

# LET TERS

**an anti-political communist journal**

*#2*

## Dearest Reader,

The second issue of this anti-political journal comes just as spring emerges from winter. As periodicals appear throughout the year the changing of seasons is an often-used poetic device in opening notes from editors, but I am hard-pressed to come up with a springtime metaphor that fits with the pessimism of this publication.

In keeping with the first issue, *Letters* continues to explore the rarely navigated waters of anti-political theory, pro-human nihilism, communist pessimism - whatever you want to call it. This issue features another dialogue, an article exploring DIY and factory work, a short re-examination of the term 'pro-revolutionary', and more excerpts from *The Unseen*.

Please contribute timid and challenging letters, responses, articles, and reviews for publication. The deadline for the second issue is August 10th 2008, and submissions can be sent by either email or post. As before, individual issues are available free to prisoners and for postage to other folks upon request. Unpublished correspondence and criticism is also welcome.

cautiously yours,  
*the editor*

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What Nietzsche perceived was the falseness of preachers telling us to do this or that, using language to depict evil, exhorting us to struggle. "My experience," he says (*Ecco Homo*), "knows nothing about 'willing', 'working ambitiously', keeping in mind some 'goal' or realizing some desire." What could be more contrary to the propaganda of Christians and Buddhists? ... In the end, the only knowledge Zarathustra's students gain is to repudiate their master. For it is said to them they should hate him and "raise their hand against his crown." For the follower, the danger isn't the prophet's admonition to "live dangerously" but not having "something to do" in this world.

- **Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche***



DIY

frère dupont

The aspiration to Do It Yourself (DIY) has never resembled a Marie Antoinette style play village more than Marx's version of it:

*...while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.*

But the question he doesn't answer is how do workers learn the skills for communist life when their bodies and minds are dominated by capitalist technique? How would the proletarianized workers of the factories, who he defines as 'a special class of workmen habituated to machinery' then break free from what he calls this 'torture' and then summon up the memory of the skills that would enable any given person to become accomplished in 'any branch he wishes'? The question of supersession is first of all a matter of practicality. And proletarianization, that is habituation to machinery, is predicated upon the forgetting of skills and the loss of what Marx calls, 'the whole of a man's working capacity'.

*Machinery produces the same effects, but upon a much larger scale. It supplants skilled laborers by unskilled, men by women, adults by children; where newly introduced, it throws workers upon the streets in great masses; and as it becomes more highly developed and more productive it discards them in additional though smaller numbers.* (Marx, **Wage Labour and Capital**, Chapter 9)

DIY as a concept and practice in capitalist society has been reproduced within social life as a compensatory response to the

mass deskilling (that is dehumanization) implied by factory production, 'The lifelong specialty of handling one and the same tool, now becomes the lifelong specialty of serving one and the same machine.' In response, millions of workers have nurtured capacities outside of the productive realm, and undertake DIY activities as a hobby which returns something to themselves that is otherwise lost in production.

However, DIY culture is progressively supplanted by the culture of the commodity as the domination of production over life advances and accelerates. The spectacular character of commodity based culture dominates subjective consciousness by delivering a series of 'shocks' to the individual's perceptual apparatus, the regularity of which causes the subject to become both accepting of such shocks (that is accepting of the noise and movement of machines) and also dependent on them (that is, the individual becomes disorientated and threatened when the machines are turned off).

*The more readily consciousness registers these shocks, the less likely are they to have a traumatic effect... The acceptances of shocks is facilitated by training in coping... The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli... Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training... What the Fun Fair achieves with its Dodgem cars and other similar amusements is nothing but a taste of the drill to which the unskilled labourer is subjected in the factory.* (Walter Benjamin, **On Some Motifs in Baudelaire**)

The essence of the proletariat's dependence on factory production is simply stated: the money that is earned as wages is used to buy the means of existence which were once produced autonomously, 'not only are the expenses of his reproduction considerably lessened, but at the same time his helpless dependence upon the factory as a whole, and therefore upon the capitalist, is rendered complete.' To the uncertainty of autonomous subsistence is proposed the constant pitch of dehumanization in return for guaranteed reproduction, the

exchange between capital and labour has been represented by some writers (Camatte et al) as the domestication of the proletariat. The wage earners of previous eras had the economic freedom to withdraw their labour and retreat to a subsistence level where they could directly utilize their skills as a means of producing their lives. But within the capitalist relation this withdrawal from employment has become increasingly unrealistic because the psychological means necessary for an individual to impose a different circumstance upon his/her life has been erased: "it is not the worker who makes use of the conditions of his work, but the conditions of work that make use of the worker.'



*At the same time that factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily*



*and intellectual activity. The lightening of the labour, even, becomes a sort of torture, since the machine does not free the labourer from work, but deprives the work of all interest.* (Marx, **Capital**, Volume 1, Chapter 15)

The deskilling of the proletariat, amongst other factors, and thus the reduction of proletarianized individuals to the status of machine appendages, increased the dependency of those individuals upon factory production to the point where 'going back to land' has become inconceivable – at the level of 'the whole of a man's working capacity' the 'collective labourer' is very far now, and much further than when he wrote the German Ideology, from the capability to utilize the necessary skills and knowledge that Marx saw (and quoted above) as the basic activities in communist society. The practical knowledge and life-skills of peasant life, what Marx calls 'Activity', that is the genuine material basis for a communist society, have long since been lost from large sectors of the proletariat as it is molded into the productive form.

*The technical subordination of the workman to the uniform motion of the instruments of labour, and the peculiar composition of the body of workpeople, consisting as it does of individuals of both sexes and of all ages, give rise to a barrack discipline, which is elaborated into a complete system in the factory, and which fully develops the before mentioned labour of overlooking, thereby dividing the workpeople into operatives and overlookers, into private soldiers and sergeants of an industrial army.* (Marx, **Capital**, Volume 1, Chapter 15)

DIY appears in human activity as the ghost of a memory of peasant autonomy, a trace capacity that is all but lost amongst the din of industrial discipline. Inside father's shed – it is for me, the first wholly deskilled, to remember the last mass generation of practical men. Surveyed briefly: the lathe, the tools on the racks, the boxes of nails and screws, the pile of wood. Run a finger through old sawdust. Look out at a flock of goldfinches on the birdfeeders he'd made. The factory bus left the corner at half six, six mornings a week and passed, by some roundabout

route, through the surrounding villages on its way to the factory. It returned about ten to five in the afternoon. Some winter mornings looked out at the men in the dark, on the corner, and watched them waiting. Each thrust into the company of the others by their alarm clock. Their duffle bags on their shoulders, joking or silent. And on Sunday mornings, no Wii gaming for them, they'd be making birdfeeders, just to fill the time. Work was real, the source of it all, and they longed to be there just as much as they hated it to the very dregs of Friday afternoon.

The question of productive activity outside of the wage relation (DIY) brings to the fore a number of contradictions within communist thought, and in particular the contradictions between the theoretical functions of objective 'criteria' and subjective capacity.

It is an unfortunate fact for those looking for signs of a communist future that all genuinely proletarian revolutionary attempts have been undertaken by populations only recently proletarianized. That is, all revolutionary attempts (from the perspective of the workers) have been conducted in terms of the workers' own sense of priorities, capacities and scale which they have carried over from their peasant existence and which in turn facilitated the perception that their interest was/is in direct contradiction to the priorities, capacities and scale imposed by capital. As access to these revolts was progressively hedged off so the proletariat became increasingly 'dependent' on and 'habituated' to factory production, and thus more inclined to choose the option of reproducing itself within the capitalist frame — the positive aspects of revolt became increasingly referent-less and more abstract.

It is the immediately felt distance from factory production that suffuses the clear self-interest of newly proletarianized populations and it is this sense of distance that grounds their hostility towards capitalism, and substantiates their practical critique. The distance between what they are confronted with for the first time, their being a function of the production line, and what they remember they are capable of from their previous

circumstances supplies the energy for, and a positive pole to, their revolt.

Proletarianization is experienced as loss of human capacity, compounded by the progressive forgetting of all forms of activity other than that imposed within the productive relation — loss of memory in this case supposes a loss of distance between worker and work which in turn supposes a loss of capacity to revolt against work.

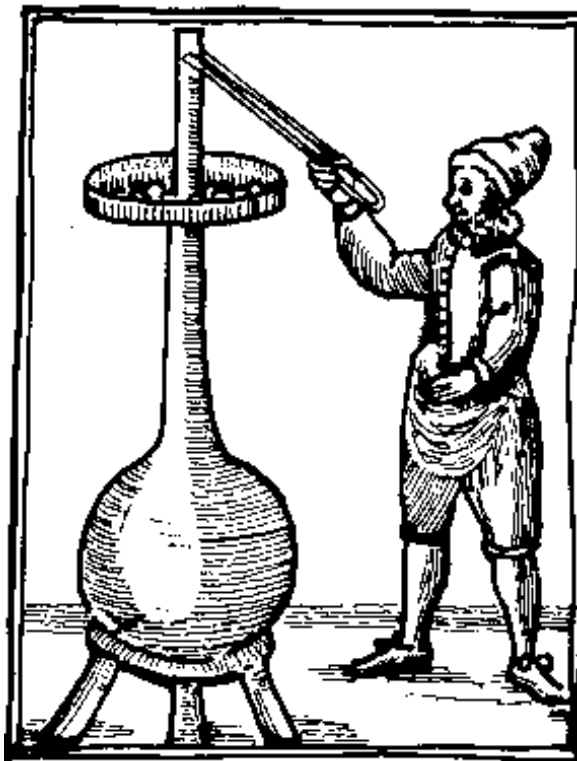
*Some crippling of body and mind is inseparable even from division of labour in society as a whole. Since, however, manufacture carries this social separation of branches of labour much further, and also, by its peculiar division, attacks the individual at the very roots of his life, it is the first to afford the materials for, and to give a start to, industrial pathology.* (Marx, **Capital**, Volume 1, Chapter 14)

In other words, from the perspective of the early proletariat, their antagonism with capitalist production existed (and exists now where populations are newly recruited into factory process) at the level of practical consciousness, or what we call DIY-skills, and the incompatibility of these skills with the progressive habituation process that is necessary for the reproduction of alienated labour.

I have written ‘from the perspective of the workers’ above because the situating of this antagonistic perspective at the beginning of the process of proletarianization flatly contradicts the perspective of ‘history’ as it is described by those communists who see the factory form, proletarianization, and capitalism itself as being objectively progressive in human history.

There is discordancy between the actual experience of workers and the theoretical assumptions of those who speak for History. Whilst it is no doubt true that capitalism, through the historical development of productive forces has accumulated an abundance that might serve as the objective material conditions

for communism, there has been a corresponding regression over the same period in the subjective capacity of the proletariat to make revolution. The longer a population of workers has been employed over time within the factory system, the greater its habituation to the system, and the more alienated it becomes from a skills-base that might supply it with a realistic practical revolutionary consciousness.



From the perspective of 'history', factory production has liberated the capacities of human society at the level of the satisfaction of needs, but from the perspective of the workers it has progressively stupefied and reduced us. In the past, when brought abruptly to each succeeding threshold in the process of

deskilling, and to the further inclusion of the worker within the operations of the automaton, the proletarian revolted in terms of defending that which remained to him of his humanity, i.e. his capacity to exist independently of production. In contrast, our present existence is defined by our habituation to that process, and we have become progressively less able to revolt because we are so lacking in practical skills — this is a result of the progressive inclusion of the proletariat within capitalist process.

*Capital has run away from human and natural barriers; human beings have been domesticated: this is their decadence. The revolutionary solution cannot be found in the context of a dialectic of productive forces where the individual would be an element of the contradiction.* (Camatte, **The Wandering of Humanity**)

It seems that the historical opportunity for a communist movement has long since passed, the continued objective development of the forces of production has cancelled out the historical role of the proletariat as revolutionary subject. This is because the capacity of the proletariat to overthrow capitalism occurred relatively early on, when it was still able to access skills and capacities belonging to another time. This is the opposite conclusion to that made by the historicists who assume that revolutions occur at the end of an era, and that there is, despite the evidence, a real movement present within the existing social process towards communism.

*Negating forces can only arise outside of capital. Since capital has absorbed all the old contradictions, the revolutionary movement has to reject the entire product of the development of class societies. This is the crux of its struggle against domestication, against the decadence of the human species. This is the essential moment of the process of formation of revolutionaries, absolutely necessary for the production of revolution.* (Camatte, **The Wandering of Humanity**)

Camatte, as so many others, was certainly over-enthusiastic in his definition of a revolutionary ‘movement’ which in reality

turned out to be only a widespread but superficial disturbance as it played out in the relation between production and mass culture set within a context of crisis. However, the idea that revolutionary change must come from outside of, rather than within as proposed by marxists, the process of history is a crucial insight which leads us in a similar (if less optimistic) direction to Camatte. If the proletariat has become cut off from history and the historical process that is driven by capital accumulation, and as human alienation from capacity continues to accelerate within this movement, then it follows that eventually the capacity to undertake any autonomous practical activity (DIY) at all will be lost from whole populations as they become indistinguishable from machines. Marx refers to the conflict that occurs between labour and capital as production progressively intensifies:

It is self-evident, that in proportion as the use of machinery spreads, and the experience of a special class of workmen habituated to machinery accumulates, the rapidity and intensity of labour increase as a natural consequence. Thus in England, during half a century, lengthening of the working day went hand in hand with increasing intensity of factory labour. Nevertheless the reader will clearly see, that where we have labour, not carried on by fits and starts, but repeated day after day with unvarying uniformity, a point must inevitably be reached, where extension of the working-day and intensity of the labour mutually exclude one another, in such a way that lengthening of the working-day becomes compatible only with a lower degree of intensity, and a higher degree of intensity, only with a shortening of the working-day.

This will be compensated for within the factory process to some extent, through the expected development of forces of production (a domestication of the rising organic composition of capital) during what is currently predicted to be the 'next industrial revolution' at the level of biotechnological DNA manipulation.

*If the prosthesis is commonly an artifact that supplements a failing organ, or the instrumental extension of a body, then the DNA molecule, which contains all information relative to a body , is the prosthesis par excellence, the one that will allow for the indefinite extension of this body by the body itself - this body itself being nothing but an indefinite series of prostheses.*  
(Baudrillard, **Simulacra and Simulation**)



However, this will inevitably induce a subjective crisis at the level of activity, and consciousness of activity. It is precisely at the juncture of proposed total incorporation of human DNA within

the productive process that we are confronted with an irresolvable contradiction: we cannot be both workers and human beings. At that moment, one or the other will be lost forever.

Or, perhaps not. To quickly sketch another outcome: the acceleration of alienation will cause the proletariat to become so incapable of engaging itself within the productive process as the proletariat and thus will become so inactive (i.e. its reproduction so energy expensive) that it will find itself in a position where it is unable even to fulfill the role of machine functions. Lassitude and disengagement must reach a critical mass and the resultant quantity of subjective incapacity (a locatable subjectivity defined by its unproductive labour), the corollary of the production of life through the mechanisms of dead labour, must eventually overwhelm production through its dead-weight dependency. This subjective crisis will occur in the absence of a recomposition of an active subjective (which has hitherto retired the concept of useful labour) and thus head off reference to the totem of heroic labour that was deployed ideologically by previous communist forms.

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# Taking Aim

on the use and misuse of the term 'pro-  
revolutionary'

“Pro-revolutionary is not a commonly used term. Through its use we hope to denote the existence of a group of people who are consciously for revolution in the here and now. Clearly though, throughout history every revolution has been made not simply by those who label themselves with this or that ism.” — *Assuming Hostilities: towards a pro-revolutionary milieu with teeth*

**Pro-revolutionaries cannot have teeth.** This lack of capacity and agency is precisely why we call them ‘pro-revolutionaries’. The recent proliferation of this term has not coincided with an acceptance or understanding of the pessimism from which it arose, nor has it marked a shift in the activity or dialogue of those who use it.

What grand understatement when the author of *Assuming Hostilities* writes that “every revolution has been made not simply by those who label themselves with this or that ism”! What delusions of grandeur! Those who are most conscious, that is, desirous of revolution, are those who from the start impede and restrict revolution by means of their leadership and influence (or actual wielding of power).

“The use of the prefix ‘pro’ with reference to the consciousness and activity of communists as distinct to that of the proletariat marked for Monsieur Dupont a profound pessimism with reference to the self-evaluation of optimistic revolutionary ideologies — and was specifically theorised to mark precisely the split between consciousness and capacity... [rather than] a concretised relation to an idealised future event” — *one\_shoe*

When ‘pro-revolutionary’ slips easily from the tongues of so many on the movement treadmill, it occurs to

me that we ought to create a new term that will bother and challenge us and not just fall into the fold of communist jargon.

1. What is the relationship of communists to class struggle? What is the relationship of class struggle to revolution? What is the relationship of revolution to communism?

As soon as *we* enter the class struggle we can contribute nothing special to it. All existing organizations, forces, and formations are capitalist. Communism is not a new mode of production: it is the affirmation of a new community. It is a question of being, of life, if only because there is a fundamental displacement: from generated activity to the living being who produced it. People do not become revolutionaries because they are persuaded by the plausibility of certain beliefs or statements but because circumstance forces them into certain acts which when reflected upon produce values that are entirely at odds with present society. We have said all these things before.

2. Similarly, the 'owners of consciousness' (for now called pro-revolutionaries) are not persuaded by the theoretical negation of their implausible beliefs and thick headedness. They too, despite their obsession with positions and issues, must be forced by circumstance to act and reflect on their actions.

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*Mankind sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when material conditions for its solution already exist or, at least, are in the process of formation.*

# DIALOGUE: AGAINST LABOUR

DS and DA

DS:

*In their 'Manifesto Against Labour' Gruppe Krisis examines the labour idol, the ideology of work. Vulcan incapable of crisis. This god of manufacture descends into a landscape of stasis and assumes the project of tearing the roof from economies of scale. Post-Fordism - as part of the larger post-industrial restructuring - emphasized flexibility, information technology and the reclassification of the individual as economic receiver, as consumer speculator, and was intended as the productive path away from crisis. The Manifesto suggests that the diffuse attempt has resulted in a deepening of crisis, to the extent that labour is on its deathbed. The purpose of work, the meaning, is pulled from underneath the worker in this efficiency parade. The worker toils in whatever service is most flexible and accumulative. No longer a creative process to be found, only dead things to be shuffled and sorted, the creator becomes a convenient attachment within the greater process efficiency. In freeing itself of traditional production the economy destroys work, destroys the worker. Production halted, we enter a new phase of crisis.*

*It is an attempt at a much needed critique of post-industrial labouring. At times excellent in its analysis, we do not see much as to where one might go, against the idol. You mention the 'unfortunate call to action'. The self-imposed quality of finding solutions. To take a positive, I think this suggests the compounding nature of anti-politics, the going beyond of Moss, Bonanno, or Beckett even. What is it that you think forces this call to action from Gruppe Krisis? Was this a step out of insurrectionary anarchism, a negative, a compounding? If the struggle against labour is anti-politics are there any subtleties here that we should take note of, in the way of their policy? Or, how do they define anti-politics? In the first issue of Letters, yourself and FD are not in total agreement as to the dynamic between pro-revolutionaries and the proletariat. You suggest that the position is fixed. Is there anything in this manifesto that changes the relationship? Is there a potential for intervention,*

as insurrectionalists would put it? What might these projects look like?

DA:

I want to begin by asking – what does this manifesto by Gruppe Krisis affirm? I don't ask this in search of a positive political project but to reveal what is not negated. Why does this critique of work and (near) rejection of leftism ultimately affirm a political practice of spreading consciousness? This question is more important to me than the specifics of the consciousness being promoted.

Perhaps before going into that I want to state my rejection of their main thesis. I do not think 'labour society' (that is to say, capitalism) is inevitably coming to an end, and your description of contemporary work (*"No longer a creative process to be found, only dead things to be shuffled and sorted, the creator becomes a convenient attachment within the greater process efficiency"*) does not seem to me to be anything new at all. Such a description could easily be of proletarianization and factory work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When has capitalism not been like that? This false claim of 'newness' is the foundation of the political project they seek to create. I am also skeptical of their claim that labour is an "end-in-itself" and not put to the end of commodity production and the accumulation of capital.

I do not think this manifesto changes the relationship between pro-revolutionaries and the proletariat, nor does it offer a potential for "intervention" in the insurrectionist (or any other) sense. The language of "intervention" is very telling because it acknowledges separation. It acknowledges the fixed position of pro-revolutionaries and proletariat that Sam Moss describes so well. When we participate in

class struggle, we do not contribute anything special, no matter how special we are on the pages of our publications or posts on internet forums. The insurrectionist “intervention”, as far as I can tell, is on the level of tactics. For example, in response to protests against the construction of a nuclear power plant, some insurrectionists topple power lines. Breaking and burning things doesn’t offend me, but I think the anarchist mythology of ‘social war’ (which might be compared to the Marxist myth of ‘real movement’) and the turn towards militancy and clandestinity need to be broken down. The former is repeated as a justification and reason for the latter while the latter becomes the proof of the former. Every action, every word, everything that happens is evidence of the social war. The “intervention” of some insurrectionists in the United States is reduced to reproducing police records of local crime and adding in urgent anti-state slogans. It is the anarchist equivalent to the communist “intervention” of publicizing strikes and adding in anti-union slogans. I am getting off topic, but it might be nice to go back sometime and revisit this while keeping in mind developing a critique of ‘radical’ journalism.

While obviously very pessimistic about “projects of intervention”, I’m going to answer your question and toss around some ideas for them anyway as I think intervention can happen within the pro-revolutionary milieu (if not within the proletariat). One intervening project could be a deliberate placing of things where they are not supposed to be – provoking sexual tension and openness against the seriousness of summit protests, a light-hearted but total pessimism against the constant affirmations of activist gatherings, the celebration of inefficiency and unproductivity everywhere. The most powerful intervention is the raising of mirrors in front of ourselves and others. Uncomfortable, dangerous





self-examination is the greatest weapon against optimism and politics.

*Camatte wrote: "It becomes clear that raising the banner of labor or its abolition remains on the terrain of capital, within the framework of its evolution. Even the movement toward unlimited generalization of desire is isomorphic to the indefinite movement of capital." This opposing thrust sets the boundaries of our discussion. What does the critique of the Left in this manifesto mean next to the call for the "constitution of a social movement that puts labour critique into practice (the "prerequisite" of this movement apparently being "a new public awareness")? What is the "struggle against labour" and how is it different from class struggle?*

**DS:**

I'll start off by responding to your comment that what Gruppe Krisis (GK) describes "does not seem to me to be anything new at all. Such a description could easily be of proletarianization and factory work in the 19th century." Well, this is just not so.

The Post-Industrial economy and its labour counterpart have only partially been dealt with by Bob Black and Alfredo Bonanno, among other situationist derived thinkers. The larger milieu has not given this changing landscape any consideration; even those exploring anti-politics often have a misconception of the proletariat as a worker with productive agency. Ignoring the basic that when work changes, the proletariat changes. Even if it is just a slight change, which it is not.

The service industry now makes up some 75% of the labour force. Anyone who has worked in the past 30 years knows that there is a significant difference in working today. How could there not be? Work and its ethic have been dismantled, yet somehow labour becomes an ideology stronger than ever. This is counter-intuitive and poses many problems. From an anti-political perspective I think there is much needed here. In the way of depatterning our working lives, how we think about work and exploring what is possible away from work creation. GK do not answer this, but they are right to poke at the changing labour idol.

Was the worker a convenient attachment in early industrialism? Did the 19th century demand the same flexibility and process efficiency of proletarians? To suggest this is to take the human out of work relations. To suggest this is to ignore important shifts in the ideologies of capital and labour. The relationship of slave and master, of capital and labour, has always been complementary (at what point it becomes symmetrical is debatable). And as we should know of any complementary relation, there are always those who identify with the other, no matter how abusive they may be. Work will always have adherents in both camps. The traditional view is that this complementary relationship is simplified, but we should consider that changes in the valorization process will complicate the relationship.

Post-Industrialism is a separate phase of Capital. It is a changing ideology within both camps. Even today, after the production of goods has shifted to automation, we see a clear

demarcation between secondary and tertiary sectors. Do you mean to tell me there is little difference whether one walks the line in an automotive plant or shuffles digital information in an IT chatroom? There is a difference, and it is quite significant. The latter being a passive transceiver, detailing information already laid out for him by managers. Controllers who likely had no effort in the creative process themselves, apart from sharing the information through computers. Let's not simplify human relations. This difference is further clarified when we expand the timeframe of work. I will give an example.

Five or six years ago I worked in a warehouse where there was talk of unionizing, the employer threatened to fire everyone and relocate the warehouse across town (eventually they did fire everyone and then hired them back on through a temp agency). This is part of the flexibility of capital, which in turn demands a flexibility of labour. The capital of the 19th century was without



computers and unable (or unwilling due to costs) to rent warehouses at will. Such innovations enabled further separation of proletarians from the means of production. We can also see that the formalization of temporary agencies — often involving a year or two probationary period - takes on a sort of legalized lumpenproletarianization. Labourers in the secondary industry often take on the security of illegal immigrants and under the table workers, at least until they have proven they have earned their security. This is a much different ideology than the capitalist of days gone by, who engaged in philanthropic acts to assert a sort of localized nationalism in his workers. I think of how Bonanno described the Fiat workers and how they had celebrations together and cheered for the owner's football team. Work was a community. It was a dishonesty for all involved, but again a difference in human relations that shouldn't be ignored.

I think you are misinterpreting what is meant by labour as an end-in-itself. The concept does not deny that labour is put to the end of capital accumulation, GK explores this in detail. Labour as an end to commodity production though? With that question we have to clarify local or global direction. Globally, labour remains at the end of commodity production, sure. Locally, as I have said, less than 25% of the labour force is producing commodities. This shift is partly due to the inherent contradiction of capital, one cannot accumulate infinitely with finite numbers. In real world economic terms, economies of scale cannot approach this infinity of production due to the conditions of finite consumption. So conditions have to be changed to allow for this approaching infinity. Currency speculation comes closest to the mark. Currency speculation reliant on commodity speculation reliant on the ability to industrialize abroad. The 19th century proletarian you mention is now the Southern proletarian. He is something of a ghost in Oceania.

Why is this so? Might I explain indirectly? Pop culture even suggests this shift in work ethic and actualization, so one cannot claim ignorance. Blue Collar and Roger & Me are well known

films that suggest the impotence of unions and the decaying secondary sector of industry. Office Space said exactly what GK are saying, work is an end-in-itself, a social treadmill. Or more currently, weekly episodes of The Office. Jim says of his performance review 'I'm actually asking for a pay decrease. What if he gives it to me? Then, I win.' The cynic response to careerism is a recurring theme throughout the series. These pop culture references suggest that even 'stultified submissives' are well aware of the diminished value of the worker, that identifying oneself through work is as hip as identifying with monotheism.

Few are organizing over this injury of flexibility, an injury to all is rarely a consideration. Apart from the odd walkout, or strike to guarantee the right to work, fucking the dog seems to be the only generalized act of sabotage. This is not to pass judgment on this sort of thing, as stealing labour time, theft and small-scale sabotage are primarily the only sort of workplace struggle I've been involved in. While at times immediately satisfying, such actions can easily give a very minimal feeling of agency.

This is another important difference for proletarians and pro-revolutionaries today. There is always a balance to things, connections and transmissions, and interference within that. Class struggle is interference within the capital connection. The old interferences of luddism, collective sabotage and unionism have been dismantled, and to some extent even valorized. The atomization of the worker, the isolation of fucking the dog and committing vandalism is not a form of agency that reconnects any sort of balance to the interference. Capital now has inhibitors. But they are not perfect circuits. We have memory and decoding. There are breaks in the interference blocking that can be more devastating than the original interference. People are not going to their workplaces in the night to smash machines, they are going to set off pipe bombs and shoot managers. There are less actions, but when they do occur the acts are unmitigated, almost aseptic in the apparent attitude towards violence. There is often an ambiguous intent. I've worked shipping docks and shitty manufacturing jobs, but the

only time I've ever been around serious workplace violence was at a call center. In a six month period there were two pipe bombs left in the parking lot and a drive by shooting. And it's fairly common for workers in these places to consider calling in a bomb threat to get a day off work. The reduction of labour, the devaluing of the worker, leads to generalized violence.

As Zerzan has pointed out, with Luddism workers began smashing machines due to the inferior products they were being forced to make, due to the devaluation of the labour process. Tools were once, at least partly, in the hands of the worker. An extension of creative process within production itself. There was an 'insistence on either the control of the productive processes



or the annihilation of them'. Capital made it clear that production had changed, that machines were not under labour control. The

labour unions de-escalated the process of annihilation. The next phase was Taylorism, and labour's de-escalation, the walkout, a temporary counterbalance to violence.

Scientific management doesn't really enter a new phase; it merely becomes more complex. Taylorism of the body becomes Taylorism of the mind, and so on. A sort of professionalism without title. The rise of the service sector, or feminization of work within the society without the father. Workers take on the role of the wife, and all go unrecognized. Workers become as Laing's schizophrenics, a situation begging violence.

This culture of violence that exists in the devalued worker is quite important. It either results in a rupture that is impossible for social managers to deal with, making communism possible, or a sporadic and repressive outpouring of violence in the form of psychiatric de-escalation, making communism impossible. And then there is the potential for combined forms, which is the most likely scenario. We see this in France, where recent rioting was much more violent and chaotic than in past moments of rupture. For pro-revolutionaries this means that the hordes likely will not listen to leftists and other managers of revolt, just as they do not listen to the democrats who label them racailles. To some extent there is non-ideology here. But it also means that insurrections and revolt will occur with an outpouring of violence never before seen. Revolt where we may not be able to intervene as we intended. To some extent I take mythic insurrectionalist social war combined with Perlman's internalized war machine. If there is any reality in this, then ideology takes on a rhizomatic role within the insurrectionary groupings. Differences compound one another. Not recognizing this makes anti-politics not so different.

The critique of the left in the manifesto is unfortunately lacking, in some ways breaking towards its opposition. But I don't think less of it for the call for dialectics and education of the public. It is a process, a holding up of mirrors. We tend to lose sight of this when we hear Voltaire speaking, when Destutt lines us up in sections. Even when it is not Rousseau, we respond as though

our firmness in right were attacked. There is a tendency, even within anti-politics, to hold onto ideas as if they were all we had, as a prisoner and her escape plans. She will be careful not to give away too much, or diverge from the plan. Our writing and discussions often follow this line of ideology. We escape to nowhere new, only different routes to the same place. The purpose is how much different?

The mirrors distort and I cannot see myself clearly. It is likely the same for Gruppe Krisis. This breaking, this becoming. Is there anything distorting your perception? Anything coding the conclusions you have arrived at? The purpose remains uncertain to me, so I will restate your question. What fragments of the left remain in this manifesto and how would their call result in anything different from past social movements of labour? The obvious answer is the felt necessity of finding solutions, the determining of something, anything. Like western cinema there was a tying of things together, to not leave anyone hanging. There is the desire to hum and have the audience respond, 'Bravo! Very nice, very nice.' This leftist practice goes back to our Christian origins, and beyond to our days as script writers and receivers. Tell me a story, any story, just don't make me cry. If this is all meaningless, all without purpose, then at least give me a happy ending.

Perhaps they should have said, if they were to suggest any ending, that your work will only get worse, become more emptying. Some Robocop figure will become your foreman, your team leader, and prod at you to get to work. To do what, who knows? Run out the clock maybe. Review efficiency charts. Hey, this is what every sci-fi movie suggests, so who are you to argue? You send your children to schools where they can no longer play tag or hug each other. Aseptic, you are stupid. You hate your wife. Why? You must be stupid. You are in the darkness, there is no time off, no brightness.

Ridiculous. But they chose something equally ridiculous, a theoretical debate to bring about public awareness. It is here that I agree with you. GK concludes that labour is dead, the



labour movement a loyal dog never leaving its master's side, even in death. Yet, somehow they have decided to reinvent this practice. Somehow they see a theoretical debate and a resultant new public awareness as aesthetically different from One Big Union or the party. Is this not obligation and the democratic barking of orders? A reaching of consensus as to what work is. They never elaborate on what they mean though, it just feels tacked on.

I think this is the best writing on labour up to this point, in its detailing of alienation. But they fail to reconnect this critique to anything creative. They fail to separate the struggle against labour from class struggle, or determine how they see class struggle changing with the death of labour. On the one hand they feel as though class struggle needs to take on an educational form. But what does it matter if capital will implode? What does it matter if the contradictions become so clear that class struggle will renew itself without revolutionary intervention? They say, 'We don't tell you anything new. You do know all these things very well.' It seems they are speaking to both labour and capital. It is progressive and hopeful, reformatively Christian. Confused.



So obligating. If the only road to abolishing labour is debating the merits for public consumption and hopefully capitulation – perhaps decapitating the labour idol as some did with Margaret Thatcher's likeness - we find it becomes work itself, apart from the other leftist sacrifices necessarily involved. Again, they never suggest how such a sweeping debate would take place. Perhaps a green cookie on St. Patrick's Day. One never knows what to expect.

How is the abolition of work, as GK sees it, clarified if related to Dostoevsky? If God does not exist, everything is permitted. Taken one step further as Orwell's reversal, if the law does not exist, everything is permitted. Replace law with work and we have the GK position. But of course, in 1984 the zero point of law is actually the totality of law. Everything is permitted because nothing is permitted. What use is there for laws? Similarly I could ask of GK, since they are so intent on the deepening of the labour crisis, so intent on the demise of the labour idol, what use is there for work? Do not underestimate the tricks of capital, what if post-industrialism itself ends work? I have nothing to offer you than the morals of science fiction. In Arthur Lipsett's short film 21-87 there are no workers, not in the traditional sense at least. But always connectivity to the machine, always receiving. In many ways this schizophrenic filmmaker went beyond what the Situationists were capable of in their films. And it's funny that such an alienated individual could create 9 minutes of images and sound to inspire Star Wars. That epic where no one works, but everyone is working, where the efficiency of an automated planet supercedes the living planets. Life force itself is the machine. Perhaps this is what deepening crisis amounts to. Perhaps this is the end point of valorization.

Capital exists now in a process of deconstruction, ever quickening. Nothing is ever allowed to work, to become concrete. The left, and GK I think, ignore that a social machine's functioning depends on it's non-functioning. That the functioning of labour, the defining complements of the relationship have been internalized by capital, and the relationship becomes symmetrical. That when labour capitulates and joins capital

through its unions capital must recreate class struggle, to move away from symmetry. Work requires an overhaul for this, the play cannot be viewed too many times. What is the immanent critique of this?

Take into account that the worker/manager dichotomy, capital and labour, is a complementary relationship in its most simplified form. The creation and extraction of value, the abstraction of value, its distribution and surplus, is always dependent on the logic of efficiency. The least amount of work for the most possible pay, and the opposite is introduced from the capitalist. It is a falsification of space and time, or at least a simplification of it. The relation needs to be made symmetrical as much as possible, but not as the symmetry introduced up to this point. Showing, if only to ourselves, that we are capable of so much more. I suppose in a way this would make the relationship neither symmetrical nor complementary. Our relations outside of work, both symmetrical and complementary, can be made increasingly complex, reaffirming creativity. We oppose to the surplus value of capital the gift of ethics and spiritual wealth.

In some sense, in order to do this, I would have to make my relationships non-functioning. That is, if they are to function, the relationships have to be destroyed. But I have to come up with a creative process that exists outside of the valorization process. Our relating in class struggle becomes a complex process, a series of games within games.

Does this go beyond our individual projects or relationships? Hard to say. It is out of our control, but it is at a level that I can experience as real. From the game of go to insurrectionary moments we see that unmanaged direction, localized and rhizomatic life, is far beyond the power of linearity or centrifugal control. We see that even democracy's appropriation of rhizomatic life always exists in nodes and circuits. So our game of games departs from here. The capricious and passing interest individual, the individual free of class constraint, is

controlled by a fluid selection of ideologies, a collective of individualities. This is the world in which workers now exist, and class struggle will find ways, is finding ways, to destroy nodes. Whether this is a struggle against labour or not is quite uncertain, but class struggle has taken on a different form due to the emptying of value and purpose in the act of labouring.

*"When the valorisation of value concentrates on only a few world market havens, a comprehensive supply system to satisfy the needs of the population as a whole does not matter any longer." How does a shift in the valorization process change your day to day life, and how those you care for struggle? Where Camatte says 'even the movement toward unlimited generalization of desire is isomorphic to the indefinite movement of capital, 'how does this effect anti-politics? Are we merely reactive? In other words, is the rejection of strategies and movements an effect of the general passing interest of capital? The surrounding of life free of any deep interest. How does the rejection of strategy affect the quality of critique and agency?*

## DA:

It has been at least a month since you sent me your reply, and I've been totally unable to carry on the dialogue. Every week I sit down with what you've written in my hand, but I throw away all of my responses. Nothing I write is interesting to me, and to be honest this topic no longer interests me. I do not see a creative process outside of the valorization process. I do not see games within games.

In the final lines of the novel *Q*, the narrator says – "No plan can take everything into account. Other people will raise their heads, others will desert. Time will go on spreading victory and defeat amongst those who pursue the struggle... Do not advance the

action according to a plan.” You ask - *how does the rejection of strategy affect the quality of critique and agency?*

I hope my answer isn't too predictable when I say that only circumstance will affect the 'quality' of agency, though 'quality' is an odd word to use to describe agency. Maybe I do not understand what you mean. As for the quality of critique, I think it will improve as we allow ourselves to transgress further from politics and firm positions. Perhaps more than anything else the power of a text like Camatte's *The Wandering of Humanity* is in how far he transgressed from his beginning place of Bordigist left communism. In the Dupont article *Your Face is Mysteriously Kind* they write – “If the walls are not



made of paper, don't punch them, if the bars are not made of chocolate, don't eat them.” This is as good a place as any to begin improving the quality of our critique: framing our discussions with something

other than 'struggle'. It seems to be said by many that we deserve to see our enemies destroyed just as they have destroyed *us* for so long. I could say instead that we all deserve the warmth of baths. That warmth is not here, so we will wait for it. It is not here, so we will search elsewhere. We will not warm our baths with burning corpses.

*Capital exists now in a process of deconstruction, ever quickening. Nothing is ever allowed to work, to become concrete. The left, and GK I think, ignore that a social machine's functioning depends on it's non-functioning. That the functioning of labour, the defining complements of the relationship have been internalized by capital, and the relationship becomes symmetrical. That when labour capitulates and joins capital through its unions capital must recreate class struggle, to move away from symmetry. Work requires an overhaul for this, the play cannot be viewed too many times. What is the immanent critique of this?*

If, as you say, the functioning of the social machine requires its non-functioning, what does crisis mean? If capital must recreate class struggle, what force(s) can create communism?

Various political factions are forever forecasting impending disaster, usually concerning financial collapse, ecological catastrophe, nuclear war, disease epidemics. This broadcasting of a future even more miserable than our current situation serves to mobilize us in defense of the present. Anarchists march in favor of the NHS in England. Everywhere supposed 'revolutionaries' rally behind this-or-that state social program. What are the results? It doesn't matter. There is never time for reflection. "Activists mobilize themselves against the catastrophe. But only prolong it. Their haste consumes the little world

that is left. The answer of the activist to urgency remains within the regime of urgency, with no hope of getting out of it or interrupting it.”

Crisis occurs in fits and starts, gradually then suddenly. A Great Depression, if you like, has been ongoing since 1973 -- but now it's really going to be bad, we're warned. A more important task is to denaturalize the present so as to demonstrate that it is utterly intolerable and should be rejected not on account of a speculative just-around-the-corner dystopia based on ahistorical conjectures but because it is a nightmare per se (the system, especially in the US, does regulate -- a US collapse may just as well resemble UK postwar decline). Everyday is a disaster. Modern capitalism is perpetually controlled (and not so controlled) crisis. Destruction does not harm the system but is necessary for capital accumulation. And, of course, the social machine's functions and non-functions all come at the expense of humanity

*Is the rejection of strategies and movements an effect of the general passing interest of capital?*

This is the most difficult question you put forward. What if I word it a different way and say – is our rejection of strategies and movements in the general passing interest of capital? This question is implicit in the criticism of my relative inactivity by my more activist oriented friends. What does a critique of art and schooling mean in a time when schools and the arts are falling apart, when the economy seems to have little use for them? It is impossible to approach capitalism in terms of issues or pieces without falling into the trap of half-measures. “All engagement at the level of political agenda, social aspiration, and cultural value, no matter what the content, *no matter what the content*, takes place within the world as it is,

the world organized by capital. At the level of values, ideas, and beliefs, there is nothing outside capitalism.”

Yes, our rejection of strategies and movements as well as everything else is the affect of the current conditions of capital, but still, we choose to be communists. This choice is one of many in the economy of choices (many more choose to be football fans or gardeners), but it is peculiar because unlike football fans people like us are thrust forward during rupture. It is an odd choice at this juncture. Where most other choices fade away during revolutionary times., ours makes sense for the first time. It was once the affect of the general passing interest of capital for ‘revolutionaries’ to form mass political parties and unions; and in some cases, to actually take over power of the state and shoot the workers down ‘like partridges’. Is our pessimism and inactivity of today the voluntarism and substitutionalism of yesteryear? This is a dirty question.

*I apologize for straying so far away from talking about the Gruppe Krisis text. I will ask a few more questions then let you end this dialogue. What do you make of GK’s discussion of patriarchy and gender? Both of us have avoided that bothersome part of their argument. If I remember correctly, Camatte came to similar conclusions as GK in his article ‘Echoes of the Past’. He says – “We must create a life that is feminine and human – it is these imperative objectives that must guide us in this world heavy with catastrophe.” What does this category of ‘feminine’ mean in the context of critiquing work? Why did we avoid it? Finally, how does your understanding and consciousness of all these things we’ve discussed change your actual experience of exploitation?*



DS:

I don't think we have avoided the question. We have merely scratched the surface of a critique of work, so there are likely many things we have missed unintentionally. Patriarchy and gender is perhaps what Gruppe Krisis deals with best here, although it is a fairly short section.

When I mentioned the feminization of labour I intended to suggest the contradictions of the labour world. Somehow the labour force has been turned towards work which traditionally would be quite feminine (a forced categorization from the male perspective) in nature. The turn has allowed women's legitimate entrance into the world of capital. This occurs at an interesting juncture, just after capital needs to legitimize itself to middle class women (those demanding the vote), and after the second world war when women were scooped into the service and production apparatus. So the categories of professionalism and militarism are what gave us the legitimate female worker. These roles which are taken up are of course not feminine at all, they are male categories of femininity, compromised with the new capital.

As you point out, Camatte suggests the importance of feminist critiques of movement. In short, the critique stems from the inability of most to recognize the subtle and not so subtle differences between men and women. And perhaps more importantly, the critique has deepened due to a reluctance of men to take the questions seriously. Male revolutionaries have more often focused on movement building, towards the grand soiree. With a sweeping generalization I could say that women are more concerned with a series of soirees here and now. How can you love the world too much when you're incapable of loving one individual? It is a question of ideology. I think that in some sense the women's movement preceded the situationist concept of self-mastery, the development of spirit and ethics so that one might create relationships to the best of their ability.

Clarifying masculine and feminine isn't an easy task. But since you mentioned sexual tension earlier, we could look at sexuality and how it is different for females and males. I suppose this is a way of exaggerating the difference. In Zizek's review of *Eyes Wide Shut* we see that male fantasy is never able to keep up with female fantasy. There is a difference which is uncomfortable and threatening. Although Zizek never clarifies what this difference is we can see that female sexuality is more situational, very human focused and caring of possibilities, it is the controlling of space and time. Very in touch with real involvement, a creative affair, sort of like a film. Male fantasy is image based, the controlling of space and time in an ideological sense. The woman becomes an object desired. She is only desired as the man wants her to be, the fantasy is power based and one-sided.

This is a story however, and as important as it is occurs in a moment of transition. Since the sexual revolution things have moved towards an asexual promiscuity. The value of sex has become more and more determined by aesthetics and practicality, detached from meaning, as it is with everything capital touches. The object desired reduced to economics and consumable image. So it would seem that the male fantasy has won out. Exploring this further we might find that sexuality has been valorized, and with it the categories of feminine and masculine. This is a depressing cynicism, but certainly contains some honesty.

From a communist perspective I might suggest instead what I think the possibilities of femininity are. This is important in these negative critiques, the opposing energy that offers us a moment, a potential. Mary Catherine Bateson suggests to us that life is a composition. She sees situational responses to the unexpected, life as a dance or poetry. This is opposed to male intellectuals who are more likely to see life in a philosophical sense, that one is projectually working towards something which may or may never solidify. The latter view implies lack and ideology. Bateson's feminine view certainly offers more to pro-

revolutionaries than the male intellectual work ethic, the view leftists have traditionally taken up.

This possible femininity is contrasted to what is happening to women in the work world. As GK point out women are given a double burden. The child rearing that was once a community affair has been specialized as work. The home is a sort of warehouse, and in the post-industrial economy one must get a second job to keep the warehouse running. The other possible contradiction is for women to become professionals in the patriarchal society and allow the crèche industry to take over. Life becomes further valorized no matter what one does. There is enough here to suggest that work needs to end, it is the opposite of life potential.

I guess I've become even more cynical lately. It is unclear what course I can take against exploitation, as capital further forces life into contradiction everything appears through the eyes of the schizophrenic. Things are too complex and the only response is to turn inward. I guess what is possible here is that revolt will take on forms unlike past attempts. And perhaps more people will take on Bateson's life view. I think it has revolutionary potential, as it suggests an immanent critique of capital and movement, perhaps we might supersede this. Life as a chaotic dance seems the only thing left, so it may be that we can only reject capital and ideology as much as possible in our daily relations and pray this enough in moments of crisis. I'll admit this is strangely pessimistic, yet offers us everything.

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# Call and Response

The following theses come from the book *Bukaka Spat Here* by Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz. The original text is in italics and the responses are not italicized. The book is very difficult to find but a photocopy can be obtained from Rolling Thunder / PO Box 494 / Chapel Hill, NC 27514 (send stamps to cover postage).

1. *CONNECTIONS WITH SPECIFIC AND LOCAL CONTEXT.* Only these specific connections can determine the effectiveness of RESISTANCE. However (I can see parenthetically) just a few resisters have ever practiced such a deepening of context – may be the Zapatistas, may be some squatters ... Without this deepening there is no understanding.

This Bukaka book is written with an infectious insanity. It is rude, crassly sexual, violent, negative, yet so early on they affirm the Zapatistas? I've been told that they back away from applauding social democrats in their next book 'The Art of Destruction', where they are purely negative (oh and harder to read!), but like those activists who talk forever in strange language about Deleuze, this nihilistic abrasive *style* covers up an approach which is just more politics. Maybe some squatters? Maybe nobody.

I do not think locality is that magical thing to deepen 'understanding' and resistance. I think a deepening of conflict will involve many with no roots at all and, if the stars are aligned, why not the evaporation of local nationalisms? Local means nothing. There is no resistance. I'll spit on this first thesis!

2. *THE BODY IS THE OPPOSITE OF A MACHINE.* Bodies do not organize or create anti-technologies, but appear as anti-technologies – it is through bodies that anti-technologies become visible and perceptible. Bodies are not machines neither machines of desire, nor war machines, nor machines of power. Bodies destroy their function, come out of

*their frames, get into contradiction with themselves. Bodies show their discrete anti-machinery.*

I have a friend who I ask to explain to me ‘body-machines’, ‘machines of desire’, ‘war machines’, and all of these concepts. I think he explains them well, but I still do not understand. I wish I could agree with Brener and Schurz, but I no longer think that bodies are organic. Anti-technologies? No, we are variable capital. Every day our bodies become more entwined with machinery and technique. Camatte said ‘domestication’. I say – our bodies will be organic once more, perhaps, if the machinery fall apart and we are forced to find a new way to live. Capital reproduces our contradictions.

*3. WILD AND ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES. These do not have anything in common with al sorts of expressionism, or, moreover, with a frustrated iconoclasm. (Expressionism is just another mercantile technology). Wild activity means introducing chance elements into the order of technology, thereby demolishing this very order. Chance elements are bodies, chairs, water, night, dirt, hunger, flowers – in a word, everything available right at the moment.*

The wild anti-social violence is an expression of our lack of humanity. Destruction is necessary for communism, but in a world where capital appears on the species level as community, to individually refuse capital is to refuse to be social. For me, scumfuck is the symbol of individual refusal. Utterly anti-social, violent, alcoholic, totally unproductive. I want nothing to do with him.



4. *STRIVING FOR DECOMPOSITION AND UNPRODUCTIVITY.* Decomposition is an attempt to hinder the repressive order, which in hegemonic culture is perceived as the main source of productivity. The normative product in today's understanding is repressive consensus in a certain packaging. Exactly this consensus must be subjected to the procedure of decomposition. Decomposition and disintegration are the weapons of a minority, calling into question the consensus of a moral majority.

The repressive order creates decomposition and unproductivity! Forever shifting papers, selling goods to ourselves, walking on endless treadmills, illiteracy, life lived on the internet, violence without theft, schools without books... decomposition and disintegration are the weapons of capital, along with productivity and consensus. Remember the anarchy of the market? Social order is only one of many myths...

*5. STRIVING FOR DISCONTINUITY. Discontinuity is a risky leap of the body of cultural history, which Walter Benjamin called a "history of winners" (The "history of winners" is the history of the fat giggling patriarchal owners who stage celebrations on the bodies of poverty). Leap into what? Into dissatisfaction, risk, pain... into the void... But more than anything a leap into thinking, into producing RESISTANCE.*

If I must leap, I want to leap into a swimming pool. Dissatisfaction, risk, pain – I cannot choose to leap into what is forced onto me. I want history. I want to be a subject.

*6. REFUSAL OF ANY AESTHETIC AND ETHICAL SATISFACTION. No satisfaction, not for yourself, not for others... No consumption and pleasure of success... I confess that this idea is not clear in the end even to myself: What does no satisfaction mean? No laughing, no enthusiasm? No hop, no dignity? Rather not that: laughing and enthusiasm, hope and dignity, but with the disgusting feeling of shit coming out of your neck. (And immediately a shout and attack). This feeling was described by Bataille in*



Literature and Evil. *The political equivalent of this feeling: Contra-Attack against your own post-bourgeois fatness. Anti-technologies are convulsive contra-attacks against the fascism of your own machine-body.*

I thought our bodies were not machines! If we say – *only satisfaction and leisure* – we know this will not happen. If we say – *let the youth throw bricks at police while we eat chocolate* – we find ourselves with bricks through our windows as well. Shouting and attacking makes for boring company after a while. The best fighters, to use an obnoxious phrase, pick their battles wisely. We have no teeth, and I am sure that the battles we will fight in will not be of our choosing.

7. *REFUSAL OF NORMATIVE DOCUMENTATION. A typical means to collect fat around your hips is to document your own “works”. Anti-technologies entail refusing the principle of documentation. Documentation is the main way to archive hegemonic cultural memory. Documentation is the liberal form of social consensus, ironically making fun of the conservative term “masterpiece”. Documentation is today’s whiny form of recognition, begging for critical revisionism. Don’t document and exchange information but think! And every thought must find its own specific mortal practical form.*

The internet has made anonymity and plagiarism a constantly repeated banality. Everything is archived with false names. Authorship (ownership) fades quickly. The ‘free and anonymous’ exchange of information on the internet doesn’t seem to be a

challenge to capital accumulation or cultural production.

*8. NON-ORIGINALITY. Fucking originality is the crumpled, rotting intellectual fruit of old shit-preservers and cultural bosses. Puffed up “experts” talk about originality, while they are disgusting non-original functionaries. Originality is the commercial success and mass-medial triumph of some obedient bodies over others – nothing more. In a political field, efforts are the only reality of RESISTANCE-culture! Non-originality means adopting radical democratic principles in a cultural, economic and political realm.*

Wasn't this written by the Dadaists almost a century ago? A funny joke – the call for non-originality is unoriginal! Finally, a thesis worth smiling at...



Nevertheless uncertain rebellion is certainly against certain things. It is not a nice conceptual blur; it stands against such a blur. It is not an attempt to place oneself in the history of “radical ideas”; it is an assault on this history. It is not chatter and crap about freedom; it fights such demagoguery and claptrap. It is not a specialization of revolution; it is against professional revolutionaries, especially those who seek to overthrow power in order to conquer it. It is not a doctrine; it stands against all doctrines, particularly that of uncertain rebellion.

- **Brener and Schurz, *The Art of Destruction***

# The Unseen

Continuing where we left off in *Letters #1*,  
here are continued selections from Nanci  
Bellestrini's tale of revolt and defeat.

In town the youth groups have organized a festival in the cathedral square China and I take the train on our own we get there earlier than we've arranged with the rest of our comrades and there's already loads of people the police are turned out in force all around there's graffiti being done on the walls and the ground free space is a right or make society a festival or let's reclaim life the police begin to hassle us to move on there are a few scuffles a couple of CS rockets go off that don't frighten anyone but they get hold of one comrade and beat him up a bit we leave the square but in the side streets we start to smash up cobblestones and fill our bags with them meanwhile large groups mainly from the outlying ghetto districts make their way to the meeting place

we try to link arms and manage to form a long snake that's not bad at all we can see the others from our collective they've all come they're in small groups mixed up with the rest the front of the march is heading straight for the cathedral square holding up a banner that says the time for rebellion has come it's a carnival you can see from the confetti and the paper streamers on the ground families have brought children for the outing dressed as Zorro and Sandokan or the black pirate we go right round the cathedral square and that's when all hell breaks loose because the *carabinieri* attack the back of the march they let off teargas at once the air is impossible to breathe everyone has weeping eyes the families are seized with panic they're chasing after their Zoros and Sandokans and black pirates scattering in the stampede

China and I stay with a group that's throwing broken cobblestones and next to us we find Cotogno Valeriana and Nocciola we see the *carabinieri* starting out at a run to charge then some comrades move a few cars into the middle of the road a couple of petrol bombs on the cars and the *carabinieri* are lost behind the flames and the clouds of black smoke a hundred yards ahead there's a group that's got it in for a Rolls Royce the bodywork battered with sticks and crowbars and the

boss's car makes a nice bonfire we play hide and seek a little while longer with the *carabinieri* through the streets of the centre finally we scatter and we all meet again at the station

all our eyes are stinging and we keep rubbing them even though it makes it worse we wash our eyes at the water fountain Malva turns up she's had a fall she'd come in high heels she hit her nose and it's all grazed Gelso's glasses fell off as usual and in the melee someone smashed them and he can hardly see now Verbena breathed in a lot of gas she feels sick and she's going to throw up Ortica arrives lifting the skirt of this raincoat to show us a big black truncheon we very nearly brought back something else didn't we Cocco Cocco found a rifle on the ground they'd even lost of their rifles you should have seen Cocco running along like an ostrich with the rifle in his hand everyone was laughing and clapping but then we threw it away what were we going to do with a rifle

another time one evening in mid-April on television there's the news of a comrade's murder a fascist shot him he was seventeen and there's an immediate spontaneous reaction in the morning we all meet on the train for the city the same faces the same tennis shoes the jackets the shoulder bags the scarves the kerchiefs the gloves the berets the carriages are packed people are standing in the corridors nobody's talking and at each station more get on the walls of the villages we pass through you can see the fresh graffiti the same words that can be read on the silent faces of the comrades at the last stations in the suburbs a tide of people gets on pressing on the platform they've got plastic bags with helmets in them and under their jackets spanners bars iron rods in their pockets slings ball-bearings bolts

when we arrive there's a long procession filling the platform and it's moving up the stairs of the metro no one's bothering with tickets and in the carriages there are flags and the long poles for banners someone has a go at singing but the mood is grim threatening we reach the university in the square in front of the university there's a tide of people but not just students not just

young people all ages are there old people too there are workers in overalls with red kerchiefs round their necks the demonstration is already there drawn up ready to go the stewards in front kerchiefs masking half their faces and the heavy sticks with small red flags tied on there's a dull rumbling sound then a shout and a slogan launched murdered comrade you'll be avenged everyone together a roar and the demonstration sets off

in front of the law courts in front of the steps there are ranks of riot police poised for battle with teargas canisters stuck into the muzzles of their guns and helmet visors down the demonstration comes to a sudden halt and slogans are launched against the police the tension mounts seriously the demonstration moves on again then stops once more in a square hoisted up on the base of the obelisk that's in the middle of the square I see an old man with a red kerchief at his neck lifting a bugle to his lips and sounding the call for silence and at once there's a tearful silence you can only hear the bugle's high notes when the bugle stops there's a roar a great roar all around thousands of fists are raised all armed with bars and spanners

in the streets we cross all the shops are closed the shutters are all rolled down and then suddenly the helmets go on I can see row after row an expanse of colored helmets like a sea of billiard balls colored red while blue green black the demonstration stops in the avenue at a crossroads there ahead just a few yards past the crossroads is a roadblock the front of the march with the stewards is at a halt a few yards away from the roadblock the spanners and the bars are raised threateningly police and *carabinieri* close ranks and take cover behind the shields stones are thrown in a hail that seems never-ending you can hear the thud of the stones as they hit the shields and the policemen's helmets

dozens of petrol bombs fly through the air then come the blasts loud as can be yellow red blue they make a high wall of flames ahead of us some jeeps have caught fire the police break ranks

they all turn and tripping stumbling in their flight one more volley of petrol bombs and other cars are catching fire a cloud of black smoke you can't see a thing any more then you hear the dull thumps of the teargas canisters that hail down on us by the dozen a downpour of teargas that rains on us from all sides in a single moment the air becomes impossible to breathe the stewards lines move back and get to the road junction they stop at the junction behind the avenue we hear the piercing sirens of a column of super-jeeps

the sirens get closer louder and louder I hear shouting all around then suddenly everyone's running towards the sides of the avenue towards the pavement and all at once as the crowd parts there appears a huge grey-green super-jeep driver at top speed brushing right past us I'm running on the pavement as well more super-jeeps arrive from the column the sirens really close ear splitting stones and a few petrol bombs are thrown at the super-jeeps whose windows are guarded by iron grilles flames rise up the side of one so many of them that they seem never-ending from the pavements the comrades are still throwing stones and petrol bombs they're shooting ball-bearings and screw bolts with slings I see a super-jeep zigzagging in the middle of the avenue and then aiming straight for the pavement

people fling themselves against the walls of the houses they scramble up the grilles the shutters of the shops onto the first floor windows the super-jeeps mount the pavement they graze the walls they brush against us I scramble up the grille of a shutter everyone is trying to scramble up but there isn't room for everyone people hang on to one another the super-jeeps come on to the pavement scraping against the walls of the houses brushing against us one two three I hold my breath and close my eyes someone near me is screaming in terror I keep holding on to the grille even when the column has gone by and I can see the last super-jeep that has brushed against us and then kind of jolts and suddenly turns towards the middle of the road I can hear a lot of screaming all coming from the place where the super-jeep turned around



very loud screaming shouting I see a lot of comrades running in that direction I can't see a thing there's smoke and confusion they all have red eyes crying with the teargas I get down from the shutter and head over there running with others we collide with others coming from the opposite direction anguished faces staring eyes some lower their kerchiefs one's running his hands through his hair I can't see what's happened there's a group of comrades standing in a semi-circle some are weeping it's not with the teargas some are sobbing one girl shouts something I don't understand then further on I see the bloody body on the ground I see the long trail of dark blood and further on I see the reddish mass of brains the wheels of the super-jeep have spattered out of it out of the head spattered out

#### 4

Then suddenly a puzzling still image that I couldn't quite make sense of it wasn't a photograph because inside the frame were hints of movement there was the intense glare of a floodlight it must have been filmed at night something shot very close up so close that you could make out nothing in any detail there was no commentary there was only that mute puzzling image I could hear only the rustle of China's fingers rolling the joint then the camera lens zoomed back to focus on a head a man's head the head lay on a stain a broad red stain and there was a red strip coming out of one ear and running down along the cheek as far as the white collar of the shirt

the camera zoomed back again to show the body of the *carabiniere* shot down beside the yellow column of a petrol pump beside the body you could see a pistol I don't know whether it belonged to him or the person who'd killed him I turned up the volume on the television which was down low the newsreader was saying someone had waited for the *carabiniere* outside his house and killed him with two shots in the head from a nine caliber no one had claimed responsibility yet then there was a review of casualties in the security forces since the beginning of the year pictures of *carabinieri* and policemen killed

in the street or through the windows of cars a long list of names and dates

the images of the casualties were intercut with other images there was commentary on mug-shots of fugitives scenes of terrorists being arrested of gun battles with terrorists of killings of terrorists scenes of terrorists on trial lined up in the cages with fists in the air and threatening faces the tone of the commentary was like a war dispatch China who had by now lit the joint passed it to me and took the remote control and cut out the sound now you can see two *carabinieri* in full dress uniform still young men carrying a vast wreath of flowers with a big purple ribbon across it with The Government in big gold lettering on it when China changed channels she started changing backwards and forwards from one channel to another

at that time I had just stopped working in the dye factory and China and I didn't have a permanent place to live any more we were moving around here and there for a bit with comrades who could let us stay with them we weren't the only ones for sure to live like that not at all at that time we were all more or less compelled to be nomads because of the oppressive atmosphere at the time there were strings of arrests and house searches nearly every day and carried out quite at random on just anybody in the movement on anyone who in some sense was a comrade or had dealings with comrades so it was usual not to stay too long in one place

we tried to spend the nights at houses of comrades who considered themselves less known less exposed or better still staying with friends who weren't involved at all or staying with friends of friends the demonstrations and festivals in the square were a thing of the past the movement was like a great ghost absent withdrawn sheltering in its ghettos the stage was now held by the trickle of clandestine armed actions where responsibility was claimed by dozens of signatures of combat organizations in competition the life of the movement was over but for the comrades it wasn't over it wasn't as if they could stand on the sidelines saying let's wait and see because the

repression involved everyone there weren't too many distinctions made

and so we were there that evening me and China on that unfamiliar bed strewn with newspapers magazines clothes smoking a joint and watching television which we usually never watched and outside you could hear police sirens going by nobody went about any more at night even at our centre we would see one another only by day and when we were out we were careful meeting comrades and then there was the business of Scilla and his friends that worried us we were worried about them worried about how it might reflect on us I remember that we talked about it that evening too while China switched backwards and forwards from channel to channel with the remote control

before that Scilla was the typical steward who in fights with fascists stood out as a very firm character very violent very aggressive Scilla had always been at the center of the fights he'd even fought the fascists alone and this is how he'd gradually turned himself into a myth because there in that small town the fascist presence had been sizeable and there too like anywhere else they didn't let people go about the town enter dressed in a way that marked them out as left-wing carrying a left-wing newspaper so the fascists provoked and attacked people who could be recognized as left-wing or just suspected of being left-wing

later the movement managed to win the upper hand thanks to guys like Scilla but at that time it was the fascists who ruled the roost and the police and judiciary shielded the fascists and through this Scilla and his kind let's say the military branch of the movement built their status by virtue of a necessity acknowledged by all the left the physical challenge to fascism was recognized as a legitimate necessary function and on this role of anti-fascist militant Scilla was able to build the status that in days to come placed him above suspicion when he began to play the role of police informer

Scilla always displayed an attitude of physical competitiveness towards everything and everyone even with comrades also because he probably felt unable to compete in other areas so that he was always aggressive sometimes pretending it was just in fun but it wasn't much fun unpleasant yes that's it unpleasant and with those he couldn't draw into this physical competition his demeanor was rather slimy and forced kind of awe in short he reproduced within the movement the same levels of violence expressed towards the enemy he always felt at war with everything and everybody and in everyone he saw an enemy on whom to take out his violence and he'd hit a comrade in the very same way he'd hit a fascist

and so inside the movement even Scilla's kind had their uses he was an internal policeman he carried out a function that was maybe unpleasant but considered useful Scilla and his kind never took part in the internal debates of the movement in the meetings and mass meetings they were largely silent interested only in where the violence came in they experienced the stage of intensified conflict in merely mechanical and purely military terms of escalating the conflict and using violence against the State as earlier it had been used against the fascists they were always outside the struggles in the local factories and little by little began to mimic clandestine ideals and behavior the habit of hiding a gun in the cellar and so on

later when things got as far as that meeting that conclusively split up our group and which I'll talk about after that meeting we heard nothing more about him and those who took the same road we never saw them again we heard nothing more about him Valeriana Cotogno and Gelso except in the leaflets claiming the armed actions before this *carabiniere* but I only discovered this once I was inside they didn't do killings they did robberies a few woundings until this *carabiniere* but then when I saw it on television that evening with China we didn't think for a second that it could have been them

China presses the remote switch again this time the screen shows a boundless plain the lens zooms in it must be filmed

from a helicopter and you can see an ostrich running very fast on a flat barren plain it's running fast in a straight line its head still the body rhythmically trembling the legs are so fast you can't see them sometimes it turns its head and runs even faster a long low shadow comes behind it it's catching up the ostrich turns its head the shadow is a few yards away the ostrich is running in zigzags now it gains a few yards but in seconds the shadow's again very close the ostrich runs towards the void with all its strength the shadow rises into the air and in one bound the cheetah's upon it they form a single still shadow the helicopter turns there's just the grey sky and the noise of the blades



# Questionnaire for Readers:

1) To continue on its indefinite course, capital is forced to call on the activity of human beings; to exalt their creativity. Is cultural production *in itself* at odds with any discussion of communism?

1a) What do your ideas inspire you to produce?

2) Are we too unobservant and self-centered to fathom one another?

2a) How did you come to read this odd publication?

3) How can *we* transgress further from the political?

4) What fantasies of revolt are you afraid to share?

Please send *honest* answers immediately by email or post.

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However, failure  
should not be  
cultivated.