

# JUMBLED NOTES: A CRITICAL HIDDEN HISTORY OF KING MOB

“The adventure of the arts (painting, sculpture, poetry, literature, music) passes in its decline through three essential phases: a phase of self-liquidation (Malevich’s “white square”, Matt/Duchamp’s urinal re-baptized “Fountain”, Dadaist word-collages, Finnegan’s Wake, certain compositions of Varese); a phase of self-parody (Satie, Picabia, Duchamp); and a phase of self transcendence, exemplified in the directly lived poetry of revolutionary moments, in theory as it takes hold of the masses.....”

-Raoul Vaneigem. *The Cavalier History of Surrealism*. 1972.

Why should I even begin to write this quite possibly longish text on something that happened so many many moons ago? King Mob, though only existing for a very brief period in the late 1960s, nonetheless affected everything I did afterwards. Always, always on my mind in some kind of way a push was needed in order to get it kick started.

I met a prostitute – Angela W – from the fishing port of Grimsby on the mouth of the Humber in the north of England. I instantly fell in love with her in an all-consuming way. The pain inside my body so massively accumulated with the death of hopes for the social revolution which would have given my life any meaning and, in a way, symbolised by the death of King Mob in my youth, was kind of half wrenched out of me as she slowly and pensively shambled towards me in a disarming walk. She had a certain compassionate expression on her face. I was finished and fulfilled through, it seemed, this obviously contradictory hammer blow. She was 55 –my age – though 5 days younger. Little by little I got to know her and the intensity I felt towards her just convulsively increased. I adored. The odds were gone and there was nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon. I just wanted to give everything of my self to her: the money I had, my possessions but most of all the intensity of my experience – the sheer truth of it – warts and all. Over the following weeks I typed her letter, after much mulled over, letter. They were about so many things but constantly came back to the need to transform traditional notions of Eros – extending the “oceanic feelings” inherent in Eros to all aspects of daily life. It was as though my youth had been re-visited on me – a youth cut off so abruptly with the extinguishing of revolutionary hopes. All I waited for was her kisses, her beautifully wrinkled breasts, and her northern, out for a good time, life-enhancing laugh (knowing that it also covered a rebellious spirit tinged with a puritanism that also lacked the courage of its convictions). If necessary – cornball though true – I would have willingly died for her as it felt like a dying in order to live. I was a slave to her erotic, transforming presence and it felt like I was on the brink of a new and different catharsis (infinitely dialectical if you like) the likes of which had never been born concretely in this world.

Inevitably - considering a history and past I’m about to enumerate – I felt myself in the kind of Maldorean syndrome/episode which Lautreamont had described – that episode when God came down to consort with a whore and couldn’t make it with her. Well it had the aura of that, though not literally. I wasn’t God nor wanted to be. God was dead a long time ago. It was a certain similarity in situation: the forbidden transgression preparing for a fresh take-off for the erotic and starting necessarily from the point of a supposed degradation. Possible transformation (for both of us) was palpably there though never materialising. It was Angela that gave me the heat and passion to write this jumble of extended notes and to put them into some kind of order. After a number of years - in the mid 90s - in which I felt too wiped out to even consider writing, simply because everything seemed so utterly hopeless, I’d been given a reason to begin again. This wanton relationship revived in me such long though still pregnant desires with past but not forgotten memories felt as keenly as though they’d happened a few hours ago. Perhaps, (along with millions of others?) I wanted to express as accurately as possible what had happened in that great rebellion. In letters I told Angela about this and the need to write it all down without stopping. She responded with a kind of intense interest (or, it seemed that way). Kissing her most beautiful sagging breasts and her adorable wrinkles, she’d ask me how “the book” was going. No woman had ever been like this – encouraging me

constantly to get facts and interpretation down on paper. I said I was now writing everything for her and for nobody else. More than that, it felt like the extension of a personal letter or email to those whom you really feel you can communicate with. It really did seem the best way of writing something i.e. with no consideration of any audience whose ghostly presence might threaten any truth. She said she also wanted to write about her often “hilarious” (her words) experiences as a prostitute and I thought it was a great idea.

I also knew with Angela that this “theoretical respect” was (and is) particularly strong among the northern proletariat particularly those harking from that stratum with the dubious characterisation of the labour aristocracy. Her Father had been a foreman mechanic in a division of Grimsby corporation, and Angela, after working for a short period as a nurse, married up, tying the knot with some kind of guy in financial circles and settling down into a suburban middle class routine. Even though Angela had probably sold herself to the highest bidder in her late teens (it looks as though love on her part never came into the marriage brothel or equally “marriage hearse” as William Blake had so well put it) nonetheless being a fully-fledged professional whore had emancipated her from that stifling background and a quite stunning searching openness and frankness was beginning to flower. At times it was breathless in its audacity. It was as though Angela’s “job” had freed her from a general mediocrity, from one to one relationships and the ties of the family. Liberated somewhat by the emancipatory air of London (which the place still just to say possesses ) nonetheless too, something of the brilliance of that remarkable town of Grimsby had rubbed off on Angela even though possibly she’d spent a good deal of her married life combating what’s so compelling about the place. Grimsby, that industrial fragment across the north east Lincolnshire plain, cut off from gentrification with its sprawling harbour full of unplanned invention where workers’ cafes housed in old wooden shacks with plastic sunflowers gazing out from tiny windows; where streets twist and turn with an air of promise and delight... and where, on another mind blowing corner just ahead, a Russian sailor asks you in the only English he knows; “Asda store”. Angela was quite rightly proud of Grimsby.

Unfortunately though, Angela, it seems, could only express all those often conflicting and incredibly disparate experiences and thoughts to me (bringing about the beginning of some yearned for unification)? Maybe. Maybe not and there’s the rub! As with so many prostitutes who cannot be fully honest and open about their trade they get confused and crash on the dichotomy between two separate existences and perhaps other existences before that. There was a petty snobbery, which ill befitted her and which one could call petite bourgeois in its hypocrisy if it also wasn’t part of a process in motion. You get to a point where you must make a gigantic leap or fall back into endless quick sands until the end of your days. Like Nietzsche’s “pale criminal” which so fascinated Freud, Angela took the latter course. (Remember Nietzsche in his critique of lack of resolution in the mentality of the “pale criminal” also wanted to see a lot, lot more of them). Finally she had to blow me out brutally getting rid of me without even allowing me to say goodbye. I think my subversive thoughts and drift rapidly disturbed her and how well in the past had I known that tale! She’d never met somebody like me and quickly she decided (as with so many others before) that I had to be stopped in my tracks – and harshly. Being an old hand at rejection, truth to tell I was waiting for the cruel return of the old familiar pain. I responded with a letter three months later to her address in Grimsby, All I can say in my defense is why go for this type of elimination? It seems though the contents of my letter helped precipitate a nervous breakdown – a breakdown that certainly could have been avoided if she been prepared to grasp the cusp of the situation and move it forward. My pain too was wretched. Her actions, precipitating an angry and hurt response, (sensing an imminent crack up?) weren’t necessary neither.

I started to write what follows under Angela’s delightful influence, scribbling note upon note. Since then it has more and more been put into some kind of disordered order but the pain of beginning again was almost unbearable seeing I shall never see Angela again or know what happened to her. Not having the heart or inclination to engage in stalking an utter letting go was inevitable. Somewhat - though very different in circumstance - like De Quincey’s opium dreams about his dear Anny ( an orphan forced into prostitution rather than through big bucks inclination) whom he lost contact with in the then teeming centre of London’s Oxford Street in the early 19th century and who he kept vividly remembering for the next 40 years, I sometimes see Angela still. Very different circumstances maybe but the end result - an on-going, palpable absence – remains the same. Much of the following book is about the lack of and renewed need for total critique. Let’s therefore end this preamble by a beautiful comment written by William Hazlitt on love: “I have wanted only one thing to make me happy, but wanting that, I have wanted everything”.

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This text/ book in very distant collaboration with my brother (and what follows is now no longer written in the first person singular) has been put together in the hope of motivating others to make their contributions, perhaps correcting unknown errors, lapses and serious omissions which will undoubtedly be here and which the veil of time has drawn across facts and memories. It may prove useful or it may not but it seemed to us that the record had to be straightened up somewhat as the trendy and marginal journalese mythology which increasingly surrounds King Mob (witness the growing number of books where King Mob is given a makeover) merely reflects the world of Rupert Murdoch and the fantastical constructs of the media in general. Speculation becomes factual evidence and flimsy, often fictional episodes become concrete facts which are then repeated and embellished upon in the next glossy presentation. Ideally, all of them should be binned tomorrow if truth had any say in this ever-darkening, miserable old world.

A lot of what's been written here has been written/talked about – with biro in hand – in the spirit of the ancient Persians: part done when sober the other when drunk/stoned, or both. Finally, the two put together in sobriety and then again, semi-drunkenly modifying yet again each other in something heading towards the ad infinitum. Perhaps Breton's claim in *Les Pas Perdus* is still relevant: "one publishes to find people, and for no other reason." But also, perhaps no longer considering you must necessarily remain in obscurity more than ever - simply to keep contact with reality which can only mean a life unmediated, as much as possible, by the spectacle. In advance, a certain sentence dyslexia must also be mentioned, partially because of the latter method and partially, because it's also conditioned by a very basic education in secondary modern schools in the coalfield areas of Co Durham and West Yorkshire. You didn't learn grammatical expression like that but, you were taught something far better than any educational achievement could give: a spirit of up-front honesty with each other meaning never letting your mates down. Later on, attending Ripon Grammar school for two horrendous years, the Headmaster, a Mr. R. Atkinson would brutally call you stupid and thick remarking that: "English is the language of Milton and not bus drivers like you speak." Obviously, the fool knew nothing of Milton whose agitational pamphlets even in his lifetime were translated into the language of the Brazilian slaves as well as some of the languages of the Native Americans inhabiting the eastern seaboard! Only later were we to learn about this from Christopher Hill - and that subsequent knowledge only increased fury against past wrongs. Really though, it was a prelude for what was to become as, increasingly, we were to become a total disappointment to almost everybody of proclaimed value in this society for not fulfilling the expectations of artists, theorists, academics, revolutionary milieuists, trade union worker bureaucrats and aspiring girlfriends alike! The first injury was the worst as increasingly after that it became like water off a duck's back.

It may be said we've written about King Mob before in the *End of Music* so why repeat the exercise? Well yes, apart from this text was never meant to be published, as it was merely a prepatory draft handed around to a few people. The name David Wise was given as the author of this document written in 1978 which was published three or so years later by a group in Glasgow which had been tied up with the once, excellent Castoriadis influenced group, *Solidarity*. We had no knowledge that the text was being printed. Part of it contained some kind of critical potted history of King Mob. On seeing the pamphlet for the first time, one of us asked for it to be pulped simply because it was merely some provisional notes strung together which initially had seen the light of day based mainly on conversations - which were quite exhilarating at the times during day to day work plastering, tiling, carpentry etc - on small building sites in East London mainly between ourselves and Nik Holliman who was later to produce *The Sprint*; c/o BM Chronos. One or two others, in different, mainly pub based scenes, had also made pertinent points which were jotted down but, basically, a name couldn't be put to it. A transcriber maybe, as it was nothing more than a product of collective, passionate yet democratic conversation (in the real and as yet unrealised sense of the term). Moreover, the people in Glasgow had altered sentences and captions - some were even created - and one or two things deleted in that editorial control freakism which is such a baneful cancer on our times and which has subsequently been applied to most of our texts not published by ourselves. Of course, this editing scourge from people gladly referring to themselves as "autonomists" in reality, has yet to arrive at the simplest of individual bourgeois liberties letting a person say fully what they have to say without arbitrary censorship! Originally, these notes were typed up and about 30 photocopies made and passed around to individuals who might be interested inviting comments. Some ended up in Leeds, falling into the

hands of the remnants of the studenty, pro-situationist, Infantile Disorders – themselves a fall out from what happened in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in the late 60s - and the background and impetus to their subsequent rip off by the Gang of Four punk band. A fair number of criticisms were made (including some from the ex Infantile Disorders) and the intention was to put them together in a larger, more coherent, balanced document as the original tone of the provisional notes was far too wide-ranging, dispersed and moreover, far too bitter and over-reactive, failing to give any notion of the elan and inventive mood of the times described. In a way it was a submission belonging to the rising tide of reaction. Perhaps the bitterness was understandable considering one was seeing the shadow of those brilliant King Mob times (well, at least comparatively) itself part and parcel of the failed revolt of the late 60s, reduced and resurrected everywhere as hip fashion (i.e. mainly punk rock) but that quite frankly wasn't good enough in putting forward the flowing outlines of a brief historical moment which partly the pamphlet had traversed.

Unfortunately, the pamphlet became a kind of icon – reproduced everywhere – particularly by that obnoxious recuperator Stewart Home. We cringed with embarrassment A few years later after the newly re-named “The End of Music” (courtesy of Glasgow) was published, Larry Law, editor of the pretty meaningless, Situationist Times contacted BM BLOB asking if he could reprint. Something of the above was related to him through letters and a revised original was partially put together ready to be dispatched but before anything could get that far, Larry Law was taken ill, dying with a brain disease a few days later. The revised text never thus got off the ground. More work was still needed on it in any case. Even before Larry Law made contact, additional notes and some significant alterations had been made before 1979 but the text remained on hold as we had in mind to produce a long piece on the troubles in Italy in the late 70s. After a turbulent journey throughout Italy (crouching at night behind convenient brick walls in the midst of gun battles in some of Rome's disputed areas between the mainly disintegrating Leninism of Autonomia Operaria -Workers Autonomy - and fascists and living by shop lifting food from super markets); we put together quite a few documents on the movement, mainly translations from the often exquisite, profound and melancholic Puzz comics which later partially merged into the 1977 Metropolitan Indian movement. Nobody was, as usual, interested in publishing and our own meagre resources were limited, obtaining some money from plastering but, coming from a poor background and having no recourse to inherited wealth, the book remained in a folder where it is to this day. It was a shame as it would have been the best book in English on the ferment in Italy. Later, in the mid 90s, we tried AK Press but with their policy of only showing interest in what sells, AK looked at you as if you were somewhat backward in even suggesting publishing such a loser.

But to hark back again to the beginning..... This book began with a quote from Vaneigem's Cavalier History of Surrealism not because it's some arbitrary show-off, demonstrating superior knowledge about modern culture but because it is the most succinct expression of where King Mob can be placed – the moment of the passing of art – in that “phase of self-transcendence, exemplified in the directly lived poetry of revolutionary moments, in theory as it takes hold of the masses.....” Inevitably the following text contains many artistic references in an attempt to map out more clearly where we were all coming from and how we attempted to put a certain momentum inherited from the last days of art into a new kind of attractive play essential for the seduction inherent in the process of a modern social revolution.

## **THE COURAGE**

What Happened in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

The mid-nineteen sixties and Icteric. Re-evaluation of a dissident European past. Russian nihilism. Recuperated artistic dada and revolutionary Dada. The forgotten revolutionary aspects of Surrealism. Conflict with the Tyneside poets. Closing down an Art School. Meetings with Black Mask in New York. Heatwave and the English section of the Situationists in London.

King Mob was initially a coming together in London of the then constituted English section of the SI – beginning somewhat to fall apart - and an ex-group, together with some other like-minded individuals, around the often confusedly anti-art magazine, Icteric, from Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. (Icteric, let it be said was spuriously anti-art but we weren't to know that with such clarity at the time). Let us first deal here with the Newcastle experience as it has never been documented before.

Icteric, founded in the mid 1960s was, more or less, a name chosen at random from a dictionary and therefore in that somewhat time-honoured tradition of modern art emanating from Dada. It meant jaundice and a cure for jaundice at the same time – which everybody felt at its very inauspicious inauguration was appropriate. Simply put, everybody present was pissed-off with art in an institution or gallery, wearied and jaundiced about it if you like, and looking for something rather more turbulent and effective. Icteric's central aim and quite resonantly put at the time, was the coming together (fusion) of art and life and was mainly the brainchild of Ron Hunt who was the librarian at the Dept of Fine Art at Newcastle University. Ron Hunt had been appointed to the post at the instigation of pop artist Richard Hamilton who taught at the university and who, ironically, around the same time, acquainted Don N. Smith with the theoretical journals of the French Situationists. Hamilton though, for some time had abandoned all semblance of radical critique pretty much falling into a benign, left social democracy, coolly and uncritically encompassing consumerist icons. A cool take was to be the essential in overcoming all adversity! In fact, it was a variant of the same terrible English inability to grasp most essential breakthroughs in perception and form which so marked the 20th century and much of the latter half of the 19th Century. Despite penetrating social critiques like that of William Morris and George Orwell everything else was always to be done in such a seamlessly nice way and ever so watered-down.

Considering this was taking place in England (and in a relative back water at that) covering an avalanche of omissions, repressions and outright hostility, Ron Hunt bravely at the time, delved into the history of modern art and began to put the record straight beginning to place all the long lost and forgotten (on purpose) radical experiments into the beginning of some coherent trajectory whose outcome at the time we were all rather fuzzy about but which was slowly but surely becoming clearer each day. Icteric became, more or less, the fulcrum of this unfolding - enlightening primarily ourselves - before any concern for anybody else. Basically, it was motivated by getting hold of anything that wasn't stultifyingly "English" in the conformist sense we found so unappealing. We went back and re-evaluated the Russian nihilists of the mid 19th century like Dobrolyubov and Pisarev who's "Destruction of Aesthetics" hit a chord. We liked the hardness of their comments: "Shakespeare or a pair of boots" etc. Pisarev had said of himself he "would rather be a Russian shoemaker than a Russian Raphael". In a sense though it was their rebellion we liked even though it brought prison and calumny upon themselves. Pisarev's: "Denial is a hard, tedious and deadly task" meant something as we eagerly read Lampert's "Sons Against Fathers" in preparation – unbeknown to ourselves at the time – of our own revolt of sons (and now daughters!) against fathers! Could we go along with it to the letter? Hardly, but it was another of the necessary ingredients which later was truly to go somewhere. Finally though and perhaps inevitably, we found the concepts of the Russian nihilists too severely utilitarian for our liking. True, it was utilitarianism bordering on the apocalyptic but that didn't really fit in with our growing rejection, or rather, that suppression and realisation of art we were searching for despite been none too clear about this at the time. It wasn't just an either/or question. It wasn't just a question of the hungry and dispossessed for whom culture was a luxury they could ill afford. In fact, concern for the poor didn't even come in to it. We were arriving at the simple, though very dialectical, recognition that culture within its own frame of reference no longer possessed the slightest quality and the subsequent emptiness beckoned towards the creation of something entirely different. The conclusion that this meant inescapably the destruction of the commodity economy, social revolution and the creation of an entirely new world we didn't immediately perceive but it did mean that a blow by blow repeat of Russian nihilism was irrelevant and quite beside the point. After all during the lifetime of the Russian nihilists, great art particularly in the form of the Russian novel was at its height. However, Tolstoy's final rejection of the role of novelist was more in tune with Pisarev's essentially moral rejection – and incidentally illustrating the powerful impact of the nihilists on Russian society – than in the preparatory self-destruct of the novel's form as undertaken by the much younger Marcel Proust around the same time. A destruction which was to be continued and carried on to the final chaos of Joyce's, *Finnegan's Wake*. Slowly but surely we were getting some sense of this though always in a pretty chaotic way.

We mustn't though be too simplistic here about Pisarev's views. He wanted to see the emergence of a "non-cultural" scientific culture neither invented nor abstracted which could only be represented, "in actual living phenomena". As Lampert was to put it: "It was to be a culture which reflected man's changing and unimpeded vision of the universe, free especially from all the burdens of the past, and with none of the hot air of exalted places. It's "temples" would be "the workshops of human thought" It would eschew the artist as a sacred monomaniac, misunderstood and misinterpreted and ensure his status as simply a human being,

endowed with a special gift of articulation and free from somnolence and escapism. His business would be roughly, to articulate on behalf of the inarticulate, to express for those who are unable to express themselves what is conducive to their growth as human persons and “thinking proletarians”. He would be a spokesman for others and the despair of aesthetes yearning for elegant elaboration”. Whilst the language of some of the above is too loose and imprecise for our times, a little later, around 1966, we couldn’t help but make something of a connection between this and Dziga Vertov when first viewing his 1920’s film “Man with a Movie Camera” and reading about the concepts behind Kino-Eye and the factograph. But more about that later...

The first Icteric magazine contained a translation by Anne Ryder of some of Jacques Vache's “Lettres de Guerre” and the first such translations in English to have appeared (the rest of the letters were to appear in further editions of Icteric). In a way Vache’s letters set the tone for what was to follow. It meant, down with gallery art and, from now on, let’s look at those historical figures whom attempted to negate art in the far-off days of Dada, Surrealism and Russian Constructivism. The painters and poets of these movements were quickly pushed aside and downgraded for their orthodox, though, in their time, radical representations. We were only interested in these people if their activities, pointed towards the beginnings of the real transcendence of art. Finally we preferred the real negation. For us, the future lay in Arthur Craven, the boxer - the supposed nephew of Oscar Wilde - and the vitriolic producer of *Maintenant*, Vache (again) and Rimbaud at the moment he quit poetry. (Little did we know at the time that Breton criticised him for this seeing his subsequent activities, like gun-running were so dubious). It was their negation of art that meant everything to us. We really responded with an ever growing deep sympathy for the best of Cravan’s comments like; “You must absolutely get through your head that art is for the bourgeois, and by bourgeois I mean: a monsieur without imagination”... and... “Soon you won’t see anyone but artists in the street and the only thing you’ll find no end of trouble in finding is a man” (Remembering this great comment by 1972 a comment was placed in a diary: “It’s taken this long for “soon” to become reality”. Thirty years after 1972 it was to have an even more astounding truth). We also really liked some of the early Surrealist experiments like the meeting at the relatively unknown church of St Julien de la Pauvre on the left bank of the Seine and the early kind of practical psychic-automatism drifts of the Surrealist walks proceeding from a point based on where a pin had been stuck into a map at random. We weren’t so foolish, naive or headstrong as to not consider that some of these random drifts nearly pushed some of these protagonists into suicide. Then there were those supposedly brutal Surrealist slogans like; “leave your children in the woods set off on the roads” etc which we really got off on. We also admired some of the imaginative environmental projects of the Russian Constructivists around 1920, particularly Klebnikov’s soup lakes and the proposed slow flying white on white squares schemes proposed by Malevich etc. Indeed, Icteric made a replica of Malevich’s coffin that was exhibited in some exhibition some years later which Jappe was to praise for its “excellent iconography” in the bibliography of his book on Debord in 1993 (?). We were interested in the concept of the factograph and bearing El Lissitzky in mind, it seemed like the starting point of an anti-literary presentation. Cinema wasn’t spared either as we dismissed the entertainment industry preferring Dziga Vertov’s films of the early 20s and the first collaborations between Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali, particularly *Le Chien Andalou* and *L’Age D’Or* in the 1930s. We readily accepted that cinema as provocation had come to an end at this point when rioting greeted the latter’s first screenings. Had anything like this happened since? We wanted to do likewise simply unaware of more recent and precise statements of the Lettrist anti-film particularly Howlings in Favour of De Sade and which had provoked public outrage but we were only to learn about these events some three years later.

However, all this growing lucidity was jumbled up within Icteric together with a hotchpotch of modern art repeats, what Duchamp was to characterise around the same time as the “double- barrel effect”, a point we noted at the time though we reacted with dismay when we heard Duchamp was making multiple editions of his old ready-mades for sale, no doubt apeing Andy Warhol’s activities just down the street from him in Manhattan. We felt it was a sellout, which of course, it was. Though for all of us painting and sculpture, novels and poetry were out and finished nonetheless some environmental constructions were deemed OK, those that were somewhat akin to artifacts that would have been more or less at home in those international Surrealist exhibitions of the 30s and 40s. Not necessarily the most spectacularly weird but things like the full coal sack hung from the ceiling of one of them. We particularly liked the fact that the sack accidentally bust open and all its mucky contents were scattered over the floor. Maybe our special liking for the latter had something to do with living in Newcastle and the presence of the north-east miners - who’s to say? It was only a year or two later that we were also to realise the futility of the latter, the more we developed a

critique of the commodity. Icteric produced anti-sociological questionnaires some of which were Surrealist repeats. "Why not commit suicide" was one of them and people were invited to fill them in. The responses were arid and, perhaps not surprisingly even worse than what Breton had hoped for decades earlier. There was no budding Artaud around replying to the original questionnaire like: "I am unhappy like a man who has lost the best part of himself. ....who has committed suicide already". But did you want a budding Artaud when you knew of individuals – even in this relatively optimistic period – who'd had enough and slashed their wrists in the bath anyway? You shuddered and with no answers giving any eureka we concentrated on producing stickers again tending to be repetitious of the past such as "Surrealism Is The Communism of Genius" but seeing this was Newcastle in the mid 60s and not Paris in the 30s it really wasn't going to make much headway.

Happenings, or rather at least some of them, were embraced although that didn't stop us taking the piss out of a Merce Cunningham performance of his supposed "free expression" dancers in London (much to the annoyance of some of the audience particularly when hearing Yorkshire accents – confirming perhaps the loutishness - of the provocateurs?) and putting on a nonsensical piano rendition performed by Trevor Winkfield mocking John Cage and taking delight in the fact that some idiots took it seriously. In fact we were mocking ourselves too as we had taken Cage and Cornelius Cardew seriously just a year previously and had even interviewed Cage in Icteric! Silence and the transcendence of music did really impact upon us though but we were left wondering about the process of its overcoming – and still are for that matter. Little did we realise how all half-negation can be capitalised and how avante garde sounds a la John Cage were to be turned into the music of Enrico Morioni as backdrop to the Spaghetti Westerns, that last gasp necessary ingredient that helped give the zing to the last consequent Westerns. We read with interest about the auto-destructive activities of Metzger and Latham's book burnings disliking the fact that the latter were turned into objet d'arte to be hung on walls. We also pointed out - to everybody's disbelief- that these acts of auto-destruction influenced The Who (the performance ritual of guitar smashing) smashing up your instruments as a substitute for a real smashing up. Being clued in, we also quoted Tzara's dictum from a half century ago "musicians smash your instruments, let blind men take the stage". As if to give a point to this we rather pointlessly repeated Tzara's ROAR which just meant inviting everybody you could to turn up in a Newcastle city car park and ROAR your head off. Maybe a couple of 100 or so did just that. Jean Jacques Lebel, the French happenner, around the same time wrote a long article for Icteric which though tending to extol his happening nonsense at the time was somewhat lucid about Artaud and very anti police. Unbeknown to us, about the same time Don Smith and Rene Vienet, after a night drinking, went round to his apartment and thoroughly slagged him off for his confusions about art and general lack of coherent critique. Jean Jacques just stood there – more or less apologetically. Although years later Don felt rather bad about this, it obviously had a good effect on Jean Jacques, as he rapidly then developed a much more lucid and subversive take on society and of course was one of the French contingent who were to tear down the fences at the Isle of Wight pop festival in 1971. A bald attack can certainly be good at times in pulling people across who are hovering on the brink in any case. A final comment upon Icteric's contents reveals a complete though, for the time, well-intentioned muddle. A quasi-scientific document on butterfly oddities and recollections of rapturous displays of these delightful insects was also published and in terms of the detritus of modernism, was one of the better things in the magazines. The same might be said of a text on the amazing activities of slugs, which fell between a kind of factograph and natural science. The fact is though if Icteric had appeared 20 years later it would have been instantly capitalised by the right wing Saatchi Brothers end of culture emporium. As it was we were heading in completely the opposite direction.

We were also coming from jazz, the other corner stone of our end of culture orientation particularly a passion for be-bop and its aftermath. However, even on this front were becoming perplexed. Something was happening to jazz – it was beginning to fall apart and as much as we really desired to go along with John Coltrane's latest developments we were flummoxed albeit, trying to pretend we weren't. We were in fact beginning to relate the trajectory of jazz to the crises besetting the totality of modern art.

As if to underline this in an Ornette Coleman/Don Cherry concert in Newcastle in 1966 we clamoured on the stage and put up in big letters, ICTERIC behind the performers. Interestingly, nobody objected and the jazzmen showed no interest whatsoever. Truth to tell, by then, we felt our statement (our Ad perhaps) was better than the free form jazz itself simply because we knew we'd become engaged on a free form quest ourselves perhaps far more searching than the free form jazz itself which we also dimly recognized was kind of heading in the same direction though without the same clarity. (Later, we equated the ghetto uprisings in

the United States as its real creative outcome having surpassed the musical form).

Moreover only three years previously a bunch of us in Newcastle had sat in awe in front of John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones, opened mouth at its transcendental brilliance knowing full well we were listening to something fantastic though even then – with a kind of premonition and a sad feeling in the gut – knowing somehow it wasn't going to be repeated because real history was beginning to say something far more pertinent and which the last days of jazz was straining to discover to. (How one can have sense of such things in the offing perhaps we'll never know). There was though a very enjoyable conclusion to this earlier moment. We and our friends – as per usual – sat through Coltrane's rendition of God Save the Queen which was then an obligatory formality all entertainment paid lip service to. One of us, David Young, loudly proclaimed to the stage and audience alike: "that it was the best God Save the Queen" he'd ever sat through.

The times were a'changing fast and the activities around Icteric were more and more moving towards total subversion. In no way could the group hold together and tensions within became palpable the more that risks were taken. In any case the group even when playing with the art/anti-art dichotomy had provoked outright hostility from the cultural establishment in Newcastle who were so conservatively brain-dead they couldn't even see where their own cultural future lay. Instead of intelligently patronizing or co-opting or even simply realising there was nothing overtly anti the system here (it was too confused for that) they came down upon it forcibly and stupidly - none so much when an article was published in a rag called The Northerner in 1966. It's perhaps worth quoting a few extracts from it.....

"It was becoming increasingly obvious to a few people that there was no longer any valid reason to make sculpture or paintings. Looking at the current art magazines revealed a uniform dullness: nothing seemed to shine anywhere. The real was so much more interesting than the simulated and offered so many more possibilities" which was how it began. It was meant to be intentionally provocative, encompassing a kind of put-on blatant philistinism. The opening sentence was followed by an attack on all art from Rembrandt, through Degas to Rodin in the spirit of Dada – a movement which was praised - along with the most subversive anti-art aspects of Surrealism and Russian Constructivism using ample quotes which ironically belied the 'philistinism': Painting is a pharmaceutical product for idiots"(Francis Picabia) "art is nonsense" (Jacques Vache) and "the high images have fallen"(Andre Breton) etc.

"..... what we did as a group (Icteric) was merely to recognise this and to notice that in the last 25 years there has been a shabby attempt at restoration. After the rejection of aesthetics by Constructivism and Surrealism, Cubism (which Picabia called a "cathedral of shit") was reaffirmed with abstract expressionism.".....

"What artists do now is merely capitalise on a stage in development and not carry it off one quarter as well. For instance, Neo-Dada which is supposed to relate to Dada when it's patently obvious that, say, a painter like Roy Lichtenstein relates more to Matisse than say, Duchamp. There is the same saleable gallery product, the same lovely "well applied paint", and the same viewing distance from the "canvas" – even using a canvas! Incredibly conservative. Is Lichtenstein a salon painter – the 1960s Bougereau ? (a French academician in the late 19th century). Is he even as good" ,

"Are not Rheinhardt's and Stella's paintings about the death of painting? Painting about Malevich's "deserts of vast eternity"? As Nietzsche said: "The desert grows woe to him that bears the desert unto himself". Malevich rejected the love of the desert and ended by making Suprematist designs for his coffin. Will Stella do likewise? It is distressing to see pictures that were done in an iconoclastic spirit now interpreted as how to make pictures."

"...If all there is in front of us is a future of style, style, style, we must still attempt to recreate this (fundamental fury) that motivated Surrealism, Dada and Constructivism – and that re-creation must not be a style neither. Perhaps we can start by burying Surrealism, Dada and Constructivism, by recognising that they were in turn second class revolutionary movements".

In a way this was all very pointed stuff for the ignorant times of the mid-60s and, moreover, in a very backward country in comparison to France and though working in the dark without knowledge of the



International Lettrists or Situationists, nonetheless we were on the right path towards liberation preparing the ground, readying us as it were to hear and inwardly digest the more lucid grasp which had been taking place elsewhere, even though the same message was also not at all well known in its place of birth. In saying this though, the short text on Icteric was finally confused and inconsistent and these passages quoted above were the best parts.

Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, this brief text created a furore among Newcastle's cultural establishment. Some even called for legal sanctions particularly as it had come on the heels of a declamation proclaiming support for the floods in the Italian city of Florence in 1966, when the river Arno burst its banks and had devastated (or for us had "transformed") the art treasures of that Renaissance city. No one came to our support and their was a loud silence from those - to be oh so famous - Tyneside Poets emanating from the somewhat avante gardism of Basil Bunting's writings - around Tom Picard and the Morden Tower collective who'd proudly brought Allen Ginsberg to the cold Newcastle nights. They really didn't like that assault on poetry. How dare we when surrounded by philistinism and straights in any case! In return we thought they were bollocks without a critique! Looking back perhaps one could say that such things were a kind of crude even vulgar though necessary provocation of traditional artistic values, Nowadays though, when we survive in a situation where the nihilism of post modernism in its re-development/commodification mania encompassing memories, willfully trashes these self same objets d'art and where "higher values" are seamlessly flattened out in the pure value of money from anything and everything, such stances just don't have the same effect. Everything becomes an equivalent and Damien Hirst is the equal of Michaelangelo etc.

We were cutting through crap as well as floundering. We were real at the same time as the media - in a general sense - was taking us. Maybe here it's best to quote from a diary jotting of 1972 as it also recounts something of which we were feeling at the time. "The overt recuperation of the Happening though was already well underway as it headed towards the mainstream as utilised in - HELP - the first film by the Beatles. They also laughed at Neo-dada art objects - wire sculptures etc. New media techniques of montage and quick splicing were developed as a form of hip youth cum-class-aggression against an ossified English ruling elite - but all set firmly within a capitalist order." At the same time, around 1966, re-reading Harold Rosenberg's, *The Tradition Of The New* - a book mainly about American Abstract Expressionism - suddenly the best of his comments came into focus as we noted an undertow which Rosenberg didn't dare clearly express. *The Tradition of The New* was better than the art commodities described - in particular beginning to notice that neo-Dadaist products were "the relics of subversion" and "a ritualised vanguardism". This was just what we wanted to hear and by then we had the wit to distance ourselves by then from his ultimately laudatory appraisal of Abstract Expressionism. A little later, in the same diary - looking at it again after all these years (!) - there follows something else and which still doesn't make complete sense - though getting somewhere: "The gestural, post abstract expressionist activity, wasn't enough without a better comprehension of the breakdown of everyday life. Taken as a one-dimensional, post artistic, it also couldn't immediately comprehend the sheer totality of present day nihilism which does mean a greater comprehension of work, sex, personal relationships and the family, as well as the mirage of all important consumer identifications".

Around this time, Ron Hunt arranged an exhibition in Newcastle called "Descent into the Street" which despite the contradiction between the title and the situation and which we were aware of, clarified things further for us as it was a compilation of past acts in the first 40 or so years of the 20th century where art was pushed historically behind us preparing the way for a greater general, communal creativity. It contained pointers towards the negation and supercession of art although we were still fuzzy about where the path of supercession lay. In a sense the exhibition was the explanation of that history, if a little confused at times like bringing in examples of Maoist calisthenics etc. A little later Ron heard about the activities (from some marginal art magazine) about the activities of Black Mask in New York who'd made an intervention at some cultural meeting in a plush art gallery shouting "burn the museums baby", "art is dead", "Museum closed" etc. Exhilarated he told us and none too soon as we were in trouble! One of us (Johnny Myers) had just padlocked and chained up the entrance to the university art school preventing any student or teacher from entering and on which was placed a notice in big black letters: "Art School Closed Forever". Moreover, just before that, he'd sprinkled gunpowder in a long trail down the interior steps and through the corridors of the sculpture school and was going to light it before getting stopped by horrified students who grassed him up. Soon letters were sent out to New York and we got replies immediately: "brothers/sisters

come and join us"! So two of us (Dave Wise and Anne Ryder) went from Newcastle To New York and in the summer of 1967 engaged in some of the activities of Black Mask (one which resulted in being held up by the police at an H. Rap Brown meeting) and/or simply enjoying their company and writing one or two things, particularly a completely over the top blood thirsty manifesto on which was placed the names of some of those who'd gathered around the now defunct Icteric. Having by then heard of the Situationists in New York Ben Morea gave us the personal addresses and telephone numbers of those individuals who resided in London whom we duly contacted on our return to England. But first another part of the missing link.

The magazine Heatwave in London and those other individuals who initially formed the English section of the SI is another story and one that still has not been clearly documented. Hopefully this may yet happen. As mentioned before, absorbed understandably with the amazing possibilities of the present and obsessed with how essentially to change it together, we never talked too much about our respective personal pasts. However, for the moment a few comments on Heatwave may have results. For it's time and considering this is England the magazine was quite astounding. It was certainly better than what had taken place in Newcastle though without the trouble and fisticuffs which had erupted in a somewhat boondocks of a town. It was the first magazine of all to put the new revolt of youth into some kind of perspective with specific reference to Mods and Rockers, Beats and the like affirming their vandalistic acts of destruction as something which could have real future consequences. No doubt they were bouncing off the magazine Rebel Worker in America but it was to the good. Ben Covington and Charlie Radcliffe were the two people who initiated Heatwave. Chris Gray, soon attracted to the publication, provided critiques of Dada and Surrealism that were really to the point. Inevitably, and with a past hindsight which is all too easy, Rebel Worker in America was full of great intention and though excellent for its time was also packed with confusion. On the Poverty of Student Life in France pointed this out though only criticising Rebel Worker's affirmation of Mao's cultural revolution) without commenting upon its up-beat assessment of youth music from The Beatles to Bob Dylan. These spectacular foci of the youth rebellion required, it seems at the time, no further comment, though obviously the mood was there as the intentionally altered English production of a French Situationist poster two years later specifically attacked pop music with one of the cartoon characters mouthing off about somebody being, "just another bloody Beatle". However, what was also needed was something crisper in terms of theory and the momentum of history to bring that aggro out. Luckily that was clearly hoving into view. At the time though, musical identifications in youth rebellion seemed to merit no further and deeper comments. Moreover, theory in Rebel Worker was confused categorising people who use their brains as just corny old-timers without insisting on thought as necessary as long as it's not part and parcel of the specialist role which usually goes with the paid-up intellectual which mostly indicates the absence of real thought. Again though, we must understand all this in relationship to the time. The best of Heatwave and Rebel Worker were the first "primitive" theoretical awakenings of that visceral need to live manifested in many aspects of a cushioned welfare-pinned youth rebellion and which rapidly found its cutting edge in 1968 – though not without sharply criticising the shortcomings of its very recent past.

And from these two disparate connections King Mob took off .....

### **THE LATE 60s AND KING MOB.**

The English Situationists and the Newcastle rebellion join forces. Similarities and differences. Reading Marx, Lefebvre and Hegel. Black Mask and the Gordon riots of 1980. English romanticism and the guerrilla/gorilla actions of King Mob. Intervention against theatre. King Mob potlatch. Subversive wall slogans.

Initially what resulted was a series of euphoric get-togethers in London ardently discussing everything under the sun in flats, pubs and other venues. A meeting - if you like – between north and south - (to give a posthumous revision to Disraeli's book of the same name) between us, Chris Gray, Don N Smith, Tim Clarke and Charles Radcliffe. In short, the English section of the Situationists. There was nothing formal at

all about these passionate conversations and no thought of making groups, reconstituting ourselves etc and nothing about organisational forms/structures and what have you. Nor did we discuss much about our different survival situations – us on the dole, them with some money or other. Mainly it was all about what was unfolding in America – the student rebellion and the urban insurrections especially in Watts, Newark and Detroit, along with endless piecing together of radical theory coming together from the best of the old world of art and politics - usually emphasising their most destructive aspects. Marx smashing the street lamps in London's Kentish Town, Durutti smashing up chairs as bourgeois domesticated articles and inevitably the practical demolition of the world of art as conceived by the most aware artists, especially Lautremont. We equally lauded anti-art measures deployed by people other than artists. Insurgent anarchists were praised like when Bakunin hauled masterpieces from art galleries hanging them on the barricades of 1848 knowing full well the military top brass would balk at destroying priceless artifacts thus giving some protection to the insurgents. The latter was communicated to Ben Morea in New York who, duly impressed, incorporated the same action during the barricaded sit-in around Columbia University in New York sometime later. Of course a lot of this re-reading and re-interpretation of history was affected by what was taking place on the streets in the here and now particularly the outbreaks of youth hooliganism in the western world of commodity domination which we saw as the potlatch festivity bringing about the contemporary destruction of capitalism. It was all, to be sure, rather too simplistic as others, much later, pointed out. Even at the time, though ready to virtually destroy anything in sight, nonetheless we felt such vandalism had to be improved upon and initially, at the very least, accompanied by a theoretical explanation saying why we should encourage others to do such things. Everybody was also reading voraciously at the same time anything from Hegel to Marx, to Lefebvre to histories of the Spanish revolution of 1936 etc. A rapid coming together of revolutionary knowledge and thought from all over was kind of quickly assembled and in haste. In retrospect, there was too much haste as the immanent pressure of the times wasn't allowing much space for good, reflective digesting. A few years later we sadly realized this was to prove a much more serious omission.

Of course we also passionately discussed the Situationists and their predecessors finding out by word of mouth - from the horses mouth if you like - all the unknown history of post second world war cultural and political subversion and how we could no longer separate the two as they inevitably tended more and more to enmesh. Astonished, we heard about the Lettrist interventions in the 1950s particularly Michel Mourre's invasion of Notre Dame dressed as a priest incarnating a litany proclaiming "God is Dead" only to be set upon by the Swiss Guards with swords drawn ready to hack him to pieces finally escaping with some nasty cuts. Why had all this information been withheld from us was an initial response and only confirmed what we'd felt deep down all our lives: England was a truly conservative shit hole!

It was all compelling stuff between us though Charlie Radcliffe was the most subdued, not to say a trifle cynical about it all, something that must have happened recently as remember he had been through the ordeal of a possible prison sentence because of his involvement with printing fake bank notes with a declaration against the Vietnam war printed across them. He was also becoming somewhat wearily hostile (well to some degree) with the Situationist scene and even in late 1967 could say: "You've got to have money to be a Situationist". It was a fair enough comment on the English section of the SI - and it went home alright – as we'd quickly realised these were people of means and obviously were in receipt of tranches of inherited wealth which funded their refusal of work allowing them to experiment with a much greater freedom in acts of blatant refusal than the vast majority of those at the sharp end. On first meeting Chris Gray in an instance we thought "shit, this guy's posh" but fuck it, it didn't matter let's get down to the real nitty gritty and does it matter where anybody comes from? We were aware of this privilege but equally we were aware at the time of the profundity of their comments and theoretical take on things that really were quite inspiring. Differences in economic position wasn't though an obstacle at the times as all of us wanted to immediately engage in subversive acts together, accompanied by high quality theoretical explanation which was way beyond anything the left could conceive. We knew we were capturing the hidden subversive tendency of the times and we knew it was really going to communicate. No question about it!

Knowing Charlie Radcliffe so briefly it may have been better to have put some of this in the personal biography section here. It would also have been inappropriate because his figure is so shadowy. He never overcame his disillusionment though one forgets how brilliant the guy had been. To take one example; memorably he asked some draughtsman to help him make a vicious satire Walt Disney's world. Dollar signs

were plastered all over the cartoon as the familiar characters indulged in all kind of rude things. Mickey Mouse was having a piss, Goofy was humping and so on. It was hilarious. The limited print run is now surely lost as the poster has never been reproduced. Slowly Charles Radcliffe was to disconnect himself from all contact, shying away, finally blanking you in the street in an embarrassed sort of way and rather ashamed about it. It sure was disconcerting as you were left wondering just what had you done? Little did we realize the man, along with Howard Marks (of “Mr. Nice Guy” fame) was getting into a lucrative hash and grass dealing syndicate which drew the line at hard drugs. Interestingly, despite the increasing distance he was mimicking some of the romantic themes King Mob was going a bundle on though the latter was utilizing them in a more revolutionary way. Charles Radcliffe’s cat and mouse game with custom and excise was straight out of Robert Louis Stevenson or maybe putting into play a pirates fantasy construct complete with pieces of eight buried in secret chambers on wild cliffs! Moreover, it wasn’t all for personal gain as some of the dosh was diverted to help fund some of the more radical underground press especially INK. However the whole scene though superficially rather swash-buckling was full of ‘grasses’ in the real sense of the term overlapping with spooks, the secret service and some gun running possibly related to the IRA. Though at a distance it could look attractive but isn’t also part of the very essence of the modern day entrepreneur?

Of course there had been Situationists from these islands previously in the persons of Alex Trocchi and Ralph Rumney but we hardly referred to them except to note they couldn’t escape the clutches of art as both their reputations were based within the cultural sphere: Trocchi as a novelist and Ralph Rumney as a painter. Interestingly, Ralph Rumney who grew up in the north of England called his home town Halifax: “A town without culture”. On first reading this there was something of a “jeez that’s really getting somewhere” having experienced that warm, untutored behaviour which is so typical of the inhabitants of that town. No such thing however! He meant it in a derogatory way as a criticism of Halifax as Ralph Rumney never could let go of the role of artist except for a brief moment in the mid 1950s in Paris. What undoubted merit had been in the man in his early years picketing army recruitment centers in Bradford, draft dodging reading a forbidden copy of the Marquis de Sade and traveling – simply because he was forced to flee Halifax as well as England was simply lost overshadowed by all those dreadful collages and montages no better or worse than your average LP cover from the 1950s or 60s. Ironically, that “town without culture” in 2002 hosted an exhibition of their rehabilitated son. Exile from art was never an option and truly today there really is no out of the way place escaping the deadly aesthetic embrace!

King Mob was a spontaneous coming together of subversive youth from middle class and working class backgrounds though most had been through aspects of higher education, which they’d found to be a constant stream of ridiculous mumbo-jumbo. Distancing themselves from this experience they were engaged in a process of overthrowing all the received wisdom from their respective backgrounds. There was for a brief - too brief – moment a remarkable similarity between them and little class hostility was evident in the paramount need to express the coming together of what we thought at the time was the first total revolutionary critique in history. Sheer passion and the desire to live a life free of money (the intensified invasion of exchange) and the social relations of commodity production was the very essence of what we were about, so why should class matter in all of this? It was our negation and what we wanted – a new world – which mattered. In retrospect, class mattered quite a lot particularly when the revolutionary moment had passed and there was a necessity to more accurately reflect on what had gone wrong in order to create a more substantial base for any future assault on the old order and to make certain a true history of the times and its failings would not be lost, if only to assist those coming. At the time though it was the pure desire to live authentically, to experience “Christmas on earth for the first time” as Rimbaud put it that really mattered.

There was no thought of breaking away from the Situationist International among the original members and indeed at that time a magazine was been put together containing original texts freshly written. They were of a high standard and the projected SI mag was indeed better than what was to appear in the pages of King Mob a little later. They had a greater lucidity and coherence even though they tended to be somewhat repetitious of the French centre. On the other hand, they were shot through with asides on Anglo/American society drawing somewhat from previous Heatwave articles making them specifically pertinent to these societies. Most of these polemical texts have unfortunately been lost as the proposed magazine was abandoned very quickly though they’d all been collectively written, some making greater contributions than others. We saved the only known one: The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution put

together by Chris Gray and Don with occasional help from Tim Clarke. Ten years later because of its outstanding quality we made photocopies of it, handing it around various individuals particularly ex-Infantile Disorders people in Leeds. One eventually found the way to BM Chronos who quite rightly published it as an important historical link as well as a very good piece of writing in itself. In that text there are references to Black Mask couched in a comradely critical way.

And then came Vaneigem's bombshell communication after his meeting with Black Mask in New York in late 1967. Principally Vaneigem objected to Alan Hoffman a kind of mystical but political acidhead who'd started to show an interest in Black Mask. We'd met him on the lower East Side with Ben Morea though Ben was thoroughly dismissive of him in mid '67 and just thought of him as a passive hippy unwilling to actively take on American society unlike the ghetto blacks or, to a lot lesser extent, the students. Actually, we couldn't get on with Alan neither finding him not that dissimilar to the Newcastle Morden Tower poets whom we detested. It seemed as though he had more of a Beat take against American society, like some more clued-in Ferlinghetti than clearly anti-art and what have you - what with his Reichian orgone box psychologising tendencies which really were more the by-product of Wilhelm Reich's persecution for adhering to revolutionary perspectives in the atmosphere of an American society experiencing the first taste of what was to become McCarthyism. Generally Ben was really down on the hippies in the Lower East Side and when panhandling asking us for spare change, he'd aggressively turn on them, saying, "ask the fucking tourists". Ben in any case at the time survived through part time shit jobs, window cleaning and what have you and he didn't have many benign liberal sympathies on that level. He'd come from a fairly poor Italian American background and wasn't that enamoured of those more economically privileged although, unlike these islands, he wasn't always mouthing off about the middle classes. One forgets the speed of events and individuals were changing themselves within days and hippies rapidly became a lot more than hippies starting to fight back taking on the police etc. It was this general movement that brought Ben and Alan closer together. Also, Ben had a serious liver complaint and he couldn't touch alcohol thus acid went down very nicely. What became the counter culture though was fast developing in subversive directions and the overlap between Alan Hoffmann and Ben Morea was something that must have been repeated countless throughout America in the late 60s. Of course there were bad things to it and mysticism was one of them. Ben was inevitably very upset about Vaneigem and started raving on in letters about the man of letters disposition he put across accusing him of not knowing anything about those at the bottom of the pile and street life in general. This created quite a dilemma in London as Chris Gray and Don N Smith in particular wanted to keep all the newfound friendships here alive and kicking. Knowing our friendliness with Ben Morea they didn't want to cause too many upsets before things had really kicked in in terms of doing something together. Presumably because of their prevarication they were excluded from the Situationists and the rest, as they say, is history. It was a major factor though that never came out in the officially recognised reasons for the exclusion as put out by the French section.

Out of this lacunae and initial disorientation followed by a kind of re-think, King Mob developed. The biggest influence in it by far was Chris Gray who moved his abode from the Earls Court area to Shrewsbury Rd in Notting Hill, an area chosen as one that offered possibility for finding other similar people with its air of general marginality. It was also cheap and flats and bed-sits were easy come easy go. Although unique in London Notting Hill had other equivalents like Balsall Heath in Birmingham and Whalley Range in Manchester. The split off from the Situationists caused soul searching but the spirit of the times was clearly moving fast and the need to work out some on-going activity keenly felt. At the time, Smiths, the popular newspaper and trashy mag newspaper chainstore brought out a series of attractively presented folders on various events in the history of these islands. One of them was on the Gordon riots of 1781 in London when a huge swathe of the capital's destitute population was swept up in an orgy of looting, burning and bitter revenge. A guy called Hillary had written a book on the subject, which though reactionary in tone and stance brought out the awesome majesty of that splendid occasion. On the walls of a destroyed Newgate prison some insurgent had painted up: "His Majesty King Mob". This seemed too good to miss as a title for a magazine cover and moreover we were connecting with a great though relatively unknown past. Obviously the book provided the basis for the modern presentation sold by Smiths which also included lots of drawings, paintings and lithographs illustrating the fury of the event. We avidly poured over it liberating further copies for others to read. We weren't really interested in the whys and wherefores of the riots like its "No Popery" it was the fact that London was put to the force of fire and we were thus liberally interpreting the picture ourselves as we dreamed of doing the same thing all over again! From the fall of 1967 we began doing just that well before any such magazine came into existence, preparing the ground as it were by

spraying up big wall slogans and producing lots of small stickers viciously satirizing the "I'm Backing Britain" campaign promoted by the then Labour party PM, Harold Wilson who was trying to encourage workers to spend a few hours every week working for nothing thus, according to the propaganda, helping save the country! Some schmucks did and were congratulated on camera by Wilson himself. Stickers were produced with slogans on them like "Bugger Britain", "IWW - I Won't Work", "Never Work" (Marx), "Fuck Exploitation" - while underneath the wording there was a miniature Union Jack. Basically Don was behind all of this and he handed lots of them out to anybody mindful to gum them up wherever they could.

Of course, the title King Mob Echo suggested we wanted to make an impact - essentially a popular impact without being populist which meant something quite different to a mass circulation, 20th century Daily Echo type newspaper. The magazine itself became the first of a bunch - the first and the best - though that's not saying much. By 1971 even run of the mill leftists were doing things along similar lines. "7 Days", for instance was heralded as a left wing tabloid harking back to the days of Picture Post but unlike King Mob Echo, it was full of specialist articles on rock music, TV and what have you written by various left wing career specialists who were already doing very well for themselves (e.g. Stuart Hood, the former controller of the BBC etc). Somewhat later, John Barker (ex-Angry Brigade) proposed producing the "Pink-Un", a kind of popular newsheet mimicking in style, if not in content, the old Saturday night sports gazette. No doubt a man with the insight of a John Barker would have created something OK but like many schemes we've all had it never saw the light of day.

Quite quickly King Mob developed into the most consequential critique emanating from the detritus of culture in Britain in the 20th century and far superceding anything posited by the Vorticists around Wyndham Lewis and the anemic English Surrealists. Its influence was widespread only for its cutting edge to be blunted almost immediately and over the ensuing years, to be completely lost. It changed a climate only to linger on as a distorted shadow and a trendy image. In its pristine condition, King Mob challenged all artistic form - something, which had never remotely happened in these islands before though there had been precursors during the Romantic movement in the late 18th and early 19th century though those early essential innovations were to be eradicated by subsequent events not least through the Imperial triumph of Britain in Europe and the world during the Victorian epoch, a legacy the enemy within still hasn't recovered from.

Action became everything and disruption a daily event including some pretty good hand to hand fighting with the police in the anti-Vietnam war demos despite completely disagreeing with the leftists with their slogan of Victory to the Vietcong etc. It's true we wanted to start the war in England but we wanted it to take place on a higher and more visionary level than any civil war in history - a war where everything institutionalised would be deemed worthy of target and subverted with maximum clarity.

Most of the actions were spontaneous affairs, though a few were planned a few days - at most a couple of weeks - in advance and were worked out to some degree, although always allowing a lot of autonomy in this provisional working out. We never informed the police and the broad outlines of what we intended doing was passed on down through eager friends into that new grapevine/diaspora which so quickly hove into the horizons of existence in the late 60s. There was sufficient advance warning of the action allowing others to make their personal contributions if they were so minded. In fact, when the interventions occurred there were always enough unfamiliar faces to add interest plus the anticipation of getting to know them personally afterwards. The well-produced Selfridges leaflet was perhaps the only real advance publicity even though no date and time was placed upon the proposed action as it was up to those enthusiastic individuals who took away bunches of these leaflets to communicate these facts. This leaflet, along with those sparse others we produced, always went from hand to hand. We shunned leftist or anarchist bookshops in distributing these leaflets (though not for magazines like King Mob I etc but even this was done sparingly as we really did hate bookshops!) This way of hand to hand distribution also did mean that the police were always taken by surprise even though, inevitably they turned up within half an hour to round up and sometimes arrest the usual suspects, more or less in the time it took for any old pub brawl to get sorted by them.

The intervention in the Powis Square dispute in Notting Hill in the spring of '68 that basically announced King Mob in the arena of an anti-publicity publicity, was arranged entirely by word of mouth and with no accompanying leaflet. Although most of us had just recently moved into the West London area

(it was in the days of the ubiquitous cheap bed-sit and the rented shared small flat existing before the squatting era) we were quickly aware of local anger about the lack of play space for children which in Notting Hill had resulted in children been knocked down by cars. Finally, a child had been killed. There were green spaces around alright – big enclosed garden areas – but they were for the leisure activities of an isthmus of rich people who in a pastiche of ribbon development, extended down into the “Gate” from the rich folks on the (proper) Notting Hill. At the time they were seen as the colonisers and sadly three decades later were finally to completely occupy our homeland and steal our very lives from us. In 1968 they were fenced off from the local community by seven foot high iron railings and the poor were denied access to their lovely green lawns. Complaints were visible alright but the protest was led by the paraphernalia of Labour and Communist party types via the umbrella of the Notting Hill Peoples Association, a multi-racial ad hoc community forum made up of largely unpaid community activists hanging on to the shirt tails of reasonably well-funded do-gooders like George Clarke whose charisma induced a resentful though somewhat acceptable subservient response from his subalterns. The “protest” - if you could call it that - was a lack-lustre, pusillanimous, official affair. We decided to change all that simply to test our metal and we didn’t even bother to inform the local leftist worthies just what we were about. They’d have objected in any case to our proposals and would, most likely, have informed the police. Instead, we arranged through word of mouth to attack the fences surrounding the square on a Saturday afternoon when there’d be enough people having a weekend drink-up or strolling through Portobello market to get perhaps a few of them to join us. A gorilla suit and a circus horse outfit were hired for the occasion.

Thus, in a crowded Henekeys pub on one Saturday lunch-time in April ’68, one of us went into the lavatory and put on the gorilla suit. A black bomber speed lozenge helped which though encouraging confidence, also made things hotter inside the makeshift fur. Like “Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment” (an English film about schizophrenia at the time) the theme of man/gorilla was put into real play – and consciously so - meaning put whatever the recent spectacle contains into concrete action - in order to come up with some real subversion. Roaring out the lavatory and pounding the gorilla’s stiffened cardboard chest - a la Morgan – causing some drinkers to shriek and drop glasses, the creature shot out of the pub immediately (as planned) meeting the circus horse and all those other (unplanned) people who we hoped would be there. We needn’t have worried. There were plenty. Together we all set off down Portobello Road shouting our heads off asking all onlookers to join us in pulling down the fences around Powis Square so that local kids could have somewhere safely to gamble about in. Well, a lot more other things were shouted out too because this had become instantly an occasion where you could shoot your mouth off and if it was ostensibly about kids it was also much more about total revolution - for us big kids - and that came across loud and clear. Arriving at Powis Square we set about the fences though within minutes, as expected, police vans arrived and the arrests started during some violent scuffles. The gorilla and the circus horse were arrested along with a fair number of species of homo sapiens. In the dock at Marylebone Magistrates Court, (that familiar place!) two days later, the judicial procedures turned into an act of hilarity particularly when the front end of the horse pleaded “guilty” and the back end “not guilty” (“Irish” and Abbo) simply because the back end couldn’t see what was happening up front! A copper objected to having been bruised by one of the gorilla’s paws – and so on. Well, people were rolling around in the court with barely suppressed laughter though later the local press hardly mentioned this laughable commotion. Remember, it was in the days before the let-it-all-hang-out sensationalism which sells more copy than ever it did in the late 60s. Finally the court farce received attention in a This England column in the New Statesman. At the time this was called publicity and even high-profile! Even the Selfridge’s invasion, a year later, only received a bit column in the liberal Observer Sunday, culture-bug news rag. Yet, much later the event was to become some kind of talisman - although if it hadn’t been for the spectacular recuperation of Malcolm McLaren and Punk Rock most likely this wouldn’t have been the case.

In the aftermath of this attractive but violent intervention, demonstrations then began to take place regularly. Finally, one Saturday afternoon, soon after the initial eruption, a determined assault was made and the fences were torn down with the police more or less looking on. They were torn down with the assistance of mainly, direct action Maoists from the local Vietnam Solidarity Committee. Some of the local community stalwarts – mostly working class and who’d been having a rough time – though flattered by the attention of middle class community activists with funded means and now acquiring a modicum of status – people like Pat McDonald (who now has a blue plaque to her name over Powis Square) - were the most vociferous in attacking the insurgents. Yet they were almost immediately – with the fences flat on the green grass - to regain the campaign initiative instituting all the legal requirements, as Powis Square became an

official children's playground. They were essentially the worker bureaucrats and need we say more! Well, truth to say, all of us – Maoists and Autonomist Situationists alike - let them get on with it as we really weren't that interested in mealy-mouthed council machinations. All of us – ersatz Stalinists to the "Nameless Wildness" people - just wanted everything to explode everywhere. It was our only concrete overlap though an impassioned one. More particularly, us lot certainly weren't interested in institutionalised space or even in a controlling space delivering an anodyne version of a child's increasingly desperate desire for play administered by aspiring youth workers well interested in an easier job via those new frontiers of the State which were (just to say) beginning to open up. On the contrary, we wanted to see uncontrolled children's play. If that was a further liberating factor in urban riot so much the better and spontaneous, vandalistic exuberance – a real throwing off of the history of civilization as well as its application to the needs of capitalism – was beckoning.

On a hot and barmy evening during June 1968 in the midst of a rare drinking bout downing whisky (in the heady days of that year pure grass or hash – or nothing at all – were preferred) somebody amongst us presented us with a leaflet advertising a play by the contemporary Spanish avante gardist play write, Arrabel. The performance was taking place nearby up by the tube station at Notting Hill Gate. It was actually occurring in a church obviously run by some hip vicar. (In fact it was the venue where that obnoxious and trendy Gate Theatre aestheticism sprang from - later to situate itself above a nearby pub) This montage of modern art and religion was rather appropriate and certainly enough to glowingly invite attack. We just couldn't pass this chance up and drunkenly stumbled up there, laughing and joking and intent on trouble. We went in through the door and saw this bunch of obviously avante garde performers strutting their stuff on a stage. It didn't really matter to us that Arrabel was a persecuted artiste in Franco's Fascist Spain. For us, the avante garde – wherever they were situated – were the enemy too regardless of the particular repressive conditions they lived in. Maybe this at the time was too simplistic. Certainly, a distinction should perhaps have been made between the differences performing Arrabel in Madrid and London. True, but what the fuck when you are also coherently drunk! After all, at the time, you would have had no hesitation in disrupting the anti-theatre theatre, nihilistic presentations of Samuel Beckett even though he had excommunicated himself from Ireland - having suffered a nervous breakdown on Dun Loaghoire pier product of a state enforced Catholic repression making things impossible for him. But were such personal experiences adequate enough reasons for the existence of The Theatre of the Absurd? Whatever - back to that lovely evening! Immediately we took over the stage pushing the actors aside and from this platform started mouthing on loudly about the need to destroy the separation between art and politics in the search for a new form of self-activity which must involve social revolution.. Some tried unsuccessfully to drag us off the stage mostly (and interestingly) from the audience, picking on women disrupters more than men. Some of the actors came up to us and said they were in agreement with France May '68 that was still taking place at the time though in its final death throws. We replied: "how can you when you are still prepared to accept the acting role reinforcing the audience/performance separation – the very lynch pin of modern day capitalist passivity" - or some such words. It was anyway more or less that. We weren't thrown out. We left in disgust as nobody came up to us and said they agreed. The strength of the Emperor's Clothes of an "art" having lost all creativity – yet how this awesome vacuum was to grow! "Love Thy Void" a contemporary slogan was to say but as Nietzsche wrote so long before that: "The desert grows, woe to him that bears the desert unto himself". Wasn't Malevich's, White Square that very desert devastatingly posited in another form and wasn't avant garde art to repeat this statement from then on, endlessly? The amazing fact is: why hasn't there been thousands more of these Arrabel-like disruptions and getting ever better? The last thing we wanted our disruption to be was as a one off pointing to nothingness. A voice to be spectacularised as a contemporary Mallarme-like Dice Throw of unique subversion. How we failed!

Later, during 1968, on one of the summer demonstrations against the Vietnam war which frequently took place in central London, King Mob made a contribution of a different sort. Abbo made a gigantic mock hamburger with a dummy American G.I. stuffed between a kapok imitation of a giant bread roll. It was then trundled through the streets of central London around Mayfair and Tottenham Court Road accompanied by a replica of a huge baked bean can (again made by Abbo) which housed 4 people. Obviously this play on gigantism was also a comment on the pop art of Oldenburg and Warhol – putting it to real purpose and not fetishising it via the now purely marketing con of the gallery product – and needless to say the way it should be used. The demonstration was supposed to be a serious moment of opposition to U.S. Imperialism. After the Powis Square events, the Maoists more than any other leftists showed interest.



Thus some of the individuals on the inside of the can belonged to various Maoists “splittists” – as they bizarrely referred to themselves and much to our amusement. Although a couple of them were unreconstructed Stalinists nonetheless inside the can they quite merrily shouted; “beans, beans, beans, beans” endlessly picking on the same ditty some others had recently deployed in a disruption in Newcastle! In a minor way it was part of the birth of that Maoist spontaneism which produced Mao Spontex in France in '69 and ten years later, Mao Dada in Italy and which still finds an echo in the early 21st century in a similar Mao Dada movement in Brazil. Was it just pure opportunism to collaborate with such people or was not the momentum of the time daily changing these people too, though only in a piecemeal and not a unified way, which despite our own manifest shortcomings, nonetheless we were also possessed by? The trouble is “unity” for these spontaneous though disintegrating Maoists never seemed to arrive. Like the “beans” there were only glimpses. One of the Maoists had until recently been an engineering worker in a very large Glasgow factory and was fed up listening endlessly on reverential knees to Harry McShane – one of the most principled of the old Red Clydesiders. Simply the Maoist guy was open to making changes and fresh discoveries. Are you to reject such a person out of hand? Later he was to live for years on Chicago’s south side and was the only pale face around.

There were also a number of other things broadly done in the same way as the interventions described above. In 1969, we intervened within and against the Notting Hill Carnival, hiring a truck and fitting it out as a moving Carnival float. At that time the Carnival was a polyglot affair and anybody who lived in the Notting Hill environs was welcome to join in and make a statement with the minimum of bureaucratic hassle or exacting procedure from the organisers, just as long as it wasn’t fascist or racist. The Carnival had been going for a number of years and was – typically for Notting Hill – the invention of Ronnie Lazlitt, a white woman, community worker. Only during the 70s did the Carnival gain an almost exclusively Caribbean flavour with the formation of the Carnival and Arts Committee. We only decided to join in as a wind-up, as an occasion to demonstrate some real (black!) humour and not to affirm any shallow media image the area was rapidly acquiring. Mind you we weren’t open with the Carnival organisers about what we proposed to do. In fact the truck simply joined the parade surreptitiously but no one much seemed to care. A “Miss Notting Hill 1969” at the centre of the float was a piss-take on the scantily dressed Miss World TV contest as it was also a means of mildly detouring the glitzy, somewhat razzmatazz image of the Carnival. Simply put, “Miss Notting Hill” was nothing other than a heroin addict with a mock three-foot long hypodermic full of red paint stuck in her arm. The trouble is as the parade went through the street few tried to stop it and nobody really objected to its presence with any conviction. Enough people though were perplexed as to what was being stated. Some did laugh at the cynical joke side of it. It’s possible the float might have had more effect but unfortunately a torrential downpour lasting hours scuppered all of that. On this occasion though it would have been better to have provided some explanatory leaflet even if it was only some hotch potch of our reflection on drugs etc, some of which – as this text gives some idea about – were pretty interesting. As it stood, it could have easily meant something else entirely. The “intervention” was thus more like a dissident, bad stage-prop contribution that wasn’t really questioning the audience/performer fulcrum and which the changing face of the spectacle would soon well enough accept and with alacrity. Hardly surprising then that it was around this time Chris Gray came up with the idea of the utterly atrocious, vile and offensive pop group which became the spawning ground of punk rock and which would function through exactly the same fulcrum as the Carnival float thereby negating any assault on modern capitalism.

In most of these actions though there was a common underlying way of doing things. Most of them involved carnival-like, post-Dada like props in one way or another. Again, as the comment by Vaneigem which fronts this book suggests, this had its legacy in the collapse of modern art as it moved towards its demise dialectically transforming itself as some of its impulse moved into a creativity made by all and not by one. More needs to be said however. These actions accompanied by bits and pieces of paraphernalia also provided a cue for performance art or, later, the active advertisement or, simply, those TV japes without any profundity like Trigger Happy TV etc and which really are quite nauseating. Even at that time, John Fox – in what became “The Welfare State” troupe - was to use something of a similar formula suitably emasculated of all subversive content. A little later he collaborated with the musician Mike Westbrook in inane events deploying elaborate sets with costumes/puppets and what have you which brought him cultural accolade in real nonsense extravaganzas like “The Apocalyptic High Dive” which involved 50 participants jumping from a tower whilst symbolically disemboweling ravens. (A kind of Maldoror without depth like an Eric Cantona poem without Rimbaud.’s lucidity). John Fox had been involved in the mid-60s agitation in

Newcastle but was one of those who quite quickly turned rancorously against the revolutionary negation it was leading to. "Art is Dead do not consume its corpse" didn't go down well at all because that was what John Fox was very precisely to finally design as product. Moving with the globalising times, by 2001 John Fox was calling his outfit, "The International Welfare State". Still capitalising on frozen moments (well for him) of the Newcastle revolt with his "Art of Death" installation in London's Round House (Winter 2001) which recalled the Icteric death questionnaire and the reconstruction of Malevich's coffin, Fox now manufactures differently conceptualised but still trivial funeral commodities as a supposed new way of dealing with death! Well, someone's got to do it.

On the cusp of the 70s some of us were becoming all too keenly aware of just how those far more principled interventions we'd been involved could be used by a power eager for fresh stimulus. We were becoming more and more critical of the trappings, thinking we should become more severe on ourselves and more spare in what we did, in order to further distance ourselves from any semblance of the aura of a late and moribund modern art which we might be in danger of becoming decked-out with. After all some of the English Beat poets - Mike Horowitz etc - were beginning to patronise our wall slogans, reproducing them along with the odd flyer of ours in newly published *avante garde* books with their names prominently splashed all over them. We heard they wanted to meet us and get to know us etc. We naturally blanked this with disdain. By the early 70s, sad to say, it seemed Chris Gray also wanted also to somehow formalise and find funding for this type of more explicit intervention enumerated above (c/f appendix on Chris Gray) but the essential people he would have needed to carry this project through were, by then, too pissed-off to step back into a recent past just at the moment they were finding it virtually impossible to go forward!

On another level and nowhere near so semi-formalised as this, bit by bit we hoped through weaving in and out, we'd begin to encounter the forces which could materially realise the dreamt-of real potlatch of destruction as daily we contributed our small offerings to the process of furthering decomposition. Some of us almost on a daily basis kept gate-crashing the offices of the burgeoning underground press slugging them off for their lack of any theoretical grasp as well as their failure to get involved in any form of cutting edge direct action. It was also hardly surprising that we tried to turn ritualised demonstrations into orgies of generalised destruction. On March the 17th, 1968 we started to turn over cars in Oxford St getting quickly pushed aside rather heavily by demo stewards. Obviously we were nervous anyway about provoking such a break in England's recent tradition of peaceful protest and thus connecting again with its distant but deep riotous past! By October of the same year such assaults had become easier to carry out (in the meantime, insurgents had quite magnificently smashed up a lot of cars in France) and we were a lot less fearful as we contributed to violent disorder smashing show room windows and trashing the regalia of the rich near the Hilton Hotel in Hyde Park as well as giving many a camera a good seeing to when those stupid idiots within our own ranks of protestors started clicking shutters. (The latter tactic seems much in need of revival when nowadays there are often more cameras than demonstrators on demonstrations).

For us at the time Vaneigem was one of the first individuals bringing into clear focus the destructive potlatch of rebellious youth and wildcat strikers in their first mass outbreak of spontaneous violence when they smashed up cars, neon signs and burnt out newspaper offices in the Belgium general strike of 1961. We didn't then know there had been a more theoretical history leading up to this which had come from a gelling together of ethnographers like Levi Strauss and latter-day Surrealist academics like George Bataille. Did this really matter because we'd certainly got the real point when put in a contemporary context? At the time and well into the 70s, the official left (including Trotskyists) condemned or generally dismissed these manifestations as unfortunate excesses of the proletariat and not as manifestations of their revolutionary essence. At the same time though even in these actions things quickly turned out to be not quite so simple.

As thoughts from a 1972 diary was to reflectively elaborate.

"On the other hand by the early 70s, certain small groups - probably initially recognising this potlatch for the joy it was - tended in a loose, pointlessly-organisational sense (and sometimes as a limbering up prelude to terrorism) to imitate and spectacularise this potlatch in various pre-meditated, voluntaristic actions like trashing whereby this, by now processed, false potlatch, became a "doing it for the proletariat", a kind of violent, worked out - dare one say active, by rote game - not too dissimilar to smashing crockery at a fun-fair stall though, minus the real fear of the police who fortunately never see the subtlety in all of this. Finally it's like the fair ground. No fun. No pleasure. University students tend to be some of the worst

recuperators of this genuine assault on the commodity. The Cultural Festival at the University of Essex in 1969 was just such an example and in response, Tim Clarke, then a lecturer at this institution, produced the pamphlet; "Revolutionaries One More Effort In Order To Be Nihilists" with its excellent cartoon front cover of a well-ageing Prince Philip trying to fuck an even more ageing Queen Elizabeth."

But amongst all this basic action – this maelstrom of an apocalyptic interval that was closing in on us so rapidly – other forces were unleashed as, it seems, we were slowly swallowed up. We'd undoubtedly become more crude as some of us became a lot "simpler" – and nothing wrong in that. A comment of Brecht's sprang to mind at the time: "The main thing is to learn how to think crudely. Crude thinking, that is the thinking of the great". Well, while a term like "great" suggesting the aura of a great individual no longer meant anything to us certainly crudity did. Much may be said about the subsequent telling silence on some of the King Mob cartoons, especially those executed in 'collaboration' with a pure phantasy group called comically The Black Hand Gang we'd invented just for the hell of it and sounding like something out of J M Barrie's tales on the adventures of Captain Hook and Peter Pan! It's a censorship persisting to this day. In their recent book on King Mob, Vague and Co never reproduced these cartoons obviously rather ashamed about them because they didn't fit within acceptable trendy paradigms emanating from official, state registered, Women's Lib. They forgot we were out to upset and we really didn't care that much just how we did it. If that meant public lavatory walls as our sources of inspiration too – well so be it! Cocks and Cunts and Shitting – well I never! Unforgivable when pictorially used in the context of a critique of leftist hi-jacking, it was these simple, dirty, forceful cartoons that really put future cadres backs up and meant that King Mob could never really be mentioned again in respectable PC circles!. One forgets at the time that Fritz Teufel from Commune I in Berlin when on trial bent over and had a shit in the dock. We weren't any different in using bodily functions to shock and obviously we weren't even as open or courageous. Nonetheless, it was these posters that really upset the first feminist wave who then rapidly described the whole of King Mob as male chauvinist. That was enough! Need one say more! Such criticism could only be effective precisely because it had come from a gender base that none dare dispute even if this criticism on all other matters firmly ( though a little waveringly) kept itself within the scope of a nicey, nicey, leftism. Well, they may have been male chauvinist but that was really a very limited take and there was too much of a Victorian puritanism overlapping with another censorship which was ill-defined in its critique of the commodity. The return of such puritanism distilled by a tut-tut tutting leftism could only be effective precisely because it had returned from a gender base that none, it seemed, had the guts to question. But it was precisely what Punk was to take up and it was these small posters which McLaren put up everywhere which produced some of the ingredients of success. As a far more powerful undertow, that scatological basic crudity was to be used by Punk sales imagery which the feminists, in an about turn, then embraced its rebel marketed image simply because women were involved in its promotion too.

King Mob was the most important moment since the English Romantic movement in terms of breakthrough in form and we have to go back to that time to get any idea of what was attempted. King Mob lay at its apex marking the finality and completion of that breakthrough and breakaway from art. This was the lineage, which had been most developed by the English Romantics and so brutally cut short and eclipsed during the rise of the Victorian era. At its best, English Romanticism broke through poetic form into simple impassioned lines (e.g. in Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey, Nutting etc), in Shelley's Notes on London etc. In fact, these formal breakdowns were typical and not exceptional in English Romanticism and made German Romanticism – Schiller, Goethe and Holderlin, formally conservative in comparison, despite the fact the German's thought things through more clearly. Throughout the late 60s amongst ourselves there were many informal discussions about some of these things and the possibilities of direct creations from where the Romantics left off. In a way, English Romanticism broke through artistic forms more than any other European Romanticism – and we recognised this, noting that all those who'd written so well about them in other respects - most noticeably and recently - Raymond Williams, had completely failed to grasp this essential essence. Ironically, in their time not one of the English Romantics could express this as well as Holderlin had done in a letter to his friend, C. L. Neuffer: "If we must we shall break our wretched lyres and do what the artists have only dreamed of doing!" As we've said before none of this was elaborated too clearly, though there was enough in these discussions around King Mob to have merited putting together some of the nuances of these arguments in a more tangible written presentation. Later with the stalling of revolutionary momentum some notes were jotted down and Phil Meyler also spent quite some time putting together a document on Romanticism in these islands which was never completed. It's a shame these efforts bore no real fruit. A few years later we learnt that Alexander Trocchi essays on the Romantics when

a student at Glasgow university were considered excellent and you wonder if he'd been approaching the subject on broadly the same lines a few years earlier? Most likely not. There was a quite stark dichotomy between our thoughts and our actions. On reflection, when we spray painted lines of romantic poetry on the walls of Notting Hill, particularly lines from Coleridge's Ode to Dejection and phrases from William Blake etc we surely gave the wrong impression: It was as though we wanted to revive Romanticism and the poet and not as we were doing in spontaneous conversation, subjecting them to relentless though appreciative critique, destroying them whilst bringing out their essential kernel in that "recovery through transfer" - a phrase of Marx we so admired at the time.

The confrontation with the landscape in King Mob or nature as such wasn't done with an eye to beauty and subversion inextricably mixed like that well known comment Coleridge made to his friend whilst walking through the Quantock Hills: "this dell is an admirable place to talk treason", nor was it that selecting of odd, interesting feature, hermits dwelling or rustic cottages etc and so typical of romantic iconography or even unusual incidents like the peasant in the Lake District lying in a hammock looking at the moon on a cold, almost freezing night which so stunned the observant De Quincey. Remarkable as these things were that wasn't the point. We wanted to play with nature in a provocative way like we wanted to play with everything else and we wanted to shock those who had embalmed everything as artistic afterthought bringing out the explosive potentialities in Romanticism as well as giving it the two fingers up treatment.

It was literally explosive. Suggestions were made about blowing up the waterfall which, after spouting ferociously out of a cave in a steep forbidding cliff face, descends in leaps and bounds down the back of the great chasm of Gordale Scar in North Yorkshire. Before the simple explosive device was detonated we were going to paint in huge letters on the side of the gorge: "Peace in Vietnam". We knew no one would understand what on earth we were up to and that was, it seemed, the whole point giving us the greatest of thrills and reducing us to helpless laughter. We knew a limited take on reason would never comprehend our subliminal truths! Let's try and explain. None among us were really interested in peace in Vietnam as, after all, could there ever be any peace under an always murderous capitalist exploitation and "Victory to the Vietcong" meant for us just another Stalinist state with mainly worker dissidents being murdered. On this point we wholeheartedly went along with the recent Solidarity pamphlet on Vietnam. Of course, we wanted to see the American military defeated but with our eyes glued to the hope it would help ignite revolution inside America. What we wanted was a real socially creative civil war throughout the whole world but this creative war had to be engaged across the totality of life and in England this also meant confronting and utterly subverting the powerful ideological vestiges of Eng' Lit' which itself had smothered, suppressed and destroyed those sublime revolutionary pointers in English Romanticism which had irrevocably exploded traditional poetic form. To mark the occasion of that by now famous March 17th 1968 Vietnam demo to the American Embassy one brilliant King Mob guy had sprayed up: "March 17th: Start The War In England". What could be more pointed than the knowing weed killer, lead pipe, bomb with nice fuse perhaps pointing out the baneful poem of Wordsworth's on Malham Cove and Gordale Scar - and theoretically too - pointing to the failure of Romanticism, even though Wordsworth's poem on Malham Cove is, despite its jaded feel, is also about the transformation of nature in the sense that he would like to see the awesome natural phenomena completed into a more total amphitheatre. Something of this, in the late 60s was meant to be communicated through a scorched earth black humour emphasizing the active part of Romanticism.. Perhaps, more benignly, putting into play too Van Gogh's frenzy of a "nature in delirium". How about such an act to change perceptions helping bring about what was needed? Later some of us experimented with weed killer/lead pipe bombs in the remote sea lochs of Sutherland in north west Scotland but only managing unintentionally to frighten tourists on a chugging rust bucket plying cheap trips. To be sure, we also entertained phantasies of blowing up the home the Queen occasionally stayed in situated between Ullapool and Drumbeg as it didn't seem that well protected, security-wise. By then though the dream was waning.....

In a similar vein we painted up slogans on the walls of the ultra smart avenues and garden walls surrounding Holland Park, West London saying "Peacocks is Dead". Obviously we were in a let go drift, playing about with the old slogans like: "God is Dead"/ "Art is Dead" etc. A drift in thought also ensued inevitably trying to put these differences together. One of us wrote a rather wild piece - which has since been lost - inspired by James Ward's huge painting of Gordale Scar in the National Gallery. Encouraged by present day events on the streets it was an attempt to bring out materially some of the brooding presence of

the painting reclaiming its foreboding pent-up drama which partially seems to be suggesting a thunderstorm about to erupt. Instead of a thunderstorm how about an immanent explosion? Well, it was something like this connecting together with hi-jinks and some laughter that must be taken into account when reassessing the validity of these provocations concerning nature, urbanism or work. We didn't any longer perceive them as separate anyway as everything was pacified and lost under the universal sway of commodity relations. Nobody, incidentally, went up Notting Hill and on to Holland Park to kill the Peacocks but a point was trying to be made that even we weren't fully aware of. After all this time let's think about it? Like many things in everyday life what can you say about Peacocks? A bird like the pheasant, introduced for the pleasure of the aristocrat as part of their elite consumer collections and ornaments before the democratisation of such consumer collections? As ancien regime symbols or the booty of Imperial conquest? Remember, during the French revolution in the aftermath of 1879, the sans-culottes would sometimes destroy stuffed bird collections simply because they were an aristocratic appendage. There was nothing very nature friendly in our slogans or our actions but nor were they unfriendly. But that was the point: an object of incomprehensible assault shaking people up helping them find their real desires jolting them into some recognition and action. A little later, someone walking around the formal rose beds of Holland Park had written on one of those keep off the grass boards which park managers insist on putting everywhere: "Alienation Gardens." Truly, more precise but not so upsetting!

In fact, (if you like) it was subconsciously - behind our backs as it were because we didn't have such knowledge at the time - an active, practical, critical outcome of some of the nature drift in Lautreamont's Songs Of Maldoror. Lautreamont was an Argentinean - a country much influenced by English Imperialism and by way of fortune too - English Romanticism. Lautreamont pirated all this in amazing ways. In the atmosphere of Lautreamont's Paris in the 1860s, Byron's Manfred seems to have met Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace - the co-authors of evolutionary natural selection in the momentum of the self-destruct of modern poetry - creating a new appraisal cum parody of natural selection - or if you like - its creative detouring. A dialectically insistent alteration of natural selection perhaps and quite unlike what a future DNA programmed designer baby could ever be.

If these activities were somewhat Against Nature they were also Against Human too - or more precisely if you like - against those functionaries who wanted to deny communication. But then can functionaries be called human now that we were surviving under a mode of capitalism wanting to destroy all life? To be sure we weren't very nice. We even stuck razor blades on the edges of an English-oriented free translation of an original French Situationist poster which was pasted up with polyester resin reinforced with fibre glass on a few out of way walls in Notting Hill in the dead of night. There weren't many put up in this way simply because it took so long to do and was simply a too paranoid creating situation constantly looking out for the cops whilst wondering if the boosted chemicals would go off like smoking rocket fuel thus giving the game away. Some, not surprisingly, stayed up a very long time - a few years in fact - as they were effectively coated from penetration by rain, so much so that the congealed resin successfully (and thankfully in retrospect) coated the razor-sharp edges because the people who would have had to take them down would be poorly paid council employees. Obviously they gave up after a few attempts.

Much has been made about all the wall slogans both at the time and since and as is well known were once endlessly reproduced and repeated. They were wide-ranging, critical about many aspects of contemporary life. Hippies were ironically lambasted: "hash is the opium of the people" etc right through to comments on the 'new' sexual freedom even affirming Freud's "polymorphous perversity" on the walls, though without reflecting on what this could mean. Interestingly, comments on class struggle didn't get sprayed up apart from one desultory "Workers Councils" in an out of the way place in Holland Park, ironically were the real super-rich live. In a slightly more down-market area in nearby Notting Dale "Remember Peter the Painter" was sprayed up as a tribute to the armed anarchist gang in the east end of London just prior to the First World War, despite the contrast between the two urban environments! True, these things happened en route as it were as we were on a night time foray to do a bit of damage to the then League of Empire Loyalist, Fascist party headquarters which was situated in the same area. Unable to get in we contented ourselves with a few decorations on their shuttered, rolled steel windows - "this too will burn" - being one of them.

Some of the slogans though didn't really have any cutting edge and were perhaps artistically pretentious or at least could be immediately reinterpreted as such now that what is art could mean anything merely by

applying a signature. In effect, after all the critical attack on the hippies we were making at the time, some wall slogans merely fell into that hippy orbit of get-togethers around the camp fire when the drums come out and the dope is smoked. How else can “percussion music is revolution” (a quote from John Cage) be placed? Even “poetry is revolution” which, if not more precisely clarified, can be stupidly taken to mean that sitting down at a table and writing a piece of doggerel (which is all contemporary poetry can ever be that the form has lost its historical *raison d’être*) is revolutionary activity! In the last 35 years or so nothing has changed on that score! Some slogans along the same lines were somewhat better though. “The sky had died” though evocative was perhaps too imprecise. It hinted at eco-collapse at the same time as it resonated like a line from some 19th century fin de siècle poem. Swinburne perhaps. Did this matter? In the same vein “cars are dead” could be construed as eco-critique though truth to tell condemning this manufactured lump of tin had then more to do with the hubby, wife and two kids, manufactured nuclear family. The slogan referred to the destruction of the social potentialities for encounter offered by the street, an encounter pregnant with unlimited possibilities and as sure as hell giving notice to the force fed, nuclear family unit. Though the car is a polluting monstrosity our 1968 critique may remain the valid one as there’s still no reason why clean technology cannot produce say the electric car en masse meaning the street as an arena of encounter will still remain gutted.

The best slogans though were those which were simple, direct and had little leftovers of literary appeal to them – like the straight forward attack on acid merchants and impresarios castigating them as “psychedelic racketeers”. Then there was the big slogan by the Hammersmith and City line beneath the West Way between Westbourne Park and Ladbroke Grove tube station – a terrifyingly accurate commentary on the double alienation of work and programmed leisure forcibly consumed in passivity. “SAME THING DAY AFTER DAY – TUBE – WORK – DINNER – WORK – TUBE – ARMCHAIR – TV – SLEEP – TUBE – HOW MUCH MORE CAN YOU TAKE: ONE IN TEN GO MAD – ONE IN FIVE CRACKS UP”. The slogan survived for throughout the 70s with its message imprinting itself on the minds of millions of commuters only to be air brushed out by the rising tide of hip hop tags and pieces which never had an ounce of the subversive impact those huge words on bare concrete had. Seeing all that tags and pieces had to offer was mindless competition they won out. Interestingly, a kind of inventive re-creation of it still remains on blackened brick walls strung out over a couple of miles on the line between Bradford and Leeds and beginning near Pudsey station and still resisting to this day the banal writeovers of hip hop.

Revolution as the great crime? From relevance to irrelevancy. Life-style passionism and the re-invention of life. Up with reading down with the readist! Down with theory!?!? Revolution perceived as a higher, material form of drug-induced ecstasy. Riot and a shock through incomprehensibility.

Perhaps however, one slogan must be mentioned perhaps above all others not just because it was exquisitely said but because it marked a tendency that was to become all pervasive in this renewed revolutionary impetus and wasn’t by any means always to the good. One night in 1968 we sprayed up a slogan on the walls of a tiny mews fronting Portobello Road. It was from De Sade - whom we were avidly reading at the time – and said: “Crime is the highest form of sensuality”. It’s implications were to be massive. To be sure it was fine to take this quite literally simply because you do get a buzz or high from shop lifting, phone phreaking and what have you. The trouble is the slogan tended to increasingly reinforce crime as an end in itself. Illegality became a revolutionary must if you wanted to remain within what was rapidly becoming a revolutionary in-crowd. Thus theory – or rather what was there of it – began almost obsessively to applaud virtually all type of crime (like the “illegal” university in King Mob 2) or trying to work out a form of survival based entirely on crime through kiting cheques and what have you etc. In practise, it could also justify some of the worst and most reprehensible acts of lumpen behaviour like turning your mates over or robbing them of a few pence in “the revolution of dirty little tricks” as we quickly termed it. Some revolutionaries actually did think it was OK behaviour to steal from all and sundry regardless of an individual’s particular property status. (Looking back you can hardly believe there was such shit doing the rounds). In no time for some the emphasis on crime began to move into rather more big time money making and “psychedelic racketeers” was given a new inflection meaning getting in on the act yourself. To be fair though some rather splendid bank heists were imaginatively pulled off! Nobody for a while strayed into hard drugs though that too wasn’t to last. “Crime” despite its revolutionary romantic overtures quickly became the old story, as an obsession with making easy money took over. Only a little of these endeavours were ever used to help fund radical projects and when that did happen, 99% of the time

were bullshit. However, it was a road basically paved with good intentions as finally the simple acquisition of money became the be all and end all and no different from the capitalist game itself. The danger was in the process itself. When illegality is gradually pushed to this point contact is increasingly lost with friends not in on the act or simply with other people at the sharp end. No longer can you have relaxed conversations in the pub just shooting the breeze. Inevitably paranoia takes over wondering just who is going to shop you. Illegality like this sets you apart from others the more you become a kind of criminal elite liking the feel of being someone special! Then one day the scams are bust wide open. Ground zero you want to feel part of that cut-above-it feeling again. Perhaps this is the simple reason why so many revolutionary illegalists then fall back onto the dog days of culture – anything to keep up a self-image of floating freely above the mass of working stiff. Moving from the glamour of heists to the glamour of culture there's always that underlying emphasis on glamour. Essentially though, "crime is the highest form of sensuality" wasn't taken in the fullness of its implication: the "crime" of critical theory, the "crime" involved in subverting State-manipulated propaganda and falsification, or even Rudolf Stirner's conception of revolution as, "the great crime" etc.

It our delirium, we emphasised a different take on things rather than a superficially accepted "reality". Through this same skewered prism the beginning of the renewed violence in Northern Ireland was taken on board. Again, the issues hardly mattered vis-à-vis Unionism or Republicanism. It was the pure act in itself. Chris Gray loved the TV footage of a blown up meat vendors van with hundreds and hundreds of sausages strewn all over the streets like some Surrealist exhibition-in-action and no longer stuck in a gallery which a little later was to happen under the financial auspices of the Saatchi's cultural emporium. Somehow we needed such incidents everywhere. Well, at least it would maybe help in deranging things sufficiently to kick start some of the other reified jams in everyday life! Catholic nationalism versus the Scots/Irish basis of this conflict (now that the former aristocratic Anglo Irish Ascendancy had been defeated if not the brutality of the British State) was pushed to one side as a more emancipatory take - if too aesthetic – was imposed across this civil(though not class) war. In fact, truth to tell, some of this emancipatory take was reflected in bemused and imaginative slogans appearing elsewhere on Belfast's walls like "shop now while shops last". Behind the barricades of Free Derry in the late 60s, there was also a permanent rent strike and a mass hot wiring of basic gas and electricity utilities. Similarly, young republicans in prison, in no matter how half-assed way could say "down with bourgeois culture and art" though the arguments, of course, were none too lucid and if anything was to come of the situation (which didn't happen) these arguments would have had to be a lot sharper.

Quite quickly the nascent King Mob began to gather a fair amount of attention and individuals started appearing from nowhere to contact a group that didn't basically exist. If anything it was a kind of personalised, magnetic force of attraction immediately sending waves out over then coming back to source. This arena that was to become King Mob was the first revolt in Britain against the total colonisation of everyday life by capitalism. Therefore any corner of this totality was deemed a fit place for spreading subversion mainly of an unpremeditated, spontaneous daily out-pouring. To be accurate though, the more planned interventions were usually the best and had the most impact in terms of influencing similar actions elsewhere but these were much rarer than the cacophony of just having a go as part and parcel of a general exuberance. There were constant life-giving and enhancing expressions and acts which had a fresh, spring-like feel to them....well initially (but more about this later). And as befitted the increasingly revolutionary temper of the times, there was always some on-going action proposed or acted upon immediately. It's a shame but a fair amount of leaflets conjured up fairly spontaneously have been lost or mislaid. Similarly many of the actions went unrecorded and obviously unreported (they usually had no signature or identifying logo) as they were merely part and parcel of an everyday thing, or rather more accurately as part of an attempted leap into a new life style free of capitalism forever and thus of no more importance than say socking a cop. As for the leaflets certainly we didn't regard them as literature to be a filed away for future museum perusal, though this what they did become. And how!

From its inception, what became the King Mob milieu was a pick 'n' mix of those youthful middle classes on the lam – those that were more privileged, anomic, unhappy and often desperate about a palpably felt disappearance or flattening out of the essence of life and often working this out with amazing clarity finding allies from lower down the social scale whom, initially at least, just weren't as clued-in in terms of general theory. A strangely inventive pick 'n' mix!

King Mob wanted to recreate life's passions now life itself had been called into question and was becoming more and more absent. We readily identified with comments from the past which gave pointers to this historical malaise like Baudelaire's: "I appeal to every thinking man to show me what remains of life" etc. To find it again meant abandoning all intellectualism even, at one point, theory itself in search of an authenticity that, we perceived dimly, overlapped with that random violence against the commodity and which seemed to manifest itself everywhere. To others outside this flow it must have appeared as insane as we consoled ourselves with Artaud's comment; "for it is the anonical logic of modern man for never having been able to live, nor think of living except as one possessed." It could be said that a kind of anti-theoretical philistinism was somewhat distantly but perhaps uncomfortably embraced which encompassed that anti-theoretical persuasion of these islands social apartheid and, in a similar vein, the new delinquent sub-cultures from mods and rockers to football hooligans. One or two provocative leaflets were handed out affirming unfolding football hooliganism which, though they emphasised a different take on that wooden concept of violence as put forward by the far left parties at the time (e.g. its OK to fight the police but don't trash cars, set fire to shops or generally wreck things etc), nonetheless, and in retrospect, fell far short also of what was needed. It was a too simplistic identification (c/f the leaflet from us reproduced in Widgery's *The Left in Britain*) which didn't even begin to acknowledge the limitations of these outpourings nor that we who wrote these leaflets were very different to the average hooligan. At the time though this stance, even though we were lying to ourselves, was effective and necessary in shaking up perceptions and actions.

And now we enter into some difficulty. In mentioning class here we encounter a major problem which perplexes these islands set adrift from the rest of Europe and which is so peculiar to it. It was as though we were reaching out wanting to grasp authentic life – a life that surely must be out there and at all costs. It was in this perspective that the embrace of a kind of stupidity in the very first lines of the manifesto of the Black Hand Gang must be placed: "Theory has really had it this time". It was if the self-destruction of modern poetry and high art met head on and interwove with that distrust of books and academic learning so endemic among the working classes here. Together we could produce a libidinal vandalism and self-consciously delinquent life styles accompanied by incendiary leaflets on some event or other which could create instant adherents and a bewildered, open-mouthed shock among the majority they were handed to. But why this anti-theory and why was there this mistrust of theory among these islands working classes? E P Thompson, the social historian explained it by relating to the lacunae between our early, unfinished bourgeois revolution of the 1640s and the new, unprecedented rise of a rebellious industrial working class in the early 19th century. Sheer reaction throughout most of 18th century Britain meant we had a much-reduced radical artisanal sector in any broad sense to act as some kind of link. We had no cobblers like Joseph Dietzgen whom Marx admired or even a Proudhon. True, we had some fine ones – men like William Benbow – but it was as if they had no profile. A "social apartheid" was thus created, more basically referred to as an "us and them" which meant class separation was virtually a deep and fast flowing river with no bridges inter-linking each side. Thus, there just couldn't be any "recovery through transfer" – in that excellent dialectical comment by Marx previously mentioned – as all books, all written knowledge was to be regarded by the exploited – in a broad, generally conservative, protective and even at times, despotic sweep – as suspect, despite the fact that an infinitesimal fraction of the dispossessed did make attempts at a more general learning (e.g. the Bradford Chartists who using the French tricolour as their flag also read the early Robert Southey etc). And so it continued right on into and through the 20th century. Jack Common (c/f later) in his book "The Freedom of the Streets" written in the late 30s contains a poignant passage on the difficulties a working class kid had in a school playground whose parents are clued-in, self-educated working class radicals. Later, with post second world war corporatism and the hoped for inclusion of the working classes as a fraction of capital – more particularly through aspects of higher education – there was almost a similar poignant mirroring of Common in a chapter by Richard Hoggart in his *Uses of Literacy* book called: *The Uprooted and the Anxious*. The kid, though now a little older, moves around in a far more alienated world cast adrift from a fixed sense of class who doesn't know whether he or she is coming or going. Despised by your background, looked down as clumsy, gauche and awkward by the traditional middle classes where could you go? Believe us one of the outlets was indulging in a more clued-in than your average yobbo, and often drunken, vandalism. Despite all these nuances, nonetheless, a simplistic class hatred came into it; a kind of combination of a comment like Bakunin's: "social hatreds, like religious hatreds, are much more intense, much deeper, than political hatreds" as it was also a breakthrough from that sullen, resentful passivity which Tom Nairn had described at the time as a, "social exclusion felt (even if not intellectually asserted to) as a fact of nature. This was one of the most powerful weapons any conservative regime has ever had in its hands, worth any number of policemen". Others have said it but in the student



revolt of the late 60s especially in England most of the violence and general destruction inside the colleges was carried out by precisely that class fraction which seemed to combine some enmeshing drift illustrating these two very different quote from Bakunin and Nairn. As Howard Fraser was a little later to say, “ they turned the corridors of learning into the very streets they’d recently left”. It was just some of this mix plus a quick grasp of essential theoretical markers together with that often destructive pattern of play from a recent childhood in industrial towns which found such an expression in some of the King Mob leaflets.

On reflection, maybe other things can be said. How did all this seamless class-less-ness come about in terms of revolt when their was also this simplistic though nuanced and different class revolt taking place within it to? After the “us and them” revolt of the early 60s ( c/f the history of “Irish” whom emphasised this distinction)and which really did result in some kind of victory for “us” from the mid 60s onwards, “them” changed and not only chameleon-like – though this came into it too. They, “them” also, for a time, really meant it. Socially and psychologically it was to create a massive confusion particularly among “us”. However, - and not to be cynical – adaptation was always the way of survival for the ideologies of the ruling class when in crises and youthful energies play such a large part in this. But, in this moment they, “Them” also experienced a breach, a lacunae, with their own lineage and they also wanted a completely different future than the one, more or less securely, mapped out for them. They also wanted the thrill of authentic adventure too – even prepared to precipitate one – though alas most never finally followed the adventure through to the bitter end. Once though the impulse falters, the old order sets in and the return to the status quo quickly if very deviously sets in. A bizarre, “knowing one’s place” returned, as those who, necessarily, still remained at the sharp end because of economic circumstances fell in awe of the new revolutionary theoreticians – even by 1967. It was an awe which was short-lived as a quick back-sliding, usually via inherited wealth, with the verities of an English cultural poise being a very viable asset on the market, meant a final “no your place” gave way to contempt and derision. Just how many of those Situationist influenced individuals in England with their supposed disavowal of a public school they’d never talk about, felt all the cultural pulls of old England; of George Eliot’s, “loves and sanctities of our life” with their “deep immovable roots in memory?” with the caveat, of course, of a very modernised veneer. How could it be other?

Perhaps we need to say something more about this theory/ anti-theory thing as it still perplexes. Anti theory – a kind of just do it was prevalent at the time among those who were desperate to have a go and to get rid of the misery of capitalism quickly in the spirit of; “we want it all and we want it now”. It is though a tendency which reoccurs here and inevitably as a side effect, brings on demoralisation in the not too distant future. Unwittingly, also it adds to a vein of conservative empiricism here which is deeply engrained in the psyche despite the onslaughts of a right wing free-market ideology from the late 70s onwards which has torn up root and branch so many traces of British empiricism as it can get hold off. Pity it wasn’t as simple as that to deal with. It was also an indisputably modern glitch as increasing social alienation made it much more difficult to concentrate for any length of time. It was as though one had willy nilly also become oppressed by the sheer weight of books and by the specific dislocation in the act of writing. For some it was fetishised affirmatively – even as “revolutionary” often knowing it harked back to some of Rimbaud’s final words as he left poetry behind forever: “I cannot write anymore”. Thus an extreme exasperation is turned into a revolutionary “virtue” and a half-recognition becomes a misunderstanding. Then there’s a further nuance to all of this. Henri Simon has written extensively on fully employed workers struggles here and produced one of the only books from an ultra leftist perspective on the miners’ strike in ‘84/’85, though it’s never been translated into English. Simon’s underlying emphasis – that workers consciousness is irrelevant – runs throughout all of these writings. Only the workers’ actions are to be recorded and, increasingly with a minimum of interpretation, despite the fact that the workers actions in this instance have been recorded through the newspapers and cretinous journalists. All intervention moreover is merely some form of extraneous and irrelevant substitutionism. Whilst having some sympathy with such responses in France where nearly every event seems to merit some often unconnected though charming poetic outpouring packed with revolutionary verities, in these islands, where all attempts at relevant dialectical theory is hounded to extinction, its often woefully wide of the mark. (See the compare/contrast introduction between the two countries in “France Goes Off the Rails” on the 1986 French railway workers, student and public sector workers’ strikes by BM BLOB and BM Combustion).

Back in the late 60s though we weren’t the only ones to fall into this trap. It seemed to spread itself across most of the English speaking world. Similar responses, though perhaps in a different more

enlightened (?) way were present in Murray Bookchin's article for RAT ( Sept/Oct 1968), an American underground magazine of the time, on the previous May '68 revolt in France: "There is no theory, programme or party that has greater significance than the revolution itself". However, after taking into account all these manifold ambiances surrounding the anti-theoretical, it's also necessary to note that with such perspectives social revolution can become an almost ineluctable, mechanistic event even courting something mystically transcendental utterly separated from any theoretical take. On the simplest of levels, people taking action do think about what they're doing even if conditioned by outdated concepts. Theory flows, all depending, in multi-faceted ways. An individual can say something, can have an effect. It happens continually. Admittedly Murray Bookchin did not go as far as the Black Hand Gang and did not dismiss theory out of hand but neither did those around the King Mob scene. There was also the element of a willfully provocative statement. Such iconoclastic statements must also be put into the perspective of the need to shock inherited from the classic days of avant garde art or even considered as an extension of a flaneur Dandy type of verbal provocation which in certain instances can be effective.

In the same vein, reading – as a form more than its content – was objected to although, at the same moment, most of us tended to read considerably. It wasn't quite an embrace of being stupid like that (although laudatory remarks on the delights of being a village idiot were welcomed) more that reading had become one of the main vehicles of torpor, propaganda and passivity. It was in this spirit that "Don't Read" was sprayed up in huge letters 6ft high on the front wall of the Porchester Hall library and reading room, Queensway, West London. Although nicely outlandish just how many people understood the point behind it? Some will have done but others most likely disturbed by its ambiguities? What the fuck did it mean but do you have to explain everything? One night, about the same time, a foraging party out spray painting slogans stopped in front of a house in Holland Park as Chris Gray, disdainfully, pointed to a bearded Allen Ginsberg look-a-like lying on a bed calmly reading a book. The contempt from everyone in this little party standing in the dark street for this passive, contemplative readist was palpable. It was as though nothing much needed be said about this cameo of society at large: it was all just so obvious. What more can be said about the readist? In a way such a critique is more applicable than ever. Everywhere people are reading yet basically learning nothing. In cafes, on trains, on buses it's the same. Couples even hold hands reading separate installments of junk. Mostly they are paperback novels packed from cover to cover with complete nonsense. Everywhere people sit and read never talking to the person next to them as isolation and emptiness grows in an essentially privatized space. It's all words without meaning and the very antithesis of what once reading implied and the vacuous counterpart of an even more vacuous TV.

Reading, school, academic learning, the role of writer, all were rightly scorned. A little later Rimbaud's lines were sprayed up nearby: "To Lulu Demon and her Incomplete Education". One could say this was a contradiction in terms - the great poet Rimbaud - yet scorning reading and writing? For those who knew, had read and had understood there was no such contradiction at all. The history of modern art, or more nearly, the long moment of it's self destruction was trawled for pointers and relished – knowing we were on the right track. Mallarme's, "the flesh is sad and I've read all the books," to Tristan Tzara's comment at the height of Zurich Dada "thought comes from the mouth" to Andre Breton's "Seeing everything has been said, life rather" etc, etc, etc. Cultural disintegration had to be explained but first of all it had to be dug up and proclaimed in a country with it's high falutin', dead duck Eng Lit platitudes and sheer conservatism. Everything transcendently posited on the extremes of the greatest moments in the last 150 years of culture was pointing to its demise. From Turner moving into Jack (the dripper) Pollock to Beethoven going out of tune heralding the atonal, to Rimbaud's rejection of poetry, as well as comprehending the crisis of the former: "great music falls short of our desire" to Mallarme's empty page in "The Dice Throw" to Malevich's white square announcing the death of painting, to Jacques Vache's pistol leveled at Appolinaire's theatrical performance, to Lefebvre's discussion of the oppression of the written word, to Artaud's "All writing is pigshit" etc, etc, etc. All were pointing to the absence of life; to our denuded bodies, at this extreme nadir of life where a point's been reached where there comes about a visceral need to totally re-create life by a practical/critical revolutionary upheaval . Ironically, as suggested previously, to come up with these examples and quotes and to remember them so well, meant an awful lot of reading was taking place – and quotes which would be eagerly communicated to each other along with episodes recounted from great historical upheavals from the Luddites, to the Paris Commune, to Barcelona in 1936 etc as though all were pointing to some goal and all finally coming together on the same path we were now embarking upon. Newspapers were eagerly read simply to find out those disturbing accounts and facts from everywhere illuming the soft underbelly of this grotesque society or to find reports on

disturbances throughout the world encouraging our sense of certainty that this impossible society was in its death throws. In the same breadth, it was a reading between the lines equipped beforehand with a greater theoretical take and the journalists who wrote these articles treated with complete disdain.

Subconsciously in this unknown but excellent conjunction something of Lautreamont was expressed in the imaginings and practical beginnings of King Mob. It was completely amoral as well as anti-aesthetic holding no truck with any bleeding hearts leftism. It was our own alienation amidst the new poverty's that was paramount. It wasn't simply the extension of the English Romantics desire to transform the world but its active re-engagement, sufficiently estranged promising something amazing and unknown. It was nature and the city completely transformed which beckoned. Conservation didn't come into it. A high rise point block was as equally capable of becoming the foci of a transformed take-off as much as say, The Shambles, a 16th century Elizabethan street, preserved in aspic in the city of York. No sympathy was shown for Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities movement at the same time as William Morris's utopian "News from Nowhere" was given short shrift for its placid, boy scoutish interplay of people, urban scene and country all serenely gelling together. Something altogether more convulsive and remarkable was called for. And this must be the basis of any consideration of what could in the future find some legitimate inspiration from King Mob with the proviso that the motive behind any actions undertaken must be explained in some kind of accompanying communication –if at all possible – against a background of deepening ecological crisis that could convulse the earth's crust in any case never mind the convulsive beauty we desired.

Although ecological critique played no part in the coming together of King Mob, ironically, Murray Bookchin was a kind of intermediary between London and New York, between Black Mask and a nascent King Mob. Murray Bookchin, an Anarchist it has to be said was the first modern theorist in a document on chemical industry pollution in Germany to put ecology at the centre of a renewed revolutionary critique and his Institute of Social Ecology predated Rachel Carson's supposedly seminal "Silent Spring" in the 1950s. In the 1960s though, Murray sought out young people who moving fast were in the process of grasping a relevant theory of modern alienation, which invariably partook of Situationist critique. Inevitably as time went on, blows followed. Murray was roundly criticised for his emphasis on the New England democratic small town polis as somehow being a relevant organisational base for any modern subversion. Whilst this was right, the balance was lost in not recognising his ground breaking ecological studies and his claim that "ecology is the only revolutionary science". Moreover, after really lauding Black Mask, he quickly became critical of the supra-militant activism of the Motherfuckers noting the extent of internal nervous breakdown engendered.

Although most talk in discussing past events and figures had to do with other countries, particularly France, figures were, as we've suggested, particularly plucked out from English literature. Regarding the Romantics, the main emphasis was on De Quincey and Coleridge though not from the revolutionary angle which Hazlitt in the 1830s and Artaud in the 1940s had railed against the traitor Coleridge. Hardly surprising as for our time this had more to do with modern drug taking habits with a sympathetic ear applied to the opium habits of both Coleridge and De Quincey. Not for nothing had the latter made that memorable statement embarking on Saturday night derives through the old urban rookeries east of Tottenham Court Rd swallowing his laudanum alongside workers and artisans: "I identified with the poor not through their miseries but through their pleasures". Collectively, in early '68 we indulged in a spontaneous opium session during one of our usual nightly witty and brilliant discussions. Nobody got where they wanted to go on the drug! We were hoping for damsels with dulcimers and sunless seas or the walls of this basement flat to fall away revealing a scene reminiscent of some kind of geological apocalypse courtesy of a scene from say, a painting by Mad Martin. The sensation predominating for some was colour everywhere, particularly orange, orange and orange again. These sessions began to enmesh with a kind of drug reinterpretation of history, which in Chris Gray at times evinced a kind of psychotropic Feuerbachianism. Man is what he eats particularly psychedelic mushrooms, There was discussion about the people who went mad after eating wheat in the churches of the Albergensians and those insurrectionary peasants who felt so transfixed by a moment of revolutionary beauty that they were unable to say anything! In terms of the present though it did encourage an interesting take on drugs. None of us liked that stern moral tone which was applied to our early days recreational drug taking as indeed we thought we were making breakthroughs. Remember, it was before heroin and later crack started wrecking working class communities and therefore out of necessity, became something to fight against. Even so that hip/beat aspect to heroin still had quodos. Hadn't Art Pepper the great white Californian alto sax player imitated in an amazing musical flow the surge and laid

back feel of a fix in “Smack Up”? We listened to the man’s great music not knowing that the whirlwind of heroin was shortly to be blamed by fellow saxophonist, Jackie Mclean, for the death of jazz.

In any case, we recognised that it was a drug obsessed society with the urge to consume acres of trivial commodities being by far the most powerful drug around and if we noted something had gone dreadfully wrong with jazz music it had more to do with dialectics and the historical rise and fall of cultural forms than anything else. Chemical drugs though could play upon real needs and desires, which found no satisfaction in the mundanity of purchasing power. Chris Gray rightfully emphasised the drug high and reckoned we should do things which brought into play that “revolution is something higher than drugs” – its material process and final existence bringing about a higher state of being and pleasure. It was a notion of ecstasy that made former pleasures merely a feeble foretaste. Although one can appreciate such a take it also had the effect of perceiving revolution as a purely sensory act despite the fact that this aspect must always be emphasised as against the baneful militants who look to a future without repression conceived and facilitated through a militant role. As a newspaper headline said at the time referring to some revolt in West Africa and which we picked up on: “natives go berserk with freedom”. One musn’t forget that drugs in the late 60s had something nebulously subversive about them soon to be lost in the increasing twilight and dusk of the following decades. Naively we thought all kinds of legalisation were coming soon and the marketing of brands no more than months or a couple of years away. Does our naivety really need to be spelt out?

We did, of course, take a huge interest in the black revolt in American cities at the time and some of our general theories of a spontaneous, festive potlatch producing a high, greater and more real than any beatific drug rush was all based on that often bloody revolt. It was more than interest it was identification. We desperately wanted something like the same thing here. What was worth preserving? Hardly anything and the ball of flame engulfing American cities pointed to one of the answers. Many who’d come to King Mob with upbringings in small towns had been steeped in the blues and jazz since childhood so much so that many an old bluesman’s or jazzman’s death was treated as an occasion for more tragic grieving than that of your own grandah. The blues had become your music as an expression of a keenly felt alienation mediated through the equally felt social apartheid even though it was largely white at the time. We wanted to see Notting Hill go up in flames in 1968 and at times we tried our damndest but of course, spontaneous organic riots don’t happen like this – and such hopes were a reflection too of our own naivete attempting to detonate a confrontation between locals and cops. It was all too crude and quickly abandoned. In practice though, it also meant developing friendships with some of the more clued in and lippy black guys – though not so much the women (which, at the time, had a kind of exclusion zone around them) in Notting Hill. And for those few who stayed on in the area those friendships became more on going. As we all now know nothing cataclysmic did happen though later we noted disappointingly that some of these rebel guys swiftly became bureaucratic representatives in an emerging and abysmal community politics scene. But for those who were lippy, among both black and white alike, the police in Notting Hill were waiting for them and some police sadists took a delight in terrorising the neighbourhood. In a way, they became a grotesque clued-in parody/inversion of the revolutionaries themselves. (see the later piece on ‘Irish’) by way of reply perhaps? After all we’d put up slogans plagiarised from America like “Burn Baby Burn” and the nihilist declaration of a rioter in Detroit: “I don’t believe in nothing. I just want to burn down the whole world – just let it burn down baby”. Well, we’d got this quote from a Newsweek article!

Although we were constantly affirming the struggles of the blacks in America and not only by the above and other slogans, we also didn’t care to go too much into the different situations of the blacks (and Asians) in Britain who were at most second generation immigrants – though most were first – and didn’t feel “at home” as it were as much as their “americanised” counterparts. Confidence generally was still lacking notwithstanding a small minority (e.g. in Notting Hill those who’d fought against the racist attacks 10 years previously in that area) and who readily identified with the American revolt. When a huge urban rebellion instigated by black youth did burst into flames in most English towns and cities some 14 years later in 1981 they were largely class riots as there was a far larger white participation than in the American ghettoes of the 60s. Moreover, the mass character of the 1981 riots mirrored the mass character of the huge strike wave of the Winter of Discontent during 1979.

Whether it be drugs, nature, the city, a procession, demonstration or anything else, the whole point was to try and turn it into the pivot for something else to take off that was either aggressive, absurdist or

seriously playful (or all three) but would have shock value. Chris Gray proposed hanging up some dreadful looking skewed up skeleton in a wood which would freak out a gamekeeper or else how about hiring a bed sit for a week to turn into a faked scene of a recent weird, incomprehensible but blood thirsty event which would, or could, shake a landlord rigid. Although he toyed with this idea for sometime it was never carried out. Despite the shock horror headlines, then in their infancy, which probably would have resulted it was essentially a detouring of a landlord's bed sit as an active extension of modern art, a provocation in the spirit of the old avante garde shocking through incomprehensibility. And there's the rub. Fine as far as it goes but the historical time had now come – we had to make clearer explanations as well as keeping the shadow of the incomprehensible otherwise such bizarre interventions could again be seriously misinterpreted. Developing the idea a little further Chris Grey suggested it might be a good ploy in a local rent strike as there were always more than a few going on at the time. At least it would have the merit of deploying more imaginative tactics unlike the usual leftist poster campaigns and what have you. This made a lot more sense even though there was still no suggestion we should in some way distribute a leaflet after the hoped for furor and publicity had died down in order to provide a coherent explanation. If not these provocations, a lot more than the slogans, would be open to hopeless misinterpretations as the acts of deranged, weird, even psychotic fantasists. As it stood, it was like putting a variation of a Lautreamont juxtaposition into real, active play but with more than a touch of the English neo-gothic horror story though without making a coherent point, it wasn't going to influence others in the desired way. Coherence though can be an easy word and how can it encompass some of the bizarre? There was also a streak in other King Mobbers too which wanted to actively realise some of that macabre, sinister, grotesque but nonetheless fascinating side of English Romanticism and its fall out that was crystallised in the novels about Frankenstein, Dracula, and those novels written by Monk Lewis and especially, Walpole's "Castle of Otranto." We wanted to put some of this into play without falling into some Hammer Horror film or Hollywood ketchup-like blood bath. At the time, none of this was adequately perceived in anything like the fuller picture it needed in raising the problems you would have with it or, in a sufficiently dispassionate was if you like, for it to be useful as an effective subversive scalpel. It's probably impossible in any case but some day it may be worthy of another try.

Moreover it's necessary to make things as clear as possible to others, otherwise an event without explanation, can pander to mysticism, obscurity and the irrational when it's precisely the society of the spectacle which is insane and irrational. By all means play with an absurd insanity simply because it excellently demonstrates the real insanity/inanity of a runaway suicide capitalism but when everything is put into play it must be done with the objective of ever greater clarity. Unfortunately, this was pushed - albeit with complaints - into the background once the rapid disintegration of King Mob set in. There was a tendency to even glory in the obscure, devilish act and not by chance did Chris Gray start suggesting we all should read Charles Fort. As the forward blurb to Fort's LO reads: "I closed the front door on science and opened up the back door to frogs and periwinkles". Although King Mob by then had acquired even more ex-scientists than ex-artists, Fort's writings provided no real critique of science – a critique which is, of course, necessary and which Phil Meyler in the mid 80s attempted in "Yet It Moves." You have a real problem here as it feels more comfortable reading a scientific book like, for instance "The Floating Egg" by Roger Osborne – a recent examination of geographical terrain in Yorkshire – than any equivalent book on an artistic topic. Some scientific books feel more honest or at least less mendacious, simply because science (we are meaning in its totality) never has had to confront or point to revolutionary activity until perhaps recently anywhere near the same as art ineluctably had to. Since then everything surrounding art has been engaged in extinguishing and smothering that ineluctable outcome. Science, here and there can still make a contribution (astro-physics, terrestrial biology etc) but a necessary critique of science per se cannot take a Fortean route. Chris Gray though has the dubious honour of launching that Fortean take on things which individuals in other situ influenced groupuscules flirted with when visibly falling apart. The most notable example is Paul Sieveking of BM Piranha who later was to become the lucrative editor of the best selling, The Fortean Times, for all those dumb-fuck new ageists to purchase and marvel at. Ironically, though an American, Fort surely reinforced something we were trying to put an end to in England; an eccentric, half-mystical, odd take on things which eschews rationality – even formal logic – never mind the horrors of dialectical thought! It was a process, which was to gain the upper hand during the following decades the more the irrationalities of neo-liberal economics were to gain supremacy in England.

Quasi-terrorist posturing. A right little tight little island. Critical re-evaluation of the King Mob magazines. Is there any longer any relevance to "a street gang with an analysis?"

Although all this may sound like a courting of incoherence there was, just to say, an internal lucidity to it, if one can separate the actual King Mob magazines which were in many ways a retarded expression of what was taking place, although it's these which have obviously remained as evidence and will have to be gone into point by point and our day to day functioning. However, in no way could it be said that this particular focus attempted - through the back door as it were - to rehabilitate art/anti-art or politics or court initially any cadre status. Thus in no way can it be denigrated by comparing it to the Nashists of the so-called second Situationist International who carried on deploying the remnants of artistic practice or all those people who supposedly anti the system, still thought some useful artistic intervention could be made. Although, to be fair, the decapitation of the bronze mermaid in Copenhagen harbour in 1962, ostensibly by Jorgen Nash, was for the time, not at all bad although today such action would have no relevance when capital itself is actively destroying the past. Be that as it may -and Chris Gray told us with glee about this act - for us, on the contrary, it wasn't past artistic symbols which mattered, but attacks against all kinds of artistic activity in the here and now which had to be unsparing and heavy. We especially pinpointed the most avante garde of these activities like street theatre and experimental performances, happenings and the hippy arts and crafts entrepreneurial ventures. As if to make this point, hippy stalls were turned over and wrecked with earthenware pots and ornaments thrown on the ground. Gradually, the attack on art acquired a quasi-terrorist edge later highlighted in the leaflet celebrating Valerie Solanas's attempted offing of Andy Warhol in New York. A leaflet was rapidly gestetnered: "The death of art spells the murder of artists. The real anti artist appears" which rounded off with a death list of mainly English artists playing on and detourning the Bob Dylan lyric; "So don't think twice it's alright". Again, leaflet in hand, an intervention was done without sufficient explanation. Sure it helped promote our terrifying image but not much else. A band of King Mob adherents with masks covering their heads and faces burst into a meeting of students occupying Hornsey College of Art and showered the gathering with leaflets. Insults were traded: "fucking art students without an idea" and inevitably the protagonists were thrown out. To be sure, the level of action and discussion among Hornsey students was fairly abysmal - even stupid - but perhaps there were better ways of getting something essential across than utilising threatening images. Well, maybe because a tiny minority of these art students did pick something up from the King Mob, Solanis leaflet though we weren't aware of it at time. Our mock death threats though had been building up over the previous months. A slogan had been sprayed upon a Notting Hill wall saying "Kill Miles", a small-time entrepreneur who played out a managerial role on the underground newspaper The International Times and ran Indica gallery where Chris Gray only two and a half years previously had put on a happening. We regarded him as the absolute drippy liberal pits. Finally it must be emphasised that these death threats were nothing more than aggressive image making tactics to purposefully inspire fear as none of us entertained the slightest intentions of offing artists we merely wanted to encourage them on their way pushing them towards the self-destruction of their own artistic roles.

However, you can go overboard in being too self-critical. Conservative England still tightly held the minds of students in these islands in the late 60s. Most of us thought it was just a matter of time before a full-blown explosion would materialise on the level of France, Germany or Italy. Even leading - and for the time - interesting "intellectual" theorists in New Left Review particularly Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn were of this opinion and mapped out probing thesis on the almost total control of conservative ideologies over institutions of higher education. True, they were unable to intelligently deal with modern art as such but then we were trying to fill in this alarming vacuum and were getting no where fast. Time and again we tried to explain coolly but accurately the disintegration and possible transcendence of art only to be met with a continuing outright hostility. During the summer of 1968, there was a demonstration of art students, focussed by the Hornsey and Guilford Art College sit-ins, in London's Trafalgar Square. For the occasion, two leaflets were handed out, one by ourselves, and the other, by Ron Hunt from Newcastle together with a banner proclaiming the death of art. One of us grabbed a loud hailer and from the plinth of Nelson's Column made an impromptu speech on the failure of rebellious art students to adequately make a critique explaining the demise of art and the subsequent emptiness which denied all creative merit to any of their artefacts or those of their teachers. We criticised the ineptitude of students in allowing themselves to be taken up by the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) that had quickly put together an exhibition of their protest work together with posters, banners and what have you. We suggested the ICA should be occupied along with colleges everywhere. All other previous speeches had been applauded but ours was barracked furiously by people saying, "who are you to make such outrageous suggestions". We replied; "We're nobody but nobody" and the loud hailer was brusquely snatched from us. A bunch of supposedly rebel

students then proceeded to tear up our leaflets. We saw them as nothing other than loyal servants of the status quo. These leaflets then disappeared from view for 30 years before one of them finally turned up in Tom Vague's, King Mob Echo, booklets. Three years later we'd already written an auto-critique of the leaflet but which, along with so many other things, was never published. It complained about the plethora of jargon in the tirade of phrases like, "an empty, meaningless, culture of death" placing too much emphasis on commodity appearances with no analysis of what makes up the basis of appearances, noting that the leaflet was more an expression of profound disgust written in a rather gloomy and nihilistic tone and presented in a too aggressively apocalyptic way. In fact two people at the demo who really liked the leaflet and the verbal intervention were soon to be part of the Angry Brigade milieu. One was Ian Purdie who three years later was to go to jail for bombing incidents. On his release he was to return to the artistic fold as an art historian though it was to prove a mere dalliance as like so many of us he found it impossible to return to the stifling suffocation of an academic role and Ian has finally ended up as an ecological brickie with many a wonderful tale to tell about life on the buildings! The leaflet itself, though not quasi-terrorist, bordered on the brink of something like it. Basically, we only saw one way out: a frenzied, relentless, "deranged" destruction obviously harking back to Rimbaud's; "prolonged and systematic derangement of the senses". For us though, derangement appealed more than "systematic" or "prolonged" which was passed over with eyes closed, therefore reducing the scope and time scale of its effect. Moreover, though perhaps understandable for the times, the brief and chaotic manifesto was built round a vain glorious hope that the art system couldn't last much longer: "For the Fine Arts, the game's up – no possibility of a last minute transfusion". By late '71 (from thoughts from a diary), we were to retort to ourselves: "How wrong. There's plenty of room for transfusion. The more Fine Art is pure commodity, the more it is integrated into business, the more it extends to the whole of alienated life". By then though we were more than dimly aware that a long night of counter revolution was setting in even though the workers here had yet really to make their play as they were to so magnificently do so from 1972 onwards, up to their final defeat in the late 80s.

You can well understand from this distance how you were forced by historical circumstances peculiar to England's "right little, tight little island" mentality in frustration to adopt a quasi-terrorist posture. Nothing was going on in comparison with western Europe or America.. Generally you were regarded as incomprehensible and just plain nasty. There hadn't been much that was relevant here for nigh on 130 years. OK one-offs but nothing, in a general sense, unraveling. Even those we found ourselves closest too like Solidarity – what would now be called an autonomous workers group - we found ourselves clearly distant from. They had no critique of the totality merely something of a beginning that had a long way to go. Chris Gray regarded Chris Pallas (aka Maurice Brinton) its erstwhile leader, as "philistine". He wasn't wrong and in that sense, Brinton was a more than faithful follower of his mentor, Cornelius Castoriadis, theorist-in-chief of Socialisme ou Barbarie in France. Though S.O.B. did make profound breakthroughs in the 1950s vis-à-vis workers autonomy and the need for workers to throw off all party/union shackles, they couldn't apply the same rigour to their own growing, professional survival status, occasional stardom and integration into the status quo - mainly through academia. Their critique of art was appalling. (In parenthesis one of the reasons we wrote what became known as "The End of Music" was in response to Solidarity's groveling, even unctuous fawning at the spiked heels of punk rock). When the S.I. had said about S ou B representing; "the furthest left and the most deluded fringe of those managers and mid-functionaries of the Left who want to have a revolutionary theory of their own actual career in society" (S.I. 9/34) was also true of most of those individuals belonging to Solidarity. Those who haven't turned out like that – those whom we don't know – are probably still the best.

We weren't averse ourselves to making some clever clever in-jokes about Socialisme ou Barbarie as a way of pointing out their limitations. Knowing the catch phrase had originally come from the passionate pen of Rosa Luxembourg and had been turned into the group name by among others Castoriadis with his sophisticated critique of modern capitalism which one of its members – Pierre Canjuers - if his testimony is reliable - had communicated to Guy Debord on many a long absorbing drift through Paris in the early 1960s. For us amidst a lot of laughter we made another choice preferring "barbarism". But of course by this we didn't mean a wish to bring about further horrors to a "capitalism which was is and ever shall be horror without end" as Lenin poignantly described it. (Although we utterly rejected Leninist ideology and its baneful historical outcome we did recognize Lenin's capacity for trenchant one-liners.) What we wanted to find or re-find was a new spontaneous, wild self – a self (most likely a collective self) - lost in our deepening experience of increasing alienation. Maybe something of a return to Athens five centuries ago where love according to Nietzsche was last really consummated or better, just before that to the time of the

“Great God Pan” with a reflection of the intensity of the moment of transition from the hunter gatherers. (c/f some of this flow in the transcript of “Culture and Revolution” from 1967 in the appendix). Essentially though, we ached for something entirely different – something that historically had never ever seen the light of day - which would combine a sensitivity to a long buried historical, or even pre-historical id together within a new dimension of fulfillment. In no way was the barbarism of fascism or Stalinism intended as example nor, need it be said, was the forthcoming horror of a totalitarian free market society of pseudo-individualism envisaged. On the two counts then known to us such connections would have horrified us. As for the third – and now the most durable and horrific totalitarianism – sadly enough many ex-68ers were prepared to side with its take-off.

Inevitably, the wrath of avant garde artists – by way of reply – was also particularly heavy and they expressed more hatred of King Mob activities than ever they did of the more sclerotic, fuddy duddy parts of a culture they professed themselves to be in revolt against. That response, like a toughening character armour, was to remain and if anything to intensify. Remember, as previously indicated, a fair amount of those around King Mob had also come from such a background but had moved through it speedily. From acceptance to transgression, as it were, in the space of a year. It’s therefore, true to say, that these protagonists hadn’t started off with the same ludic, gradually evolving lapidary coherence which characterised the development of the Situationists in a more slowly paced time. (It was our luck as it was also disastrous as we often didn’t grasp things sufficiently coherently – rather like some mantra endlessly repeated). On the contrary, the changing general tempo of the times meant huge changes in oneself were taking place within a few weeks as the subversive character of the times widened and accelerated. Those who couldn’t keep pace or were insensitive to Lautreamont’s maximum written a century previously: “There are new tremors running through the atmosphere all we need is the courage to face them” (headlines of a poster distributed in Newcastle at the time), quickly found themselves in bitter opposition to the most advanced and were determined to have their guts for garters. They probably rightly sensed that it meant the end of all artistic hangers-on career prospects or any hope of retaining a modicum of artistic privileges: no name or a name-in-waste!

However, in our youthful naivety we were quite astonished at the hatred and furious backlash our critique and dismissal of art produced. It was a salutary lesson and that hatred kept on coming year after year. Nothing is likely to fray tempers so much as expounding a critique of art and, almost by default, proving its centrality to revolutionary subversion. In fact it’s more centre stage now than ever it was in the late 60s at the same time as its critique has never been so absent! It’s tended to fall into disuse simply because it hasn’t been updated and as such, is one of the pressing tasks of the time. From Portugal, we translated and produced a text in the late 80s which attempted such an update (together with our own introduction concerning such absence) but, as usual, it didn’t get anywhere. Since the days of King Mob there’s been a number of interventions against art in these islands but they are lost without trace simply because no one seems capable of putting together a half decent text alongside such acts which would help considerably. There was one memorable one during the Notting Hill art festival in 1987 when a number of people made junk out of ‘junk sculptures’ when exhibits were spontaneously re-arranged, together with bits of rubbish brought in from the streets as a means of making nonsense out of nonsense. It was light-hearted stuff and probably didn’t have sufficient cutting edge and those who did it kept getting slung out of the galleries. Well, what can you expect? It was quickly glossed over and forgotten simply because it wasn’t accompanied by any thought provoking and accurate statement announcing themselves and their ideas. We’ll keep insisting on this – especially in these islands – because if you don’t, such actions are usually interpreted as philistinism when it’s those who ideologically commit themselves to art – in a world without art – who are the real philistines. Moreover, these actions which pass without comment, can also be performance art acts in themselves and which are now at the very cutting edge of advertising. As was remarked lucidly a long time ago: we are on the same path as our enemies, which is why they have to be so remorselessly attacked. With a grim laugh looking at an internet compilation entitled “Basic Banalities” listing some situ influenced publications, we noted a BLOB programme on prime time Italian TV which no doubt had been pirated from the various European translations of “A Summer with a Thousand Julys”.

In a sense it came as no surprise to be confronted with the obnoxious bile of Stewart Home in the early 1990s initially distilled in his pathetic book *The Assault on Culture* – a latter day defense of the art/anti-art syndrome with its origins in Fluxus Happenings. The difference is, Home’s defense of an old order with a face-lift, unlike those of a couple of decades previously, is littered with knowledge and facts (though both



are half-arsed) of the movement he's attacking being able to trace its origins in Dada, Surrealism, Lettrism etc whilst leaving out all reference to Hegel, Lukacs, the German ultra-left and so on. In any case Home has no intention of ever deserting the cultural plain. The end result is an even more nasty and hysterical tirade than anything experienced in the late 60s and 70s against those who would theoretically explain and act upon the negation and supercession of art. Yet again we repeat ourselves!

Most of this can be explained by the character of the times in which all sense of history, movement and any meaningful attempt at dis-alienation has been utterly lost. The colonisation of virtually all space and time in the ever more intensified expansion of the commodity economy has meant that all movement that could lay claim to be historical dialectical movement has been so slowed down that it's virtually frozen. And the more it is frozen the more it can be instantly capitalized thus prevented from escaping down fruitful paths. "The worst alienation is the blocking up of development" as Henri Lefebvre had said in the early 1960s. Thus as previously suggested, happening, performance art, installation and what have you instead of proffering some possibility of their self-negation and subsequent disappearance see their potentiality in big money spinning promo and/or incorporated immediately into the world of active advertisement ably facilitated by the old power station, Tate Modern, which attracts more visitors than ever the Millennium Dome did in its heyday. Surely, this single fact alone points to the need to re-launch the assault on art? In the mid 60s, trashy neo-dadaist anti-art art works using living, re-arranged nature etc and having no monetary significance (if for no other reason than the wall of money and commodity wasn't so in-your-face at the time) was often rapidly superceded for the real, thorough going critique of art. Three decades later they are everywhere re-packaged and sold as high price commodities by an ad art promo world of a Damien Hurst type brand, purveyed most notably by the media dept at Goldsmiths College of Art. The difference is, the neo-Dada/anti-art artefact colonises space everywhere and none of us can escape it as it relentlessly stares down at us. One day we can hope for a potlatch of trashing and destruction of these monuments to (and about) nothingness. It will create fury as this capitalised emptiness must be defended at all costs. Of course, there are schisms and rifts within this. Although Stewart Home bitterly defends generally this emptiness, no doubt he would distance himself from the more mainstream Damien Hurst/Turner Prize ambience. If questioned, he probably would also distance himself from everything sarcastically blaming the protagonists for being such dupes for having such a serious take on things. The climate of nihilism reduces all arguments to equivalents to be (all depending) sneeringly dismissed. In this swamp of a climate and as a substitute for all meaningful historical action, meaningless provocation together with self promotion become a be all and end all.

For those who would repeat the disintegration of modern art, all these creeps can do is make endless repeats in this era of frozen time of artifacts and gestures superceded during an historical movement now long gone. Somehow their bile cannot be separated from these historical circumstances simply because these moments cannot be recreated in an a-historical way. Hegel in his Philosophy of the Fine Arts was the first to historicise the movement of artistic form. At times re-reading this great tract with its undertow that the arts were dying is, with its emphasis on the rise and fall of form, like picking up an earlier version of Lettrist theory. We always have to move on whilst developing ever wider, the subversive momentum of history. Although you cannot doubt the beautiful contribution of Ivan Tcheglov to a wider subversion in the 1950s, it would seem any repeat when it's not mere whimsy, heads straight today into the role of artistic entrepreneur (e.g. the Hacienda Club in Manchester or Irvine Walsh's list of symbols of consumer conformity at the end of the film Trainspotting), mysticism, the occult and the ley line bollocks of the London Psychogeographical Society which Home connects with. It has absolutely nothing in common with the moment of derive which came into fruition at that intense lacunae between the disappearance of the old city neighbourhoods and their colonisation by a bureaucratic, traffic-oriented town planning, commodity outlet promo and an arid, financially anchored themeing which uses the ghost and shadow of the past city ambience through the aid of a psychogeographic memory as a means of estate agent hype. In the late 1990s, Hoxton, a bleak and poor area of East London was thus embellished for a rising property market by artists delving into its 20th century past. Looking for their "roots", artists Rachel Lichtenstein and Ian Sinclair turned up some Jewish, Kurt Schwitters-like figure from the 1940s-50s, by the name of Roditsky (a guy who produced some mildly interesting collages and montages about Hoxton) and made a book around him called Roditsky's Room. Basically Roditsky was used as a means of providing a past aura to hype the gentrification of Hoxton seeing that Notting Hill had lost its fashionable cutting edge. In passing, its worth trashing, Transgression, that other load of sub-psychogeographical nonsense and academic bilge emanating recently from the Geography Dept at Newcastle University. Obviously, these hip lecturers know nothing

about what took place in Newcastle in the late 60s and early 70s. It's like a raft of recuperation on recuperation as all memory of authenticity fades from view. Thus Manchester's Hacienda, itself a rip-off of real experiment becomes a canal-side development purchased by Crosby Homes North West utilizing its name and shadow as sales pitch.

Home's writings though became somewhat influential in these islands, if not in the States, if only because they gave off an air of learning and knowledge which can pass without comment as to their veracity, simply because this history is unknown. Home has presumed to make himself a specialist and therefore an available source of information for would be academics writing their Phd dissertations with the aim of future publication. Confusion and fudge are handed down everywhere like Simon Sadler's recent, *The Situationist City* - the title itself being a giveaway). In this coffee table book the Situationist critique is quite wretchedly placed alongside that of artists like Richard Hamilton, architects like the early (now Sir) Richard Rogers, critics like Lawrence Alloway and groups like The Independants and Archigram! Sadler never states there cannot be any comparison when all the latter simply balked at revolutionary critique! After all his historical research, translations and factual details about the psycho-geographic times of the 50s, Sadler even ventures the dumb comment that Happenings had a greater impact and were more worthwhile than thoughtfully experiencing the ambience of city neighbourhoods!

The recent spate of books on the Situationists written in English are rather different from their predecessors. Those by Anselm Jappe and Len Bracken in particular, are much more weighty affairs altogether and most likely mark a shift in making the SI more academically respectable and an object more worthy of university study and not as previously, an intellectual footnote in the pre-history of media studies, precursors of post-modernism or as part of a cultural studies curriculum where the Situationists are portrayed as avante garde artists sympathetic to advertising who spent their time altering bill boards and hoardings. Even McLaren in his memoirs was to claim us as "revolutionary artists"(sic) with such characterisations paving the way in England for a King Mob punk group and a King Mob theatrical promotions company hiring Gary Synder and his Merry Pranksters for a nauseating tour of concert hall performances. Falsely consigned to an artistic role meant the venom was drawn and the major practical/theoretical contribution to a relevant contemporary social revolution cast aside. This deliberate falsification has been ably assisted by art collectors looking for new fields of auctioneering where the inflated price tags of art gallery originals can now be applied to subversive texts and magazines. In the famous piece about the fetishism of commodities in *Capital 1*, Marx writes about "the theological capers of the commodity" hinting at fantastical twists and turns in commodification having endless ramifications. In the light of present times we could fruitfully perhaps alter this. How about "the artistic capers" resembling more Rimbaud's proclamation in *Clearance Sale*: "For sale, anarchy for the masses" !

It wasn't only the disintegration of modern art which was trawled for insight giving out many an excited illumination when the protagonists around King Mob got together in a heated, euphoric atmosphere as equally Freud and Marx especially were avidly read. In fact, it was a line from Marx's "18th Brumaire"; "I am nothing but must become everything" that was placed underneath the photo from a Feuillade film of a menacing masked guy grasping a bottle on the front cover of the first King Mob magazine in Feb 1968. It wasn't as though the 18th Brumaire had been read rather carefully and reflectively from beginning to end but had merely been dipped into in a somewhat fevered, high-as-a-kite state culling a profound sentence as a one-liner that could have been penned in pages marking the disintegration of modern poetry. However it did the job well enough pointing to a future totality beyond the division of labour and reification.

Although the first King Mob magazine was to have a big impact, it's content wasn't that precise and was certainly a step back from *The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution*. Apart from a good translation of part of Vaniegem's *The Revolution of Daily Life* which freely transcribed a few facts more appealing to an English audience which weren't there in the original French but which nonetheless added to it, the centre piece was the inclusion of a text by the American psychiatrist Norman O' Brown playing somewhat glibly with dialectical curlicules and written in a form of poetic stanza which entirely put the wrongmessage across to people. The last thing needed was a poetically formal presentation of a critique which was rather slickly written, in comparison to Norman O' Brown's earlier, soberly assessed and innovative "Life Against Death". Moreover, Norman O' Brown was a professor at an American university (when 99% of the King Mob protagonists at that time were completely anti the university). In no time though some around King Mob were calling the Professor "Dr Normal O' Brown". It was an accurate

enough snide remark.

On another though equally worrying level, the project elaborated on the back cover for some kind of intervention amongst youth in the East End of London had a social work disposition even though possessing a much heavier edge than social work would have dared conceived of at the time with its up beat assessment of “the do badders and do-madders”. It was a project of Phil Cohen’s, which nothing came of, though certainly, the initial outline probably added impetus to the squatted London Street Commune in central London that Phil Cohen played quite an extreme part in initiating one and a half years later.

If the first King Mob had perhaps one common theme running through its pages it was the dialectic of “madness” – going mad with freedom; of breakdown as breakthrough; of disintegration as prelude to a new unity, or as justification for previous “mad” interventions via the rantings of King Mob and with further actions coming soon. Also, it was “mad” in terms of the usual leftist or anarchist protest – which often were quite similar in character. In retrospect, this was the one thing providing a continuum – “madness” in the good up and the long, long, bad down that was to go on for decades. Many of the participants around King Mob were, in no time, “to play some fine tricks on madness” – as Rimbaud’s, *A Season in Hell* put it, while a few adherents really did go mad, some committing suicide. It was sadly a familiar story of our times everywhere. Remember though, we also putting emphasis on the tendency of the late 60s with its psychoanalytical-cum-Artaud quoting researches of R D Laing, the existential psychiatrist who emphasised the important role of the family in the manufacture of schizophrenia. Though we were aware at the time of Laing’s limitations they were certainly better than subsequent searches for schizophrenic genes, artistic genius genes, etc trumped up by a subsequent banal modern “science” without any understanding of historical movement.

As for the other King Mob magazines more has to said. The critique of students didn’t really have a lot to say and was far too simplified and emptily raving, contrasting their spurious intellectualisms with a Brixton where youths with “sheer speed” wrecked the place every single night – which they didn’t! King Mob 2 and 3 were brought out with the aim of reflection and critical suggestion in a rapidly unfolding situation of increasing activity and both generally were responses to the student revolt and the more consequent drop out/hippy revolt (at least as experienced in America and a lesser extent, in the UK), a revolt which in its essence, was a revolt against most professional roles and the training that went into such roles as well as more fundamentally also being a revolt against work as such. We were well aware that this essence was well masked with a whole array of bullshit ideology and it was this carapace which had to be shaken off.

In both instances though, King Mob 2 and 3 were well over the top. Some kind of dialectical sober assessment was completely lacking. However, given the increasingly messianic temper of the times this was hardly surprising. In retrospect though, what was really needed was something far more analytical than what was published if only to keep something in prospect which was more on-going and clearer for the future. It would have made more sense as by then, all within the King Mob milieu, had begun to recognise that a social revolution was going to take a lot longer than the sheer exuberance afforded by the apocalyptic tenor of 1968.

Although “On Student Power” rightly disparaged the student milieu, King Mob’s proposals were fanciful, criticising and condemning the “Alternative University” along with Alex Trocchi’s cultural jam-sessions for the nonsense they were, the “criminal” activism which was proposed – a kind of chain of ripped-off goodies from higher educational institutions carted down to marginalised areas of the cities - wasn’t much better. It was as though our lauding of criminal survival means (e.g. shop lifting, fare dodging, scrounging on the dole etc) needed to be more comfortably augmented by flogging-off expensive items of university equipment. If not that, how about dipping into the pockets of student’s overcoats left on college clothes racks where you could always find the occasional cheque book handy for kiting. It was reckoned that such practices would help create a kind of permanent network feedback involving more and more people. It was really quite ridiculous and merely nothing more than a fanciful mock guerrilla construct over a stark and mostly mundane reality of growing proletarianisation. Put simply; a lot of students increasingly and for a lot of complex reasons - and not just simplistic materialist ones - weren’t going to arrive at “their” future role in the higher echelons of wage labour. Their future was bleaker, more hum drum and most likely relatively poorly paid. There’s nothing pretty or romantic to say about that stark fact. By all means try get

up to some scam to augment survival as long as it didn't harm any fellow voyagers embarked on the same route. Heroic role play a la King Mob just didn't come into it! It was within the wider paradigms of wage labour where the real choice lay: were you to remain poacher or become gamekeeper? And the last thing poacher meant (and still should mean) is arbitrary rip-off. Inevitably, a lot of the more craven were to become gamekeepers and it was no good King Mob vamping this up with literary flourishes about "hideously dressed" lecturers who'd be some essential link in this criminally conceived survival process. Lecturers would never be able keep up such a front in any case being involved in something far more devious: the hideous lie! The most they would ever be would be the enfant terribles of fashion and even that but rarely!

As for Tim Clarke's reply in the second letter what can you say? Pouring cold water on the proposals he didn't hit the nail on the head neither. Remember by then, the only thing Clarke had nailed down was his first full job as a university lecturer at Essex University placing himself on the first rung of a very high career ladder he was to exploit to the best of his abilities. In the letter he is defensive in the extreme. Nay worse and none so more than that execrable line; "the poetic is dead along with poetry". The poetic is never dead. Wasn't it rather a comment upon himself on the threshold of a cadre lifestyle in fawning denial of everything poetic because his acceptance and submission to a university career was becoming the paramount factor in what he wanted out of life? The last thing he wanted was a new world because the fucking bastard wasn't prepared to risk anything.

By way of prelude to the King Mob, Motherfuckers, pamphlet, it's worth saying that King Mob didn't navigate well the moment of the self-destruct of modern art to more clearly (and collectively?) face a future of proletarianisation which wasn't only about the destruction of aesthetics. That moment was mentioned, then emphasised and re-emphasised as though the egoism of that moment couldn't find its way – its way down - to another socially lower plain. Beyond lay the world of working stiff and wasn't it best to conceive them as "the worker as object" and quit for safer harbours?

In a way though this "hideously dressed college lecturer" phantasy syndrome perhaps pinpointed something more possible which you had to think more carefully about. Obviously we all discussed ways of making money even deploying means of cynical self-recuperation. So why not let's write crap ourselves! Let's consciously pull our punches and make ourselves a bit of money providing we don't put our names to it. After all, hadn't Michelle Bernstein done this with her imitations of Nouvelle Vague/Robbe Grillet type of novels like *All the Kings Men* etc? They sold well and hadn't the money been used to subsidise real subversion? OK then. We experimented writing a nonsensical spoof about Notting Hill which we called "Balls" (c/f *Lost Ones* around King Mob elsewhere on this web) and got paid well for it which came in handy after working for the low wages a casualised agency like Manpower offered you. In fact "Balls" had been commissioned at the behest of Dan Richter, the Beat poet resident in London who was a distant friend of Chris Gray's. It wasn't, therefore an honourable detournement but which one ever is? It was though a missing link we weren't informed about until later. We embarked on other things setting about doing a book on Berlin Dada and the failed German revolution after 1918. Recently, on reading a few mildewed pages of that aborted book it still retains some relevance acutely picking on comments by Rosa Luxemburg noting her penchant for traditional forms of art as she herself dabbled in drawings, paintings and poetry. We simply asked: "How far is this relevant today"? Perhaps, more interestingly, we noted how Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg couldn't understand how individual workers had no stomach for being reduced to "nought – the better to prepare themselves for becoming all". Well, negation here, through fruit of bitter experience doesn't follow through in the same way as dialectics can do in terms of professional specialisms. Obviously in picking this comment up of Rosa's, we must have had in mind that somewhat related comment by Marx fronting the first issue of *King Mob*: "I Am Nothing But I Must Become Everything" which perhaps also brought into play the self-destruction of modern art which in the here and now when Marx wrote this might even have trawled some unknown musings between the negation of art and the self-negation of the worker? Even in terms of paid recuperation which never came about apart from "Balls", we were trying to make some kind of link-up which had never been made as it was left there hanging in mid air.

Generally though everything heading towards degree zero fascinated us. For the same proposed book interesting jottings were made on the de-materialisation of the object (how on earth would any recuperative publishing business in England at the time have accepted any of this never mind now?) taking as its cue Breton's comments in 1936 that "the hateful reign of common sense is founded on the world of concrete

objects” noting that if there’s a revolution, the subsequent change in consciousness would mean that the conventional value of the object freed from the commodity form, would be subservient to the desire of the observer and an “evocative capacity” creating a freer relationship would then ensue. Interestingly too, notes were prepared on De Sade relating his thoughts to present time emphasising “imagination is pleasures spur” and that inclination towards a love that can set us on fire. To be sure, in attempting recuperation we weren’t playing their game and maybe that was why nothing came of it? We were simply too serious!

The long text on the Motherfuckers was a real advertisers/promo job and the critical content of the text was small beer indeed. In fact the best part of the text described in detail some of Black Mask and early Motherfucker attacks on modern art, including the magnificent attack on the Madison Avenue gallery hosting a retrospective exhibition on Dada, Surrealism and Constructivism in 1968 culminating in a splendid riot. This really did put anti-art on the map in New York as more and more people began to pick up on it which was no mean feat indeed. For example, though the Motherfuckers had immediately produced a leaflet supporting Valerie Soloanis’ SCUM manifesto justifying the shooting of Andy Warhol, they also, it seems, never realised their prior effect upon Valerie! She had obviously imbibed that anti-art disposition spreading across the Lower East Side and that had given her confidence to act and given head and example in the Madison Avenue gallery riot. Maybe, it could be said that Valerie Solanas combined that adoration-cum-hate of pop stars, anti-art derived from Dada and that initial more open and genuine explosion of feminist critique – a critique which was never surpassed in this respect. Subsequently, popademia-feminism was never to mention this critique which surely in its condemnation of fashion and the reduction of everything to the show was very pertinent. Feminism never overcame this retardation.

Finally though despite all these activities it wasn’t enough to point Dada away from an artistic interpretation towards a new though unrealised creative future. Perhaps there was far too much simplistic crudity. Bruce Elwell, of the then American section of the SI noted the “atrocious anti-art manifestoes” Black Mask tended to write. Ben Morea’s anti-art was also oddly mixed in with an acceptance of some aspects of modern art especially a reverence for Jackson Pollock which was mirrored in the new movement everywhere. It was a serious shortcoming. Consider “Guerrilla, the Free Newspaper of the Street” which coming out about the same time republished a manifesto called; “Poetry Demands Unemployment” put out originally by the somewhat Bolshevised titled of, The Central Committee of the Dadaist Revolutionary Council, Berlin 1919. It was set alongside some of Walt Whitman’s poems, together with “guerrilla” poetry by “revolutionary” Nicaraguans. Again this was hardly the point and certainly wasn’t what the best of Berlin Dada would have meant by poetry as for sure the German Dadaists really didn’t want everybody sitting around composing sonnets hither and thither! In his own time, of course, Whitman had been exceptional but to arbitrarily re-print his poems merely gave out the wrong idea – basically that the role of poet was still OK, alive and kicking. What Berlin Dada had in mind by poetry in this manifesto hardly happily co-existed with traditional poetic form in the New York street newspaper.. A far larger picture was envisaged creating a new poetically fulfilled life style for everybody having left behind the sacrifice of wage labour. Surely by 1968 it would have been better if such a trajectory had been stated even more clearly than the Dadaists had put in 1919 rather than needlessly obscuring it. In that sense it fell in line with the silly act by the nascent Motherfuckers a little later who fired a rifle into the air at a Kenneth Koch Beat poetry reading whilst proclaiming a manifesto entitled: “Poetry is Revolution” when they were merely defending the Black Power poet, Leroi Jones who’d been arrested in the Newark riots. He also provided the name Up against the wall Motherfucker which came from a line from one of his poems. In no way had Leroi Jones ever questioned, never mind abandoned his role as a poet writing poetry and he was no better or worse as a poet than Koch, the Beat guy’s poetry venue which had been disrupted. The same could be said at the time about Adrian Mitchell or Adrian Henri in England. When all is said and done poetry can only revolve historically now around the paradigm of an E. Jarvis Thribb’s doggerel in Private Eye. It’s as true today as it was in 1968 even more so.

But this was the best part – and a small part – as the rest of the King Mob magazine quickly fell into the completely ridiculous. True, Black Mask had made a few interventions against modern art before the Madison Avenue riot but the King Mob presentation of their activities made it look as though this was happening every other day! This was a lie purely and simply and it didn’t stop there. The Macy’s superstore “mill-in” was exaggerated to the point of becoming ridiculous. It was in fact rather like the Selfridge’s invasion of Oxford St. According to the heavily embellished King Mob blurb all kind of crazy things happened. However, among the bric-a-brac at Macy’s no rabbits were released nor was a vulture set free

among the china section. As for other accoutrements e.g. the snake with graffiti all over it – it was pure bullshit. It was Chris Gray's English gothic fantasy "realised" in reality – an artistic macabre fantasised upon a reality which in an American context, might have appealed to those who had a predilection for what could come out of the novelist H.P. Lovecraft's sewers. The same goes for all the various quasi-terrorist attacks in California which were quite gratuitously attributed to the Motherfuckers.. They really had no part in them but making such suggestions and using the Motherfuckers to hang an ideological construct on – the path from the destruction of art through to terrorism – was the real purpose. Whoever blew up the pylons we certainly had no idea about though obviously we were sympathetic to their actions. It was on that level of suggestion that had been there in the previous "Student Power" text that was now getting completely out of hand. On receiving the magazine, Ben Morea laughingly dismissed it as "an advertising phantasy" and by then, seeing he was into such militant image making himself, it was quite a derisory comment. His militant reputation really had grown and women swooned. Opportunistically, the Motherfuckers became a chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The King Mob pamphlet never criticised this entryism concentrating on the direct action the Motherfuckers took in the occupation of Columbia University where, in a quite exemplary way, they hung college art treasures on the makeshift barricades, a tactic as previously mentioned, derived from Bakunin in 1848 in order to deter the police from attacking the insurgents. However, when the Motherfuckers burst into some locked up parts of the university, they burnt, it seems, a lot of "priceless documents" as well as preparatory theses by students including one on the French revolution. Well so what as certainly there was no sense of personal gain coming from this pillaging unlike say the pillaging of Baghdad museums in 2003. Obviously they had some real feel for just how destructive and vandalistic real revolutionary ferment is. Unfortunately, it was also becoming flawed the more they conceptualised themselves as some avante garde of militant vandals dominated by something like a pop group image of themselves inevitably projected upon their somewhat star-struck followers. They were becoming somewhat like the repetitive guitar smashing performances The Who were giving nightly only more real and exciting. It was becoming ritualised and losing the necessary spontaneity of that real anger preceding destructive riot. There was no waiting or reflection in any of this just at the moment when a lot of people were becoming seriously worried and unsure sensing that things were beginning to go awry. The presentation itself had become part of the problem and as the old saying goes: you cannot attack alienation through alienating means.

Perhaps we are being rather harsh here. Is lying too strong a word? Really it was more the case of the legacy of poetic license absorbed in the mind set of an imaginative novelist of the ilk of a Robert Louis Stevenson. It was hoped this embellishment of reality would encourage and inspire many another to take it all literally even copying at will or perhaps carrying out a pattern of similar, unpredictable and imaginative intervention. (Wasn't this later to become some of the theory behind the copycat riot and too much media exposure?) This was different because the problem was a form of poetic license that hadn't left the literary/artistic dimension without arriving at a new kind of factual analysis (an analysis with a poetic/imaginative edge) which passionately told the truth. Therefore, some kind of sympathetically critical appraisal of the Motherfuckers would have been more to the point than the hopelessly laudatory approach King Mob came out with. Interestingly, as far as we know, no ex-Black Mask or Motherfucker has made such critical remembrances of things past although, from what we know, in the latter days of the movement, many made the beginnings of such critiques and which never came to anything. Even the mystic Alain Hoffmann, which Vaneigem had complained about so readily in the Situationist bible, in conversation with one of us in San Francisco in the summer of 1971 said things were becoming geared towards publicity and an internalised image worship. He said it with a practical sensible confidence even whilst distributing a really absurd mystical A3 sheet of sun/moon/star/ new age tripe during the process of demonstrating his impressive Japanese martial arts skills. A few weeks later he was dead having fallen out of the back of a pick-up truck hitching a lift while lying on the duck boards in his sleeping bag. Giving out the illusion of inner control, externally Alain was exhausted and beat up internally and finally unable to take simple precautions like keeping the truck's tailboard up and fixed. On the other hand, a much more basic Motherfucker in the latter-days of the group's really supra-militant style in New York, went screaming down to the Brooklyn Bridge frantically gesticulating that he'd been: "Consumed and consumed and consumed by the Motherfuckers". It seems the Motherfuckers had pressured themselves to such an extreme degree that they inevitably turned on themselves, encouraging hatred for each others as well as self-hate as they failed to live up to their self-appointed image. They imploded. The critique of the capitalist mode of production and consumption wasn't meant to be like this! Don't make too much out of this though. All of us who were there and meant it went through similar experiences in the very early 70s, as the grim and stark

“reality” of one of the worst counter-revolutions in history began to bite. As Phil Meyler said at the time and so poignantly with his short subversive, friendly laugh, ever inviting comment: “Be militant, go home and beat yourself up”.

In some sense though there was a hidden undertow of polemics in King Mob more or less centered in and against the French Situationists meaning they weren't much more than de-classe intellectuals who were brilliant at fighting paid-up intellectuals but hopeless at a down home punch-up. It's certainly a moot point and one that the French indignantly answered by pointing out that Rene Vienet had been a docker in Rouen. Well, perhaps but for how long? It certainly didn't get in the way of him becoming much later, a friend of Asian bankers! Memorably, Vaneigem said in the re-orientation debate that there'd never been a worker in their ranks. True, but on the other hand the Situationists conducted themselves admirably throughout the explosion of May '68 and the occupations movement. They did what they could and lucidly. However, here isn't the occasion for going into all of that. Engagement with the workers – if you like – came more organically and rather later for both Situationist influenced individuals in France and England and many of these people were to be far more principled than the original members of the group.

In England – as we've pointed out there was a frenetic desire to break on through farther to become some kind of tough gang adept at the ways of the street but also possessing a trenchant critique. This kind of ideology was projected onto the Motherfuckers who had moved, it was suggested, “from the Situationist salon to the street”. Of course such a drift was there in the Motherfuckers but they went over the top utilizing the street as the arena to parade the militant role. The best interpretation – meaning the overthrow of roles – not only intellectual ones but even the finest theoretical ones and lying well outside the occupation of an intellectual calling in question also the role of revolutionary, wasn't how it was taken on board. Considering the frenetic tempo of the times, it meant voluntarism in the sense of what you could do to endlessly set an example for others to follow. ‘Revolutionary’ for this new militant milieu, meant piling as much pressure on yourself as you could possibly take though without cracking up! Indicative of that line of thought was an inane introduction written by Chris Whitbread for his translations of two texts by Vaneigem and Rene Riesel, broadly around workers councils, and published in Anarchy in 1972 where he criticised the Situationists for their passivity during 1968. It was almost in the vein of failing to organise some military putsch a la (perhaps) Blanqui himself or, perhaps, some Maoist ideology had made its fashionable entrance? At the time one felt the shades of Leninism were taking a long time to pass on by. Military problems in such situations – even more so now – are complex and for sure, it's the last thing one can rush into without a lot of careful consideration.

It wasn't Leninism as such but some kind of cocktail of Durutti in the Ramblas heading a posse of insurrectionary bikers. It seems this idea of some clued-in street gang persisted as it also moved with the times. A recent text from Not Bored in New York locates its beginning in The Revolution of Modern Art and The Modern Art of Revolution redefining itself over the years and reaching its realisation in the Sex Pistols! – a gang of street lumpens who'd got it! No doubt McLaren will be pleased as the text utterly fails to point out the musical pop star recuperation inherent in Punk from its beginning. It's as though our contemporary critiques brought out by us and others in the late 70s were to be set at naught.

King Mob 5 did not exist and was a simplistic invention not unlike that section of Class War calling itself King Mob in Cork City in Ireland during the early 1990s. As for King Mob 6, it was mainly written by Ian and Di Clegg with a little distant help from their low down but scummily-aware friends from Newcastle! Although parts of the analysis are perceptive and telling particularly the emphasis upon a future of capitalised liesure recuperating Belsen as a Butlin's holiday camp on Spanish beaches which McLaren and Punk rock were to take on board there wasn't that much of interest in the text. These paragraphs were probably the inspiration behind the Punk slogans like, “Cheap Holidays In Other Peoples Misery” and the EP, “Belsen was a Gas” The text itself, we balked at and wanted certain lines removed removed. To be sure, it welcomed the need for a re-appraisal of the fully employed working class which was beginning to come into focus with opposition to the then Labour Government's proposed bill, “In Place of Strife” limiting wildcat strikes. Where King Mob 5 went pear-shaped was in referring to the marginals in a virtually Stalinoid way. Consider: “As long as it (capitalism) remains, the rebel youth, the hippies, the long haired squatters are mere parasites”. This really was too much as was the absurd accompanying notion that somehow everything could become free under capitalism with comments like: “Monopoly capitalism will establish the biggest free fair known to mankind”. A likely story which was put even more fancifully a little

later: “ As long as capitalism exists, even after work is abolished and everything is free, there will always be one class which is more exploited than the other”. Well for us who were short of money (Oh, the Situationist shame of it !) and having a real lack of purchasing power, no such perspective and simply felt in the gut, could be endorsed. We blatantly knew money ruled with a vice-like grip and that reality was to slowly triumph, the more everything became subject to a commodification previously unimagined.. That “piratical entrepreneur” which the Cleggs’s regarded as a has-been of capital was on the cusp of making a terrifying and ghastly comeback ably assisted by yippie transmogrifying into yuppie often embracing the new technology and the stock market at one and the same time. Remember the earlier years of the Microsoft Corporation were to have a very alternative image. By then the reality had become an old, old story. The Cleggs when writing KM 6 had plenty of inherited wealth to comfort themselves with as well as owning properties in London, Sussex and a croft in north east Scotland. It seems that to be able to talk and write about freedom from monetary constraints as an immanent tendency of capital comes much easier for such people than those at the sharp end.

Events in Newcastle in the late 1960s. Street theatre and radical intervention against rock music. Wrecking the English Surrealist festival and subsequent critique of English Surrealism. Newcastle Art School firebombed! Tyneside shipyard workers and a (kind of) Situationist critique. Jack Common and Vis Comics.

There was much overlap between on-going activity in London and what was happening in Newcastle. At this point it’s worth going into a few details about subsequent events in Newcastle simply because nobody has done so as some of what took place was quite remarkable. The Icteric period had waned and a more direct response was called for. After “closing the Art School forever” Johnny Myers had erupted in a meeting of leftists against the Vietnam war shouting out, “we’ve got to make a Ho Chi Minh Trail out of Northumberland St” (the main drag in Newcastle). It wasn’t that the guy was a leftist, he merely wanted to experience a crazy and exhilarating mayhem of unexpected eruption down the city’s main thoroughfare. True, in his shouting it would have been better if Johnny had been more ironic about references to Ho Chi Minh perhaps bringing in something of Bunuel’s *L’Age D’or*, as that was his intended effect. It never materialised as a mass event but a little later, on a hot sunny midday, Johnny took all his clothes off and walked down Northumberland St. He was arrested, banged up in Durham jail and later sectioned.

In response to this new mood, by 1967 many of us were quite willing to throw away many treasured possessions like art books, even ones you regularly looked at like Goya’s etchings, jazz records – even a revered collection of Charlie Parker among which was “Bird Symbols”, basic craftsman’s tools etc. It was a case of giving them to anybody who might want them. It was an attitude of “let everything slip from your grasp” which possibly might smell of private property. It was however, taking place before a general historical time had been seized when it would be possible for everybody to let go of commodities precisely because commodity relations, the wages system and money would be in the process of self-liquidation. Coming up with such common sense objections at the time wouldn’t have met with much of a response as truly a force was rising within us and within so many other dispersed and disparate individuals that it was impossible to resist. We knew we were calling the shots and things must crumble before us...

First though it’s worth making a few points here about that process which ultimately leads towards the abolition of money. In the late 19th century and some of the early years of the 20th century it was reasonably common among a minority of workers, perhaps as a naive afterthought, to nod in the direction of the abolition of wage labour. Eventually, it was inscribed on some of the logos of the various union outfits (e.g. the NUR) and in the statutes of say, the Irish TGWU. That didn’t mean the object was pursued – quite to the contrary - but it had to be mentioned occasionally as a kind of litany. If anything most of the impetus went into a form of nationalisation whereby many things would then become free particularly bus and train travel and the health services. Many millions of workers in Britain around the time of the second inter-Imperialist world war subscribed to these illusions about nationalisation so in that sense the notion of a world free from monetary exchange remained a powerful living force, if very misguided, on how it could be achieved. After 20 years of nationalisation by the mid-60s most people knew this hadn’t worked out they way the scriptures had suggested cynically shrugging off the hopes they might have had in following such a path. Such a lacunae though, almost like nature, abhorred a vacuum. As the shades of darkness fell the owl of Minerva took another course as it flew towards a money-less future. The momentum transposed itself as



it became more personal though nonetheless still collective at the same time often presenting itself as just who was into money and who wasn't. of course the latter were rated! If you'd come from the well-off it was a matter of spending money generously on others and not saving it, or else using it to fund projects. Essentially just get rid of ! On a more general level there was the street hippy lingo directed against "bread heads" within their own ranks. It was powerful and scathing. Though the abolition of money and wage labour wasn't proclaimed as such as a revolutionary banner it was palpably there in the atmosphere. Some individuals even refused to touch money for a number of years in. Disdaining to sign on the dole, remarkably, they often succeeded. Many people had respect for them. and though always in a tiny minority they nonetheless were admired for their ideological persistence, even though the emphasis here has to be placed on ideological and in that sense not too dissimilar to the old slogans. All of this had virtually disappeared by the mid 1970s merely lingering on here and there. A true monetary hell then set in when the only need and even eternal verity in society became money itself. True we all know about this but we didn't sufficiently grasp just how out of kilter this 'new' mood was with the changing but incessant undertow of the previous 130 years or so. Truly, a concerted reaction was trying harder than ever to abolish the becoming of history. Today, we have the abolition of money alright but in the sense of vast teeming millions on the outskirts of Mexico Cities everywhere plunged into the capitalist nightmare of commodity relations without a peso ever passing through their hands. Certainly, we do need more perceptive, in depth, theorising about the abolition of money – of just how do we get from here to there?

Other things weren't so dramatic but there was a drift here too. The Alfred Street theatre project was set up by Ron Hunt and some friends (shades of Alfred Jarry?) together with the paraphernalia of exaggerated costumes that had characterised this form from Futurism through Dada to the days of agit prop after the Russian Revolution in 1917. The Alfred Street theatre figured fairly prominently in a quite ferocious on-going rent strike in Elswick, a run down suburb flanking river bank heavy industry in the west end of Newcastle which later, in 1992 became the focus of bitter rioting between youths and police. The Alfred Street theatre like all other street theatre, didn't leave the terrain of art behind nor did it encapsulate a much more lucid trajectory – the shock tactic – inherited from the best traditions of modern art. Even though taking place in the streets with non professional actors, it relied upon the passive spectator/ performer dichotomy - a dichotomy that had to be vanquished. Later in the 70s, a film company, Z Films, based in Newcastle and following on from this somewhat Meyerhold axis produced some docu-fiction social realist films with a mixture of actors and non-actors on aspects of Tyneside life (Launch etc) which were completely without any consequence. Ron Hunt though in the late 60s was strung out between street theatre and active intervention. He somehow acquired a copy of a super 8 home movie of the Motherfuckers "garbage for garbage" protest when, during a New York street cleaners' strike, they collected together rubbish from the streets of the Lower East Side and dumped it on the high culture Rockefeller Plaza. Ron really liked this intervention. It was certainly one of the best actions of the Motherfuckers and considerably more to the point than their super-militant histrionics which always invited jail and a far too arbitrary media attention which they hoped would produce a copy-cat effect or would add recruits to their small but fancied, Durrutti-like, guerrilla image.

Some of the same people though who were engaged with Alfred Street theatre also simultaneously took part in some excellent interventions. A Surrealist weekend conference with various speakers held in Durham during the heady year of 1968 was wrecked. One of us pissed all over the stage at the same time wildly proclaiming to a 220 plus audience the failures of Surrealism. Obviously the harangue relied heavily on Situationist critique. In response, Patrick Hughes, the Surrealist painter exploded in outrage later claiming we'd destroyed the Surrealist movement in Britain. If only! A few years later and Patrick Hughes continued on his way only this time via a TV series that was painful for its dull conformity and no different from the typical English Surrealist product found regularly in the cultural market place from the 1930s onwards. Ron Hunt objected to this disruption saying you had to give people the chance of finding out about Surrealism, particularly as now, in the shape of the magazine, Transformation a greater emphasis was been placed on its revolutionary kernel. OK but the mag only went as far as praising Cohn-Bendit ("Cohn-Bendit we need you here") neglecting any deeper critique and was retarded in comparison to Maurice Brinton's fairly commendable effort for Solidarity. In any case, as it transpired even this emphasis on the revolutionary kernel of Surrealism in England would be rapidly abandoned.

Surrealism in these islands had always been a very tepid affair eschewing the real nitty gritty of the movement – the disruptions, (the Saint Pol Roux banquet et al) the manifestoes, the wild experiment -

despite the fact that Surrealism even in France always tended to re-instate art after engaging in provocative acts. Under the conservative guidance of Roland Penrose, Surrealism in England was always a precious arty movement producing nothing significant. It never remotely broke the hold of a dominating artistic culture powered essentially by an Eng Lit ideology firmly caste in a long gone and once glorious past which could never be repeated. It never questioned the boundaries of art and it's politics never made any imaginative leap basically inclining towards leftist social democratic and Communist party sympathies. They stood on the same platform as Clement Atlee, the future post second world war, Labour Party PM extolling Picasso's Guernica and Ceri Richard's Surrealist poster campaign supporting the Spanish revolution that never went beyond a No Pasaran popular front stance. Surrealism in England was, unfortunately, merely a means of displaying a wearisome juxtaposition of images – coming from some kind of delving into the subconscious – in order to change a little the subject matter of traditional and outmoded categories like painting, sculpture, novels and poetry. It tended to reinforce a tradition of benign whimsy which was all too common basically unable to shock anything apart from some right wing daily newspapers even then, avidly looking for copy. Surrealism made no impact on Britain precisely because it was already its greatest success story. We mean by this, that cornball and popular concept which sees Surrealism as really nothing more than placing disparate objects side by side to create some kind of frisson, a technique which was about to be taken up with increasing alacrity by advertising. Nowadays, these same techniques are accelerating ever faster with computer generated digitalised images. Although English Surrealists met and often struck up on-going friendships with some of the best French Surrealists, you are constantly amazed at how little – if any – of the real meat of Surrealist drift rubbed off on them. Some, like Nancy Cunard, even had close personal and sexual relationships What on earth did they talk about – merely dreams and art? Surely though it proves the profound grip reaction in England had over even its more tempestuous personalities? Even that slightly more interesting part of English Surrealism – say the collaboration between the psychoanalyst Grace Pailthorpe and the painter, Rueben Mednikoff – lent towards the reformist impulse at the Portman Clinic of civilising the criminal or the insane through changed therapy. It certainly turned out to be instrumental in the now ubiquitous art therapy treatment cum tranquilizers which now fills you with so many predictable groans. Vaneigem's comment in his book on Surrealism is pertinent: "the contempt which the Surrealists heaped on torturers in white coats did not inoculate them against a temptation to co-opt attitudes usually treated clinically for purely artistic purposes". In fact John Lyle launched the 60s English Surrealist magazine Transformation with an exhibition of the "art" of the mad in an Exeter art gallery. For those later who were to fall foul of the psychiatric police and who'd developed a critique of art to be forced to paint and draw in the loony bin was quite an insult!

Like English Surrealism, English whimsy – of which it was a part – could also never embrace revolutionary violence against culture, ossified rituals, or some aspects of politics like Surrealism had done in France. In England it tended to fit in too neatly with its well-known eccentric image – e.g. the "wild nature crank" picked out for vicious ridicule in Blast – the Vorticist paper around 1913. Although English absurdity and whimsy had brought forth very penetrating and remarkable things particularly in the late 19th century in the humour and profound fantasy of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll it rapidly lost its real cutting edge.. Since then the same vein has kept resurfacing in more and more popular forms from the Goons radio shows to the Monty Python prime time TV shows. Indeed, the leftover English Surrealists in the 1950s commented – perhaps with a certain jealousy upon the mass appeal of the Goons – obviously impressed and wanting similar fame themselves. On a broader level, English Surrealism was more an expression of a current which produced those Heath Robinson whimsical sketches of fantastic machines than any pushing through of artistic negation like happened with the origins of Surrealism in France. At a later date, towards the end of the 60s, Monty Python was able to divert and spectacularise the serious and subversive intent behind a revitalised and more all-rounded concept of play as a weapon against capitalism and the State into up-dated comic relief at peak viewing times. It was clever recuperation. For all its pitching at English foibles – the piss takes on the upper class accent, the army (often the breeding ground for mad cap pranks anyway and where The Goons were spawned) etc, English absurdity always ends up supporting the status quo and the revolutionary transformation of everyday life is the last thing within its ken. In a sense though some of the British trad jazz scene had prepared the opening via the blues singer George Melly plus the mass market, surrealist packaging of Dick Lester's films. No wonder Melly, Spike Milligan and John Lennon have been called; "the unofficial trinity of British surrealism".

More than this though -and the real point - which should have been emphasised in the Durham intervention against Surrealism was that the annals of English Surrealism in the 1930s reads like a litany of

almost everybody who was to become part of the main stay of the cultural establishment by the late 1960s – from Henry Moore, to (Sir) Herbert Read, to William Coldstream etc. Those who like Read, became academic cultural critics added nothing of value even though in the 1930s Read's motto had been: "To hell with culture". It's the usual familiar tale of modern times. Latter day Surrealist influenced individuals in France who became academics like Georges Bataille and Henri Lefebvre really did contribute something in that ever widening momentum of a theory of negative becoming more total in scope. Where would the notion of potlatch be without Bataille; a notion emphasising riotous, festive destruction and where would the anti-specialism of everyday life – the terrain of total revolution - be without Lefebvre? Instead, we had Herbert Read's "The Meaning of Art". A joke indeed if the implications weren't to be so dismal. It meant in this climate always coming up against a solid brick wall of incomprehension. Nothing much has changed since in that respect.....If only some of this had been communicated in a more enduring form at Durham. Interestingly, a guy called Anthony Earnshaw tried to be conciliatory during the bust-up. Indeed we still feel some affection towards him because he was a misfit not working at the time in some cultural capacity but variously employed as crane driver, engineering fitter and lathe turner. He'd evolved his own kind of Surrealist walks in West Yorkshire boarding trains, descending at will and roaming thus for hours. Alas, only to abandon his negativity as slowly but surely he became an Art School lecturer allowing him finally to devote himself full time to art.

Other interventions took place. At the time there was this spate of right wing lecturers who seemed to enjoy giving talks at various university venues throughout the country knowing they were going to get disrupted by left wing Dave Sparts ( a Private Eye, lock-jawed, spoof Trotskyist invention) who were going to call them racist, anti working class etc, which of course they were but that was hardly the real point. In Newcastle, the Sparts were shoved out of the heckling limelight against Patrick Wall by a vociferous cabal hollering "beans, beans, beans" at the top of their voices.(see previous comment on page 15). In short, it was a playful detouring of an advertising jingle. Nonsense for nonsense if you like and a rather more appropriate way of dealing with right wing ideologues. At least it was enjoyable and a rather more infectious way of sparking off the beginnings of some real communication.

Perhaps the most significant intervention though was that against The Mothers of Invention at the City Hall, Newcastle when a bunch of protagonists got up from the audience and shouted "Up against the wall Mothers" to which Frank Zappa replied: "Surely you mean Up Against the Wall Motherfucker". The response was quickly shouted back: "No, no, no, we mean up against the wall, Mothers". Both big audience and performing band were perplexed and neither knew what was going. Just exactly what was being said in this intervention? There was also the in-joke side too despite the seriousness of intent. Just who in Newcastle City Hall in this relatively out of the way place, in this, if you like, brusquely un-hip town in the boon docks would have heard of the Motherfuckers apart from Frank Zappa, his band and the protagonists? Most likely nobody. Those who stood up and shouted from the audience knew Zappa was one of the hippest dudes of the pop spectacle and "Up against the wall, Mothers" would probably fall on the audiences deaf, unknowing ears. They were right. Zappa did, after all, have some notion of a crazy negation if probably not much more. Remember, through his commercial power and influence, Zappa was able to fix it so that Wild Man Fisher, the very amusing paranoid schizophrenic anti-music musician and who couldn't play a note on that guitar permanently glued to his hand, was given a recording session. Some of this complexity could have been suggested in a leaflet. Often there's nothing like some simple honesty. And the leaflet could have been scattered throughout the audience in the old time-honoured way. Explanations like this are needed also because people otherwise are left in the dark most likely considering it to be the splutterings of malcontents having some personal grief against this particular pop group. This just wasn't the case but in the near future it was just such damaged responses which were to become more common spilling over into some kind of psychotic identification like Mark Chapman's killing of John Lennon in New York City in 1980. In fact as early as 1972, a "yob" - according to the media - called Billy Howells really hurt Zappa when he was performing at the Finsbury Park Empire in London. The alternative/libertarian leftist press still very active at that time, never commented upon the event, even though Howell's got six months in jail. The attack wasn't probably too enlightened but some kind of explanation might have been revealing. You never know it might have contrasted nicely with a coherent leaflet from the Newcastle intervention and given it an extra dimension in terms of a lucid contrast. Though most people don't understand such leaflets, one or two do and seeding starts from there and maybe in this dry desert one day, after rain, flowers will bloom. Moreover, such subversive challenges have to be clearly delineated – simply so they don't get confused with the prevalent, often eroto-maniacal, obsessive assaults on stars - in that combination of adoration-cum-

hate. For sure, the latter maybe demonstrates some damaged kind of praxis but it lacks the necessary real enlightenment.

Obviously what was basically been contested here, like in the other nonsense interventions, was the passive audience/performer relationship particularly as the pop concerts in the 60s were moving on from club venue and City Halls to the giant pop festival and were in this respect, spectacles of gigantic reification we often compared with Chinese Maoist calisthenics. Some of us at the time even felt them to be somewhat akin to fundamentalist religious revivalist meetings in their role of pacification of rebel activity. Whilst undoubtedly true, it also did mean that we'd unwittingly blocked our ears to the last moments of great popular music from the Doobie Brothers to the sheer magnificence of Jimi Hendrix who as a musician trying to escape the boundaries of music, was quite the equal of Charlie Parker, Bud Powell or Django Rheinhardt.

A little later though and we had no real simpatico with the trouble which began to erupt at the huge rock festivals. Sure we thought it was OK but recognised that it failed to address the real problem of spectacular separation. Though welcoming the tearing down of security fences at the Isle of Wight rock festival, we had serious reservations knowing that even if they made the concert a completely free event, the formal focus, the essential reification, had to be the real core of contestation which the Zappa intervention hit squarely on the head. The pop musicians were meant to disintegrate, to commit suicide, to end the music. In essence we preferred that photo from an American Life mag from the riots in Detroit in 1967 where a black guy with his back to the camera is seen walking out of a looted store carrying a double bass. Scribbled underneath, Debord had commented; " negro carrying a musical instrument after assassinating Mozart".

To be sure the transcendence of art was particularly central to the developing revolutionary critique in Newcastle and was always given a sharp focus and there was a lot of hard headed and by then excellent historical knowledge about its unfolding trajectory particularly throughout the 20th century as the censored pieces of the jig saw were put together. The university art school turned into anti art ferment in response to this call to arms coming from the outside. Finally, sometime later during early 1969 persons unknown firebombed part of the art school at night and most of the Art History dept was gutted. It took some time for firefighters to put out the blaze. Although Newcastle university art school never experienced the sit-ins like Guildford or Hornsey College of Art in London, it did partake of the most radical critiques-in-action. In short, why occupy a place making mealy-mouthed reformist demands about different course content or inter-disciplinary studies – which always produces some variant of the same old crap – when you can burn the place down? Though nobody was ever arrested for this exemplary act, we were basically accused as being the instigators. To this of course we still proudly plead guilty! A greater decision was made for us because of this action. There was now little hope of crawling back into safety shot jobs on the fringes of the art scene (i.e. art academia) or "independent scholar" if you like. But it went further than that. The Special Branch had names and blacklists heavily functioned. It wasn't just employment of a professional nature. One of us was even denied employment cleaning out blast furnaces at a steel mill in Rowley Regis in the west Midlands Black Country, the manager seconded for hiring new hands saying he'd received a report listing trouble making at the London School of Economics! It was no more than what many experienced at the time as both the blacklists and the official denial of their existence mushroomed. As the years went by, you could have groveled to the powers that be and asked for forgiveness - as many did – but think of the self-inflicted humiliation! In any case you'd never be really forgiven so why give them the pleasure of capitulation? We have only to recount the case on a more spectacular level of the Hornsey College of Art agitator Kim Howells, himself influenced by King Mob, who cravenly some years later crawled up the Labour Party hierarchy became a Welsh MP and an ardent adherent of Blairism and free market ideologies yet got nowhere as his past continued to haunt him through periodic tabloid exposure. In his present position as Minister of Culture Howells plays on his provocative past though by now his critique has lost all semblance of coherence and comes across like some cantankerous fuddy duddy.

If we'd had any hesitancy as to where we were headed, there's nothing like the political police to finally focus negative theory clearly for you. As the radical German play write, George Buchner said in the 1840s; "The Darmstadt police were my muses"! Any immediate hope of making any kind of living in the cultural/educational field had been sealed off in any immediate sense - a survival venue you had messed around with, now and again, on a desultory few hours a week basis. Rarely though are things ever fixed immutably like that. Finally though it was nothing to bleat about as you really didn't want their fuck-crazy,

mind-abusing jobs compromising clear thought in any case. Sure you could have groveled but unless you were prepared to eat shit denying everything you'd experienced and the truths ringing in your ears, then yes, baby, you were on the outside. If you'd done what was demanded, asked for forgiveness, ameliorated your words, scrambled your brain, then the world of lies and secure monetary compensation lay at your feet. There's always a choice to be made. Perhaps there was too much pride, perhaps past insults had been too much but there was finally something irreducible inside which said: NO.

What happened in Newcastle though sent shock waves throughout the city but like everywhere else where a revolutionary theory was posited, recuperation was its closest admirer. Two architectural students showed quite an interest only to use a few ill-digested ideas to update the crises in architecture as they cynically shaped a new architectural style producing the ghastly formal plagiarisms of post modernism. To be sure we'd applauded plagiarism but not in the sense of aesthetic additions and the updating of the role of architect! Nick Grimshaw and Terry Farrell were their names. There's no need here to say more about these couple of twerps. Sufficient to point out that Farrell two decades later designed the monstrous new M15 secret service building in Vauxhall, London and Grimshaw designed the Eurostar terminal at Waterloo station. The mini plethora of cartoon hand outs in Newcastle with new bubble-speak lines and captions also became a marketing idea for a new cartoon comic in the shape of VIS with its now well known notorious characters and launching very lucrative careers for its illustrators and producers.

Again what is most interesting is something that's really unknown. Some aspects of the Situationist critique particularly its provocative intervention captured the imaginative of young workers, particularly apprentices in the Tyneside shipyards. In the early 70s, wildcat strikes mushroomed on the Tyne and the situation became barely controllable both for the bosses and union officials alike. Caught up with the notion of a "Strasbourg of the factories" then current at the time some rather more clued-in individuals decided to concentrate on the waterfront but whether this had any effect or not isn't clear as what their activities were remain obscure. (What this refers to is the famous anti-student scandal at Strasbourg in 1966 which had such a massive impact in May '68 in France. In essence it was hoped there could be an even more profound follow-up with some kind of radical intervention in a big factory which would act as a beacon for others to follow) Nonetheless and whatever leaflets written by Tyneside apprentices it seems, appeared in wildcat strikes. They were about clobbering foremen, ignoring local union officials, and extolled wrecking machinery suggesting turning your lathe bench into a comfortable bed complete with extra tips on how to permanently dodge work while still getting paid etc. Finally it resulted in Jimmy Murray, area boss of the Boilermakers or Transport union, exploding on local TyneTees television condemning "irresponsible Situationist (sic) leaflets" and waving a selection of them at the cameras whilst reading out choice phrases. Shock horror! In a way though, the Tyneside engineers had a long tradition of libertarian subversion. Jack Common had come from their ranks and his account of *The Right to Get Drunk Strike* in about 1912 was in a similar vein. Common was a member of the Independent Labour Party - one of the best of the old organisations - and, which had quite a presence in County Durham around that time and among its members were many free-thinking libertarian workers who we remember with great affection from our childhood there. Initially Common had come from an engineering family background on the Tyne and was employed as a clerk. He was made redundant and experienced the harsh realities of the means tested dole in 1930s Newcastle. He then went south and ever after took more menial employment like unskilled assembly line work or caretaker jobs partially because he even felt some shame about whitecollar work he'd previously relied on for survival. Surprisingly, he even refused to become an engineering worker like his father.

In a way though revolt was returning to its roots. Had not Jack Common suggested in those excellent scraps of broad theoretical comment before he succumbed to the role of novelist that the best thing to do in a cinema was to go behind the curtains and look at the audience? Whilst not quite possessing the cutting edge of Vache's revolver pointed at the actors, it's not bad all the same. You cannot help but speculate that there was a subterranean continuity between notions like *The Grand National Holiday* (as that early form of the General Strike was once called on Tyneside), Jack Common and the events of the very early 70s in the shipyards. It wasn't only the engineering apprentices but young miners from the west Durham coalfield who began to turn up at the broad, informal Solidarity/Situationist axis in Newcastle no doubt attracted by the local publicity some of the interventions inevitably acquired and you wonder just what was this relationship between this and the thoughtful early writings of Dave Douglass, who was later, unfortunately to become such a wooden anarcho-syndicalist and TV hogging demagogue? The concrete backdrop to this

were the first shop floor led wildcat strikes beginning to break out in the nearby coalfield. Whatever. It was a fruitful pot pourri of good old time and modern influences that was also marked by a heavy class bitterness. Miners would turn up in Newcastle on a Saturday night hoping to bed some radical middle class young women and not averse to employing a bit of simplistic class demagoguery in order to achieve their ends.

The bug of the social apartheid still dogs Common in relation to George Orwell just like it does that other forgotten, brilliant engineer, Alfred Russell Wallace, the co-founder with Charles Darwin of natural selection. Although we critically commented upon Orwell in the late 60s, the fact is, even those of us who'd hailed from Newcastle hadn't even heard of Jack Common. Colin Hutchinson, a guy around the Newcastle agitation was the first to put together a well-produced booklet called *Revolt in an Age of Plenty* that was a selection of Common's critical writings. Sure we'd made some acid comments about Orwell especially his dumb take on Surrealism though liking many of his essays and thoroughly respecting the excellent *Homage to Catalunya* though noting his insistence on being termed a writer and his lack of comprehension regarding the decline of artistic form. As Don N Smith acutely said at the time it was just as well Orwell died when he did as his inadequacies would have meant he'd probably have ended up becoming a pathetic TV hack like Malcolm Muggeridge. If we'd known about Common at the time it would have been quite a revelation as his attempt to grasp the essence of rising modernity was far in advance of Orwell's and you can sense in some of his often convoluted expression, that he's trying to get into shape a theory which was nigh on Situationist. Be that as it may, in passing we note their dissimilar deaths. Orwell died in a University College Hospital bed surrounded by so-called literary lions like Stephen Spender, Muggeridge, Anthony Powell and BBC journalists, Common died as a labourer on a building site in Newport Pagnell, Bucks.

Jack Common was a different kettle of fish as he defied categorisation and couldn't be fitted into some neat specialist place on the bookshelves. He wasn't a Surrealist nor was he a Social Realist, though both left some kind of mark upon him. If he had been a Social Realist he would have been much more acceptable to the polyglot mix of the Establishment here particularly as social realism is acceptable to British leftist conservatism. Social realism was there well before the "Angry Young Men" writers which the early Situationists derided in the mid 50s precisely because they were writers and historically ignorant of the revolt against literary form (and which Jack Common had been more than vaguely aware of). Although social realism in the thirties had produced some haunting moments in the films say of Humphrey Jennings etc, as an increasingly denuded style, it was to remain a constant thereafter and to be much embraced by the new medium of television. In no way though did it disturb all those many time-honoured faceted and funded cultural roles beloved of the hierarchy here. Moreover, it was to serve as educator to all those aspiring cadres with high hopes of position in the new frontier posts of the State, whether as councillors, stress managers, social workers or even newly-fashioned crafty Leninists with their aspirations of leading the working classes. Social realism buttressed the emerging palliative concept of a basically PC community politics which nonetheless originally had its origins in the pacification programmes of the old British Colonial Office. In Newcastle, it found an expression in "Z Films", a hip local outfit and previously mentioned, led by a cineaste creep called Murray Martin whose later claim to fame was a film based on the Meadow Well estate, which exploded in the early 1990s. He tried to capitalise on the riot in order to further his career nationally though nothing really came of it. Moreover, the underlying slant of all these films - itself also indicative of social realism - are within a leftist social democratic framework with the State as enlightened facilitator. The State, the State, always the State!

In a sense Jack Common was the epitome and most clearly articulated expression of an open-minded probing which was not un-common on Tyneside and parts of Co Durham. This subversive tendency lurked behind a quite pervasive official cultural yearning it was plainly at odds with. Although it could be said Newcastle Upon Tyne was an out of the way place the city nonetheless strived to achieve a major cultural image. City boss, T. Dan Smith in the 1960s banally wanted the city to be: "A Florence of the north". To even think you could build a "Florence" just like that and set aside from its essential historical time and place was a priceless piece of philistine and bureaucratic absurdity, though with the demise of that nonsense Newcastle was to achieve a massive post-modernist impact by ironically ditching its grandiose Renaissance project by recuperating that life-enhancing experiment and more than embryonic subversion and turning it into its opposite. The city drew its sting forcing most of the instigators into exile proceeding to pave the way for a bankrupt modernity by massively promoting 'end of culture' culture in the forms of gigantic displays from the sculptor Antony Gormley's moronic "Angel of the North" to the new waterfront Baltic Exchange

Flour Mill, the veritable temple of Saatchi & Saatchi vacuity.

## THE FAILURE

THINGS FALL APART. The Angry Brigade and “the violent reformists of the bomb”. The emerging malaise of issue politics. Putrid academic recuperation – The Sociology of Deviancy and others. Love, breakdown and schizophrenia. The new limbo. Lamenting the lack of radical tradition in these islands! The Irish end-of-culture experience. Thoughts on severe role crises. Down with careerism! Critical look back on the British shop steward movement. Re-birth of the old ultra-left –its value and limitations.

By late 1969, all kind of balance began to dissolve quickly. The earlier glorious, well-intentioned though naive enthusiasm had slipped away and a certain weariness was setting in fostering an initially reluctant cynicism about intentions. Suspicion about motives was clearly gaining impetus. It was fertile ground on the one hand for extreme voluntarism and careerism on the other and there was often some overlap between the two.

It's been said before that the Angry Brigade was a realisation of King Mob. Well, partially this is true although big differences must be mentioned purely for the sake of accuracy. The terrorism of the word (or the terrifying address King Mob sometimes excelled at) was followed by one of the deed. Angry Brigade communiques testify to these links, e.g. the “Dear Boss” letter, the using of the name of Geronimo (from the Motherfuckers) and more general references to the Spectacle and the attack on the fashion industry (like in the poetically sensitive communique accompanying the bombing of Biba's boutique) etc. All this set the Angry Brigade well aside from the cruder anti-imperialist leftist terrorist groups throughout Europe and America at the time. Undoubtedly, the Angry Brigade was the most advanced and had the best critique of all. Leftism was pushed well to the side though it hovered over some of their milieu and began to make even more headway as the times became more dire. Moreover, as we've mentioned elsewhere, the Angry Brigade wasn't infiltrated by the State as was the case with most other outfits, most spectacularly within the ranks of the Red Brigades in Italy and even more alarmingly, some of those exemplary autonomous commando groups which appeared in Spain in the late 70s whose plight in Spanish prisons we helped publicise in the earlier 80s (the Segovia prisoners appeal was put out in poster form in collaboration with BM Piranha). At the time of the Angry Brigade though, most military motivated terrorism was specifically and quite rigidly Leninist inspired, anti-Imperialistic (though only as regards the United States) and its only drift, apart from the exquisite knee-capping etc of particularly vicious foremen etc in Italian factories tended towards a kind of schizoid despair-cum-pathological disposition. For instance, the Japanese assassins at Lydda airport in 1972 aimlessly killed anybody like some ultimate Surrealist act or like those individuals who shot people at random – like the guy in the university of Texas in 1966 – which Heatwave had mentioned without specific comment other than to say this is what modern alienation in extremis can do to you. Yet the diary of one of the Japanese terrorists reads sensitively like in some paranoid disassociation: “DDT has poisoned the world” and “I love a cherry tree”. We must say that quite categorically none of this disassociation was in the Angry Brigade. They were sane very human principled people.

Though there were similarities with King Mob what were the differences? The Angry Brigade milieu was also somewhat into the ideology of “serving the people” though not quite with the emphasis the Maoist spontaenists and the other straighter though disintegrating Leninist groupuscules would have put on it. In that sense they did have some kind of distant identity with the energetic Italian movement of the time which John Barker explained more clearly in magazine Transgressions published by some lecturers from the Geography Dept of Newcastle University. Groups like Potere Operio, and we guess Autonomia Operaria must come to mind. These groups were at the time richly critiqued by the Italian Situationists, Ludd and Ceasarano etc but most likely the Angry Brigade milieu were unaware of this. Thus some of the AB cadre did work through the Notting Hill People's Association that King Mob had thoroughly disrupted only a couple of years earlier (see the later note on John Grevelle). Elsewhere, they began to orientate themselves around the arena of an emerging community politics which though it was all fresh-faced and looked really clued-in was basically no more than an updated face lift of the old forms. They got involved in those well-meaning, social democratic campaigns like winter heating for the elderly, schemes to set-up Adventure Playgrounds plus more modern concerns like shelters for the victims of domestic violence. Fair enough but they did throw these concerns at you as though they were subversive. They weren't funny or relaxed and there was no chance some subversive drift might derail their missionary character. They immediately and

uncritically took feminism on board, most clearly exemplified in the bomb against the Miss World TV spectacular. Social workers were tolerated but only in their new guise as revolutionary social workers and then replete with a new title were more than welcomed. Case Con, "The journal of the revolutionary social worker" was such an example and to some degree, was informally regarded as part of a hoped for extending Angry Brigade network – it's base as it were. Some of them also went in for day to day participation in the emergent Claimants Unions which had sprung up. However, it must be said only the more unusual CUs particularly the Notting Hill one which hardly surprisingly, considering the recent King Mob activity, contained a strong "never work" profile which at times resulted in aggressive attacks on dole workers administering government rules behind the office counter. Although this had its merits at times as there were enough dole workers who sadistically enjoyed their petty powers, there were equally enough nervous and shy claimants who just wanted to know their simple rights who often scurried away frightened by the posturing of the Claimants Union. All this helping the people activism was pretty chaotic though and there was enough of it that was part and parcel of a hoped for sensitised and renewed State (the beginnings of political correctness etc). Certainly it was less anti the State than King Mob had been. Inevitably, as previously mentioned, this meant some kind of leftist drift aided by a more general drift as unofficial action by the fully employed workers was rapidly unfolding taking to the streets against Barbara Castle's (Minister of Labour in PM Wilson's Lab government) proposed In Place of Strife legislation against wildcat strikes. Around the time of their inception, some core Angry Brigade participants attended (and probably financially helped out) the launching of the radical newspaper, Big Flame, in Liverpool in 1971. Big Flame in many respects was somewhat similar to the disintegrating Leninism of Lotta Continua in Italy and was a pot pourri of all sorts of things. It was better than the usual leftist effort but nonetheless still hanging on, initially by its finger tips, to leftism. Thus, it was able to dig up very interesting facts here and there as, for a while at least, many of its adherents threw over the allotted career roles and, as it were, joined the workers for a couple of years or so. Most didn't stick at it. Some of these facts though, particularly as put together in its more theoretical Red Notes journal, did however prove to be useful when put within a clearer more autonomous perspective.

Once their activities did really start to take place some ex-King Mob individuals called the Angry Brigade, "violent reformists of the bomb" which was OK as far as it goes but such a description failed to pinpoint essential nuances. The individuals who made up its centre had been university students mostly studying in and around liberal arts/social studies courses. Included elsewhere on this web is a pretty intelligent text by John Barker published in the Birmingham Radical Arts magazine just prior to forming The Angry Brigade. Though falling short of the lapidary edge of say the, The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution – that good text written at the moment of the demise of the English section of the SI - it did contain some razor sharp lines about culture, particularly pop culture. Apropos of The Who in a text called Art + Politics = Revolution, Barker memorably said: "we contemplate other people destroying the environment we want to destroy". In many ways it was a quite remarkable acute piece of writing pinpointing all the cultural foibles modern capitalism throws at us plus making an essential connection with the present day vacuity of Eng Lit. Though originally written as a series of footnotes to "A Critique of the Study of English Literature" published in an obscure magazine called Red Texts No 2, it was weak in other ways especially in its justification of street theatre, tepid though the justification was. Nonetheless, this anti-art stance did figure in the turn to incendiary acts. A disillusioned and freaked out Chris Gray by 1972 was calling The Angry Brigade, "the last bourgeois artists". Whilst this coinage wasn't accurate enough and sounds too disparaging – which wasn't intended - as two years later he was to praise them for their sincerity even though of the opinion they'd gone "straight up the wall", it did point to an historical dilemma that hasn't ever been considered. Art had reached an unbelievable nadir with no place within its orbit whereby any real creativity could unfold and, at the same moment, the proletariat still didn't possess the steely impulse and vision to creatively transform the world and everyday life. Between this rock and a hard place the Angry Brigade erupted.

To be accurate the Angry Brigade weren't really terrorists at all – in the horrific sense the term has come to mean - but in reality violent saboteurs employing, if you like, whiffs of gun smoke. Remember nobody was killed or even physically hurt by their actions. One of the AB protagonists, Hilary Ann Creek, distancing herself from all that horrific terrorism that nation states world wide use as a final *raison d'être* for their survival, was undoubtedly right when she said 30 years later: "Nobody picked up that it wasn't the bombs themselves that they were worried about. It was the fact that it exposed the vulnerability of the system... How could someone go and do in the back door of a minister? It wasn't so much the criminal



damage, it was the fact that it made them look stupid.”

Did the Angry Brigade have an effect elsewhere? Although it's difficult to say it's highly likely, as surely their example also lay indistinctly behind a massive wave of small bombings that took place throughout England, Wales and Scotland (leaving N. Ireland aside) in 1971. According to a report in The Guardian newspaper around Dec 3rd 1972, there were something like 14,000 to 16,000 of what were defined as “explosive devices and not incendiary devices like molotov cocktails”. It seems it exceeded in quantity anything England had previously known including the Fenian campaign of the 1870s and '80s. What's amazing though is that none of this massive though dispersed assault of the bomb ever really penetrated the national press (although seeing it's England it's hardly surprising it was given, as it were, the Royal blank). Most likely though mention was made in local newspapers and probably those who carried out such acts got some high from the effect rubbing off on the local media.

On the other hand careerism began to reappear and as mentioned there was even some tenuous overlap between this and avante garde terrorism. A recuperation (via a supposed “explanation”) of criminality as part of a revolutionary becoming became the stock in trade of a new wave of college lecturers supposedly with a lot of bright ideas, who were fashionably daring for a brief moment. Well “daring” at any rate within the constraints of academia. The most prominent were grouped around the Sociology of Deviancy who wrote accounts about petty criminality (shoplifting and the like) forms of industrial sabotage, accounts of the activities of the Weathermen in America etc. Elsewhere in this book they are mentioned here and there in relation to some obnoxious particulars like their cultivation and trashing - at one and the same time- of certain individuals around King Mob who unwittingly helped set them on the career ladder. For brevity's sake and giving some kind of idea about their disposition we'll mention here something about a book one of this dismal crew wrote.

Prof Stan Cohen's book Psychological Survival is a sociological survey of prisoners' attitudes to the top security “E” Wing of Durham jail that housed some of the most “dangerous” inmates in the country. He forsakes criminologists like Becker and Matya and instead purloins revolutionary material particularly Victor Serge's Men in Prison which is based broadly on the time he was banged up because of his association with the anarchist Bonnot gang prior to the First World War. It is a powerful and moving account and full of life despite an often antiquated literary flourish. It's obviously so much better than the lifeless writings of professional criminologists. Cohen's great contribution was to recognise this simple fact! (The sheer daring of the man!) And as for content, Cohen (surprise, surprise) like any run-of-the-mill, knee-bending academic sociologist doesn't stray too far in his views on prison reform. Come the crunch he backs off. Serge in his descriptions of the architecture of modern prisons (even in 1914 !) is far more contemporary ending on a sublime, prophetic and utterly partisan note: “Modern prisons are imperfectable, since they are perfect. There is nothing left but to destroy them.”

This was too much for our aspiring Prof to fully endorse and like any academic slime ball merely hints at an endorsement of such comments as, after all, he didn't want to jeopardise his future career. Interestingly, a few years later, John Barker wrote a book on prisons obviously based on his experiences of prison from the sharp end. To this day the book remains unpublished though one or two chapters have been printed here and there in relatively obscure publications. Again that is so typical of an England which always prefers the shadow to the substance. Cohen is acclaimed for writing on such a subject whilst Barker is silenced. When writing Psychological Survival, Cohen taught at Durham University and knew something about the Newcastle agitation. The attempted wrecking of the Durham Surrealist festival left a mark on him and in response, our Stan read Situationist material and included it in his miserable sociological survey and most likely occasionally lectured to some of the “E” wing inmates about their activities especially May '68 in France, though prudently he kept such facts out of his publications. In Psychological Survival he recounts how the prisoners enjoyed reading about Dada and Surrealism. For the future though, his greatest success story was the transformation of John McVicar, one of the great train robbers, into becoming a leading criminologist himself and now an on/off Blairite. If this is the outcome of education for prisoners you can keep it.

The aftermath of the late 60s was like some gigantic cave-in when venturing through a cavern where all passages and avenues to the open air had been blocked. We were left stumbling in the dark, without oxygen really confused and not knowing which way to turn or how to get out. For some and may it be said some of

the best, suicide was the choice. There were many – once three friends topped themselves in one week – an act so often finally precipitated by the end of some desperate love affair which had gone bitterly wrong. It was the last straw. Victor Schklovsky's *Zoo: Letters Not About Love* and Mayakovsky's poem *About This* was read as a means of consolation and it seemed only too prescient and compelling, though in no way were you an exile from a failed revolution in another country (Russia) living in a Berlin-type situation of the 1920s. It felt like it though. Both guys though had been spurned by the bourgeois sister of his choice producing in desperation printed memories of the death of love within themselves. This time though there could be no exile or escape and no Berlin to rush too as it was the same bitter defeat and more or less on a worldwide scale. We note here two suicides among many: Alain Abelard around Ron Hunt in Newcastle and Spooks, the ex-scientist on the far fringes of the King Mob milieu. Were these suicides wrong? Not really. Finally you come up with the same general reflection and sad ratification as that which troubled the aging Goethe on the suicidal young man in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* he'd written about in his youth whereby "Lotte, a bourgeois woman instinctively holds onto her marriage with a capable and respectable man and draws back in alarm from her own feelings" (George Lukacs). Werther through, "thwarted happiness, hampered activity, ungratified desires" (*Conversations with Eckermann*) commits suicide because he can be satisfied with nothing less than everything. However, now, for our time, the erotic composition was greater because it also involved the destruction of the "oceanic feelings" (Freud) that could transform the world – a transformation that could have stopped the world flinging itself headlong into a suicidal trajectory. But what to do about the increasing sense of pain you felt inside yourself? For some it was drugs and relief in heroin or mandrax, for others booze or an incessantly mindless fucking devoid of feelings. It's this kind of grim reality and context which Chris Grey's call for mass therapy at the time must be placed (see appendix). The real truth of the matter though was much more unpalatable. There was no way that personal agony could be abolished short of another revolutionary upheaval more profound than the one you'd been through. In which case why hang around nursing that grim pain for decades? "All length is torture now the torch is out" as Shakespeare's Mark Anthony had howled on hearing of Cleopatra's death. It's still a moot point. In a sense one was historically traumatised by having a glimpse of an almost palpable freedom of the good life and tantalisingly near enough to be virtually touched.

At this point and in such confusion and pain it was difficult to put any thing together apart from some passable pastiche mouthing eternal verities which superficially could look very smart providing the right phrases and words were used: spectacle, play, individual autonomy etc when, as someone said at the time; "surely it would be more appropriate to talk about automated individuality"! Certainly that was beginning to feel more applicable. A little later, in 1974, Howard Fraser very accurately said: "the revolution is dead meanwhile write good prose" which was also a kind of quip against the belle-lettrisme of Vaneigem. Both quotes however, sum up the sense of jaded passions, sheer hesitancy, questioning and self-questioning which was setting in. Indeed self-questioning was to prepare the way for the ubiquitous therapy industry which was gradually taking off. And there was a grim laugh on noticing a more precise wall slogan reflecting this essentially new anguish: "Is suicide the highest form of self criticism?"

All such glimpses merely reflected the ghastly pain inside. Thoughts and feeling, intellect and soul, mind and heart did not correspond with each other. Truly it was like Hegel's "spirit in absolute dismemberment". All equilibrium had vanished and everything inside was locking into ugly combat. Having no money there was worry upon worry about a simple financial situation rapidly moving towards hyper-inflation. It seemed suddenly cynically rich to talk about the hunt being "on for the last proletarian" as Vaneigem had naively put it. At the same time there was a desperate desire for some kind of revolutionary love full of compassion and understanding simply to provide a little shelter from a howling storm you felt was turning into a hurricane. A state of frenetic chaos existed inside yourself and quite frequently it was as though knowledge disappeared from the mind with that cursed adrenalin ceaselessly pumping up and down inside the veins and arteries making all sustained concentration impossible. You could write – only very occasionally may it be said – in a way which had lost all sense of literary merit although in retrospect maybe that was to the good!

In the early 1970s, it seemed there were more than a few genuine revolutionaries dismayed by the renewed onslaught from all sides and dealing with a capsized utopianism, experienced as profound crack-up, wrote many a page of what Howard Frazer was to call "schizophrenic drivel". In a way though some of this "drivel" – though mostly unreadable – was perhaps (maybe a big perhaps) trying to reach a greater depth than a pre-schizoid (too strong a word?) "revolutionary" sanity – if you like? Modern history has taught us it can be a prelude to a different even better take on things and one must never forget (again?)

Antonin Artaud's example. His notes and mostly ravings from the lunatic asylum at Rodez are, apart from one or two sentences, mostly unreadable. But can we clearly separate these incomprehensible ravings from the profundity of his writings a few years later like his texts on Van Gogh and Coleridge? In one sense "schizophrenic drivel" was also an attempt to get beyond that everyday language we use and deploy trying desperately to encompass ever more nuances even though in that state of "absolute dismemberment" which the first King Mob had emphasised.. But the trouble is because it's a language which has lost all sense of an everyday and recognisable connection to others it hasn't arrived yet upon The Other Shore as it were and thus impossible to understand. In a way it was another response to a language taking on "a revolutionary air" in early King Mob to be followed through by an avant garde quasi-terrorist, "language of the deed". In a sense all these responses were passages to a something else never arrived at or rudely cut off. "The language of the whole man will be a whole language: perhaps the end of the old language of words" as Vaneigem was perceptively put it. Perhaps all we experimentally wrote in this vein did point to the supercession of the written word, maybe of that repression evident within its form which Henri Lefebvre had noted in one of his long discourses? As we've mentioned previously, we wanted to get away from writing especially the role of writer as a little later we wanted to get away from the role of revolutionary particularly now that the bonehead militant of everyday life seemed to be everywhere. Maybe this created the broken omelette of "schizophrenic drivel"? And then Nietzsche's Zarathustra spoke; he did not write. Over 100 years later, Patrick Cheval who painted up so many perceptive wall slogans – not only in Paris, May 68 but long afterwards – right up to his death by drink in the 1990s and who sparingly put down little which was traditionally durable in written form memorably said: "books burn, words remain".

Things seemed to ossify very quickly as new roles reappeared in the most unexpected quarters. That spring-like exuberant, infectious spontaneity which really did communicate congealed into the militant of daily life whereby a kind of milieu oriented, closed-off super-activism ensued which was basically puritanical in relation to the increasing disintegration at the heart of everyday life. Thus, Jim Greenfield (later of The Angry Brigade) could rant on about nobody should be in bed at 10 in the morning when there was so much to do. It became so much empty posturing like when Jim turned on a young woman with sweeping brush in hand cleaning the floor of a squatted building: "What are you doing sweeping up – are you a fucking housewife or something". Others quickly made their disenchanted comments directed against this unforeseen expansion of the traditional militant politico's role into something far more off-putting. The American militant, Yippie type paper Rising Up Angry with its Maoist inclined spontaneism with a bitter laugh became Rising Up Shattered. In retrospect there's no point in being too harsh on these extremes of daily life critique. We were all into these comments at one time or another - including ourselves. In some ways it marked the urgent apocalypse of the age and what was to replace these off-the-cuff remarks was to be far, far worse in bland and usually underhand, viciousness. And need it be said, Jim Greenfield was throughout the years to be one of the nicest guys one could wish to meet talking eloquently about the steel mills and endless walks in the Pennines. It's also true most of the individuals around the Angry Brigade have throughout the lengthening years remained put in reasonably low profile survival scenes in contrast to some of the high-ups of the King Mob elite.

Once the revolution didn't immediately materialise within two or so years, the whole impetus became clothed in a wish-fulfillment which increasingly had little basis in reality. Everybody was susceptible even willing themselves to have thrown off more past conditioning than they had or were even capable of throwing off given the vague outline of dark skies on the horizon. Increasingly a posture was adopted – a pretense of having cast off career, family, marriage, money-grubbing etc when what was being felt inside was a lot more complicated and contradictory. It became a truth that dared not speak its name. The more the situation began developing a desperate edge, the more an abstract "revolutionary" wish fulfillment – well at least for 2 or 3 years - took over. It became a mask enforced through a "liberated" personal charisma projected by a certain caste of self-appointed revolutionary leaders whom appeared free. Many of these often super-star inclined, self-appointed leaders were so full of themselves they couldn't see – nor even wanted to see – the look of sheer misery on somebody's face who'd slunk off from the crowd, gripped with a sense of a new loneliness and a renewed death wish fast disappearing under the slime of slogans and posturings. It was part and parcel of the militant of everyday life syndrome and was so completely out of synch with most people's gutted everyday life alienation was merely reinforced. Simply put it meant lying was returning aided and abetted by a complete lack of transparency (remarkably enough in an atmosphere where transparency was encouraged but with the rider, provided it was a right-on transparency). Skeletons in the cupboards were again entering our hoped-for new world! The postscript of Ten Days Which Shook

The University emphasised the destructive damage of the lie and The Great Communications Breakdown from the Bash Street Kids in Newcastle (see appendix) had more subtly gone into the essential differences between lying to the State and among yourselves. What this amounted to was that open talk – without moralist censure – was of the utmost importance. Once this essential was lost defeat was looming large.

In one sense, Hunter S Thompson's novel of the time, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas was succinct about this come-down and full of a truth about all these, worse than ever, nervous, psychotic states you were experiencing and which, with maybe a little less intensity here and there, were set to continue and continue. Certainly the book emphasised lying. With the disappearance/eclipse of the hoped for new sense of community, the only way out was lying (of course the book on purpose grotesquely over-emphasised this in order to bring out the point). The more self-preservation became uppermost, the bigger and bigger became the lie as you began to con your way through life. Transparency between each other was to become about as transparent as the ugly glass façade of a post modern building together with the rank misery of permanent psychosomatic pain manifested as a pain in the throat that just wouldn't go away.

Looking back, even within the desperation, it certainly would have been worthwhile to have collected together some of these scattered thoughts and insights and put them together and a fair number of individuals did scribble their reflections down and to judge by the conversations, some seemed pretty good. On a more general level, there were tentative moves to explain more fully the failure of any on-going coherent radicalism to take hold in these islands since the collapse of romanticism. The outlines of a text took shape linking the inadequacies of the workers' movement here in comparison to Germany, Italy or France which however, in retrospect was rather wooden and councilist (noting, for example, that the only two significant workers councils to have taken place were in the armed services and in the context of Empire – in Alexandria and somewhere else). Well, it was meant to be provocative! On the other hand, placed side by side with the paucity of radical cultural breakthroughs it did attempt something. Only the single figure of Lewis Carroll received fulsome praise and the more general movements like Vorticism and Blast and English surrealism were marked by their insipidness. And apropos of the time, the failure of any real Dada movement was emphasised, noting that those who could have made a difference like that superb, insulting anti-artist Arthur Craven found more sympathetic streets in Paris to express their anger.

It could be said that King Mob had created an opening out of nothing in these islands. Aggressive tactics had split something asunder as basically we were absolute beginners without any immediate reference points to hand. It's like as though we were forced into the quasi-terrorist address against a back drop of quite terrifying incomprehension. Hardly surprising therefore that it was followed by direct action terrorism in the form of The Angry Brigade even though both were heading clean up the wall. By 1972, we realised we had nothing to fall back onto. Nobody would possibly publish anything we'd done or would even propose to do so. After all translations of radical French books quite acceptable in their own country were turned down by everybody including trendy publishers like Paladin who were quite prepared to publish shits like Jock Young of the Sociology of Deviancy and Richard Neville's Play Power. By then we also realised we had no Gallimard or De Bonato, no Buchet-Chastel or Feltrinelli. The Situationists had after all access to publishing firms the Surrealists had used years previously. We had nothing to fall back upon and now really knew it! Cape Editions and New Left Books merely proved the point. Howard Frazer rightly said at the time: "We'll need a revolution in England before we can disseminate revolutionary theory". Moreover, there was nobody around - most likely much older - on our doorstep we could look to for some kind of bearing or example we could maybe improve upon - maybe a few more clear headed anti-artists or revolutionary theorists - with at least some take on the totality. As we've said elsewhere here, though it's worth emphasizing again, we didn't even have an academic we could remotely consider intelligent in the sense of a Bataille or Lefebvre. There wasn't even a Noam Chomsky or a Marcuse like in the US. Sure there were social historians like EP Thompson and Christopher Hill who were empirically very absorbing and we read them avidly but that didn't help in terms of establishing something more rounded giving us some toe hold on this intolerable society on a day to day level. If anything, in turn, Christopher Hill was to be influenced by ours (and others) "mad" antics regarding further fascinating researches on those wildly imaginative movements like the Ranters unleashed in the English revolution of the 1640s in books like The World Turned Upside Down. Autonomous academic social historians like Cleaver and Linebaugh had of course yet to appear and then, as in Linebaugh's case, he was of course an ex-student of Thompson's. In any case by the time they did appear, no thought of a more generalised merit was issuing from any university in the world. The totalising intellectual was indeed finished and post-modernist

posturings made that all too clear. If anything the cretinism we encountered in our youth had intensified over the years the more subversive memory was eliminated. Journalists here - surely the most cretinised in the advanced world - aren't even capable of making the slightest informed connection. They profess themselves bamboozled by slogans like "Desire Armed" on the walls of Seattle during the WTO riots of 1999. Sometime before, commenting upon the jailing of Florence Rey and Audrey Maupin in Paris - the two revolutionaries jailed for shooting a cop - British journalists could only call upon, in tones of shock horror, the tendential influence of the psycho-film, *Natural Born Killers* unable to comment upon on the manifesto Maupin and Rey had written which in places was a straight lift from Vaneigem's passionism linking-up with the creation of workers councils.

The simple fact was that the tiny postscript to the *Ten Days That Shook The University* pamphlet was the most interesting and profound general commentary upon modern day England at the time hitting the nail on the head more precisely than any of the New Left Review Trotskyite fellow travelers like Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson were doing around the same time. As the latter were not experiencing defeat in the same devastating way they were able - well, for a short time at least - to continue with a kind of balanced analysis of the peculiarities of a commoditised English everyday life in an almost seamless update of past fixations especially an all pervasive emphasis on a neo-ruralism which had become a world of substitute nature, of "weekend landscapes far more synthetic than the most plastic products of Hollywood" and, apropos of figures like the MP, Enoch Powell, inhabiting, "this Disney-like English world where the Saxon ploughs his fields and the sun sets to strains of Vaughan Williams." However, these insights were short lived as Nairn was completely incapable of making more relevant points about the real situation unfolding in Britain the more he removed himself from basic everyday struggles falling into various nationalist perspectives and then embracing a modified free market perspective.

Perry Anderson, the other notable New Left Review ideologue expressed some of the on-going vacuum we'd grown up in in his notable *Components of the National Culture* which most of us thought was good if too starchy intellectual and limited in its analysis of how a "white émigré" culture fleeing from revolution in continental Europe settling here and occupying English intellectual life, whilst the "red emigration", the Frankfurt School, Neumann, Reich and Brecht finally ended up in the USA. To Anderson, these people "did not opt for England, because of a basic cultural and political incompatibility". Inevitably, we added our own rather more meaningful figures when individual figures like Andre Breton, Marcel Duchamp and Richard Huelsenbeck, escaping the Nazi occupation of mainland Europe again opted for America. We had of course well noted that neither Anderson or Nairn had the ability to understand the self-destruct of modern art, music, poetry and what have you and it was a massive and gaping hole in their critique which otherwise had good insights. We could respond to comments like Anderson's: "Throughout this desolate panorama the very notion of totality is banned.....The British Bourgeoisie had learnt to fear the meaning of "general ideas" during the French Revolution: after Burke, it never forgot the lessons". Although more than sympathetic to such comment, despite our youth we felt this concept of totality remained limited within an academic framework putting far too much emphasis on university learning. This though was the best most of them could accomplish and their cutting edge rapidly blunted.

Interestingly, within this context, the uniqueness of the Irish experience was finally raised perhaps a little too late but only to be passed over. This omission hasn't been rectified or fleshed-out since. For sure it's an experience which is very difficult to deal with in the way it needs to be dealt with in Ireland where an attack on the specifics of that distorted accumulation which now makes up the Irish cultural spectacle must surely be one of the starting points of any modern revolutionary critique there as it inevitably crosses the path of a now retarded nationalism. To be sure, in the beginning of the 20th century the rebellion within Irish culture in the Gaeltach and the flight to the western coasts of Kerry. Sligo and Connemara did produce movement and experimentation that had long been suffocated in England. More formally inventive than anything in England it was based simply on the recognition of that remarkable story-telling capacity of the extra-ordinary language of the Irish common folk. Nowadays all that once was authentic has become mere pastiche and the role of the Irish writer nothing more than a dollar mark up on a cultural stock exchange. Something of that had always perhaps been there in the 20th century from the moment perhaps the Anglo-American canonising of W B Yeats as the greatest poet of the 20th century was made just at the general moment of poetry's self-annihilation. We certainly emphasised the superb paradoxical provocations of Oscar Wilde (whilst criticizing him for conforming to the role of playwright) together with some of those formal experiments in the early decades of the 20th century that pointed to the transcendence of art. In

passing we point to Synge's, almost El Lissitzky like, factographs of the people of the Arran Islands which composed of photographs is written like some diary. Inevitably we couldn't help reflect on Bram Stoker and his journey in the other direction to the east coast of Yorkshire and Whitby where he encountered as well as invented the legend of Dracula, noting that the first person Dracula fanged was one of the new rail-link tourists to this fishing port of wild tales, legends and drink! Was this an early critique of consumer leisure? In a way we saw Bram Stoker's novel as a sexy necrophiliac metaphor about the death orgy of modern capitalism. Most of these insights were developed in conversations with Phil Meyler which themselves were, typically very drunken affairs. Inevitably James Joyce would crop up and his beautiful destruction of the novel as the point we must start from – particularly that fast and musical language which tended to fuse with the multi-leveled flow of "the craic" in drunken flight. Although it's often said that Joyce's final novel, *Finnegans Wake* is unreadable, it's recommended to read some passage if you've had more than a few. Just listen to the sense of musical drift: "All moanday, tearsday, wailsday, thumpsday, frightday, shatterday till the fear of the Law." After that the role of The Irish Writer gradually became a hideous abomination and pathetic imitation of a once glorious past. Examples constantly keep coming on promo-stream from Roddy Doyle, to Angela's Ashes to...(wait for next years writer commodity). The world of Irish poetry hasn't been bequeathed to Seamus Heaney but as Phil Meyler said so long ago, has slipped to the drunks in the back of the bar. At least it's a starting point. As Patrick Campbell rather cynically said somewhere "every generation in Ireland produces an army of poets," which in his choice of terms, reflects The Irish cultural equation with the nationalist volunteer on "K. O. Sempatrick's day and the fenian rising" as Joyce also reminded us!

The problem is the demolition and realisation of Irish culture – essentially its imaginative, multi-levelled association offering such pundreamed of possibilities has essentially been lost e.g where pornography can mean placing the girlfriend in the piano. Thus, ex-Pogues Sean MaGowan calls out: "Yeats? That old fairy", which is quite as bad as Julie Burchill's/Tony Parson's insults in the late 1970s about individual musicians being fat or old. Unpleasantness like this does not amount to critique.

Past revolutionary defeats never really investigated the experience of wipe out. Glimpses were there like the vicious racketeer mentioned by Ciliga in Stalin's gulag who'd been a Kronstadt mutineer, like Makhno's alcoholism in Paris or Fergus O'Connor's "madness" in Notting Hill after the defeat of the northern Chartists, etc. But you had no idea defeat would be so overwhelming. Perhaps if there been more recognition, more discussion even, of this dreadful feeling inside, perhaps if so many hadn't immediately cut their losses, thrown in the towel and headed upstairs in such unseemly haste, possibly, just possibly, a lot of that cruel edge could have been blunted. The darkening situation was made a lot worse by a sickening and now, long term, opportunism. The horrible ploys of some of the men are enumerated at greater length elsewhere here but it was almost as bad among a fair proportion of the women. How could so many women with a sure sense of what mattered end up as public school head mistress like Phillippa D'Eath? Cathy Pozzo Di Borgo becoming a high flying journalist hack when in the flush of youth she'd rightly despised journalists? Anne Ryder cutting free in a very nasty way, pouring endless calumny on former close friends in order to pursue a nice little mediocre niche in High Wycombe making sure that hypocritical respectability and money honey was what love was all about. It was even worse. For some, the cut off was so complete and rancorous that if it had been Latin America they would have embraced a Chilean Pinochet-style coup momentarily delighting in the spilt blood of former lovers, friends and associates. Make no mistake about it, the outcome of defeat was as cruelly vengeful even if the practice couldn't be as savage simply because it was Europe. Instead excessive calumny and abrupt cut off were the tools of wipe-out treating those who still wanted to continue with the subversive quest as lower than vermin. We weren't only air-brushed out of the picture but reduced to an abandoned anonymity to be placed in some new or updated privatised Gulag. Responses like these continue to this day. These little Pinochet's of personal relationships – men and women alike - did what they could to destroy all hope of that love "invented afresh." which Rimbaud long ago had yearned for. Certainly, Annie Le Brun, despite her too restricted notion - and perhaps fetishism - of love ( and thus reducing the scope of eros ) makes feminists from Germaine Greer to Sheila Rowbotham look idiotic. Why, like De Sade, is she never translated into English?

In many ways though this experience couldn't be compared to past defeats in the earlier years of the 20th century: there was something far more total about it mirroring the fact that something like a total revolution though far less bloody had been posited. Instead of shooting us they tried to force us into suicide. Where could we go? With the defeat of the social revolution between 1917/21, it was possible for those,

apres Dada, to gain a greater theoretical coming together of disparate tendencies of thought (Marx and Hegel, Fourier and Freud, Lautreamont and Duchamp, Kronstadt and Ciliga) which slowly but surely was to coalesce into something a lot more coherent, especially throughout the 50s and early 60s. After that mind-blowing experience of the late 60s, it was as if you couldn't make major breakthroughs in thought and experience, only make minor additions. What seemed to be needed was its application everywhere and that just wasn't happening." Because of that impasse/block, the choices seemed stark: either stepping back into a desperate careerism or surviving through some kind of hum drum work hoping for some break where you could again speak your mind. More and more though, you were seeing this "breakthrough" coming from the outside more than through anything much you could do yourself and lines like "the critique which goes beyond the spectacle must know how to wait" (Debord) came in handy in this quandary of neo-passivity. For those who refused the path of careerism, though far more salutary, usually didn't speak their mind or at least, nowhere near forcibly enough. Very pissed off they allowed the shit to rise to the top. In that sense we allowed it to happen as we really didn't give 'em hell. That cull of insurgents with hardly a shot fired was also to be a thirty year plus cull of the mind. Those "left behind" (just look at how reaction appropriated and inverted subversive description!) were "self-destructive ghosts" and "shadows". To be sure, many of these individuals had cracked up – and often in a not too pleasant a way – but then crack up is never a picnic for anybody concerned even though you generally come through it.

Defeat wasn't a pretty sight. To slightly alter Rimbaud: we smelt of burning that's for sure – and who wants to be near that smell? As Ron Hunt perceptively said: "From the avante garde of hope we've become the avante garde of misery." It was true. The trouble is there was no way you could escape it and for all those who ran for money and/or recuperation, they merely delayed – and in a pastel agonisingly way – that day when that pushing aside of misery would devastatingly catch up with them again. Always, everyone fears the on-set of that constantly beckoning nightmare – no matter how much it may be denied.

Engels' comment: "Drink is the quickest way out of Manchester" was scribbled on the wall in a local pub in Notting Hill. Two days later underneath somebody had scrawled: "Suicide is the quickest way out of Birmingham". If such slogans could be sprayed up in the mid 1970s think how much worse it is now? To return to a diary from those times in an entry from May 12th, 1973: "Drugs and alcohol have become sheer pain killers for an increasingly, unbearable reality. They're no longer that much different from sex. To be sure after the 1960s, a kind of free sexuality has continued but the game has altered. Here too, sex has also become a desperate and immediate pain killer and an explanation for the sport of a promiscuity and the huge amounts of money to be made from pornography. If not that, embedded in the id (?check) people don't fuck each other any longer, they fuck each others roles: the potential whore, the enlightened critic, the property speculator, the burly shop steward etc".

The immediate reaction; this running away, this forgetting, this even more hideous attempt at self-repression getting ever more dire was, in macrocosm, what was to unfold across the breadth of society in the decades to the point where all sense of history and historical memory was to become a virtual crime to be vanquished forever by power. The pain of course didn't go away even though an alienated society spent billions on eliminating those it regarded as the source of its pain. In such a pursuit money was no object. Slowly but surely an all conquering depression envelopes the whole of human kind –perhaps even some of sentient nature itself – itself, in the process of a capitalist mode of production in suicide formation. And what were we saying about self-destruction ?

It's been said, perhaps most tellingly by the Enclopaedie de Nuisances in 1984, in a text called The History Of The Last Ten Years that in the late 60s we knew how to destroy alright but we didn't know what to put in its place. Surely though, there wasn't sufficient of the right kind of subversive destruction carried out with enough clarity and sensitivity? After all, everything remained intact even after receiving a remarkable battering and in these islands, at the so-called height of the "destruction" in the late 60s there wasn't that much of a battering. Violence and physical destruction here was something that was to unfold in the 1970s and particularly the early 1980s, when virtually everywhere else throughout the world had lapsed into silence and unhappy acceptance – a fact which again points to the sheer idiosyncratic turbulence of this unpredictable place. As Hamlet had said centuries before: "I will to England where they are all mad too". To create that point where no turning back is possible just didn't happen. Instead other routes directed us back into a new and venomous dark age. What happened was more generally at first, a reform of the impossible rather than its destruction. It was a reform that fairly rapidly petered out as a hideous nightmare

society was reconstructed. Contesting hierarchy on all levels just wasn't strong enough among the combatants themselves where single issue campaigns, particularly anti-sexism, became a powerful antidote to the total critique of a hierarchy which really did strike at the fundamentals of capitalism. Only a tiny minority of men and women alike took on board the critique of the cadre – refusing and rightly dismissing – the roles of painter, sculptor, architect, writer, teacher, lecturer, musician, town planner, social worker, psychiatrist and especially (as it turned out to be) revolutionary, as well as the usual leftist targets such as vicar, cop, business person, lawyer etc. For those who didn't ineluctably arrive at such a point of no return, critique of role was conceived – nay provided – as therapeutic relief and as a means of altering the same role so as to carry on as before. The therapy necessarily had to increase and increase as the world got darker and darker.

For those who couldn't go back, for those who did burn their boats, role crises with the waning of the late 60s revolutionary was severe. We mean here roles in the socio-economic sense, those pertaining to your position within society as that's finally the crux of a role crisis. It's not be any means just some kind of abstract, vaguely intellectual decision involving calmly thought out choices. Your whole being revolts against the role. You feel sick inside – physically throwing up and sweating – if you try and carry on within its stifling scope. Finally, left with no choice you have to abandon the damn thing despite the fear of losing sanity, money and personal relationships. For most of us – for all those who were forced from within themselves to take such a path – and so often wishing they hadn't had to take it in the face like this it did mean you were sunk. It implied severe proletarianisation and a growing bitter hatred of those who felt sufficient equanimity to be able to carry on with that cancerous role (of course with the necessary facelift) as of yore. Well, for those of us who were now well and truly stuck at the sharp end you fucking well despised them. This hidden hostility grew and grew as the character of the times became more and more reactionary with the slow unfolding of the nightmare, neo-liberal free market.

For those who refused to compromise right from the beginning of this extra long and increasingly hideous downturn, or refused to apologise for their “youthful excesses” it meant a future of pared down survival engaging in hum drum part time work (manual/clerical or what have you) petty criminality, welfare scrounging or longer periods as a full time worker. There really was no other choice if you wanted to keep your mind clear, incisive and uncluttered. It wasn't a moral choice nor was it the dreaded *ouvrierism* as some cadres described it wishing to rubbish such a drastic decision on your life. Glorifying work like that was well out of the frame as in reality we were little more than scoundrels! You were a worker yet not a worker. Though *The Real Break In The International* (1972) written by Debord and Sanguinetti is rather ludicrous as regards its fantastical hopes for the times, its assessment and attack on the cadre was pointed and excellent still remaining the relevant and best part of the polemic. Would it were that simple and life has a habit of being more than a fine piece of writing. Over a long period of time it slowly dawned on those who had taken on board the ineluctable, practical logic of the critique of the cadre and more numerous than one cares to think were, for all their hesitations and mess ups living rather truer lives than most of the original Situationists who had so rapidly abandoned the implications of their fine words. Most fled into the professions in one way or another or in the worst case scenario like Rene Vienet became a business man. The individual who wrote perhaps their most well known provocative text *On the Poverty of Student Life*, Mustapha Khyati, himself became a lecturer and then a university Professor. Need one say more! Shakespeare's old maxim comes readily to mind: “lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds”. The background to all this bullshit was the unfolding of a long winter of economic crises, the slow erosion of all welfare and the emergence of a two tier health care system etc. It plainly wasn't that nice and you often yearned for some modicum of economic protection or just some dosh to ease a few pressing problems.

Finally you realised the great Guy Debord was taking steps in that direction too as he fell into the role “of the last artist in an age without art” (“Abrege” in *Encyclopedie de Nuisances*) care of his benevolent patron, the extremely rich cinema entrepreneur, Gerard Lebovici, who handed out to hi by the standards of the time what amounted to big sums of money which were far higher than most university Professors could expect. It seemed like having the money without the role compromise but in practice things didn't work out like that They never do. Sure his thought wasn't compromised like that immediately but it did mean Debord was permanently removed from that raw economic cutting edge invading most people and making everyone, everything and everywhere a lot meaner. Inescapably Debord was cut off from the reality of on-going workers struggles having nothing to say about them after 1982 or thereabouts. You might have expected TJ Clark to have suggested some criticisms in his laudatory homage in the foreword to Anselm



Jappe's book. Of course, his foreword is more forthright than all the deliberate scholastic disinformation that is the stock in trade of all TJ's art market books but even here, artistic roles must be slyly acclaimed. Waffling on about being Debord a great writer ("nay, I'd call it great "writing") TJ knows he must put "writing" in apostrophes to forestall criticism from those who would sharply contest such literary categorisation because you can't let things like this pass. To be sure, Debord collapsed into the role of writer towards perhaps in the late 70s – most certainly afterwards – but at the high point of the Situationist critique, describing yourself as a writer would have provoked a contemptuous dismissal. Debord's expression was always eloquent and accurate and that classical elegance was always too, an ever-threatening future artistic role. Does this cautious emphasis surprise coming from a academic who hopes to satisfy everybody? Although Clark uses commas about an obnoxious role immutably fixed categories are the bread and butter of these creeps with a high ideological job profile. To be sure, the vast majority of people are all wage labourers now but in itself this abstraction doesn't mean't much. as putting it baldly, even top executives are on a wage. This simple fact has produced some interesting apologists.

The problem is with these few critiques which look OK on paper mapping out a world colonised on all sides by commodity fetishism and where alienation has reached a degree of objective intensity far greater than ever experienced in the late 60s, we come up against the concept of a classless capitalism and where it becomes dubious to refer to any kind of workers' movement. After Camatte in the 1970s, we now have the two academics, Kurz and Moishe Postone. Thus the latter's kind of pupil, Anselm Jappe, berates Debord and the Situationists for falling back on or even considering a workers' movement as a leftover from past critiques. Workers can only aspire to State Capitalism and are nothing but the object of capital as Postone puts his hopes on the Feminist or Ecology movements without ever mentioning they are also very State Capitalist oriented. Here's not the place to go into Postone's theories though his discussion of Time is quite good. But do we all fall more or less evenly under the weight of the commodity and do some more actively participate in the reproduction of commodity relations than others? For those who aspire to achieve this usually much better paid collaboration perhaps they do feel the agony of their particular alienation more precisely because they have sold themselves to the commodity regime rather more than the vast majority of others. On the simplest of levels, they cannot speak in a straight forward way to anybody which surely still is the necessary pre-requisite for any collective action? Do we really wait for the great strike of the professors, or the top judges and social workers because they experience alienation so keenly? Just where is the praxis, which comes from all of this? Once it was dropping out with a few of the best making a fanfare farewell to their former roles. Now it's a lot more difficult to do so seeing capital has plugged it's defenses with the desiccation of welfare systems. So what's it to be: early retirement?

There's an interesting account by a Belgian guy called Yves Le Manache, which appears to have all the hallmarks of authenticity about it. It's basically about his fraught and unpleasant encounter with Debord. Yves had been a full time worker in a car factory in the late 1960s and early 1970s and had written considerably about his experiences. He'd slowly, hesitantly and unsurely grasped the relevant core of the Situationist critique and it was proposed to publish some of his writings in Editions Champ Libre, only to be dismissed in a high handed and nasty way by Lebovici and Debord. Stunned and very aggrieved by this experience, Yves Le Manache has continued writing – often increasingly scathingly – about this incident and its implications refusing to be ashamed of describing himself as a worker and despising career Situationists.

And that's where the real break lies: between those cadre Situationists and those who can also talk well about Marx, Debord, Lukacs, Breton and Nietzsche etc but who have no position in this untenable society refusing to reproduce the ideology of this insane system as little as possible simply by trying to remain human. They've acquired a simple and forthright hatred for all those cultural specialists in academia/journalism and what have you who cannot write anything officially without putting in obscure but knowing asides harking back to a radical pedigree. The latter, of course, would like to be friendly with those at the sharp end but the sharp end won't have it as too much murky water has flowed under the bridge since then. In any case you always feel their friendship has a powerful hidden undertow and it's all about making certain you keep your trap shut.

How can you when the general solution of the powers that be involving both hard and soft cops, has seen the most ferocious assault strengthening the social apartheid with a chasm of formidable laws which the highly developed world has experienced in recent times. That capital in this archaic form was put back

in the saddle here and despite all appearances to the contrary like the property owning, share owning democracy con etc was due to our general lack of insight. We allowed this situation to come about by at times, the crassest of responses in simply not sticking together when it was essential. England, in particular, since the late 1960s to the early 1990s was wracked by one of the most profound social conflicts in the world. If these conflicts had gelled together and even had a limited success, we would have seen sparks fly that would have transformed the protagonists themselves and most importantly, transcended the all too dismal limitations of the social apartheid which all too often can be a guilt-sodden springboard for the most contemptible careerism and go-getting. The way such demagoguery was used after the late 60s, was nothing short of disgusting - probably because it was so effective - because for certain, those radicals from the middle classes who'd admirably refused compromise, didn't dare for a long time confront this hideous side of the social apartheid. The general atmosphere though was increasingly not conducive to anything which might have stimulated the meagre beginnings of a more general hope whether in some kind of written down memories or even actions (the publicity of anti-publicity perhaps?). Whatever, the real ground of the modern revolution would have had something a darned sight more substantial to stand upon than the ruins we survey and agonisingly experience in these islands. It maybe a world ruin but the set back here hasn't helped at all.

The working class revolt in these islands which amazingly followed the defeat of the 1960s (we mean here "working class" in an almost generic sense and not whether you worked or not) certainly compared favourably to The Great Unrest which preceded the First World War and which continued on its way culminating in the General Strike of 1926. However - and this cannot be said too often - it was also very different. There was no general impetus heralding a greater grasp of abstract revolutionary theorising or even some political or economic education for the working classes as had happened previously in the 20th century with talks given by Marxist teachers like John McLean to eager manual workers (e.g. his lectures on basic Marxism to Cumbrian miners during their strike in 1912 etc). Theory was also something which was pushed aside and not really bothered with. Facts yes but not a theoretical construct. In a sense, it was also a yearning too for a fulfilled life in the tenour of Rimbaud's exclamation: "come to me oh absent life!" and like the revolt of the 60s, very much partook of that visceral anti-theoretical revolt which King Mob had emphasized too crassly. The fact that the insurgent workers neglected theory and failed to see just what was so new and original about what they were doing was also a glaring omission here and one that contributed to a terrible defeat. We noted this omission in a sympathetic though critical way putting it in a longer historical perspective at the end of *A Summer With A Thousand Julys* published in 1982 and said it may just help in avoiding disaster. In retrospect it was probably already too late....

Although the late 60s in these islands were a period of youth revolt it was less marked in its real essence than that in America, West Germany, France or Italy. In the latter two countries the student revolt was immediately followed by a profound workers revolt which contained within it, a considerable degree of independence the like of which had probably never before been experienced in terms of its distance from the machination of workers parties and trade union bureaucrats. Here there were no such obvious lines of flow. Everything was much more haphazard and unpredictable. There was also a feeling that total collapse was immanent and even the Young Tories in the early 1970s wished to rename the Conservative party, "The Movement"! Nonetheless among those who'd genuinely tried to realise a new society, despair and misery were clearly in the air everywhere. Then in 1972, one of the biggest revolts in working class history in these islands broke out which in a way was the pointer towards the storms which were to follow over the next 20 years. By then though King Mob was truly dead and buried and a big subterranean re-think was in the offing that was taking a long time to come into any focus. In a sense this was all part of the difficulty in trying to get to grips with a society which you thought you knew yet also plainly didn't know well enough. If we couldn't make head nor tail of it who the fuck else could? Somehow this still remains the dilemma even after all these years.

For those leftovers of King Mob who hadn't disappeared upstairs in some scared, unseemly haste, they were really thrown in more ways than one. And as for the rest of our generation by 1972 instead of thinking about images, pop groups or chasing and changing the sound of pop music, simply one was more concerned about proletarianisation and economic marginality and quite fearful about it. A Marxist theory of economic crises that you had tended to glibly dismiss four years previously suddenly began to make a lot more sense as it enmeshed with a period of class struggle the intensity of which, these islands hadn't known since perhaps the English civil war. You ineluctably became immersed in the unfolding revolt simply because it

was on virtually every bodies doorstep. It took a number of years to acquire some clearer perspective on what was taking place in front of your eyes – on just what was old hat about it and what was moving towards a more precise perspective which might one day usher in the elusive goal of autonomous revolt. A re-borne though limited traditional ultra left certainly helped this process on its way despite its limitations but the biggest effect by far was the failed social revolution in Portugal and Spain from 1974 to 1979.

The Situationists originally had lauded the excellence of the British shop stewards movement more or less praising their pivotal influence in the increasing number of wildcat strikes which began to break out here from the mid 60s onwards. No doubt this was gleaned from the pages of Solidarity as well as Le Monde and personal friendship with individuals from these islands. The implication was that this movement was a breakthrough suggesting autonomy was just around the corner. In a way this was understandable as from the French perspective where a rigidly disciplinarian Stalinoid CGT union apparatus managed to prevent any independent self-activity, Britain in this respect looked remarkably libertarian. The Situationists rightly applauded the efforts of Solidarity whilst criticising its Cardanite disposition, noting that combative workers made up its core membership and, for sure, some were shop stewards and were undoubtedly acquiring an advanced revolutionary critique. However, this wasn't the main impetus behind the shop stewards movement as a whole and by the early to mid-70s one was becoming aware all too aware of its woeful inadequacy in controlling and suppressing wildcats as much as instigating them (see the two texts in the written by us and published by German Wildcat on the Revolt Against Plenty website). In a way it was to the credit of a narrow, though often searching born again ultra left in the early 1970s that they started pointing out the recuperative role of the shop stewards movement though by then in the 1970s it was more a bureaucratic function than a movement. A leaflet handed out by the recently formed World Revolution in the mid 70s on a textile workers strike in Leicester was perceptive in this respect (and, in passing, well before World Revolution ossified into a baneful ultra leftist Leninist party it now is). Certainly this critique of shop stewards did crystallise quite a few things for us as with increased proletarianisation and increased day to day personal contact with shop stewards in work place situations as well as the pub, their limitations and repressive role was often all too obvious. A few years later, we made a very quick translation of Cajo Brendel's Autonomous Class Struggle in Britain 1945-77 making about 15 photocopies for friends to comment upon. We did it because we thought it was interesting putting the early 70s in particular into some kind of perspective although we thought the analysis wasn't rounded enough in the way it down graded the momentum of thought and consciousness – that admittedly difficult process and conundrum. Unfortunately it was printed without knowledge and the translation hadn't been subject to the very necessary revision it needed. In other respects, the early 70s threw up small ultra leftists groups like Socialist Reproduction and Workers Voice which decimated a much forgotten theory and history of past workers revolt with some sensitive analysis on workers councils (particularly in Germany from 1918 to 1923) and the old ultra left.

Although this searching analysis by a worker oriented ultra-left was welcome indeed, nonetheless at the time, you were aware of its inadequacies in terms of any attempt at total critique. Admittedly this is something that is extremely difficult to achieve and out of necessity, that critique must always be aware of its febrile existence ever receptive to renewal. However, among this re-borne ultra left, a critique of art was non-existent This really is completely inadequate as the actual shaping, production, promotion, buying, selling and general marketing of commodities in modern capitalism is much dependent on its realisation via advertising and design upon the fall out from modern art, design and poetry. The surface of modern art was ransacked whilst its inner increasingly subversive essence was utterly excluded the more that it shaped up into a revolutionary critique of modern capitalism. Unfortunately, this glaring omission was to be fatally re-enforced by Jean Barrot in France who missing out on the relationship between the fall out from modern art and the increasingly fetishistic scope of the commodity in the very basic (though marvelous) original analysis of the fetishistic value of the commodity in Chapter 1 of Das Capital, contributed to a limiting of perspectives. In England in particular it tended to reinforce an unimaginative mundane. Thus a pared-down ultra-leftism here periodically brings out Barrot reprints without noting these inadequacies. If only something of this anti-art critique which had been to the forefront in King Mob had been worked out more precisely to deal with such a coming impasse! Instead the essential critique of art fell into a calamitous disuse where now all memory of it has been long forgotten in a period which even some opportunist recuperator like Naomi Klein noted regarding her own personal circumstances as, "having grown up after history ended".

Some of the individuals involved. Seeing we have said so much about King Mob ranging far and wide and

always reflecting theoretically, perhaps it's time to say a few things about some of those crazies who passed through this impassioned moment.

The following sequence is quite haphazard and has no pretence at any top down hierarchy, the sequence of names being purely random. It's by no means definitive as nothing ever is and apologies to those inadequately represented or not mentioned. It's not intentional. Among those left out this potted bibliography are Al Green, Brenda Greville, Gill Woodward, Cathy Pozzo Di Borgo and Abbo. The latter is a very good friend and closeness remains far too precious and whatever defects are there, they are the ones we all possess. He's a fine guy and the rest is quibbling.

Maybe though it's better to say something briefly about some of those creeps who got their name in lights if only because it says a lot about contradictions and terrible slurs. Notably we are dealing with Malcolm McLaren and Fred Vermorel. Some of Fred's revolutionary leaflets from around 1970 are included in the appendix to this book. His critique of cineastes along with other soberly assessed though polemically argued leaflets were really rather good. In 1970, he was determined to burn down the ICA gallery in The Mall and wanted others to help him. We dissuaded him simply because we knew we'd all be picked up immediately by the police our bad reputations by then well known. Certainly it would have been followed by a long stretch inside. What's interesting about this is not the proposed act but both McLaren and Vermorel were to achieve star status in the cultural milieu a few years later in another re-run of the rejection/acceptance nexus so familiar in the history of modern art sidelining a more thorough going negation going back well before Vlaminck wanted to burn down the Louvre in 1905 with his cobalts! In 1973, Vermorel was sending postcards to Malcom "the boss McLaren" declaiming, "stop wasting your time. Time is running out. There are better things to do". Those better things were the honing and selling of punk rock! Thus five years later, in reply to a letter from Nick Brandt condemning his support for punk rock, Vermorel replied criticizing his "gee whiz logic" as merely "pissing in the wind". Hate always has to be out though once aggro becomes spectacularised and sold by show-biz rebels its never then directed against the system but is turned venomously against those who refused to cop out. More than a decade later in 1989, Jamie Reid, the so called Situationist artist at the finale of the opening night of the exhibition at the Pompidou Centre in Paris turned on the picket outside the exhibition protesting at this shameless recuperation with a snarling: "Fuck off you arty wankers". The truth must always be inverted. After all aren't Vermorel, McLaren and Reid the arty wankers?

Before the following potted bibliographies there is a diabolical true story to sadly relate. A guy called Sam Lord was involved with King Mob for a little while. He was a sensitive person always asking probing questions and produced one of the better posters aimed at criticising a surfeited consumerism. A guy with an agonised face looks out from a poster proclaiming: "I wanted to cry, instead I ate." Some further comment, the memory of which escapes us, was written across the bottom of the poster. Sam Lord tagged along with a soulful girlfriend called Lucy Partington who was rather down on what she regarded as some of the gratuitous excesses of King Mob. Many years later in horror we read in the newspapers that she'd become one of the victims of those ghastly serial killers, Fred and Rosemary West and buried in the cellar of their Gloucester charnel house. In the days of King Mob we'd put quite an emphasis on the psychotic character of capitalism's underbelly – the person "crippled to the point of abnormality" - as Marx so eloquently put it, though only referring to the division of labour in this instance. We pushed such characterizations a lot farther giving such insights of Marx a far greater dimension and urgency as we trawled the underworld of maimed desire. There's the letter from Jack the Ripper reprinted in KM No 1 under the heading: "The art of death". As if to ram the point home, opposite no 10 Rillington Place in Notting Hill, the scene of the pathological killings that had so obsessed the newspapers a few years previously we sprayed up the slogan "Christie Lives." What we wanted to bring out was that these horrendous episodes were nothing more than can be expected from a necrophiliac capitalism where the dead labour embedded in the process of accumulation somehow toxically reacts on a starved psyche only De Sade had had the guts to depict in all its utterly necessary rawness. In 1968 we all desperately wanted to read *The 120 Days Of Sodom* but the British Board of Censors had banned the book. Decades later, Lucy had returned to haunt us as the West's activities seemed to have capped any previous psychotic horror in these islands. Reflecting on conversations we all seemed to have had that capitalism from the 80s onwards had become sociopathic – did this therefore imply that its excesses had become even more luridly and exquisitely ghastly? The West's had all the appearance of a reasonably normal family household. Was this going on next door to you behind the chintz? *120 Days In A Housing Co-op*? Almost, as if by default, we

were still trying to unravel what we'd first rather naively put forward in the days of King Mob.

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### **Madeleine Neenan**

Madeleine was certainly the most aware of the women who chose to orientate themselves around the King Mob scene. Nervously precise and at times excruciatingly honest, a Londoner from a half Jewish, half Irish background, she hailed from the labour aristocracy, - her father being a low ranking supervisor on the then Thames Water Board. In a permanently agitated state, taking the rings she had on her fingers placing them on others, Madeleine felt inferior and superior at the same time especially in relation to those dissident women from the more assured middle classes in the King Mob milieu. It was as though she was locked into competition with them. Finally though and for whatever reason, Madeleine simply felt this overwhelming feeling of inferiority. She acutely noted those who were on the make, what she called "the success ethic" in people like Dick Pountain and Dave Robins, at the same moment referring to herself and those close to her rather peculiarly as "insects" illustrating yet again her masochistic put-down of those desiring authentic life. It was even more complicated, as it was part of a more general conundrum embracing that inferiority/superiority complex suffered triumphantly and miserably by an increasingly unsure cockney identity - if one can characterise like this. Perhaps in Madeleine this conundrum was stretched to breaking point as she also felt ill at ease with the cockneys she'd grown up with. Her life had been hell, experiencing constant depressions forcing her to bed for days on end feeling society's emptiness as something excruciating. Endless sleep. Endless suffering. In Madeleine though, there was a certain traditional cockney contempt for what she regarded as "the provinces" and in her teens miserable that she could only gain a place at Hull University instead of one at a London college. Nonetheless despite these contradictions she possessed a fine cutting edge. Together with us, she helped put together and then spray painted in 1968 the long slogan about work alongside the now Hammersmith and City line between the bridge over Portobello Rd and Westbourne Park tube station and, long since painted over by mindless, competitive hip-hop tags and pieces. Madeleine at the time worked as a typist on The International Times as well as doing other free-lance typing stints. On the same evening before venturing out to spray up that classic graffiti, we'd half suggested putting up some comment by Shakespeare but it was rightly opposed by Chris Gray and, rather more forcibly, by Madeleine simply because it sounded too high flown and rather pretentious. All agreed. We then sat down together and in about 20 minutes flat worked out what we were going to say, then went out into a cold damp night taking about an hour to execute in huge letters the slogan. It was all so simple....

In the harsh, depressing times after the debacle of King Mob, Madeleine went seriously AWOL. Her potentially lucid hatred turned into a lashing out at all and sundry and her characteristic inferiority/superiority syndrome bizarrely enmeshed with an ever-increasing madness. She ludicrously believed that the working class had to make as much money as the professional middle classes in order to have any chance of socially defeating them! Wasn't Russian society at that time in any case not that dissimilar and yet communism was nowhere to be seen? On reflection this ridiculous comment was most likely based on personal tragedy finally ensuring she'd end up on the long road to madness. Some time in 1969 Madeleine had fallen seriously in love with that swine Jock Young (the later Sociology of Deviancy lecturer and future star of lectern and TV) who had himself hailed from a working class background around Aldershot in Hampshire. On the lower rungs of a career ladder, Jock Young blatantly used Madeleine for lecture material and street cred info, spitting her out once her 1968 insiders aura had been drained dry. Combined with everything else, particularly the dawning realisation we'd all suffered a terrible defeat, Madeleine never recovered from her unrequited love for Jock Young. It was to haunt every step she was then to take - hating him and loving him at the same time. The problem was she couldn't move on from this to a more coherent negative hatred, and perhaps working out, step by step, the unfolding of a more fiendishly clever mode of exploitation.

She'd visit the rising stars of the more clued-in feminists like Lynne Segal who lived in a huge mansion of a house in Highbury at the time quickly scurrying away from that cushioned abode, fuming about their lack of any day to day knowledge of working class women. Madeleine also seethed about their inherited wealth particularly when deploying worse than patronising terms like, "we the poor" a phrase regularly fronting their usually fairly dire leaflets. As Madeleine said at the time: The only working class women they regularly talk to are their paid cleaners who come round to clean up all their shit up which

they just drop out of their hands – you know they must have had servants and the like when they were kids.” We readily agreed with her. The following day though, instead of learning a lesson and perhaps prepare for a future more lucid assault on these feminist careerists, Madeleine would again masochistically go round to Lynne Segal’s abode ready for more humiliation and punishment because basically – and this was her greatest error – she wanted to compete with them on their terms. Sure the feminists sounded fine and radical at the time but their take on the essence of real revolutionary critique was dismal and ignorant as well as crassly and hypocritically populist. Even Sheila Rowbotham who presented herself as northern and down home, implying therefore a greater class orientation in the women’s perspective was full of cant. In her manifesto in the Trotskyite oriented Black Dwarf in 1970 she demanded that “we” as women should demand the right to be bus drivers when the last thing these secure professional careerists wanted was to be put in the ranks of bus drivers! One thing for certain they damned well made sure for the rest of their lives to keep well clear of such downwardly mobile prospects. Being leftists from the word go they were never to encounter any autonomous feminist critique and moreover even if they knew what that meant (which they didn’t) would never have sought one out as such perspectives were anathema to them in the first instance. Even now this crew probably have never read a word of that excellent latter-day French Surrealist, Annie Le Brun whose critique of feminism may even have helped save Madeleine from that black hole she was falling into. But let’s quit the carping. These people were nonetheless all good trade unionists and Sheila Rowbotham’s present partner still fights for the cause of working class justice as a TU representative representing assistant headmasters. The sheer radicalism of it all constantly astounds...

Madeleine’s increasingly aloof but anxious demeanour always had something somewhat puritanically unsure about it and what little eros seemed to flow from her, particularly as her carapace began to harden, the more capitalism again gained the upper hand, seemed very out of place. Her disposition though wasn’t starchily intellectual, rather it was frozen and relatively absent of hostile vibes. She couldn’t be coquettish or seductive in any cornball way but neither could she be militantly aggressive and feminist as she was far too suss for that. A restlessly calm, hidden hysteria characterised her being which at times masked a terrible sexual raving and craving. Now and again she’d just gently cry out after some drinking bout: “I just want to be fucked, I just want to be fucked” It would be anguishly repeated. Looking on sympathetically, you always felt such behaviour had to do with the devastation of unrequited love, a means of massaging the pain of a broken heart but a heart which had, like so many others been broken by catastrophic defeat, as well as by creeps like Jock Young.

Becoming more desperate and schizoid by the moment, bit by bit she fell into real madness. Being properly competitive meant buying a house as all the rising feminist stars were doing, so Madeleine bought one in a street in Hackney a few doors down from where Sheila Rowbotham was living. But the contrast couldn’t have been greater. Rowbotham’s house had a kind of open door character invitingly there for all the petty cadre of the leftist parties to visit particularly those around the Trotskyist, Socialist Worker. A boy friend was installed who dabbled in plumbing - though more for the image than anything else – as really he was into carving out a career for himself in the new therapy techniques and liked having baths immersed in different coloured water. He certainly impressed the feminists with his sensitive, new man imagery and they clamoured to bed him. Doing his duty for the women’s cause he duly obliged them. More to the point, the guy was handsome. As Mick Carter said at the time: “Always look for the obvious”. Madeleine’s home couldn’t have been more different. It was forbiddingly forlorn, empty of furniture and heating as well as men and women. It was a veritable disaster with builder’s rubble heaped here and there in corners. Only one room was pathetically lived in with a few chintzy pictures hung on a green emulsion-covered wall. On the floorboards of this room she’d marked out a star of David which she kept stepping into hoping her deepening misery might be “cured” by creating for herself a full Jewish identity. One day mugged in nearby London Fields (or at least accosted) she thought it was the actions of an M15 agent pursuing her. Truth to tell her accounts of the incidence were pretty convincing but on reflection, we thought it was the acuteness of her own paranoid critical activity that was so convincing. As if to console her increasing misery, more and more Madeleine, day in and day out, sat in a rocking chair, endlessly tipping backwards and forwards as the leak in the roof got worse and the electrics, spurting flashes with the constant drip drip of the rain went kaput. Finally she was carted off to the loony bin. Periodically she ventures out only to be found wandering somewhere experiencing those terrible absences of mind which “patients” feel so aggrieved about.

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## **RICHARD BRENDAN BELL. aka IRISH**

Coming down to London in 1967 from Newcastle, “Irish” had been involved in the art scene there though increasingly feeling distant from it he never really getting involved with any of the art/anti-art experimentation. He was living a more proletarian life anyway and hangovers and the 8 o clock start facing a mad foreman called “Tulip” figured rather more intensely. He was once nicknamed “the most colourful psychopath in Newcastle” what with the constant heavy brown ale bottle fights he often got into sometimes involving Geordie hards who were extremely adept at nutting people. The most notable set to was with Tiny Crumb, the bouncer at the Club Agogo where The Animals made their name. Crumb regularly had to take on heavy gangs like The Diamonds from North Shields whose favourite pastime was giving somebody a good nutting. Pinned behind the lapels of their jackets were deadly fishhooks that an adversary would grab onto ready to nut back. Needless to say it was invariably the last thing they did for sometime. Though “Irish” lost the Club Agogo punch-up, nonetheless Crumb reckoned the fight was one of the worst he’d ever had to deal with. A few months later and the two of them after that brutal evening at the club became fairly friendly with each other.

Irish’s flirtation with art, sometime before the above incidence, had always been full of wry and crazy comment. He liked to do paintings that were utterly mocking in intent. One, a huge portrait of the Queen was simply titled underneath in big red letters: “The Queen By Her Subject, R Bell.” Another crudely executed painting requested in similar letters: “What We Need Is An Art For The People That Even The Lowliest Storm Trooper Can Understand.” Obviously, all this piss-take of black humour remained firmly within the bounds of the art/ anti art artefact we’ve all become so wearily familiar with and can be as good a sales pitch as anything else provided one plays the game of the charismatic artistic image intent on promo. But Irish was of a finer calibre than any of this nonsense as the undertow of the mood of the times was pulling in another, more consequential direction. Slowly abandoning the fall out from art he took on board a more coherent Situationist tendency and when sometime later he was to put pen to paper again, it was for a more subversive effect though his previously wittily crude gestures were still there – even more so! He executed many funny cartoons for the London Street Commune, most of which are probably lost. Before that “Irish” drew some funny-man pornographic one-off comic posters satirising the usual self-appointed committees you get in college occupations which were later put together as a pamphlet by King Mob featuring The Black Hand Gang (a purely invented folkloric phantom gang which still seems to crop up in various threatening stories about psycho street life in many northern cities).for a student sit-in at the London School of Economics in late 1969. The cartoons were couched in terms of toilet graffiti together with a Carry On Nurse tits and bums humour applied to leftist racketeering in a given situation. These comic cartoons which were copied and stuck up everywhere infuriated the leftist parties who were dominating the occupation with all their references to Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara, Trotsky etc. In short, the usual suspects - as they say. Robin Blackburn and other paid-up respectable intellectuals furiously tore down the posters aghast at their crudity. This was precisely the point as they were meant to be an emanation from the gutter and we wanted these leftist ideological big wigs to react like that. It was a kind of epate le bourgeois lefty cadre and the pictorial counterpart to Chris Gray on the same occasion shouting at Robin Blackburn after he’d come out with some high falutin’ rhetorical tosh “I don’t read New Left Review I’m just a common thief myself”. Sometime later in the early 1970s, the fresh faced neo-puritanism of the seemingly ever rising feminist tide, were again to singularly pick on these posters for blatant sexism because of their cock and cunt imagery. It was enough to definitively pronounce King Mob male chauvinist and that was that. End of discussion and please don’t mention the subject ever again. Some of that priggish attitude still carries on quite powerfully. For instance all the various publishing outfits reprinting excerpts from King Mob never reprint these cartoons including those two booklets by that trendy load of shit Tom Vague who purports to have published all known King Mob. Censorship again and still too offensive for a delicately tuned pro-feminist ideology which probably still considers such posters as little more than top shelf pornography? Whatever; let’s still plead guilty on belonging to that long tradition of bawdy subversion that once found very forcible expression among The Ranters in the 1640s English Revolution and little different to that memorable ditty of theirs which said:

“To swear and whore

And rant and roar

With yet no brawls and squabbling”

As the decades past on by much of this King Mob oriented sexual provocation has inevitably lost all its original liberatory impact. Again in deploying blatant public lavatory imagery to get home some point or other, advertising was to take the biggest cue and nowadays we are everywhere overwhelmed by a sexualized commodity ales pitch getting ever more lurid as the erotic impulses in everyday life are colonized to the point of near extinction.

Essentially, the comics offended English moralism which throughout the centuries keeps rearing its ugly head and we must never forget that such an arch academic as EP Thompson was to write his last book centered around that seemingly amazing sexually loaded manuscript of William Blake’s which was burnt after his death; a manuscript which it seems was quite the equal of De Sade. It wasn’t as though Irish was obsessive about cocks and cunts like that. On the contrary he was a rather shy person, treating people with respect unless they turned him over and then he could be very hostile and unforgiving. Rightly so. He equally did posters for rent strikes and lots of anti-police stickers at the same time which were directed against a bunch of maniacs at Notting Hill police station under the direction of a certain PC Pulley who took it upon himself to declare a personal vendetta against the neighbourhood, especially those he regarded as trouble makers. “Irish” had reason to feel intense vehemence against PC Pulley having received a three-hour thrashing from him at Notting Hill police station during one long night in the cells. Memorably during one of these ordeals, “Irish” had a book in his jacket pocket on the Clerkenwell riot of the 1830s in which a certain PC Culley was killed by the mob. Later a jury drawn from Clerkenwell’s inhabitants absolved the rioters accused of murder referring to the incident as an unprovoked attack by the police. On the blurb on the book’s back cover Irish had crossed out the C on Culley replacing it with a P. On seeing this our PC Pulley tore the library book up scattering it to the winds. It wasn’t only Pulley he locked horns with as “Irish” was always in trouble one way or another whether due to a punch up or attempting some petty crime or other. Naturally one gets older but 12 years later he nearly lost his job for trying to defenestrate a union official in a public sector union he belonged to.

“Irish” was one of the first with his seering honesty to get pissed off with the so-called revolutionary movement once rigidity set in and the revolutionary role made its ghastly entrance on the stage. A witty smile would play across his face as he talked about “the situationist police state” having got heartily sick of the ritualistic denunciations doled out almost by rote when what he was tending to see, along with others at the time, was the old class system reappearing again right in the heart of capital’s supposed negation. He made an amusing poster of a kind of Pilsbury dough man next to a tree with his hand cupped to his ear saying “hark I hear the first militant of spring.” More than that, Irish began to hate the experience of the late 60s precisely because of the inter-classism saying he thought the early 60s were less duplicitous on this matter as at least you knew your companions weren’t kidding you over the essential basics like how much dosh did you have in your pocket and where hypocrisy played itself out with less deadly effect. The trouble is, it was an over-reaction and the wheat wasn’t separated from the chaff as unfortunately, there was a kind of return to a class-in-itself workerism that sentimentally tended to embrace a nostalgic view of an old and always mythical Labour party. It finally prevented hope of open flowing discussion and a deepening of friendship that could lead to something more consequential given the possibility of things suddenly opening up.

## **JED GARDNER AND JOHNNA**

Reflecting the proletarianisation which was overtaking the drift in the revolutionary impetus of the times, these two guys who had had nothing whatsoever to do with Further Education institutions quickly trained themselves up as carpenters came down from Newcastle and survived by working on the buildings. They wanted a new world alright and immediately gravitated around the most radical critique having had



nothing to do with any previous leftism simply because it hadn't appealed in the first instance though they'd obviously been brought up in that old Labour party type culture endemic on the Tyne. In a sense they reflected that shift among the workers that very visibly shook things up in the shipyards at the time. They joined in gleefully with many a King Mob action and quite gladly handed out some of the most provocative leaflets such as *The Death of Art Spells the Murder of Artists*. This was certainly handy as their lyrical Geordie accents plus their tough disposition (needless to say both were as sensitive as anything inside) made certain that quivering artists furious at the leaflet didn't dare complain about it's contents too loudly.

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## DICK POUNTAIN

What can one say about this guy without feeling disheartened and miserable? It is the case of somebody initially having a pretty good critique on all kind of things taking place at the time gradually going to the all time dogs and "lilies that fester small far worse than weeds". In the early days and at his best he possessed a keen sense of observation. Hailing from Chesterfield in North Derbyshire, Dick Pountain had for instance a fine take on some of the complexities of people working in heavy industry in and around Sheffield particularly those who'd taken to frequenting heavy drinking night clubs packed with Chicago blues fans and which spawned the likes of Joe Cocker etc. Once after a Saturday evening of heavy drinking and getting the last bus back to Chesterfield he recalled a drunken companion hitting the bus conductor simply because the poor guy didn't know who bluesman Buddy Guy was.....

From reading the plethora of books appearing on the late 60s, you could be forgiven for thinking Dick Pountain was a "leading situationist" as some blurb on one of these nonsensical offerings would have it. Ever ready to cultivate some part of the limelight though usually in a discreet manner, this same man now is willing to accept such an accolade particularly as his posh friend, the journalist and lexicographer, Jonathan Green, has published quite a few books on the late 60s trawling the undercurrents of the time though Green is unable to make a memorable statement or critique of the age. In these books there are on-the-spot interviews with Dick Pountain discussing drugs, direct action and some of the characters involved. Regarding the latter, it is noteworthy that Pountain never names those unworthy friends of his, always concentrating on the name people .i.e. those among us who cultivated publicity. People like that miserable opportunist cum pop entrepreneur and ex-White Panther, Mick Farren who memorably broke up (Sir) David Frost's TV show which in retrospect was an act wanting rather than negating, publicity. Dick Pountain always liked individuals who were on the make – so no change there. Glad to bask in a hip glow, the murky reality of what Dick Pountain was to become isn't even hinted at. So let's start therefore by putting the record straight.....

Dick Pountain was a man who could read and understand Situationist theory - quickly getting a grasp of some of its essence - which for Britain was fairly remarkable considering the pitiful few who did in the late 60s. He applied the critique though with a somewhat dour disposition as though even from the earliest moments he wasn't all that keen on it and in no time wasn't really disposed to what he quickly regarded as "naive utopianism". A memorable incident comes to mind. Sometime in the summer of 1970 journeying with Phil Meyler in the American mid-west they decided to cheer themselves up as all around lay the palling of the revolutionary late sixties and the two friends were feeling pretty bad inside. Chancing on an escarpment they grabbed some large pieces of cardboard and slid like children down the scree ending up in a heap at the bottom of the hillside. Dick looked at Phil and grimly said: "Is this the future?" Behind such seemingly trivial comment lurked a more menacing reflection implying that what we've been involved in over the last couple of years or so has been nothing more than gesture politics and games and in the future we will have to become more serious. Seriousness for Dick Pountain was more than taking a few steps backward as he fell back into the latter-day deadly embrace of the decaying stench of Stalinism he'd had some association with in North Derbyshire in his youth. It was generally anyway being reinstated with a vengeance world wide but with a supposedly greater theoretical depth - actually veneer - heralded by the writings of the French academic Marxist, Louis Althusser, and the baneful pseudo-profundities of Britain's own Theoretical Practice contingent staffed by some influential New Left Review adherents. Quite frankly endlessly sliding down scree was probably more thought provoking than the empty intellectualisms of French academia, post 1968. At the moment of its disappearance stood the last consequent theoretical

academics like Henri Lefebvre. Soon there would be none to replace them despite all the hype and ephemeral glamour about to be bestowed on the now forgotten Nouvelle Philosophes and later, the empty euphoria and mildly critical, acceptance culture, purveyed by a post-modernist void in the writings of Deleuze/Baudrillard etc. What insights and youthful radicalism some of these latter day stars of a vacuity unknown in previous history may once have had was quickly left behind as some kind of posturing juvenilia.

Dick Pountain in his head was to follow a similar path though his real emphasis would be on a very discreet crude money making essentially glossed over by a bogus intellectualism he used to front real accumulation. Even his intellectualisms were mired in a perverse crudity itself the perverse opposite of real subversion. Thus, by the late 1970s, he was even prepared to accept some of the grotesque Stalinist apologetics for the Moscow show trials of the 30s proclaiming that defendants like Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin really “did want to restore capitalism in Russia”. Any critical theory of State capitalism had long before being jettisoned by this new apparachniki of the old school, even accepting the crudest of Stalinist slurs not only regarding the Moscow show trials but other contemporary events too. He hated Phil Meyler’s first draft for his subsequent book on Portugal simply because it mocked the Stalinoid Portuguese Communist party. Truth to tell Pountain by then didn’t feel anything towards anybody who cut up untidy or held subversive opinions. Anton Ciliga’s magnificent book on the Russian experience (translated into English as *The Russian Enigma* had recently been published in English but it was of course a total no go for Dick P’s growing totalitarianism as he upheld the baneful belief that Russia was a workers’ state where capitalism had been abolished. It wasn’t only the 1874 Portuguese revolution Dick Pountain hated he also refused to acknowledge that the inspiring actions of the Russian workers from 1917 up to the defeat of the Kronstadt sailors in 1921. From the mid 70s onwards, Pountain had become a loose kind of fellow traveler of the British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO) which helped buttress some of his perverse take on things. Around this time Pountain was to write an utterly dreadful text fully supporting the then expanding nuclear power industry. This pamphlet was peppered with much scientific detail befitting Pountain’s scientific training and at the time the press was full of stories prompted by the various debates about further full-scale nuclearisation suggested in the proposed Marshall Plan aired in the early 1980s. Broadly supporting this plan the only activity Pountain desired at the time was the smashing of an emotional and “un-scientific” Peace Movement epitomised at the time by the Greenham Common women’s occupation. Although a lot of real subversives were also at the time pissed off with the often trite whimsical, and naive Greenham Common actions particularly the gender based pro-feminist mysticism ( e.g. gentle women as against war-like men etc ) in no way did such a critique also encapsulate a hideous pro-nuclear perspective.

Latterly, along with sociologist, Dave Robins, Dick Pountain has written a book entitled *Cool Britannia*, a laudatory appraisal of the cool outlook so anodyne and essentially early Blairite in tone. There’s no trace here of the old Stalinism, or indeed any kind of vanquished Bolshevism and is truly remarkable for not saying a thing which could be construed as remotely controversial. The book has since vanished along with the wretched Cool Brit pop scene of the dismal 1990s.

Behind all these somersaults of mind and attitudes which mark Dick Pountain’s career lies his basic drive: the ever greater accumulation of money as a minority partner in some of Felix Dennis’s business activities. It’s well known that Felix Dennis, after a youth of notoriety as so called radical editor of *Oz* magazine in the late 60s, gradually turned his attention to more middle of the road printing ventures becoming ever more sleazy and slimy as Dennis has ended up becoming one of the wealthiest individuals in Britain, publisher of *Loaded* and a fat cat donor to the Blairite Labour Party. From early in the 1970s, Pountain handled the organisation of the graphics, print set ups and what have you around Dennis’s Bunch Books watching passively and saying nothing as Felix Dennis endlessly ripped off the cartoonists, illustrators, wordsmiths, etc who provided the material for this budding super-entrepreneur. Howard Fraser who worked at Bunch Books at the time and incidentally a man with a far more coherent take on Situationist and subversive theory in general than ever Pountain had and who often developed memorable arguments and occasionally profound insights (particularly on England) would tell Bunch contributors not to sign contracts drawn up by Dennis as they were been taken to the cleaners. As if in response, Pountain masked his silence on this crucial question by a while later unionising the firm. Trade unionism again became the means and substitute for suppressing this honest direct, telling-it-like-it-is encounter though no doubt it ameliorated some of the worst excesses of Bunch Books super exploitation. Pountain though continued to

keep his head down and befitting an industrious northerner applied himself extremely skillfully to the many difficult technical tasks managing magazine production. Almost inevitably surrounded by the new hi-tech and with his scientific background, Pountain became a very informed technical writer on the computer age and production manager of that glossy trade magazine; Personal Computer as he saw his personal wealth increase by leaps and bounds. First it was one million, then the next and the rest following ever more rapidly. In 2002, he even wrote a best seller paper back on computer terminology as he played up to the image of polymath extraordinare by being interviewed on radio programmes about the Angry Brigade

And the more he made the meaner Pountain became with his dough, donning a hair shirt the like of which perhaps has never been seen? Refusing former friends small requests for money (a £100 or so) to publish magazines critical of the system, usually coming up with the excuse of a cash flow problem(!), he went from the bad to the dire. He acquired so much wealth he was finally able to seduce the wife of his youthful dreams who'd rejected him in the very early 70's because he had no inherited wealth and lacked financial prospects. Yes our man Dick Pountain fell into abject mediocrity and utter conformity even rebuking individuals for not wearing appropriate dark suits at a funeral of a former drug freak cartoonist.

However, we must end here on a note of congratulation and innovation. Surely Dick Pountain must be the first to have miraculously transformed himself from pro Communist Party apparatchnik to money-grubbing entrepreneur - a species now as common as a latrine in modern Russia - embracing neo-liberal ideology and loudly proclaiming their horror of the "evils" of the pre 1989 Soviet Bloc as though it was some fresh, undiscovered news? Unable to read Ciliga in the mid 1970s he was still unable to read him! No wonder as one of his best acquaintances is Nikolie Koletski, that rabid free-marketeer Times journalist and together with that other journalist creep, John Lloyd, (who blatantly made his name by siding with the scabs during the 1984/85 miners' strike) all sit smugly, though probably unhappily together, in convivial evenings at the obnoxious Supper Club, which surely must have been so appropriately named in honour of their servitude to the status quo.

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## **IAN CLEGG AND DIANA MARQUAND-CLEGG**

This couple were perhaps the strangest bed fellows in King Mob as in many ways they were the traditional examples of the English, Anglo/Scottish ruling class in the sense that they were straight yet utterly mad at the same time. Diana Marquand was the sister of David Marquand, the future Liberal Party MP, although at the time she was very critical of her brother's limited grasp and obtuseness. Their all too brief coherent madness rapidly gave way to typical English eccentricity which Tom Nairn characterised in the early 1970s as "that crab-like moving side ways" rushing blindly back into the past they tried to escape from lured no doubt by awith considerable amount of promissory inherited wealth beckoning as good enough reason to do so. Like many of those who coalesced into King Mob they'd come from high up public school backgrounds but were very reluctant to talk about these schools or even to name which ones they were. Was it so weird they wouldn't tell you much detail about their past yet wanted to know everything about yours? Later we found it to be typical of all of them: keeping mum themselves they demanded self-exposure from us in the name of not being so repressed!

Ian Clegg evidently met Don Smith at some Oxbridge university college and they struck up some kind of friendship. During university, or just after, they journeyed to Algeria together in the moment after France had abandoned her colonial possession after a brutal and murderous wa in the early 1960s. Both of them, though on separate occasions, mentioned how thrilling it was to walk the streets of the haute bourgeois district of Algiers marveling at the abandoned mansions of a former colonial ruling class having fled for their lives. Ian Clegg once noted that it gave him a sense of certainty, (despite basically being a war for national independence which Ian Clegg had no leftist illusion about) that one fine day the rich could be pushed out of everywhere and made to disappear once and for all. However the way in which it was said was as if he - Ian Clegg - wanted to disappear! (Ironically we remembered this during the miners' strike in the aftermath of that inspiring uprising around the village of Fitzwilliam in West Yorkshire which caused the neighbouring very well off to flee from the old aristo-imitative hamlet of Nostell Priory nearby). Under the influence of Don Smith, Clegg became more and more Situationist influenced from the mid 1960s onwards though in a much more intellectual, somewhat New Left Review (ish) kind of way although

the guy was considerably better than those of that ilk who were later to write on the Situationists in that rag (e.g. Peter Wollen who was rightly condemned for hypocrisy in a recent text by Don Smith and Tim Clarke in a MIT magazine with the baneful title of October).

Nonetheless, Ian Clegg lived a highly schizoid existence even in the late 60s and there was little attempt to iron out any of these often blatant contradictions. It was push and pull every which way. Condemned by his father, a Royal Navy big wig, stationed on the Firth of Forth who'd blamed his son's Ban the Bomb activities at Faslane naval base on the Clyde for spoiling further career opportunities, Ian Clegg in 1967 nonetheless opted for a traditional military style wedding completed by arches of crossed swords above the bride and bridegroom's head. A year later and the same couple, lying under leafy trees with friends, were rightly scorning academia and sounding-off about the death of art having eaten home baked hash cakes! Of course with such vast contradictions lurking inside and between themselves and the everyday existence most were forced to live, nothing gelled and the insufficient glue which held it all together quickly came apart once the quick of the revolutionary impulse hadn't successfully followed on through.. In no time with the waning of King Mob and, more importantly, the general revolutionary impetus of the late 60s, Ian Clegg quickly cobbled together a souped-up M.A. or Proposed Phd thesis for a New Left book entitled Workers Councils In Algeria. It was duly published by publishers, Allen Lane. It was long, it was clever, it was wide-ranging intellectual stuff (eg featuring a dispute with Andre Gorz etc) and it was boring having nothing of the pulse which galvanised the Situationists original Address to the Revolutionaries of Algeria. One point in its favour though: it was one of the first post '68 books to pin-prick councilist ideology as though the form in itself was the great panacea. Clegg did emphasise content but in a teacherous intellectualse which made nonsense of theory and, as Mike Bradley was to say some eight years later in, *The International Times*: "Theory cannot be taught it can only be incited" A few months later in California, Isaac Cronin, one of the members of the pro-Situationist groupuscule *Contradictions*, was to call the book: "a work of advanced recuperation". He was right, though like any other recuperator, Ian Clegg hadn't written the book in order to establish or improve on any basic truth; he'd written it in order to advance his career and in no time landed a job in the politics dept of Leeds University. Modern academia of course thoroughly approves of pulled punches and watered down arguments – and this has been truer in the last 30 years than prior to the watershed of the late 1960s.

Once ensconced in a secure academic niche, Ian Clegg descended into academic obscurity quickly abandoning or even exhibiting any vaguely radical orientation. Considerable inherited wealth helped this process gather momentum and it was probably the Clegg's more than any other individual belonging to the King Mob economic elite which marked the waiting to burst class split brooding in that loose grouping of like-minded, if not like-surviving, people. These two factors must somehow begin to come together if any truer collectivity stands a hope in hell. The Clegg's though now began to use the poorer ex-King Mob affiliates to decorate their house rewarding them with cooked meals and cups of tea simply so their property would acquire a higher rating in an Estate Agents window. Schmucks at the sharp end (including ourselves) were still foolish enough to believe that you hung on to basic comradeship helping each other out periodically particularly when agreeing with a basic set of ideas you still hoped to realise in a social arena. At the same time the Clegg's would criticise working class people for taking tacky consumer holidays in Blackpool which caused at least two women from working class backgrounds, Freddie Cooke and Anne Ryder to explode having spent more than a few "wakes weeks" as kids at Blackpool. The Clegg's, once their economic position and aim became all too clearly visible, were never forgiven for their class users' mentality and snobbery and their blatant deploying of their former friends/comrades as unpaid brush hands.

However, the Clegg's had one brief moment of sheer excellence. In attacking spectacular consumption though often on a too simplistic a level simply forgetting their greater economic clout, the Clegg's along with ourselves, proposed an action which would involve an invasion of an Oxford Street store in London, Christmas 1968. Selfridges was chosen for the foray. Together with the Clegg's, we wrote the leaflet which was handed out providing the layout and drawings of Christmas decorations as a seductive detouring of the usual decorative regalia surrounding the yearly ritual. What more is there to say? The well-known rumpus followed along with arrests and subsequent publicity. Whatever may have been said subsequently, we know for fact there was no attempt to contact in advance any media: the rejection was absolute. In distributing the leaflet all communication was done by word of mouth. One further comment needs to be made: The Selfridge's invasion was not the invention of Malcolm McLaren although he played a plucky part

in the melee inside the store. In this guy's TV film on Oxford St and its historical characters which, like the great jail escapee, Jack Shepherd, who are said to haunt the area, McLaren's voiceover makes it look as though it was all his idea, including his verbatim quotes from the leaflet without mentioning its existence, a process so typical of recuperation! Of course, as Lautreamont once said, "plagiarism is necessary" but when it amounts to economic re-possession well then it's a very different matter and McLaren appropriates simply for his own star-struck economic quodos and gain. Moreover, McLaren was not dressed up as Santa Claus as that part was bravely taken on by Ben Trueman – but that is for later. What happened to the Cleggs? Well no one really seems to know as they certainly kept well clear of everyone from very early on.

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## **TONY SCHOFIELD**

Again, Tony Schofield was one of the ex-public school contingent emanating from those belonging to the more privileged echelons of King Mob, Tony had been treated appallingly by his parents in a mercilessly cold manner. As a real monster from the public school system, Pete Fowler, the dispicably reactionary editor of the 1980s art magazine *Modern Painters* was to say during his earlier Marxist foray, "public schools treat their own off-spring brutally prepainge them for their sadistic treatment of the lower orders in the future". Too true. Sometimes though, the neglect is so brutal they really do destroy their own. A northerner whose parents owned the Schofields megastore in Leeds Tony was one such victim. But how could you know him when he seemed to reserve his friendship for the dissident wealthy unable to cut free from the very class mores he was tortured by? Unwilling to break out of the cocoon/tomb which was killing him, he could also be extremely funny in the company of his best friends who were rather similar, though in future prospects generally less wealthy than himself. One night in early 1968, he entertainingly spent a good hour "looking for the proletariat" inside key holes, under carpets, on top of book cases etc. We all laughed our heads off as it wasn't done in a disparaging put down way. This would have been light weight stuff if he also wasn't pretty good at whacking coppers on the violent anti-Vietnam demonstrations of that year. Tony's demeanour was shy and withdrawn and obviously he was a very decent guy. Sensitive to the all-pervading reaction which seemed to drop suddenly within the hearts of all the most insightful protagonists during 1970 or a little later, and which was to engulf the totality of society as the years rolled by, Tony Schofield just couldn't handle this growing brutal reaction. In fact, nobody could but most had reason to hang on – just! The path of the suicidal Young Werther was to be repeated, not too dissimilar to Goethe's ruminations on Werther in later life when he wondered if Werther was right or wrong to do what he did. We still exist in the same tortured dilemma given an extra dimension by the sheer absence at the heart of modern alienation. Tony Schofield and all those countless others after 1968 who ended this excuse for a life we nonetheless hold in deepest respect. They refused humiliation which we subsequently know now was to be our lot in the years of deepening reaction which, on the cusp of the '70s, we also felt in our bones was bound to follow. We weren't wrong and our nightmarish premonitions were to become even more nightmarish in reality.

One day, in the early 1970s, Tony probably took a long, last, agonised journey up Wharfedale in Yorkshire (no doubt the scene of happy, youthful memories) beyond even then, the gentrified former mining village of Grassington, to that darkly dramatic and stark, Wordsworthian-like, Almscliff Crag where once, the rare and exquisite Scotch Argus butterfly flew and there ended his brief life passionately and ruthlessly throwing himself off that pinnacle, overhanging outcrop. A renegade from the respectable upper northern bourgeoisie, he ended his life in the heart of the Yorkshire badlands. Now and again when passing that forbidding and awesomelimestone crag one immediately thinks of Tony Schofield that fine man nursing a restless and wounded psyche.

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## **JOHN GREVELLE**

Older than most of the protagonists who figured in King Mob, Grovel, or so he was called by some referring to that indefatigable toff and Private Eye cartoon character even though the description wasn't apt, had formerly been the husband of Brenda Grevelle, Chris Grey's girlfriend. John Grevelle's personal history had in his youth revolved around the more traditional anarchist milieu of the Peace Movement, the

Committee of 100 and, more to the point as he gradually left a simplistic anarchism behind, the Castoriadis influenced group, Solidarity. As the times moved (and they seemed to move very briskly in the mid to late 60s), Solidarity quickly attracted a wide, strong worker base, who in no time began to think of John Grevelle as a head case by most of these intelligent, hard working people who made up the backbone of this memorable Councilist group with a much sharpened modern critique than say, an ultra-leftist like Pannekoek had envisaged. It's worth pointing out that Grovel (despite his posh accent) had not come from wealth and therefore his gut association with most of these sober stalwarts in Solidarity was real enough. Sober though is the word which must be emphasised here because sober John Grevelle rarely was. Most days - indeed every one - drink and whatever drugs were on hand passed down his throat. He had his favourites though especially a cocktail of paregoric cough medicine mixed with cider which must have incited some kind of delicious calm and high now that a more effective opium was no longer dispensed at the chemists as in De Quincey's more liberal times in the early 19th century. Amidst all the collective conversations and actions in flow at the time, drunken attacks and assaults were usually the most effective of John Grevelle's interventions which, without exception, were spontaneous affairs. He had the merit of being one of the first to thoroughly wreck, at least for an evening, a nascent community politics scene in Notting Hill clearly recognising the structure as a vehicle for drawing the sting of radical protest and a means to career advancement. His drunken raving one evening in summer 1968 against the fresh-faced Notting Hill community politics scene, in particular George Clarke (number one guru of the nascent community politico scene) was memorable indeed, and had all the erstwhile future "community servants" foaming at the mouth. They never forgot Grevelle's savage attack and of course they never forgave him.

Grevelle's negativity was never clearly worked out though and you always found it impossible to discuss anything with him in a pensive, reflective way as he lurched about stabbing the air punctuated by short and wild guffaws. Any greater coherence were always clearly lacking. Contradictions were pushed within him as he oscillated between utter negativity and an informal impresarios role like organising musical venues at the old Round House in Chalk Farm, London. The only common denominator between these two disparate activities was drunkenness. Sometime later, during the very early 1970s, he made an effort to launch a Free School in the same area. There were many stinging criticisms made of this venture as it was hardly free though Grevelle insisted the richer kids were subsidising the poorer ones. Bernie S wrote some hard hitting stanzas which were accurate enough about this expensive way to be free! Whatever one may think of all the grave inconsistencies in Free Schools generally, John Grevelle's version had the merit of being completely over the top. It was organised between Grevelle and his then girlfriend who was a dominatrix by trade and would regularly on an evening lock up her clients in the school cupboards. The school couldn't carry on like this and shortly thereafter fell to pieces in a mad orgy of drink, acid, grass and paregoric: an auto-critique in action of a Free School even if by default. From then on drink more or less reigned in John Grevelle's life dying of a heart attack in the mid 1990s still remaining in daily contact with Chris Gray. What the content of this latter day relationship was it's difficult to know as he also had sustained friendship with one or two other larger than life, really great guys. In this non-stop spree of drink and other substances, Grevelle still spoke his mind and received more than a few thumpings for his blindly courageous, off-the-drunken-cuff responses usually in uptight pubs where it would have been wiser to have kept schtum.

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## **GERRY BRENCHLEY**

Another one of the wild crazy ones who gravitated around King Mob abandoning his job and career prospects despite being trained at Cambridge as a scientist, specialising in chemistry. He helped put together a big A3 size broadsheet ranting and raving about this that and the other and calling for a supercession of the Situationist critique. Truth to tell it was extremely garbled and you couldn't discern any direction in the text as it was more a reflection of the guy's apocalyptic behaviour in daily life than anything else. He was one of the people who carried the big banner in the October demonstration in London in 1968 which said: Storm The Reality Studios. Retake The Universe, which though distinctly more inspiring than the usual pedestrian banner was a quote from William Burroughs who himself had hardly given any clear indication of the transcendence of art. Nonetheless on the same demo, Gerry, along with other friends, frequently attacked cars smashing the occasional camera whilst loudly pointing out that his participation in this event had little to do with Vietnam but everything to do with the "new poverties" which

we in the highly developed world were increasingly colonised by. Gerry Brenchley wanted to slash priceless paintings in the National Gallery though he never did more than mouth off about it. Again none of this was at all clearly worked out and as a consequence he tended to identify with those nutters who occasionally resort to this form of action never seeing the necessity of a clear theoretical explanation on why such actions may possibly be worthwhile, although it's very difficult to know when that would be so. Invariably the reasons nutters give are garbled and pretty non-sensical even though arousing a mild interest. By en large, if consciously undertaken, such gestures are used as a form of sensationalism to promote some cause or other like the action of the Suffragettes prior to the First World War. Such outrages have long since lost their shock value in an age when all memory of the past and its treasures have been essentially destroyed by capitalism. What's at stake here is an intelligent subversion of the fall out from modern art something ill-equipped for use in gesture politics but which potentially could have far greater impact.

Gerry Brenchley had the merit of never copping out and survived for sometime by taking low-key jobs in chemistry laboratories that he detested. In a way though this humdrum work kept a lid on his psyche as periodically after the defeat of the 60s he started to go hyper spending brief periods in asylums. The build up was manic behaviour when in a solipsist way he'd lapse back into the time of King Mob euphoria when the social ambiance which had created that period had been well and truly eclipsed. Over the following years, Gerry Brenchley's critique remained pretty haywire as he mulled over the reasons why everything fell apart not so much in acrimony more through bewilderment and burn out. But for Brenchley his musings contained more than a whiff of paranoid plots and skull duggery, ("John Greville stabbed in the back" etc as he said in one letter) and more a product of his own dementia than anything else. It didn't just stop there as it was usually accompanied by some action that was as bizarre as it was funny in a madcap sort of way. One day in the late 1970s and in this frame of "mind", Gerry B sauntered out into the middle of Ladbrooke Grove and began personally re-directing all the traffic. A little later when arrested by the cops who naturally asked what he was up to, he replied: "well it's all good fun isn't it". Evidently he'd been up to the same thing two days previously elsewhere in west London so the court imposed the regular sectioning order it uses for such miscreant behaviour. Thus Gerry Brenchley probably remains to this day alternating between the funny farm and living in some shack at the bottom of some garden in Wales rather like some latter day Johann Baader – the "lunatic" of German Dada, one of the originators if you like in deploying 'madness' as a tactic in the history of modern subversion.

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## **BEN TRUEMAN**

Memories of this man are usually a joy to recall. He was, and still is, larger than life. The son of a taxi driver from Winchester he gravitated around the King Mob scene drawn to it by his rebellious ways. He joined in many of the actions with a devil-may-care attitude often arrested for one thing or another notably as the red coated Santa Claus in the Christmas 1968 Selfridge's protest where he grabbed sweets from the counters and handed them on to passing kids. Some mums were furious and started hand bagging him calling Ben a "drug-crazed hippy." In other circumstances this might have been true though not on this occasion even though Ben always tended to despise laid back hippies. Ben though did drink like a fish and more or less indiscriminately took whatever drugs he could get his hands on subsidising his excess of leisure delights by the odd burglary or two like nicking lead from church roofs etc. after a skinful in a pub. To put it mildly, the guy was none too cautious in any of his escapades and inevitably kept getting banged up for brief periods. He personally felt at the time that the greatest enemy of the revolution was the "straight" working class although this attitude was somewhat conditioned by the prevailing criminal ideology which Ben modified the older he got.

So infectious was his general love of life and spontaneity – and a very un-PC spontaneity at that – meant he was cultivated as the untutored working class rebel like some modern day Wild Boy of Aveyron who was brought up by wolves in south west France. He wasn't averse to giving middle class girlfriends, fascinated by his handsome charisma, an occasional slap or two who, in their turn, went racing off complaining to the new fuming feminists who'd usually willfully ignore the provocative acts and put downs which could lead up to such unnecessary responses. As a friend said apropos of this: "Why hit a woman when a few well aimed words can do just as much damage". We all laughed cynically well aware that the feminist onslaught was as bad as what they were replacing though in different ways. Down at the sharp end

things had (and still have) a way of defining and redefining themselves and we were all rather pissed off by middle class girlfriends into rough trade complaining in a tub-thumping way about their wild working class boyfriends banged up in nick asking them on prison visits what kind of nickers they were wearing.

Being cultivated like this from both middle class men and women alike did Ben Trueman no good at all and he began to perform - even when feeling pretty bad inside - to an image others had invented for their own ends and uses which soon enough was to become diabolically clear. Ben provided the first deviant stereotype for a budding rip-off in the shape of the Sociology of Deviancy who patronised him before moving on to the next-in-line deviant fashion. Finally though, and just in time, Ben wasn't fooled and gladly partook of an atmosphere and discussion that was again reinstating, though in a different way, the us and them gulf which was again unfolding. Sick of the misery of performing to middle class proclivities Ben married Marion, a working class gal and becoming more subdued and relaxed, felt he could breathe easier now that he was no longer called on to act the part of the iconoclastic permanent rebel against the constraints of daily life. A great gal, Marion was bi-sexual and quite the equal of Ben in wildness. Hilariously, he'd recount how he stick her vibrator in a pint of Fullers beer and watch it froth all over the place. Under the quickening disintegration of everyday mores no matter what safety shots you make nothing seems to remain stable for long. Would it was so easy! Sadly the new couple quickly broke up. We were the last persons to see Marion alive as an hour later she was murdered by an unknown assailant. As for Ben Trueman he picked up the pieces and carried on.

There was no question Ben would fall for the con of education for the working class simply because, unlike so many others, he never felt sufficiently resentful to crawl into the middle classes himself. From youth right up to this day and age Ben has continued to work - if one can call it that - applying himself to various manual trades. To get away from all the imploding pressures with the defeat of the late 60s he opted for farming for a few years employed as a farm labourer to an ex-Communist party farmer on the moors near Halifax in West Yorkshire. Even away from it all mayhem was always Ben's closest companion as a nascent Angry Brigade - unbeknown to our friend - camped out with him enjoying a holiday in that wild and beautiful scenery would with their newly acquired armaments, take more than a few pot shots at the teeming game. Elsewhere, on the buildings when Ben was around, uproar was always in the offing, decking sub-contractors who instead of paying up, kept their hands in pockets. Like the best of King Mob he remained an un-reconstructed scoundrel and when shall we see the likes of such scoundrels again. The guy still remains a joy to see warmly greeting long lost friends.....

TJ (TIM) CLARKE

“If I cannot have the proletariat as my chosen people any longer, at least capitalism remains my Satan”

(T.J. Clarke. Farewell To An Idea. 1999)

Though one of the so-called leading lights of the English Situationists, if our TJ ever got hold of an idea it was in order to almost instantly betray it. Let's use this occasion to fill in more than a few unsavoury details to debunk any myth that's grown up about this guy. First of all the proletariat was never his “chosen people”. Throughout his life, Clarke has always tended to relate to those at the sharp end as thick, stupid, a rather philistine and quite beneath him. Now and again, such an attitude, usually politely hidden, would break out in quite bitter and uncalled for personal onslaughts. Once in a pub on Tottenham Court Road sometime in 1973, Tim Clarke quite savagely and gratuitously turned on a bar tender who quite innocently asked him if he was OK. Spluttering with bile he turned on the bar tender: “No, I'm not OK and I'm sick of having all my privileges eroded”. Erosion of privileges would seem to be the core of the matter. Upset that his elite up-bringing, his attendance at an elite public school (Winchester) followed by admission to London University's elite Art History Dept, the Courtauld Institute after a stint at Cambridge, was in danger of coming to naught, as, after all, he'd done his self-destruct stuff having participated in the notorious Situationist International, surely that could mean having courted career disaster? In that sense it's understandable for a man in his then possibly precarious position to turn venomously on a barman he may have felt possibly he might one day have to become if all his treasured “privileges” were taken from him. He'd glimpsed the anti-careerist Situationist abyss and he'd recoiled in fear and horror! Yet hadn't this man



who proclaimed his knowledge of the history of the self-destruction of the artistic avant-garde suffered a memory lapse? Hadn't that principled Surrealist, Benjamin Peret, through one of the bouts of periodic poverty he was so accustomed to had stints employed as a barman? Benjamin Peret a man who made many creative breakthroughs signaling the end of the poet's role like his early commitment, gun in hand (c/f that lovely photo of him with rifle and a cat on his knee) to the anarchist militias in the Spanish insurrection of 1936-39, who in his later years wrote a passionate historical factograph on the history of the Brazilian slave revolt and who also moved towards a more cogently revolutionary anti-trade union stance in collaboration with George Munis.

But he need not have worried as his paid-up intellectual future career was secure. Nay more than secure. Tim Clarke was to become the rising star in the Art History firmament as throughout the following decades he was to produce a series of art historical books tepidly analysing one movement after another from the late 18th century to the mid 20th century. Well, it wasn't quite tepid as he raised valid points here and there only to drown them in a deluge of side-tracking and deliberate obscurantism. It was necessary to do this as all were published by big, Anglo-American, middle of the road publishing houses that would drop any radical statement like it was a scalded cat. Two of his early efforts were published by Thames and Hudson *Image Of The People* and *The Absolute Bourgeois*. Clarke bears comparison with Umberto Eco in Italy whose novelistic pursuits like *The Naming of the Rose* marking the end of his radicalism was nicely turned into an appropriate wall slogan; "Here's a policeman – there's an echo". One anti-student, Rob Horn and connected to the pro-Situationist groupuscule, *Infantile Disorders*, scrawled something similar on Clarke's faculty door at Leeds University which read: "Tim Clarke may present himself in the image of the people but he's still the absolute bourgeois". This is in fact truer than one cares to realise. T.J.'s father was the esteemed (sic) Sir Otto Clarke, the top Whitehall civil servant who supervised the production of the super sonic, transatlantic carrier, *Concorde*. According to TJ his illustrious father provided the name "Concorde" to the supersonic aircraft. One of the engineers who worked under Sir Otto said of him, that you "never got twelve pence to a shilling". The same could also be said of his illustrious son, the future Sir Tim.

Although playing with the Situationist name tag which, no doubt provided some radical background cred, T.J. Clarke never put his life on the line. He always made certain that his economic future was more or less secure. His radical sounding theoretical elaborations when he was a member of the Situationists were made when living on a student grant in Paris and London. After that it was from lectureship to lectureship, on and on and up and up through academia to a top Professor's role at the University of California. Clarke's non life has been completely covered over by the mantle and protective shield of elite educational institutions. How can all of this square with a passionate yearning for authentic life, when all his existence has been spent in actively promoting alienation and never once taking a walk on the wild side? It's doubtful whether he even took a menial job during vacations! No wonder this creep has no feeling for the proletariat.

Don N Smith, a long and forgiving friend of this petrified fossil and the most aware by far of that early elite band of Situationists hailing from public school backgrounds could, on the one hand say; "He, (T.J.) is the most intelligent man I ever met," at the same time making lame apologies for Clarke's academic careerism: "Well, what else could he do?" What of course this implied was an underscoring of that familiar emphasis on social provenance and social determinants so beloved of the English bourgeoisie. And for those present the unspoken bottom line was all too clear – "therefore what else could you do other than survive through casual labour, welfare and building sites". This is hardly the atmosphere and stuff of transgression and the choices that can (and must) be made by one and all though it accurately reflects the seeming immutability of the social apartheid in these islands.

Choices can and are made but for Tim Clarke there was to be no *This Way Down or Sunk* – that memorable title of Franz Jung's, the German Dadaist's autobiography. Clarke never wanted to be included among workers even living within their social space, or even using the same bar or pubs as them, nor did he ever want to be in a position where all jams were permanently kicked out should he ever wish to express himself radically again.

To be sure bitterness can be more than detected in this long and overdue commentary but that is because something else really mattered. These people, this Situationist elite were, for a brief moment, sharp. In fact, they were razor sharp. There were no better in their general grasp of things and in the beginnings of

a critique of the totality pertaining specifically to these islands on the basis of a universal, but on-going grasp of negation and revolutionary critique relevant not only to here but elsewhere throughout the world. During this period Tim Clarke did contribute considerably to then unpublished texts such as *The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution*. In this text his knowledge of the self-destruction of modern poetry was eloquently put to use. More importantly, over and above any danger of falling into the role of writer and theoretician (roles which were adamantly rejected at the time) were the on-going conversations and that passionate desire to seek each other out as states of euphoria were reached and insights and ideas were developed in run-down bed sits, pubs and cheapo cafes purveying English junk food. Tim Clarke contributed superbly to all of this - now re-counting De Quincey's life on the London streets, followed by an accurate insight on Henri Lefebvre's *The Sociology of Marx* - "well the title is a dead giveaway".etc. Examples are too numerous to mention. These weren't insights for the sake of clever insights but were viewed as prelude to action, to make a point that could have maximum subversive impact.

However, that excellent lucidity of TJ was extremely short lived and though repeating some of what we've mentioned previously, having no taste for life on the margins, in no time Mr. Clarke obtained a secure full time lecturers tenure at the University of Essex. Being one of the hot spots of student revolt and educational, anti-institutional vandalism in England in the late 60s, T.J. was caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, Clarke knew full well that the leftist lecturers at Essex were theoretically under developed and retarded, most having some vague Trotskyist orientation, he quickly got annoyed with them exploding in exasperation at their sheer ignorance. In particular, there was NLR hack Peter Wollen who some 20 years later was to come round to a garbled situationism helping produce the I.C.A./Verso garbage in that touring exhibition from Paris to London to Boston in 1989. (Later Clarke was to attack this caricature of an update). On the other hand, Clarke was himself now ensconced in a petty power position and he was being undermined from below once students began acquiring a realisation that their courses were a smokescreen of distortion, lies or at best, half truths. They responded accordingly by taking little interest in courses, exams, tutorials and the rest of the academic paraphernalia. Some knowing that our TJ had helped translate as well as contribute to an Afterword on; *The Poverty of Student Life* (and a splendid Afterword it was too) didn't bother to do much at all about their looming B.A. finals or end of year exams. As a kind of shock tactic which he presumably hoped would have some aura of revolutionary truth (!), Clarke failed the lot of them possibly because he was beginning to see them as little more than self-indulgent spoilt brats or possibly again, simply for the arbitrary shock value. In reality though, it's what happens when a poacher becomes gamekeeper as no matter what, after awhile, you start performing the way the system wants you to perform. However, it didn't go down too well among his mates outside education! No doubt feeling guilty about this perverse type of skewed praxis, Clarke, a few years later at Leeds University, was to award some Infantile Disorder students with 1st Class Hons even though they openly criticised his role.

This was part of the nub of a serious contradiction though and not a minor discrepancy. He'd been faced with a choice right back as a young lecturer at Essex University. TJ had to bite the bullet but refused to do so. Instead of realising he'd made a big mistake quitting his art historical role, he massively consolidated his initial backsliding. In parenthesis, we're not calling for a kind of steadfast purism here. It's hardly surprising if in fear or pain or what have you, you retreat and take steps backward getting lost in a labyrinth, providing you come through such detours relatively quickly. Such experiences can be treated as a temporary loss something which may in the long run strengthen you. Perhaps this was what was meant by Nietzsche's comment somewhere: "The path towards eternity is bent". Instead Clarke substituted such hard decision by pursuing the realization of his very saleable art historical commodities which have the illusion of profundity, of thoughtfully picked out, precise words, phrases playing on a mimicry of "great" writing when this cascade of words is merely a decorative cover for what he must know deep inside himself is deliberately misleading deploying arguments specializing in pulled punches. Such books have to be written this way in order to lever grants from various bodies and obtain permission from university Regents whom Clarke thanks befitting any groveling careerist. To get published like this isn't merit in the real sense it's merely been good at arse licking and brown nosing. In short, a life more or less to the likes of his family destiny and truly a son Sir Otto could have been proud of. Let's face it; art history has always been one of the acceptable faces of finance capital, of high rolling antique and property assets brought to realisation by an endless accumulation of hype. Is he therefore that much different from his erstwhile younger brother - that rising star and Minister of Education Charles Clarke who has been mooted as leader of the Labour Party once Blair steps down?

As if to counter this knowledge that he dare not acknowledge in himself, TJ Clark produces the odd radical pamphlet. In the late 1990s in collaboration with Don N Smith, he produced a kind of 30 years on (in style at least) imitation of the Afterword to *On The Poverty Of Student Life*. It lacks by a long way, the original power and promise of that Afterword but as things go and as a sad general comment upon the sheer emptiness of the present, it's better than most things presenting themselves as critique. And, furthermore, when Tariq Ali (still some kind of social democratic Trotskyist) called Tim Clarke's *Farewell to an Idea*, the 1999 book of the year, you know you're in trouble. Not that Tariq Ali has improved since his no-business-like-show-business militant days of the late 60s. His critique hasn't got any better though his money making skills have vastly improved cornering a large part of the media/TV business outlets emanating from south east Asia.

Epithet: " And every glory that inclines to sin

The shame is treble by the opposite."

Shakespeare: *Edward 1* 11.

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### **DON NICHOLSON SMITH**

What can you say about this guy? Certainly he was one of the best of the original Situationists in these islands in terms of his general theoretical grasp, his amiable bingeing ways possessing more than a glimpse of problems the rest of the elite were blind to, particularly, the social apartheid and the difficulties you have with it. This had more than a little to do with his own precarious position being a somewhat marginal interloper among the traditionally English middle classes able to see the predicaments of both sides though finally and with much internal anguish, to side with that elite, Nay more: Never ever to break with it retaining many a devious link. In practice he nobbled himself by constantly riding both horses at once trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. In his youth having been sent to some notable public school or other, possibly as a scholarship boy it would seem probable that he constantly had to guard himself against vicious put downs from the offspring of the traditional, often unspeakably crass and rich ruling class. As Chris Gray said of him at the moment of impending general collapse in 1969: "He has the character armouring of a World War Two battleship" – a comment made not in anger as it was attempting to find a kinder and deeper critical sympathy.

Though constantly fraternising with so many who carved out nice little, and not so little careers for themselves, especially in academia, Don never took up any obvious cadre role himself settling down into translation work from French into English. It was an occupation he increasingly took very seriously indeed so much so that it effectively put on the back burner any original contribution he might have wanted to make himself and which he was more than capable of doing. Often the guy has worked for much lower translation rates than is the market norm in order to translate books by Debord, Lefebvre and Vaneigem. Sometimes he worked for nothing as when he translated *N'Drea* by Os Cangaceiros and published by Pelagian Press in England. All of this is of course salutary as these translations are by far the best going. Saddled though between two horses Don has been unable to speak plainly himself. Only, it seems, at moments of real despair (was it this?) could he speak with acute, clued-in anger though never to be followed through into anything more concrete like simply letting flow with the keyboard and to hell with it. He couldn't do such a thing because his precarious self-identification meant he was constantly looking over his shoulder just in case he offended. As he once lamely said -and it casts light on his dilemma - "everybody's right". Well, of course they're not. He meant this though in terms of his diverse circle of acquaintances as for sure, Don had a constant hatred of the real right wing but beyond that his anger was tempered by some form of psychoanalytical even Freudian-cum-Keats-like take on "negative capability" as he perhaps strove to understand the insides of what makes a person tick - only to forgive them. The trouble is does one really forgive like this with a polite glossing over and a forgetting; a friendly conciliatory gesture, maybe a drink together without any argument? For truth to tell with Don after the disarming get together and a sense of

relaxation pending a boot quickly goes in only to be pulled away just as quickly but leaving you in no doubt where your place is in the not so informal hierarchy.

Maybe this is sparse comment upon Don simply because it hurts to write it. Enough to say that he had to leave these islands for New York, a place where class doesn't figure in the same all consuming way and where any social apartheid isn't so particular, often irritatingly miniscule and quite frankly shut down and hostile as it is here. Of course class does figure in America but in a very different way and has more to do with crude money than social provenance and a tendency towards a separate species being so characteristic of here. Certainly the American way of class is less encumbered by baggage but be that as it may. Don always said that the French Situationists didn't have a clue about the peculiarities of these islands. He was right but only to depart to a place which eased his personal sense of being on that particular wreck he was incapable of talking about.

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## PHIL COHEN

The first issue of King Mob Echo contained only one original statement from those who put the magazine together and that was on the back page: Urban Gorilla Comes East written by Phil Cohen and Don N Smith. Basically it's a series of questions about how modern repression works in relation to working class youth. It is, in effect, quite well written put in a short list of generalised, rhetorical, even poetic questions ("Why is King Kong the most heavily guarded animal in the Children's Zoo? Why is he asleep." etc) and is the outline for a kind of research directive for Catch 22, a proposed youth initiative in the East End of London.

Well fine as far as it goes although the statement ends up with a kind of youth/ community cum social work/ anti social work feel to it which wasn't to become obvious in Phil Cohen's orientation until at least a couple of years later when revolutionary hopes were rapidly being dashed everywhere. However, one should have been aware at the time of this tendency that was possibly going to update the face and practice of social work. Over a year later and its example was to prove the point as it influenced; Case Con, the magazine of "the revolutionary social worker"! Since then social worker facelift has spread everywhere throughout the ideological state apparatus cementing the new totalitarianism.

In the meantime, Phil Cohen did engage in often quite inspired acts of revolutionary disruption, general cheekiness and aggression which culminated in the audacious squat in the salubrious mansions of 144, Piccadilly in the heart of London's wealthy Mayfair. However, many of these acts did contain internal ambiguities, which weren't sufficiently thought through. Even at the high point of this audacious squat under the new name of The London Street Commune, Phil Cohen, referring to himself as Dr John, conducted interviews with the press and proposed setting up a sub-cultural research centre based there. (For a few more details see Like A Summer With A Thousand Julys put out on The Class Against Class website). Freddie Cook, a woman from Liverpool and on the fringes of the disintegrating King Mob milieu was really involved in the Commune as she later, spoke about the experience animatedly and with an excellent analysis emphasising the maneuverings which Phil Cohen got up to even at this high point. As with so much other off the cuff excellent analysis, Freddie never put any of this to paper but she did crystallize coherently the dissident tendency in that superb anti-ad for squatting.

Perhaps Aggro the street paper put together by Phil Cohen and published courtesy of the Gutter Press in late 1969 together with cartoons by Irish was better in some respects than Catch 22 some 18 months previously in that it called for some kind of unity among the youth subcultures embracing hippies, skinheads, football hooligans, bikers etc. It identified THEM – the enemy – as parents, teachers, social workers, work and the cops while nonetheless - and contradictorily - in a section called Project Free London, leant towards anti-institution institutions favouring somewhat Resource Centres and organisations like Release, the Simon Community, People not Psychiatry, New Horizons etc.

It was said at the time by the most suss that all the survival tips in Project Free London like how to make free phone calls, secure free travel, fixing gas and electricity meters, kiting cheques and shop lifting tactics was merely an egotistical show-off, a publicity stunt which gave unnecessary assistance to the

authorities exposing survival techniques which should have been kept as clandestine as possible. Whilst this is still true enough on looking back these survival tips seem so arcane and unremarkable as everybody you knew was up to something or another along these lines. Moreover these passages, like the paragraph on shoplifting are so laughably wooden and forced they sound like some fresh-faced innocent who'd just gotten into it! However, over the years bit by subtle bit, all scams and ploys around the refusal to pay were to be gradually eliminated for those at the sharp end and poachers turned gamekeepers played a sizeable part in this close down. Publicising scams encouraged this process at the same moment as criminality and the scams of the rich were to be given an ever freer reign by the state.

Ever after the going has been rapidly down hill for Phil Cohen and all personal integrity came apart at the seams as he fell into the role of the hip youth worker he'd blazed a trail for followed by writing academic sociological books on the youth question his most recent being *The Youth Question Revisited*. He no longer has to keep publishing like that in order to keep his name in circulation as academics must do to ensure further employment as Phil Cohen really is now just too big a name which wouldn't have had the same clout if he hadn't cynically used his earlier revolutionary insights as part of his CV. None of us saw it clearly like that in the beginning as then it was his increasingly unsavoury personal behaviour towards people which caused us to get pissed-off. He used his gay disposition as a power brokers' ploy. Turned on by working class youth he'd seduce some of them bribing them with presents in return for sexual favours. At the same time, he'd pounce off his poorer friends and - one began to sense it - laughing behind their backs that they were mug enough to buy him drink after drink (pleading the usual poverty scam) as he pontificated on how his middle class parents had forbidden him from playing with working class kids and how it had damaged him! Of course there was nothing unusual about this. It was blatant gay rough trade and condescending towards others. However, as Freddie recounted, one or two working class lads would fall in love with him and he'd break their hearts in a couldn't care less type of way. It wasn't liked and according to Freddie who'd been in the squat at 144, Piccadilly, one committed suicide. She was really aggrieved about this.

And then to crown it all, a lectureship at Hendon Police College. It was all too much as Phil Cohen launched his cultural studies programme to sensitise the police in political correctness resorting to occasional TV slots about police racism and...no doubt...the occasional delicate shafting with a truncheon. From then on it wasn't too long before Phil Cohen became the esteemed establishment Professor courted by a litany of big wigs in the civil service, police and top civil rights agencies who fawn at his feet and hang on to his every word as he takes the big time stage in conference after conference mouthing all the acceptable liberal platitudes he helped create and which have now become such a PC obstacle to authentic and accurate expression. Even in 1968 holding tightly on to his Lacan and Foucault Phil Cohen rightly found his allotted place in the post-modernist horror story which was to unfold throughout the coming decades.

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## **PHIL MEYLER**

Phil Meyler was probably by far the most consequent individual to gravitate around King Mob, remembering that King Mob wasn't any kind of formalised, card-carrying group but a field of magnetic attraction spreading ever wider, making it sometimes quite difficult knowing who to include and who not to. Phil Meyler in the 'groups' latter days played more than a big part often quite savagely leaving his mark on this particular scene through his various leaflets, actions and magazines and when drunk, managing to put every bodies back up at some time or another.

Basically, he gravitated towards this fulcrum through some kind of friendship with Ian and Di Clegg whom he quite rapidly thereafter rightly fell out with after a somewhat violent punch-up. After bringing out *Arson News* - a crude but fiery diatribe - he took the kernel of the chaotic King Mob breakthrough and tried to transpose it on Ireland, particularly Dublin, city of his birth. He put together a couple of editions of *The Gurriers* (Dublin lingo for hooligans) which completely upset the two dominant ideologies in Irish life - the Catholic church and an Irish nationalist culture orientation - launching a broad sided, wild attack on both which didn't pull any punches if lacking somewhat in a more coherent theoretical approach that *Red Rat* in Dublin two or so years later, was fleetingly to provide. It was a promise which sadly was never fulfilled. One remembers with delight on first reading *The Gurriers* just how down home, raw and

splendidly nutty it was. After the obligatory attack on professional roles there is the great exhortation: "You must destroy the lorry driver within yourself". Wow, just how do you do that?

Remember though, when Phil initially launched his attack peppered with cartoon strips of nuns saying they wanted to be fucked, there were over 8,000 books banned in Ireland by the 1923 board of censorship dominated by a fundamentalist Catholic Church. His intervention was done in a kind of radical void in Ireland due to a basically intense sexual repression fostered by the church. Its effect spilled over necessarily involving all other aspects of thought and the nascent counter culture there was muted in comparison to America or most other western European countries at the time.

For his pains, Phil's broadsides alerted the unwelcome attentions of the Irish Special Branch who seized what Gurriers they could plus related documents when they raided his Mother's home in Dun Laigoire putting this poor, god fearing, semi-illiterate lovely woman through a horrible ordeal once she realised what blasphemous activities her son had become involved in. It was probably the biggest (and by far the most explicit) anti-cultural intervention that Ireland had seen since the hey day of its avante garde in the early 20th century perhaps since the moment James Joyce was forced to leave Dublin for more tolerant climes. It's worth mentioning some of the choicer examples of Phil's output at the time like the cynically accurate Tony Trend In Carnaby Capers plus some other cartoon strips also distributed in Ireland which further provoked the ire of the establishment there.

However, Phil's major contribution came in the moments after the collapse of King Mob when he tried to grasp a lot more theoretically the nature and whys and wherefores of this collapse recognising clearly the looming reaction ambushing from all sides. In the States he produced a leaflet that he distributed at some New England seminal eco meeting around Murray Bookchin which did not go down at all well. In cartoon form the smell of defeat was put clearly and a character, like in some 19th century English Imperialist African venture, comes out of the jungle exclaiming; "I've been up front Bwana and there's nothing there". Few were sympathetic and Murray Bookchin took the disillusioned young man aside countenancing him to note the whole meal baked bread freely distributed at this venue, the vegetarianism and the on-going alternative life styles etc. Replying, "It's all just become plastic Murray, all plastic" he drifted on to the nearby golf links crying his eyes out. Refusing however, to fall back into any kind of retardation, particularly a re-emerging and strengthening makeover of old leftism or a union-oriented workerism falsely claiming to be "the new unionism", plus the growing eclipse of the critique of art, Phil Meyler was about to produce his best efforts.

In exile from Ireland after his escapades and unable to live in London or elsewhere in England preferring the States, in desperation and despair in early 1973, Phil moved to Portugal (much to the disapproval of those who objected to visiting Fascist countries like Portugal then was under Salazar's dictatorship) where he became a witness and protagonist during the Portuguese revolt of 1974-6. Initially, he put together written comment after written comment on the events there which he dispatched to people in London and America becoming more and more involved with those of a autonomous persuasion like the melancholic and profound Situationist influenced Julio Henriques and those who gravitated around the ultra leftist group Combate. Through our help, having earned enough spare cash through hard graft plastering on building sites what developed from type written sheets to a whole book was published by the Cardanite revolutionary group Solidarity in England. There was certainly a deft re-arranging and probably some editing by Solidarity but they did the thankless and boring task of putting it all together and doing it well. Some people have criticised this move saying it was a step backwards to have consorted with Solidarity but we didn't have enough money or technical means to do Phil's long text with all its telling photos and it was too good to have been left on the side without hope of seeing the light of day. The book also needed to come out relatively quickly if it was to have any effect. Portugal: The Impossible Revolution, was more than good; it was the best book in any language on the near revolution in Portugal. It definitely surpassed Jaime Semprun's book in French which was limited by a self-imposed need to say Situationist theory was being realised in practice by the Portuguese workers as that baneful "Our Party" syndrome gained its hold. Sure, "Our Party" was meant to be somewhat jokingly ironic but in its Debordist rigidity on all matters, it sometimes felt like that you were been given real stick over nothing! Phil Meyler's account was a lot more complex, shot through with that unmistakeable "I was there" feeling not just as an acute observer but protagonist too. In a photo book in Portuguese on the thousands of slogans which covered the walls of Lisbon it's surprising how many of Phil's comments are reproduced from "Football Or Revolution" outside

the Benfica stadium to a sober assessment of possibilities.

Moreover, at the moment of the attempted coup within a coup in late 1975, Phil quickly got together some of his companions, along with others mostly around Combate and began teaching them how to use firearms plus further elements of basic military training which he'd acquired through his compulsory stint in the Irish army where he'd been commended for his adept military prowess with rifles and sub machine guns. They started to laise with soldiers going up to their barracks or check points even asking for weapons which the soldiers weren't very keen to hand over but he didn't have to put his military knowledge into practice. October 1975 wasn't a prelude to the May Days in Barcelona in 1937

## **CHRIS GRAY**

The trouble is in dealing with a personal history/cataloging like this loses much sense of the collectivity which was the most important thing of all. We all bounced off each other. As enumerated in the general, more theoretical part of this book, some individuals were more persuasive and influential than others. This must be said of Chris Gray and as we've said so much about this guy previously the precis we are about to elaborate here concerns his later activities.

Slowly but surely with the decline of the revolutionary edge of the times, Chris Gray began moving towards things which others, forced to confront a sharpened survival, after they'd burnt their bridges and with no money to fall back on, found quite unacceptable. It began by endlessly playing the recently hyped dirges of Leonard Cohen, a pop musician quick to pick upon the renewed feeling of despair and nothingness even, in a sense, before such feelings had actually made their debut! Was Chris Gray thinking about himself when playing for the seemingly millioneth time "and the rain falls down on yesterday's men" or did he think we'd all failed, that we were all yesterday people? But this was merely a taster. Instead of recognising what was tragically beginning to unfold, Chris Gray began to look for answers in dubious quarters few could go a long way with. Dabbling with hard drugs and messing around with various other substances was fine but once serious heroin use was on the cards it was too much as it was accompanied by other interests, theoretical ones, which we were trying to get away from particularly a growing tendency towards mysticism, that quintessentially English fall back when nothing can be sorted out in terms of any practical critical activity. It wasn't just the typical Guedjief/Ouspensky orientation which was there but an interest in Aleister Crowley which quite frankly attempted to imitate the charismatic image Crowley contrived which was particularly effective in seducing young heiresses helping them to part with their wealth. Chris Gray was reasonably successful on this level too making certain that from now on he'd only hang around with women of some means like Lucien Freud's daughter. Moreover, there was a fall back into Beat poetry and renewed friendships with the American Beat poet, Dan Richter and the ex-Situationist, Alex Trocchi although wheeler dealing heroin played more than a small part in the latter relationship. Disappointed that people, mainly for survival reasons, started to get involved in some type of work despite dole culture being still intact, even just coming on stream, Chris Gray on finding a penny lying on the pavement could say "look why work when you can find money lying about everywhere" neglecting to mention that he'd survived on tranches of inherited wealth and now, via the philanthropy of a well-off girl friend who was prepared to financially help. Funny, if you came from the working class it was rather more difficult to come by this solution though with the advent of consumer capitalism it wasn't by any means impossible providing you were prepared to cut out a lucrative, aberrant career for yourself as a budding pop musician, artist, hip academic, ad maker or a drug dealing raconteur like Howard Marks capable of presenting yourself as true-blue posh.

Chris Gray became more than a little interested in the need to find and cultivate "some loony peer" which first saw the light of day in the one and only Manifesto Of The Black Hand Gang. We wrote the first draft of this in the spirit of some kind of drift around the possibilities inherent in James Ward's huge painting of Gordale Scar in the National Gallery. Chris Gray considerably changed the original emphasis and he introduced the guiding light of a possible future benefactor - the loony peer syndrome. It gradually merged into the concept of finding some rich, preferably enlightened aristocratic type who possibly owned a castle and was utterly jaundiced and strangled by the aridity and banality of an everyday life increasingly colonised by commodity production thus searching for some kind of transcendence. If you like a modern

day benefactor prepared to build an even more outrageous version of Beckford's Fonthill Abbey and/or Ludwig the 3rds castle on a cliff above the Rhine in Bavaria or even Coleridge's Pleasure Dome in Zanadu. This new Pleasure Dome though wasn't to be mundane like say the original technological fall-outs based partially on this phantasy and built in the 19th century like Brighton Pier or Blackpool Tower but a fulcrum of experiment where individuals, groups and gangs etc would go out into the world to disrupt a reified everyday life. Inside this castle (preferably) Chris Gray talked about having workshops where all kind of things could be conceived, where weird machines could be constructed and strange costumes sewn together. Then with like-minded people at the helm, epigones of Chris Gray perhaps, they'd break out of the castle running amuck in the streets disrupting boredom and set ways of doing things. The basis for all of this had, of course, been the carnival gorilla/circus horse in Powis Square Notting Hill and the aggressive, bad taste float for the Notting Hill Carnival in 1969 plus those figures originally suggested by Chris Gray, dressed as giant bean cans who'd cavorted through the streets of London calling for revolution and an end to work and boredom amongst other things. This wasn't street theatre as there was no plot or scenario to watch and it was too purely confrontational in a minor, pushy way though the lineage of Dutch Provo could perhaps be called to mind. In any case, street theatre had been met with disdain for its tame set pieces, which merely transferred the stage to the street never challenging the passive audience/actor relationships.

Nothing thankfully was to come of these schemes although Chris Gray spent a great deal of time and energy in the early 1970s looking for some kind of approximation to this ideal patron. Somehow or other he befriended Paul McCartney and did some minor DIY jobs for him like tiling. He also cultivated a rising journalist cum property speculator named Benny Grey. For the time, Benny Gray was a new type of investigative journalist principally highlighting homelessness problems and had been involved with Christopher Booker (later of the Booker Prize yearly literary awards which of course was the art front masking the often brutal exploitation of food processing workers by the Booker food marketing empire). Like Booker and art, Benny Gray's real concern wasn't homelessness but owning homes, and lots of them, making millions of spondoolies out of property deals. Fawning like this got neither Chris Gray nor his erstwhile toff companion, Duffy Jordan anywhere. Neither the future Sir Macca nor Benny Gray was exactly the freaked-out rich looking for some true negative coherence against this banal world. In reality, Gray and Co, were merely the decorative entourage and necessary adjuncts to Benny Gray's hip tycoon-style put-on or McCartney's more "concerned" caring intellectual image and they had no more intention of funding any serious revolutionary project than fly! It was obvious at the time and Chris Gray got very upset with any individual who crudely but rightly pointed this out to him. Instead of being Machiavellian as maybe The Prince calling the shots, Chris Gray was on his knees more or less groveling to them - hardly the strategy of a successful deviancy - seeing "deviancy" as a right on word was very much in vogue at the time. Needless to say gone had the slogan in the old English Situationist adaptation of the original French poster "C'mon he's just another bloody Beatle". To be sure, if Chris Gray had hung on in there he would have probably come across an updated eccentric peer like the hippie oriented Duke Of Devonshire who, as well as being a friend of minor dissident authors and actors like Heathcote Williams and Jeremy Irons, was purported to have a taste for Raoul Vaneigem, the French Situationist who relished passionism.

But there's no way the Duke or even Paul McCartney and Benny Gray would have been on the brink of accepting a thorough going revolutionary critique like perhaps the multi-millionaire entrepreneur, Gerard Lebovici aspired to in France during his long patronage of Guy Debord until Lebovici's death at the hands of an assassin in 1984. Although one can soundly criticise the relationship between Debord and Lebovici,, as the latter certainly related to Debord through his notorious image cultivated in the French spectacle, France was a country where revolutionary uprisings had been regular occurrences since 1789 and where the concomitant ever more lucid disintegration of modern art was at its most intense. Our World Turned Upside Down had been nearly three and a half centuries ago and despite the occasional brilliant revolts and an on-going combative working class (up to say the 1990s) these revolts haven't been accompanied by an evolving and general earth-shattering, theoretical lucidity since that more primitive take on the totality in the 1640s and which then was inevitably so shrouded in religious sentiment.

In a sense, all Chris Gray was doing was handing on to wealthy entrepreneurs and pop stars a more enlightened take on things than they probably wouldn't have possessed otherwise. No wonder Paul McCartney was later to be called the most clued-in Beatle. Interestingly, about the same time, Charlie Radcliffe became an adviser/intellectual-in-harness to Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane. Afterwards, Chris Gray was to apply the same kowtowing technique of "enlightening the boss" to the Baghwan Shree



Rajneesh in Poona, India who was given doled-out potted summaries of Vaneigem and Reich to add to his mystical brew. In any case, this snake-oil salesman liked to add all sorts of things to his ersatz version of old Indian scriptures and remedies and remember he'd started out in as an adherent of the Maoist inspired, Indian Naxalites. On looking at a photo of Chris Gray in the late 70s, Rod B was to say, "here's mud in your third eye." All of this though had to have an air of dare about it and living off the sale of relatively minor amounts of heroin in order to fund a session with the Bagwash in Poona added charisma to both parties.

The castle/ loony peer syndrome in Chris Gray marked some kind of rapport, although obviously more superficially, with the beautiful statements of Ivan Chitchevlov in the early 1950s which were echoed in Chris Gray's *Leaving The 20th Century* in 1974: "Who the hell is going to exert themselves to get another frozen chicken, another pokey room? But the possibilities of living in one's own cathedral" was for Chris Gray a place of material fantasy where all traditional and modern usage be abandoned and where newly regaled and fleshed-out Arthurian legends could venture out from a remote Tintagel castle hung on a cliff face above crashing waves. The trouble is this "grail" wasn't the derive or drift that early psycho-geographical experimenters in Paris had made comparisons with – perhaps in a momentary weak wording – summarising perhaps that the original participants were into something new that had yet to be found. Applied by Chris Gray, this grail was now heading in a much more traditionally English mystical direction. At the time, in the early 70s, it was impossible to separate Arthurian legend from a relatively passive and laid back hippy life style. Revolutionary critique didn't enter into it but neither did historical accuracy. The search for the grail in England or Wales had none of the resonance of similar quests in Europe in the early middle ages that enmeshed with messianic peasant revolts of extreme radicalism in terms of a collective sexuality and often the abolition of property. True, there was much tabooed sexual transgression in the Arthurian legends but this wasn't (and still isn't) emphasised. Rather the emphasis is upon that elite band of knights through their quest bringing about a kind of realm of truth and beauty. Chris Gray at the end of his *Leaving the 20th Century* infamously compares Debord, Vaneigem et al to a kind of new Round Table.

In truth it would have been more appropriate if you really wanted to communicate through past references if Arthurian legend had been side-lined in favour of the Peasants Revolt of 1381, Robin Hood, the plasterers revolt during the reign of Henry the Eighth and what have you, though to be fair these scenes had been mulled over by traditional leftism though not in an inspiring way. It wouldn't have taken much to have written a kind of docu-polemic on the Peasants Revolt emphasising some remarkable facts, liking grinding down all gold to make it worthless, which are usually overlooked in pedestrian histories. In a sense though, Chris Gray at this moment was no longer in the hippy embrace but was on the cusp of new ageism harking back to more pagan times where simple revolts of the oppressed didn't figure. However for Chris Gray the countryside was still a play area to be endlessly disrupted and he'd embark on many a walk in the Lake District (where else?) deliberately leaving farmer's gates wide open.

Although a critique of The Situationist International had become necessary *Leaving the 20th Century* was only symptomatic of this malaise providing no indications of a way out. In retrospect, it was probably at the time impossible to conceive of such a thing seeing we were only beginning to experience the sheer enormity of the defeat. Consider two of Chris Gray's statements from this publication which nonetheless were to have quite an impact on a younger generation heading towards careers via a recuperation reinstating old world specialisms (the artistic/entrepreneurial activities of Suburban Press who helped produce the booklet and a future Punk Rock). "What was basically wrong with the SI was that it focused exclusively on an intellectual critique of society. There was no concern with either the emotions or the body"...."After their initial period, creativity, apart from its intellectual forms, was denied expression." But is it possible to say that the original Situationist critique was intellectual like that? They thought - and thought accurately - but it was essentially anchored in an everyday life resolutely refusing professional roles particularly that of any paid-up intellectual, artist, sociologist or politico. Crisp thought and emotional experience came from the essence of that refusal predicated on the social space you inhabited marking that refusal! Believe us, sex and personal relationships (plus the serious absences which now multiply here through the sheer onslaught of the commodity directed against basic survival communities) are very different on this terrain than those mediated on the selection of status. As for the second italicised sentence, it seems like a coded plea hiding behind the loony castle, weird costume and provocative street displays, like a back door appeal for the reinstatement of art. Chris Gray wanted to bring all of this together in a campaign for a total revolution demonstrating the possibility of life; "simultaneous with the creation of mass therapy".

The therapy isn't defined (what was it; bashing cushions, screaming, endless me me me splurges?) but everyone at the time who had been involved in the "movement" in no matter how half-arsed away, knew now the pain inside as consequence of sheer defeat, or at the very least as the closure of all subjective hopes for a fulfilled everyday life. If we hadn't been united in our assault we certainly were united in our grief! It's difficult though to know in practice how such a therapy could have worked and just how could it have been different from the pandemic of a banal, dumb-fuck counseling that later was to appear as a placebo, achieving at times, pseudo-collectivity through the manipulations of periodic mass market grief fests like that for the obnoxious Lady Di in 1997. Soon after the Free Fall publication Chris Gray found therapy through that pseudo-mystic, the Bagwash, a solution, which was merely a talking/touching/fuck-in for those with economic clout and without any relevance to those at the sharp end who couldn't afford it. He goes on to say that the American and English Situationists wanted: "political subversion and individual "therapy" to converge in an uninterrupted everyday activity". Well, did they? Despite being freaked out, somewhat crazy and depressed there wasn't that much recourse to therapy. Some did but there was a certain pride in refusing to give in to such palliatives knowing full well Freud's rueful scepticism on this crucial point. Rightly so considering how the therapy industry was to colonise society's mores over the next 30 years in an attempt to make us adjust to an increasingly insane society and where even the cops were to become therapists.

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## RON HUNT

Although Ron Hunt, even during the late 60s would have objected to be called an associate of King Mob nonetheless the link was there. Enough has been said about his influence in Newcastle, which was profound but what happened to him afterwards? In many respects throughout the King Mob ferment he was to write some of the most balanced and intelligent leaflets and commentaries. The Brigitte Bardot interview was his as was a contribution called: The Great Communications Breakdown, a previously mentioned text still retaining its merit. Ron though was to become increasingly bitter pushing him in a reactionary direction. Even during this apocalyptic time he wasn't too enamoured of the Situationist critique although he went along with it as his intelligence was too keen not to recognize its inherent truth. Having hailed from a working class background in his teens working in aircraft factories in Bristol and later with a family to support, Ron was understandably hesitant. Despite all the deepening conflicts within Icteric he'd wanted the group and magazine to continue cynically hoping perhaps some research job could come out of it. Maybe Troels Anderson, the hip director of the Moderna Musset in Stockholm might employ him. Possibly through the effect of Icteric Ron gained sufficient prestige to host a superior Descent into the Street which was staged in the Stockholm museum in 1969. The exhibition turned into a display of various re-constructions made in Newcastle like Malevich's Suprematist coffin which Malevich was buried in at Vitebsk, Tatlin's Ornithopter, plus fresh photo-montages illustrating visually the surrealist schemes for the re-construction of Paris which interestingly the psycho geographers of 1950s Paris had rightly objected to because they merely presumed to alter the face of things architecturally, when it was the ambience/potential existing in present day reality that really mattered. Nonetheless, the exhibition was OK as history, particularly as most of the catalogue was in English. Although Anselm Jappe in his book on Debord mentions the exhibition's "excellent iconography" – which was true enough – he fails to point out its essential feature: recuperation. It's perhaps worth quoting at length some of Ron Hunt's introduction here as it is well put, if a little tepid (befitting the mode of recuperation) and in contrast to the often somewhat crazy histrionics of King Mob.

Ron Hunt finally did take the cue from this recuperation. He was to dislike even more intensely the growing Situationist lucidity and refusal to take up cadre roles explicitly saying he "couldn't go a long with that worker thing" putting such sentiment in a greeting card form as; "militant self-sacrifice can be ideological as well as head-bashing for a cause." As if it was that simple as the critique of the modern cadre didn't by any means necessarily mean adopting a self-conscious worker role in order to make some point. Nonetheless, Ron moved up the ladder from librarian to college lecturer and there he stayed put getting more jaundiced by the second (remember Icteric meant "jaundice as well as a cure for jaundice") as he failed to get anywhere in terms of the name in lights which it seemed he'd so much wanted. Obviously he had to get out of Newcastle as he knew he'd be severely punished as one of the instigators of a more general rebellion. He was however able to survive for a while on scholarships with many a willing reference from

recuperators high up in European art establishments. However, in a kind of lacunae before hard-headed career choices had to be made, Ron Hunt wrote a book on the history of modernism and the avante garde which was never published, though not through want of trying. Though again recuperative, it was way better than the ultra safety shot of T J Clark's *The Absolute Bourgeois* published by equally ultra safe, Phaidon Press around the same time, nay somewhat earlier. Knowing it was mealy mouthed in comparison to his own effort, the book infuriated Ron Hunt causing him to exclaim a little nervously that; "Clark needs a rap across the knuckles". Recuperators at war with recuperators, Ron Hunt being much more incisive and plain speaking than Sir Tim.

Moreover, unlike TJ, though from the same neck of the woods in the south west of England, Ron Hunt was from the wrong class and that really mattered in an England where thought is really only supposed to emanate from one class of person. However, if Ron had pushed harder he probably could have got his book published in perhaps Sweden, Canada or the States. If not he could have made 50 or so reasonably presentable photocopies and no doubt something would have come of it. Most likely he lost his nerve. Feeling reaction on his skin –and which sensitive person didn't – he hunkered down under possibly thinking publishing such a text in the looming Thatcherite epoch would no longer be a choice career move. After the defeat of the 60s, Ron became very conscious of safety shots, bitterly retiring into obscurity and full of bile comments towards his former comrades, more or less blaming them for what he regarded as his demise, tending to cultivate the more right wing of local art establishments, fearing the sack, economic impoverishment and the wife fucking off. To top it all and after all he'd said and done in the years of youthful exuberance he embarked on the pursuit of easel painter!

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## THE CONSEQUENCES

Double-reflection. We were necessarily on the same path as our enemies. From recuperation to brutal hi-jacking as everything turned into its opposite.

Looking back on *King Mob* and its times one is struck by how different the general social situation is between then and now. Superficially everything appears so similar. Temples of consumption are literally everywhere and the Society of the Spectacle is now more omnipresent than ever it was in its more youthful phase in the sixties when the spectacular commodity economy still entertained a certain innocence through which genuine revolt could finally unfold. Fashion did indeed accelerate as revolution was treading on its tail. Since then all the attributes of this new and terrible phase of capitalist accumulation have intensified to degrees unimaginable over 30 thirty years ago. The grand manufactured lie is now all-encompassing and pervasive invading every detail of daily life. Truth is silenced like never before as the smoke and mirrors of a deadly magicians trick nightmarishly triumphs everywhere. Without our collective web site – *Revolt Against an Age of Plenty* - numbering merely four individuals, none of our utterances would ever see the light of day. Truly there has never been such a dark time to elaborate the subversive theory of our age; a theory no longer seamlessly bound to the late 1960s.

What we once said in the late 60s cannot be said again as most of it (as has been elaborated here) needs much qualifying and auto-critique if we are to get anywhere. A lot is irrelevant. As Nick Brandt once pointedly said: "We write from the present moving back over" and though at the risk of some repetition, it's a serious of long querulous backward glances that must conclude this hidden history.

In the 1960s we emphasized the totality alright and that essentially distinguished us from what was to come. The totality of what we trail-blazed was immediately lost in all its roundness as the mood was instantly recuperated and modified by a general 'new' culture of hydra-headed, issue politics successfully lobotomizing the general, totalising intent. Thrown back in our faces we hesitantly looked at our uncalled for offspring shaking our heads in bewilderment muttering; "no, no, a thousand times no, that isn't what we meant" even though we were hard put to explain what we really did mean! It's easy enough to say things after the event and one of the constant refrains through this book is an, 'if only' especially the 'if only' of a more reflective foresight. It unfortunately could be said that *King Mob* did realize itself in anticipating many tendencies and trends that mainstream society was to take up with a vengeance later on though it did so by essentially disconnecting each from the other as all notion of the totality evaporated to be replaced, at

best, by a plethora of inter-disciplinary measures. As was mooted in *Once Upon A Time in Nothing Hill* (1988) things were turned into their opposites, or as Vaneigem quipped in the early 1970s; “everything was realized minus the essential”, allowing, with the passage of time, a certain glibness in such an assertion considering this society now has no revolutionary undertow. To be more precise, our take on riot, on never working, on anti-art, on crime, on individual self-expression – and so many other things beside – got more than turned into their opposite as it became impossible to even begin to recognize ourselves in a disastrous outcome we never remotely intended or, even in our most desperate nightmares, we never imagined could happen. Then too if you had a libertarian disposition in everyday life and were especially against racism it was acquainted with an anti-capitalist rebellious perspective. This is no longer the case. Indeed you can be all these things - and with feminism thrown in for good measure - whilst maintaining a deeply submissive, anti-life identification with present day capitalism. A strange and alarming conjuncture is brought into focus not too different in broad outline, if not in subtlety, to that broadly based, cosmopolitan elite perfecting repression and newspeak in the Oceania of George Orwell’s 1984.

Of course what we meant by the totality in the late sixties was relatively limited in comparison to what now would be considered a totality – if ever that crying need is to reassert itself again. Moreover, the totality as envisaged then was set in an everyday life still containing more than a whiff of genuine freedom. By revealing everyday life we also revealed it to the market that was to make brutal mayhem with the concept as our desires and social space were colonized at the same moment as our authentic self was exterminated. In its infancy then, it must be remembered that totality was a concept also aimed for rather than immediately grasped – a way of praxis if you like – as obviously we were often woefully short of sufficient knowledge and experience. The fact that we aimed for totality was in itself remarkable. Essentially it was a notion underpinned by commodification spreading everywhere though in terms of discussed content we couldn’t really then have possibly had any thoughts say on neuro-science, astrophysics, genetics, computers or, surprisingly in retrospect, just how serious the ecological crises was going to be. It could be said too that our analysis of the law of value as the corner stone of total critique was rather woefully absent. Nonetheless, it was rather better that that coterie now who eternally emphasizing the law of value in relation to everything under the sun, completely miss out on the totality of alienation.

Seeing our very essence was instantly denied (the counter revolution was quick, very quick to announce itself) our influence, becoming more diffuse by the day, was merely to change surface appearances which inevitably could only end up by making matters worse as we increasingly, were unable to combat changing (for the worse) times. Truly we were on the same path as our enemies as they rested control from us – a control they’ve grimly and powerfully hung onto ever since.

Centrally for us who had so vehemently tried to realize the rich subversive core of modern art saw our efforts over the decades turned into the very artistic commodities we so despised. We, in turn, were destined to be hung on walls as we became nothing more than a missing link in contemporary cultural history. If not that we only altered the shape of the environment our long shadow providing an occasion for new artistic roles most obviously from graffiti to graffiti artists and a step back into the picturesque.

It may seem ironical after emphasizing the totality but perhaps it’s necessary to go into some of the facets of the totality by deploying a kind of compartmentalization – a contradiction in terms if you like – if only to more exactly pinpoint how, from all sides, we’ve been had! Essentially though one underlying truth pervades throughout: a general drift towards monetary psychosis.

We lauded riot as the great truthful expression which would truly purge us of our present day conditioning and socializing, the authentic voice of our anger and essential in the creation of a new world. Well, we were right as for sure big riots then were impassioned social explosions full of communication and dialogue with strangers about to become friends ever ready to explore all frontiers of liberation. Riots were all-encompassing events and though one could get easily hurt or even killed in them, nevertheless they welcomed allies, were inclusive rather than exclusive. Don’t be afraid - even if shy or timid – join us! And then somehow, bit-by-bit, the whole mood of riot began to almost imperceptibly change as the decades unfolded and the revolutionary impulses waned. Finally riot was either done by militant rote or, as in those spontaneous urban outbursts, began reflecting more and more the hideous fears of the bourgeoisie in seeing an underclass hell bent on the attack and rape of ordinary citizens. This wasn’t what was intended by riot. And for every glorious Seattle or Genoa there were to be all the sickening others providing a venue for a

maimed psyche giving more gist to the mill to the lurid fantasies of a sensationalist press seeing (perhaps even wanting) brutal mayhem everywhere. On our website, Revolt Against an age of Plenty, the introduction to the text on the 1979'80 Winter of Discontent notes the deterioration in the capacity to riot. In an article in the Leeds based Here and now in the early 1990s we noted a similar deterioration in the Newcastle-Upon Tyne riots of 1993. The sociopathic activities in the huge Bradford riot of 2001 where a gang of youths tried to murder drinkers bevying in a nearby cut-price Working Men's Club by blocking all entrances to it with burning cars, meant that what was liberating in this event got lost by the imprint this dreadful incident was to make upon the minds of local people. The first firebomb lobbed at the club was thrown by a mid 40s businessman which in itself clearly states the overlap between gang activity and capitalism. This example of pure fuckhead hate-culture only served to reinforce the judiciary in handing out long prison sentences to those well-intentioned rioters who didn't deserve this judgement and calumny. Now, more than ever, riot, to rewrite Rimbaud, "must be reinvented afresh" by rediscovering its lost innocence.

Closely related to the above we played on the form of the gang more as a two fingers up more than its reality, notably its often repressive and authoritarian hierarchy and most decidedly coloured by the recent experiences of mods, rockers and greasers than more traditional forms of the gang with their baneful lumpen overtones. A gang was a means suggesting violent and vandalistic escape from the strait jacket of a straight (and dull) society as well as something which put a distance to that party structure so enamoured of Social Democrats and Leninists. A gang proclaimed the aura of the urban streetwise at loggerheads with all the new forms of social control spawned by the new era of post war capital. In retrospect all this other emphasis had some kind of *raison d'être* to it if only as a perspective putting some kind of clear blue water between ourselves and orthodox, procedural leftism In short to bring to things a sense of life and urgency. As we've suggested before, unfortunately this positive side was at the expense of a more lucid analysis which should have reminded everybody that the gang unit had to be transcended and that gangs in themselves must acquire the ability to listen to what is going on around them (which necessarily implies their immanent end) as in themselves gangs are also useless and going nowhere.

Unfortunately, much of our gang emphasis, and unforeseen ourselves during the brief moment of King Mob, was as the decades passed by to become the form most perfectly compatible with an absolute finance capital. Times now favoured the racket, the vicious clique, the renewed robber baron tendency, the para-state drug cartel which could run a government. Mirroring this, on the street, the gang, in its most avante garde form, became the non-racist posse colonizing the very essence of a riot having lost its revolutionary innocence utilising a warped, almost psycho-geographical marker, as a means of mapping out its essential stake out, its future market. The dominant feature of the contemporary street gang was to become that of an un-licensed, wildcard, brutal business superceding the image of the old lumpen gang and, more latterly, that of sub-cultures and marginality. Spontaneous urban riots dominated by gangs thus no longer presaged victory over the machines of permitted consumption but a means of grabbing the commodity within its own term minus the drag of having to pay for them.

Fuckhead culture and its general reflection in Rap is the horrific recuperation of a revolutionary praxis emanating from visceral impulses marking the end of modern art nuanced by the free market and capitalist aggression in everyday life. Ending up with maimed praxis it now means vicious psycho assault proclaimed everywhere. To be sure the revolutionary praxis coming from the fall out of modern art must upset and disturb in its urgency but it mustn't capsize into a blatant elimination of those people existing all around us (just in case everyone's forgotten) who are the subject and means of generalized escape from these hellish conditions. Such a process must be infinitely dialectical full of an ever-increasing wisdom and forthright criticism plus more than a dash of seeming madness and imaginative leaps.

Art throughout the early decades of the 20th century had to envelope and develop by fits and starts, revolutionary praxis. There was literally no escaping such realization. It could though be diabolically side-tracked and this has become the very putrid essence of the achievement and tragedy of the epoch we are enduring, hanging on as we are to sanity by our very fingertips.

Again we must reiterate that all these things are inseparable from each other as each flows into the other. The same goes for crime. To put a new or at least revived emphasis on crime regarding the part it plays in social revolutionary acts was, in the late 60s, justified but look how rapidly such emphasis lost its

radical cutting edge as the capitalist mode of production itself has since then taken on more than a gangsterish hue. In fact crime and gangsterism has become its very essence permeating its highest echelons and well mimicked on a street level by a plethora of mugging, petty burglary and never ending assaults on poor neighbours. And we who loved the street; that aura where encounter and liberating potential lay, where the real future would unfold, saw it stolen from beneath our eyes meaning that emphasizing crime as something emancipatory in itself and set against unimaginative and routine ways of a deadening daily life, will never again be at the heart of a liberating social critique. Society isn't dull so much as just plain frightening and we don't need to be terrorized anymore.

Terrorism has become the foil, the means by which to seal our fear – a method the authorities have engineered to perfection to suit their own diabolical ends – that chimera and sometimes reality which stalks our everyday life. In this grim reality our terrorist style address which King Mob deployed and which had a certain innovatory dash to it at the time couldn't be more inapplicable. True, we must still critique forcibly and be unrelenting but we can no longer give the State any leeway on this matter and we cannot supply them with the arms - meant here in the broadest sense of the term - which can assist in our future demise.

While we are mentioning arms we can only be more than careful in proclaiming old shibboleths like the arming of the working class. What resonance can we get from that old maxim with arms proliferating everywhere in the midst of mass paranoia and sociopathic impulses everywhere? As we've said before; arm the working class the better to shoot each other and/or as a means of proclaiming gangland ways or securing immediate survival – and perhaps a little bit more – for some small unit of people. Now we have under our belt examples like Albania in 1999 when an armed and seemingly insurrectionary population staged an 'uprising' which despite some anarchist eulogies made not the slightest difference in creating any hoped for wider social revolution. Basically Albania was a gun fest reinforcing crime and general gangland activities as the small amount of true subversive actions and tendencies retreated into almost total insignificance.

As for all the youthful zest which is essentially at the core of all genuine social revolt when will we see the likes of it again? Will we ever be able to eulogise youth like we once did now that a huge part are so enmeshed by the specific logic of the commodity they behave according to its inherent table turning mystifications? Once we could readily enthuse over Lautreamont's maxim; "The storms of youth precede brilliant days" noting (even then!) he cautions with "precede". We could identify with the sub cultures from Teds, to Mods and Rockers and most obviously, the Hippies (though well noting the Hippies obvious inadequacies) while we, rather masochistically perhaps, lauded far too much, the more violent sub-cultures. Generally though we were thrilled by the better qualities of all of them as truly at the time, they were indeed pointing to something better than passive acquiescence to spectacular consumption.

Today we are presented with the end of sub-cultures, themselves living on as mere shadows and ghosts of their former glories. Within this lacunae "Fuckhead culture" has been spawned supported by a veritable industry of social workers and agencies empowering a victim syndrome never apportioned to the real sub-cultures of yester year. Thus moulded by an arm of the state their hazy use to capital isn't like the traditional Marxist "reserve army of labour" as these people simply aren't "good enough for work" as one of the characters at the beginning of Reservoir Dogs says. Fuckhead culture does equate though with an arditti of out of control community scabs readily attacking all and sundry (ironically a kind of nightmarish pastiche of King Mob provocative intervention) assisting – unbeknown to themselves – the state in curtailing many hard won rights the people forged for themselves over centuries resisting enclosure, limiting the power of landlords, and keeping some social space relatively free of capital. Worse than that, an outrageous free market finds Fuckhead culture useful, if only be selling its image back to them and the state finds its role useful, even perhaps formidable, in helping suppress authentic protest simply in keeping people locked safely up behind doors during their leisure time. It's as though spontaneous youth rebellion is more split down the middle than ever before, a stark choice between splendid children's riots opposing war on Iraq and a form of anarchically driven Fuckhead authoritarianism claiming and maiming the street. No wonder there's been a hideous revival in its fortunes in the wake of the so-called 'victory' in Iraq. We weren't the only ones aware of the subterranean relationship between these two seemingly disparate phenomena, but then the concept of totality always was a bonus.

Between these two extremes, for a brief period there was the inspiration of marginality. For certain King Mob and the more committed hippies were its harbingers forging "dole culture" as it was once

nostalgically called. In the despotism of the free market dole culture could no longer be an option even though this form of resistance was, more often than not, safely recuperated and hedged in exhibiting itself as nothing more than harmless rebellion. (e.g. things like the “Demolition Decorators” of the 1970s). All such different ways of attempted survival, living and outlook were to be completely eclipsed in a brave new world of what American neo-liberalism was to call presenteeism i.e. the worker instead of never working never leaves work.

Thus sub-culture has given way to sociopathic expression and become perfect foil of a sociopathic mode of production and consumption with its nexus located in the image of the crackhead gang. It is also in the light of such developments that we must also put our fascination with the deranged and psychotic in the late 60s. No longer interesting examples of damaged psyches pushed to a limit, the hideous underbelly of a capitalism with necrophiliac tendencies but something tending to more closely dog us personally penetrating into our inner being. Shortly we shall all be mad, utterly depressed or – as a kind of reflex tragic outcome – suicidal exponents of a suicide capitalism.

If all this is over the top nonetheless you cannot be blamed for such a bleak take on things that possibly coming our way soon. Over the last three decades conditions have got worse and for those who’ve lived through it, there’s probably nobody on this planet that would deny it. As for us, the heady, well-intentioned protagonists of total revolution, for certain we weren’t prepared one iota for the long, drawn out, hideous collapse in the offing and still with no end in sight. Everywhere subversive tendencies stalled, even lost sight of going into sharp reverse or turning into their opposite. We played with all kinds of drugs, some light, some heavy only to quickly oppose Class A drugs like heroin and especially – though much later – crack, as once hitting the working class poor, they created mayhem severely hampering open class struggle. We welcomed the breakup of the uptight and impossible nuclear family only to see its disintegration often spawning monsters.

As Henri Lefebvre said sometime in the sixties: “The worst alienation is the blocking up of development”. Instead of changing things, things changed us. Disoriented and in increasing limbo we gradually lost all sense of ourselves and where we’d even come from as memory was consciously assisted in its annihilation by absolute capital. Thus with our own physical space broken into pieces and increasingly hapless we became prone to an easier-by-the-day manipulation.

Let’s as a finale return to the very beginning of this book – to the moment of the *depassement* of art – and where King Mob stepped in only to come to a quick and abrupt end without hint of intelligent supercession. Isn’t it a horrible though mighty achievement that absolute capital can successfully (seemingly forever?) divert the revolutionary consequences of modern art freezing its essential critique into spectacular effect in the general display of the modern commodity in urbanism, in media, in fashion, in language and performance etc, reproducing modern art’s more innocuous legacy everywhere without even a hint of its explosively revolutionary core? There was more than a hint of that in the late 60s. It has to return.

DW: 2003