

# KING MOB ECHO



**I am nothing but I must be everything**

**— Karl Marx**



# THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

So much has changed  
perhaps the message is instability  
permanent instability in the mind  
corresponding to the permanent revolution in things  
instability to be accepted as an eternal truth  
like Heraclitean flux —

But in this Heraclitean flux, or fire,  
there is for me also a Heraclitean Logos  
the logos, the word, is One, or oneness  
unity  
unification  
the unification of the human race.

Logos seeks unification; and the fact it faces is  
Division —

Alienation, in the old Marxist vocabulary  
the rents, the splits, in the newer Freudian vocabulary  
the schisms  
the schizophrenia.

Now — if I may make a Great Leap Forward —  
alienation is schizophrenia

The outcome of the collision between Marx and Freud  
is their unification  
the perception of the analogy between the two  
the analogy between social and psychic  
society and soul  
body and body politic.

In the mythology of Marxism, the revolution is from  
below :  
Those lower classes, lower depths, are the depths of  
depth psychology  
an underworld repressed by the bourgeois ego  
a cauldron of energy and violence with the lid on  
an anonymous mass, or social id —

If you take the psychoanalytical idea of projection  
seriously  
the proletariat (if and when we perceive one) is us  
projected  
a collective projection  
a collective dream, or nightmare.

If you take the psychoanalytical idea of projection  
seriously  
the ego constructs itself by projecting the other  
the ego constructs itself by drawing an imaginary line  
between inside and outside  
an imaginary boundary-line.  
And this imaginary boundary-line is the reality-  
principle  
The reality-principle is the distinction between inner  
world and external reality

and it is a false distinction.  
"The false reality-principle"  
This is to take psychoanalysis more seriously than the  
psychoanalysts do  
or to pass beyond psychoanalysis  
Beyond the reality-principle is poetry  
taking metaphors seriously  
(metaphors and analogies)  
that way madness lies.

The disintegration of the boundary-line  
between inner and outer  
self and other  
is the disintegration of the ego  
the disintegration of the ego of the ego-psychologists  
in Marxist terms, the disintegration  
of the bourgeois ego  
of bourgeois individualism  
or, alienation overcome —  
The split between inside and outside  
is the primal split  
is the origin of alienation.

Already in Marxism  
the intellectual was to go to the masses  
bourgeois individualism, the separate self, was to  
be drowned in the proletarian ocean  
Marxist thought substitutes for the reality of individuals  
the reality of classes  
but classes, as external realities, mutually external,  
are not real either.  
It all really takes place in one body.  
Marx, who, like Freud, is a genius who surpasses his  
own limitations, once said : "The head of this eman-  
cipation is philosophy, its heart the proletariat."  
He means ego and id. Of course proletariat, if you look  
at the word, must also be genital.

At any rate, it all takes place in one body  
one body that has been mysteriously dismembered  
and needs to be remembered  
to knit again these broken limbs into one body.  
It must be some kind of embrace  
overcoming alienation.  
Emerson used to say, There is only one Man —  
After Emerson, what happened, on the American  
continent, to this intuition?

To perceive that it all really takes place in one body  
is to transvalue the old political categories  
to pass from politics to metapolitics  
or poetry.  
The proletariat is dead  
but the proletariat is us  
long live the proletariat.



He was one of the quiet kind, a person a friend could speak of as a "peaceful man, devoted to his family". Leo A. Held was a father of four who had put in service in the village of Loganton, Pa., as a school-board member, a Boy Scout leader and a volunteer fireman. On the job at the Hammermill Paper Co. in nearby Lock Haven, he invariably went right to work, without a word, testing paper for quality. At this he was methodical, dependable, efficient and, above all, forgettable — until last week.

After seeing three children off to school (the fourth is in college) and his wife Alta, 36, off to her secretarial job, Held showed up at the Hammermill plant right on time. This time he carried a .45-caliber automatic pistol in one hand and a .38-caliber magnum revolver in the other, and as the 6-foot, 200-pounder strode among his friends he displayed the same icy method that he practised in the testing lab. With cool selectivity Held shot down nine colleagues-five of them supervisors who had been promoted over him. Then he calmly walked out of the plant and drove his station wagon 3 miles to the Lock Haven airport, where he critically wounded Mrs Geraldine Ramm, a switchboard operator — and member of a car pool that had once "blackballed" Held for driving recklessly.

After that Held drove by a back-road to Loganton, walked into the house of a neighbour, Floyd D. Quiggle, a self-employed trucker who was still in bed with Mrs Quiggle. Held had recently complained to the Quiggles about their leaf burning; he did not like the smoke. Held shot them as they lay in bed. Leaving Quiggle dead and Mrs Quiggle critically injured with neck and face wounds, Leo Held grabbed some ammunition and several rifles from Quiggle's gun collection before dashing to his own home across the street.

He barely made it before the police arrived...

He dashed out his back door, with a pistol in each hand. A single police bullet crunched into his thigh and felled him. When police called on him to surrender Held called back ambiguously: "Come and get me. I've had enough. I'm tired of taking all this bull..."

It was all over by 9.25 a.m. and the Lock Haven-Loganton region was left to mourn six citizens dead and six wounded and to ponder one of those essentially insoluble puzzles. Why had Leo Held done it? "I don't think they are ever going to find a motive", said Clinton County District Attorney Allan W. Lugg...

— *Newsweek*, 6-11-67

There is an inner Bastille to be captured  
to release the prisoners  
or rather, the inner and the outer Bastille is the same  
Bastille  
or rather, the distinction between inner and outer is  
the Bastille

the false reality-principle  
the government of the reality-principle,  
to be overthrown  
and the revolution is a visionary break-through  
or poetry  
or madness.

Revolution really is madness  
political revolutions  
The French Revolution, the Russian Revolution  
Ten Days that Shook the World  
The Great Cultural Revolution  
all the pathology of the twentieth century  
the madness of the millenia breaking out,  
as Nietzsche prophesied —  
The problem really is madness  
There is a point where Marat and Sade are one.

What to do with madness  
The political solution to the problem of madness is  
divide and conquer  
segregation and repression  
(like in asylums)  
perpetual conflict  
The political revolution is a temporary break-down  
followed by the reinstitution of repression  
a cycle of explosion and repression  
activity and passivity  
in eternal recurrence  
Perpetual conflict is the rule of politics

the reality-principle  
the world as we know it  
Is there any alternative?

A metapolitical solution to the problem of madness  
would see politics as madness  
and madness as the solution to politics.  
Breaking down the boundaries is breaking down the  
reality-principle  
unification lies beyond the reality-principle  
the communion is Dionysian.  
Madness is even the solution to the problem of madness  
it is sanity that needs to be saved  
(I don't mean, save your sanity)  
it was the greatness of Freud to see through, to bore  
through, the wall separating sanity and insanity  
it is all a problem of communication  
the poet says, Madness is oneness lost  
But oneness regained is madness also.

Can we liberate instead of repress  
Can we find a way of being permanently unstable—  
Emerson says:  
"Whenever man comes, there comes revolution"  
there is that great flame  
It is the idea of permanent revolution  
But permanent revolution cannot be political revolution  
permanent political revolution is fratricide,  
or suicide,  
it is the situation we are in now  
the situation we are trying to escape from  
To save the revolution it must be given a metapolitical  
meaning  
as madness, or poetry  
uninterrupted poetry:  
surrealism, to stamp out reality.



Madness and Civilisation

a very serious question

Here I differ from one of your sages

B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (202) :

"Nothing comes from general frothing at  
the mouth"

I have done some frothing in my time  
and some shaking or quaking is testimony

to the need for liberation

to the uncomfortableness of culture

It is possible that the future is a contented humanity  
without neurotics like me

but I don't think so

I don't think the future is behavioural engineering  
getting rid of unhappiness, maladjustment,  
madness.

My utopia is

an environment that works so well

that we can run wild in it

anarchy in an environment that works

the environment works, does all the work

a fully automatic environment

all public utilities

or communication-networks

(the engineering contribution to unification;

unification is also a matter of engineering)

Wasn't there a divinely absurd anticipation in Marx,  
or Engels, saying that the government of persons will  
be replaced by the administration of things —

The environment can do all the work

Serious thought,

thought as work,

in pursuit of *Wirklichkeit*,

is about over

*Wirklichkeit*, the German word for reality, the reality-  
principle

The reality-principle is about over.

Thought as work can be buried in machines and  
computers

the work left to be done is to bury thought; quite  
a job

To put thought underground

as communication-network, sewage system, power lines

so that wildness can come above ground

technological rationality can be put to sleep

so that something else can awaken in the human mind

something like the god Dionysus

something which cannot be programmed.

The ordering of the physical environment will release  
unparalleled quantities and forms of human disorder

The future, if there is one, is machines and madness.

*What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?*

*What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?*

The struggle should not be, is no longer, really, the  
struggle for existence.

But unification is not only a matter of engineering.

Marshall McLuhan is taken by some to mean that  
technology is bringing us into a global village

Buckminster Fuller is taken by some to mean that  
technology is bringing us a global network of

public services

But there is some obstruction

some obstacle impeding the free flow of  
unification

political divisions, boundaries

but, at a deeper level, the reality-principle  
the boundary between Self and Other

the logic which divides

which most people think is reason itself,  
or rationality

Rationality and the reality-principle are obstacles  
to unification.

But fortunately there is a disturbance in the house of  
reason

Ever since the age of reason something like

a collective break-down

has been taking place

a destruction of reason

a destruction in which intellect must immerse

in order that the disintegration of the ego may be the

birth of some kind of collective consciousness

in order that the logic of division may give way to the  
logos of union

The logos of union whose name, or one of whose names  
is, ever since the time of Hegel,

dialectics

We are still Hegel's contemporaries

even in America, as Emerson knew

living in the last days, the end of history

the age of revolution and apocalypse

And therefore in that No Man's Land between  
reason and madness

which is dialectics.

*Reason and Revolution* is really Reason and Madness

Dialectics is the revolt against rationalism

the discovery that self-contradiction is the essence of  
reality

the opening to the absurd

Dialectics is intellect seeking union with energy

in Marx, philosophy seeking union with the

proletariat

in Freud, ego seeking union with id

In dialectics nothing is stable, movement is all

a logic of passion

Mandelstam in Russia in 1921 (Mandelstam, not

Lenin; a poet not a politician): "A new heroic

era has opened in the life of the word. The word

is flesh and bread. It shares the fate of bread and

flesh: suffering."

Dialectics is a dialectic of life against death

death is a part of life

like Freud, Hegel says the goal of all life is death:

"The nature of the finite lies in this,

that it dissolves itself"

it must go under

this is self-contradiction in practice, in action—

Hegel, *Phenomenology*: "Not the life that shrinks

from death and keeps itself undefiled by devastation

(*Werwüstung*), but the life that suffers death and

preserves itself in death is the life of the Spirit. Spirit

gains its truth by finding itself in absolute dismem-

berment (*Zerrissenheit*).

Dismemberment, absolute dismemberment



the Spirit is Dionysus, the god who is dismembered  
 Dionysus, or schizophrenia  
 schizophrenia is spirit in absolute dismemberment  
*déchirement ontologique*  
 Dionysus is also union, communion  
 Dialectics is the dissolution of all partial statements  
 till they are lost in the whole  
 "the truth is in the whole"  
 And the union or communion is madness  
 Dialectics is drunkenness or dancing  
 the Bacchanalian revel of the categories in which not  
 one member is sober.

Hegel nevertheless made a Hegelian system  
 and Marx also made a system

and so did Freud; at least the Freud whom the  
 Psychoanalytical Associations worship  
 Systems, Marxist, Freudian, can be, as they say,  
 flexible

But flexibility is not enough —  
 Mind, or spirit, or life, must learn how to die  
 it must go under  
 All these systems have immortal longings on them  
 that is why they are dead  
 born dead  
 representing from the hour of the birth  
 the dead hand of the past  
 The flexibility is wriggling to avoid death  
 what they mean by rationality is, don't die  
 be consistent —



## BLACK ANARCHY: PILLAGE AS THE NATURAL RESPONSE TO THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY

The Negroes of Los Angeles — like the young delinquents of all advanced countries, but more radically because at the level of a class globally deprived of a future, a sector of the proletariat unable to believe in any significant chance of integration and promotion — take modern-capitalist propaganda, with its display of abundance, LITERALLY. They want to possess IMMEDIATELY all the objects shown off and made abstractly accessible: they want to MAKE USE of them. That is why they reject their exchange-value—the COMMODITY-REALITY which is their mould, purpose and final goal, and which has PRESELECTED everything. Through theft and gift they retrieve a use which at once gives the lie to the oppressive rationality of commodities, disclosing their relations and invention as arbitrary and unnecessary. Plunder is the simplest possible realization of the hybrid principle: "To each according to his (false) needs" — needs determined and

produced by the economic system, which the act of pillage rejects. But the fact that the vaunting of affluence is taken at its face value and discovered in the immediate instead of being eternally pursued in the course of alienated labour and in the face of increasing but unmet social needs — this fact means that real needs are expressed in carnival, playful affirmation and the POTLATCH of destruction. The man who destroys commodities shows his human superiority over commodities. He frees himself from the arbitrary forms which cloak his real needs. The flames of Watts consumed the system of consumption! The theft of large fridges by people with no electricity, or with their electricity cut off, provides the best possible metaphor for the lie of affluence transformed into a truth IN PLAY.

—FROM "THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE 'SPECTACULAR' COMMODITY-ECONOMY", 'INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONNISTE' 1966. (B.P. 307-02 PARIS)



The rule of die-in-order-to-live  
*diese Stirb' und Werde*  
 is not flexibility but metamorphosis  
 is not political but poetical.

The real action in *Love's Body*  
 (you can tell by the creaking)  
 is to find an alternative to systematic form  
 Dialectics, in flight from the systematic, finds refuge  
 in aphoristic form

Aphorism:  
 the word smells of literary self-consciousness  
 the reality is brokenness  
 words in absolute dismemberment  
 or even, absolute self-contradiction.



The body of Rosa Luxemburg, dragged from a canal in March 1919, three weeks after her murder. The reality-principle is not quite over...

We have been told that the medium is the message  
 Aphoristic form has political or rather metapolitical  
 implications —

Politics is systems  
 There is a hidden truth or secret  
 that is what the Unconscious is all about  
 But it cannot be put into systematic, reified,  
 permanent form  
 Systematic permanent reified form creates an élite  
 who possess the secret  
 (Platonic academy, occult order, political party,  
 the repository of the secret).

"The truth is in the whole"  
 But the whole is in any part, not in the system —

infinity in a grain  
 and in an instant  
 the whole is here or nowhere  
 Aphorism is instant dialectic  
 the instantaneous flip instead of the elaborate system  
 Only so do we have a form of intellect that is so easy  
 that any child could do it  
 or, only a child can do it  
 And so perishable  
 that it cannot be hoarded by any élite  
 or stored in any institution  
 A form of dialectics, therefore, unequivocally on the  
 side of freedom  
 or madness.

And finally  
 (using Hegel again as my landmark)  
 The Hegelian dialectic is the simultaneous total  
 affirmation of this world and its total negation  
 Both the right-wing Hegelians and the left-wing  
 Hegelians are in it  
 Both Marxian change-the-world and the Nietzschean  
 everything-always-the-same  
 The hard thing here is the Nietzschean affirmation—

Nietzsche says  
 "He does not negate any more"  
 At any rate intellectuals should watch their language  
 The critical judgement  
 which separates the sheep from the goats  
 We and They  
 critical judgement is party or sect-formation  
 is scission of the one body  
 and projection of part of ourselves  
 Intellect as protest  
 or Great Refusal  
 (Hawthorne-Melville's No in Thunder)  
 gets us nowhere  
 in this mess, rectitude or righteousness is unobtainable  
 and will not save us.

What kind of language might be helpful?  
 Instead of morality, metaphor  
 to ferry us across  
 the language which unifies  
 The language of healing, or making whole, is not  
 psychoanalysis, but poetry.  
 Poetry is the visionary form, or explosion  
 which overthrows the reality-principle  
 and transforms this world, just the way it is,  
 without changing a thing  
 the transformation is the unification.  
 These are the fragmentary moments which bring  
 something new into the world  
 Fragmentary moments: there isn't anything we can  
 count on or accumulate

Poetry is the solvent which dissolves  
 the rigorous stereotypes of political ideology  
 the numb automatism of political reflexes  
 the somnambulist gravity of literal believers  
 These are the obstructions to be dissolved  
 to be loosened up —  
 Poetry is the transforming spirit of play  
 metaphorical play  
 Begin today.



The great revolutionary intellectual of the 20th century :  
 James Joyce  
 who reduced all that solemn nonsense to nonsense  
 leading us in the path to which Wittgenstein  
 directed us  
 from disguised nonsense to patent nonsense  
 a transition that is accomplished not by linguistic  
 analysis but by poetry.

The primal Logos is the poetic Logos  
 and the Logos of unification is poetry

The intellectual, to whom was entrusted the word,  
 was given the power to unify the world this way.  
 There are also engineers, to whom is given  
 the power to unify the world in another way  
 There are also politicians.  
 It is the tale of Shem and Shawn  
 who turn into Shem, Ham, and Japheth  
 or Tom, Dick and Harry.

1967

—Norman O. Brown, author of *Life Against Death*.

## DESOLATION ROW

Rozanov's definition of nihilism is the best :  
 "The show is over. The audience get up to leave  
 their seats. Time to collect their coats and go home.  
 They turn round... No more coats and no more  
 home."

Nihilism is born of the collapse of myth. During those periods when the contradiction between mythical explanation — Heaven, Redemption, the Will of Allah — and everyday life becomes patent, all values are sucked into the vortex and destroyed. Once myth no longer justifies the ways of Power to men, the real possibilities of social action and experiment appear. Myth excuses social repression, but it also reinforces it. Its explosion frees an energy and creativity too long syphoned away from authentic experience into religious transcendence and abstraction.

During the interregnum between the end of classical philosophy and the instauration of the Catholic church, every previous form of social order was suddenly called in question. A thousand lifestyles were improvised, from those of the sects and heresies to those of a Caligula or a Nero. Once the unity of myth is challenged, the whole pattern of social existence breaks up. The same thing took place with the disintegration of feudal society and christian myth. Nothing was true any longer and everything had become possible. Every kind of experiment and research. Gilles de Rais tortured nearly a thousand children to death; the revolutionary peasants of 1525 were out to build Heaven on Earth. 1789 precipitated the same total collapse, this time there was a major difference: in spite of the political reaction, the reconstruction of a *coherent* myth had become utterly impossible.

Christianity neutered the explosive nihilism of certain gnostic sects, and improvised a new order from the remains. But the establishment of the bourgeois world made any new *displacement* of nihilistic energy onto the plane of myth impossible. The bourgeois project had been precisely the destruction of a transcendent 'other world', the enforcement of the rule of

this world and its market-values. In place of a myth, the bourgeoisie can only produce ideologies. And because ideology is essentially a *partial, technical* rationality, it can never integrate the total negation of the nihilist. In the conspicuous absence of God, the

The Eastern Gas Board are taking action in an attempt to cut the suicide rate among Cambridge undergraduates. They are bringing natural gas into the city 12 months earlier than expected. The inhalation of natural gas is not fatal because it has no carbon monoxide in it... The chairman of the Eastern Gas Board, J. H. Dyde, said: "I have been distressed to learn of the increase in the number of impulsive suicides by university students. There is, in fact, only one satisfactory solution, and that is to get natural gas to Cambridge as soon as possible..."  
 —EVENING STANDARD (13-4-67)

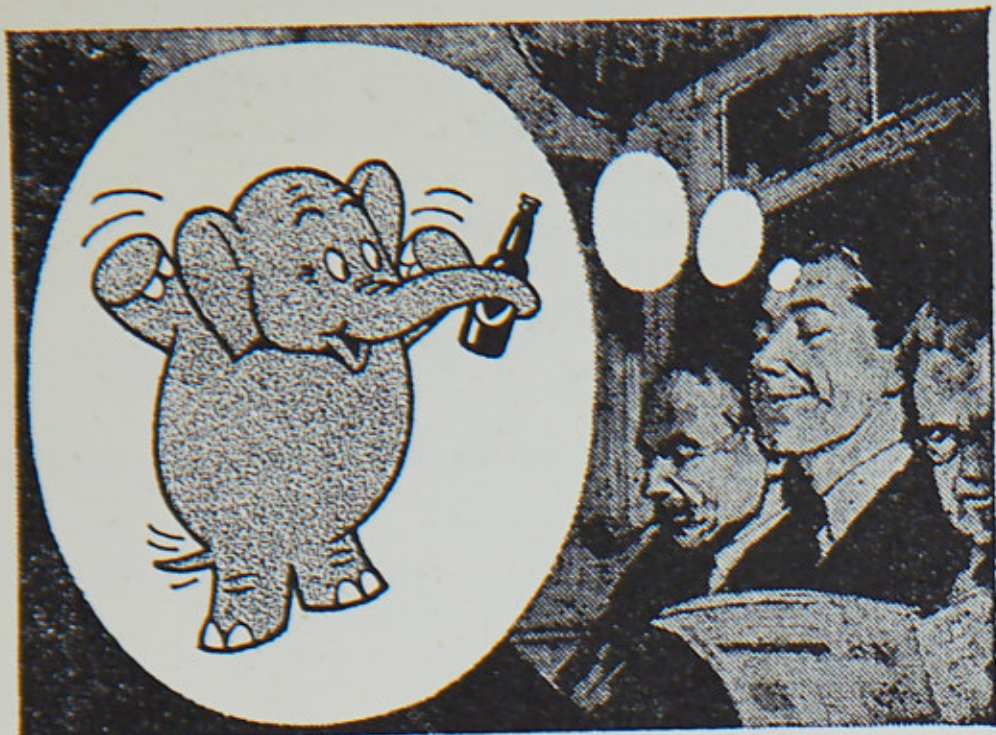
reality of exchange can never be concealed, for the *complete* illusion of myth has gone. As a last-ditch effort Power has produced the *spectacle* of nihilism — on the principle that the more we contemplate, as spectators, the degradation of all values, the less likely we are to get on with a little real destruction.

For the last century and a half, the most striking contribution to art and life has been the fruit of free experiment with the possibilities of a bankrupt civilisation. The erotic reason of Sade; Kierkegaard's sarcasm, Nietzsche's lashing irony; Ahab's blasphemy, Mallarmé's deadpan; Carroll's fantasy, Dada's negativism — these are the forces which have reached out to confront people with some of the dankness and acidity of decaying values. And with it, the desire for a reversal of perspective, a need to discover the alternative forms of life — the area Melville called "that wild whaling life where individual notabilities make up all totalities". But to create that world, the nihilist must *act*.

### Paradox :

I. The great propagators of nihilism lacked an essential weapon: the sense of historic reality, the sense of the reality of decay, erosion and fragmentation.





Home is where his 'Elephant' is

drink **FREMLINS**  
'Elephant' Beers

II. Those who have *made* history in the period of bourgeois decline have lacked a sense of the *total* decomposition of social forms which nihilism announces. Marx failed to analyse Romanticism and the artistic phenomenon in general. Lenin was wilfully blind to the importance of everyday life and its degeneration, of the Futurists, of Mayakovsky and the Dadaists.

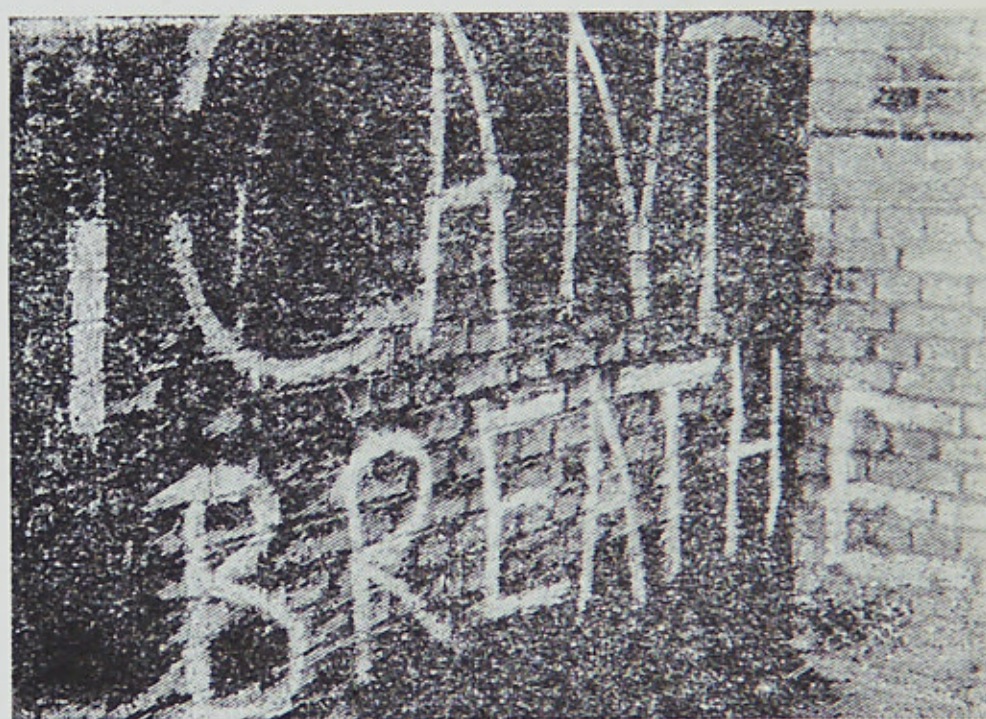
What we need now is the conjunction of nihilism and historical consciousness (Marx smashing something better than the street-lamps in Kentish Town; Mallarmé with fire in his belly). As long as the two fail to join forces, we shall have to endure the present empire of political and artistic hacks, all preaching the fragmentary, all working assiduously for the Big Sleep, and justifying themselves in the name of one Order or another: the family, morality, Culture, the Space-Race, the future of margarine... Everyone is going to pass through nihilism. It is the bath of fire. The best arguments against 'moral seriousness' are the faces on the hoardings. The end of all values is the Nothing-Box. All that is left of the past or the future is the demand for the present — for a present *which has still to be constructed*. To day, *the destructive and the constructive moments of history* are slowly coming together. When the two meet, *that* will be total revolution. And revolution is the only wealth left in the affluent society.

A nihilist is someone who takes the distinction between living and surviving seriously. If living is impossible, why survive? Once you are in that void, everything breaks up. The horrors. Past and future explode; the present is ground zero. And from ground zero there are only two ways out, two kinds of nihilism: *active* and *passive*.

The passive nihilist compromises with his own lucidity about the collapse of all values. He makes one final nihilistic gesture: throws a dice to decide his 'cause', and becomes its devoted slave, for Art's sake, and for the sake of a little bread... Nothing is true, so a few gestures become hip. Joe Soap intellectuals, pataphysicians, crypto-fascists, aesthetes of the *acte gra-*

*tuit*, mercenaries, Kim Philbies, pop-artists, psychedelic impresarios — bandwagon after bandwagon works out its own version of the *credo quia absurdum est*: you don't believe in it but you do it anyway; you get used to it and you even get to like it in the end. Passive nihilism is an overture to conformism.

After all, nihilism can never be more than a transition, a shifting, ill-defined sphere, a period of wavering between two extremes, one leading to submission and subservience, the other to permanent revolt. Between the two poles stretches a no-mans-land, the waste-land of the suicide and the solitary killer, of the criminal described so aptly by Bettina as the crime of the State. Jack the Ripper is essentially inaccessible. The mechanisms of hierarchical power cannot touch him; he cannot be touched by revolutionary will. He gravitates round that zero-point beyond which destruction, instead of reinforcing the destruction wrought by power, beats it at its own game, excites it to such violence that the machine of the *Penal Colony*, stabbing wildly, shatters into pieces and flies apart. Mal-doror takes the disintegration of contemporary social organisation to its logical conclusion: to the stage of its self-destruction. At this point the individual's absolute rejection of society corresponds to society's absolute rejection of the individual. Isn't this the still



## THE ART OF DEATH

DEAR BOSS

I keep on hearing the police have caught me but they won't fix me just yet. I have laughed when they look so clever and talk about being on the right track. That joke about Leather Apron gave me real fits. I am down on whores and I shan't quit ripping them till I do get buckled. Grand work the last job was. I gave the lady no time to squeal. How can they catch me now. I love my work and want to start again. You will soon hear of me with my funny little games. I saved some of the proper red stuff in a ginger beer bottle over the last job to write with but it went thick like glue and I can't use it. Red ink is fit enough I hope HA HA. The next job I do I shall clip the lady's ears off and send to the police officers just for jolly wouldnt you. Keep this letter back till I do a bit more work, then give it out straight. My knife is nice and sharp I want to get to work right away if I get a chance. Good luck.

Yours truly

JACK THE RIPPER

Don't mind me giving the trade name.

LETTER TO THE CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1888.



point of the turning world, the place where all perspectives are interchangeable, the exact point where movement, dialectics and time no longer exist? Noon and eternity of the great refusal. Before it, the pogroms; beyond it, the new innocence. The blood of Jews or the blood of cops.

The active nihilist does not intend simply to watch things fall apart. He intends to speed up the process. Sabotage is a natural response to the chaos ruling the world. *Active nihilism is pre-revolutionary; passive nihilism is counter-revolutionary.* And most people oscillate between the two. Like the red soldier described by some Soviet author — Victor Chlovsky perhaps — who never charged without shouting "Long Live the Tsar!" But circumstances inevitably end by drawing a line, and people suddenly find themselves, once and for all, on one side or the other of the barricades.

You always learn to dance for yourself on the off-beat of the official world. And you must follow your demands to their logical conclusion, not accept a compromise at the first setback. Consumer society's frantic need to manufacture new needs adroitly cashes in on the way-out, the bizarre and the shocking. Black humour and real agony turn up on Madison Avenue. Flirtation with non-conformism is an integral part of prevailing values. Awareness of the decay of values has its role to play in sales strategy. There's money in decomposition. More and more pure rubbish is marketed. The figurine salt-cellar of Kennedy, complete with "bullet-holes" through which to pour the salt, for sale in the supermarket, should be enough to convince anybody, if there is anybody who still needs convincing, how easily a joke which once would have delighted Ravachol or Peter the Painter now merely helps to keep the market going.

Consciousness of decay reached its most explosive expression in Dada. Dada really did contain the seeds by which nihilism could have been surpassed; but it just left them to rot, along with all the rest. The whole ambiguity of Surrealism, on the other hand, lies in the fact that it was an accurate critique made at the wrong moment. While its critique of the transcendence aborted by Dada was perfectly justified, when it in its turn tried to surpass Dada it did so without beginning again with Dada's initial nihilism, without basing itself on Dada-anti-Dada, without seeing Dada historically. History was the nightmare from which the Surrealists never awoke: they were defenceless before the Communist Party, they were out of their depth with the Spanish Civil War. For all their yapping they slunk after the official left like faithful dogs.

Certain features of Romanticism had already proved, without awakening the slightest interest on the part of either Marx or Engels, that art — the pulse of culture and society — is the first index of the decay and disintegration of values. A century later, while Lenin thought that the whole issue was beside the point, the Dadaist could see the artistic abscess as a symptom of a cancer whose poison was spread throughout society as a whole. *Unpleasant art* only expresses the repression of pleasure demanded by the State. It is this the 1916 Dadaists proved so cogently. To go beyond this analysis could mean only one thing: to take up arms. The neo-Dadaist larvae



MAN RAY: GIFT (1921)

It is ridiculous and a sign of idiocy exceeding the legal limit to say that Dada (whose actual achievements and immense success cannot be denied) is "only of negative value". Today you can hardly fool first-graders with the old saw about positive and negative. The gentlemen who demand the "constructive" are among the most suspicious types of a caste that has long been bankrupt. It has become sufficiently apparent in our time that law, order and the constructive, the "understanding for an organic development", are only symbols, curtains and pretexts for fat behinds and treachery. If the Dadaist movent is nihilism, then nihilism is a part of life....

RICHARD HUELSENBECK: "EN AVANT DADA" 1920.

pullulating in the shitheap of present-day consumption seem to have found more profitable employment.

The Dadaists, working to cure themselves and their civilisation of its discontents — working, in the last analysis, far more coherently than Freud himself — built the first laboratory to revitalise everyday life. Their activity was far more radical than their theory. Grosz: "The point was to work completely in the dark. We didn't know where we were going". The Dada group was a funnel sucking in all the trivia and pure rubbish cluttering up the world. Reappearing at the other end, everything was transformed. Though people and things stayed the same they took on totally new meanings. The beginning of Dada was the re-discovery of lived experience and its possible delights — its end was the reversal of all perspectives, the invention of a new universe. Subversion, the tactics of radical change, overthrew the rigid structure of the old world. Amidst this upheaval the *poetry made by everyone* revealed its concrete sense — something very different from the literary mentality to which the Surrealists surrendered.

The initial weakness of Dada lay in its extraordinary humility. Every morning Tzara, clown with the gravity of a Pope, is said to have repeated Descartes' statement: "I'm not even interested in knowing whether anyone ever existed before I did." Yet this same Tzara was to end up a Stalinist, sneering at men like Ravachol, Bonnot and Mahkno's peasant army.



If Dada broke up because it could not transcend itself, then the blame lies on the Dadaists themselves for having failed to search for the real historic occasions when such transcendence becomes possible: the moments when the masses arise and seize their destiny in their own hands.

The first compromise is always terrible in its effects. Through Surrealism to neo-Dada, its repercussions gradually infect and finally poison Surrealism's initial vigour. Consider the Surrealists' ambivalent attitude towards the past. While they were right to recognise the subversive genius of a Sade, a Fourier or a Lautréamont, all they could subsequently do was to write so much — and so well — about them as to



## THE PREHISTORY OF THE ID

### REVOLUTIONARY PEASANTS OF THE EARLY 16TH CENTURY

Suso... describes how on a bright Sunday, as he was sitting lost in meditation, an incorporeal image appeared to his spirit. Suso addresses the image: 'Whence have you come?' The image answers: 'I come from nowhere' — 'Tell me, what are you?' — 'I am not.' — 'What do you wish?' — 'I do not wish.' — 'This is a miracle! Tell me, what is your name?' — 'I am called Nameless Wildness!' — 'Where does your insight lead to?' — 'Into untrammelled freedom.' — 'Tell me, what do you call untrammelled freedom?' — 'When a man lives according to all his caprices without distinguishing between God and himself, and without looking before or after....'

—NORMAN COHN, "THE PURSUIT OF THE MILLENIUM"

Mysticism is the confused intuition of that realm, lying beyond the Ego, where the Id reigns.

—FREUD, 1938

win for their heroes the honour of a few timid footnotes in progressive school textbooks. A literary celebrity much like the celebrity the neo-Dadaists win for their forebears in the spectacle of our present decomposition.

The only modern phenomena which can be compared with Dada are the most savage outbreaks of juvenile delinquency. The same contempt for art and bourgeois values, the same refusal of ideology, the same will to live. The same ignorance of history, the same barbaric revolt, the same lack of tactics.

The nihilist makes one mistake. He does not realise that other people are also nihilists, nor that their number is rapidly growing. Nihilism is, in fact, about to become a mass philosophy. The nihilist does not realise that life as a whole could be *completely and utterly* transformed. He is quite unaware of what was really attempted during the highpoints of past revolutionary activity. Yet contemporary society is nothing more than the product of a series of past revolutionary defeats. Inhumanity is reaching its paroxysm today, and it is in this paroxysm that our only hope lies.

Awareness of just how nightmarish life has become is on the point of fusing with a rediscovery of the real revolutionary movement in the past. We must reappropriate the most radical aspects of all past revolts and insurrections at the point where they were prematurely arrested, and do so with all the violence bottled up inside us. A chain explosion of subterranean creativity could not fail to overthrow the world of hierarchical power.

In the last analysis, the nihilists are our only allies. They cannot possibly go on living as they are. Their lives are like an open wound. A revolutionary perspective could put all the latent energy generated by years of repression at the service of their will to live. They need only to realise that life today could be *utterly* transformed, and that total revolution can have no other meaning. *Nihilists* — as de Sade would have said — *one more effort if you want to be revolutionaries!*

— freely translated from Raoul Vaneigem's *Traité de Savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations*, 1967.



## URBAN GORILLA COMES EAST

Any strategy for the coming civil war has to abandon the assumptions of the old revolutionary movement, which has engendered such monsters. It has to find the weak links in the chain of *modern* repression, and fight the temptation to rejoin battle at the traditional points of confrontation: ideology and economic infrastructure.

Capitalism's most intractable crisis in the advanced industrial states is the crisis of *socialisation*. The attempt to mediate *family* and *school* encounters and aggravates contradictions which must be exploited by an urban youth guerilla. It must also aim to occupy the hiatus which separates the individual's emergence from the family - school complex and his reintegration *into* organised society via *forced labour*. The first task is to build up a comprehensive network of Anti-Social Services, designed to combat the system's efforts to conceal its structural weaknesses by means of a unified ideology and practice of Welfare.

Why do schizophrenia and delinquency have a key role to play in the subversion of the *reasonable* society?

How does language determine the dialectic of consciousness, so that the failure to understand its pivotal function has prevented the development of a *Marxist theory of class*?

Why and How must the "revolutionary" intellectual commit suicide?

What are the Bands of Hope and Glory, the Family Court, the Genital Strike and the School Aversion Programme?

Why is King Kong the most heavily guarded animal in the Children's Zoo? Why is he asleep?

CATCH-22 is already trying to answer these questions — in the East End, where one in three people between 15 & 25 is labelled *delinquent*, and one in eight defined as *mental*. Abstractly, these two forms of social negation are in the same position vis-à-vis society; substantially, they appear as radically opposed. We believe there are lines of communication to be opened up between them, both theoretically and practically. Which is why we want to meet people, with a view to mobilising resistance, who have either

- a) experienced — as teachers, social workers or therapists — the contradictions of institutionalised forms of social violence
- or b) researched on the effects of these contradictions within specific groups: delinquents, problem families, young schizophrenics, school dropouts... Some have done research from the point of view of their own experience as victims — as do-madders or do-badders. Others, from the sidelines of academic concern.

Write to Dave Barbu, BCM/CATCH-22, LONDON WC1



---

**KING MOB ECHO** NUMBER ONE APRIL 1968  
POST BOX : BCM | KING MOB LONDON W.C.1.

---