* by the growing onrush of the Empire's acephalous, non-contractual, inordinate

sovereignty, the man of the Old Regime has been swindled by History, and, world-weary, has sent in his invoice; thus in France a few years ago we saw an Old Regime politico-intellectual party and movement crop up which attempted to bail out the water from a few good old myths like Republic, School, or Authority, in the shadow of which they hoped to be able to go on living. But their coin has no more currency, and Sirius' perspective doesn't bring home the bacon anymore. The man of the Old Regime, thus, is reduced by all this to bringing his theoretical neutralization and interference apparatus into existence biographically, an apparatus of "change-for-its-own-sake-ism",⁶⁴ modernity, the dominant ideology of party-down youth-ism, progress, mobility, flexibility and clean slates; in brief, the ever-so pleasant globalization so dear to the "liberal-libertarians," versus a certain number of properly valorized postures and concepts like critique, reflection, authority, slowness, conservatism, "tory anarchism," the Republic so dear to the "Bolshevik-bonapartists," respect for the past, traditionalism, literature, discursive masterfulness, etc. But the part he pretends to play so passionately has in fact already been played out. The assertions, positions, theses, and analyses that comprise the feigned confrontations he has in his world are always already known to all, and in no way serve to clarify reality but act as symbols of recognition, gauges of belonging, rhetorical guide-rails. These are *gimmicks*; it's the stuff of carnival fortune-tellers.

The static here comes from an eternal playing out, over and over again, of the old false opposition between conservatism/progressivism, terms that are never more than two *variants* of the same

⁶⁴ *Bougisme* –tr.

anthropological thesis – a thesis of pacification that postulates man as a living-social-being-in-society. And the point of it all is to naturalize an apparatus that comprises one of the major controlled burns to hide the fact of human reality as civil war.



Who could still believe this world to be worthy of love? What good does it do to love what itself is devoted to hatred? Even God can't do it, and resigns himself to allowing Hell to go on existing.

– Bernanos

5. GIMMICK

One of the favorite gimmicks of the man of the Old Regime is the declamatory affirmation of his militant exteriority to “this” world, his irreducibility relative to the so-called “mass” culture, the dominant bloc of alienation, perceived as the impassable horizon of all human positions; this reflex at bottom only expresses the fetishism of a chimerical foreignness to the world that seeks itself out for example in the practice of perpetual, pathetic, misanthropic – or even schismatic hygienic measures. Owing to the heavy historical tendency to centralist pacification which has marked the French State for such a long while, and has produced the citizenist psychology we know so well – the psychology of subjects believing they can find freedom in the proper operation of a State that takes charge of all the “political” aspects of their lives – the Old Regime posture is reminiscent, in a preferential way, of a certain tradition very much our own, one that can be traced back to the “anti-monarchist” libertines, and has continued all the way down to the right-wing/royalist⁶⁵ and dietary situationism of today, by way of reactionary catholics, heideggerians of all obediences, anarcho-capitalists, “Hussars,” and other Sollerso-Celinians.⁶⁶ In the last resort, old regime man will always try to make good on his back-up *right*, his *right* to an inward emigration. Today all these fractions are part of a vast movement remaking the battle-fronts, all seeking to ally themselves with liberal-humanism so as to escape the

⁶⁵ *Maurrasian*, from Charles Maurras –tr.

⁶⁶ From Phillippe Sollers/Louis-Ferdinand Celine –tr.

historical confrontation between the Empire and whatever escapes it.

6. A GOLDEN PERSONALITY

The man of the Old Regime is still, whatever he may think, a *liberal puritan*, even when he plays at dressing himself up in the *worn-out* masks of the libertine, the high-lifer, the hero, the bandit, the rebel, the strategist, the novelist, or even the expert ataraxia-enthusiast. These are just so many roles that he masters only enough to give off an illusion. The impurity, violence, subversion, the negative, and the sacred he enjoys invoking once in a while, are just so many pretexts for another infinite literary rumination. In general, all the experience of the man of the Old Regime is highly structured, built around references, not to the commodity – which is vulgar in his eyes – but to culture. Like his much maligned brother-Blooms, he has purchased a whole panoply for himself; and he sees himself as quite upwardly mobile on the culture market of subjectivity-casting. His particular form of showiness remains, towards and against everything, a very French product within the world-wide production of subjectivities.

7. A LITTLE LITANY (AN EXAMPLE OF THE PANOPLY)

Festivist mode of production fashioning new humanity / the Brussels Health Authorities refrigerate everyday life / “principle of precaution” = morbid theology / disappearance of Evil, and hence of Good, from the Original Sin, and thus of the joy of sinning / end of the Sacred / juvenile festivism = preserver of fascism / anthropological mutation having already taken place / irreversible decadence of the critical mind / slipping of populace towards a dream-like state / seizure of power by the pleasure principle / demolition of all the load-bearing structural separations which built the adult world / diffuse will to return to the state of innocence from before the Fall / abolition of Conflict / creation = subversion of the mixed economy / return of the human race to animal life / desire: now purely utilitarian, mechanical / return of Culture to the fold of Nature / examination of the Old World, of History / “Because life’s like that. It’s something continuous, with its mix of nice people and mean people, which has been brought to a stop now.” / change in the function of literature: no longer reflecting the contradictions of human beings, but celebrating a neo-human free of any contradictions (values of good citizenship, conviviality, parity, fraternity) / a new imperative of Citizen Wellbeing / replacement of the negative by intersubjective self-negativity / there is no reality anymore / disappearance of the concrete under the battering ram of the Universal / tyranny of nice sentiments, transparency, mirthless people / health through literature / “thinking will be like vomiting” / long live the aristocracy of critical thought! / playful erasure of differences / computerized oppression

/ poetico-morbid re-enchantment of public space / closely entwined romanticism of community / victimocracy / the self as an authenticity bloc, as proof, as opus / triumphant survival of life / process of provincial alignment / resurfacing of the romantic lie / museumization of cities / change in the nature of the concept of an "event" (inversion of meaning/sense) / parodic end to the division of labor (everybody stay in their proper place!), of money, of classes, and lots of other things / collapses of all kinds / reading = access to a vast pre-spectacular human experience, to true conversation / reading = finished / nostalgia for authentic bourgeois publicity and skill in it (salons) / "people now resemble their times more than they do their parents" / erasure of personality / unaddressed falsehoods / perpetual present / miserable contemporaries ever more separated from the possibility of getting to know any authentic experience / pseudo-ization of the world and of things / necessity to discover one's individual preferences / critique first and foremost the full-fledged disavowal of mankind.

8. POLISHING

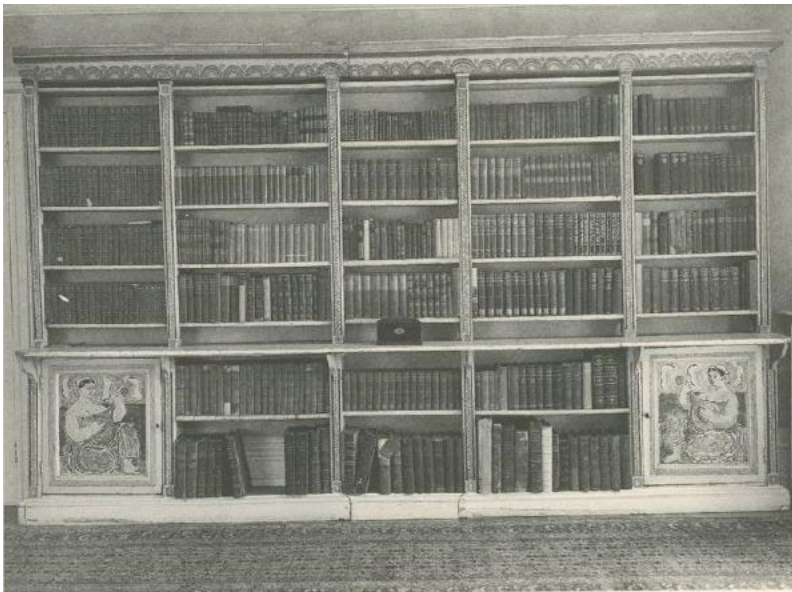
This kind of Old Regime "sensibility," which relies on yesteryear's well-proven forms- of-life, can only arise, theoretically – or even literally – when what's old knows itself to be old and breaks off from the historical process: it involves living forms not recognizing themselves as such but letting themselves only be evoked in memory, once they've already expired. Thus the Old Regime posture reveals itself as integrally *liberal*: it proceeds from a fundamental choice to make a "museum-like" secularization of

thought, one that is certainly tacit, but is justified culturally again and again, and hence intrinsically unfolds within the sphere of representation - although no one invokes their attachment to the "real," to the "concrete" more insistently than the man of the Old Regime does. In fact, this is one of those little contemporary mythologies that like the others is seeking to get itself anthropologically patented. Nothing to it but another slick little play on words where our fortune-teller valiantly strikes down the paper tigers he pulls out of his hat, and, since, as everyone knows, "History is over" and there's nothing at stake, proves himself to be just another post-modern toad like the rest - but one that rolls in the trough of the self-importance of "critical" thought. He's a *civilized* Bloom, one that's been civilized by the impersonal, by what "PEOPLE" think.

9. A HERITAGE TO MAKE THE MOST OF

The man of the Old Regime spends the majority of his time playing the tired out hero of The Modern Era who – since he doesn't have the strength anymore to claim to be himself – contemplates himself indefinitely in the posture he's *inherited*. This heritage is the rickety assumption of all the old artificial dividing lines producing that cozy being called the modern citizen, inhabiting, for better or worse, his own inexperience of the world. Persisting, with the obligatory catholic bad faith, in an obsolete psychological paradigm (Balzac above all!), the man of the Old Regime seeks out everywhere the proofs of the particular Human Comedy he's attached to, even while he is immersed in the bloomesque Farce,

wandering lost with no landmarks to guide him. He'd like to think he's a Descartes or a Casanova, when he's really just a condescending despiser of social entertainment, the cartographer of his own renunciations, the herald of the incantatory negative, which works to make his passivity into a pretty looking little book of critical lucidity, perfect as a gift for the new year (your oldest son will adore it, that little intellectual; you'll see!). In any case, the clothes he wears don't match his build.



When humanity has attained to such a stage where every bit of progress, each new invention, inexorably sinks men into a deeper inhumanity, language too degenerates quickly, and all understanding becomes impossible.

– J. Semprun

10. AN ADVERTISED AUTHORITY

The undeniable charm one can get from playing the tragic games of nostalgia, from making the melancholic sentiment of the flowing away and irreversibility of time into the alpha and omega of all critical reflection on existence and the course of the world, carries within it the risk of autistic rambling, the risk of getting all caught up in a posture that becomes a mere hatred of *what's there*, of what's *being played out*. When reality doesn't reveal itself to be anything anymore but the decadence of a past grandeur, it doesn't matter how much we pose as *hold outs*: the velvet gloves are still on. What we denounce about the man of the Old Regime is thus not that he has at bottom so little real experience, since that's a condition that is now common to us all, but rather his puerile mania for gumming up the game with the repressive function that his much-advertised experience performs, which he pulls out as a perpetual argument for his authority. In the last resort, his infantilism squared perhaps merely arises from the fact that he's *flipping out*; from the fact that he's refused to attain to any experience of the present conflict outside of the civilized, police-like framework proper to his class.

11. A BIT OF PSYCHOLOGY

The position of the man of the Old Regime is an untenable one, since his critique, founded on hatred as well as on a voluntary misunderstanding of the conflict and experiments that are going on now, has in the end a reactionary basis: the visceral incapacity to

live *in* this world and the pure will to *differentiation* that flows from that. Descartes or Casanova were the majestic sons of their era, whereas our man has but one wish: to no longer be part of this world, and to find the wrong reasons for that flight. That's why the critical descriptions made by this or that man of the Old Regime always remain literary in nature, as if he were signaling from beyond the grave, transmuting the abjectly impoverished material that he does no more than give a name to in sniggering satires and baroque vanity about the vacuity of worldly life, in the little encyclopedias of inconveniences he feeds on, or in the sublime tombs of an era only some laudatory biography could save. The acts of the man of the Old Regime thus reproduce the classical act of the religions: the creation of a metaphysical "back-world."

12. WHERE'S THE BODY AT?

It appears then that the sensibility of the man of the Old Regime is but the opposite term of a false opposition, one that renders said opposition profoundly in solidarity with the enlightened false consciousness of the super-hipster: beneath the vague super-referential agitation of a fidgety postmodernity and the cynical arrogance of a self-proclaimed traditionalism, there is the same – idealist – incapacity to start from the self, from one's own form-of-life, one's *current* (and not just hypothetical or incantatory) desires and means, to give oneself room to understand what's at play, where one stands in this whole thing, and to figure out how to escape the general *paralysis*. If the pious agitation in favor of the "third millennium" is laughable, the therapeutic stubbornness in

favor of the *critical mind* is much more so. Within a capitalist society that not only integrates critique but makes it operate to its profit, it's much more a question of feeding the thickness of a critical corporeity with an effective grip on reality than of discoursing on the reasons for one's powerlessness. Among these two brother-enemies, so tragically in need of one another in order to exist and oppose one another, who respectively hypostatize a pleasure principle and a reality principle that are equally abstract, who live in an empire of symbols that the one seeks to *surf* and the other to *deconstruct*, there is a real lack of any true *presence in the world*.

13. HANDRAIL

Condemned to perpetually find in his tow what he can only *denounce*, moved by an inexhaustible resentment in the face of the presupposed loss of what he thought he might possess one day, the man of the Old Regime wears himself out in the Sisyphus' task of spitting at it all in plain sight, and passing off his real powerlessness as a superior and unassailable consciousness. This manner of always attempting to transform lead into gold, this *authorized* critique of the Spectacle, this *second hand* life, is on its way to becoming the most popular of cultural commodities; the man of the Old Regime is an informed, demanding, and meticulous consumer, one that does not take kindly to reprimand. He's paid for his seat on the boat of modernity; he shouldn't have to be on the lookout for the ticket man; and thus he's well in his right to *complain about it* when the ship sinks. *Subjectivation via the kinds of complaints proper*

to believers has, in the man of the Old Regime, been secularized as a critical consumerism.

14. THE NIXED FOOL

Cybernetic capitalism presents itself as ever more idealistic about its reformatting of the world, the goal of which is to extract “informational value.” Among other things, it makes the “consciousness that you’ve not been *duped*” work to its benefit as the conceited urge to not come off looking the fool that the man of the Old Regime shares. All discursive or partial contestation is thus brought back into the Whole and contributes to reinforcing the system by rendering it more impermeable to the critique of the process in acts. This tends in this way to generalize enlightened false consciousness, rendering its underlings *complicit* in the ongoing cybernetic normalization process, in order to immunize them against all possibility of making a *real* departure from the Program. They can wink their eye or lift their arms to the sky all they like; they remain merely the marvelous little props of a grumpy old humanism. To the extent that everything becomes explainable and criticizable, nothing can happen anymore at all. And so the “non-dupes” wander through the night. And they are sinister. The Old Regime posture is a past-experience neutralization device that works by coagulating it into *reference values*. And so our man (including his garden, his humanities, and his identity) carefully cultivates the practice of little differences, slight deviations, miniscule put-downs, always seeking to set himself up as against what he disdainfully calls the Integrated Spectacle, the

Great Whatever, the party-party society, the present abjection, or more seriously still, what he sees as alienation's herds of fanatics sinking to the deepest depths of the abyss (upon the signal "cell-phone" or "rollerblades," grind teeth audibly), always camouflaging his irreducible attachment to precisely that which he ostensibly vomits: Power, which he so hates but secretly desires, since it *makes him live*--in his totally carefree manner. If the man of the Old Regime is now sick and dying, it's because he's turned all the energy he mobilized to produce his "consciousness" against himself in an autotomic process of progressive self-paralysis. A disastrous flight forward, this self-devouring which forbids itself any real activity since it would be a priori "polluted" by the grip of Power. Wherever power circulates, wherever human relationships are experienced in anonymity and opacity, for instance among these technoid cretins that he never ceases jeering at, he will be unable to *grasp* anything nor understand anything, and will make do with the cretinizing or alienating power of the "times," of fashion, or of the mass media. Though he does see how authoritarian social entertainment is just *one* of the present modalities of domination, the man of the Old Regime will remain attached to the repression-hypothesis (while easily mocking -- for the wrong reasons -- leftist attempts at "liberation"), which permits him to pose as a holdout against the "dehumanization" process brought about by the "ongoing anthropological mutation" by simply distancing himself from it, as an individual irreducible to the confusion of it all, as impervious to a fantastical total social power. An easy sleight of hand. A simple play on words. Solidarity between power and its critique, by the frenetic disclaiming of any lines of flight that might differ from the politics proper to the back-world. And he willingly admits it: he's merely a *high-end* spectator

on the collapse, a detached chronicler of the course of the disaster; a spirited reporter, reporting from the edge of the abyss.

15. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CONSCIOUS

An idealist spectator, who first and foremost schematizes all empirical data by means of the scrawny transcendentals of the sedimentation of past experience – which he never got much of after all, our little orphan of Historical Meaning, who ceaselessly falls back on the paternal function, the symbolic order, the reality principle, a hypothetical history that took place and is now finished, wears himself out abstractly denouncing (Look out! Here comes the construction kit!) semiotic confusion, sexual indifferentiation, the digital reformatting of experience, the global commodification of the world, panoptico-festive control, the generalization of living currency throughout standard social relations, the health police regulating everyday life, declaring that his is a critique of the *irrationality* of our times, and that all men would really need to do would be to become conscious of the structural irrationality at work, and show some good sense, in order for everything to go better in the best of possible *common decency*. The aesthetic of disaster, catastrophe, and collapse (which have always already taken place) almost automatically changes into a reinforcement of a good inclination towards critique, thus contributing to the triumph of the citizen-ideology of forms-of-life that are assisted-living but *conscious*. But the youth of today -- do tell; are they really conscious?

The young men that surround us – above all the youngest of them, the adolescents – are almost all monsters. Their physical aspect is almost terrifying, and when it's not, it is sickeningly sad. Their fur is really horrible; their hair looks like some kind of caricature; they have those pale complexions, those extinguished eyes... These must be the masks of some kind of barbaric initiation, but it's barbaric in a lackluster way. Or perhaps these are the masks of a kind of diligent and unconscious integration that kindles no compassion.

– Pasolini

16. A PORTRAIT GALLERY

All the traditional forms of authority and mastery have visibly lost their aura and have been degraded into the postures of expert, technician, politician, victimology consultant; as for the man of the Old Regime, that doctor in nothing, that strategist that always loses, that professional of language, he is reduced to *aping* the cheerful fat cat, the anarcho-poujadist,⁶⁷ the protective, gruff *Pater*, the reasonable cynic, the man of infallible judgment, the little cherub peering into the abyss, the stable but disturbed humanist, the honest man who occasionally keeps bad company, the grinning shopkeeper who doesn't lose his cool, the right wing anarchist, or more commonly the *realpolitiker of emotion*. Like the others, he plays a role; a role with some composure, as required for the proper

⁶⁷ Pierre Poujade: champion of small-business conservatism –tr.

maintenance of the French mental décor. But he distinguishes himself by his strategy, which is to *counter today's poverty with yesterday's*, without even seeking to concretely fill himself with such poverty but by exorcising it and refusing to *grasp* it. Invariably all his wisdom comes down to this miserable dialectic between false obviousness and distancing: *well of course* (God and Man are dead, woman does not exist, transparency reigns, the world is rotten, children and hybrid beings have taken power, control is in full swing, apparatuses govern us, the world turns), but what do you expect (milady); *that's how it is*, and you know what, it's always been that way and always will be that way; sure, everything's been getting worse, but for we of the old school, to be aware of it and not be like the urban zombies that we pass by now and then – well, that's the essential thing; it doesn't cost anything, does it? And that's why – between you and me – your son's got no balls.



I always had a taste for interiors... intimate habits, private conventions, the details of houses: a new interior for me to penetrate was always a pleasant discovery for me.

– Sainte-Beuve

17. AN INTERIOR MAN

The man of the Old Regime doesn't really have any fun; a smile at the corner of his mouth, he chooses the petty false consciousness of someone who thinks he knew about it first and is putting up with it. Everything he can't manage to understand he throws into one of his two conceptual garbage bins that he makes such an extensive and manifestly defensive use of; stupidity and barbarism. He thinks that urbaneness, tact, politeness, courtesy above all, and good manners comprise a legacy passed down to us which will suffice to protect us from commodity barbarism. He practices a false pathos of distance, referring everyone back to their own suffering, a pathos that does not increase his potential but makes him an *untouchable*, in the proper sense. He endlessly expects the worst, which has ended up not even needing to happen; in fact, he *desires* the worst, not for its own sake, but because all in all only the worst would permit him to remain in his cynical half-withdrawn position, threatened as he is by that possibility, which radically changes the deal and resides – always already there – in abeyance, *between bodies*. But to free himself, he'd have to come down off his pedestal, abandon a relationship with the world constituted of suspension, interruption, and internalization, and leave behind the altar of substantial rationality, before which he chants endlessly, as well as those refined, small pleasures that he plays defense attorney for, and that are certainly nothing but vindictive submission.

18. A GUARD-DOG MAN, ON DUTY



The man of the Old Regime is the unfortunate consciousness of our times which has ended up loving its misery and indeed even delights in and feeds off it. However quick he is to use the billyclub of “alienation” to disqualify any gesture however slightly ecstatic, it’s just because he’s been dying of sour grapes ever since *events* arose: because events send him back to his solipsistic solitude, his waiting room lifestyle, contemplative and aggressive. It’s piquant to note that the man of the Old

Regime does take up most of the concepts of the old critical theory right when they cease to be operational, but always feels a certain annoyance about the concept of separation. Basically he just can’t manage to grasp the coexistence of the extreme separation and the extreme symbiosis- relinquishment of Blooms within the spectacle of social entertainment, because separation is precisely the *cipher* of his unavowable solidarity with Bloom, the dead angle of his self-consciousness which he’d so sought after. In the same way, his opposition to transparent mobilization by informational Capital or to a despicable praise for confessions as of value in themselves are all done out of reactionary motives: the man of the Old Regime invokes the secret only as a fetish, and only practices it in a truly

anti-social opacity, because he is incapable of attaining to even the slightest sharing, any interruption to his culturally acquired suspension. A man of existential moderation, he puts his retention-hysteria to work for him. He's the perfect picture of an anal-type Victorian: lucid, he nonetheless holds back. But for what?

19. PROVEN USE

The man of the Old Regime lives and acts from the fantastical perspective of posterity, in this sense in conformity with a sovereignty that is simply *literary*. If he *has* always already comprehended everything and expected everything, that everything appears to him to have already been done or tried, it's just because he *is* already comprehended within the little circle of his renunciations: thus his activity is primarily of a linguistic nature: with him, critical theory becomes an analysis of the language of a society which is quickly earning the qualification of totalitarian, all the while retrenching itself in a grumpy attitude of haughty non-participation. Putting the world at a distance and declaring it null and void for its excess vulgarity is enough for him. The unspoken imperative here remains *the Puritanism of proper usage*(of language, emotions, objects, foods, the critical spirit; in brief, of his "profession of being a Man," in general), everywhere and on all occasions. What makes up the man of the Old Regime is, in the end, merely the *radical theory of the citizen*, hooked into the IVs of the 18th centurist encyclopedism and orthographical correctness. All upsurge of an offensive practice will thus be immediately accused as a *taking advantage of custom*, that civilized version of the

police-like notion of “arme par destination”.⁶⁸ To our “*that shit happens,*” he’ll always oppose his pathetic “*but, you just don’t do that sort of thing!?*”

20. NO TOUCHING, BUDDY

We find among the men of the Old Regime an absolute rejection of “monstrosity,” a ferocious denial of impropriety as such; in brief: a motive in all the subtle forms of tautological and infantile identity politics at play in his bedroom psychology, and that Barthes in his time masterfully put down to the poujadist philosophy of *good sense*: the man of the Old Regime is *also*, but not above all, the white, male, cultured petty- bourgeois, who’s afraid of everything because he is nothing and doesn’t know how to do anything. What he opposes to Biopower is simply a less up-to-date version of normalcy, a forgetting of bodies rather than their neutralization. The lie of affirming a non- vacillating feeling of reality and its permanence rests on a fatal confusion between the feeling of cleanness affirmed to no one in particular (only out of reaction against the fantasized mass of the unclean par excellence: the commodity and its cultural corrolary, hybridity) and that of true substantiality, as a sedimentation of successive possessions, in the sense where gestures, acts, conflicts take possession of us and make us *thicker* (which is just the opposite of heaviness). The beautiful

⁶⁸ Using as a weapon something not customarily used as a weapon –tr.

completeness that he carries like a flag before him prohibits all communication with the man of the Old Regime: there we find his ideal of complete separation, permitting *predictable* and *sure* relations: among well-mannered people we don't *touch* one another! He thus lives in the paranoid fear of the bursting of his constitutive lie of a "stable" construction of the self projected to the outside as a big weighty thing prohibiting any real transmission of experience. Like his other ghosts, his advertised paternalism is absolutely hollow because he has nothing to transmit, since he has no real skill, no knowledge-power, just his posture and his references, which will for a little while longer still permit him to be able to do without the world. As a consequence of this, the man of the Old Regime lives in a closed universe where he only ever finds himself and his peers, unfortunate and wandering systems of reference whose free space is always limited to a few salons, libraries, and box offices.

And when he has anything to complain about besides the way the world's going, he can always call the authorities. There's a whole, stuffy world oozing out of his person, that of the backwards psychological contradictions that undermined the classical bourgeoisie of the 19th century (hypocrisy, frustration, inexperience, neurosis, social drama, hatred of the other, greed, misogyny, narcissism, anal fixation, mediocrity, racism, gossip, constant terror of ridicule, obscene outbursts, the proper authoritarianism, cult of "style," – warning, this list is non-exclusive!).

21. HEAVY, BUT NOT THICK



A whole economy of nostalgia for origins is at work in his discourse: the dreamed-of primordial originator, even situated in history, has more value than the impure, tardy, composite, finished, intrinsically alienated element we evolve in. The man of the Old Regime wants (or says that he wants, which for him is the same thing), a *restoration*(of presence, of meaning, of reality, of the Father, of God, of the King, of the Republic, of man, of

order, of separation); in brief, a restoration of precisely those great idealist narrations that have for so long served to justify the mass prohibition on any acts of singular or collective sovereignty. He is, subsequently, heavy, Gaullist, paralytic, universalist by default and regionalist by virtue of the Michelin guide,⁶⁹ incapable of getting out of the maze of a politics of the whole – a praxis indexed to a teleological heavy machinery (that certainly doesn't cost anything). Quote: "Whisper in the conservatives' ears: time's running out."

⁶⁹ A popular roadmap –tr.

22. A POLITICS OF QUOTATION

The man of the Old Regime makes a poor use of the notion of *majority*, as do all heirs; because majority is what he permanently mobilizes against the slightest threat of excess or overflow, outside of a few culturally admissible forms (drunkenness, sexuality, splits, and so on). The defense of heritage (“nothing or almost nothing can be judged from now on with yesterday’s vocabulary and words. We’ll have to put quotes around every word, as if handling them with tweezers.”) isn’t a bad thing in itself, no more than the historical meaning that he brags that he’s the last possessor of. Though like all of us he’s come quite late, when the world is already old and heavy with the weight of all the unrealized possibilities of history, for him this late birth feels like reason to put on a moralizing air, a stylized varnish, an aesthetic of a little tight-lipped smile, an ethics of weak-willed submission. Authority and discipline only ever manifest themselves in him as repression, and not as a true mastery of the self including even its abandonment. Certainly, nothing’s fairer than his critique of the hysterical minority state that those who have been socialized by all-normalizing capitalism wallow in; but such a critique is nothing if it is not practiced *continuously*, as a real, everyday growth of potential. As a means of differentiation and as an alibi, it is not merely pathetic, it’s authentically *infantile*.

23. CRITIQUE AND EXPRESSION

The Old Regime posture comes from a pathos that is a priori allied, if only objectively, with the normalization process that it rejects, because it never targets the true enemy, that monstrous coalescence of local apparatuses regulating and restraining ever more what it is *materially* possible to do, and just takes it out on the bait graciously put within its reach (modernity, alienation, Capital, globalization, the Spectacle, etc.). In reality, it appears that the social gratification is all the greater for what you might *declare* yourself to be, do, or think, as that easily falls in as a gear within the mythical mechanisms of individuality (still free!) that bourgeois publicity rules, without ever bearing consequence. The man of the Old Regime, who calls upon negativity, the struggle for recognition, upon desire, who calls up evil (in literature or elsewhere), on guilt, or still to secrecy, remains in fact the only heir to the avant-gardist practice – though he himself rejects it – of slogans. He cherishes his comfortable “freedom of expression,” all the while tasting the delights of “ill will,” at a time when, just for laughs, one can incite to murder in the newspapers because you’re not allowed to just make a simple mistake anymore in the subway. Criticism without effectiveness, that is, capitalization on consciousness, has its origins in freedom of opinion, that luxury that the bourgeoisie gave itself to furnish the boredom of its Sunday afternoons, and which went from being the occupation of the “brightest” of their children at first to being on the way towards becoming the flower of our semiotics industry. Certainly this critique can be useful locally since in certain very specific cases the bird’s eye position proper to the man of the Old Regime permits him to clarify and name the surface phenomena that rule the present times -- among others: perpetual

emotional blackmail, partying as ideology, charity as a mode of control, the sinister reign of good sentiment, the logic of decompartmentalization, the passion for undifferentiated recognition as crowd management, puerile moralism putting the whole of History under the microscope to renaturalize it, reanimalize it, and then judicialize all human existence. But on the other side of it, what do we have? A sorrowful longing – on the part of our well-informed expert on the phenomena called “social” – for his dear departed little nugget of individuality and his starchy art of living, for perspective on a life spent just rambling on, singing the same tired tune of resentment and phony substantiality.



An existence concretely subject to spectacular norms is, in its conditions, fatally accompanied by an erasure of personality, which leaves one always more separated from the possibilities of having any really authentic experience and thus of discovering one's individual preferences.

– Debord

24. PRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

This then is quite the unconditional defense of the bourgeois individual against the indifferenciation of Bloom, unilaterally perceived as the social production of an obscene dumbing-down and desubjectivation. On this capital point, the man of the Old Regime deceives himself however, since he takes the spectacular propaganda at face value only wherever he's decided not to follow it: it would be false to say, in effect, that Bloom is a mere product of the Spectacle; what is produced by the Spectacle is merely the majority of the Blooms' present lifestyles. It would be a strategic error of the most serious importance to see Bloom as merely the product of nothingness, to only perceive, effectively important as it is, that which he has lost in mastery, in freedom, in *spirit*, in culture, in "refined" enjoyment, in style – in sum, in *classical existence*. Because he has also gained something: the devastated battlefield of individuality, a terrain of experimentation for all the attempts at assuming Bloom, where all the fragments of past experience, all the *figures* of the past, can be taken up once more and *put back into play* without acting as prohibitive moral imperatives. There are pleasant processes of (de)subjectivation, but as for this rancid subjectivation, it's *always* unpleasant.

25. THE WAR OF TASTE

What we're dealing with in the man of the Old Regime is a metaphysical figure for a *reduced sovereignty*; above all: (corny old

tune) perfect command, good taste, critical judgment, a frenzied self-consciousness, decency, courtesy. The man of the Old Regime still manages to get off on this joy in identity, exaltation of peers, his universality, his human nature, his fine polish. In fact, that's just the man of *cold calculation* talking, the man of little strategies for differentiation, character assassination, the conquest of opinion -- null strategies because they take place only within the space of publicity proper to his form-of-life. The fundamental choice is to penetrate (or not) into that world, and not what might be said there (he can't *do* anything there, one way or another). The consequence: infinite variations in contemporary literature on the Tocquevillian theme of the unavoidable loss of the kind deeds and well-made things of the past. The man of the Old Regime is thus the perfect economic subject: he who *pays* for his experience, as he does for everything, whether it be in cash money or in his effective submission to the social order. Once he's robbed by some little twink, or by some other "youth," or beaten accidentally by a cop, he can write tremblingly in his *Journal* for the year about where a adventurous, non-conformist life gets you, and just how much he holds in contempt the social-democratic flock of men in shorts who are content just to consume discount experiences, while regretting, obviously, that social civility has been so cheapened.

26. A MATURE MAN

Attached to the decent publicity of the bourgeois era, hostile to all moments of truth the lasting principle of which would be civil war – all his being tends to *naturalize* his weakness and his offensive neutrality as an unquestioned model for inter-subjective usage and relations: everything that cannot be reduced to the most threadbare

bourgeois humanism (moments of sovereignty, suffering, vertigo, theft, violence, outbursts, break-ins, rioting, anonymity, hysteria) will be subtly censured and made insignificant in light of a decent attitude of passive lucidity. The man of the Old Regime believes in harmless discourse on truths, not in the territorialized truth-apparatuses or in mute criminality without excuses. And so we find once more our old enemy, the antique liberal fear of the masses, of the formless, of the marginal, of dissolution, of anonymous ecstasy.

27. BIG BROTHER

One of the objects that are left to the man of the Old Regime for him to use to believe he's making any kind of impact on the world with his practice is retrology; to wit, the jester's paranoid speculation about the mysteries of power; he wants to be *in on the game* (one of the primary enjoyments of those who have nothing to fear is knowing themselves to be in on the secret, and shuddering at the excessive means that domination has at its disposal). This is a sign of an infantile admiration for the dreamed-of gears of a Power supposedly hidden away in some secret place, in some ministry of Love, of the Interior, of Peace or of Truth, an admiration coupled with heroic rhetoric about great strategic confrontations. In the very specific case of the analysis of judicial repression in the insurrectionary movement of 1970s and early 1980s Italy, for example, this gave us the famous Calogero theorem, named for the "anti-terrorist" magistrate who took as his "working hypothesis" that not only was there a unique direction being taken by all the different armed groups, but also a manipulation of the Movement

or of the autonomous action by one single thinking head of subversion, the famous “O” or the mythical “Grand Old Man,” a hypothesis which served to justify the invention of a new misdemeanor: that of “moral responsibility.” One can only be surprised to see that the sad passion for assignment, the urge to reveal individual responsibilities, proper to all police-like concepts of History, is still at work in today’s so-called “critical” analysis. The retrological perspective is, furthermore, an idealist perspective, one of a totalizing subjectivity: it demands a view from above, the piercing gaze of the eagle flying above the battlefield. So there are no more deeds, just intents, maneuvers, lures, disinformation: it’s another way of sweeping under the rug what has really happened, since what’s happening can’t be real but rather just indicts a greater reality, a back-world that forms the foundation for ours as illusion and manipulation. In passing we could perhaps benefit here from imagining a little general maneuvering his troops by sheer force of thought.

28. THE PACKAGED LIFE OF THE DECLASSED ONES

We aren’t attacking the declared stability of a form-of-life here; we’re attacking its sterility. The man of the Old Regime is world-poor, since the false abundance he gives himself gives a concrete authorization to zero experience of historical conflictual besides an extremely far-off, mediated one. This doesn’t prevent him from capitalizing on the little anecdotal tissue that forms his existence by

pompously calling it life experience. What's left to the bourgeois when the bourgeoisie has disappeared is merely hypocrisy as an art of living, a fantastical compensation for their powerlessness before the impersonal forces that rule their lives. At bottom, under cover of a pessimistic anthropology with Hobbesian overtones and the "lucidity" that comes with it, these Blooms with their packaged rich men's lives of are moved by fear: their terror of physical violence is the real motive for their critique. Sociologically, we here find together both the hard-up little landlord and the declasseed intellectual dreaming of a time when domination was as retarded as they are and who tremble in the face of the incomprehensible multitudes, who will end up having their hides. How could anyone fail to hear the solid materiality of the fiduciary sense behind their perorations about the loss of values? Are they worried about their twilight days? They're right to. Between the intimate acknowledgement of civil war as a total social fact, the obligation to live up to it, and to the hatred that we have of it, there's nothing but all these bad-faith operations aiming to transfigure the terror of physical violence into metaphysical banalities of the anxiety-with-no-object type, to absolutize a eunuch critique of the procedural excess taken in the regulation and normalization of violence. In brief, there's nothing left anymore between the ethics of civil war and apologies for the State and control but the typical backwater of vain pretense, the spectacle of extremism and visceral bad faith, all so proper to our fine nation.





Whoever never knew life in the Old Regime doesn't know how sweet it can be to be alive.

– Talleyrand

29. A CRAFTY PRIEST

One of the nice old barbeysian fantasies of the man of the Old Regime is to imagine himself to be a defender of the patriarchal values at the heart of a society that tends towards the matriarchal. And in fact, this latter fact allows him to hold forth like the 19th century bourgeois ladies used to with their husbands, knowing all the while that the males above all seek to remain non-contradicted within the order of discourse and of representations, but that it's up to them to run the shop, manage the home, hold together the infrastructure. We clarify that his profound theoretical misogyny has nothing exclusively masculine about it, since it's one of the rhetorical specialties of the women of the Old Regime that have recently appeared on the scene, who put their self-hatred to work in a hysterical delirium that's almost touching. The "whole man" of discourse, law, with a Name, a Father; in brief, the Author, the master subject and the owner of his apartment, is today gently dispossessed by the all-enveloping, enthusiastic management of all-normalizing economy, which interferes everywhere, even in the intimate nooks and crannies of his desires. In this matter, the absolute and *sticky* symbiosis of the police chief and Madam Maigret that we find in Simenon's novels, with its two faces, the Law and the Norm, is quite enlightening. But it is elsewhere, in the curious affinity between the Young-Girl and the man of the Old Regime, that the nature of this character really reveals itself. In his frequentation of the Young-Girl, the man of the Old Regime gets off on being able to counterpose to a simple self-foreignness his own, cultivated, well-referenced self-foreignness. Nothing's sweeter in the eyes of those who think they're oh so very deep than the spectacle of a supposedly innocent life, immanent to itself, that they

can kindly patronize or mock. Because the relationship between the man of the Old Regime and the Young-Girl is based on a common simulation - the one simulating life and the other culture - it is also the most stable relationship there is, the one that is the least threatening. In fact, Old Regime subjectivity shows itself as the ideal complement to the conquering superficiality of the Young-Girl. The deep solidarity between the full man of the Old Regime posture and the maternal and pastoral power of the norm thus demands that their opposition remain - on the surface - so they can go on functioning to trip up the suckers. Maigret, like her brothers in literature O'Brien from 1984 and the Grand Inquisitor in the *Brothers Karamazov*, aims at a comprehension of social pathology whose deep design is the infinite and senseless reproduction of society. They don't judge anymore; now they want to *understand*, so as to be able to cure people of the irreducible restiveness that characterizes them. They want to *make them live*. Also, nothing's more absurd than to critique the process of normalization via security-enhancing references to the Law: much deeper still, the authorized critique that the man of the Old Regime practices is but a harmless, puerile playacting, objectively allied with all-normalizing domination. On this supplementary head, the Old Regime discourse is today a concluded narrative, with no dark side to it at all. He has nothing more to teach us; he just operates as a simple apparatus for the *socialization of paralysis*. That's how it is. We have to move on to something different.

30. WHAT'S COMMON TO MORTALS

Because of his incapacity to share in a true Commonality, the only “social” life that the man of the Old Regime has is the company of so-called strong-minded people, the elitist circles of elective affinity formed by rancid individualities bound together by a shared worship of etiquette and courtesy, the club of the Great Disdainers in the face of History. There’ll certainly be enough solitude, finiteness, and exposure to go around, but only negatively, in an ultra-domesticated, aseptic mode, never allowing for the slightest line of flight other than suicide, drink, rambling and senility, which, though there’s nothing contemptible about them in and of themselves, are all the same merely part of the admission of a collective defeat, the impossibility of any continual, lusty play among these forms-of-life. A community of bad sentiment is just as impossible and undesirable as would be a community of good sentiment. The misery of his everyday life, from his embittered humanism to the expired code of seduction that he uses, demonstrate at every possible opportunity that the form-of-life that the man of the Old Regime upholds is *transitory* and unadapted for the great game of civil war, even if he’s almost managed to persuade himself of the immutable foundations of his habitus. It is an *unassumable* form-of-life inasmuch as it is attenuated, passive, and, in sum, repulsive and *ugly*. Blooms playing the role of the Man of the Old Regime are certainly most often too mutilated to go all the way along with what they might possibly become. They will have to, however; otherwise they’ll just persist in their puerile attachment to their weakness, their classic prejudice against all *offensive communization* of existence, continue denouncing the anonymous joy that comes with such communization as a “fusional

transcendence of individual separation," and thus they'll either disappear, or get rid of themselves and attain to something different, something more joyous and more sharp-edged, within the Imaginary Party.

**YOU'RE NEVER
TOO OLD TO
DROP OUT**

You're never too old to drop out.

You worked... You were fooling yourself. No big deal. You still have another chance. Today you are protesting to keep your pension once you're sixty years old. You don't want to work anymore. But you certainly did your share of work. And you waited for it to go away, you waited for it to pass. Finally it did pass, and you passed on too.

If today you're in your sixties, you would've been in your 20s in 1968. You saw and knew that other worlds were possible beyond the one that's been built up around us with your participation. But you forgot that, or at least you pretended to forget it. You acted like working was a dignified, tolerable, interesting, or simply the human thing to do. The generations that followed after you mimed your resignation, or, to put it more grotesquely, your enthusiasm.

You have a second chance now. You know in your flesh that you don't want to work anymore. That in the end you only worked because you were forced to, and some of you know that you gave yourselves the necessary illusions. Leave those illusions of yours behind now, if you still have any. It's time. You've got the means to do it. Sixty years old, and you've certainly not dried up. The government, domination – they are terrified of you in a way... They'd like to reenlist you for another five years, until you're really totally emptied out. Before they release you back into nature.

The managers of society fear you. They're scared that you might ditch out, since you're still alive. You've got the means to do it. Maybe even more than you had when you were 20. You have the means to desert, to ditch out, to renounce your adherence to the

social order that's consumed you. Deserting means: organizing the conditions of the flourishing of less mutilated relationships than those that commodity domination commands us to have (the growling hostility, the systematic incomprehension between men and women, the absence of any true community, intimacy, or friendship, the prohibition on violence, madness, suffering, etc.).

You have one last chance to not betray yourself – to live, finally. And it means abandoning ship. In one sense it's our last chance. A world going down the drain wants to ensure everyone that it won't go down alone. It wants to drag us along with it into the abyss. And it's ready to do anything it needs to in order to prevent and annihilate any social secession. However, that's the only adventure open to us now that really draws level with life.

Chaos will be our General Strike.

SONOGRAM OF A POTENTIAL

What hinges on something defends it.

– Italian Proverb.

When I was born, my mother still didn't know what gender her child was. A nurse came into the room she was lying in, half asleep after a long labor, and said to her:

"Madam, you have suffered a disgrace. It's a girl."

That's how she was told of my birth.

– F., born in Naples, 1975

I would have liked not to have to write this text. I would have liked to erase myself behind a prudish flood of words, to drape my carnal body in the sacrosanct neutrality of discourse, to ridicule my desires or arrange them according to an analytical table of pathologies that would have absolved me only to better subjugate me. But I didn't, since I no longer believe what's been said about me; I needed a text written in many voices, a shared kind of writing that would bring to life a sexualization with no prudishness, one that would tell it like it is, denature it, open it up like a sealed box, bringing it out of the cloister of the "private" and "intimate" to subject it to the intensity of politics.

I wanted a text that wouldn't cry, that wouldn't vomit sentences, that wouldn't give premature answers just to make itself look unquestionable. And that's why the following is not a text written by women for women, because I am not one and I am not just one, but I am a many that says "I." An "I" against the fiction of the little "me" that acts as if it were universal and mistakes its own cowardice for the right to erase, in the name of others, everything that contradicts it.



The monologue of patriarchy has been interrupted many times. Many blows have been struck against the classical subject - closed, neutral, objective, cosmic. Its image has crumbled under the weight of the carnage of total wars that took all the ancient aura away from heroism; its solo speech has been drowned out by the brouhaha of the commodity Esperanto. New, improbable family relationships formed then: the old fool who's been dispossessed of his world and the plebeian excluded from everything are now supposed to find themselves on the same side of the barricades, now that there aren't any more barricades left at all.

So, to ask ourselves what we are, how we got there, who our brothers and sisters are, and who our enemies are, is no longer just a pastime for intellectuals on an introspection trip, but an immediate necessity. "Now that everything is destroyed, I'm left with one thing: myself," said Medea: starting from oneself is not a question of "penchants"; it is the ungrateful course of those who have been dispossessed of everything.

Feminism undertook a battle that no longer exists, not because it won or lost, but because its battlefield was a constructible terrain and domination has now built its neighborhoods there.

A sonogram is an abusive operation. Beneath its pretext of therapeutic intent it violates a secret space removed from visibility. By means of technology it gives itself the right to predict a future loaded with consequences. But its prophecy is fallible like all divination, and the possibilities it announces often become implicit impossibilities at the very moment it tears them away from the "not yet" and throws them into the irreparability of the present.

This text is a sonogram to the extent that it gives itself the right to obscenity, but not as an insult to some presumed "public modesty"-- in

the context of commodity pornocracy, that would be pitifully ingenuous. Obscene, in the etymological sense, is what should not appear in the open, what must remain hidden because the relationship it has with official visibility is a relationship of negation and exorcism, complicity and repulsion. What can be said and what can be done depends on the relationship such saying and doing have with the ethical assumptions that comprise us: the possible is the margin where our mental balance can oscillate without failing us, where desubjection can be exercised without turning into delirium.

This text is intended as a non-therapeutic sonogram: the potential it examines knows no parameters of conformity, no completion in a pre-set act.

There is a kind of discourse about love and insurrection that make all love and insurrection impossible. There's also a kind of discourse about women's freedom that simultaneously disqualifies both the term "woman" and the term "freedom." What allows practices of freedom to surface is not whatever isn't recuperable by domination, but what dearticulates the mechanisms producing our own emotional and psychosomatic disorder. The aim is not to abolish the malaise that pushes us to revolt so as to better adapt us to an obviously toxic system for managing bodies, nor is it to learn how to better struggle within the hindrances of the present contingency in the name of some "strategy" that would lead us to victory. Because victory does not mean readapting the world through struggle, but adapting the world to struggle itself. That's why all logic of differentiation serves a time with no present: the only really urgent thing for us now is to render the disturbance offensive, to become its accomplices, because "better death than the health they offer us." (G. Deleuze)

One indeed must be obscene, because everything visible within biopolitical democracies is already colonized with a melancholic kind of obscenity that safely packages what should be scandalous.

What's possible among men and women has unquestionably to do with the obscenity of our times, but it happens that the space of this connivance is neither immutable nor indecent, merely the result of a particular culture that is growing old and not doing it gracefully, forgetting patriarchy but remaining misogynist.

And since the framework of assumptions we move within are not logical but ethical, transmitted within a historically determined, rather than philosophically grounded order, we gaze disquietly at the excessive care with which men and women work on the upkeep of their desires, within the production machine and against it, but also against themselves. Certainly they subjectivize themselves in order to be sexually desirable; they are sexualized because they have a generic relational existence, but that doesn't happen symmetrically: men have had access to a symbolic order, a transcendence very much their own, which prolonged the banality of their desire in the elegant appendices of power, whether legitimate or transgressive.

Women have remained bogged down in an unsayable corporeality, torn apart between the image of submission that the old society has projected onto them and the new obligation of being post-human cogs in the capitalist desire machine.

"Alas, my brothers," wrote HD, "Helene was not walking / on the ramparts; / she who you've condemned / was but a phantom, a shadow worn / an image reflected." (H.D., Helene in Egypt, I, 1, 3) and all women walk with her, like the poor, beautiful Helene, the phantom that men's

desire for power, born among men and bearing no relation to her pleasure, has attached to her fate. And it's a desire with no leeway, because all feminine transgression ends up twisting mouths into a bitter grimace. When a Don Juan sparks the complicity of the most faithful of wives, free women are still a public threat.

Platonism was born as a secondary manifestation of orphism. Dialectics, thus, and to a certain extent Marxism and materialism as well, are linked in part to the unhappy love story of Orpheus and Eurydice. The legend tells that the poet Orpheus, who was so fluent with his logos that even the trees and animals felt moved, lost his lover Eurydice in the flower of her youth, and the gods, touched by his inconsolable pain, allowed him to go down into the kingdom of the dead to bring her back to earth. The only condition was that he had to accompany her without ever looking at her in the pallid light of the land of the dead and had to wait to be among the living again to see her face.

Whether out of passion or skepticism, despair or apprehension, Orpheus turned to look. Whether it was because he couldn't share the secret of life and death (women's prerogative), or simply because he was incapable of believing that something more than a woman's body might be following him, or just out of his desire to gaze into the eyes of his lover's ghost, Orpheus was deprived of his loved one, and, drunk on his pain, was devoured by the Maenads.

A question inevitably arises here: why was the sublime poet unable to find the words to speak to his loved one but rather felt only the urge to look at her? Was he not perhaps hesitant to take back with him a woman who he'd lost control over for a time, who he'd lost sight of, thinking she was dead when she could still follow him and come back with him?

What about Eurydice?

When Hermes, who came to accompany her back to life shouted, "he has returned," Eurydice asked, "who?" (Rainer Maria Rilke, Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes).

Now that the social contract has been definitively rescinded, women are welcome everywhere, and there are some that are quite excited about it. Until recently they had remained quietly at the gates, but now they oppress people in the Parliaments, falsify reality in the press, and are exploited in the same professions as men; they are now just as null as they are, and even a little bit more because of the enthusiasm that they put into zealously carrying out the most terrible of tasks.

People ask themselves why they hadn't thought to make use of them before now. It's surprising; they love it all: commodities and maternity, work and marriage, millennia of docility and oppression stream along in hundreds of women's little floods of reformist or reactionary happiness.

And anyway, modern women don't really love the Blooms, who they find rather too passive and too in love with their oppressors. From time to time they complain that they're not even good enough for us to subjugate to ourselves anymore.

IN THE BELLY OF THE WAR MACHINE

“The difference about being a woman is that woman found her free existence by leveraging herself not on the given contradictions, present within the social body, but on the contradictions that each individual woman had inside her, and which had no social form to them before receiving one from feminine politics. We ourselves, so to speak, invented the social contradictions that make our freedom necessary.”

– *Don’t Believe You Have Rights*, Libreria Delle Donne, Milan, 1987.⁷⁰

Penelope’s labor. Is it not finished? It’s never finished. Women make things, and time erases all the vestiges of them. On the pretext that women don’t exist; that it means nothing. There is no “woman problem” separate from the problems of the body, the problems involved in managing these bodies that don’t belong to us. And anyway, to whom does this body belong, this pretty little body that everyone wants to fuck? To whom does this body belong, which is not really so pretty at all, and that everyone sizes up, like people used to judge cows at the cattle auction? To whom does this body belong, this body that grows old, gets fat, gets deformed, and makes me work to maintain it and keep it in conformity with the parameters of what’s desirable? Desirable *for whom?* And so the abyss grows deeper, between those who work on their added value and those who go on strike. But the consequences are everyday and definitive; I myself am the object either of my strike action or my hard work. Between my cellulite and my fatigue, my job and my

⁷⁰ Translated as *Sexual Difference*, Women’s Book House –tr.

pretty face, my conversation and my patience. No rest, comrades; no rest, my dear boss.

It's called affect-value, and it's the added value of heterosexual women, the most prized of commodities, the one that makes all the others sell, and which, furthermore, makes edibles (she does the cooking), livables (she makes babies), and fuckables (she maintains her body). A slight drop of transgression, perhaps? But of course, my dear; it's just a little overtime work so as not to be *ordinary*. And if in your group of friends it's been decreed that this is all bullshit, that you're all beyond all that, and even beyond the



need to write a text like this, it must be pointed out – quick! – how shameful it is to feel needs that others consider illegitimate. The shame of getting tired of being pretty and nice, when apparently you've not even been asked... "What's her problem? Is she on the rag? What, maybe she doesn't get laid very well?" It's *not even* asked because it's *implied*; because people think that woman corresponds, through and through, to her daily labor of autopoiesis. Still no rest! But I've got a soul too! Yes, a working girl's soul! And what's more, it's even profitable... You're getting off easy, my dear, and the more we indulge you the more you're dependent; and the more anti-conformist your life is, the more tiring it is to hold it all together.

"What's she talking about? I don't get it; do you?"

The less duped we are, the more difficult it is. Mistrusting other women, each of them comfortably – or painfully – confined to her decorated little corner of separation.

“Feminist self-consciousness; see where it got us?” Yes, I see: the metaconsciousness of unconsciousness. We know that the woman problem is a problem; but we also know that t’s a problem to express it, and so, you see, by repressing the problems or posing them wrongly, well now, we’ve gotten all tired out, and that’s our real problem now.

I see.

I understand.

The more I understand, the unhappier I am; I want to forget, I want to tell myself that I can “realize” myself through work, through the couple form, in maternity, in entertainment, in decoration, in literature, in S/M.

The intellectual and transgressive woman, the sadistic *domina* who knows what she’s doing; that’s not so bad, is it? If you’ve got the means and the character to do it, that is. Face and assume your solitude; make something exceptional out of it. Become a porn star, the hippest spokesperson for globalization. You’ll be alone still, but less depressed; frustrated, but socially recognized.

“Be content, is that it? But contentedness is damaging!”

“Quit complaining!”

“Shut it!”

How's that work? The war machine fights and desires, desires and fights. It can't fight against its own desire; that jams it up. It can't examine it too much; that grinds it to a halt. So how do you do it then? I want to fight; to fight with my brothers and my sisters. But I desire strength to keep it up, to go on fighting, to no longer doubt that my place is there, that my pleasure is there. And yet that's not my place, not my desire. Because the war machine is male, and besides, that's what pleases me about it. But alas, warriors are homosexual, and moreover they scorn their desires.



How's that work? The anthropologists explain that there are various cultures within the "men's house." "Considerable sexual activity does take place in the men's house, all of it, needless to say, homosexual. But the taboo against homosexual behavior (at least among equals) is almost universally of far stronger force than the impulse and tends to effect a rechanneling of the libido into violence... Indeed, the warrior caste of mind, with its ultravirility, is more incipiently homosexual in its exclusively male orientation than it is overtly homosexual. (The Nazi experience is an extreme case in point here.)

And the heterosexual role-playing indulged in, and still more persuasively, the contempt in which the younger, softer, or more 'feminine' members are held, is proof that the actual ethos is misogynist, or perversely rather than positively heterosexual." (K. Millet, *Sexual Politics*) ... That reminds me of something. It reminds me of the man in me; and that presents a problem to me. I don't feel myself to be in solidarity with women that do not wish to struggle, that live outside of the war machine. I also suddenly realize, myself as well, that "women" do not exist, and that if they did exist I wouldn't want to be around them. Between the guard dogs and the makeup experts, between the homemakers and career women, there are too many different kinds of suffering, and too many wrong answers. Too many social differences and opposing interests. No possibilities shine from that horizon.

And so I have a problem. I don't want to leave my war machine. Outside of the war machine, I'd only have a right to a domestic existence. *They'll want to tame me, domesticate me.* Women used to be a kind of furniture; now they've become a kind of pet animal.

I want to struggle.

Help me to struggle.

Have I always loved men as if I were of the same gender? Am I really a boy, a naughty boy with no balls? No! I'm not castrated and I don't want a penis. At all. I swear! And plus I love girls, women in general. I excuse them when they're stupid, I admire them when they do good. Woman are great; they bring joy to the open-air shopping mall of our lives – they add a kind of holiday charm! Do I love them like a man, with the same hypocrisy, and even the cowardly hope that they won't become my rivals in seduction? Is it rhetoric? Or is it chivalry? When *people* love women, are they not perhaps just playing out again the contemptible farce of courtly love, romantic love, where woman is an angel, never shits, never gets her period, has no body?

What do they vomit up, the anorexics, the bulimics, the women with eating disorders? They vomit up *their bodies*. Perhaps *they* haven't understood anything at all about that, and just want to look like Kate Moss. But *their bodies* understand; the body understands everything and explains it. They have their symposium of gastric juices that corrode the teeth, bones that show through the skin, stretch marks that disfigure the stomach. The Spectacle is getting more and more clinical. As usual, the medical womb spits in our faces that our bodies do not belong to us (read: you can't rent it out or sell it as you please anymore), that our bodies are the bodies of the sick, the bodies of hysterical lunatics that no one would want.

Women's bodies say things that no mouth dares repeat. Women's bodies hear things that ears refuse to hear. What people say to women counts for nothing.

What counts is *what people do to them, and what they do to themselves.*

I want to struggle alongside women, and alongside men. I want us not to leave the war machine, and to grow together, I want us to make it irresistibly desirable. I want us to make it truly *mixed*. And perverse. And polymorphous. And on the offensive. I want us never to get bored of it anymore. I want us to forget women, to forget men, because those are just two names for one and the same constraint, tied to accumulation and military offensives.

Outside of capitalism and the piling up of goods, outside of the war waged for the pillage and extension of power, we have nothing to do with "men" and "women" and their pathogenic families.

We don't give a fuck about being compatible with their now; we are compatible with our future.

WHAT'S THE DEAL HERE, NOW?

It appears at times that historical misrepresentation can never appear too egregious when its subject is woman.

– K. Millett, *Sexual Politics*

We too, we also are leaving behind the whorehouse of historicism and all that fucking “once upon a time” shit, and we have no regrets; but it is with a certain skepticism with regard to the recitals of historical materialism, which would remain “master of its forces: virile enough to shatter the continuum of history” (Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*).

The continuum of history is not a given; it's the chatter of the dominant ones over the silence of the dispossessed, the systematic sequence of virile narratives; whether materialist or historicist, whether good spouses or libertines, it matters little. Above all today, when History (the widow of the classical subject: the valiant male, the hero or the scholar, capable of making it and passing it on) stammers and the moral of the story doesn't enlighten anyone anymore. History is not finished; experiences seek out and find, at this precise moment in the recesses of time, the words to declare themselves and pass themselves on, but that's become an effort, a practice of resistance.

Though “Culture” can no longer serve as a crutch for the powerful to beatify their crimes, there are few women complaining about that. Because even if they never really were a minority, their wisdom and their histories have only embroidered the edges of the

great Western narrative. There's a complicated relationship between women and the heroic epic...

The commonplace goes that women and anecdotes have almost an innate relatedness. In pre-industrial societies, loves, pains, sicknesses, deaths, and births passed through the human tissue of the villages by way of words spoken by one woman into another's ear; in the same way the places of domestic labor, where everyday knowledge-powers circulated and forms of life reproduced themselves, were the places of story-telling among women and to children.

And today still. Feminine friendships remain narrative friendships, where the other is necessary to see yourself again, to recompose yourself, to recognize yourself. But the need for a narrative of the self, in order to not succumb to identity-idleness and to resignation in the face of its failings, to the madness of not seeing yourself in your own acts anymore, now fills the psychoanalysts' pockets. To where there's nothing left to say: experience and narrative having divorced one another, all we're left with is *information*, neutral, aseptic, appalling – and our passivity as receivers.

I won't be telling just one single story here; I'll be telling a few, about a multiple and heterogeneous experience that took place primarily in Italy, but not exclusively, between the sixties and seventies. The Milan women's book house is part of it, as are many voices, both women's and men's, from different perspectives. The voices that I'm gathering here in an arbitrary way, and under the name *ecstatic feminism*, have in common a line of flight, a promise, a tone, sometimes a revolt, a need for strength. In this constellation what shines is the inviolability of women and the desire to change

the relationship between immanence and transcendence, as well as the refusal of the abstraction of law, the unreal institutional representation of bodies, and the demand for a plane of political consistency shared among men and women, the cross-gender/mixed hypothesis.

What I'm tracing out here is an *anarcheology*, which excavates shattered fragments out of the disorder, and examines their possibilities rather than trying to figure out who they belonged to. It is justified to be hesitant before making grand syntheses or taking clearly defined perspectives on this story, because of the fact that it is not over, has in part remained silent, and in part has been told by falsifiers.

PRIMACY OF PRACTICE: START FROM YOURSELF

A politics that doesn't always have the name politics

And though it is true that the juridical has been able to represent, doubtless non-exhaustively, a power that is essentially centered around withdrawal and death, that is still absolutely compatible with power's new procedures, which operate not by punishment but by control, and which operate on levels and in forms that go beyond the State and its machinery. After centuries, we have now entered into a kind of society where the juridical can less and less cipher power or serve it as a system of representation. Our trajectory distances us more and more from the rule of law, which had already started to recede into the past at the time of the French Revolution, when an age of constitutions and codes seemed to hold promise of it for the near future. It's this juridical representation that is at work in the contemporary analyses of power's relationship to sex. The issue isn't whether desire is foreign to power, if it is anterior to the law, as is often imagined, or whether it's not the law itself that constitutes it. That's not the point. Whether the former or the latter is true about desire, either way we continue to conceive of it relative to a power that is always juridical and discursive – a power that finds its central focus in the pronouncement of the law. We remain attached to a certain image of power/law... And that's the image we have to liberate ourselves from, the theoretical privilege of law and sovereignty, if we want to make an analysis of power in the concrete and historical play of its procedures. An analysis of power must be constructed no longer having law as its model and code. ... We have to think about sex without law, and power without kings.

– Michel Foucault, *The Will to Know*

In 1966, ten years before the appearance of the first volume of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, a group of women in Italy had already attacked the repression it hypothesized. *Demau*, an abbreviation for "demystification of patriarchal authoritarianism" was not so much an attack on masculine oppression, but rather simply indicated that there was a problem between women and society, and that it wasn't the women that posed that problem to society (which is called the "female question") but rather society that posed a problem to these women. From their perspective, the politics of integration was to their situation what chamomile is to a serious illness, because female separation, even in the marginality it entails, once it is reappropriated, becomes a starting point for attack, and no longer a source of weakness. This approach put forth the feminine difference, to counter the myth of equality built according to the masculine yardstick. But at the same time what they were making was a symbolic revolution that would give women the tools to build another cartography of the world which would see them as subjects, a new transcendence which would allow female bodies to express themselves and think without sublimating themselves. "Man," wrote Carla Lonzi, "has sought out the meaning of life beyond and against life itself; for woman, life and the meaning of life overlap each other constantly." This was an attack directed against culture, one that laid the foundations for another kind of practice, an arithmetic of possibilities: to accuse philosophy of having spiritualized the hierarchy of fates by assigning man to transcendence and woman to immanence was to demand for oneself aright to make history, to conceive of birth, death, and war in a different manner, to put in one's own two cents about what's viable and desirable.



“What human culture and women’s liberation lacks,” we read in *Don’t Believe You Have Rights*, “is the act of female transcendence, the greater existence that we can attain by symbolically surpassing the limits of individual experience and of the naturalness of living.” But history went in a different direction. In the seventies in Italy, female consciousness was awakened as a result of the oppression women were undergoing there; the “feminine condition” was not reflected in the articulated social and political reality that it should have borne within it, rather it showed women who wanted freedom and potency a demeaning and deformed image that it was their moral duty to identify with, and which extinguished all enthusiasm. After 1970, and in the wake of the American experience, self-consciousness groups began to form in Italy. The silence was broken, but satisfaction was still far off: hearing the stories of women who were wrongfully treated as inferior in the family, at work, or in political groups, ended up producing a kind of echo chamber which rendered this contingent reality impassable. “This does certainly make us conscious,” said one woman, on the

subject of self-consciousness, “but it doesn’t give us tools, it doesn’t make us develop any kind of contractual power within the transformation of the social; it just gives us consciousness and rage.” (*Don’t Believe You Have Rights*). And yet, in these words exchanged between women who had up until then remained mute, something had taken shape which would remain part of the feminist tradition: a certain intimate and familiar relationship with the sphere of the perceptible, a coming and going between concreteness and abstraction that cracked the smooth surface of the discourses that legitimate power.

Little by little, groups of women emerged from their innocence, which was the prison that society had confined them in and that separatism had had such a hard time getting them out of. We had to get free of the image of the “deathly mother” (*L’erba voglio*, no. 15) which nourishes but devours, simultaneously the image of devotion to others and of heteronomy, of she who renounces violence but loves it in men, by proxy and against herself.

On the subject of relations within groups of women, we read in 1976: “by excluding aggressiveness, everything’s kept pure on the surface even if inside of us, among us, there’s something threatening growing on a deep level; could what’s made to stay outside perhaps be something that has forever been repressed and forbidden among women? Women are tender, everyone says so; should we listen to what everyone says, or should we listen to what’s happening among us that’s new and extravagant? (*Don’t Believe You have Rights*).

Against the deathly mother arose the idea of the “autonomous mother”: “To put it more simply, there is a feminine fear of

exposing her own desire, of exposing herself with her desire, which pushes women to think that others are hindering her desire; and that's how she cultivates and manifests it, as something refused to her by external authority.



In this negative form, feminine desire can feel authorized to express itself. We're thinking for example of the feminine politics of parity, upheld by women who never make themselves strong through their own free will but only and exclusively through what men keep for themselves alone and deny to women." (*Don't Believe You have Rights*)

However, the specter of a terrifying childhood, impossible to dismiss, continued haunting relations among women. "I felt an insane envy," says Lea, involved in the experiences of women's groups, "towards my friends who had come back from Portugal, who had seen "the world," who had kept a familiarity with the world.⁷¹ I felt myself to be foreign to their experience, but not at all indifferent. A consciousness of our reality/of the diversity of women cannot become an indifference to the world without

⁷¹ There was an attempt at social revolution being made in Portugal at the time, in 1975.

plunging us once again into non-existence... Our political practice cannot make the mistake of reinforcing our marginality... How can we get out of this impasse? Will the women's movement have the strength and originality to discover the history of the body without letting itself be tempted by childishness (reinforcement of dependency, omnipotence, indifference to the world, etc.)?" (Sottosopra, no. 3, 1976)

After 1975, numerous women's book houses were opened all over Italy, based on the example of the Parisian women's book house; women's documentation centers and libraries also came into being. The more the alternative took form, the more moderation grew, and the "satisfaction of surviving" became more predominant.

The wealth of the Italian movement, which had been the fact that it had focused on practices of subjectivation free from sordid realism, rather than on psychoanalysis and the therapeutic function of aggregation, had now turned against it. The history of the Col di Lana House, which opened in spring of 1976, gave a remarkable image of defeat: "when the House was all fixed up," as the protagonists recount, "women came in great numbers. During the big meetings on Wednesday evenings, the main hall would fill. But it became clear quite soon that this bigger and more open place didn't even work for the broader political confrontation. Its dimensions only added to the phenomenon of the majority remaining passive and some few doing all the talking. Every time the room would fill up with 150 to 200 women, they'd start talking about the rain or the nice weather we'd been having, all in the most polite way, like it was a women's studies class waiting for the teacher to show up. This kind of half-waiting would stop when one person or another – though it was always the same people – would

ask that we start in on the political work we had gathered there to do. The work would progress with the one or the other of them making their contributions, always the same ones talking, somewhere around ten of them, and the others just listened. There was no way of changing this ritual. If one of the ten didn't start the work, the others would go on chattering with the same vivacity. Once the debate had begun, if none of the ten spoke up, there would be total silence in the room. The themes of discussion were also incapable of shaking up the situation. In the end, as you can easily imagine, no subject really merited discussion besides the situation itself that had come about there, and the attempt to decipher it. But even discussing that subject had no transformative effect. It was posed and discussed by the same ten that spoke all the time, in the face of the invariably mute presence of all the others. It was a total failure." (*Don't Believe You Have Rights*)

The explosion of this huge, silent group of women which brought simply their massive and enigmatic presence to bear against the political will of the ten speakers, gave rise to twelve working commissions where that silence was to be broken. The women explained that they feared political conflictual, that they perceived it as threatening to solidarity among women and the coherence of the collective, i.e., to their new subjective equilibrium. These women were subjectivized, in effect, but in a paralyzing manner. Their constructive practice, comprised of discourse and the transmission of a different kind of wisdom, because it never dared directly clash with what contradicted it, ended up speechless and uncurious. What these women feared the loss of if they were to expose themselves they had already lost long before: the protective unity that they wanted to preserve at all costs was already dead of their fear of modifying it; they had nothing left to say to themselves,

they had started once again to survive in the margin, a situation that their whole meeting was supposed to have been intended to get them out of. "The collective, if we've understood correctly, was thus not a place of a possible autonomous existence, but merely the empty symbol women have of that existence." (*ibid.*)

The fear of returning to dependence on men rendered relations between women rather undemanding, and leveled them from below: all divergence became a danger. A politics that only infects one gender isn't infectious at all. Later practice at the Milan women's book house went in a direction that thwarted this stasis through an active assumption of the disparities between women. The practice of confiding in a "symbolic mother" became the center of their activity and relations. The "greater woman than I," who was supposed to comprise the most faithful, impassable mediator vis-à-vis the world, absorbed the power differential by embodying it. And such authority was considered legitimate because it got women out of a false, neurosis-generating and immobilizing sisterhood. The ecstatic phase of differentialist feminism had closed in on itself around the authoritarian mother.

A refusal of the repressive hypothesis here does not come out to its logical conclusion: the abandonment of separatism, and a cross-gender/mixed hypothesis. So, if the perspective we're aiming at is such a mixed hypothesis, why keep the name feminism, and not swallow it up in gender theory or queer theory?

Well, for a lot of reasons. The first is that women's movements have never been minority movements; women, as is well known, are numerically a majority on the planet; the second is that women, because of their long absence from the scene of knowledge and art,

have been incompletely civilized, with no transcendence of their own, and for that reason they still bear within them a coming political potential: they have been integrated into management and into capitalism, but not so much into its political forms.

The third reason is that the body of woman, along with the bodies of children, even more than those of homosexuals or transsexuals, is the biopolitical body par excellence: the object where citizenism's calibration-operations and publicity are most invested; the biggest prop for the scripting of commodity desire.

The fourth reason is that women have deconstructed themselves long ago as women, but that that is not sufficient to fulfill the promise of a political practice of freedom that will unite the means and the ends: "As long woman demands reparations for wrongs against her, whatever she might get out of it she'll never know freedom... Freedom is the only means of attaining freedom." (*Don't Believe You Have Rights*)

“WE’VE BEEN WATCHING FOR 4000 YEARS. FINE; NOW WE’VE SEEN!”

– *Manifesto di rivolta femminile*, 1970⁷²

If it is true, as has been written, that the invention of the milk pasteurization process did more for women’s freedom than all the struggles of the ‘suffragettes,’ then we have to take action so as to make that not true anymore. And the same thing has to be said about medicine, with its reduction of infant mortality or its invention of birth control products, or about the invention of machines that have made human labor more productive, or progress in social life that have made men no longer see women as creatures of an inferior nature. Whence this freedom, given to me in a bottle of pasteurized milk? What roots has this flower, offered me as a sign of superior civilization? Who am I, myself, if my freedom depends on this bottle, on this flower placed in my hand? This isn’t so much a question of the precariousness of gift, even if it is a circumstance whose origins should not be neglected. We have to put ourselves at the origins of our own freedom, in order to take full and sure possession of it; this doesn’t mean guaranteed enjoyment, but it does mean the certainty of knowing how to reproduce that freedom even in the least favorable of conditions.

– *Don’t Believe You Have Rights*

⁷² Manifesto of women’s revolt



What is a modest witness? According to Donna Haraway, it's someone whose invisibility to herself has risen to the dignity of an epistemological instrument.

Western universalism has lived within the myth of the truth-producing neutral being, thus giving itself the weapons for an unnamable oppression, creating a force relations for which the vocabulary of existing knowledge lacked words. The erasure of the subject and the upsurge of Bloom are the seismic effects of a system of knowledge-power that has for millennia deliberately based itself on the fiction of the "transparent self," who can supposedly be compiled with the techno-scientific model of knowledge by

overlaying itself upon it, without ever being put into question by its discourse, innocent war machine that it is.

In this configuration, subjectivity no longer exists except as a lyrical and harmless demand on the margins of an objectivity of all-powerful technical experts; the particularities of each person, and – even more so – the political consequences of their body-being and their place-having, are no more than the concerns of an aesthetician idled in the face of a knowledge-power that attacks, in total bad faith, the idea itself of a human psycho-physical integrity.

The most ferocious anti-humanism of the “human” sciences, for example, is light-years behind medicine, which cures living beings by working from the anatomical paradigm of the dead corpse, and only sees bodies as divided into their parts, organically treatable mental illnesses, immunodeficiency phenomena probably tied to a lack of gratification of the subject...

The ethics that gave political meaning to the fact of being in the world, or of no longer being there, dissolve in the overpowering acid of biopower; asexualized organic life made heteronomous under the effects of a toxic environment, which becomes power’s unquestionable object: to make live and let die.

To find meaning in a life that belongs to probes, microscopes, and speculums in foreign hands, to the dispassionate artifacts of science, is now of central political urgency. It was through these bodies, ripped from us by biopolitics as if they were slated for a clinical resurrection independent of our acts and our choices - and at times even contrary to them - that ecstatic feminism at first aimed to liberate itself. It was a response to the blackmail of a univocal

desire that ignored its pleasure with a crude discourse about feminine anatomy, relegated until the sixties to the ambiguity of whispers, in the dim light of confessionals and bedrooms, delivered over to the torture of clandestine abortions. The sense of propriety/shame has doubtless been the most precise of the devices of domination which women have had to deal with, since it's a sense of self inculcated from outside, the performative proof of the existence of which is that it is reproduced by the very subject that it's imposed on. Private life thus becomes a safe shelter from the desocializing threat of shame.

To be your own possible source of crushing dishonor, the mechanisms of whose production you don't control, has been the blackmail that patriarchal desire has so heavily burdened women with by way of their bodies. All dysfunction, all uncertain symptoms, all the shamelessness or manifestations of heterodox desires that this body – which must at all costs be kept docile – might have ever displayed was always condemned as morally unacceptable.

The female body, with its delicate hormonal operation, with its complex pleasure wrapped in a demeaning silence, has remained, in spite of all, the dark continent of all liberation's good intentions. What civilization has done to women's bodies is no different than what it's done to the earth, to children, to the sick, to the proletariat; in short, to everything that isn't supposed to "talk," and in general to whatever the knowledge-powers of government and management don't want to hear, which is thus relegated to exclusion from all recognized activity, relegated to the role of a *witness*. But what's the difference between the modest witness, which, disappearing behind a supposed scientific or economic

objectivity, conveys “unavoidable” power relations inside its theoretical system, and that other, mute, marginal witness, who no one knows whether it speaks because it’s so important to not be able to hear it? The difference has still to do with the body. The man of “objective” knowledge-power hides his sexualized, weak psychosomatic existence by delegating the monopoly on violence to a police that can bloody its hands while he goes on feeding the contradictory illusion of human incorporeality in the name of which other bodies can appear to be foreign objects, emotively indifferent. He develops his sensual anesthesia so as to better exert his knowledge by means of technological prosthesis; he sets separation up as a condition for objectivity and sets up his lack of intimacy with his peers as a necessary professional habit.

The body of those left out of the conversation, on the other hand, is a body that is speaking and unheard, whose central characteristic is that it seeks to reduce separation, because separation for it is but a source of fragility, and never an instrument of power. It is the witness that dissolves itself and passes away along with the object of its witnessing, which cannot remove itself from the womb of domination without dying, which lacks the detachment that allows the subject upheld by the institution (the sole condition on which the self-identical subject can exist) to feign foreignness to the horror of the world, to cut out a delimited space for its complicity with the disaster.

The witness that does not fit into the discourse model authorized by knowledge-power is the paradoxical figure of error and powerlessness; her body, her being-there, only produces the inarticulate cry of she who, by saying “I,” seeks vainly to designate herself and thus lies, and takes sides with the guilty ones.

There is no virginity among the oppressed, those who are excluded from history, whether they are women, minorities, or a class; on the contrary, the oppressed is he or she that has no other choice than to participate in the domination machine; the oppressed is indeed even the most dependent product of it, the product least capable of self-determination. Perspectives for a practice of freedom can only come out of a rupture with the game of signifiers played in the permanent offensive intended to make us identify with ourselves. What must be fought and defeated is our ultimate wariness of letting suffering bodies talk without chaining them to an "I," because that's the trap that domination relies on, by denying them when they demand independence, and by making them operate once again when once the toxicity of a life under the yoke of government is painfully clear. The discourse of biopower, both on the topic of our suffering and on the topic of our enjoyment, needs to be silenced. All practices of freedom start there.

EPHEMERAL LOYALTY, IMPOSSIBLE COHERENCE

The feminine image that man has interpreted woman with was an invention entirely his own.

– Manifesto di rivolta femminile

... and there are no women in the idea of mankind.

– A. Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato*

Images owe their effectiveness to their epistemic sentimentality.

– B. Duden, *On the Female Body as Public Space*

On idle afternoons, I amused myself by counting the number of times I'd set the table and cleared it. It came to a sum of a thousand nine hundred fifty times! One thousand nine hundred fifty times in ten years! Considering the fact that every time I have to lay down and pick up an average of six plates, two pans, two courses of food, eight sets of silverware, four glasses, two table napkins, a tablecloth, a tablecloth cover, two bottles, the salt, the pepper, the bread, the bread knife, and the fruit bowl – and more if it was a special meal or serving style – that I had to get up and sit down again almost six or seven times per meal, go from the kitchen to the table and from the table to the kitchen cabinet, and repeat that whole thing three times a day, even if breakfast involved less, and not to mention the two times a day I serve coffee – well, go ahead and count it all up! Moving from one place to another around 21 times per day (and that's a modest estimate still), times 365 days, that gives 7,665, times ten years' marriage,

that makes 76,650! Imagine the number of bricks I could have laid if I were a mason! That would have built a good number of houses right there! But alas, I built nothing! It's as if I were plowing the ocean. And tomorrow I'll do it again, and the day after tomorrow, and forever...

– L. Falcon, *Letters to a Spanish Idiot*, 1975.



The first impulse that comes to me from this reading is one of refusal: I refuse to accept as true the theory that we, women, have lived and continue living, exploited and managed by man and his history. I'm aware that this protest is a defensive move on my part, but let's at least acknowledge that this could be really tragic for a woman who'd already gone halfway through her life and had always thought

she was doing the best she could, saying to herself (I'm just trying to get at the concept): "you've fooled yourself in everything in life; the values that you thought were just, like family, faithfulness in love, purity, even your work as a housewife: it was all wrong, all the result of a subtle strategy handed down from generation to generation to achieve a continual exploitation of women." I'll say it again: there's something really staggering about it.

– A woman who went back to night school in Italy to get her degree, after her meeting with feminist militants in 1977 (from *Don't Believe You Have Rights*)

Masculine homosexuality has had a revolutionary reputation because of its not playing the civilizing game of sublimation required by the social pact between men. Masculine homosexuals took politics literally: it's among men, we'll keep it to ourselves; no sweat. But that didn't sort out virile rivalries, it created the *eteria* - the great fraternity, ridding itself of paternalism with a malicious laugh. But that also had to do with the social pact; even if it contained totally different effects of power and corollaries of desire.

The real UFO, people said, was female homosexuality; it was really disloyal, because it removed itself simultaneously from the masculine desire to paternize and the feminine desire to infantilize. The homosexual woman comes from a far off land, from an island, Lesbos; a sea has been placed between them and the rest of the world; they've sailed here from elsewhere - they must certainly not have grown up in any families of ours if they aren't oedipal and don't want children! So there's a logic to the creation of a universe of lesbian desire within the feminist movements, but the experience of the Italian women's book houses had to grapple, rather early on, with the contradictions arising from the myth of a "reassuring foreignness," that last ditch effort of the collective unconsciousness to confine women into innocent fault. The foreigner either integrates into the other culture, or comes to represent the non-lawful as wrong: *he is not in his place*. The construction of *another normalcy*, even a deviant one, can't get us out of the impasse. Desire may change sides, but power just accompanies it with a new productive censorship, another arbitrariness. Imperial "liberalism" accommodates itself quite well, in fact, to anomie and perversion; the contradictions of the old heteronormative world come back in through the window from outside. It's no longer a question of the form of desire *in itself*, but how it operates within everything that

opposes the present domination. It's not about thinking about sexuation against social bonds, but against society: *desire in itself has no autonomy*. As Leo Bersani wrote, for example, contrary to the most typical and worn out commonplaces about SM, "[if there is some subversive potential in the reversibility of roles in S/M,] a reversibility that puts into question assumptions about power inhering 'naturally' in one sex or race, S/M sympathizers have an extremely respectful attitude towards the dominance-submission dichotomy itself." (Léo Bersani, *The Gay Daddy*, in "Homos," 1995) Abandoning the terrified fear of conformity as well as the rip off of anti-conformism is the only possible a-moralism within biopower. If Bloom's desire reveals no ultimate truths about oppression or freedom, it does on the other hand permit or prohibit desubjectivations; it increases or diminishes collective potential. And since biopower dominates us through our bodies, it is through bodies that we can liberate ourselves from it, by exposing them to violence, danger, pleasure, outside of the law and the transgression of it, in the space today occupied by domination.

SEBBEN CHE SIAMO DONNE, PAURA NON ABBIAMO.

[Though we are women, we are not afraid.]

“Even though we’re women, we aren’t afraid...” sang one of the friends that we shared our mediocre winter vacation house with, every morning as soon as she got out of bed; we mixed together our children until they became young men. She sang while she was bent over picking up sandals and shoes, while fixing shoelaces or sweeping the room. “Hey, at least could you not sing!” we would say to her, to make her cut it out. “You sing the rice transplanters’ fight song while you’re cleaning



up after everybody else’s life!” She’d lift her head then and smile as if to excuse herself for the humble enthusiasm that helped her carry on, but her eyes shone with intelligence and conscious joy. Sixty eight was far off yet, and with these words she was singing a hard-won freedom, the pride of ideas, the satisfaction of the research that she was devoting herself to between work, school, and caring for her family; she was singing, at

bottom, the pleasure of those days of a choral life, of contact, beyond habit, with the same children, even if it meant she'd have to provide all kinds of miniscule, continual services.

– Luisa Adorno, *Sebben che siamo donne*

The fact that “macho” and “feminist” refer respectively to negative and positive realities according to the generalized filter of political correctness should be immediately telling about the absurdity of choosing between them. All dualist perspectives are a kind of camouflaged policing, in the same way that the construction of a negative auto-mythology is but a pretext for leaving the field of battle without even having fought at all, while putting on airs that you’re not just escaping. The problem that feminisms have historically had to deal with is that critiquing civilization requires more self-criticism than denunciation, more introspection than popular tribunals.

Whoever still sets women up against men will only remain a prisoner of the antinomies of traditional society, play with empty abstractions, and will just increase guilt and confusion. Whoever puts a mother kicked out of Mali with her ten children in the same basket as the holder of a position in some western government ministry because they both belong to an “oppressed gender” is reasoning within the signifier zoning of domination that they claim to combat, is struggling within the ancillary contradictions of the central contradiction: what makes someone a “man” or a “woman”? How can a given subject’s destiny be reduced to an “anatomical destiny”?

It's an issue of the *de/re/construction* of identity. If we don't want to chain the oppressed to their condition, and thus if we consider it as contingent, *where do we see their potential as coming from?* From inside, quite simply.

If it is true that force relations modify the identities of the subjects in question, and if it's that, and not what remains unchanged, that is decisive on a political level, then the essentialist temptation starts to fade away.

"When we fill in a form," writes Teresa De Lauretis, "the majority of us, women, doubtless fill in the F box, and not the M box. It doesn't even cross our minds to mark the M. That would be deceitful, even worse, it would be to not exist, to erase ourselves from the world. ...As soon as we've filled in the F box on the form, though, we're making our official entrance into the sex/gender system, and we become un-engendered women: which means not only that others consider us as females, but that from that very moment *we ourselves* represent ourselves as women. And so I ask myself: couldn't we say that the F box we've marked when filling out the form has stuck itself onto us, like a wet gown? Or that when we think that we're being *ourselves* when we fill in the F on the box, that in fact it's the F that's filling us in?" (T. De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender, Essays in theory, film and fiction*, 1987). A woman is no more a woman than a cat is a cat. And starting from that very contingency now we'll have to rewrite, relive, retell the history of women, until there is no more separate history, no more divisions, no more ghettos. The abandonment of resentment which has to precede any kind of a cross- gender/mixed hypothesis cannot take place either within a binary vision (oppressor males/oppressed females, or vice-versa) nor within dialectics (the contradiction resolves itself in the

mediation = integration of women into the idea of “woman”). What is important in ecstatic feminism isn’t women (nor men, moreover) but the *desire for autonomy* which dares to be so impudent as to rise up against all social, family, economic, and psychological conventions.

To say that society poses a problem, and not its contradictions, opens a perspective much broader than the question of sexuation conceived of as separate from an offensive political perspective. The horizon of the mixed hypothesis is one of *partisan war*, a war where men, women, and children practice a non-military discipline, reappropriate violence, and dig in for the long haul to liberate both material and less material spaces. This kind of an articulation of the fight undoes both discipline and authority simultaneously, and sketches out a different horizon than either the “men’s house” or separatism do.

GENDER

Power produces by classifying and classifies by producing; all taxonomies conclude in accumulation, in the creation of availabilities. Gender is not sex; its concern is not anatomical but kinetic. Its epistemological function is to render legible the bond that exists between the sexual practices of each person, their self-representation as sexualized, and their consequent relational existence, their way of knowing the world and attributing meaning to beings, things, and situations.

Gender is not a reality, nor something natural or given, but an instrument for knowledge and deconstruction. No identity can be fabricated from it, no “sexualized nationalism” can be born from that kind of approach. The goal is to make visible the political technologies for the management of desires, bodies, and identities, so as to modify them or to explode them.

That changes a lot of things about the romanticism of the old style feminisms: neither the good mothers, nor the bad wives, nor the lesbians, nor the hysterics, nor the nymphomaniacs can serve as a pre-fabricated revolutionary subject to be promoted.

Rather, it is *them as well*, but not as such. The subject of practices of freedom is something that has to be built, in new relationships, beginning with practices that go on the offense.

Political and cultural mediation has been colonized by the fiction of the male sex (and the white race); thus we must go deep into the unsaid and into silence, and that will be the first luddite act against technologies of gender. Ecstatic feminism has something in

common with the workers' struggles when they operate in silence. The oppressed have nothing to discuss with power. The relatedness of practice and politics is closer than that of politics and discourse. Freedom can do without small talk. It doesn't need to indicate its goal; it is its own means and its own ends.

Freed from the obligation of speaking and explaining themselves, women and plebeians have perhaps never walked together in the orderly and imperfect gardens of metaphysics or the "human" sciences, but they have certainly practiced enough gesture politics. Stealing, carrying out attacks, working or going on strike are all political acts that speak for themselves and don't need any translation; they are self-evident, and they drive home an immediate meaning which conditions the presence and state of the soul. In the same way, cooking dinner, raising kids, loving your husband or not, are all just so many discourses that power just passes off as background noise.

THE CRACK-UP

One has only to skim those old forgotten novels and listen to the tone of voice in which they are written to divine that the writer was meeting criticism; she was saying this by way of aggression, or that by way of conciliation. She was admitting that she was 'only a woman', or protesting that she was 'as good as a man'. She met that criticism as her temperament dictated, with docility and diffidence, or with anger and emphasis. It does not matter which it was; she was thinking of something other than the thing itself. Down comes her book upon our heads. There was a flaw in the centre of it. And I thought of all the women's novels that lie scattered, like small pock-marked apples in an orchard, about the second-hand book shops of London. It was the flaw in the centre that had rotted them. She had altered her values in deference to the opinion of others.

– V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*



The most disconcerting things are not the things you never knew before, but the things that you'd known at first and then forgot.

– *Don't Believe You Have Rights*

Fitzgerald called it the crack-up. It's neither social malaise, nor an epidemic, nor mass misery, nor discontent. The crack-up too, like this text, is a personal matter, in a time of mass impersonality. It has to do with singularity; it is the unclassifiable illness of idiosyncrasies, the disease of forms-of-life as such, which has to do with the complicity that we fail to establish with the world, and which we've given up looking for. With all our capitulations, resistances, defeats and victories, the crack gets longer, stops, and deepens within us, goes from the surface to the depths of the flesh and compromises or preserves the health of the body. What harmony or dissonance there is between civilization and our fates guide the crack: men and women crack up differently. But it's an effect of their subjectivation, not the cause. The difference between forms of life is strictly linked to the differences between the cracks in them. A materialist approach would say that a woman's body is distinct from that of a man, but a non-essentialist approach would also say that it's the way bodies are inhabited that determines their sexual identity. It's a question of "gender," but it's also one of revolt.

How was power able to subjugate so many bodies, with such disorderly impulses and such varying penchants, to one unique norm of desire and one clearly-defined catalogue of transgressions?

It's a history of everyday repression, by debasement and micro-apparatuses, family imprisonment and discouragement, marginalization, criminalization. By the continual imposition of an identity-coherence with physiologies that don't have any at all, until "men" and "women" ended up created.

And yet...

I'm not telling the story of the crack-up of women as a history of oppression nor of emancipation: women have certainly occupied a subordinate place in the circulation of official power in the West, but they are not a homogeneous class or social group. Either way, this manner of staying apart from it all while remaining totally within it all, of living with our tongues cut out in a world that has always carefully set up the "feminine" difference while pretending not to know it or hiding the fear that it brought up; this whole blackmail that "women" as a cultural category have acquiesced to undergoing is not a scandal that calls for vengeance nor an oppression that demands justice, but a social relationship of "gender" that structures our identities.

In the social shockwave that was feminism there was, doubtless, something that questioned the subjectivation apparatuses that made women out of women (that is, spouses/mothers or whores/crazy bitches), something profoundly foreign to the delirium of quotas or the co-management of phallogocracy and its morbid procession of neuroses. The currents of feminism that came out of this observation were the ones furthest from Marxism, which accused it of not having dealt with the problems between men and women, or furthermore, as we would say, of not having allowed men and women to subjectivize themselves differently, not having allowed desires to take other forms besides that of the desire for the family or couple. The possibilities that come out from this manner of posing the question constitute in themselves alone a whole other plane of politics, where Statist mediations are questioned and the function of force relations is seen and described in all its consequences, even those which, not having a supposedly strategic function, only developing in confidential conversations or in the folklore of miscellaneous facts. This approach is the approach of a

feminism that I call ecstatic, because it seeks to come out of its struggle and contaminate everything else, because it undermines the very foundations that give rise to it: the socially constructed identity of men and women, the universalist fiction of the human.

There is no equality possible between men and women, nor between men and men or women and women. The smooth surface of abstract arithmetic that forms the basis for the illusion of democracy constantly cracks under the obvious weight of irreducible ethical differences, under the arbitrary nature of elective affinities, under the suspicion that the circulation of power is a question of *qualities that become incarnate*, that power passes through bodies.

In his 1980-1981 course, Foucault explained how the issue of government is now about the management of behaviors. Power thus becomes biopower, since it gives form to the lives that it manages; to do so, it must take hold of bodies, which are what individualize and separate beings, and acts by way of statistics and observations on the desires that they contain.

Mastery of other people's desires is in effect what makes them into real slaves, because no emancipation that is not *the emancipation of such a desire for emancipation* can get them out of the force relations they struggle within. This mechanism, which is to be found, moreover, at the very foundation of commodity society, has historically made women into a vibrant human mass, suffering from and raging against the fables of conjugal and maternal happiness that pictured them as somehow flourishing in a circulation of emotions quite simply non-existent in lived reality. Each ethical polarization, each form of life, is but the result of the

adherence to a narrative about happiness, one which is often mute but is implicit in the tissue of practices that surround us: it's a question of transmission. Beings move towards their dreamed-of destination of joy and freedom, and if they cross paths on their trajectory, they share a common end of the road. Insurrections are those moments when a curiosity for other wanderers gains collectivities of travelers, and the mechanisms of subjectivation get jammed up or disrupted. The kinetics of skillfully regulated desires changes, and singular fates are communized against the imperative of conformity. At that moment a potential appears on our sonogram screen, but it escapes the range of vision of the panopticon of domination, and not just by chance; the resonance technology that gave rise to modern sonograms was developed for underwater warfare and was then put to a different use,⁷³ while the panopticon serves only one regime of visibility: that of surveillance. War and its technologies can become *partisan*, and thus mixed, and not *exclusively* war oriented; discipline, however, remains masculine, as a relationship suppressing potential, suppressing freedom.

⁷³ *Detourned* –tr.

HYSTERICAL WOMEN AND WOMAN LAWYERS

'It's like this: women have only gotten false news about love. Lots of different news, but all false. And inexact experiences. And yet, they always trust in the news, not in the experiences. That's why they've got so many falsehoods in their heads.'

...

'You see,' said Mariamirella, 'I think I am perhaps afraid of you. But I don't know where to hide. The horizon is deserted, there's only you. You are the bear and the cave. That's why I stay hunkered down in your arms, so that you'll protect me from my fear of you.'

– I. Calvino, *Prima che tu dica 'Pronto'*⁷⁴

When discussing the laws on sexual violence in Italy, it was clear that contrary to what their opposing interests might suggest, there was an intimate solidarity between the mystifying hysterical woman and the jurist, that they suffered from the same thing: from a lack of recognition, from undergoing the stranglehold of others' desires without being able to free themselves from it, without knowing how to oppose to it any kind of a singularity, which was too crushed and too discouraged to rise up against it as a refusal. Is

⁷⁴ Numbers in the Dark and Other Stories

a woman that pretends that she's been raped, and reports a crime that didn't take place, more delirious than a woman who fastens herself to a law that negates her? Is that woman, the pretender, who believes she has been raped, any more wrong than the woman who believes she has rights? "The pretender in the strict sense of the word," writes Lia Cigarini, "reveals something that all of us really are, even when we manage to control ourselves. The women's movement has had to deal with pretenders many times. Faced with the women's assemblies, they were obliged to refute their stories, or their stories were refuted by the judges after interrogation. But for the representatives of the law, the pretender, the hysteric, by inventing a crime, is mocking the law. And it all ends up looking quite ridiculous. The most ridiculed of all are obviously the women who believe in the law. ... And faced with that, what sort of kind gestures should be made, what kind of political practice used? Trying to understand the hysteric's message (she who appears to uphold the law and the man's desire, but only by distorting it, and whose theatrics refute her claims) or punishing her because she's made us look bad?" (Lia Cigarini, *Symbolic Rape*, in *Il Manifesto*, 20/11/79)

In the pretender's suffering, abutting mental illness in its unencodability, there is the expression of a refusal of her own slavery pushed so far that she can hardly recognize it as really existing. "It was false," we read in *Don't Believe You Have Rights*, "to want to deal with the contradiction between the sexes by intervening in the pathological moment of rape and by isolating it from the whole of the feminine destiny, its ordinary forms, where the 'invisible violence' that rips from the feminine sex its living unity as a body- mind is consummated." The emotion-colonizing form of domination produces an impossibility in its subjects, the

impossibility of making use of their own feelings as hermeneutic instruments, the impossibility of second guessing themselves while seeking to escape the familiar, mine-riddled terrain. Most often these subjects come up against so radical an incapacity of finding a space for a non-submission that it is seen as disloyal even by those who should unite there. But, Cigarini continues, "from the moment that I find myself in a trial, who gives me the possibility of reacting to the symbolic rape of the judge, the lawyer, the law? ... This law regulates an internal contradiction in the world of men. There are men with deviant behavior relative to bourgeois morality. The regulation of this contradiction takes place in trials." (L. Cigarini, *cit.*)

The reassuring foreignness to the world of law turns suddenly into despair at the moment of rape, a despair borne of the anatomical interpretation that our culture injects into women's destinies. Even when a woman might manage to "reappropriate" the few scraps of "femininity" that have still not been colonized by the medical profession, by the Spectacle, traditional machismo, or religion, what could she do with that if she can't recover her desires as well, if her unconscious is not energized at the same speed as her need for liberation? What should be done with women who have "rape fantasies" and get pleasure out of being raped?

To counter the prison that coincides with their corporeity, women have even come to blame male desire as such, to refuse penetration by reappropriating the most macho reading of it, to proclaim a female homosexuality, declared as against the implicit masculine homosexuality that has built the foundation of the patriarchal order. That was a step backwards to a strategy contrary to everything that while it had indeed undermined them, had also

made certain feminist political experiments extraordinarily rich: the refusal to espouse any kind of hierarchies at all; the will to not take on any names, priorities, rules; and confronting contradictions as they present themselves every time, without haste or arrogance, without preventing their eruption or channeling them off. The strength of feminism was that it didn't propose a model for liberation, but that it sought out a kind of freedom that would be coextensive with existence, a form of life that would also be a form of struggle.

There was an unprecedented unavailability there, which doubtless helped render the feminist movement quite unappealing, and which justified itself by affirming that "availability has ended up becoming the forced condition for the survival of women. To think about living only in terms of making others live: it seems that women have no other way to symbolically legitimate their existence. This is the most tragic and the most difficult condition to change." (*Convegno dell'Umanitaria*, 1984).

But there was also a powerful rejection of political and identity representation there, one that struck right at the heart of the whole institution of democracy and republic. Women who didn't want to see the passage of the law on sexual violence held that "if the representation is institutionalized, and attributed on the basis of formalist criteria, like, for instance, the aims written into a statute, solidarity becomes presumptuous, independent of reality; the struggle becomes a mere ritual, and the awakening of consciousness becomes the banal registering of a piece of normative data." (*Don't Believe You Have Rights*, Women's Bookhouse, Milan, 1987).

MOM-N'-POP AND US VICTORIANS

A long time afterwards, when he was old and blind, Oedipus smelled a familiar smell one day while walking down the road. It was the Sphinx. Oedipus said:

"I would like to ask you a question. Why did I not recognize my own mother?"

"You answered incorrectly," said the Sphinx.

"But it was my answer that made all this possible."

"No," he replied. "When I asked you who walks with four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening, you answered 'Man.' You didn't mention women."

"When we say Man," said Oedipus, "we also include women. Everyone knows that."

"That's what you think," answered the Sphinx.

– Muriel Rukeyser, *Myth*, 1978.

The voice of ecstatic feminism is thus not a voice of women. Its strength, the source of the contempt for it by the mixed revolutionary political groups that preceded it in existence, is that it poses not only the question of the *relational means* of struggle, but also brings up the issue of the plane of consistency. In effect, it's never really been a question of critiquing alienated relations as bad means of struggle as the non-violent movement did for example; rather it's about clarifying the way the prolongations of power's modes of circulation within the contested society, in supposedly subversive practices, made them ineffective.

The herd-mentality social conservatism, which still characterizes a number of subversive formations, arises from too simplistic a questioning or refusal of the capitalist economy. The typical thinking, which doesn't take into consideration the fact that in the relations between the sexes there is *a different dialectics* at play, one without masters or slaves, will thus remain only all too obviously complicit with the object it's supposed to be fighting against.



It is difficult to imagine the emancipation of the oppressed where oppression is but a coded source of enjoyment, even indeed the only one that is socially acceptable.

Hence it is not at random that Marxism all too often pulls back discreetly in the face of so loaded an issue as “oppression,” preferring the more aseptic term “exploitation,” which saves it the risk of breaking down into psychologism. But the problem is that there is no objective, quantifiable measure of exploitation, since it too is part of the domain of the qualitative. The issue isn’t about how much a person is exploited, but how, and from what perspective exploitation is but a subjectivation mechanism that once it’s broken leaves nothing to liberate. Because the preventive social delegitimation of certain desires by power makes these desires into the source of such guilt that the subjects are not even capable anymore of feeling them without a kind of self-destruction. The complex psychological dialectic that makes the reformist into the revolutionary’s most dangerous enemy in reality counterposes them on the basis of their two incompatible approaches to enjoyment; revolutionaries hold that the essential indecency of all desires for life will end up winning out over the morbidity of their repression, that identities elaborate themselves in a relational and contingent manner, and that they can never establish themselves on the basis of any shared social conformity.

Marxism talks about the “false desires” we are filled with by Capital, but it doesn’t speak of subjectivation; on what basis then can the bodies extracted from the State’s chain links of identity relate to one another? That falls outside of the scope of the concern of the materialist, who instead attacks the private property of bodies, slavery, violence, and then comes up against certain

inexplicable things, like S/M, the desire to be pregnant, wife swapping clubs.

Engels could say all he liked that within the family the woman is the proletarian and the man is the bourgeois, since the man is remunerated and publicly recognized, and the woman is exploited and relegated to the silence of bare life, but his comparison comes up against a stumbling block in the fact that in society the bourgeoisie gives no pleasure to the proletariat, and love or desire only mix in an oblique manner in their relations. Even today, the most surprising blind spot of the typical thinking remains sexual relations, while the family and familialism continue doing marvelously well and end up invariably reconstituted in as false alternatives to capitalist relations. Incarnating a situation where the circulation of power does not intersect the circulation of money, which is thus supposed to be more pure and more revolutionary, the paradigm of the family continues to structure imaginations and practices that had intended to break with society. Libidinal economy, which Marxism so spectacularly fails to analyze, is indeed the first thing that needs to be looked at, because it is the tender and innocent heart of all systems of power, which in itself calls up in us an irresistible complicity.

“In the countries of the Communist bloc,” writes Carla Lonzi, “the socialization of the means of production has in no way undermined the traditional family institution; on the contrary, it has reinforced it, insofar as it has reinforced the prestige and role of the patriarchal figure. The content of the revolutionary struggle has taken on and expressed personalities and values that are typically patriarchal and repressive, and which have had repercussions throughout the organization of society, first as a paternalist state, and then as a

truly authoritarian and bureaucratic state. Its classist conception, and thus its exclusion of women as an active party in the elaboration of the themes of socialism, has made this revolutionary theory into a patricentric one... Marx himself had a traditional married life, absorbed in his scholarly ideologue's labors, and loaded down with children one of whom he had had with his housekeeper. The abolition of the family in effect means neither the common possession of women, as Marx and Engels themselves showed, nor the other formula which would make women into an instrument of 'progress,' but rather the liberation of a part of humankind that had made its voice heard and fought, for the first time in history, not only against bourgeois society but against any kind of a society designed with man as the primary protagonist, thus going much further than the struggle against the economic exploitation that Marxism denounced." (*Let's Spit on Hegel*, 1974)

UNCLASSABLE

“Once it has been established that man is not ‘violence’ and woman ‘gentleness’ (since that split was made by men and against women) and that violence is neither masculine nor feminine; once it has been established that the difference is, on the contrary, between liberated violence and non-liberated violence, it then becomes a matter of trying to experience and practice it differently. By ensuring that it won’t produce what is defined as the ‘militarization of consciousness’ by following its own totalizing rules.”

– I. Faré, F. Spirito, *Mara and The Others*.

“‘For woman,’ we read [in Tennyson] ‘is not undeveloped man, but diverse.’ The ‘diverse’ is of course wonderfully familiar – Vive la difference. His bromide ‘not like to like, but like to difference’ simply passes off traditional inequalities as interesting variety. Under this formulation the male will continue as of old to represent force, authority, and status, ‘the wrestling thews that throw the world,’ the female will go on at ‘childward care’ as well as supplying the ‘childlike in the larger mind.’ Flattery gives way to insult.”

– K. Millett, *Sexual Politics*

Reappropriating difference, which meanwhile has become biopower’s primary management tool, is obviously a lost cause. Symmetrically, to count on its negation, on the legalist abstraction of equality, is an error that time will not forgive. This difference was played out “against” women in order to exclude them (from the public sphere, from the circulation of power) and “for” them in the hypocrisy of gallantry granted them in virtue of an innocence and

virginity directly indexed to that marginality. The family is the primordial space for the distribution of responsibilities, just as it is the first source of subjectivation. There, the biological destiny of woman, and now the citizen-destiny of civil unioned homosexuals, is accomplished with the full blessing of society.

The class struggle starts limping when it crosses the threshold of the family home: another economy reigns there. Affective gratification has no buying power, the work of family attention doesn't need any syndicalists, and classical politics starts to stutter; the norm gets the last word.

“Even if it was something quite new and disturbing, a detained comrade could easily recognize a common law criminal as a proletarian, as a potential ‘revolutionary subject’; such a recognition was sanctioned by the traditions of political struggle. Thanks to his uniquely ‘pre-political’ self-consciousness, he represented and expressed an antagonism towards the system in any case simply by his illegal action. To go beyond crimes against property (the most common ones according to statistical data) to start struggling against the capitalist system is part of a logical approach that certainly supposes a political synthesis, but which also comprises a reasoned and determined thinking. But a woman, who has committed the classical ‘pre-political’ crime of infanticide, that crime against the family, cannot follow such a linear trajectory. How could we recognize an infanticide as our sister in the struggle against the expropriation machine run by Capital? Her prison is much deeper and more internal; she’s been violently rejected and her act proves it... If men have a cultural, political, and symbolic patrimony at their disposal to ‘justify’ their violent acts, what patrimony could the ‘infanticide mother’ invoke to justify hers?

“Nonetheless, could the family, the child, the husband, not be just so many elements of material oppression, could they not be the symbols of a hopeless misery, the symbol of a cage that could cause a woman to momentarily lose her psychic balance and carry out an insane act? ... If it is true that the comrades understood deeply and powerfully that the material conditions of their detainment, which themselves could bring about a unity starting from here and now, could also be turned against the institution, they had a lot of trouble giving any meaning or ‘political unity’ to these solitary rebellions, stripped of any immediate self-control, within the system of class oppression.” (I. Faré, F. Spirito, *Mara and The Others*)

A CERTAIN SKEPTICISM

Blowback from repressed urges threatens all my work, research, and political projects. It threatens them, or is it rather that that is what's truly political in me, which needs relief and space? ... Silence defeated, denied that part of me that desired to get into politics, but it affirmed something new too. There was a change; I started to speak, but nowadays I understand that it was the affirmative part of me taking up all the space once again. I convinced myself that the silent woman is the most fecund objection to our politics. The 'non-political' digs out tunnels that we have not yet filled in with earth.

Lia, Sottosopra, no. 3, 1976.



It seems that in 1977 someone put up a poster in the Milan Women's Book House that read "THERE IS NO FEMINIST POINT OF VIEW," and that said poster remained on the wall for a number of years. There was a feminist movement that passed through what is called feminism, now that it is no more: but it wasn't a movement of identity reconstruction or of identity construction, or at least not in the aspects that I define as ecstatic; it more resembled a demolition process, which was totally coherent with its presuppositions. Because to integrate oneself into a civilization that so recently excluded us entirely, or to propose another one which would operate better so as to help resolve its little collapse problem, is an unsustainable choice.

The feminization of labor in the west corresponded to a need to modernize the production apparatus: the exploitation of women at home was simply no longer sufficient. Fordism was male, with all its pride, its dirty hands, its blue overalls, its brute force in struggles and in factories. The worker was a professional specializing in his own exploitation, a dilettante of existence. Production was his domain, and reproduction the space of his incompetence. Already, nothing but the regeneration of his own labor power was "his problem" anymore, and even that was all up to his wife, as was caring for the children and doing the upkeep of the house. The worker in fordism traversed a life loaded down with machines and fatigue, returned dirty and hollowed out every day into a family cell where bodies were domesticated and affected differently than were those of his colleagues in the libidinal cemetery of the factory, and eventually he died ignorant and full of rage, fallen victim to his dispossession of a power that he didn't even know the name of, the victim of a suffering that he hadn't even found the source of.

Women's refusal to collaborate in maintaining the ignorance of a life sponsored by Capital is part of what I call ecstatic feminism. Its scandal was that it spoke the language of pleasure, not that of demands; its novelty was that it removed itself from the strategic sphere which forces contestation and its object to live in what is most often a fatal contiguity.

The paradoxical and ephemeral proximity between feminism and the workers' movement was based in their reciprocal attack on fordism, where the machine logic of industrial production was opposed by the demand for a human rhythm, and the mechanical arithmetic of factory time was opposed by the incommensurability of the time of life. But this convergence was problematic: though the men could besiege the conventional terrain of wage labor with their struggles, or contest it with a refusal to work, women had a more precarious, less codified position, because their work was unrecognized and unquantified, and their work was basically coextensive with their lives. Speaking the male, union style language of equality in order to struggle against the wage inequalities and under employment of women in skilled work really just came down to a legitimating of the real system of underground slavery that had led to such a situation; that is, the continual extraction of surplus value from all the domestic and familial activities of women under cover of the necessity, ordained by social norms, for emotional "reciprocity."

But the bitterness of such an observation produced an immediate extinguishment of any real solidarity with any male struggles, a violent desire for separatism, for the interruption of the double bind that gnaws away at the lives of all women in the struggle, by requiring them to separate out a private dimension – where level

headed judgment is crushed by the need to indulge everyone and the obligation to adhere to the norms that were the source of women's idea of love – from the political or social dimension where we speak the language of those same men that we pardon at home, hoping to be recognized outside of it as something other than a housewife.

If the Sisyphus' labor of the worker was miserable, his unhappiness was at least socially ritualized and politically recognized; Penelope's misery on the other hand, from inhabiting the double constraint of being married and neglected, faithful but coveted by a man that an absent husband fails to chase off, separated from a spouse that forgets her but feeding his memory so as not to lose dignity in her own eyes – that misery has no place. The suffering of those who lose sleep over having to lie to themselves and to others in order to conform to some contradictory stereotype (the good mother, the diligent worker, the liberated woman, the faithful spouse, the comrade, the sock-cleaning washerwoman, the intellectual, the sweet girl...) or other – that suffering is considered obscene. Making and unmaking the weaving of a social fabric impregnated with ignorance of the body, joy, children, and feelings are a labor with no vacation or compensation. Whatever obligates so many women to float within the most superficial layer of existence, between fear and frivolity, still finds no ear to listen to it and no struggle to defy it.

BARTLEBY: ECSTATIC FEMINIST

1) *The home, where we do the majority of the [domestic labor] is atomized into thousands of sets of four walls, but it's present everywhere, in the country, the city, the mountain, etc.*

2) *We are monitored and controlled by thousands of little bosses and inspectors: these are our husbands, fathers, brothers, etc., but still we have only one master: the State.*

3) *Our comrades in work and in the struggle, who are our women neighbors at home, are not physically in contact with us at work as is the case in a factory; but we can meet each other in agreed upon places that we all go to by using a few famous little periods of time that we cut out of our day. And none of us are separate from the other by virtue of any stratifications of qualifications and categories. We all do fundamentally the same work. ...If we go on strike, we won't be leaving products incomplete or raw materials untransformed, etc.; by interrupting our work we won't paralyze production, but we will paralyze the everyday reproduction of the working class. That will strike at the heart of Capital, because it will effectively become a strike even for those who normally would have gone on strike without us; but as soon as we no longer guarantee the survival of those to whom we are emotionally attached, we will also have difficulties to face in continuing our resistance.*

– Emilian Wages for Domestic Labor Coordination, Bologna, 1976

They call it Love: we call it unpaid labor. They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism. Every time we get pregnant against our will, it's a workplace accident.

*Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both conditions of labor...
But homosexuality is control over production by workers, not the end of work.*

More smiles? More money. Nothing would be more effective in destroying the virtues of a smile.

Neuroses, suicide, desexualization: professional diseases of the housewife.

– Silvia Federici, *The Right to Hate*, 1974

The worker has resources available to him to unionize, to go on strike; mothers are isolated from one another, in their houses, tied down to their children by merciful bonds. Our wildcat strikes manifest themselves most often in the form of physical or mental breakdowns.

– Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 1980

It is not too clear how it was that Bartleby decided one day to spend the night in his office. His gray existence as a petty employee fades into leisure time, which suddenly appears impossible; his inertia one day just brings an end to his weak will to compartmentalize his work and his life: they are for him two incompatible possibilities, two impossibilities following each other in sequence. Bartleby doesn't play the game; he lives his life as an employee and conducts himself at his post as if he could calmly just live there. Surely he has no home, no family, no love, no wife. So? In this desolate universe, peopled by tasks to accomplish and abstract relationships between worker-men, Bartleby *prefers not to*. Bartleby goes on a totally new kind of strike, which wears down his boss like no luddism could.

“Indeed,” affirms his boss, resigned, “it was his wonderful mildness chiefly, which not only disarmed me, but unmanned me, as it were.” Bartleby is surprised hanging around at the office on Wall Street on a Sunday, half undressed, but no one finds the firmness of mind to kick him out: everyone just assumes that that must be where he belongs. “For I consider that one, for the time, is sort of unmanned,” continues his boss, “when he tranquilly permits his hired clerk to dictate to him, and order him away from his own premises.”

The master’s authority is here deposed by a generic act of refusal: it’s not violence, just the pale solitude of someone who “prefers not to,” who haunts the consciousness of the office boss, just like it has haunted the lives of so many husbands pushed away with the same firm, unjustified determination of a negative preference, harder than any unappealable refusal.

The bad conscience of classical virility, personified by the Master in Chancery, Bartleby’s superior, prevents it from freeing itself of this mute specter that doesn’t demand anything anymore, refuses everything, and by its simple obstinate presence alludes to a different kind of world, where the offices would no longer be places where accountants undergo their tiresome slavery, and where the bosses would take orders. “I seldom lose my temper; much more seldom indulge in dangerous indignation at wrongs and outrages,” clarifies his boss. This gentleman is a calm, *balanced* person, and nonetheless he loses all agency faced with Bartleby. His mild-mannered non-submission seduces him; his strike action contaminates him; he wants to let go and abandon an authority that becomes suddenly burdensome to him, and at the height of his unexplainable sympathy for his do-nothing employee, he resolves

to opt for the least logical of solutions: "Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen, thought I; I shall persecute you no more; you are harmless and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short, I never feel so private as when I know you are here. At least I see it, I feel it; I penetrate to the predestinated purpose of my life. I am content. Others may have loftier parts to enact; but my mission in this world, Bartleby, is to furnish you with office-room for such period as you may see fit to remain." No strike in history has won such favorable conditions as these: the boss comes to be convinced of the essentially abusive character of his role, and the refusal of work gives rise to its remunerated abolition. Bartleby's strike, which in this sense is similar to that of the feminists, is a *human strike*, a strike of gestures, dialogue, a radical skepticism in the face of all forms of oppression that are taken for granted, including the most unquestioned of emotional blackmail or social conventions, such as the need to get up and go to work and then come home from the office once it's closed. But it's a strike that doesn't extend itself out, that doesn't contaminate the other workers with its negative preference syndrome, because Bartleby explains nothing (that's his great strength), and has no legitimacy; he's not threatening to not do anything anymore, so he's still upholding his contractual relationship with the boss, he simply reminds him that he has no more duty than he has desire, and that his preference happens to be for the abolition of work. "But thus it often is," continues the boss of the office, "that the constant friction of illiberal minds wears out at last the best resolves of the more generous." A human strike without a communization of morals ends up as a private tragedy, and is considered a personal problem, a mental illness. His colleagues, circulating in the office during the day, demand obedience from Bartleby, that employee that walks along

with his hands in his pockets; they give him orders, and faced with his categorical refusal to carry them out and his absolute impunity, they are perplexed and feel that they have somehow become the victims of some sort of unspeakable injustice. The metaphor is even too clear; one can all too easily imagine the threat of ‘unmanning’ felt by lawyers and magistrates when their authority is ignored and scorned by a simple accountant. “And what could I say? At last I was made aware that all through the circle of my professional acquaintance, a whisper of wonder was running round, having reference to the strange creature I kept at my office. This worried me very much. And as the idea came upon me of his possibly turning out a long-lived man, and keep occupying my chambers, and denying my authority; and perplexing my visitors; and scandalizing my professional reputation; and casting a general gloom over the premises. ... I resolved to gather all my faculties together, and for ever rid me of this intolerable incubus.”

Bartleby – does it even need to be said? – dies in prison, because his solitary de/occupation did not spread. In the same way as he never believed himself to be an accountant, he did not later believe himself to be a prisoner. His radical skepticism never found the comfort of any belonging, but in this disturbing short story, which stages a master-slave dialectic much more perverse and corrosive than that of the Hegelian paradigm, there is also the promise of a coming practice. The below-market work of women, in light of its congruence with life, can only be ground to a halt by a wildcat strike of behaviors, a human strike, which comes out of the kitchens and beds, speaks up at assemblies. The human strike puts forth no demands; rather it deterritorializes the agora, reveals the “non-political” to be the implicit place for the distribution of non-remunerable responsibilities and labor. Some women from the

Italian movement explained this: "We find no criteria for, and have no interest in, separating politics from culture, love, and work. A separate politics like that displeases us and we would never be able to carry it out." (L. Cigarini, L. Muraro, *Politics and Political Practice*, in *Marxist Critique*, 1992)

What happened with the transition to post-fordism, which integrated women into the productive sphere better than any prior mode of production, was a growing indifferentiation of the space-time of work and the space-time of life. More and more, workers find themselves in Bartleby's situation, which was exclusively the female situation until the end of the twentieth century in the West, but they 'prefer not to' refuse, for the time being. Work and life are tangled up to what is perhaps an unprecedented extent, for both sexes; what once was only females' economic oppression is now unisex, and the human strike appears to be the only solvent possible for the situation. Because 'preferring not to' is now equal to preferring *not to be* an accountant, a telecommuter, a woman, and that's something that has to be done by a number of people together. Negative preference is above all a political act: "I am not what you see here" gives rise to "Let's be another possible now." By no longer believing what other people say about you, by opposing the political intensity of your existence to the mundanities of recognition, above all not *wanting* any power, because power mutilates, power demands, power makes you mute and then other people will talk for you, will speak within you without you even perceiving it; that's how we escape, that's how we go on human strike. But already, schizophrenia is watching over all the detached ones, all the dupes of power, all the *scabs* of the human strike.

ON POLITICAL VENTRILOQUISM

Me I say me.

*Whoever said ideology is my adventure?
Adventure and ideology are incompatible.
My adventure is me.*

...

*A day of depression
A year of depression
A hundred years of depression
I let go of ideology, and I'm nothing anymore
Distraction is my ordeal.
I'll never again have a single moment of prestige
At my disposal
I'm losing my attraction
I won't be your point of reference anymore.*

...

*Whoever said that emancipation was unmasked?
Now you're courting me...
You expect an identity from me and you don't make up your own mind
You had the identity of a man and you don't leave it behind
You pour your conflict onto me and you are hostile to me.
You attack my integrity
You'd like to put me on a pedestal
You'd like to put me under your guardianship I distance myself and you
don't forgive me
You don't know who I am and you act like you can be my mediator*

I say what I have to say alone.

...

Whoever said my cause profited off you?

Your career has profited off me.

– “Me I say Me,” in *Rivolta Femminile*, 1977

In 1977, in Italy, a text entitled *Me I Say Me* appeared in the magazine *Rivolta Femminile*, a sort of open letter to the democratic feminists, who were more and more publicly appearing in the joyous and colorful protests/manifestations that spectacular history passes off as Feminism with a capital F.

A feeling of unease towards political ventriloquism was already widespread at the time and was theorized as part of the need to give a coherent voice to one’s own body, which is strictly impossible in biopolitical democracies.

“After the first day and a half,” recalls a participant in the Pinarella conference, “a strange thing happened to me: beneath these talking, listening, laughing heads, there were bodies: though I was speaking (I was really quite overcome with a calm serenity and free of any self-affirmation when speaking before those 200 women!) in my own words, in some way or other it was like my body had found some strange way of making itself heard.” (Serena, *Sottosoprano*. 3, 1976).

The problem of the head ceaselessly seeks a solution in radical feminist movements; looking at it, it becomes clear that it’s urgent that a remedy be found for the gap between the absence of sophistication and feminine refinement in discourse, and the excess of it in bodies. That genealogies of women, not familial but cultural,

need to be sought out. The search for a different mode of expression here lacks that avant-gardist tone that tries to say things differently to set itself apart, but the urgency of making discourse itself into the terrain for the expression of different possibilities, which exposes it as a place of conflict, a place where implicit force relations are openly revealed. It was a matter of making bodies and their stories exist in a different way, via a symbolic disengagement. In the case of women, outside of the *qualities* that are attributed to them by the masculine yardstick— whether it's held by a man or woman doesn't make a difference — “they can only exist in the empirical sense, so that their life is a *zoe* rather than a *bios*. It doesn't surprise us,” writes Adriana Cavarero, “that the in-born urge towards the self-exhibition of one's uniqueness crystallizes, for many women, in the desire for *bios* as a desire for biography.” (A. Cavarero, *Relating Narratives*). That's where self-consciousness becomes a simultaneous practice of reshaping and sharing, the production of subjectivity through discourses, and of discourse through subjectivities.

In 1979, a woman participating in an armed feminist group spoke the following, anonymously, over a telephone: “I am preservation, self-preservation, everyday life, adaptation, conflict mediation, the release of tension, the survival of the objects of my love, nourishment; I am all of that against myself, against the possibility of understanding who I am and how to construct my own life; I *am*, precisely *in* my madness, *in* my self- destruction. And so I look into myself and try to stop thinking about what's good and what's bad, what's right and what's false... I feel a need to smash myself, to burst, to not always think in a continuity with my own history. Maybe that's because I have no history, perhaps because everything I see as being my history appears otherwise to me, like

a suit of clothes put on my back that I can't get off of me... And so then I start to think about the act of smashing myself, bursting, fragmenting myself, about searching for myself within our collective research, our possibilities, our collective utopias, meaning that I can't break with my resignation and subordination if I don't break with the enemies that I've unmasked, if I don't recognize my rage, and if I don't make it explode with my violence against the ideology and apparatus of violence that oppresses me... If I don't find in other women as well my desire to get out, to attack, to destroy... To destroy, to take down all the walls and all the barriers..." (I. Faré, F. Spirito, *Mara and The Others*, 1979)



Freedom
Lesbian Citizen, not a porn star!

Feminine anonymity, the absence of women from the great narrative of History, makes silence preferable to them over self-exposure, subtraction over heroism. To be extraordinary, to be an exception, is for women a risk of separation from the silent mass of her comrades; it's more than a betrayal of her class, it's almost social suicide. "By definition," says another woman who had chosen

armed struggle, “‘woman’ does not think. If a woman puts herself outside of the established order, people say that she’s doing it because she’s ‘following’ her husband, or her ongoing bout with madness... When I started to say ‘no’ at home, I didn’t know how to do it; I was afraid. I watched men very carefully, to imitate them; I ‘absorbed’ them, and understood that I could do things like them too. But that wasn’t enough to liberate me. They were afraid too, of me even...” (I. Faré, F. Spirito, *Mara and The Others*). The issue of biography is, for women, a question of *how to do it*. If there is no material prison confining them to their role or to silence, how can the image of us that others give to us be demolished without our destroying ourselves? For women, biography is thus a technical issue rather than one of narcissism; the narrative of the self is the answer to the question “how have other women who wanted to be neither ‘women’ nor ‘women who want to be like men’ gotten out of that?” How, in sum, can a woman’s body come to hold a discourse that was not intended for it, which on the contrary was intended to shut her up. How can we get out of silence while remaining anonymous, while remaining an anybody, which represents the only manner of undoing political ventriloquism.

When ecstatic feminism seized upon it, this attention to discourse as the privileged vehicle of power had hardly surged forth, and had no promising future in the bad faith of the denizens of the universities; if there was something exemplary in this quest for a language capable of giving political dignity to the submerged, unencoded everyday existence of a multitude of women thirsting after meaning for their existence, it was the refusal of all the principles of authority. This research inaugurated a new logic of war, not about becoming impervious to attack by outside adversaries, but about the struggle against the inner enemy. Where

physical demobilization and symbolic decolonization coincide in a movement of self-removal.

It was a gesture intended to be free, one that demand the right to be wrong for itself (and that's always also the right to wander, to vagabondage, to the broadest possible discovery). But it was also one that refused to be corrected, and eventually came to critique the law, the prison system, and the movement of the *delegislation* of ecstatic feminism in this sense remains a fundamental heritage to counterpose against the imperialism of integration at all costs and at every advance of *political correctness*. This was scandalous when, in the middle of their struggle for the right to abort, women said that they didn't want any laws on their bodies, on rape, on maternity. That they didn't want any more laws *at all*.

Because the only honorable departure from a minority status is not the achievement of recognition by the dominating majority or a change in force relations, but the deconstruction of the whole mechanism of recognition itself and of the idea of victory. We read, in the *Manifesto of Female Revolt* from 1971: "We refuse to tolerate the affront that a few thousand signatures by men and women can serve as a pretext to ask the men in power, the legislators, for something that was in reality the content expressed by the lives of thousands of women sent off to the slaughterhouses of clandestine abortion." To accept being pulled away from the opaque zone of non-law, from the arbitrariness of emotional relations – which, as we know, is something no one should mess with – only to be brought under the degrading spotlight of spectacular politics, was the primary error made by feminism; all the questions that it had brought up have since then remained dangerously unresolved, and the path to posing them once again is now barred. What's more

demeaning than seeing a movement that demanded a new political space fall back on the very movement that had deliberately organized its exclusion, with a mélange of family-mother good sense that knows that “either way we just have to make it work out” and the pride of the liberated woman that fixes the motor of her car by herself?

One can read a distressing demonstration of this compromise in *Two Women in the Kingdom of Men* by Roselyne Bachelot and Genevieve Fraisse: “We must always pay attention to our physical appearance... We are always on the edge of the knife. If we have too short a dress on, or too low-cut a neckline on our shirt, it’ll shock people. But if we put on a suit that looks like a bag of apples, we get jibes... I remember a public meeting in Millau, in a disused movie house, with a very high podium and nothing to hide our legs. At the end of the meeting, a gentleman came up to tell me, ‘you got a nice white slip on, there!’ One can thus see that nothing is truly made for women.” You start with skirts, and end up with a desire to affirm yourself on the stage, in the image of men...

The abstraction of institutional politics is not reappropriable by women inasmuch as the figure of the citizen, which is at its center, exists *against* the material and singular nature of bodies, for and in the logic of representation. The impossible “woman-citizen,” capable of integrating herself into classical politics by hiding her shame of being ashamed of not being a man, haunts the female body with another specter: that of the fetus. What is still not even a bout with nausea for her is already a body to be governed by the State. The fetus is the citizen that the woman carries in her womb, which is invisible and has no existence but is already a subject of the law against her, as spoken by biopower.

“In the space of a few years,” writes Barbara Duden, “The *child* has become a *fetus*, the pregnant *woman* has become a *uterine feeding system*, the baby to be born became a *life*, and ‘life’ became a *catholic-secular value*, and thus omni-comprehensive.” (*On the Female Body as Public Space*)

The female body as potential citizen-factory is born alongside the birth of what Foucault calls biopolitics. “After 1800,” writes Barbara Duden, “the insides of women became something public, and that from the medical perspective, as well as the police and legal perspective, even while parallel to that, ideologically and culturally, the privatization of her outer form was undertaken. What I think we’re dealing with here are the tracks left by a distinctively contradictory development, both of the ‘creation’ of woman as a scientific fact over the course of the 19th century, and that of the *citizen* of industrial civilization.” (*On the Female Body as Public Space*). The thinkers of this Enlightenment thus organized another regime of visibility and predictability for living bodies which demanded to scrutinize the insides of women and which transformed her physiology into a public space. Between medication and political representation there is a coincidence which is not merely chronological: both the citizen and the fetus are fictions produced by biopower, and as such are the sworn enemies of ecstatic feminism.

THE BLEAK DAMAGE DONE BY THE REPRESSIVE HYPOTHESIS

Genealogy of Misandry.

The knowledge of the rudiments of psychoanalysis had by our contemporaries comes down to a confused ensemble of strategies for “not getting taken for a ride” and “not getting your toes stepped on.” Western women looking for professional affirmation quite often find themselves with a Cinderella complex that can only very rarely be explained by their biographies; they are specialists in that sport which consists in disarming those with bad intentions before they even become such, sweeping out all innocence and naivety so much so as to destroy even the homeopathic element in it that permits human relations to exist. “*Never get fucked*” is the banner under which a whole generation of cynical capitalist women marches, women who justify doing the most horrible shit by pointing to a ghostly masculine oppression they discovered in books.

With them, the hatred of men – already energetically rejected by a good part of the first- ever feminism of the sixties – comes back in force in the form of a demand that men be domesticated. The champions of economico-bureaucratico-infrastructural submission impose all the commodity oppression possible on their husbands so as to obtain at least a kind of *equality from below* where they cannot practice an inequality where they’d be the winners. The mutilation inflicted on both sexes and their desire is replaced by the vengeance of one sex against another, which thus is only an intent

to settle accounts and only feeds resentment. The economic and social emancipation of women thus ended up becoming one of the most appalling defeats the human race has suffered: the reinforcement everywhere of oppression, the proliferation of misunderstandings and the increase of separation have been the only tangible consequences. Those who rejoice every time they see a woman doing a job that was traditionally reserved for men, because "it was the lack of work that was harming women," sometimes need to be reminded of the inscription over the gates of Auschwitz. There is no possible practice of freedom starting from a *need for obedience* as expressed by the comical push for "equality of opportunity."

The political proposition of ecstatic feminism concerns relations between beings, and not only between sexes. It's about working to make the sexes cease obeying the patterns set out for them, such as the pattern of "command -> execution" or of "implicit demand -> punishment of those who ignore it." Moreover, the primary dissension between men and women is centered around contempt for a desired being: women are obviously capable of that, but they experience it as a personal and social frustration; men in the scenario often appear reassured by it. Never making any demands on women, which is in its enchanted variant called "gallantry," is above all justified by the refusal to allow them to be direct interlocutors, and by the demand that they only be interpreters of *signs*, which becomes, in the rambling nonsense of common sense, the clichés that "women are sensitive," or "they have an intuitive sense."

This also obviously concerns sexual relations, and in particular those that could be defined as heteronormative. If in the occasional

sexual relation between a man and woman it is the latter that “loses out” in the eyes of whatever collectivity, it’s not just because she’s risking getting pregnant – which was already easily preventable by non- penetrative sexual practices long before technology maliciously came to our aid – but because in the sexual exchange men *take* pleasure and aren’t supposed to give any. The woman gives herself; she lets herself be conquered, or worse, she offers herself. And if that offer is irregular, it produces anomie, breaks the balance, and becomes an inflation of pleasure offered that suddenly transforms the very idea of the sexual exchange. Female pleasure, which is invisible and physiologically limitlessly reproducible, if it were to take charge of the game, would threaten a constituted authority; that is, an acquired right to expropriation without compensation. This is the source of rape; it just manifests in a patent and practical manner the opinion that is being expressed in the universal prejudice against free women.

Women have no rights because they don’t have the right to pleasure – since all rights, at bottom, express an authorization of an enjoyment/pleasure or an interruption of suffering – men, on the other hand, have had the right to take that for themselves, even from non- consenting subjects. The women who did not want rights, thus, understood that the power-law-desire *nexus* had to be defeated or reorganized, that if enjoyment exists within restrictions, it’s not a matter of condemning it or denying it, but of keeping in mind that it creates no real freedom, and that other pleasures are possible too. There is no reactionary sexuality, and no subversive sexuality either, but there is a sexual politics that can have an effect on bodies and languages, which produces certain power games and bans others. The camouflaging of feminism as a politics of parity has shifted the issue from one of pleasure exchange to one of power

exchange, which of course biopolitical democracies manage. A world where even women don't know what autonomy their enjoyment has relative to the mechanisms of government, and fear castration, that is, deprivation of a phantom power that in no way renders them more potent, is but a *vast sprawl of docile bodies*.

"Don't believe you have rights" means "don't believe you're getting any protection in exchange for your obedience," because after millennia you still offer up your obedience without demanding any compensation, taking a pure loss; don't believe you'll be able to blossom in a society created to exclude you: if you've been given any rights, it's only because in order to demand them you let yourself be normalized, and now the enemy can integrate you in a way more to your liking.



**We can live without models;
We can't live without nurses.**
AVENIR [future]
The publicity company that speaks to everyone personally.

OUTSIDE? WHERE'S THAT?

"But when women practice emancipation, they realize that it's quite costly, and entails a lot of frustrations and suffering. Because there is no pleasure in producing for this world, and even less in liberation from roles – which re-form themselves as soon as a re-questioning is primed; it is difficult to sustain the struggle and the exhausting competition that emancipation entails; the acceptance of a rule, of a rhythm, a model, a mode of production and a lifestyle that are totally alienated and foreign, sucks the lifeblood out of us and imposes on us to where it provokes that ever more frequent symptom that, even in popular language, is called 'schizophrenia.'"

– I. Faré, F. Spirito, "Reassuring Foreignness" in *Mara and The Others*

"Progress means then that I get divided in two, my body of the female sex on the one side, and thinking social subject on the other, and between the two, furthermore, is a bond formed of a malaise that can be obviously felt: rape brought to its perfection as a symbolic act."

– *Don't Believe You Have Rights*

Integration always operates by means of a prior operation of criminalization and discrimination; that's where the infinite loop of the law loops closed, where every advance of democracy corresponds to yet another cancerous excrescence of the law in our lives. The apparatus of law functions like a peristaltic expulsion of contradiction out of the body of society; criminalization is the production by power of an intimacy between parties with common interests but divergent ways of pursuing them. By hiding the

invisible relatedness that unites the oppressed, the Law has historically set itself up as the sole progenitor of the social as a whole, and the guarantee of its cohesion. But women, exactly like the plebeians, found themselves in a very ambiguous position relative to the Law, since they were neither guaranteed nor represented, but only and exclusively were hindered and threatened by it. Their violent refusal of the Law was thus the requirement for an adulthood beyond the restricted definition of it set by the Enlightenment. As long as we remain in the shadow of the Law, we are still in the condition of a child under guardianship. As long as the state's monopoly on legitimate violence survives, there will be no legitimacy to practices of freedom that refuse to submit to the self-abasement of an itinerary/career of liberation (*from men, from bosses, from machos, from prejudices, and at bottom from ourselves.*)

Separation cannot be reduced, nor can our potency come out, through an introduction into the social body of self-repression apparatuses like anti-racism, anti-fascism, anti-machismo, which are supposed to act on each being. No hope! Each "no," each "better not," adds another little bit to the hodgepodge of prohibitions that comprise each of our lives, which start with mom/dad, are followed by State/society and finish in the arms of Biopower.

Freedom is not necessarily such a beautiful thing to see; it is "the reason for the infanticide mother, the woman who doesn't want a husband, the homosexual poetess, the egoist daughter... and so on and so forth, encompassing every one of the numerous manners in which female humanity tries to signify its need for a free existence, from the baby that gets dropped into boiling laundry water to the impulse to steal from supermarkets." (*Don't Believe You Have*

Rights). The refusal to accept and take up the “concentration camp internment of the female destiny” (A. Cavarero) in the foreign terrain of masculine powers and sublimations, that is, of the “civilized,” was the gamble of the first feminism that constituted itself separately by practicing “conflict through subtraction.” But the strength to undo the mechanisms of subjectivation is not produced within any monosexual heterotopia, and the secession of the feminists remained merely a little hemorrhage of meaning within the greater body of classical politics. “One day not so far off,” writes Teresa De Lauretis, “in one way or another, women will have careers, family names, and property belonging to them alone; children, husbands, and/or lovers according to their preferences, all without altering the existing social relations and the heterosexual structures in which our society and many other societies are so solidly anchored.” (T. De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*.) That day is not at all far off, indeed it perfectly resembles what is already present for a “privileged” minority.

OIKONOMIA

The difference lies in the fact that whereas the right distinguishes between the mother and the whore, the left declares freedom for all men to use all women. The left involves women in the concept of freedom, something they are looking for above all else, but in reality it only wants them free so it can use them; the right fools women with the concept of the “upstanding woman,” which they want to be above all else, and then uses them as wives: they make them into whores that procreate.

– A. Dworkin, *Pornography*.

The whoring nature of biopolitical democracies has done a lot for the equality of the sexes. Those that sold themselves, and thus conceived of themselves as simultaneously the object and the subject of their commerce, were, historically, the women, for an enormous number of reasons, all of which were of an *economic* nature. Economy, whatever anyone may say, is the law of the home (from the Greek *oikos* and *nomos*, house and law), and the house (whether it's a whore house or a private home hardly matters) was the female domain within patriarchal culture. The pleasures of the flesh are domestic, internal affairs which one shouldn't have to share. The upstanding woman/ dutiful wife is a private sex object, domesticated, well-behaved, decent. The *cleanliness* of interiors, of the intimate (a synonym for the internal and hidden feminine sex) has long been but a women's affair; making themselves inhabitable (for a penis or for progeny) and available, but quite poorly remunerated relative to the enormity of the task: such is a woman's job, such is her living. And it isn't just masculine exploitation that's involved here; it's something located at the intersection between

patriarchy and capitalism, in an *economic* domain, because economy is ruled by the law of desires, and everything that is an *object* of desire, even if it's a subject, figures into that fully. In sum we are desirable since we are solvent/creditworthy; we have a charm-capital, a beauty-capital, which we have to know how to manage, and that's now true for men and women both, which fact has to do with the metamorphosis of the production and circulation of bodies more than with a "revolution" in morals. Blending into a fatal and complacent intimacy with *things* has become the mass activity for fetish-compatible Blooms. That used to be specific just to the "weaker sex."

Apparently there's no more intercourse in the lives of men and women since the "sexual liberation" of the seventies, and that's explained by the following: the economic principle of the circulation of desires – just read any women's or men's magazine and you'll see it confirmed – intends that coitus, the consumption/consummation of the self and the other, is to be *optimized*.

The fearsome contiguity between libidinal economy and mercantile economy is an effect of the transformation of the forms of labor: "What's at play in work," explains Bifo, "is the investment of desire, from the moment when social production began incorporating ever larger sections of mental activity, and symbolic, communicative, and emotional activity. What is the most essentially human is what's involved in the process of cognitive labor: it's not muscular fatigue or the physical transformation of materials anymore; now the product of productive activity is communication, the creation of states of mind, emotion, imagination. Industrial labor of the classical type, above all in the

organized form of the fordist factory, had no relation to pleasure except in compressing it, deferring it, and rendering it impossible. It had no relation to communication, which, on the contrary, was hindered, fragmented, and prevented as long as the workers were on the assembly lines, and even outside of labor time, in their domestic isolation... The industrial worker had no other place for socialization except the subversive community of workers, the political or union organizations where they could organize against capital." (F. "Bifo" Berardi, *The Factory of Unhappiness*)



Victims of the illusion that anyone could “blossom” in communications work, women put their skills in relationships at the service of Capital, skills they acquired over thousands of years of submission during which time they *had an interest* in making themselves likeable. Advertising, fashion, night clubs, cafes, and even the ground floor of the sad edifice of “immaterial labor” whose bars and sidewalks are crawling with whores, all operate as female added value. Having become inevitably over-conscious of their price, women have become the living currency with which PEOPLE buy men. And so the circle of the prostitution economy closes, leaving nothing outside it, with the exception of a lumpen-proletariat of undesirables, the handicapped, or the unsellable, the out-of-work men and women of the libidinal factory.

Coitus – and this is all the more true the higher the relational added value of the subjects involved is – thus becomes the space for building reputation-capital, a labor of self-promotion, one which, even if it fails to hit upon an opportunity, should all the same never fuck up your “game.” That’s how “rebounds” and unsafe (safety-refusing) sexual practices should be interpreted: as little transgressions that allow the *total worker* to go back on the job a little high off it and full of a feeling of having “splurged” in a pretty dangerous way. We put our health-capital in danger like in other times the bourgeoisie would put their marriages in danger by picking up a mistress. Don Juan was a choir boy compared to today’s hipsters.

ANATOMY OF THE DESIRABLE

I have but contempt for you, diplomat, manager; you use the word 'pleasure' when I say 'joy.' You manage, whereas I feel.

– H. Hessel, *Helen's Diary*

“The texture of skin also ‘belongs’ to the tongue that loved or hated it, not only to the body supposedly wrapped in it.” (Lyotard). That’s why “my body belongs to me” is the most deceitful, lying slogan ever: because there’s no more a central, disembodied “me” than there is private property in bodies. Our enjoyment loses us, puts us in an ecstatic position, where we’re confused with the other/the others. And solitary or autistic pleasure is just another variant of sociality. If we needed a kind of thinking that would go beyond monism or dualism (its manifestation of a split personality) and dialectics (the ruse used to maintain it), it wasn’t because we found the “mixed” hypothesis sexier than separate constitutions, but because desires and pleasures are relational creations. The less the field of sexuation is burdened with norms, the broader the play among singularities, the more movements of subjectivation and desubjectivations are extended, and the more the potency of the beings involved increases (molecularly but also collectively). The attitude of liberationist feminism that condemns feminine masochism appears to us to respond much more to a demand for capitalist production than to a need for self-esteem. The woman in power exercises a phallographic authority, minus the nuts (castration, penis envy); she occupies an unconsciously comical position and she doesn’t get the joke. The sadist – contrary to what capitalism would like to have us believe – does not get off any more or less

than the masochist does, just *differently*. In the framework of a mixed practice of freedom, where the desires of male-female relations detach from the need to accumulate and exploit, the liquidation of specifically feminine masochism remains a hurdle still waiting for both sexes to leap. "Women," writes Ida Dominijanni, "have been confined by the symbolic patriarchal order to the disorder of rivalry relations measured on the basis of masculine desire; they've been historically excluded from the social hierarchies, constructed in the image and representation of masculine sexuality; and then they were assigned, within the paradigms of emancipation and liberation, to a 'gender' revolution, based on a miserable idea of the oppressed sex and on fitting in to masculine models. To break out of this double prison of exclusion and homologation, the symbolic structure of desire and exchange need to be reinvented." (Ida Dominijanni, *The desire of politics*)

The abject character of men that defend women against their macho congeners comes from a behavior based on a double self-hate. The hate, first off, of the male in each man (which they give up expressing in an articulate manner to content themselves with reducing it to the silence of shame) and then of the women they deign to protect the weak and infantile part of, a part of them which is secreted precisely by a misogynist culture. Feminine misogyny, moreover, has ended up seeing the specter of rape in all sexual relations, thus manifesting only the chagrin of women upon seeing themselves made the object of a desire for submission, an ignorant desire for pleasure and its complication, a monist or binary desire. Whether they like it or not, the bodies of women belong to the desire of the rapists, as long as they aren't capable of exciting other desires. Getting out of the blame game to start a true dialogue of the flesh is the secret, unavowed hope of ecstatic feminism. This

would concern children abusively desired or desirous, the old men excluded from pleasure and perverts of all kinds: sexual “normality” is decided and established at every moment between the beings concerned, since all normative morality has as its only goal the imposition of a more “productive” and controllable behavior than the others.



Commodity society in effect has an emotional and psychosomatic education that is all its own, which can only be fought on the ethical terrain, which can only be defeated by bringing into existence new pleasures arising from new exchanges. This pornographic and ad-copy education polarizes the various forms-of-life by inscribing the predetermined possibilities into the surface of bodies. Sexuation is

the first primary inscription, the one that organizes all the other legibilities, and assigns all bodies to a specific ethos (and to its variants as established by the Spectacle), which makes it so that even if the margin of moral tolerance regarding “gender disturbances” appears greater now, the summum of the indecipherable remains the body of uncertain gender, with a heretical relational ethos. The integration of transgressions and sexual perversions into the heart of domination’s taxonomy doesn’t have so much to do with an opening of minds arising from the “sexual revolution” as it has to do with a need to colonize territories of desire that are coming out ever more openly. And so if the ethical terrain of homosexuality was in the past a zone falling outside the gaze of the Church, the hand of the State, and the reproduction of the family, it is at present so totally infested and agitated by the Spectacle that its symbolic integration into institutions was obliged to get with the program. The control of bodies by the progressive colonization and subsumption of their desires has ended up transforming all vestiges of sexual anti-conformism into a new constructible terrain for commodity publicity.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF A WILL TO KNOW

If these are no more than mere texts, then let the men have them.

– Donna Haraway

It may be that this text has not come across clearly. Where does she, they, we want to get to with it? In the uncertain territory that is our everyday life, in this soil which is the least questioned because it is the soil we tread upon, and because if it were to begin eroding, first of all: it would be obvious to everyone, and second of all: we'd be in such a state of emergency we wouldn't be writing texts.

And anyway, what kind of a text talks about what everyone sees and doesn't specifically name an external enemy, doesn't name programmatic issues, doesn't *explain* anything new to us, properly speaking?

It is a tool. Or more precisely, it's a weapon of war. It's a tool when we use it on ourselves, to demonstrate the mechanisms of the technologies of gender that comprise us, and it's a weapon when we turn it against those who prevent us from taking hold of those mechanisms, all the conscious or unconscious reproducers of reproductive censorship. It is the rifle of the mixed partisan war that the Imaginary Party needs. We learn from the scientists how to clone the "living," and every day we unlearn cooperation, the only resort of freedom.

For the time being, we're very tired. It's time to go on a good long strike. A human strike, which will be so radically destructive that it will in the same movement destroy the enemy that's inside of us.

And only then will we realize how much space it took up and how much indulgence it required of us, how useful it was too, and how much it collaborated and participated in our coherence (the coherence of death among the children of dialectics).

The human strike does not demand – in a sense it's even its opposite – a sexual revolution; it demands *psychosomatic revolution*. The epistemological question there is an emotional one, one that decides on our relationship to the world; the political question there is an existential one, one that puts our being-in-the-world into play. The human strike attacks the commodity economy at what holds it together: by undermining its two bases, psychic economy and libidinal economy.

Is it dangerous?

Yes, and it's beautiful.

Furthermore whatever isn't dangerous is also undignified.

Women have been made likeable for their fragility; they've been consecrated to love by being made incapable of living, by their existence being transformed into a series of threats that oblige them to take refuge in the necessary arms of a man. What we need now is a kind of danger with no possible refuge; we need passions that can make do without compassion.

The hero was pitiful in his ignorance. We take away from him his monopoly on the struggle, and give up complaining about him and forgiving him. The thousands of years of culture that have driven into men the conviction that they shouldn't be afraid of dying have ended up producing in them a fear of living. The struggle against

this fear is the beginning of a partisan war where every form-of-life is also a form of struggle, and which appears in little snippets in the acts that stand behind these lines.

What's important at bottom is not what we retain from the strange and contradictory history of ecstatic feminism, but what it demolishes: the little inner collapses that follow the shake-up of familiarities.

Does that lead to nothing? No!

It does lead to something! It does!

It makes room. To live. To laugh. To struggle.

"Destruction keeps you young," wrote Benjamin, and he was right.



“Men have kind hearts when they are not afraid but they are afraid afraid afraid. I say they are afraid, but if I were to tell them so their kindness would turn to hate. Yes the Quakers are right, they are not afraid because they do not fight, they do not fight.”

“But Susan B. you fight and you are not afraid.”

“I fight and I am not afraid, I fight but I am not afraid.”

“And you will win.”

“Win what, win what.”

Gertrude Stein, *The Mother Of Us All*

HELLO!

The neutralizing action of ATTAC and the “left of the left” has now started to be publicly exposed. The Ministry of the Interior’s cars have the subtitle “Ministry of Citizenship” written in cursive letters on their sides. Sub-commandant Marcos is marching on Mexico city with the outrageous project of participating in the creation – at long last! – of a true Mexican State. And, at the same time, all kinds of organizations – AC!, DAL, Act Up, etc. – which had embodied a sort of critical revival at the start of the 90s because at the time their “symbolic actions” were the object of large-scale media coverage, are now either integrated into the project of a citizen modernization of Capital or have been left for dead. And the counter-summits, in turn, are now boring for those who at first had a taste for them; their repetition has reduced them to being just picturesque elements of a new, inoffensive folklore.

All this means that the moment has come to tear off the stranglehold that the false opposition between Capital and its contestation has held all practice of violent antagonism in. The solidarity between “citizenism” (which could perhaps be called “bovism” not only because it has so many specifically French traits, but also to underline its transitory and inconsistent character) and Capital doesn’t only have to do with the fact that they share the same sappy language, that of economy, or that the bovist movement is in the last resort controlled by the capitalist State. It has above all to do with the fact that together they form a controlled-burn apparatus, a preventive controlled burn: a controlled burn consists in fighting a fire by lighting another fire, a controlled one, around the circumference of the trajectory of the first fire. Upon contact with the controlled-burn area, the first fire loses all its dynamic and dies out there, finding nothing to feed on in that area since it’s already been burned. The ATTAC controlled

burn, for instance, simulates the existence of a popular discontent with the “dictatorship of markets” so as to prevent any radical expression of the real discontent. But it itself can only function as long as it’s masked; and over the past few months it’s been coming out into the open.

In these conditions, the question is: how can we cluster together to create an offensive reality that will oppose both capital and its citizen pseudo-contestation? One possibility would be to take the coming months – in any case long before the Barcelona counter-summit – to draw up and circulate a platform, on a Europe-wide level, that would break with the dominant positions of the “anti-globalization” movement. On the basis of that text and the contacts that we already have, it will then be up to us to confer with those that, in France and elsewhere, are interested in organizing a series of anti-citizen initiatives precisely in the very places of citizen contestation; that is: in Barcelona in June and in Genoa in July.

One point that we can leverage ourselves on, which also forms the central contradiction of a discourse certainly not lacking in contradictions, is that the citizen does not exist. Or rather, that there are no citizens, merely proofs of citizenship. And those proofs are administered endlessly every day in an attempt to bring about an impossible integration into the new, cybernetic process of social valorization. The adjective “citizenist” now has to replace the old term “social” now that the existence of society itself is in question, having been effectively pulverized by the universal incursion of commodity mediation. Manifesting the existence of a non-citizen pole would thus be the first step towards aggregating the multiple forces and numerous existences permanently trying to get out of

the present state of things, but whose isolation invariably drags them right back into it.

**THIS IS NOT A
PROGRAM**

REDEFINE HISTORICAL CONFLICT

I don't believe that ordinary people think that in the short run there is any risk of a sudden, violent dissolution of the state, of open civil war. What is gaining ground instead is the idea of latent civil war, to borrow a journalistic expression, the idea of a civil war of position that would strip the state of all legitimacy.

Terrorisme et democratie, Editions Sociales, 1978

Once again, blind experimentation, with no protocol or almost none. (We have been left so little; this may be our chance.) Once again, direct action, sheer destruction, out-and-out confrontation, the refusal of any kind of mediation: those who don't refuse to understand will get no explanation from us. Again, the desire, the plane of consistency of everything that several decades of counterrevolution have repressed. Again, all this: autonomy, punk, riot, orgy, but original, mature, thought out, clear of the petty convolutions of the new.

Through arrogance, "international police" operations, and communiques declaring permanent victory, a world presented as the only world possible, as the crowning achievement of civilization, has finally been made thoroughly abominable. A world which believed it had completely insulated itself has discovered evil at its core, among its children. A world which celebrated a common new year as a change of millennium has begun to fear for its millennium. A world long settled in the house of catastrophe now warily grasps that the fall of the "socialist bloc" didn't portend its triumph but rather its own ineluctable collapse. A world gorged

with the clamors of the end of history, the American century, and the failure of communism is now going to have to pay for its frivolity.

In the present paradoxical situation, this world—that is to say, essentially, its police—has constructed for itself a fitting, and fittingly extravagant, enemy. It talks of a Black Bloc, of a “traveling anarchist circus,” of a vast conspiracy against civilization. One is reminded of Von Salomon’s Germany in *The Outlaws*, a Germany obsessed by the fantasy of a secret organization, the O.C., “which spreads like a cloud loaded with gas” and to which THEY attribute all the dazzling confusion of a reality given over to civil war. “A bad conscience tries to exorcise the power that threatens it. It creates a bogey that it can make faces at and thinks safety is thereby assured.” That sounds about right, doesn’t it?

Despite the flights of fancy of the imperial police, current events have no strategic legibility. They have no strategic legibility because if they did that would imply something common, something minimally common between us. And that—a common—makes everyone afraid, it makes Bloom⁴ turn away, it stuns and strikes dumb because it restores something unequivocal to the very heart of our suspended lives. We have become accustomed to contracts for everything. We have avoided everything resembling a pact because a pact cannot be rescinded; it is either respected or broken. And in the end that is the hardest thing to understand: that the effect of a negation depends on the positivity of a common, that our way of saying “I” determines the force with which we say “no.” Often we are surprised by the break in historical transmission, a break arising from the facts that for at least fifty years no “parent” has been able to talk about his life to “his” children, to turn his life

into history [*histoire*], a history that isn't simply a discontinuum colored with pathetic anecdotes. What has in fact been lost is the ability to establish a communicable relationship between our history and history as such. At the heart of all this is the belief that by renouncing every singular existence, by surrendering all purpose, we might finally get a little peace. Blooms believed that it was enough to abandon the battlefield for the war to end. But nothing like that happened. War didn't stop and those who have refused as much now find themselves a bit more disarmed, a bit more disfigured, than the rest. This is the source of the resentments that now roil in Blooms' bowls and from which springs the insatiable desire to see heads roll, to finger the guilty, to secure a kind of general repentance for all of history past. A redefinition of historical conflict is needed, not intellectually: vitally.

I say redefinition because a definition of historical conflict precedes us in which every existence in the pre-imperial period had its part: the class struggle. That definition no longer holds. It condemns us to paralysis, bad faith, and empty talk. No war can now be waged, no life lived, in this straightjacket from another age. To continue the struggle today, we will have to scrap the notion of class and with it the whole entourage of certified origins, reassuring sociologisms, identity prostheses. The notion of class is only good for holding like a little bedpan the neuroses, separation, and perpetual recrimination in which THEY have taken such morbid delight in France, in every segment of society, for such a long time. Historical conflict no longer opposes two massive molar heaps, two classes—the exploited and the exploiters, the dominant and dominated, managers and workers among which, in each individual case, one could differentiate. The front line no longer cuts through the

middle of society; it now runs through the middle of each of us, between what makes us a citizen, our predicates, and all the rest. It is thus in each of us that war is being waged between imperial socialization and that which already eludes it. A revolutionary process can be set in motion from any point of the biopolitical fabric, from any singular situation, by exposing, even breaking, the line of flight that traverses it. Insofar as such processes, such ruptures, occur, one plane of consistency is common to all of them: that of anti-imperial subversion. "The generality of the struggle specifically derives from the system of power itself, from all the forms in which power is exercised and applied." We have called this plane of consistency the Imaginary Party, so that in its very name the artifice of its nominal and a fortiori political representation is clear. Like every plane of consistency the Imaginary Party is at once already present and yet to be built. Building the Party no longer means building a total organization within which all ethical differences might be set aside for the sake of a common struggle; today, building the Party means establishing forms-of life in their difference, intensifying, complicating relations between them, developing as subtly as possible civil war between us. Because the most formidable stratagem of Empire lies in its throwing everything that opposes it into one ugly heap-of "barbarism," "sects," "terrorism," or "conflicting extremisms" fighting against Empire essentially means never confusing the conservative segments of the Imaginary Party-libertarian militias, right-wing anarchists, insurrectionary fascists, Qutbist jihadists, ruralist militants-and its revolutionary-experimental segments. Building the Party must therefore no longer be thought of in terms of organization but in terms of circulation. In other words, if there is still a "problem of organization," the problem is organizing the

circulation within the Party. For only the continuation and intensification of encounters between us can further the process of ethical polarization, can further the building of the Party.

It is true that a passion for history is generally the fate of bodies incapable of living the present. Nonetheless, I don't consider it off topic to return to the aporias of the cycle of struggle initiated in the early 1960s now that another cycle has begun. In the pages that follow, numerous references will be made to 1970s Italy. This afraid of going is not an arbitrary choice. If I weren't afraid of going on too long, I would easily show how what was then at stake in the starkest and most brutal terms largely remains so for us, although today's climate is, for the time being, less extreme. As Guattari wrote in 1978: "Rather than consider Italy as a special case, captivating but all things considered aberrant, shouldn't we in fact seek to shed light on the other, apparently more stable, social, political, and economic situations originating in more secure state power through a reading of the tensions currently at work in that country?" 1970s Italy remains, in every respect, the insurrectional moment closest to us. We must start there, not in order to write the history of a past movement, but to hone the weapons for the war currently taking place.

FREE ONESELF FROM MORTIFICATION

Those of us who provisionally operate in France don't have it easy. It would be absurd to deny that the conditions in which we operate are determined, and even bloody well determined. Beyond the fanaticism for separation which sovereign state education has engrained in bodies and which makes school the shameful utopia hammered into every French skull, there is this distrust, this impossible to-shake distrust of life, of everything that exists unapologetically. And there is the retreat from the world-into art, philosophy, the home, food, spirituality, critique-as the exclusive and impracticable line of flight on which the thickening flows of local mortification feed. An umbilical retreat that calls for the omnipresence of the French state, that despotic schoolmaster which now seems even to govern "citizen" protests. Thus the great din of spineless, crippled, and twisted French minds, which never stop whirling round within themselves, every second feeling more threatened sensing that something might wake them from their complacent misery.

Nearly everywhere in the world debilitated bodies have some historical icon of resentment on which to ding, some proud fascistoid movement that has decked out in grand style the coat of arms of the reaction.

Nothing so in France. French conservatism has never had any style, because it is a bourgeois conservatism, a gut conservatism. That it has finally risen to the rank of pathological reflexivity changes nothing. It isn't driven by its love for a dying world, but by its terror of experimentation, of life, of life-experimentation. This

conservatism, the ethical substratum of specifically French bodies, takes precedence over any kind of political position, over any kind of discourse. It establishes the existential continuity, a declared as' much as hidden continuity, that ensures that Bove, the 17th arrondissement bourgeois, the pencil pusher of the Encyclopedie des Nuisances, and the provincial notable all belong to the same party. It matters little, then, that the bodies in question voice reservations about the existing order; the same passion for origins, forests, pastures, and village life is currently on display in opposition to worldwide financial speculation, and tomorrow it will stifle even the smallest movement for revolutionary deterritorialization. Regardless of where, those who speak solely from the gut exhale the same smell of shit.

Of course, France wouldn't be the country of world citizenism (no doubt in a not-too-distant future *Le Monde Diplomatique* will be translated into more languages than Capital), the ridiculous epicenter of phobic opposition that claims to challenge the Market in the name of the State, had THEY not managed to make themselves so utterly impervious to all that is politically actual, and particularly impervious to 1970s Italy. From Paris to Porto Alegre, in country after country, the global expansion of ATTAC bears witness to this Bloomesque craze for quitting the world.

CREEPING MAY VERSUS TRIUMPHANT MAY

'77 wasn't like '68. '68 was anti-establishment, '77 was radically alternative. This is why the "official" version portrays '68 as good and '77 as bad; in fact, '68 was co-opted whereas '77 was annihilated. This is why '77, unlike '68, could never make for an easy object of celebration.

Nanni Balestrini, Primo Moroni, *L'orda d'oro*

On several occasions over the course of the 1970s the insurrectionary situation in Italy threatened to spread to France. It would last more than ten years and THEY would finally put an end to it with the arrest of more than 4,000 people. First, there were the wildcat strikes during the "Hot Autumn" (1969), which Empire quashed in the Piazza Fontana bombing massacre. The French, whose "working class took up the red flag of proletarian revolution from the students' delicate hands" only in order to sign the Grenelle Accords, couldn't believe that a movement originating in the universities could reach all the way to the factories. With all the bitterness of their abstract relationship with the working class, they felt deeply offended because their May came out sullied as a result. So they called the Italian situation "creeping May."

Ten years later, at a time when we were already happy to celebrate the memory of the French May and at a time when its most resolute actors had already quietly found jobs within Republican institutions, new rumblings again came from Italy. These were more obscure, both because pacified French minds were already at a loss to understand much about a war in which they had,

nevertheless, been engaged and because contradictory rumors sometimes mentioned prison revolts, sometimes an armed counterculture, sometimes the Red Brigades (BR), among all the other things that were a bit too physical for THEM to understand in France. We pricked up our ears, just out of curiosity, then we turned back to our petty concerns, telling ourselves that those Italians sure were naive to continue the revolt when we had already moved on to commemoration.

THEY settled back into denunciations of the gulag, the “crimes of communism,” and other delights of the “New Philosophy.” THEY thereby avoided seeing that the Italians were revolting against what May '68 had become, for example, in France. Grasping that the movement in Italy “challenged the profs who gloried in their May-'68 past, because they were in reality the most fervent champions of social- democratic standardization” (Tutto Citta 77)- that surely would have given the French an unpleasant taste of immediate history. Honor intact, THEY therefore became all the more certain of a “creeping May,” thanks to which THEY could pack away the Movement of '77 with the souvenirs of another age, a movement from which everything is no less still to come.

Kojeve, who was unmatched in cutting to the heart of the matter, offered a nice turn of phrase to put the French May to rest. During a meeting at the OECD a few days before he died of a heart attack, he observed of the “events”: “There were no deaths. Nothing happened.” Naturally, a bit more was needed to inter Italy's creeping May. Then another Hegelian surfaced who had acquired no less a reputation than the first but through different means. He said: “Listen, listen, nothing happened in Italy. Just some dead-enders manipulated by the state who wanted to terrorize the

population by kidnapping some politicians and killing some judges. As you can see for yourselves, nothing exceptional." In this way, thanks to Guy Debord's shrewd intervention, on this side of the Alps we have never known that something happened in Italy in the 1970s. To this day, French luminaries have accordingly confined themselves to platonic speculations concerning the manipulation of the BR by this or that state service and the Piazza Fontana massacre. If Debord was an execrable middleman for all that was explosive in the Italian situation, he nonetheless introduced France to the favorite sport of Italian journalism: retrology. For the Italians, retrology – a discipline whose first axiom might be "the truth is elsewhere" – refers to this paranoid game of mirrors played by those who no longer believe in any event, in any vital phenomenon, and who, consequently, that is, as a consequence of their illness, must always imagine someone or some group hidden behind what happens – the P2 Lodge, the CIA, Mossad, or even themselves. The winner is the one who has given his little playmates the best reasons to doubt reality.

It is thus easier to understand why the French speak of a "creeping May" when it comes to Italy. They have the proud, public May, the state May.

In Paris May 68 has served as the *symbol* of '60s and 70s world political antagonism to the exact extent that the *reality* of this antagonism lies elsewhere.

No effort was spared, however, in transmitting to the French a bit of the Italian insurrection; there were *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Molecular Revolution*, there were Autonomy and the "squat" movement, but nothing had enough firepower to break through the

wall of lies of the French spirit. Nothing that THEY can claim not to have foreseen. Instead, THEY prefer to chatter on about the Republic, Education, Social Security, Culture, Modernity and Social Relations, Suburban Unrest, Philosophy, and the Public Sector.

And this is still what THEY chatter on about just as the imperial services resurrect Italy's "strategy of tension." Clearly, there is an elephant missing from the glassworks. Someone to state the obvious, to come out with it somewhat coarsely and once and for a even if it means smashing up the place a bit.

Here I would like to speak to the "comrades," among others, to those with whom I can share the party. I am a little fed up with the comfortable theoretical backwardness of the French ultra-left. I am fed up with hearing the same fake debates with their rhetorical sub-Marxism: spontaneity or organization, communism or anarchism, the human community or unruly individuality. There are still Bordigists, Maoists, and councilists in France. Not to mention the periodic Trotskyist revivals and Situationist folklore.

THE IMAGINARY PARTY AND THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT

What was happening to the movement was clear: the union and the PCI came down on us like the police, like fascists. It was clear then that there was an irreparable divide between them and us. It was clear from then on that the PCI would no longer be entitled to speak within the movement.

A witness to the clashes at the University of Rome on February 17, 1977, quoted in *L'Onia d'aro*.

In his final book, Mario Tronti observes that “the workers’ movement wasn’t defeated by capitalism; the workers’ movement was defeated by democracy.” But democracy didn’t defeat the workers’ movement as if the workers’ movement were a kind of foreign creature: it defeated it *as its internal limit*. The working class was only temporarily the privileged site of the proletariat, of the proletariat as “a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society,” as “an estate that is the dissolution of all estates” (Marx). Starting in the interwar period the proletariat began to definitively surpass the working class to the point that the most advanced segments of the Imaginary Party began to recognize in it, in its fundamental laborism, in its supposed “values,” in its classist self-satisfaction, in short: in its class-being, the equivalent of the class-being of the bourgeoisie, its most formidable enemy and the most powerful vector for integration into the society of Capital. From then on the Imaginary Party would be the form in which the proletariat would appear.

In all Western countries '68 marks the meeting and collision of the old workers' movement—fundamentally socialist and senescent—with the first constituted segments of the Imaginary Party. When two bodies collide the direction that results depends on the inertia and mass of each. The same thing happened in every country. Where the workers' movement was still strong, as in Italy and France, the meager detachments of the Imaginary Party slipped into its moth-eaten forms, aping its language and methods. We then see the revival of militant practices of the "Third International" type; it ushered in groupuscular hysteria and neutralization via political abstraction. It was the short-lived triumph of Maoism and Trotskyism in France (the GP, PC-MLF, UJC-ML, JCR, Parti des Travailleurs, etc.), of the *partitini* (Lotta Continua, Avanguardia Operaia, MLS, Potere Operaio, Manifesto) and other extra-parliamentary groups in Italy. Where the workers' movement had long been eliminated, as in the United States or Germany, there was an immediate move from student revolt to armed struggle, a move during which the use of the Imaginary Party's practices and tactics was often veiled in socialist or even Third-Worldist rhetoric. Hence, in Germany, the Movement 2 June, the Red Army Faction (RAF), the Rote Zellen, and in the United States, the Black Panther Party, the Weather Underground, the Diggers or the Manson Family, were the emblems of a prodigious movement of internal defection.

The particularity of Italy in this context is that the Imaginary Party, although merged overwhelmingly with the socialist structures of the *partitini*, still found the strength to destroy them. Four years after '68 had revealed the "crisis of hegemony of the workers' movement" (R. Rossanda), the cauldron finally boiled over in 1973,

leading to the first significant uprising of the Imaginary Party in a key area of Empire: the Movement of '77.

The workers' movement was beaten by democracy, that is, nothing to come out of this tradition can counter the new configuration of hostilities. On the contrary. When the *hostis* is no longer a portion of society – the bourgeoisie – but the society as such, the society as power, and when, therefore, we find ourselves fighting not against classical tyrannies but against biopolitical democracies, we know that every weapon, just like every strategy, must be reinvented. The *hostis* is Empire, and, for Empire, we are the Imaginary Party.

CRUSH SOCIALISM!

You're not from the castle, you're not from the village, you're nothing.

Franz Kafka, *The Castle*

The revolutionary element is the proletariat, the rabble. The proletariat is not a class. As the Germans of the nineteenth century still recognized, *es gibt Pöbel in allen Ständen*, there is a rabble in all classes. "Poverty in itself does not reduce people to a rabble; a rabble is created only by the disposition associated with poverty, by inward rebellion against the rich, against society, the government, etc. It also follows that those who are dependent on contingency become frivolous and lazy, like the lazzaroni of Naples, for example" (Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, addition to § 244). Every time that it has attempted to define itself as a class, the proletariat has lost itself, taken the dominant class, the bourgeoisie, for a model. As a non-class, the proletariat is not the opposite of the bourgeoisie but of the petite bourgeoisie. Whereas the petty bourgeois believes himself capable of mastering the game of society, persuaded that he will come through all right individually, the proletariat knows that its fate hangs on its cooperating with its own kind, that it needs the latter in order to persist in being, in short: that its individual existence is fundamentally collective. In other words: the proletariat is that which experiences itself as a form-of life. It is communist or nothing.

In every age the form in which the proletariat appears is redefined according to the overall configuration of hostilities. The most regrettable confusion in this regard concerns the “working class.” As such, the working class has always been hostile to the revolutionary movement, to communism. It wasn’t socialist by chance but socialist in essence. If we except the plebian elements, that is, specifically, what it was unable to recognize as a worker, the workers’ movement has throughout its existence coincided with the progressive elements of capitalism. From February 1848 to the Commune and the autogestionary utopias of the 1970s, it has only ever demanded, for its most radical elements, the right of the working class to manage Capital for itself. In reality, the proletariat has only ever worked for the expansion of the human basis of Capital. The so-called “socialist” regimes have carried out its program perfectly: integrating everyone into capitalist relations of production and incorporating each person into the process of valorization. Their collapse, conversely, has but shown the impossibility of a total capitalist system. It has thus been by way of social struggles and not against them that Capital has taken hold of humanity, that humanity has in fact reappropriated it to become, strictly speaking, the people of Capital. The workers’ movement was therefore essentially a social movement, and it is as such that it has survived. In May 2001 a little tyrant from the Italian *Tute Bianche* came to explain to the young imbeciles of “Socialisme par en bas” how to speak convincingly to power, how to sneak through the backdoor into the sticky game of classical politics. He explained the *Tute Bianche* “approach” like this: “To us, the *Tute Bianche* symbolize all the subjects that have been absent from institutional politics, all those who aren’t represented: illegal immigrants, young people, precarious workers, drug addicts, the homeless, the

excluded. What we want is to give a voice to people who have none." Today's social movement, with its neo-trade-unionists, its informal activists, its spectacular spokesmen, its nebulous Stalinism, and its micro-politicians, is in this the heir of the workers' movement: it uses the inclusion of workers in the process of reformed valorization as a bargaining chip with the conservative agents of Capital. In exchange for doubtful institutional recognition-doubtful because of the logical impossibility of representing the unrepresentable, the proletariat – the workers' movement and then the social movement have promised Capital to maintain social peace. When, after Gothenburg, one of its sterile muses Susan George denounces the "rioters" whose methods "are as undemocratic as the institutions they mean to protest"; when in Genoa *Tute Bianche* deliver up to the cops supposed members of nonexistent "Black Blocs"-which they paradoxically decry as being infiltrated by the very same police—the representatives of the social movement have never failed to remind me of the reaction of the Italian workers' party when confronted with the Movement of '77. "The popular masses," reads the report Paolo Bufalini presented to the PCI Central Committee on April 18, 1978, "all citizens of democratic and civic feeling will continue their efforts to provide valuable assistance to the forces of order and to the officers and soldiers involved in the fight against terrorism. The priority is to isolate, both politically and morally, the red *brigatisti*, as well as their sympathizers and supporters, in order to strip them of any kind of alibi, of all external cooperation and support. They must be completely cut off and left like fish out of water, which is no small task when you consider how many people must be involved in these criminal activities." Because no one is more interested than the social movement in maintaining order, it was, is, and will be on

the avant-garde of the war waged against the proletariat. From now on: against the Imaginary Party.

The history of Italy's creeping May demonstrates better than anything how the workers' movement has always been the vehicle for Capital-Utopia, a "community of work in which there are only producers, with no idle or homeless, and which would manage capital without crises and without inequality, capital having in this way become The Society" (Philippe Riviale, *La ballade du temps passe*). Contrary to what the phrase suggests, creeping May was in no way a continuous process stretched out over ten years; it was rather an often cacophonous chorus of local revolutionary processes, moving, town by town, according to a distinctive rhythm marked by interruptions and resumptions, stases and accelerations, and each one reacting to the other. On common consensus a decisive rupture occurred, however, when the PCI adopted its politics of Historic Compromise in 1973. The preceding period, from 1968 to 1973, had been marked by the struggle between the PCI and extra-parliamentary groups for hegemony over the new social antagonisms. Elsewhere this had led to the success of the "second" or "new" left. The focus at the time was on what THEY called a "political solution," that is, the transformation of concrete struggles into alternative, more inclusive management of the capitalist state; struggles which the PCI at first considered favorably, and even encouraged here and there, since they helped enhance its contractual power. But starting in 1972 the new cycle of struggle began to run out of steam worldwide. It then became urgent for the PCI to cash in on a potential for social agitation

whose price was in free-fall. Moreover, the lesson of Chili- where a socialist party whose rise to power in short order ended in a

remote- controlled imperial putsch-tended to dissuade the PCI from going it alone in its bid for political hegemony. That was when the PCI laid out the terms for the Historic Compromise.

With the workers' party joining the party of order and the subsequent end of that sphere of representation, all political mediation disappeared. The Movement was isolated, forced to develop its own position from a non-class-based perspective; the extra-parliamentary groups and their phraseology was abruptly dropped; under the paradoxical effect of the watchword "des/agregazione" the Imaginary Party began to form a plane of consistency. At each new stage of the revolutionary process it logically came up against the most resolute of its adversaries, the PCI. Thus the most intense confrontations of the Movement of '77- whether in Bologna or at the University of Rome between Autonomists and the Metropolitan Indians on one side and the head of the CGIL's, Luciano Lama's, stewards and the police on the other-would pit the Imaginary Party against the workers' party; and later on it was naturally the "red judges" who launched the "anti-terrorist" legal offensive and its series of police sweeps in 1979-1980. This is where one must look to find the origin of the "citizens" discourse currently promulgated in France as well as its offensive strategic function; this is the context in which it must be assessed. "It is utterly clear," wrote PCI members at the time, "that the terrorists and militants of subversion intend to thwart the workers' progressive march towards political leadership of the country, to attack the strategy of an expansion of democracy and the participation of the popular masses, to challenge the decisions of the working class in order to drag it into direct confrontation and, tragically, into ripping up the democratic fabric of society. If large

n umbers mobilize in this country, if democratic forces intensify their unified action, if the government can give firm direction to state institutions that have been appropriately reformed and made more effective, terrorism and subversion will be isolated and vanquished and democracy will flourish in a thoroughly modernized state" (*Terrorisme et democratie*). The call to denounce this or that person as a terrorist was thus the call to differentiate oneself from oneself as capable of violence, to project far from oneself one's latent warlike tendency, to introduce in oneself the economic disjunction that makes us a political subject, a citizen. It was therefore in still very relevant terms that Giorgio Amendola, then a PCI senior deputy, in due course attacked the Movement of '77: "Only those who seek the destruction of the republican state gain from spreading panic and preaching revolt." That's it exactly.

ARM THE IMAGINARY PARTY!

The points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments of life, certain types of behavior. Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible.

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*,
Vol. 1

Empire is the kind of domination that knows no Outside, that has gone so far as to sacrifice itself as the Same in order to rid itself of the Other. Empire excludes nothing, substantially; it only precludes that anything present itself as other, that anything escape the general equivalence. The Imaginary Party is therefore nothing, specifically; it is everything that impedes, undermines, defies, ruins equivalence. Whether it speaks with the voice of a Putin, Bush, or Jiang Zemin, Empire will thus always label its hostis a "criminal,"

a "terrorist," a "monster." If need be, it will itself secretly organize "terrorist" and "monstrous" acts which it will then ascribe to the hostis-who remembers Boris Yeltsin's edifying rhetorical flights following the attacks in Moscow carried out by his own special police, especially his speech to the Russian people during which the buffoon called for a fight against Chechen terrorism, "against a domestic enemy that has no conscience, no pity, and no honor," that "has no face, no nationality, or religion"? On the other hand, Empire will never recognize its own military operations as acts of war, but only as "peace-keeping" operations, "international policing" efforts.

Before '68 brought the dialectic swaggering back- the dialectic as the way of thinking final reintegration Marcuse attempted to think through this curious configuration of conflict. In a speech from 1966 entitled "The Concept of Negation in the Dialectic," Marcuse attacks the Hegelo-Marxist propensity to introduce negation within an antagonistic whole, whether between two classes, between the socialist camp and the capitalist camp, or between Capital and labor. To this tendency he opposes a contradiction, a negation that comes from outside. He observes that the staging of social conflict within a totality, which had been the defining characteristic of the workers' movement, is but the mechanism by which THEY freeze out the event, prevent the actual negation from occurring from the outside. "The outside about which I have spoken is not to be understood mechanistically in the spatial sense but, on the contrary, as the qualitative difference which overcomes the existing antitheses inside the antagonistic partial whole [...] and which is not reducible to these antitheses. [...] [T]he force of negation is concentrated in no one class. Politically and morally, rationally and

instinctively, it is a chaotic, anarchistic opposition: the refusal to join and play a part, the disgust at all prosperity, the compulsion to protest. It is a feeble, unorganized opposition which nonetheless rests on motives and purposes which stand in irreconcilable contradiction to the existing whole."

The new configuration of conflict came out of the interwar period. On the one hand, there was Soviet membership in the League of Nations, the Franco-Soviet Pact, the fuled strategy of the Comintern, the masses joining with Nazism, fascism, and Francoism; in short: the workers' betrayal of their call to revolution. On the other hand, there was the explosion of social subversion coming from outside the workers' movement—from surrealism, Spanish anarchism, or the American hobos. Suddenly, the revolutionary movement and the workers' movement were no longer identical, revealing the Imaginary Party as an excess relative to the latter. The motto, "class against class," which from 1926 had become hegemonic, only reveals its latent content if we note that it pre-dominated exactly at the moment when all classes to disintegrate under the effect of the crisis. "Class against class" actually means "classes against the non-class"; it belies the determination to reabsorb, to liquidate this evermore massive remainder, this floating, socially unaccountable element that threatens to undermine every substantialist interpretation of society, be it bourgeois or Marxist. Indeed, *Stalinism must first of all be interpreted as the hardening of the workers' movement as it is effectively surpassed by the Imaginary Party.*

One group, the Cercle Communiste Democratique, which united around [Boris] Souvarine in France in the 1930s, tried to redefine historical conflict. It succeeded by half in so far as it identified the

two principal pitfalls of Marxism: economism and eschatology. The last issue of its revue *La Critique Sociale* noted the following failure: "Neither the liberal bourgeoisie nor the unconscious proletariat have shown themselves able to absorb into their political organizations the forces of the young and *declassé* elements, whose increasingly energetic interventions have accelerated the course of events" (*La Critique Sociale*, no. 11, March 1934). As is hardly surprising in a country where the custom is to dilute everything – especially politics – in literature, the first rough theory of the Imaginary Party comes from the pen of Bataille in the revue's last issue. The article is entitled "The Psychological Structure of Fascism." For Bataille, the Imaginary Party stands in opposition to homogeneous society. "Production is the basis of social homogeneity. Homogeneous society is productive society, namely, useful society. Every useless element is excluded, not from all of society, but from its homogeneous part. In this part, each element must be useful to another without the homogeneous activity ever being able to attain the form of activity valid in itself. A useful activity has a common measure with another useful activity, but not with activity for itself. The common measure, the foundation of social homogeneity and of the activity arising from it, is money, namely the calculable equivalent of the different products of collective activity." Bataille here points to the present-day composition of the world into a continuous biopolitical fabric, which alone accounts for the fundamental solidarity between democratic and totalitarian regimes, for their infinite reciprocal reversibility. The Imaginary Party is what consequently manifests itself as heterogeneous to biopolitical formation. "The very term heterogeneous indicates that it concerns elements which are impossible to assimilate; this impossibility which has a

fundamental impact on social assimilation, likewise has an impact on scientific assimilation. [...] Violence, excess, delirium, madness characterize heterogeneous elements to varying degrees: active, as persons or mobs, they result from breaking the laws of social homogeneity. [...] In summary, compared to everyday life, heterogeneous existence can be represented as something other, as incommensurate, by charging these words with the positive value they have in affective experience. [...] This proletariat cannot actually be limited to itself: it is in fact only a point of concentration for every dissociated social element that has been banished to heterogeneity." Bataille's error, which would plague all the work of the College of Sociology and *Acephale*, was to continue to conceive of the Imaginary Party as a part of society, to consider society as a cosmos, as a whole capable of being represented as beyond oneself, and to view oneself from this perspective, i.e., from the point of view of representation. All the ambiguity of Bataille's positions with regard to fascism stems from his attachment to these used-up dialectics, to all that prevented him from understanding that under Empire the negation comes from the outside, that it does not occur as a heterogeneity with respect to the homogeneous, but as a heterogeneity in itself, as a heterogeneity between forms-of-life playing within their difference. In other words, the Imaginary Party can never be individuated as a subject, a body, a thing, or a substance, nor even as a set of subjects, bodies, things, and substances, but only as the event of all of these things. The Imaginary Party is not substantially a remainder of the social whole, but the fact of this remainder, the fact that there is a remainder, that the represented always exceeds its representation, that over which power is exercised always eludes it. Here lies the dialectic- our condolences.

There is no “revolutionary identity.” Under Empire, it is instead non-identity, the fact of constantly betraying the predicates that THEY hang on us, that is revolutionary. For a long time now, there have only been “revolutionary subjects” for power. To become neither particular nor general, to become imperceptible, to conspire, means to distinguish between our presence and what we are for representation, in order to play with representation. To the exact extent that Empire becomes unified, that the new configuration of conflict acquires an objective character, there is a strategic necessity to know what we are for Empire, although accepting ourselves as such, as a “Black Bloc,” an “Imaginary Party,” or something else, would be the end of us. For Empire, the Imaginary Party is but the form of pure singularity. From the point of view of representation, singularity as such is the complete abstraction, the empty identity of the here and now. Likewise, from the point of view of the homogeneous, the Imaginary Party is simply “the heterogeneous,” the purely unrepresentable. If we don’t want to do the police’s work for them, we will therefore have to be careful not to think we can do any more than indicate the Imaginary Party when it occurs—for instance: describe it, identify it, localize it within the territory or mark it out as a segment of “the society.” The Imaginary Party is not one of the terms of social contradiction but the fact that contradiction exists at all, the inassimilable alterity of the determined faced with the omnivorous universality of Empire. And it is only for Empire, that is, for representation, that the Imaginary Party exists as such, that is, as negative. Dressing up what is hostile to the system of representation in the guise of the “negative,” “protest,” the “rebel,” is simply a tactic that the system uses to bring within its plane of inconsistency the positivity it lacks—even at the risk of

confrontation. The cardinal error of all subversion therefore lies in the obsession with negativity, in an attachment to the power of negation as if that were its most characteristic feature, whereas it is precisely in the power of negation that subversion is the most dependent on Empire, and on Empire's recognition of it. Here militancy like militarism finds its only desirable solution: that of ignoring our positivity, which is our whole strength, which is all that we have to offer, from the point of view representation, that is, as derisory. And, of course, for Empire, every determination is a negation.

Foucault, too, made a decisive contribution to the theory of the Imaginary Party: his interviews dealing with the plebs. Foucault evokes the theme for the first time in a "Discussion with Maoists" on "popular justice" in 1972. Criticizing the Maoist practice of popular courts, he reminds us that all popular revolts since the Middle Ages have been anti-judicial, that the constitution of people's courts during the French Revolution occurred at precisely the moment when the bourgeoisie regained control, and, finally, that the tribunal form, by reintroducing a neutral authority between the people and its enemies, reincorporated the principle of the state in the struggle against the state. "When we talk about courts we're talking about a place where the struggle between contending forces is willy-nilly suspended." According to Foucault, the function of justice following the Middle Ages was to separate the proletarianized plebs – the plebs integrated as a proletariat, included by way of their exclusion – from the non-proletarianized plebs, from the plebs proper. By isolating within the mass of the poor the "criminals," the "violent," the "insane," the "vagrants," the "perverted," the "gangsters," the

“underworld,” THEY would not only remove what was for power the most dangerous segment of the population, that which was always ready for armed, insurrectionary action, THEY would also enable themselves to turn the people’s most offensive elements against the people themselves. This would be the permanent threat of “either you go to prison or you join the army,” “either you go to prison or you leave for the colonies,” “either you go to prison or you join the police,” etc. All the effort of the workers’ movement to distinguish between honest, strike-ready workers from “agitators,” “rioters,” and other “uncontrollable elements” is an extension of this opposition between the plebs and the proletariat. The same logic is at work today when gangsters become security guards: in order to neutralize the Imaginary Party by playing one of its parts off the others.

Foucault would clarify the notion of the plebs four years later in another interview. “No doubt it would be mistaken to conceive the ‘plebs’ as the permanent ground of history, the final objective of all subjections, the ever-smoldering center of all revolts. The ‘plebs’ no doubt has no sociological reality. But there is indeed always something, in the social body, in classes, in groups, in individuals themselves, that in some way escapes power relations, something that is by no means the more or less docile or recalcitrant raw material, but rather the centrifugal movement, the inverse energy, the breakaway part. No doubt ‘the’ plebs does not exist, but there is, as it were, a certain plebeian quality or aspect (*de la’ plebe*). There is plebs in bodies, in souls, in individuals, in the proletariat, in the bourgeoisie, but with an extension of forms, of energies, of various irreducibilities. This part of plebs is less exterior to power relations than their limit, their underside, their counter stroke, that which

responds to every advance of power with a movement of disengagement. Hence it provides the motivation for every new development of networks of power. [...] This point of view of the plebs, the point of view of the underside and limit of power, is thus indispensable for an analysis of its apparatuses.”

But we owe the most decisive contribution to the theory of the Imaginary Party neither to a French writer nor to a French philosopher but rather to the militants of the Red Brigades Renato Curcio and Alberto Franceschini. In 1982, in a supplement to *Corrispondenza internazionale*, the little volume *Gocce di sole nelle cita degli spettri* [Drops of sun in the city of specters] was published. As disagreements between Moretti's Red Brigades and their then-imprisoned “historical bosses” turned to open war, Curcio and Franceschini drew up the program of the short-lived Guerrilla Party, the third offshoot of the BR to form following its implosion, alongside the Walter Alasia Column and the BR-Combatant Communist Party. In the wake of the Movement of '77, remarking how much they were spoken about in the conventional Third International rhetoric of the revolution, they broke with the classical paradigm of production, taking the latter out of the factory and extending it to the Total Factory of the metropolis where semiotic production, that is, a linguistic paradigm of production, prevailed. “Rethought as a totalizing system (differentiated into private, interdependent, functional subsystems or fields of autonomous decision-making and auto-regulating capacity), that is, as a modular-corporate system, the computerized metropolis appears as a vast, barely disguised penal colony, in which each social system, just as each individual moves in passageways strictly differentiated and regulated by the whole. A penal colony made

transparent by the computer networks that keep it under constant surveillance. In this model, metropolitan social space-time mimics the schema of a predictable universe in precarious equilibrium, unbothered by its forced tranquility, subdivided into modular compartments inside of which each worker labors, encapsulated within a specific collective role-like a goldfish in a bowl. A universe regulated by apparatuses of selective retroaction dedicated to the neutralization of all disruptions to the programs system established by the executive. [...] Given the absurd and unsustainable communication in which everyone is inevitably caught, as if ensnared by the paradoxical injunction-that in order to 'speak' one must give up 'communicating,' that to 'communicate' one must give up speaking!- it isn't surprising that antagonistic communication strategies emerge which refuse the authorized language of power; it isn't surprising that the significations produced through domination are rejected and countered with new decentralized productions. Unauthorized, illegitimate productions, but organically connected to life, and which consequently constellate and constitute the secret underground network of resistance and self-defense against the computerized aggression of the insane idioms of the state. [...] Therein lies the main barrier separating social revolution from its enemies: the former takes in isolated resisters and schizo-metropolitan flows to a communicational territory antagonistic to that which led to their devastation and revolt. [...] In the ideology of control, an at-risk individual is already synonymous with a 'potential terrorist madman,' with a fragment of high-explosive social material. That is why these individuals are tracked down, spied on, and followed with the discretion and tireless rigor of the hunter by the great eye and the great ear. For the same reason they are made the target of

an intense, intimidating semiotic bombardment that sustains the scraps of official ideology. [...] This is how the metropolis achieves its specificity as a concentration camp which, in order to deflect the incessant social antagonism it generates, Simultaneously integrates and manipulates the artifices of seduction and fantasies of fear. Artifices and fantasies that assume the central function of the nervous system of the dominant culture and reconfigure the metropolis into an immense psychiatric Lager – the most total of total institutions – a labyrinthine network of High Security Quarters, areas of continuous control, loony bins, prisoner containers, reserves for volunteer metropolitan slaves, bunkered zones for demented fetishes. [...] In the metropolis, perpetrating violence against the necrotropic fetishes of Capital is humanity's greatest possible conscious act because it is through this social practice that the proletariat constructs – by appropriating the vital productive process – its knowledge and its memory, that is, its social power. [...] Destroying the old world through revolutionary transgression and bringing forth from this destruction the surprising and multiple constellations of new social relations are simultaneous processes that are nonetheless of two distinct kinds. [...] Those responsible for creating the imaginary world prohibit themselves from communicating real life, turning real life into madness; they fabricate angels of seduction and little monsters of fear in order to display them to the miserable rabble through the networks and circuits that transmit the sanctioned hallucination. [...] To rise up from the 'registered location,' to take to the stage to wreck the fetishistic performance: that is what the metropolitan guerrillas of new communication have set out to do from the start. [...] Within the complex metropolitan revolutionary process, the party cannot have an exclusively or eminently political form. [...]

Nor can the party take on an exclusively combative form. The 'power of arms' does not imply, as the militarists believe, absolute power, because absolute power is the power-knowledge that reunifies social practices. [...] A guerrilla party means: the party of power is party of knowledge. [...] The guerrilla party is the agent through which proletarian knowledge-power achieves its maximum exteriorization and invisibility. [...] This means that the greater the party's invisibility, the more it opposes global imperialist counterrevolution, the greater its visibility, the more it becomes an internal part of the proletariat, that is to say, the more it communicates with the proletariat. [...] In this way, the guerrilla party is the party of transgressive social communication."

AUTONOMY WILL TRIUMPH!

In large part it was these tendencies and not the violence of the struggles that made the young people of '77 incomprehensible to the traditional elements of the workers' movement.

Paolo Virno, "Do You Remember Counterrevolution?"

Genoa is sacked by masked-bodied *reyas*, a new squat opens, workers threaten to blow up their factory, a suburb explodes, its inhabitants attack police stations and the nearest lines of communication, the end of a protest turns nasty, a field of transgenic corn is mowed down during the night. Whatever discourse describes these acts – Marxist-Leninist, reformist, Islamist, anarchist, socialist, ecologist, or stupidly critical – they are events of the Imaginary Party. It matters little if the discourses are fit from the first capital letter to the last period to the mold of meaning of Western metaphysics, for from the start these acts speak a different language.

For us, the aim is of course to combine with the event as gesture the event as language. This is what Autonomia Operaia achieved in Italy in the 1970s. Autonomia was never one movement, even if THEY described it at the time as "the Movement." Autonomia's space was the plane of consistency where a large number of singular destinies flowed together, intersected, aggregated, and disaggregated. Bringing these destinies together under the term "Autonomia" serves purely as a signifying device, a misleading convention.

The big misunderstanding here is that autonomy wasn't the predicate demanded by subjects – what dreary, democratic drivel if the whole thing had been about demanding one's autonomy as a subject – but by becomings [*devenirs*].

Autonomia thus has innumerable birthdates, is but a succession of opening acts, like so many acts of secession. It is, therefore, workers' autonomy, the autonomy of the unions' rank and file, of the rank and file that ransacked the headquarters of a moderate union at Piazza Statuto in Turin in 1962. But it is also workers' autonomy with regard to their role as workers: the refusal to work, sabotage, wildcat strikes, absenteeism, their declared estrangement from the conditions of their exploitation, from the capitalist whole. It is women's autonomy: the refusal of domestic work, the refusal to silently and submissively reproduce the masculine workforce, self-consciousness, making themselves heard, putting an end to pointless affective intercourse; women's autonomy, therefore, from their role as women and from patriarchal civilization. It is the autonomy of young people, of the unemployed, of the marginal, who refuse their role as outcasts, who are no longer willing to keep their mouths shut, who impose themselves on the political scene, demand a guaranteed income, create an armed struggle in order to be paid to sit on their asses. But it is also the autonomy of militants from the figure of the militant, from the *partinini*, and from the logic of the groupuscule, from a conception of action always deferred – deferred until later in existence. Contrary to what the sociologizing half wits – always hungry for profitable reductions – may lead one to believe, the remarkable fact here is not the affirmation of “new subjects,” whether political, social, or productive, young people, women, the unemployed, or homosexuals, but rather their violent,

practical, active desubjectivation, the rejection and betrayal of the role that has been assigned to them as subjects. What the different becomings of *Autonomia* have in common is their call for a movement of separation from society, from the whole. This secession is not the assertion of a static difference, of an essential alterity, a new entry on the balance sheet of identities managed by Empire, but a flight, a line of flight. At the time, separation was written *Separazione*.

The movement of internal desertion, of brutal subtraction, of ever-renewed flight, this chronic irreducibility to the world of domination – this is what Empire fears. “The only way to develop our culture and to live our lives, as far as we are concerned, is by being absent,” proclaimed the Maoist-Dadaist fanzine *Zut* in its October 76 issue. That we could become absent to its provocations, indifferent to its values, that we might not respond to its stimuli – that is the permanent nightmare of cybernetic domination, “to which power responds by criminalizing all foreign behavior and one’s rejection of capital” (*Vogliamo Tutto* 10, summer ’76). Autonomy therefore means: desertion, deserting family, deserting the office, deserting school, deserting all supervision, deserting men’s, women’s, and the citizen’s roles, deserting all the shitty relations in which THEY believe us to be held – endless desertion. With every new direction that we give to our movement, the essential thing is to increase our power [*puissance*], to always follow the line of increasing power in order to strengthen the force of our deterritorialization, to make sure that THEY won’t be stopping us anytime soon. In all this, what we have most to fear, what we have most to betray, is all those who are watching us, who are tracking us, following us from afar, thinking of one way or another to

capitalize the energy expended by our flight: all the managers, all the maniacs of reterritorialization. Some are on the side of Empire of course : the trend-setters feeding on the cadaver of our inventions, the hip capitalists, and other dismal scum. But some can also be found on our side. In 1970s Italy they were the Operaists, the great unifiers of *Autonomia Organizzata*, which succeeded in "bureaucratizing the concept of 'autonomy' itself " (*Neglazione*, 1976). They will always try to make ONE movement out of our movements in order to s peak in its name, indulging in their favorite game: political ventriloquism. In the 1960s and 1970s the Operaists thus spent all their time repatriating in the terms and behavior of the workers' movement what in fact outstripped them on all sides. Taking as their starting point the ethical estrangement from work expressing itself overwhelmingly among workers recently emigrated from southern Italy, they theorized workers' autonomy-against the unions and the bureaucrats of the classical workers' movement-whose spontaneous meta-bureaucrats they were hoping to become; and this, without having to climb the hierarchical ladder of a classical union: a meta-syndicalism. Hence the treatment they reserved for the plebian elements of the working class, their refusal to allow the workers to become something other than workers, their obliviousness to the fact that the autonomy asserting itself wasn't workers' autonomy but autonomy from the worker identity. They subsequently treated "women," "the unemployed," "young people," "the marginal," in short, "the autonomous," all in the same way. Incapable of any familiarity with themselves let alone with any world, they desperately sought to transform a plane of consistency, the s pace of *Autonomia*, into an organization-a combatant organization, if possible-that would make them the last-chance interlocutors of a moribund power.

Naturally, we owe the most remarkable and most popular travesty of the Movement of '77 to an Operaist theoretician, Asor Rosa: the so-called "theory of two societies." According to him, we were supposed to have witnessed a dash between two societies, that of workers with job security, on the one hand, and, on the other, that of workers without (young people, precarious workers, the unemployed, the marginal, etc.). Even if the theory has the virtue of breaking with the very thing that every socialism and, therefore, every left look to preserve (even if it takes a massacre to do it), namely, the fiction of society's ultimate unity, it neglects. (1) that the "first society" no longer exists, having already begun a process of continuous implosion; (2) that the Imaginary Party, which is being constructed as the ethical fabric following the implosion, is in no way one, in any case, in no way capable of being unified into a new isolable whole: a second society. This is exactly the move that Negri now atavistically reproduces when he calls a singular multitude something whose essence is, in his own words, a multiplicity. The theoretical con game will never be as pathetic as its underlying goal, which is to pass oneself off as the organic intellectual of a new spectacularly unified subject.

For the Operaists autonomy was, therefore, part and parcel an autonomy of class, an autonomy of a new social subject. Over the twenty years of Operaist activity this axiom was maintained thanks to the convenient notion of class composition. As circumstances and short-sighted political calculations dictated, this or that new sociological category would be included in "class composition," and, on the pretext of a study of labor, one would reasonably change sides. When the workers got tired of fighting, the death of the "mass-worker" would be decreed and his role of global

insurgent would be replaced with that of the “social worker,” that is, with more or less anyone. Eventually we would end up discovering revolutionary virtues at Benetton, in the little Berlusconi entrepreneurs of the Italian North-East (cf. *Des entreprises pas comme les autres*) and even, if need be, in the Northern League.

Throughout “creeping” May autonomy was nothing more than this incoercible movement of flight, this staccato of ruptures, in particular ruptures with the workers’ movement. Even Negri acknowledges as much: “The bitter polemic that opened in ’68 between the revolutionary movement and the official workers’ movement turned into an irreversible rupture in ’77,” he says. Operaism, the outmoded because avant-garde consciousness of the Movement, would never tire of reappropriating this rupture, of interpreting it in terms of the workers’ movement. In Operaism, just like in the practices of the BR, we find less an attack on capitalism than a covetous struggle with the leadership of the most powerful communist party in the West, the PCI, a struggle whose prize was power OVER the workers. “We could only talk politics by way of Leninism. As long as a different class composition wasn’t in the offing, we found ourselves in a situation that many innovators have found themselves in: that of having to explain the new with an old language,” Negri complains in an interview from 1980. It was therefore under cover of orthodox Marxism, under the protection of a rhetorical fidelity to the workers’ movement, that the false consciousness of the movement came of age. There were voices, like those of Gatti Selvaggi, that spoke out against this sleight of hand: “We are against the ‘myth’ of the working class because it is first of all harmful to the working class. Operaism and

populism only serve the millennial aim of using the ‘masses’ as a pawn in the dirty games of power” (no. 1, December 1974). But the fraud was too flagrant not to work. And, in fact, it worked.

Given the fundamental provincialism of French opposition movements, what happened thirty years ago in Italy isn’t just historical anecdote; on the contrary: we still haven’t addressed the problems the Italian autonomists faced at the time. Given the circumstances, the move from struggles over places of work to struggles over territory; the recomposition of the ethical fabric on the basis of secession; the reappropriation of the means to live, to struggle, and to communicate among ourselves form a horizon that remains unreachable as long as the existential prerequisite of *Separ/azione* goes unacknowledged. *Separ/azione* means: we have nothing to do with this world. We have nothing to say to it nor anything to make it understand. Of acts of destruction, of sabotage: we have no reason to follow them up with an explanation duly guided by human Reason. We are not working for a better, alternative world to come, but in virtue of what we have already confirmed through experimentation, in virtue of the radical irreconcilability between Empire and this experimentation, of which war is a part. And when, in response to this massive critique, reasonable people, legislators, technocrats, those in power ask, “But what do you really want?” our response is, “We aren’t citizens. We will never adopt your point of view of the whole, your management point of view. We refuse to play the game, that is it. It is not our job to tell you which sauce to cook us with.” The main source of the paralysis from which we must break free is the utopia of the human community, the perspective of a final, universal reconciliation. Even Negri, at the time of *Domination and Sabotage*,

took this step, the step outside socialism: "I don't see the history of class consciousness as Lukacs does, as a fated, integral recomposition, but rather as a moment of intensively implanting myself in my own separation. I am other, other is the movement of collective praxis of which I am a part. I participate in an other workers' movement. Of course I know how much criticism speaking this way may provoke from the point of view of the Marxist tradition. I have the impression, as far as I am concerned, of holding myself at the extreme signifying limit of a political discourse on class. [...] I therefore have to accept radical difference as the methodical condition of subversion, of the project of proletarian self-valorization. And my relationship with the historical totality? With the totality of the system? Here we get to the second consequence of the assertion: my relationship with the totality of capitalist development, with the totality of historical development, is secure only through the force of deconstruction determined by the movement, through the total sabotage of the history of capital undertaken by the movement. [...] I define myself by separating myself from the totality, and I define the totality as other than myself, as a network extending over the continuity of historical sabotage undertaken by the class." Naturally, there is no more an "other workers' movement" than there is a "second society." On the other hand, there are the incisive becomings of the Imaginary Party, and their autonomy.

LIVING-AND-STRUGGLING

The most yielding thing in the world will overcome the most rigid.

Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

The first campaign against Empire failed. The RAF'S attack on the "imperialist system," the BR'S on the SIM (Stato Imperialista delle Multinazionali), and so many other guerrilla groups have been easily suppressed. The failure was not one of this or that militant organization, of this or that "revolutionary subject," but the failure of a conception of war, of a conception of war that could not be reproduced beyond the sphere of organizations because it itself was already a reproduction. With the exception of certain RAF texts or the Movement 2 June, most documents from the "armed struggle" are written in this ossified, used-up, borrowed language that one way or another smells of Third International kitsch. As if the point was to dissuade anyone from joining.

After twenty years of counterrevolution, the second act in the anti-imperialist struggle has now begun. Until now, the collapse of the socialist bloc and the social-democratic conversion of the last remnants of the workers' movement have definitively freed our party from any of the socialist inclinations it still may have had. Indeed, the obsolescence of the old conceptions of struggle first became obvious with the disappearance of the struggle itself, then with the "anti-globalization movement" of today, with the higher-order parody of former militant practices.

The return of war requires a new conception of warfare. We must invent a form of war such that the defeat of Empire no longer obliges suicide, but rather to recognize ourselves as living, as more and more ALIVE.

Our starting point is not fundamentally different from that of the RAP when it observes: “the system has taken up all of the free time people had. To their physical exploitation in the factory is now added the exploitation of their feelings and thoughts, wishes, and utopian dreams [...] through mass consumption and the mass media. [...] The system has managed, in the metropolises, to drag the masses so far down into its own dirt that they seem to have largely lost any sense of the oppressive and exploitative nature of their situation [...] So that for a car, a pair of jeans, life insurance, and a loan, they will easily accept any outrage on the part of the system. In fact, they can no longer imagine or wish for anything beyond a car, a vacation, and a tiled bathroom.” The unique thing about Empire is that it has expanded its colonization over the whole of existence and over all that exists. It is not only that Capital has enlarged its human base, but it has also deepened the moorings of its jurisdiction. Better still, on the basis of a final disintegration of society and its subjects, Empire now intends to recreate an ethical fabric, of which the hipsters, with their modular neighborhoods, their modular media, codes, food, and ideas, are both the guinea pigs and the avant-garde. And this is why, from the East Village to Oberkampf by way of Prenzlauer Berg, the hip phenomenon has so quickly had such worldwide reach.

It is on this total terrain, the ethical terrain of forms-of-life, that the war against Empire is currently being played out. It is a war of annihilation. Contrary to the thinking of the BR, for whom the

explicit purpose of the Moro kidnapping was the armed party's recognition by the state, Empire is not the enemy. Empire is no more than the hostile environment opposing us at every turn. We are engaged in a struggle over the recomposition of an ethical fabric. This recomposition can be seen throughout the territory, in the process of progressive hipification of formerly secessionist sites, in the uninterrupted extension of chains of apparatuses. Here the classical, abstract conception of war, one culminating in a total confrontation in which war would finally reunite with its essence, is obsolete. War can no longer be discounted as an isolable moment of our existence, a moment of decisive confrontation; from now on our very existence, every aspect of it, is war. That means that the first movement of this war is reappropriation. Reappropriation of the means of living-and-struggling. Reappropriation, therefore, of space: the squat, the occupation or communization of private spaces. Reappropriation of the common: the constitution of autonomous languages, syntaxes, means of communication, of an autonomous culture-stripping the transmission of experience from the hands of the state. Reappropriation of violence: the communization of combat techniques, the formation of self-defense forces, arms. Finally, reappropriation of basic survival: the distribution of medical power-knowledge, of theft and expropriation techniques, the progressive organization of an autonomous supply network.

Empire is well-armed to fight the two types of secession it recognizes: secession "from above" through golden ghettos-the secession, for example, of global finance from the "real economy" or of the imperial hyperbourgeoisie from the rest of the biopolitical fabric-and secession "from below" through "no-go areas"-housing

projects, inner cities, and shantytowns. Whenever one or the other threatens its meta-stable equilibrium, Empire need only play one against the other: the civilized modernity of the trendy against the retrograde barbarism of the poor, or the demands for social cohesion and equality against the inveterate egotism of the rich. "One aims to impart political coherence to a social and spatial entity in order to avoid all risk of secession by territories inhabited either by those excluded from the socio-economic network or by the winners of the global economic dynamic. [...] Avoiding all forms of secession means finding the means to reconcile the demands of the new social class and the demands of those excluded from the economic network whose spatial concentration is such that it induces deviant behavior." These are the theories peddled by the advisers of Empire—in this case, Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin in *Les Etats-Unis entre local et mondial*. That said, Empire is powerless to prevent the exodus, the secession, we are working towards precisely because the latter's territory is not only physical, but total. Sharing a technique, the turn of a phrase, a certain configuration of space suffices to activate our plane of consistency. Therein lies our strength: in a secession that cannot be recorded on the maps of Empire, because it is a secession neither from above nor from below, but a secession through the middle.

What we are simply getting at here is the constitution of war machines. By war machines should be understood a certain coincidence between living and struggling, a coincidence that is never given without simultaneously requiring its construction. Because each time one of these terms ends up separated, however it happens, from the other, the war machine degenerates, derails. If the moment of living is unilateralized, it becomes a ghetto. Proofs

of this are the grim quagmires of the “alternative,” whose specific task is to market the Same in the guise of difference. Most occupied social centers in Germany, Italy, or Spain clearly show how simulated exteriority from Empire provides a precious tool in capitalist valorization. “The ghetto, the apologia of ‘difference,’ the privilege accorded to moral and introspective questions, the tendency to form a separate society that forgoes attacks on the capitalist machine, on the ‘social factory’: wouldn’t all this be a result of the approximate and rhapsodic ‘theories’ of Valcarengi⁷⁵ and company? And isn’t it strange that they call us a ‘subculture’ just as all their flowery; nonviolent crap has started to be undermined?” The *Senza Tregua* autonomists were writing this already in 1976. On the other hand, if the moment of struggle is hypostatized, the war machine degenerates into an army. All militant formations, all terrible communities are war machines that have survived their own extinction in this petrified form. The introduction to the collection of *Autonomia* texts *It diritto all’odio*⁷⁶ published in 1977 already pointed to this excess of the war machine with regard to its acts of war: “Tracing the chronology of this hybrid and, in many regards, contradictory subject that materialized in the sphere of *Autonomia*, I find myself reducing the movement to a sum of events whereas the reality of its becoming war-machine asserted itself only in the transformation that the subject effectuated concentrically around each moment of effective confrontation.”

⁷⁵ Head of the countercultural publication *Re Nudo*

⁷⁶ *The Right to Hate*

There is no war machine except in movement, even hindered, even imperceptible movement, in movement following its propensity for increasing power. Movement ensures that the power struggles traversing it never settle into power relations. We can win our war, that is, our war will continue, increase our power, provided that the confrontation is always subordinated to our positivity: never strike beyond one's positivity, such is the vital principle of every war machine. Each space conquered from Empire, from its hostile environment, must correspond to our capacity to fill it, to configure it, to inhabit it. Nothing is worse than a victory one doesn't know what to do with. In essence, then, ours will be a silent war; it will be evasive, avoid direct confrontation, declare little. In so doing it will impose its own temporality. Just as we are identified we will give the notice to disperse, never allowing ourselves to be suppressed, already reuniting in some unsuspected place. The location makes no difference since every local attack is henceforth an attack against Empire-that is the only worthwhile lesson to come out from the Zapatista farce. The important thing is never to lose the initiative, never let a hostile temporality impose itself. And above all: never forget that our strike capacity is linked to how well-armed we are only by virtue of our constitutive positivity.

THE SORROWS OF THE CIVILIZED WARRIOR

I steer clear of those who expect fate, dreams, a riot to provide them with a way to escape their weakness. They are too much like those who in the past relied on God to save their wasted lives.

Georges Bataille

It is commonly acknowledged that the Movement of '77 was defeated because it was incapable, notably during the Bologna conference, of relating in any significant way to its offensive strength, to its "violence." In Empire's fight against subversion, its entire strategy consists in isolating the most "violent" "punks," the "out of control," the "autonomous," "terrorists," etc.-from the rest of the population- and every year this is again proven true. Contrary to the police view of the world, it must be said that there is in fact no problem with armed struggle: no consequential struggle has ever been waged without arms. There is no problem with armed struggle except for the state, which wants to conserve its monopoly over legitimate armed force. On the other hand, there is indeed the question of the *use* of arms. When in March '77, 100,000 people protested in Rome, 10,000 of whom were armed and, at the end of day long confrontations, not one policeman was hurt although a massacre would have been easy, we can better appreciate the difference between being armed and using arms. Being armed is part of the power struggle, the refusal to remain abjectly at the mercy of the police, a way of assuming our legitimate impunity. Now that that is cleared up, there remains the question of our relationship with violence, a relationship whose general lack of consideration impedes the progress of anti-imperial subversion.

Every war machine is by nature a society, a society without a state; but under Empire, given its obsidional status, another determination has to be added. It is a society of a particular kind: a warrior society. Although each existence is at its core essentially a war and each will know how to engage in confrontation when the time comes, a minority of beings must take war as the exclusive aim of their existence. These are *the warriors*. Henceforth the war machine will have to defend itself not only from hostile attacks, but also from the threat of the warrior minority breaking off from it, composing a caste, a dominant class, forming an embryonic state and, by turning the offensive resources at its disposal into the means of oppression, taking power. To us, establishing a central relationship with violence only means establishing a central relationship with the warrior minority. Interestingly, it was in a text from 1977, the last by Clastres, *The Sorrows of the Savage Warrior*, that such a relationship was sketched out for the first time. It was perhaps necessary that all the propaganda about classical virility had to fade before such an undertaking could be made.

Contrary to what THEY have told us, the warrior is not a figure of plenitude, and certainly not of virile plenitude. The warrior is a figure of amputation. The warrior is a being who feels he exists only through combat, through confrontation with the Other, a being who is unable to obtain for himself the feeling of existing. In the end, nothing is sadder than the sight of a form-of-life that, in every situation, expects hand-to-hand combat to remedy its absence from itself. But nothing is more moving, either; because this absence from self is not a simple lack, a lack of familiarity with oneself, but rather a positivity. The warrior is in fact driven by a desire, and perhaps one sole desire: the desire to disappear. The warrior no longer

wants to be, but wants his disappearance to have a certain style. He wants to humanize his vocation for death. That is why he never really manages to mix with the rest of humankind: they are spontaneously wary of his movement toward Nothingness. In their admiration for the warrior can be measured the distance they impose between him and them. The warrior is thus condemned to be alone. This leaves him greatly dissatisfied, dissatisfied because he is unable to belong to any community other than the false community, the terrible community, of warriors who have only their solitude in common. Prestige, recognition, glory are less the prerogative of the warrior than the only form of relationship compatible with his solitude. His solitude is at once his salvation and his damnation.

The warrior is a figure of anxiety and devastation. Because he isn't present, is only for-death, his immanence has become miserable, and he knows it. He has never gotten used to the world, so he has no attachment to it; he awaits its end. But there is also a tenderness, even a gentleness about the warrior, which is this silence, this half-presence. If he isn't present, it is often because otherwise he would only drag those around him into the abyss. That is how the warrior loves: by preserving others from the death he has at heart. Instead of the company of others, he thus often prefers to be alone, and this more out of kindness than disgust. Or else he joins the grief-stricken pack of warriors who watch each other slide one by one towards death. Because such is their inclination.

In a sense, the society to which the warrior belongs cannot help but distrust him. It doesn't exclude him nor really include him; it excludes him through its inclusion and includes him through its exclusion. The ground of their mutual understanding is

recognition. In according him prestige society keeps the warrior at a distance, attaching itself to him and by the same token condemning him. " For each exploit accomplished," writes Clastres, "the warrior and society render the same judgment: the warrior says, That's good, but I can do more, increase my glory: Society says, That's good, but you should do more, obtain our recognition of a superior prestige: In other words, as much by his own personality (glory above all else) as by his total dependence on the tribe (who else could confer glory?), the warrior finds himself, *volens nolens*, the prisoner of a logic that relentlessly makes him want to do a little more. Lacking this, society would quickly forget his past exploits and the glory they procured for him. The warrior only exists in war; he is devoted as such to action" and, therefore, in short order, to death. If the warrior is in this way dominated, alienated from society, "the existence in a given society of an organized group of 'professional' warriors tends to transform the permanent state of war (the general situation of the primitive society) into actual permanent war (the situation specific to warrior societies). Such a transformation, pushed to the limit, would bring about considerable sociological consequences since by affecting the very structure of society it would alter its undivided being. The power to decide on matters of war and peace (an absolutely essential power) would in effect no longer belong to society as such, but indeed to the brotherhood of warriors, which would place its private interest before the collective interest of society, making its particular point of view the general point of view of the tribe. [...] First a group seeking prestige, the warlike community would then transform itself into a pressure group in order to push society into accepting the intensification of war."

The subversive counter-society must, we must recognize the prestige connected to the exploits of every warrior, of every combatant organization. We must admire the courage of any feat of arms, the technical perfection of this or that exploit, of a kidnapping, of an assassination, of every successful armed action. We must appreciate the audacity of this or that prison attack meant to liberate comrades. We must do all this specifically in order to protect ourselves from warriors, in order to condemn them to death. "Such is the defense mechanism that primitive society erects to ward off the risk that the warrior, as such, presents: the life of the undivided social body for the death of the warrior. Tribal law becomes clear here: primitive society is, in its being, a society-for-war; it is at the same time, and for the same reasons, a society against the warrior." There will be no doubt of our grief.

The Italian Movement's relationship with its armed minority was marked by this same ambivalence throughout the 1970s. The fear was that the minority would break off into an autonomous military force. And that is exactly what the State with its "strategy of tension," was aiming at. By artificially raising the military presence in the conflict, by criminalizing political protest, by forcing the members of militant organizations underground, it wanted to cut the minority off from the Movement and in so doing to make it as hated within the Movement as the state already was. The idea was to liquidate the Movement as a war machine by compelling it to take as its exclusive objective war with the state. The watchword of the PCI secretary general, Berlinguer, in 1978 – "You are either with the Italian state or with the BR" – which above all meant "either with the Italian state or with the Brigadist state" – sums up the apparatus by which Empire crushed the Movement, and which it is

now exhuming in order to prevent the return of anti-capitalist struggle.

DIFFUSE GUERRILLA WARFARE

“But how many of you are there? I mean ... of us, the group.”

“Who knows. One day there are two of us, the next twenty. And sometimes when we meet, there are a hundred thousand.”

Cesare Battisti, *L'ultimo paro*⁷⁷

In 1970s Italy two subversive strategies coexisted: that of militant organizations and that of Autonomia. This is an oversimplification. It is obvious, for example, that in the sale case of the BR, one can distinguish between the “first BR,” those of Curcio and Franceschini – who were “invisible to power, but present for the movement”; who were implanted in factories where they kept the loudmouth bosses quiet, kneecapped scabs, burned cars, kidnapped managers; who only wanted to be, in their words, “the highest point of the movement” – and those of Moretti, more distinctly Stalinist, who went completely, professionally, underground, and who, having become invisible to the movement as much as to themselves, launched an “attack on the heart of the state” on the abstract stage of classical politics and ended up just as cut off from any ethical reality. It would therefore be possible to argue that the most famous of the BR’S actions, Moro’s kidnapping, his incarceration in a “prison of the people,” where he was judged by a “proletarian court,” so perfectly imitated the procedures of the state not to be, already, the exploit of a degenerate militarized BR,

⁷⁷ The Last Shot

which was no longer what it once was, no longer looked anything like the first BR. If we forget these potential subtleties, we see that there is a strategic axiom common to the BR, the RAF, the NAP, Prima Linea (PL), and, in fact, to all combatant organizations, and that is to oppose Empire as a subject, a collective, revolutionary subject. It entails not only calling for acts of war, but above all forcing its members to eventually go underground and in so doing to sever themselves from the ethical fabric of the Movement, from its life as a war machine. A former PL member, surrounded by calls for his surrender, offered some worthwhile observations: "During the Movement of '77, the BR understood nothing of what was happening. The ones who had been working as moles for years suddenly saw thousands of young people doing whatever they wanted. As for Prima Linea, the movement had had influence, but paradoxically nothing remained of it, whereas the BR recuperated the remnants when the movement died out. In fact, the armed groups never knew how to get in synch with the existing movements. They reproduced a kind of alternative mechanism, a kind of silent infiltration, and finally, a virulent critique. And when the movement disappeared, the disillusioned leaders were gathered up and launched into the heights of Italian politics. [...] This was especially the case after Mora. Before, the organization was instead run with this somewhat irrational spirit of transgression of the Movement of '77. We weren't modern-day Don Juans, but the prevailing behavior was 'unauthorized.' Then little by little the influence of the BR changed. They had their grand, model romance, the passion between Renato Curcio and Margherita Cagol. [...] With militarism-a certain conception of militarism-life itself is organized as it is in the army. The analogy with the military struck me; this formal camaraderie infused with

reassuring optimism which feeds a certain kind of competitiveness: whoever told the best joke and kept the troops' spirits up the best won. With-just as in the army-the gradual elimination of the shy and depressed ones of the group. There is no place for them, because they are immediately considered a weight on the regiment's morale. It is a typical military deformity: seeking in the exuberant and noisy existence of a gang a form of security that substitutes for an inner life. So, unconsciously, you have to marginalize those who might weigh things down with perhaps a morose but no doubt more sincere mood, in any case, a mood that must be a lot closer to what the noisiest must deep down be feeling inside. With a cult of virility as the result" (Liberation, October 13–14, 1980). If we leave aside the profound ill will behind these remarks, the account confirms two mechanisms specific to every political group that is constituted as a subject, as an entity separated from the plane of consistency on which it depends: (1) It takes on all the features of a terrible community. (2) It finds itself projected into the realm of representation, into the sphere of classical politics, which alone shares with it its same degree of separation and spectrality. The subject-subject confrontation with the state necessarily follows, as an abstract rivalry, as the staging of an in vitro civil war; and finally one ends up attributing to the enemy a heart it doesn't have. One attributes to the enemy precisely that substance which one is on the point of losing.

The other strategy; not of war but of diffuse guerilla warfare, is the defining characteristic of *Autonomia*. It alone is capable of bringing down Empire. This doesn't mean curling up into a compact subject in order to confront the state, but disseminating oneself in a multiplicity of foci, like so many rifts in the capitalist whole.

Autonomia was less a collection of radio stations, bands, weapons, celebrations, riots, and squats, than a certain intensity in the circulation of bodies between all these points. Thus Autonomia didn't exclude the existence of other organizations within it, even if they held ridiculous neo-Leninist pretensions: each organization found a place within the empty architecture through which-as circumstances evolved-the flows of the Movement passed. As soon as the Imaginary Party becomes a secessionist ethical fabric the very possibility of instrumentalizing the Movement by way of its organizations, and a fortiori the very possibility of its infiltration, vanishes: rather, the organizations themselves will inevitably be subsumed by the Movement as simple points on its plane of consistency. Unlike combatant organizations, Autonomia was based on indistinction, informality, a semi-secrecy appropriate to conspiratorial practice. War acts were anonymous, that is, signed with fake names, a different one each time, in any case, unattributable, soluble in the sea of Autonomia. They were like so many marks etched in the half-light, and as such forming a denser and more formidable offensive than the armed propaganda campaigns of combatant organizations. Every act signed itself, claimed responsibility for itself through its particular how, through its specific meaning in situation, allowing one instantly to discern the extreme-right attack, the state massacre of subversive activities. This strategy, although never articulated by Autonomia, is based on the sense that not only is there no longer a revolutionary subject, but that it is the non-sub itself that has become revolutionary, that is to say, effective against Empire. By instilling in the cybernetic machine this sort of permanent, daily, endemic conflict, Autonomia succeeded in making the machine ungovernable. Significantly,

Empire's response to this any enemy⁷⁸ will always be to represent it as a structured, unitary organization, as a subject and, if possible, to turn it into one. "I was speaking with a leader of the Movement; first of all, he rejects the term 'leader': they have no leaders. [...] The Movement, he says, is an elusive mobility, a ferment of tendencies, of groups and sub-groups, an assemblage of autonomous molecules. [...] To me, there is indeed a ruling group to the Movement; it is an 'internal' group, insubstantial in appearance but in reality perfectly structured. Rome, Bologna, Turin, Naples: there is indeed a concerted strategy. The ruling group remains invisible and public opinion, however well informed, is in no position to judge." ("The Autonomists' Paleo-Revolution," *Corriere della Sera*, May 21, 1977) . No one will be surprised to learn that Empire recently tried the same thing to counter the return of the anti-capitalist offensive, this time targeting the mysterious "Black Blocs." Although the Black Bloc has never been anything but a protest technique invented by German Autonomists in the 1980s, then improved on by American anarchists in the early 1990s-a technique, that is, something reappropriable, infectious-Empire has for some time spared no effort dressing it up as a subject in order to turn it into a closed, compact, foreign entity. "According to Genovese magistrates, Black Blocs make up 'an armed gang' whose horizontal, non-hierarchical structure is composed of independent groups with no single high command, and therefore able to save itself 'the burden of centralized control,' but so dynamic that it is capable of 'developing its own strategies' and making 'rapid, collective decisions on a large scale' while maintaining the autonomy of single movements. This is why it has achieved 'a

⁷⁸ *ennemi quelconque* -tr.

political maturity that makes Black Blocs a real force'" ("Black Blocs Are an Armed Gang," *Corriere della Sera*, August 11, 2001) . Desperately compensating for its inability to achieve any kind of ethical depth, Empire constructs for itself the fantasy of an enemy it is capable of destroying.

AND THE STATE SANK INTO THE IMAGINARY PARTY...

In attempting to counter subversion it is necessary to take account of three separate elements. The first two constitute the target proper, that is to say the Party or Front and its cells and committees on the one hand, and the armed groups who are supporting them and being supported by them on the other. They may be said to constitute the head and body of a fish. The third element is the population and this represents the water in which the fish swims. Fish vary from place to place in accordance with the sort of water in which they are designed to live, and the same can be said of subversive organizations. If a fish has got to be destroyed it can be attacked directly by rod or net, providing it is in the sort of position which gives these methods a chance of success. But if rod and net cannot succeed by themselves it may be necessary to do something to the water which will force the fish into a position where it can be caught. Conceivably it might be necessary to kill the fish by polluting the water, but this is unlikely to be a desirable course of action.

Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping*, 1971

*Frattanto i pesci, / di quali discendiamo tutti, / assistertero curiosi / at
dramma personate e collettivo / di questo mondo che a loro / indubbiamente
doveva sembrare cattivo / e cominciarono a pensare, nelloro grande mare /
come e pro fondo il mare. / E chiaro che if pensiero fo paura e da fostidio /*

*anche se chi pensa e muto come un pesce / anzi e un pesce / e come pesce e
difficile da bfoccare percm fo protegge il mare / come e pro fondo il mare*

Lucio Dalla, *Come e pro fondo il mare*, 1977

Empire's reconfiguration of hostilities has largely gone unnoticed. It has gone unnoticed because it first appeared outside metropolises, in former colonies. The prohibition on war—a simple declaration with the League of Nations that became actual with the invention of nuclear weapons—produced a decisive transformation of war, a transformation that Schmitt attempted to account for with his concept of “global civil war.” Since all war between states has become criminal with respect to the world order, not only do we now see only limited conflicts, but the very nature of the enemy has changed: the enemy has been domesticated. The liberal state has folded into Empire to such an extent that even when the enemy is identified as a state, a “rogue state” in the cavalier terminology of imperial diplomats, the war waged against it now takes the form of a simple police operation, a matter of in-house management, a law and order initiative.

Imperial war has neither a beginning nor an end, it is a permanent process of pacification. The essential aspects of its methods and principles have been known for fifty years. They were developed in the wars of decolonization during which the oppressive state apparatus underwent a decisive change. From then on the enemy was no longer an isolable entity, a foreign nation, or a determined class; it was somewhere lying in ambush within the population, with no visible attributes. If need be, it was the population itself, the population as insurgent force. The configuration of hostilities specific to the Imaginary Party thus immediately revealed itself in

the guise of guerilla warfare, of partisan war. Consequently, not only has the army become the police, but the enemy has become a "terrorist" -the resistance to the German occupation was a "terrorist" activity; the Algerian insurgents opposing the French occupation, "terrorists"; the anti-imperial militants of the 1970s, "terrorists"; and, today, those all-too-determined elements of the anti-globalization movement, "terrorists." Trinquier, one of the chief architects as well as a theoretician of the Battle of Algiers: "The job of pacification devolving on the military would create problems that it was not accustomed to have to solve. Exercising police powers in a large city was not something it knew well how to do. The Algerian rebels used a new weapon for the first time: urban terrorism. It offers an incomparable advantage, but it has one serious drawback: the population that harbors the terrorist knows him. At any time, given the opportunity, it might denounce him to the authorities. Strict control of the population can rob him of this vital source of support" (Le Temps perdu). Historical conflict hasn't followed the principles of classical warfare for over a half-century; for more than a half-century now there have been only extraordinary wars.

It is these extraordinary wars, these irregular forms of war without principles, that have gradually dissolved the liberal state into the Imaginary Party. All the counterinsurgency doctrines-those of Trinquier, Kitson, Beaufre, Colonel Chateau-Jobert-are categorical on this point: the only way to fight guerilla warfare, to fight the Imaginary Party, is to employ its techniques. "One must operate like a partisan wherever there are partisans." Again, Trinquier: "But he must be made to realize that, when he [the insurgent] is captured, he cannot be treated as an ordinary criminal, nor as a

prisoner taken on the battlefield. No lawyer is present for such an interrogation. If he gives the information requested, the examination is quickly terminated; if not, specialists must force his secret from him. Then, as a soldier, he must face the suffering, and perhaps the death, he has heretofore managed to avoid. The terrorist must accept this as a condition inherent in his trade and in his methods of warfare that, with full knowledge, his superiors and he himself have chosen" (Modern Warfare) The continuous surveillance of the population, the labeling of at-risk individuals, legalized torture, psychological warfare, police control of Publicity, the social manipulation of affects, the infiltration and exfiltration of "extremist groups," the state-run massacre, like so many other aspects of the massive deployment of imperial apparatuses, respond to the necessities of uninterrupted war, most often carried out without a fuss. For as Westmoreland said: "A military operation is only one of a variety of ways to fight the communist insurgency" ("Counterinsurgency," Tricontinental, 1969) .

In the end, only partisans of urban guerrilla warfare have understood what the wars of decolonization were all about. Modeling themselves on the Uruguayan Tupamaros, they alone grasped the contemporary stakes in the conflicts of "national liberation." They alone, and the imperial forces. The chairman of a seminar on "The Role of the Armed Forces in Peace-Keeping in the 1970s," held by the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies in London in April 1973, declared, "if we lose in Belfast we may have to fight in Brixton or Birmingham. Just as in Spain in the thirties was a rehearsal for a wider European conflict, so perhaps what is happening in Northern Ireland is a rehearsal of urban guerilla war more widely in Europe and particularly in Great

Britain." All the current pacification campaigns, all the activities of "international peacekeeping forces" currently deployed on the outskirts of Europe and throughout the world, obviously foreshadow other "pacification campaigns," this time on European territory. Only those who fail to understand that their role is to train people struggling against us seek in some mysterious worldwide conspiracy the reason for these operations. No personal trajectory better sums up the expansion of external pacification to domestic pacification than that of the British officer Frank Kitson, the man who established the strategic doctrine thanks to which the British state defeated the Irish insurgency and NATO the Italian revolutionaries. Thus Kitson, before confiding his doctrine in *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping*, took part in the decolonization wars in Kenya against the Mau-Mau, in Malaysia against the communists, in Cyprus against Grivas, and, finally, in Northern Ireland. From his doctrine we will focus on only a bit of first-hand information concerning imperial rationality. We will condense them to three postulates. The first is that there is absolute continuity between the pettiest crimes and insurgency proper. For Empire, war is a continuum-warfare as a whole, says Kitson; it is necessary to respond from the very first "incivility" to whatever threatens the social order and in so doing to ensure the "integration of military, police, and civil activities at every level" Civilian-military integration is the second imperial postulate. Because during the time of nuclear pacification wars between states became increasingly rare and because the essential job of the army was no longer external but domestic warfare, counterinsurgency, it was advisable to accustom the population to a permanent military presence in public spaces. An imaginary terrorist threat-Irish or Muslim-would justify regular patrols of

armed men in train stations, airports, subways, etc. In general, one would look to multiply the points of indistinction between civilians and the military. The computerization of the social sphere, that is, the fact that every movement tends to produce information, is at the heart of this integration. The proliferation of diffuse surveillance apparatuses, of tracing and recording, serves to generate an abundance of low-grade intelligence on which the police can then base its activities. The third principle of imperial action following this preparatory insurrectionary phase-which is the normal political situation- involves "peace movements." As soon as violent opposition to the existing order arises, peace movements among the population must be accommodated if not created out of whole cloth. Peace movements serve to isolate the rebels while they are infiltrated in order to make them commit acts that discredit them. Kitson explains the strategy; employing the poetic formula, "drowning the baby in its own milk." In any event, it is never a bad idea to brandish an imaginary terrorist threat in order to "make the living conditions of the population sufficiently uncomfortable that they create a stimulus to return to normal life." If Trinquier had the honor of advising American counterinsurgency bigshots, the man who in 1957 had already established a vast system of neighborhood policing, of controlling the Algiers population, a system given the modernist name "Urban Security Apparatus," Kitson for his part saw his work reach the highest circles of NATO. He himself quickly joined the Atlanticist organization. Hadn't that always been his calling? He who hoped that his book would "draw attention to the steps which should be taken now to make the army ready to deal with subversion, insurrection, and peace-keeping operations during the second half of the 1970s," which he concluded by emphasizing the same point:

“Meanwhile it is permissible to hope that the contents of this book will in some way help the army to prepare itself for any storms which may lie ahead in the second half of the 1970s.”

Under Empire, the very persistence of the formal trappings of the state is part of the strategic maneuvering that renders it obsolete. Insofar as Empire is unable to recognize an enemy, an alterity, an ethical difference, it cannot recognize the war conditions it has created. There will therefore be no state of exception as such but a permanent, indefinitely extended state of emergency. The legal system will not be officially suspended in order to wage war against the domestic enemy, against the insurgents, or whatever else; to the current system will simply be added a collection of ad hoc laws designed to fight the unmentionable enemy. “Common law will thus transform into a proliferative and supererogatory development of special rules: the rule will consequently become a series of exceptions” (Luca Bresci, Oreste Scalzone, *Italia: la excepcion es la regia*⁷⁹). The sovereignty of the police, which have again become a war machine, will no longer suffer opposition. THEY will recognize the police’s right to shoot on sight, reestablishing in practice the death penalty which, according to the law, no longer exists. THEY will extend the maximum time spent in police custody such that the charges will henceforth amount to the sentence. In certain cases, the “fight against terrorism” will justify imprisonment without trial as well as warrantless searches. In general, THEY will no longer judge facts, but persons, subjective conformity, one’s aptitude for repentance; to that end, sufficiently vague qualifiers like “moral complicity,” “illegal membership in a

⁷⁹ The Exception Is the Rule

criminal organization," or "inciting civil war" will be created. And when that is no longer enough, THEY will judge by theorem. To demonstrate clearly the difference between accused citizens and "terrorists," THEY will invoke laws dealing with reformed criminals in order to allow the accused to dissociate himself from himself, that is, to become vile. Significantly reduced sentences will then be granted; in the contrary case, *Berufsverbote* will prevail, outlawing the exercise of certain sensitive professions that require protection from subversive contamination. And yet, such a set of laws, like the Real law in Italy Of the German emergency acts, only respond to an already declared insurrectional situation. A lot more heinous are the laws intended to arm the preventative fight against the war machines of the Imaginary Party. Unanimously ratified "anti-sect laws" will supplement "anti-terrorism," as happened recently in France, in Spain, and in Belgium; laws that prosecute-without concealing the intention to criminalize- every autonomous assembly of the false national community of citizens. Unfortunately, it may become increasingly difficult to avoid local excesses of zeal like the "anti- extremism laws" passed in Belgium in November 1998, which penalize "all racist, xenophobic, anarchist, nationalist, authoritarian, or totalitarian conceptions or aims, whether political, ideological, religious, or philosophical in nature, contrary [...] to the functioning of democratic institutions."

In spite of all that, it would be wrong to believe that the state will survive. In the global civil war, its supposed ethical neutrality no longer fools anyone. The tribunal-form itself, whether civil court or the International Criminal Tribunal, is perceived as an explicit mode of warfare. It is the idea of the state as a mediation between parties that is falling by the wayside. The historical compromise-

experimented with in Italy from the early 1970s but now a reality in all biopolitical democracies following the disappearance of all effective opposition on the classical political stage-has finished off the very principle of the state.

In this way, the Italian state failed to survive the 1970s, to survive diffuse guerilla warfare, or rather it didn't survive as a state, only as a party, as a party of citizens, that is, as a party of passivity and police. And this is the party that the passionate economic turnaround of the 1980s blessed with an ephemeral victory. But the total shipwreck of the state only really came when one man took power, took over the theatre of classical politics, a man whose entire program was specifically designed to jettison classical politics and put pure entrepreneurial management in its place. At that point the state openly took on the role of a party. With Berlusconi, it isn't a single individual who has taken power but a form-of-life: that of a narrow-minded, self-seeking, philofascist petty-entrepreneur from the North of Italy. Power is once again ethically-based-based on business as the only form of socialization after the family-and he who embodies it re presents no one and certainly not a majority, but is a perfectly discernable form-of-life with which only a small fraction of the population can identify. Just as everyone recognizes in Berlusconi the done of the neighborhood asshole, the perfect copy of the worst local parvenu, everyone knows that he was a member of the P2 Lodge that turned the Italian state into its own personal instrument. *This is how, bit by bit, the state sinks into the Imaginary Party.*

THE CITIZEN FACTORY

The repressive societies now being established have two new characteristics: repression is softer, more diffuse, more generalized, but at the same time much more violent. For all who can submit, adapt, and be channeled in, there will be a lessening of political intervention. There will be more and more psychologists, even psychoanalysts, in the police department, there will be more community therapy available; the problems of the individual and of the couple will be talked about everywhere; repression will be more psychologically comprehensive. The work of prostitutes will have to be recognized, there will be a drug advisor on the radio-in short, there will be a general climate of understanding acceptance. But if there are categories and individuals who escape this inclusion, if people attempt to question the general system of confinement, then they will be exterminated like the Black Panthers in the US., or their personalities exterminated as it happened with the Red Army Faction in Germany.

Felix Guattari, "Why Italy?"

You have divided all the people of the Empire – when I say that, I mean the whole world – in two classes: the more cultured, better born, and more influential everywhere you have declared Roman citizens and even of the same stock; the rest vassals and subjects.

Aelius Aristides, To Rome

If there is a heuristic virtue to Italy in terms of politics, it is that in general historical incandescence has the virtue of increasing the

strategic legibility of an age. Still today, the lines of forces, the parties present, the tactical stakes, and the general configuration of hostilities are more difficult to discern in France than in Italy; and with good reason: the counterrevolution that was forcibly imposed in Italy twenty years ago has barely established itself in France. The counter-insurgency process has taken its time here, and has been given the luxury of concealing its real nature. Having made itself indiscernible, it has also made fewer enemies than elsewhere, or more thoroughly duped allies.

The most troubling thing about the last twenty years is without a doubt that Empire has managed to carve out from the debris of civilization a brand new humanity organically won over to its cause: citizens. Citizens are those who, at the very heart of the general conflagration of the social sphere, persist in proclaiming their abstract participation in a society that now only exists negatively, through the terror it exercises over everything that threatens to abandon it and, in so doing, to survive it. The accidents and the rationality that produce the citizen all point to the heart of the imperial enterprise: to attenuate forms-of-life, to neutralize bodies; and the citizen advances this enterprise by self-annulling the risk he represents to the imperial environment. This variable fraction of unconditional agents which empire deducts from each population forms the human reality of Spectacle and Biopower, the point of their absolute coincidence.

There is therefore a factory of the citizen, whose long-term implantation is Empire's major victory; not a social, or political, or economic but an anthropological victory. Certainly, no effort was spared in order to bring it off. It began with the offensive restructuring of capitalist modes of production in reaction, starting

in the early 1970s, to the resurgence of worker conflict in factories and to the remarkable disinterest in work then manifesting itself among the younger generations following '68. Toyotism, automation, job enrichment, increased flexibility and personalization of work, delocalization, decentralization, outsourcing, just-in-time methods, project-specific management, the closure of large manufacturing plants, flextime, the liquidation of heavy industrial systems, worker consolidation- these are but aspects of the reforms of the modes of production whose main purpose was to restore capitalist power over production. The restructuring was everywhere initiated by advanced columns of employers, theorized by enlightened union bosses, and put in place with the approval of the principal union organizations. As Lama explained in *La Repubblica* in 1976: "the left must, with purpose and a clean conscience, help to reestablish today's much diminished profit margins, even if it means proposing measures that prove costly to the workers." And Berlinguer would declare at the same time that "productivity is not the weapon of the employer," but "a weapon of the workers' movement for advancing a politics of transformation." The effect of restructuring was only superficially the objective: "to part simultaneously with oppositional workers and abusive petty tyrants" (Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*). The objective was rather to purge the productive center of a society in which production was becoming militarized, to purge it of all the "deviants," of all the at-risk individuals, of all the agents of the Imaginary Party. It was, furthermore, through the same methods that standardization operated inside and outside the factory: by portraying targets as "terrorists." There was no other reason for the firing of the "Fiat 61" in 1979, which foreshadowed the imminent defeat of workers' struggles in Italy. It goes without

saying that such actions would have been impossible had worker leadership not actively participated in them, the latter being no less interested than management in eradicating chronic insubordination, unruliness, worker autonomy, "all this constant sabotage, absenteeism, this ungovernable, deviant, criminal activity" which the new generation of workers had imported to the factory. Certainly no one was in a better position than the left to mould citizens; it alone could criticize this or that person for deserting "at a time when we are all called on to show our civic courage, each of us in our own job"-thundered Amendola in 1977, lecturing Sciascia and Montale.

For more than twenty years, there has therefore been an entire calibration of subjectivities, an entire mobilization of employee "vigilance," a call for self-control from all sides, for subjective investment in the production process, for the kind of creativity that allows Empire to isolate the new hard core of its society: citizens. But this result couldn't have been achieved had the offensive over work not been simultaneously supported by a second, more general, more moral offensive. Its pretext was "the crisis." The crisis not only consisted in making commodities artificially scarce in order to renew their desirability, their abundance having produced, in '68, all too obvious disgust. Above all, the crisis renewed Blooms' identification with the threatened social whole, whose fate depended on the goodwill of everyone. That is precisely what is at work in the "politics of sacrifice," in the call to "tighten our belts:" and more generally, currently; to behave "in a responsible way" in everything we do. But responsible for what, really? for our shitty society? for the contradictions that undermine your mode of production? for the cracks in your totality? Tell me! Besides, this is

how one is sure to recognize the citizen: by his individual introjection of these contradictions, of the aporias of the capitalist whole. Rather than fight against the social relations ravaging the most basic conditions of existence, the citizen sorts out his garbage and fills his car with alternative fuel. Rather than contributing to the construction of another reality, on Fridays after work he goes to serve meals to the homeless in a center run by slimy religious conservatives. And that is what he is going to talk about at dinner the next day.

The most simple-minded voluntarism and the most gnawing guilty conscience: these are the citizen's defining characteristics.

THE BIOPOLITICAL TRADITION

Rarely has an intellectual endeavor been more unwelcome, more vulgar, and more pointless than the one undertaken by the aspiring managers of socialized Capital in their first bullshit-inaugurating issue of the rag *Multitudes*. Of course, I wouldn't even mention a publication whose only reason for being is to serve as the theoretico-urbane showcase for the most disastrous of careerists, Yann Moulier-Boutang, were the rag's scope not to reach beyond the militant mico-circles that stoop to reading *Multitudes*.

Always hanging on the latest shenanigans of their master, who in Exile sang the praises of the "inflationary biopolitical entrepreneur," the bureaucrats of Parisian Negriism attempted to introduce a positive distinction between Biopower and biopolitics. Identifying themselves with a nonexistent Foucauldian orthodoxy, they courageously rejected the category of Biopower-which was really too critical, too molar, too unifying. To this they opposed biopolitics as "that which envelops power and resistance as a new language which each day compels them to confront equality and difference, the two principles-political and biological-of our modernity." Since, as it was, someone more intelligent, namely, Foucault, had already pronounced the truism that "there is power only between free subjects," these gentlemen considered the notion of Biopower all too extreme. How could a productive power, whose purpose is to maximize life, be all bad? And furthermore, how democratic is it to speak of Biopower-or even of Spectacle? And wouldn't doing so be a first step towards a kind of secession? "Biopolitics," Lazzarato in his pink tutu prefers to think, "is therefore the strategic coordination of these power relations such

that the living produce greater force." And leave it to the imbecile to conclude with an exhilarating program announcing a "return of biopower to biopolitics, of 'the art of governing' to the production and government of new forms of life."

Of course, no one could say that Negrists have ever been burdened by philological concerns. It is always a bit frustrating to have to remind them that the project of a guaranteed salary was, well before they struck on the idea, proposed by the para-Nazi intellectual movement led by Georges Duboin, a movement that during the Occupation inspired the "scientific" work of the group "Collaboration." Similarly, it is with great modesty that we remind these morons of the origin of the concept of biopolitics. Its first occurrence in French dates to 1960. *La Biopolitique* was the title of a short pamphlet by the peace-drunk Genevese doctor A. Starobinski. "Biopolitics acknowledges the existence of the purely organic forces that govern human societies and civilizations. These are indiscriminate forces that drive the human masses against each other and provoke the bloody conflicts between nations and civilizations which lead to their destruction and extinction. But biopolitics also acknowledges the existence of constructive and conscious forces in the life of societies and civilizations which protect them and open new and optimistic perspectives to humanity. The indiscriminate forces-Caesarism, brute force, the will to power, the destruction of the weakest by force or trickery, through pillage or plunder. [...] While accepting the reality of these facts in the history of civilizations, we will go further still and maintain that the reality of truth, justice, the love of the Divine and of one's neighbor, mutual aid, and human brotherhood exists. All those who share the ideal of brotherhood, all those who preserve in

their heart the ideal of Goodness and justice work to protect the superior values of civilization. We must recognize that everything we have, that everything we are-our security, our education, our very possibility of existing-we owe to civilization. This is why our basic duty is to do everything we can to protect and save it. To that end, each of us must let go of our personal preoccupations, dedicate ourselves to activities that improve society, develop our spiritual and religious values, and actively participate in cultural life. I do not believe that this is difficult, though goodwill is especially called for. For each one of us, the thoughts and action of each one of us, has a role to play in universal harmony. Every optimistic vision of the future is therefore both a duty and a necessity. We mustn't fear war and the disasters which result, for we are already there, we are already in a state of war." The attentive reader will have noticed that we have stopped ourselves from quoting the passages from the pamphlet that advocate "eliminating from within [our society] everything that might hasten its decline," and the conclusion that at the current stage of civilization, humanity must be united."

But the good Genevese doctor is but a sweet dreamer compared to those who would usher biopolitics into the French intellectual universe for good: the founders of the *Cahiers de la politique*, published in whose first issue was 1968. Its director, its kingpin, was none other than Andre Birre, the grim functionary who went from the League of Human Rights and a great project for social revolution in the 1930s to Collaboration. The *Cahiers de la biopolitique*, the mouthpiece of the *Organisation du Service de la Vie*, also wanted to save civilization. "When the founding members of the 'Organisation du Service de la Vie' conferred in 1965, after twenty years of unflinching work to define their position regarding the

current situation, their conclusion was that if humanity wants to continue evolving and reach a higher plane, in accordance with the principles of Alexis Carrel and Albert Einstein, it must purposefully restore its respect for the Laws of Life and cooperate with nature instead of seeking to dominate and exploit it as it does today. [...] This way of thinking, which will enable us to reestablish order in an organic way and allow techniques to reach their full potential and demonstrate their effectiveness, is biopolitical Biopolitics can provide us the understanding we lack, for it is at once the science and the art of using human knowledge according to the givens of the laws of nature and ontology which govern our lives and our destiny." In the two issues of *Cahiers de la biopolitique*, one thus discovers logical digressions on the "reconstruction of the human being," the "signs of health and quality," the "normal, abnormal, and pathological," among considerations entitled, "when women govern the world economy," "when international organizations open the way to biopolitics," or better yet, "our motto and charter in honor of life and service." "Biopolitics," we learn, "has been defined as the science of the conduct of states and human communities in light of natural laws and environments and the ontological givens that govern life and determine men's actions."

It should now be easier to understand why the Negrists of *Vacarme* not long ago called for a "minor biopolitics": because a major biopolitics, Nazism, wasn't, it seems, very satisfying. Thus the little Parisian Negrists' windy incoherence: if they were coherent, they may be surprised to find themselves suddenly the bearers of the imperial project itself, that of recreating an integrally engineered, finally pacified and fatally productive social fabric. But, luckily for us, these chatterers are clueless. All they are doing is reciting, to a

techno beat, the old patristic doctrine of *oikonomia*, a doctrine which they know nothing about and have precisely no idea that the first millennium Church came up with it in order to found the limitless range of its temporal prerogatives. In patristic thought the notion of *oikonomia* – which can be translated in a hundred different ways: incarnation, plan, design, administration, providence, responsibility, office, compromise, dishonesty, or ruse-is what allows one to designate in a single concept: the relation of the divinity to the world, of the Eternal to historical development, of the Father to the Son, of the Church to its faithful, and of God to his icon. “The concept of economy is an organicist, functionalist one that simultaneously concerns the flesh of the body, the flesh of speech, and the flesh of the image. The notion of a divine plan with the aim of administering and managing fallen creation, and thus of saving it, makes the economy interdependent with the whole of creation from the beginning of time. Because of this, the economy is as much Nature as Providence. The divine economy watches over the harmonious conservation of the world and the preservation of all its parts as it runs in a well-adjusted, purposive manner. The incarnational economy is nothing other than the spreading out of the Father’s image in its historic manifestation. The economic thought of the church thus constitutes at once an administrative and corrective way of thinking. It is administrative in that *oikonomia* is at one with the organization, management, and development of each ministry. But it is also necessary to add to its corrective function, because human initiatives that are not inspired by grace can only engender inequalities, injustices, or transgressions. The divine and ecclesiastical economy must therefore take charge of the wretched management of our history and regulate it in an enlightened and redemptive way’ (Marie-Jose Mondzain, *Image*,

Icon, Economy). The doctrine of *oikonomia*, that of a final because suffering, original integration of all even death, even sin – with divine incarnation is the declared program of the biopolitical project in so far as the latter is first of all a project for universal inclusion, for the total subsumption of all things in the boundless *oikonomia* of the perfectly immanent divine: Empire. In this way, when the magnum opus of Negrism, Empire, proudly identifies itself with an ontology of production, it is impossible to miss what our suit-clad theologian means: everything is produced in so far as it is the expression of an absent subject, of the absence of the subject, the Father, in virtue of which everything is-even exploitation, even counterrevolution, even state massacres. Empire logically doses with these lines: “Once again in post-modernity we find ourselves in [Saint] Francis’s situation, posing against the misery of power the joy of being. This is a revolution that no power will control-because biopower and communism, cooperation and revolution remain together, in love, simplicity, and also innocence. This is the irrepressible lightness of and joy of being communist.”

“Biopolitics may very well lead to a revolt of the executives,” bemoaned Georges Henein in 1967.

REFUTATION OF NEGRISM

“Never has society been as absorbed in the ceremonials of the “problem, and never has it been so democratically uniform in every sphere of socially-guaranteed survival. As differentiations between classes gradually fade, new generations “flower” on the same stalk of sadness and stupor; which is explained away in the widely publicized eucharist of the “problem.” And while the most extreme leftism-in its most coherent form- calls for pay for everyone, capital caresses ever less modestly the dream of giving it what it wants: of purging itself of the pollution of production and allowing men the freedom to simply produce themselves as capital’s empty forms, its containers, each one confronted with the same enigma: why am I here?”

Giorgio Cesarano, *Manuale di sopravvivenza*,⁸⁰ 1974

There is no need to refute Negrism. The facts do all the work. It is, however, important to frustrate the ways in which it will likely be used against us. The purpose of Negrism, in the last analysis, is to provide the party of the citizens with the most sophisticated ideology. When the confusion surrounding the obviously reactionary character of Bovism and ATTAC finally lifts, Negrism will step forward as the last possible socialism, cybernetic socialism.

⁸⁰ Survival Manual

Of course, it is already amazing that a movement opposed to “neo-liberal globalization” in the name of a “duty to civilization” -which pities “young people” for being held in a “state of infra-citizenship” only finally to spew forth that “to answer the challenge of social disintegration and political desperation demands redoubling civic and activist efforts” (Tout sur ATTAC) pass for representing any kind of opposition to the dominant order. And if it distinguishes itself at all, it does so only in the anachronism of its positions, the inanity of its analyses. Furthermore, the quasi-official convergence of the citizens’ movement with lobbies advocating greater state control can only last so long. The massive participation of deputies, judges, functionaries, cops, elected officials, and so many “representatives of civil society,” which gave ATTAC such resonance initially, has over time dispelled any illusions in its regard. Already the vacuity of its first slogans-“taking back our world’s future together” or “doing politics differently” -has given way to less ambiguous formulas. “A new world order must be envisioned then built, one that embraces the difficult and necessary submission of all-individuals, corporations, and states-to the common interest of humanity” (Jean de Maillard, *le march fait sa Loi: De l’usage du crime par La mondialisation*).

No need for predictions here: the most ambitious in the so-called “anti-globalization movement” are already open Negrists. The three watchwords typical of political Negrism-for all its strength lies in its ability to provide informal neo-militants with issues on which to focus their demands-are the “citizen’s dividend,” the right to free movement (“Papers for everyone!”) , and the right to creativity, especially if computer-assisted. In this sense, the Negrist perspective is in no way different from the imperial perspective but

rather a mere instance of perfectionism within it. When Moulier-Boutang uses all the paper at his disposal to publish a political manifesto entitled "For a New New Deal," hoping to convert all the various Lefts of good faith to his project for society, he does nothing more than reiterate the truth about Negrism. Negrism indeed expresses an antagonism, but one within the management class, between its progressive and conservative parts. Hence its curious relationship to social warfare, to practical subversion, its systematic recourse to simply making demands. From the Negrist point of view, social warfare is but a means to pressure the opposing side of power. As such, it is unacceptable, even if it may be useful. Hence political Negrism's incestuous relationship with imperial pacification: it wants its reality but not its realism. It wants Biopolitics without police, communication without Spectacle, peace without having to wage war to get it.

Strictly speaking, Negrism does not coincide with imperial thought; it is simply the idealist face of imperial thought. Its purpose is to raise the smokescreen behind which everyday imperial life can safely proceed until, invariably, the facts contradict it. For this reason, it is again in its very realization that Negrism offers its best refutation. Like when an illegal immigrant gets a green card and then is satisfied with the most banal assimilation; like when the *Tute Bianche* got itself smacked in the face by an Italian police force with which they thought they had come to an understanding; like when Negri complains, at the end of a recent interview, that in the 1970s the Italian state was unable to distinguish among its enemies "those who could be rehabilitated from those who couldn't". Despite its conversion to Negrism, the citizens' movement is thus most certainly going to disappoint him.

It is likely that a citizen's dividend will be established, and to a certain extent already is, in the form of welfare payments for political passivity and ethical conformity. Citizens, insofar as they are made to compensate more and more frequently for the failures of the welfare state, will be paid more and more overtly for their work in comanaging social pacification. A citizen's dividend will therefore be established as a form of coercion to maintain self-discipline, in the form of strange, extremely tight-knit, community policing. If necessary; THEY might even call it existence wages," since it would in fact entail sponsoring those forms-of-life most compatible with Empire. As the Negrists predict, affects will be, indeed already are being "put to work": a growing proportion of surplus value is made from forms of work that require linguistic, relational, and physical skills that can only be acquired, not in the sphere of production, but in the sphere of reproduction; work time and life time are effectively becoming indistinguishable-but all that merely foreshadows the greater submission of human existence to the process of cybernetic valorization. The immaterial work that the Negrists present as a victory of the proletariat, a "victory over factory discipline," without question contributes to imperial aims, constituting the most underhanded of domesticating apparatuses, apparatuses for the immobilization of bodies. Proletarian self-valorization, theorized by Negri as the ultimate subversion, is also taking place but in the form of universal prostitution. Everyone sells himself as best he can, sells as many parts of his existence as he can, even resorts to violence and sabotage to do it, although self-valorization really only measures the self-estrangement that the value system has extorted from him, really only sanctions the massive victory of the system. In the end, the Negrist-citizen ideology will only serve to conceal in the Edenic attire of universal

Participation the military requirement "to associate as many prominent members of the population, especially those who have been engaged in nonviolent action, with the government" (Kitson), the requirement to make them participate. That loathsome Gaullists of the Yolán Bresson-type fight for more than twenty years for existence income, placing on it their hope for a "transformation of social life," should offer further proof of the true strategic function of political Negrism. A function that Trinquier, quoted by Kitson, wouldn't have denied: "The Sine Qua Non of victory in modern warfare is the unconditional support of the population."

But the convergence of Negrism with the citizens' project for total control occurs elsewhere, not at the ideological but at the existential level. The Negrist, a citizen to this extent, lives in denial of obvious ethical facts by conjuring away civil war. But whereas the citizen works to contain every expression of forms-of-life, to conserve ordinary situations, to standardize his environment, the Negrist practices an extreme and extremely spirited ethical blindness. To him, everything is the same aside from the petty political calculations of which he occasionally avails himself. Those who speak of Negri's casuistry therefore miss the essential point. His is a veritable disability, a tremendous human deformity. Negri would like to be "radical" but he can't manage it. To what depth of the real, in fact, can a theoretician go who declares: "I consider Marxism a science whose employers and workers serve each other in equal measure, even if it is from different, opposite positions"? A professor of political philosophy who confides: "Personally, I hate intellectuals. I only feel comfortable with working-class people (especially if they are manual workers: in fact, I consider them among my dearest friends and teachers) and with businessmen (I

also have some excellent friends among factory-owners and professionals)? What is the sententious opinion worth of someone who fails to grasp the ethical difference between a worker and an owner, who regarding the businessmen of Le Sen tier is capable of writing: "The new company manager is an organic deviant, a mutant, an impossible-to-eliminate anomaly. The new union official, that is, the new type of company manager, doesn't worry about wages except in terms of social income"? Someone who confuses everything, declaring that "nothing reveals the enormous historical positivity of worker self-valorization better than sabotage," and recommends, for every revolutionary possibility, "accumulating a different capital"? Whatever his claims to playing the hidden strategist behind the "people of Seattle," someone who lacks the most elementary personal knowledge of himself and the world, the tiniest ethical sensitivity, can only produce disaster, reduce everything he touches to a state of undifferentiated flow, to shit. He will lose all the wars into which his desire to flee compels him, and in those wars he will lose those closest to him and, worse still, he will be incapable of recognizing his defeat. "All armed prophets have conquered, and unarmed ones fail. In the seventies, Negri might have understood this passage as a clarion call to frontal collisions with the state. Decades later, Empire offers by contrast an optimism of the will that can only be sustained by a millenarian erasure of the distinction between the armed and the unarmed, the powerful and the abjectly powerless" (Gopal Balakrishnan, "Virgilian Visions")

WAR ON WORK!

Starting in February something apparently inexplicable had begun to shake the depths of Milan. A ferment, a kind of awakening. The city seemed to be coming back to life. But it was a strange life, an all too vigorous, too violent, and above all too marginal one. A new city appeared to be establishing itself in the metropolis. All over Milan, everywhere, it was the same story: bands of adolescents were launching an attack on the city. First they occupied empty houses, vacant shops, which they baptized "proletariat youth circles." Then, from there, they spread out little by little and "took over the neighborhood. "It went from theatrical performances to the little "pirate markets, "not to mention the "expropriations." At the height of the wave there were up to thirty circles. Each had its headquarters, of course, and many published small newspapers.

Milanese youth were passionate about politics and the extreme-left groups, like the others, took advantage of the renewed interest. More than politics, it was about culture, a way of life, a wide-ranging refusal of the status quo and the search for another way of life. Milanese youth nearly in their entirety were by then aware of everything involving the student revolts. But unlike their elders they loved Marx and rock and roll and considered themselves freaks. [...] Fortified by their numbers and their despair, the more-or-less politicized groups intended to live according to their needs. The movie theaters being too expensive, certain Saturdays they used crowbars to impose a discount on tickets. They were out of money, so they launched a movement of tragically simple "expropriations," just short of looting. A dozen of them were enough to play the game, which involved entering a store en masse,

helping oneself, and leaving without paying. The looters were called "The salami gang" because in the beginning they mainly raided delis. Very soon jean stores and record stores were also hit. By late 1976, expropriating had become a fad, and there were few high schoolers who hadn't tried it at least once. All classes were thrown together: the looters were as much the sons of factory workers as of the upper middle class and everyone united in a huge celebration that would soon turn to tragedy.

Fabrizio "Collabo" Calvi, *Camarade*, P. 38

With the exception of a tiny minority of half-wits, no one believes in work anymore. No one believes in work anymore, but for this very reason faith in its necessity has become all the more insistent. And for those not put off by the total degradation of work into a pure means of domestication, this faith most often turns into fanaticism. It is true that one cannot be a professor, a social worker, a ticket agent, or security guard without certain subjective aftereffects. That THEY now call work what until recently was called leisure – "video game testers" are paid to play the whole day; "artists" to play the buffoon in public; a growing number of incompetents whom THEY name psychoanalysts, fortune-tellers, "coaches," or simply psychologists get handsomely paid for listening to others whine – doesn't seem enough to corrode this unalloyed faith. It even seems that the more work loses its ethical substance, the more tyrannical the idol of work becomes. The less self-evident the value and necessity of work, the more its slaves feel the need to assert its eternal nature. Would there really be any reason to add that "the only real, true integration in the life of a man or a woman is that experienced through school, through the world of knowledge, and, at the end of a full and satisfying school career,

through entering the workforce" (Dealing with Uncivil Behavior in School), if the obvious reality weren't already breaking through? In any case, the Law gives up the game when it stops defining work in terms of an activity and starts defining it in terms of availability: by work THEY now only mean voluntary submission to the pure, exterior, "social" constraint of maintaining market domination.

Faced with these inescapable facts, even the Marxist economist loses himself in professorial paralogisms, concluding that capitalist reason is thoroughly unreasonable. This is because the logic of the present situation is no longer of an economic but of an ethico-political kind. Work is the linchpin of the citizen factory. As such, it is indeed necessary, as necessary as nuclear reactors, city planning, the police, or television. One has to work because one has to feel one's existence, at least in part, as foreign to oneself. And it is the same necessity that compels THEM to take "autonomy" to mean "making a living for oneself," that is, selling oneself, and in order to do so introjecting the requisite quantity of imperial norms. In reality, the sole rationality driving present-day production is the production of producers, the production of bodies that cannot not work. The growth of the cultural commodities industry, of the whole industry of the imagination, and soon that of sensations fulfills the same imperial function of neutralizing bodies, of depressing forms-of-life, of bloomification. Insofar as entertainment does nothing more than sustain self-estrangement, it represents a moment of social work. But the picture wouldn't be complete if we forgot to mention that work also has a more directly militaristic function, which is to subsidize a whole series of forms-of-life-managers, security guards, cops, professors, hipsters,

Young-Girls, etc. – all of which are, to say the least, anti-ecstatic if not anti-insurrectional.

Of the entire putrid legacy of the workers' movement nothing stinks as much as the culture, and now the cult, of work. It is this culture and this culture alone, with its intolerable ethical blindness and its professional self-hatred, that one hears groaning with each new layoff, with each new proof that work is finished. What one in fact ought to do is put together a brass band, which one could, for example, call the "Combo For the Death of Toil" (C.F.D.T.), and whose purpose would be to turn up and play at each massive new layoff, marching to perfectly ruinous, dissonant, balkanized harmonies, and trumpeting the end of work and all the prodigious expanse of chaos opening up before us. Here as elsewhere, not to have come to terms with the workers' movement carries a heavy price, and the diversionary power that a gas factory like ATTAC represents in France has no other origin. Considering this, once one has grasped the central position of work in the manufacturing of the citizen, it isn't too surprising that the current heir to the workers' movement, the social movement, has suddenly metamorphosed into a citizens' movement.

We would be wrong to neglect the pure scandal, from the point of view of the worker's movement, created by practices through which the latter has obviously been surpassed by the Imaginary Party. First, because the privileged site of these practices is no longer the place of production but rather the entire territory; second, because they aren't the means to a further end-status, greater buying power, less work, or more freedom-but at once sabotage and reappropriation. Here again there is no historical context that offers us more insight into these practices, their nature,

and their limits than the Italy of the '60s and '70s. The whole history of "creeping May" is in fact the history of the movement's being surpassed, the history of the extinction of "worker centrality." The incompatibility of the Imaginary Party with the workers' movement revealed itself for what it is: an ethical incompatibility. A blatant incompatibility, for example, in the refusal to work with which southern workers doggedly responded to factory discipline, thus shattering the Fordist compromise. It is to the credit of a group like Potere Operaio that it zealously brought the "war on work" into the factories. "The refusal to work and alienation from work are not occasional," observed the Gruppo Gramsci in the early '70s, "but rooted in an objective class condition that the growth of capitalism ceaselessly reproduces and at ever higher levels: the new strength of the working class stems from its concentration and its homogeneity, stems from the fact that the capitalist relation extends beyond the traditional factory (and in particular to what is called the 'service sector'). In this way, it produces resistance, goals, and behaviors there as well, all tendentially based on the foreignness of capitalist work, and strips workers and employees of their residual professionalism, thus destroying their 'affection' for and any other kind of potential identification with the work that capital imposes on them." But it was only at the end of the cycle of worker struggles in 1973 that the Imaginary Party actually outstripped the movement. Indeed, at that point those who wanted to pursue the struggle had to recognize that worker centrality had ended and take the war out of the factory. For certain of them, like the BR, who stuck to the Leninist alternative between economic and political struggle, leaving the factory meant immediately launching oneself into the realm of politics, a frontal attack on state power. For others, in particular for the "autonomes," it meant the politicization of

everything the workers' movement had forgotten: the sphere of reproduction. At the time, Lotta Continua came up with the slogan, "Take back the city!" Negri theorizes the "social worker" – a sufficiently elastic category to include feminists, the unemployed, the precarious, artists, the marginal, rebellious youth – and the "diffuse factory," a concept that justified leaving the factory because everything, in the last analysis, from the consumption of cultural commodities to domestic work, from then on contributed to the reproduction of capitalist society and, therefore, the factory was everywhere. In more or less short order, this change led to the break with socialism and with those who, like the BR and certain autonomous workers' groups, wanted to believe that "the working class in any case remains the central and governing nucleus of communist revolution" (BR – Resolution of the Strategic Leadership, April '75). The practices that brought about this ethical break immediately set at odds those who believed they belonged to the same revolutionary movement: auto-reductions in 1974, 200,000 Italian households refused to pay their electricity bills-proletarian expropriations, squats, pirate radio, armed protests, neighborhood struggles, diffuse guerrilla warfare, counter-cultural celebrations, in short: Autonomia. In the midst of so many paradoxical declarations-it should still be recalled that Negri is the same schizophrenic who, at the end of twenty years of militancy focused on the "refusal to work," ended up concluding: "Therefore, when we spoke of the refusal to work, one should have understood a refusal to work in the factory" even this dissociated personality, because of the radicalness of the period, happened to produce a few memorable lines like the following, taken from *Domination and Sabotage*: " The self-valorization-sabotage connection, like its opposite, prohibits us from ever having anything to do with

'socialism,' with its tradition, whether reformism or euro-communism. It may even be the case that we are of a different race. We are no longer moved by anything belonging to the cardboard-cutout project of reformism, to its tradition, to its vile illusion. We are in a materiality that has its own laws, already discovered or still to be discovered through struggle-in any case, different laws. Marx's 'new mode of exposition has become the new mode of being of the class. We are here, implacably, in the majority. We possess a method for destroying work. We have sought a positive measure of non-work. A positive measure of freedom from this shitty servitude which the bosses appreciate so much and which the official socialist movement has always imposed on us like a badge of honor. No, really; we can no longer say 'socialists,' we can no longer accept your ignominy." What the Movement of '77 so violently came up against, a movement which was the scandalous, collective assumption of forms-of-life, was the workers' party, the party which denigrates every form-of-life. Thousands of prisoners allow us to gauge socialism's hostility toward the Imaginary Party.

The whole mistake of organized Autonomia, these "repulsive louses who aren't sure whether to scratch the back of the social-democrats or that of the Movement" (*La rivoluzione 2*, 1977), was to believe that the Imaginary Party could be recognized, that an institutional mediation would be possible. And this is the same mistake of their direct heirs, *Tute Bianche*, who in Genoa believed that it was enough to behave like cops, to denounce the "violent elements," for the police to leave them alone. On the contrary, we have to start from the simple fact that our struggle is criminal from the outset and behave accordingly. Only a power struggle guarantees us something and above all a certain impunity. The

immediate affirmation of a need or desire – in so far as it implies a certain knowledge of oneself – ethically contravenes imperial pacification; and it no longer has the justification of militancy. Militancy and its critique are both in different ways compatible with Empire; one as a form of work, the other as a form of powerlessness. But the practice that moves beyond all this, in which a form-of-life imposes its way of saying “I,” is bound to fail if its impact isn’t worked out in advance. “Reestablishing the paranoid scene of politics, with its paraphernalia of aggressiveness, voluntarism, and repression, always runs the risk of stifling and repelling reality, that which exists, the revolt that emerges from the transformation of everyday life and from the break with mechanisms of constraint” (*La rivoiuzione* 2).

It was Berlinguer, then head of the PCI, who shortly before the Bologna congress in September '77 uttered these historic words: “It is not some plague-victims (*untorelli*) who will destroy Bologna.” He summarized Empire’s opinion of us: we are *untorelli*, contagious agents, only good for extermination. And in this war of annihilation we should fear the worst from the left, because the left is the official trustee of the faith in work, of the particular fanaticism for negating all ethical difference in the name of an ethics of production. “We want a society of work and not a society of those aided by the state,” Jospin, that lump of Calvinist-Trotskyite unhappiness, replied to the “Jobless Movement.” The credo exemplifies the dismay of a being, the Worker, whose only sense of something beyond production lies in degradation, leisure, consumption, or self-destruction, a being that has so utterly lost contact with its own inclinations that it breaks down if not moved by some external necessity, by some finality. We should recall, for the occasion, that

commercial activity, when it appeared as such in ancient societies, couldn't be named by itself since it was not only deprived of ethical substance but the very deprivation was raised to the level of an autonomous activity. It could therefore only be defined negatively, as a lack of *scholē* for the Greeks, *a-scholia*, and a lack of *otium* for the Latins, *neg-otium*. And it is still – with its celebrations, with its protests *fine a se stesso*, with its armed humor, its science of drugs, and its dissolving temporality – this old art of non-work in the Movement of '77 that makes Empire tremble the most.

What else, in the end, makes up the plane of consistency on which our lines of flight emerge? Is there any other precondition to developing play among forms-of-life, any other precondition to communism?

**MA NOI
CI SAREMO**

[BUT WE'LL BE HERE]

“The International Chamber of Commerce recognizes how societies are changing, with citizens speaking up and expressing their deep-felt concerns. However, in some respects, the emergence of **activist pressure groups** risks weakening the effectiveness of public rules, legitimate institutions and democratic processes. **These activist organizations** should place emphasis on legitimizing themselves, improving their internal democracy, transparency and accountability. They should assume full responsibility for the consequences of their activities. Where this does not take place, **rules establishing their rights and responsibilities should be considered**. Business is accustomed to working with trade unions, consumer organizations and other representative groups that are responsible, credible, transparent and accountable and consequently command respect. **What we question is the proliferation of activist groups** that do not accept these self-disciplinary criteria”.

From The *Geneva Business Declaration*, adopted in September 1998 by the leaders of 450 multinationals as part of the Geneva Business Dialogue.

Those that are against the G8 aren't fighting against authorities democratically elected in their countries; they are fighting against the western world, the philosophy of the free world, the spirit of enterprise.

S. Berlusconi, *Le Monde*, Sunday – Monday 22-23 July 2001.

THESES (LIKE A NURSERY RHYME)

1. The political subject of democracy is the *population*: a conglomerate of ethically heterogeneous bodies to be managed and administered.

2. The citizen, the atom comprising this population, is neither the honest person nor the criminal, neither poor nor rich, and has no class, no sex, no odor — but the citizen does have rights (among which the right to vote, which ensures the continuation of the system that produced him), a variable purchasing power, and *desires*.

3. Democracy listens to its citizens' desires because it cannot do otherwise. From the moment that it manages them rather than commanding them, it *needs* consensus like fish need water. And the citizens cannot do without it either, because they themselves are democracy's primary product. Aside from the few rare expressions of violent antagonism, which are permanently being beaten back, PEOPLE just *fine-tune* that consensus so as to bring about the convergence of all singular desires at a few precise points.

4. As long as capitalism survives, this convergence is to a large extent ensured by consumption and everything that universally preserves it (work, police, family, money-mediated relations, etc.).

5. When the citizen begins to "exist," to desire outside the advertising gimmicks, to throw the inevitabilities of his everyday life out of order, to look too insistently or with too charity-unrelated a sympathy at the non-citizens, he becomes a "potentially dangerous subject," someone who's almost not a citizen anymore,

someone who'd be better off just watching TV. And it's not irrelevant that some of us are now starting to see the whole "social contract" story as little more than a fable told to put the good little children of democracies to sleep. Starting to understand that our "rights" are just threats to keep us from leaving our pitiful orthopedic conformity. Starting to see that we are alone and under surveillance, and that our "freedoms" are little more than the toys that PEOPLE let us play with to distract us while the managers busily optimize, count out, and reallocate the number of the dead and the sick over the coming years.

6. The good citizen does not exist, and the bad citizen is a potential criminal. The only possible horizon for the "citizen" ideology is thus that of surveillance, and the only guarantee of its perpetuation is the prison system. Hence the equation: citizen = cop.

7. In the final analysis, cops hold the monopoly on legitimate violence. And in exchange for that they tolerate the humiliation of being reduced to obedience, because by obeying they can beat and oppress others, in brief: they can uncork their bottled-up resentment, the resentment of slaves. Citizens are those who delegate their own violence to cops, but in return get only multiple slaveries (the rights to consume, work, have fun, and hang around under the watchful eye of punitive law), intended to hold them in their proper place and kindly make them stay in their rooms while "others" act arbitrarily and in total impunity. In other words, a citizen is a cop in plain clothes, an unarmed cop of the cybernetic Empire, who thinks he has rights but is just fooling himself.

8. The "others" are those who aren't bothered about the bullshit PEOPLE call the "Law," who easily get around it with a slight,

annoyed gesture whenever it gets in their way, and change it at their leisure as needed for their profit and hegemony — which, moreover, is the only consistent position within a capitalist society. The most profitable cooperation is thus, of course, that of the mafias, the Statesmen, the capitalists, and the police; it's also the most natural. Meanwhile, PEOPLE will continue paying to have social-democratic and pacifist lullabies sung to the citizens so that they won't cry too much between one nightmare and the next. And that will continue on until the violence knocks at their own door, until someone sets fire to their bank, their car, their gas stations, their advertising-programmed dreams that never come true. And then the lullaby will change: "Don't worry, it's just the police infiltrating the demonstrators, or vice-versa; they're just nuts, it's whatever, it doesn't mean anything. But geez, it sure is horrible, look at all that blood; it ain't tomato sauce this time — not too pretty, is it? Well look out, because we'll do the same to you if you don't go to sleep, see? See? You ain't seen shit; go on, go beddy-bye!"

Affinity and election. Democracy is based on the idea that politics is the realm of *logos*, hence the proliferation of debates and the fetishism of discussion as a way of resolving conflicts — in an era when no one knows how to talk or listen anymore. Democracy thus ignores the fact that *the obvious assumptions about politics are never of a logical nature, but always of an ethical nature.* The essence of all community is not discursive but elective. The continued existence of "elections" within democracy is merely an expedient decoy: elections can only be a reciprocal movement, and certainly not the movement of *choice* in favor of those who are offering themselves for election. In this sense, electoral practices are not elective practices, because whoever's elected never chooses his

electors, has good reason to scorn them, and only listens to them during his campaign in order to better shut them up when he's in a position to manage them.

Everyone's alone together. What do a Berlin housewife, a Bologne electrician, the Helsinki punks, the Seattle schoolkids, and the Mestre autonomists have in common? Obviously *absolutely nothing* except the physical presence of all of them at the Prague counter-summit. They made themselves known over the 'net; they met up thanks to the "network" based on their having a common enemy (the IMF, the World Bank, the present management of the global economy, etc.). For one day they protested in separate processions against the parodic epiphany of the exploiter elite, and critiqued the global commodity from the other side of the world, only to go back home the next day and submit to the local commodity. They physically encountered one another for one day, and at best they'll write emails to each other now for the rest of their lives. Hence each of them will remain tightly, tranquilly wrapped in the chains of power, like fish on hooks, and will protest against a global injustice that they know nothing about except for whatever they get from reading newspaper reports. No one of course will get any ideas about protesting the corner newspaper salesman or the new leftist mayor; tomorrow they might be sitting next to us on an occupied train, speeding towards a new destination of global contestation.

As for the hopeless everyday fabricated by the big decisions made at these summits, *no one talks about it*. Politics is something *they* make, and something that *we* either put up with or put up resistance to. Wrong: in order for them to make their politics, they have to have already walked straight over our dead bodies. It's absurd to protest that it hurts when they tread on us; we have to

stand up, here and now, because at every moment they are organizing our deprivation of a future. That's what the "uncontrolled" ones say.

Only bodies can be governed. The management of bodies – of their health and their illness, their mobility and their sedentariness, their inventorying or their clandestinity – is the sole aim of the "global government."

Money, work, transportation, healthcare, housing, ID papers – these are just apparatuses, devices used by governments to control bodies.

Culture, spectacle, repression – these are but supplementary means of controlling the "souls" in bodies. Since there is such thing as soulless bodies but no such thing as bodiless souls, cultural conditioning in the final analysis targets bodies as well. It's because of my "killability" and nothing else that I am conditionable. When power shows its real face, it doesn't take aim at my soul; it strikes my body, because it is as a body that I am exposed, that I can be murdered or imprisoned. The rights of man are the parade, now a planetary one, intended to make us forget this obvious fact; to make us forget that the prohibition on violence is a contingent cultural factor necessary for the perpetuation of a *particular* regime of power and oppression that suits *certain* people and not others.

The monopoly on violence. To persuade the citizens that to defend themselves on their own is inhuman and bestial, that violence is an abomination to be permanently repressed until you become disgusted with yourself if needed – since "violence," after all, is as

much a part of human life as oxygen – has always been the dream of governments. Democracy has quite nearly realized that dream, while still occasionally reserving for itself the absurd privilege of calling men to kill and get killed in *its* wars.

Mobilization, not movement. In Prague, in order to make the merely physical convergence of incompatible forms-of-life possible, it was necessary to oil up not a war machine but an organizational machine. Though some of them were “armed” (with wooden sticks and plastic shields, or more simply with gas masks so as not to suffocate in the middle of all the tear gas), the majority of people in Seattle as well as in Prague said they were inspired by the romantic dream of innocent masses, unarmed and in the right, up against a few corrupt power mongers armed to the teeth. The reappropriation of violence that intervened all the same and which made the front page of all the newspapers was reported with astonishment, and unanimously condemned. That’s called dissociation, and it’s the primary toxic effect of citizen ideology. It proves quite quickly to be lethal.

In the wolf’s mouth. But if people refuse violence, why gather precisely where the apparatus of security proclaims itself to be unassailable and only “forcing” it is possible?

Prague was a “success,” we are told, because the iron jaws of power only clamped shut the second day, and not the first. Anyone who was impudent or careless enough to go for a stroll in the city with a non-conforming look about them the day after the protest had to pay a high price for taking it all so lightly.

So, why only gather under the most blinding floodlights of the spectacle, where the slightest real gesture will immediately be reproduced and amplified in a world-wide broadcast, until it becomes unreal and un-reproducible for anyone that wasn't there at the event? Isn't that separation of the space-time of the struggle from the space-time of life part of what we're fighting against?

Let's be clear: we are not against the riotous joy of Prague or Seattle. We are just against their uniqueness as epic sagas, which prevents us from repeating them everyday at home.

Where you're supposed to be. An aspect of repression that's rarely questioned and nevertheless is at the basis of all authoritarian logic is the idea that everyone has his *place*. Knowing how to *stay in your place*, both in space and in the hierarchies, is what guarantees you your security; and whoever *isn't in his place* has certainly spent time looking for it... It's taken for granted when you learn about society in school: the poor and exploited are supposed to liberate themselves, and the rich are supposed to guard and keep their privileges for themselves. And thus left out in all that is the dynamic character of the relations of domination, which makes the majority of the exploited fail to rebel and instead only work to make their lives similar to those of their bosses, carefully leading an existence that's just as counter-revolutionary as that of their bosses smoking their cigars in their leather armchairs. To adapt to the place of a boss or a slave now reinforces domination in the *exact same way*, since today being an employee or an employer shows an identical refusal of conflict in all its forms. No *place* in this society is revolutionary in itself anymore. The common person occupies the place of the placeless, and it's the only one anyone can revolt from.

That people physically move about serves as a powerful excuse for the police; if people get arrested they obviously must not have been in *their proper place*. But in such conditions, why not revolt right there *in your place*? Why, instead of protesting that we are treated like foreigners everywhere – which is precisely the Bloom condition – why don't we protest that our country and our neighborhoods are foreign to us and ours, that "our place" is not really our place, since we don't want such places, allocated to us so impersonally as they are? For only then will the chorus "our homeland is the whole world" will have some meaning again.

Barnum. After a kid who'd thrown some stones at the cops got shot twice in the back at Goteborg, Tony Blair said that we shouldn't let ourselves be swayed by the "traveling anarchist circus." And he was right, in a way; there's getting to be so much despair and unjust cruelty at the circus that soon no one will want to go buy tickets anymore.

The image of the kid stumbling away from the goggle-eyed cop that had just fired two shots into his kidney and liver, a kind of cinematic freeze-frame of the riot, has all the qualities of some B-movie. We're hardly all emotional about it, but we can surely believe it happened. We certainly wouldn't like to die like that, in front of a camera under the dumbfounded spectators' parasitic gaze. The end of heroes here is no longer just a phrase; it's a definite feeling. The commodity of revolt sells well on TV and in tabloid form, as long as it's well choreographed. You just gotta organize it right.

And the anti-globalization folks' whole production, Indymedia and whatnot? There's not even any rhythm to their action scenes.

Anyway, when the cops fire, power grabs the remote control.

And what if the next summit were in Qatar?

GAME OVER.

Dangerous Hooligans. Time goes by, and counter-summits change pace and rhythm. We got back from Genoa; the victim of Goteborg can walk again — he's lost ten kilos, but Carlo Giuliani will never move again. He lost his life — the police took it, as if they were taking suspect material in one of their search and seizure raids.

The most obvious thing that came to light in Genoa was neither the uncontrollable nature of the imperial police (the Italian Minister of the Interior declared the day after the massacre which took place the night of July 21st that he wasn't aware of the operation), nor the fact that the confrontation has gone to the next level (it's become murderous), but the definitive decline of the good old social-democratic joke. While the media the world over took pains to define as "criminal" these actions, which involved the destruction of automobiles, banks, commodities — in brief, *things* — and the appropriation of violence by a phantomlike "Black Bloc," the Berlusconi government was innocently starting to crack a mischievous smile of dictatorship.

The real plane of political consistency at the Genoa counter-summit was clearly that of the "violent ones" who alone grasped the stakes and the level of the "dialogue" taking place: the citizens marching peacefully for their rights were gassed, beaten, arrested, and generally treated like litter that needed to be swept up off the streets as fast as possible. The rioters, meanwhile, knew exactly where they were and what conditions they were operating in, and acted

with relative impunity – obviously they were quickly seen as suspect from the bad faith perspective of the “citizens.” When the Italian newspapers’ headlines blared, with no irony at all, that “the police and the Black Bloc charged at the march together,” they were in a way confusedly grasping a plane of consistency which pertains to the Imaginary Party, where infiltration quickly becomes futile: a cop provocateur is always a rioter too, whereas the opposite can never be proven; that’s why the reformists left Genoa so totally defeated and bewildered. The disquiet that washes over citizens when looking at photos of plainclothes cops, disguised as protestors in the one picture and serenely lined up alongside their colleagues in uniform in another, is not unlike the shock felt by a child upon realizing that the whole time it was just dad dressed up as Santa Claus in that rudimentary costume. Faced with the necessary and constitutive criminality of police power, those who still remain duped by democratic illusions gesticulate comically while begging to be reassured: “Tell us that the Black Bloc’s violence was just the effect of police provocation, but also tell us that the police are really good people, that they only beat the nice, well-meaning demonstrators by mistake, that they’re leaving the really mean demonstrators alone only because they’re their colleagues, and that either way they’re there to protect us.” From the citizen point of view, Genoa has to be reduced to a mere management issue, between good cops and bad cops: no way, dad couldn’t have lied to us; Santa Claus exists!

Trying to be present. The mobile terrain of non-rights, the poor but lively civil war of the riots, produces in reality another form of *political presence*, that of an “elsewhere” that has become embodied in a given place; that of a possibility that has suddenly been able to do without the improbable prosthesis of citizen delirium. Bodies

won out on the concrete scene of politics, against the hypostasis of the mystic body of the eight powerful nations, whose ability to represent them, exist, and decide in place of them they contest. The smashing and destruction in the streets were not an invitation to the media to focus on the protest rather than on the event being protested against; the numerous attacks on journalists prove that. Rather they show the protestors' urge to leave behind the false alternative of either accepting power as it is, or accepting the agreed-upon rules for transforming it, i.e., while preserving it.

Get out of that impasse, and it's no longer politics up in the heavens and the citizens down on the earth but a world that's already there, a world to be inhabited and traveled through. The reformist slogan, "another world is possible" which a lot of the anti-G8 protestors had on their T-shirts, only shows the extent of their resignation and ignorance: naturally, the issue isn't that other worlds are possible, but that *there are other worlds already*, living or asleep under the weight of the imperial apparatuses, and PEOPLE are waging wars against them. A few well-placed blows would be enough to bring out their potential, their sudden presence, and a little bit of audacity is enough to find the way leading to them.

The fact that the police apparatus in Genoa — which was prepared months and months in advance, with meetings among police and international intelligence organizations, and astronomical expenditures on fences, road blockades, expelling residents from the city — was a total failure from the strictly securitarian point of view, shows us a thing or two about both its implicit function and its real function. The cops, like the journalists, devour the present — and that's the only reason they are there. Whether it's a time-immobilization operation (a lengthy incarceration to prolong an

isolated act carried out at a precise moment) or the multiplication of a present which is not to be allowed to pass (indefinite reproduction, by image or text, of a unique and singular act), the cops and journalists chew away at the space of events, and cooperate with all the resources they have at their disposal to neutralize it.

The memories of those who in Genoa did not suffer the consequences of this ephemeral civil war in their bodies are stricken by a tragic unreality: both mediated time and repressive time diminish presence, disqualify the meaning and intensity it contains, and carry off its frozen image (the *proof*, the guarantee of “objectivity” for use by those who were passive and absent at the time of the events). The word *image* comes from the Latin *imago*, and originally referred to wax death masks. Whether the images from the counter-summits leave us indifferent or shock us, either way they simply participate in an apparatus for the production of confusion. What bodies taking action in the streets – and those who were just marching – should prove to us was that violent practice is the only way of regaining presence in the Empire, and that power fears exactly that. That’s how the fear of the police when confronted by the “Black Bloc,” and their incomprehensible loss of control, can be explained: it had to do with the disproportionate nature of the forces in play. As soon as bodies are more than just pale holograms of themselves, the police fire, because they have *already* lost control: they have proved incapable anymore of holding back *the presence of another world in acts*.

Anyone. The fear that recourse to a means prohibited by the democratic apparatus, but not really so threatening for all that, the balaclava, is the fear of anonymity, of anyone-ness. Certainly, the

Black Bloc does not exist: and that's because it exists *too much*. Behind the headscarves, the kaffiyehs, and the balaclavas, anybody could be hiding, or whoever does not separate him or herself out from the rest publicly, but perhaps also someone that actually does.

Behind the masked faces hides the desire of every citizen to no longer be controlled.

The riots in Genoa were intense without being epic, powerful without being heroic, and the police, who cannot conceive that "violence" might exist without organization, pathetically sought out the rumored "boss" of the no-less rumored "Black Bloc," thus adding up to one wish and two non-existences. Those who PEOPLE labeled as Black Blockers in Genoa were not all wearing black – PEOPLE even said that they were in black on the first day and not on the second, that they were dressed and masked in black in the moments of confrontation and not in the other marches, etc. The color black is itself a non-color, the sum of all other colors, the ordinary color par excellence. Whoever was found to be in possession of black clothes was a suspect individual during the days of the counter-summit; if someone's hiding their face, and thus has become anyone, indiscernible in the mass, they must have something to hide. In fact, anyone could have been in the Black Bloc, hence cops and neo-nazis could have been in it too, since in a zone of non-control there are simply no more subjects, which renders totally moot the question "who did what?" It hardly matters whether from the perspective of Control the zones of opacity to be imperfections to iron out, or holes deliberately pierced in the continuous fabric of surveillance: control does not see the event; it only sees subjects and the supposed consequences of their

actions. But in the anonymous space of a riot, there is only the event of the riot, which regulates according to its own rhythm the psycho-somatic continuum of the bodies involved en masse. A riot is not a space for exchange, nor speech, nor necessarily even for action; it is a space of presence, where bodies merge and subjects disappear into collusion with the Imaginary Party. The only truth that Power's will to knowledge will be able to extract from all this is the following: there is no intelligence of events except within them and at the moment they take place — all testimony misrepresents it, and all exteriority deforms it. Whoever wasn't present doesn't understand. Whoever was present has nothing to explain, because the space of anonymous rioting is a spread out space which cannot be interpreted, which sets itself up and erases itself against the subject, and thus against itself as a subject. All the declarations of what the Black Bloc's "intentions" were are thus reduced to nullity. The Black Bloc is not a subject, and so it can do anything and the opposite; any fifteen persons with totally different credos can easily dress in black (or white) and claim actions in the name of the Black Bloc or the Tute Bianche. The difference is that in the second case, there were bodies with names and a purpose that replaced the multitudes, saying "we're the tute bianche," and distinguished themselves from everything that had escaped them by hoping to confine the power of anyone-ness within a politically profitable representation. But they lost that bet before they even made it, because it's the same bet the police made, and which moreover was invoked by Casarini, to try to help PEOPLE throw some light on this zone of opacity, forgetting how twenty years ago in Italy somebody wanted to dry up the sea to take out all the fish and failed, because, as little children are told, "the sea has no end."

NO JUSTICE / NO PEACE / FUCK THE POLICE!

PARABELLUM

Yesterday we experienced a great day for democracy; every single segment of the march was basically charged at and assaulted, beaten, and shot at like rabbits by the forces of the State – democratically, of course, without distinction to sex, race, religion, political ideas, etc. – all the way until the execution on Piazza Alimonda.⁸¹

Those who over the last few months worked to reduce the Genoa manifestation to an innocent, inoffensive promenade for the media's cameras just like last year's, found themselves quite disoriented and could do nothing but condemn the events, calling for calm and for people to leave the streets, at the very moment when the streets were once again filled with the ancient song of revolt.

The Agnolettos, the Francescatos, the Casarinis, and the Farinas should be expelled from the movement because of the seriousness of their behavior and the declarations they made yesterday.

Contrary to what these stool-pigeons and their shepherd Bertinotti all say, the riots were not provoked by a few hundred elements foreign to the manifestation; they were a moment of large scale, determined involvement, thanks to which the arrogance of the State forces was successfully contained, and a large variety of concrete

⁸¹ The murder of Carlo Giuliani.

manifestations of death (above all the banks) and numerous commodity abominations were uprooted from the streets of Genoa.

In these events, pacifist ideology appeared for what it is: a lethal weakness. Why did the forces of order not dare to fire live ammunition in July 1960, in spite of all the violence, but yesterday they went ahead and did it? Because at the time they knew that they would have had to face a response suitable to meet the weight of such an offensive.

What happened yesterday cast a stark light on the borderline between the misty peaks of the Genoa Social Forum's demo-contractual ideology, the Tute Bianche & Co., and the earthly nature of social relations, where issues are never about *form* but about *force*. Louis "The Prisoner" Blanqui is still right, today as a hundred fifty years ago: "he who has iron, has bread."

We salute the Black Bloc and all the anonymous comrades who fought courageously.

A universal community of struggle emerged from yesterday's street rioting, which comprises the profound meaning of the action of men when they rise up against their domination by State and Capital.

Yes to the real movement, and to all behaviors that break with passivity.

We are even more resolute today than we were yesterday!

-a few individuals who support the human community.

Genoa, July 21st, 2001.

HOW IS IT TO BE DONE?

Don't know what I want, but I know how to get it.

– Sex Pistols, *Anarchy in the UK*

I.

TWENTY YEARS. Twenty years of *counter-revolution*.

Of *preventive* counter-revolution.

In Italy.

And elsewhere.

Twenty years of a sleep studded with fences, haunted by security guards. A sleep of *bodies*, imposed by curfew.

Twenty years. The past does not pass. Because the war continues. Ramifies. Extends.

In a global reticulation of local apparatuses. In a newfound calibration of subjectivities.

Within a new superficial peace.

An *armed* peace

crafted to cover the uncoiling of an imperceptible civil war.

Twenty years ago, there was punk, the Movement of '77, the "area" of Autonomy, the metropolitan Indians and diffuse guerrilla warfare.

All at once there sprung up,

as if issuing from some underground region of civilization,

an entire counter-world of subjectivities

that no longer wanted to consume, that no longer wanted to produce,

that no longer even wanted to be subjectivities.

The revolution was molecular, and so was the counter-revolution.

On the offensive, THEY set up,

then left in place,

an entire complex machine to neutralize all that carries intense charge. A machine for defusing all that *might* explode.

All the individuals that pose a risk,
the intractable bodies,
the autonomous human aggregations.

Then came twenty years of foolishness, vulgarity,
isolation. and desolation.

How is it to be done?

Get back up. *Pick your head up.* By choice or by necessity.
No matter, really, from now on.

Look each other in the eyes and say we are starting over.

Let everyone know it, as quickly as possible.

We are starting over.

We are done with passive resistance, inner exile. conflict through subtraction, survival. We are starting over. In twenty years, we have had time to see. We have understood. Democracy for all, the "anti-terrorist" struggle, the State massacres, the capitalist restructuring and its Great Work of social purging,

by selection,

by precariousness,

by normalization,

by "modernization."

We have seen, we have understood. The means and the ends. The future held in store for us. The one we have been denied. The state of exception. The law that puts the police, civil servants, public officials above the law. The growing judicialization, psychiatrization, the medicalization of all that is out of bounds. Of all that *flees*. We have seen. We have understood. The means and the ends.

When power establishes its own legitimacy in real time,
when its violence becomes preventive
and its right is a "right to intervene,"
then it is now useless to be right. To be right *against it*.
One must be stronger, or more clever.
This is also why
we are starting over.

To start over is never to begin *something* again. Nor
to pick up things where they had been left off. What one
begins again is always *something else*. Is always
unprecedented. Because it is not the past that drives us,
but precisely what in it

has not

happened.

And because it is also *ourselves*, then, that we start over
with.

To begin again means: to exit the suspension. To
reestablish contact between our becomings.

To start out from,
once again,
wherever we are, now.

For instance, there are some rackets
that THEY will not pull on us anymore.

The "society" racket. Transform it. Destroy it.
Make it better.

The social pact racket. That some would break
and others pretend to "restore" it.

These rackets, THEY will not pull them on us anymore.
You have to be a militant element of the planetary petty
bourgeoisie,
a *citizen* really

Not to see that it, society, no longer
exists.

That it has imploded. That it is nothing more than
an argument for the terror of those who claim to
re/present it.

This society that has turned up missing.

All that is social has become foreign to us.

We consider ourselves absolutely unbound to any
obligation, to any prerogative, to any belonging that is
social.

"Society,"

is the name the Irreparable has often received
from those who also wanted to turn it into
the Unassumable.

He who refuses this lure will have to take
a step to the side.

To perform

a slight shift away

from the logic common

to Empire and to its contestation,

that of *mobilization*,

A step to the side of their common temporality,

that of *urgency*.

Starting over means: inhabiting this gap. To take on the capitalist schizophrenia as a kind of growing capacity for *desubjectivization*.

To desert *while keeping arms*.

To flee, imperceptibly:

Starting over means: to rally social secession, opacity, to enter

into demobilization,

Ripping off, from this or that imperial network of production-consumption, the means to live and fight in order, at the chosen moment, to scuttle it.

We speak of a new war,

a new war of *partisans*. With neither front nor uniform, with neither army nor decisive battle.

A war whose focii concentrate themselves away from the commercial flows, while still remaining plugged in to them.⁸²

We speak of a completely latent war. That *has time*.

Of a war of *position*.

That is waged here where we are.

In the name of no one.

In the name of our own existence, which has no name.

⁸² Alternatively translated "A guerrilla whose *focos* concentrate themselves..." by Tiqqunista

Perform this slight shift.

No longer fear our time.

"Not to fear one's time is a question of space."

In a squat. In an orgy. In a riot. In a train or an occupied village. In search of, amid unknowns, a free party that is unfindable. I experience this slight shift.

The experience

of my desubjectivization. I *become*

a whatever singularity. Some *play* opens up between my presence and the whole apparatus of qualities that are ordinarily attached to me.

In the eyes of a being who, being present, wants to assess me for what I am, I savor the disappointment, his disappointment in seeing me become so *common*, so perfectly *accessible*. In the gestures of another, it is an unexpected complicity.

All that isolates me as a *subject*, as a body endowed with a public configuration of attributes, I feel it founder. Bodies brush up against each other at their edges. At their edges, are indistinct. Neighborhood after neighborhood, the whatever lays waste to equivalence. And I reach a new nakedness, a nakedness that is not my own, as if clothed in love.

Does one ever escape alone from the prison of the Self?

In a squat. In an orgy. In a riot. In a train or an occupied village. We meet again.

We meet again

as whatever singularities. That is to say not on the basis of a common belonging, but of a *common presence*.

Thus is
our *need for communism*. The need for nocturnal spaces,
where we can
meet up
beyond
our predicates.

Beyond the *tyranny* of recognition. Which imposes
re/cognition as the *final* distance between bodies.

As an unavoidable separation.

Everything THEY – fiancé, family, environment,
business, the State, public opinion – recognize in
me, THEY use to seize hold of me.

By constantly reminding me of what I am, of my
qualities, THEY would like to abstract me from each
situation. In every circumstance, THEY would like
to extort from me a fidelity to myself which is a
fidelity to my predicates.

THEY expect that I should act as a man, as an
employee, as an unemployed person, as a mother,
as an activist, or as a philosopher.

THEY want to contain within the bounds of an
identity the unpredictable flow of my becomings.

THEY want to convert me to the religion of a coherence
that THEY chose for me.

The more I am *recognized*, the more my gestures
are hindered, hindered *from within*. And here I am
caught in the ultra-tight meshwork of the new
power. In the impalpable snares of the new police:
THE IMPERIAL POLICE OF QUALITIES.

There is a whole network of apparatuses that I slip into
in order to "integrate" myself, and which
incorporate in me these qualities.

A whole little system of filing, identification, and mutual
policing.

A whole diffuse prescription of absence.

A whole machinery of comport/mental control, aiming
toward panopticism, toward transparent
privatization, toward atomization.

And in which I struggle.

I need to become anonymous. In order to be present.

The more I am anonymous, the more I am present.

I need zones of indistinction

in order to reach the Common.

To no longer *recognize* myself in my name. To no longer
hear in my name anything but the voice that calls it.

To give consistency to the *how* of beings, not what they
are, but *how* they are what they are. Their form-of-life.

I need zones of opacity where attributes,
even criminal, even brilliant,
no longer separate bodies.

Become whatever. Becoming a whatever *singularity*
is not given.

Always possible, but never given.

There is a *politics* of whatever singularity.

Which consists in tearing back from Empire
the conditions and the means,
even interstitial,

to experience yourself as such.

This is a politics, because it presupposes a capacity
for confrontation,

and because a new human aggregation
corresponds to it.

Politics of whatever singularity: freeing up these spaces where an action is no longer assignable to any given body.

Where bodies rediscover their aptitude for *gesture*, something that the canny distribution of metropolitan apparatuses—computers, automobiles, schools, cameras, mobile phones, sports arenas, hospitals, televisions, cinemas, etc.—had stolen from them.

By recognizing them.

By immobilizing them.

By letting them spin against nothing.

By making the head exist separately from the body.

Politics of whatever singularity.

A becoming-whatever is more revolutionary than any kind of being-whatever.

Liberating spaces liberates us a hundred times more than any kind of "liberated space."

More than putting a power into action, I enjoy the circulation of my potentiality.

The politics of whatever singularity lies in the offensive. In the circumstances, the moments, and the places where we tear away

the circumstances, the moments, and the places

for such an anonymity,

for a momentary halt in a state of simplicity,

the chance to extract from all our forms *the pure adequation to presence*,

the chance to be, at last,

here.

II.

HOW IS IT TO BE DONE? Not *what is to be done?*

How to? A question of means.

Not a question of goals, or *objectives*,

of what there is to do, strategically, in the absolute.

A question of what one *can* do, tactically; in a situation,
and of the *acquisition* of this power.

How is it to be done? How to desert? How does it work?

How to conjugate my wounds with communism?

How to stay at war without losing our tenderness?

The question is technical. Not a problem. Problems
are profitable.

The experts live off them.

A question.

Technical. Which requires in turn the question of
transmission techniques for those techniques.

How is it to be done? The result always belies the goal.

Because to set a goal

is still a means,

another means.

What Is to Be Done? Babeuf, Chernyshevsky, Lenin.

Classical virility demands an analgesic, a mirage,
something. A *means* to ignore oneself a bit more.

As a presence.

As a form-of-life. As a being in a *situation*,

endowed with inclinations.

Determined inclinations.

What is to be done? Voluntarism as the ultimate nihilism.

As the nihilism appropriate
to *classical virility*.

What is to be done? The answer is simple: submit once again to the logic of mobilization, to the temporality of urgency. Under pretext of rebellion. Set down ends, words. Tend toward their accomplishment. Toward the accomplishment of *words*. In the meantime, put off existing. Bracket yourself. Dwell in the exception of self. Separated from time. That passes. That does not pass. That stops. Until... Until the next. End.

What is to be done? In other words: useless to live. Everything you have not lived, History will give back to you.

What is to be done? It is the forgetting of the self projected onto the world.
As a forgetting of the world.

How is it to be done? The question is *how*. Not *what* a being, a gesture, a thing *is*, but *how* it is what it is. How its predicates relate to it.

And it to them.

Let it be. Leave the gap between the subject and its predicates. The *abyss* of presence.

A man is not "a man." "White horse" is not "horse."

A question of *how*. Attention to the *how*. Attention to the way a woman is, and is not, a woman—it takes apparatuses to make "a woman" of a sexually female being, or "a Black" of a man with black skin.

Attention to *ethical difference*. To the *ethical* element. To the irreducibilities that traverse it. What

happens between bodies during an occupation is more interesting than the occupation itself. *How is it to be done?* means that military confrontation with Empire must be subordinated to the intensification of relations within our party. That the political is only a certain degree of intensity *amidst* the ethical element. That revolutionary war should no longer be confused with its representation: the raw moment of combat.

Question of *how*. Become attentive to the taking-place of things, of beings. To their event. To the obstinate and silent salience of their own temporality beneath the planetary flattening of all temporalities by the time of urgency. The "*What is to be done?*" as programmatic ignorance of all that. As inaugural formula for frantically falling out of love.

The "*What is to be done?*" returns. For some years now. Since the middle of the nineties, not just since Seattle.

A revival of *critique* pretends to confront Empire with slogans, recipes from the sixties. Except that this time, they're faking it. Innocence, indignation, good conscience, and the need for society are simulated. The old gamut of social-democratic affects are back in circulation. *Christian* affects. And once again, there are demonstrations. Desire-killing demonstrations. Where nothing happens.

That only demonstrate
a collective absence.
Forever.

For those nostalgic for Woodstock, weed, May '68
and militancy, there are counter-summits. THEY
have rebuilt the facades, minus the possible.
This is what the "*What Is to Be Done?*" demands
today: go to the ends of the earth to contest the
global commodity
only to come back, after a long bath of unanimity
and mediatized separation,
and submit to the local commodity.
Once back, there's a photo in the paper ... Everyone
alone together! ... Once upon a time ...
These young people! ...
Too bad for the few living bodies that strayed there,
searching in vain for a space for their desire.
They come back a little more bored.
A little more empty. Worn out.
From counter-summit to counter-summit,
they will figure it out. Or not.

Empire can't be faulted for its management. You
can't *critique* Empire.
You *oppose* its forces. Wherever you are.
Giving your opinion on some alternative, going
wherever ONE calls us — this no longer makes
sense. There is no global project that would be an
alternative to the global project of Empire. Because
there is no global project of Empire.
There is an *imperial management*.
There is no good management.

Those who call for another society would do better
by beginning to see that there is no longer such a thing.
And maybe then they'll stop being managers-in-training.
Citizens. *Indignant* citizens.

You can't take the global order for an enemy.
Not directly.
For the global order has no place. To the contrary.
It is the order of non-places.
It is perfect not because it is global, but because
it is *globally local*. The global order is the warding off
of every event, it is the complete, authoritarian
occupation of the local.
You can only oppose the global order *locally*. By
extending shadowy zones over the maps of Empire.
And by progressively putting them into contact.
Underground.

The coming politics. Politics of local insurrection
against global management. The triumph of presence
over absence to self. Over the imperial estrangement
of the citizen.

Presence triumphing through theft, fraud, crime,
friendship, enmity, conspiracy.

*Through the elaboration of modes of life
that are also modes of struggle.*

Politics of taking-place.

Empire *does not take place*. It administers absence
through a hovering threat of police intervention.
Whoever tries to measure up against the imperial
adversary will be preventively annihilated.
From now on, to be perceived is to be defeated.

Learn to become indiscernible. Blend in. Revive the taste
for anonymity,
for promiscuity.
Renounce distinction
in order to evade repression:
arrange for the most favorable conditions
of confrontation.
Become crafty. Become pitiless. To do so,
become whatever.

How is it to be done? is a question for the lost children.
Those who haven't been told. Whose gestures are
awkward. To whom nothing has been *given*. Whose
creatureness, whose wandering never stops revealing
itself.

The coming revolt is the revolt of lost children.
The transmission line of history has snapped.
Orphans of the revolutionary tradition itself.
The worker's movement above all. The worker's
movement that was transformed into an instrument of
greater integration into the Process. Into the new,
cybernetic, Process of social valorization.
In 1978, in the name of this Process, the Italian
Communist Party, the "party with clean hands,"
started hunting down Autonomia.
In the name of its classist conception of the
proletariat, its mysticism of society, its respect for
work, the useful and the decent.
In the name of defending "democratic gains" and
the rule of law.
The worker's movement that survived up to *operaismo*.
Sole existing critique of capitalism *from the point of view of*
Total Mobilization.

Formidable and paradoxical doctrine,
that ended up saving objectivist Marxism by only
speaking of "subjectivity."
That introduced new refinements in the denegation of the
how,
The reabsorption of the gesture in its product.
The allergy of the *future anterior*.
That everything *will have been*.

Critique has become vain. Critique has
become vain because it amounts to an absence.
With the dominant order, everyone knows what to expect.
We no longer need critical theory. We no longer need
teachers. From now on, critique works for domination.
Even the critique of domination.
It reproduces absence. It speak to us from where we are
not. It drives us somewhere else. It consumes us.
It is cowardly.
And stays safe
when it sends us to slaughter.
Secretly in love with its object, it never stops lying to us.
Hence such brief affairs between proletarians and
committed intellectuals.
Marriages of convenience, *reasonable*, where neither has
the same idea of pleasure or freedom.
Rather than new critiques, new cartographies are what we
need.
Cartographies not for Empire, but for lines of flight out of
it.
How is it to be done? We need maps. Not maps of what is
off the map.
We need navigation maps. *Maritime* maps. Tools
for *orientation*. That don't try to say or represent

what is within different archipelagoes of desertion,
but show us how to meet up with them.

Portolan charts.



IT IS Tuesday; March 17, 1996, just before dawn.
The ROS (Special Operations Group) co-ordinates
the arrest up and down the peninsula
of 70 Italian anarchists.

Their aim is to put an end to 15 years of fruitless
investigations of insurrectional anarchists.

The technique is well-known: fabricate a "turn-coat,"
have him disclose the existence of a vast, hierarchical
organization of subversives.

Then, on the basis of this made-up construction,
accuse everyone you want to neutralize of being
part of it.

Once again, drain the sea to catch some fish.

Even when it's only a small pond.

And small fry.

An ROS "internal memorandum" was leaked
regarding this affair.

It revealed the strategy.

Founded on the principles of General Dalla Chiesa,
the ROS is a classic example of the imperial agency
of counter-insurrection.

It works on the population.

Wherever some intensity occurs, wherever
something happens, it is the "French Doctor"⁸³ of
the situation. The one who unfurls,

⁸³ A reference to Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of *Médecins
du Monde*.

claiming it is a preventive measure,
the *cordon sanitaires* that will isolate
the contagion.

When it's scared, it says so. In this document, it
spells it out. What it's scared of is the "swamp of
political anonymity."

Empire is afraid.

Empire is afraid that we'll become whatever.

A delimited space,
a fighting force. These it has no fear of. It is afraid
of an expansive constellation of squats, of self-
managed farms, collective houses, *fine a se stesso*
gatherings, radios, skills, and ideas. The whole
bound together by an intense circulation of bodies
and affects between
bodies. Which is something else entirely.

Conspiracy of bodies. Not critical minds, but *critical*
corporealities. That's what Empire is scared of.

That's what's slowly coming about,
with the increasing flow
of social defection.

There is an opacity inherent to the *contact* between bodies.
And that is incompatible with the imperial reign of a light
that no longer illuminates things
except to break them down.

Zones of Offensive Opacity do not have
to be created.

They are already there, in any kind of relation that brings
about a veritable
putting into play of bodies.

What's needed is to *embrace* the fact that we take
part in this opacity. And to give ourselves the

means to spread it,
defend it.

Everywhere you manage to sidestep the imperial apparatuses, to ruin all the daily work of Biopower and the Spectacle in order to extricate a fraction of citizens from the population. To isolate new *untorelli*.⁸⁴ In this indistinction that's won back, an autonomous ethical tissue, a secessionist plane of consistency spontaneously forms.

Bodies gather. Get their breath back. Conspire. That such zones are doomed to be flattened militarily means little. What matters is that each time we arrange a fairly secure escape route. In order to gather together again elsewhere. Later.

Behind the question "*What is to be done?*" was the myth of the general strike.

Answering the question *How is it to be done?* is the practice of the HUMAN STRIKE.

The general strike says that operations are limited in space and time,

a piecemeal alienation, thanks to a recognizable, and therefore defeatable, enemy.

The human strike corresponds to an era when the borders between work and life have become blurred.

⁸⁴ "Plague-carriers," a term used by the Italian Communist Party to describe *Autonomia*, and the subject of a 1977 issue of the journal *Recherches*, edited by Felix Guattari

When consuming and surviving,
producing "subversive texts» and protecting against
the most toxic effects of industrial civilization,
playing sports, making love, being a parent or
being on Prozac.

Everything is work.

For Empire manages, digests, absorbs and reintegrates all
that lives.

Even "what I am," the subjectivation I don't refute

hic et nunc,

all is productive.

Empire has put everything to work.

Ideally, my professional profile will coincide with my own
face.

Even if it's not smiling.

The grimaces of the rebel sell quite well, after all.

Empire is when the means of production have become the
means of control and the means of control the means of
production.

Empire signifies that henceforth the political moment
dominates the economic moment.

And the general strike is powerless against it.

What must be opposed to Empire is
the human strike.

Which never attacks the relations of production without
attacking at the same time the affective relations that
sustain it.

Which undermines the unavowable libidinal economy,
restores the ethical element — the how — repressed in
every contact between neutralized bodies.

The human strike is the strike that, whenever THEY
expect

this or that predictable reaction,
some contrite or indignant tone,
PREFERS NOT TO.

Slips away from the apparatus. Saturates it, or
blows it away.

Gets ahold of itself, preferring
something else.

Something else that is not limited to the possibilities
authorized by the apparatus.

At the counter of some government office, at the
checkout counter of some grocery store, in a polite
conversation, when the cops intervene,
following the relations of force,
the human strike gives consistency
to the space between bodies,
pulverizes the *double bind* that holds them,
drives them to presence.

A new Luddism must be invented, a Luddism against the
human gears
that turn the wheels of Capital.

In Italy, radical feminism was an embryonic form of the
human strike.

"No more mothers, wives or daughters, let's destroy the family!"

was an invitation to make the gesture of breaking the
predictable chains of events,
of liberating compressed possibilities.

It targeted shitty affective exchanges, everyday
prostitution.

It was a call to get beyond the couple, the elementary unit
of the management of alienation.

Call for complicity, then.

Practice that is untenable without circulation, without
contagion.

The women's strike implicitly called for a strike by men and children, called to empty the factories, schools, offices and prisons, to reinvent for each situation another way of being—another *how*.

In the 1970s, Italy was an enormous human strike zone. Self-reductions, holdups, squatted neighborhoods, armed demonstrations, pirate radio, untold cases of "Stockholm syndrome," even the famous letters sent by Moro when he was a hostage, toward the end, practiced the human strike. Back men, me Stalinists were talking about "diffuse irrationality," which says it all.

There are also writers for whom it is always the human strike. In Kafka, in Walser; or in Michaux, for example.

Acquire *collectively* the ability to shake out the familiar.

The art of feeling at home with the most uncanny of all guests.

In the present war, where Capital's emergency reformism has to don the revolutionary's clothes to make itself heard, where the most democratic combats, the counter-summits, have recourse to direct action,

A role awaits us.

That of the martyrs of the democratic order,
which preventatively strikes every body that *might*
strike it.

I should sing the song of the victim. Since,
we all know,
everyone is victim, even the oppressors.
And savor the masochism whose discrete circulation
makes the situation magical again.

Today, the human strike means
refusing to play the role of victim.
Attacking it.

Reappropriating violence.

Appropriating impunity.

Alerting the stoned citizenry
that if they don't join in the war
they are at war all the same.

That when ONE tells us it's either this or death,
it's always
actually
this *and* death.

So,
from human strike
to human strike, spread
the insurrection,
where there's nothing but,
where we are all,
whatever
singularities.

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