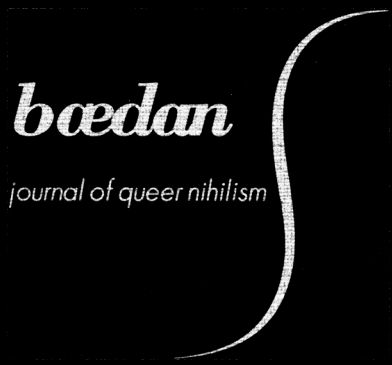
bædan
journal of queer nihilism

The Modern English word 'bad' came into common usage about four centuries ago, before which 'evil' was the predominant term. The successor was derived from the Old English derogatory term *bæddel*, and its diminutive form *bædling*, meaning effeminate man, hermaphrodite, pederast. This in turn was derived from *bædan*, meaning to defile.

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Typeset in Bodoni and Futura.

Artworks by Aubrey Vincent Beardsley.

Printed in Seattle, 2012.

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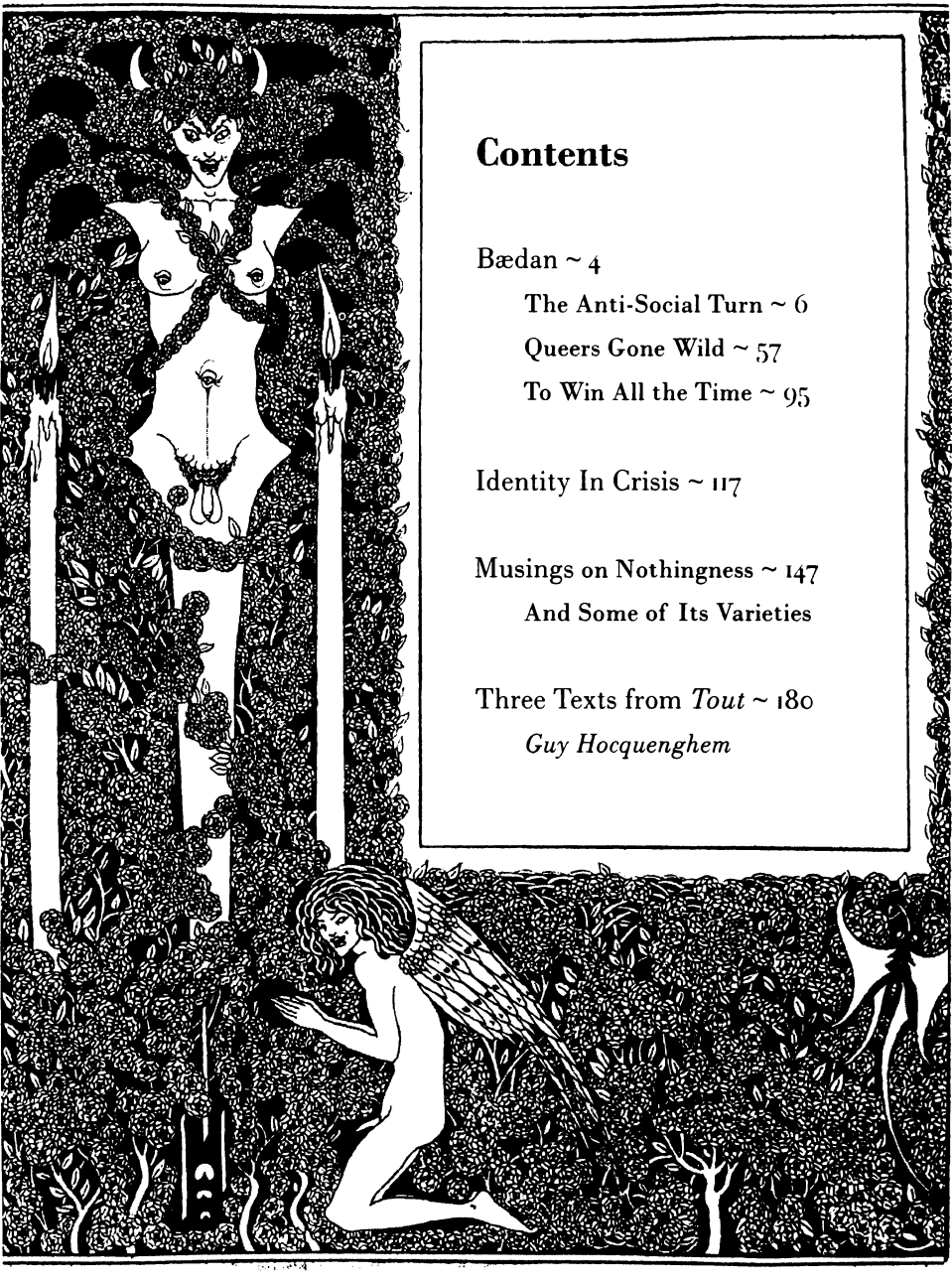

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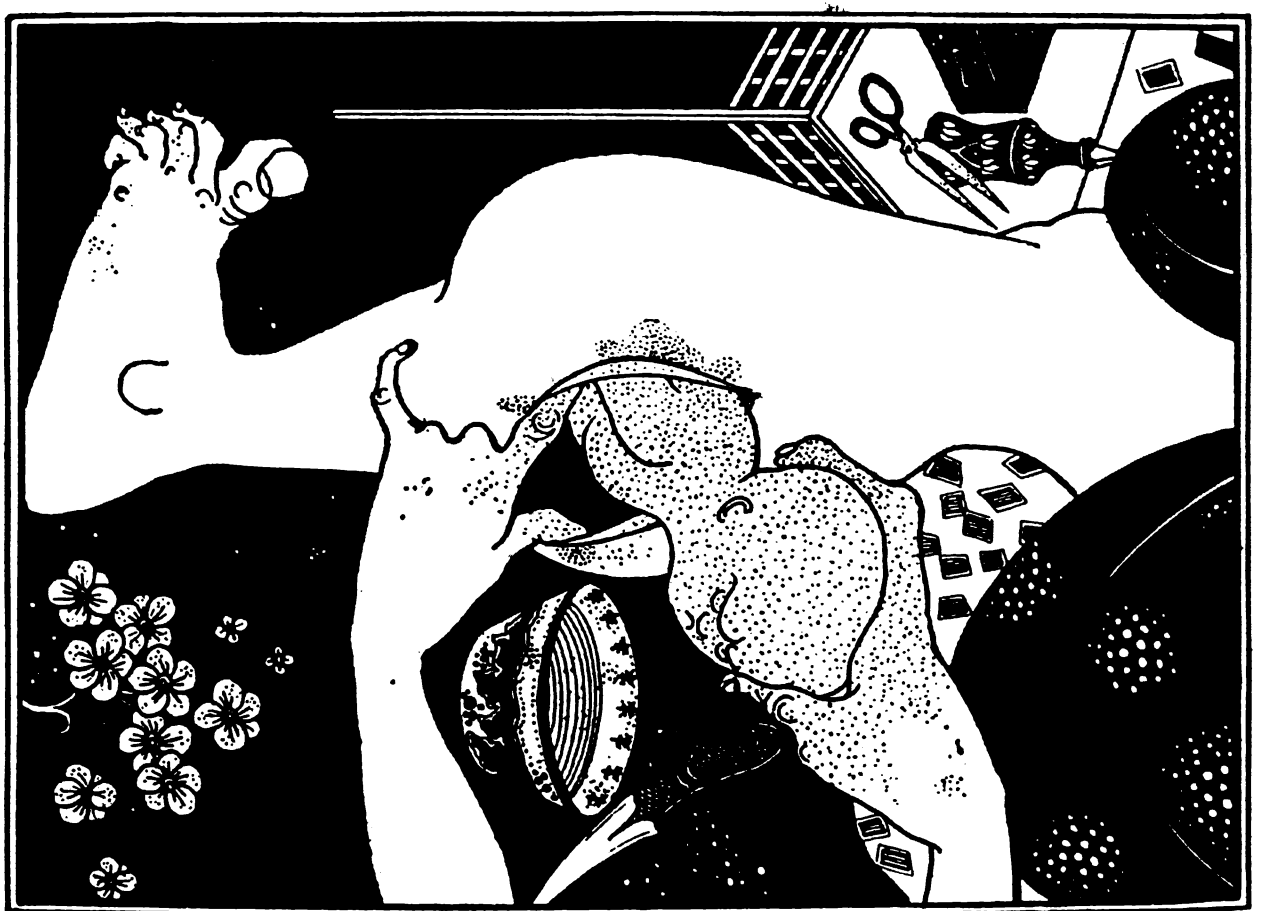
Guy Hocquenghem

But what is an eternity of damnation
compared to an infinity of pleasure
in a single second?

~ C. Baudelaire



The Anti-Social Turn

No Future, Edelman's magnum opus of queer negativity, offers a series of crucial lessons for *baedlings*; that is, for those of us whose queerness means the refusal of society and not any negotiation with or within it. In our reading and use—or abuse—of Edelman's singular work, we have no choice but to take him to task for his academic form, his position within institutionalized queer theory, and the separation between his theory and practice. His project fails in that it locates queer negativity within various cultural productions—literature, film—and yet never works to unveil this negation in the context of lived revolt or of active struggle against the society he purports to oppose. In exploring *No Future*, we insist on expropriating it from the ivory tower of theory and using it as a tool for our life projects. Against the safe interpretations offered by the academy and its theorists, we embark on an elaboration of queer negativity that means nothing less than the destruction of the civilized world.

Judith/Jack Halberstam, another popular queer theorist, reads the significance of Edelman's text in regard to what they term the anti-social project, but also experiences it as lacking:

> Edelman's polemic opens the door to a ferocious articulation of negativity ("fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis;* fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital ls and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop") but, ultimately, he does not fuck the law, big or little L, he succumbs to the law of grammar, the law of logic, the law of abstraction, the law of apolitical formalism, the law of Genres . . .

Elsewhere, Halberstam more explicitly frames their particular interest as follows: "I want to engage critically with Edelman's project here in order to argue for a more explicitly political framing of the anti-social project."

Halberstam's aim is like ours, in a way. Edelman's ferocious negativity remains caught within the web of formal knowledge and domination that is the academy. Trapped within these laws—logic, abstraction, formalism—Edelman's theory, as it stands, can only serve to be a somewhat more naughty articulation of the law of the social order itself. And yet Halberstam's alternative project fails in the same way. We don't desire a more explicitly *political* framing of the anti-social project, when the logic of politics itself can only really offer us more abstraction, more formalism, more of the same. For us, queer theory is only important to the extent that we make it a tool or a weapon for our projects. But in this we cannot look to politics, which is the science of organizing and representing society. Instead we have to exceed Edelman's project, discarding his apolitics in favor of an explosive *anti-politics*.

If Edelman opened a door, as Halberstam argues, for an anti-social queer project, then let's cross through the threshold and let's set the whole house on fire while we're at it. What follows is a close reading and overthrowing of *No Future*. These are the vital elements of the theory without the baggage of the academy, the crucial points of the text sharpened into weapons for anti-social projects.

Pure Negativity

Edelman's project, insofar as we can imagine it as a starting point, is intriguing because for him queerness is fundamentally negative. Whether in the form of gay assimilation, identity politics, or 'radical queer' subculture, any contemporary engagement with queerness must reckon with decades of capitalist integration into society and its

state. These varying forms are joined together through positive queer identity as a shared content. If we read Edelman with a great sense of catharsis, it is because his conception of negative queerness allows us to discard all the identitarian baggage which accompanies queerness. This move against a positive queer projects is a crucial one; it illustrates one truth about capital. Capital is predicated on accumulating value—*any* value—for its own self-reproduction. Capital is in a constant process of revolt against itself. Subjects which were once marginalized or annihilated by the civilized order are absorbed into its circuitry, positions that could mark an outside are moved inward. There is no positive queerness that isn't already a site of society's reproduction. The positivist institutions of queerness—its dance parties, community projects, activist groups, social networks, fashion, literature, art, festivals—form the material structure of civilization. Whatever antagonism or difference these forms possess is thoroughly re-made in capital's image; all value extracted, all danger neutralized. To our horror, queerness becomes the *avant-garde* of marketplaces and the dynamic life-blood of the advanced postmodern economy.

This analysis of positivism is not particular to queerness. One can as easily point to any number of anarchist projects and expose the ways in which they reproduce the very alienation they aim to overcome. Cooperative business, radical commodities, independent media, social spaces, Food Not Bombs: when positive anarchist projects aren't doing social work to stave off collapse or upheaval, they are developing the innovations (self-management, decentralized production, crowd-sourcing, social networking) that will help to extend capital's reign into the next century.

The departure from these forms is the elaboration of queerness in the negative. In this linking of queerness and negativity, we join Edelman, who defines queerness thus:

> [Q]ueerness, irreducibly linked to the "aberrant or atypical," to what chafes against "normalization," finds its value not in a good susceptible to generalization, but only in the stubborn particularity that voids every notion of a general good. The embrace of queer negativity, then, can have no justification if justification requires it to reinforce some positive social value; its value, instead, resides in its challenge to value as defined by the social, and thus in its radical challenge to the very value of the social itself.

Put another way, we are not interested in a social project of queerness, in queer contributions to society, in carving out our own ghettos within the material and symbolic structures of capitalist life. Rather, our engagement with queer theory must be attuned to locating the moments which reveal the potential undoing of society, its structures and its relations. For Edelman, a theory of queer negativity begins from an exploration of the fantastic position of queers within society's collective imaginary. His methodology is to navigate the discourses and nightmares of right-wing heteronormativity. Citing one fundamentalist pundit after another, he fleshes out the terror with which the anti-queer establishment imagines the threat of queerness. A thread persists through history into the present which imagines queers as the destroyers of social cohesion, the 'gravediggers of society,' the repudiation of the values of hard work and family, the persistent wave which erodes the bedrock of the monetary and libidinal economies, thieves, tricksters, hustlers, sinners, murderers, deviants, and perverts. Queers are not just damned, they are the proof of society's fundamental damnation as well. Sodomites, after all, are named for their symbolic position as the sexual symbol of civilization's decadence and imminent annihilation.

Analyzing an example of this fantasy, Edelman writes:

> We might do well to consider this less as an instance of hyperbolic rant and more as a reminder of the

> disorientation that queer sexualities should entail: "acceptance or indifference to the homosexual movement will result in society's destruction by allowing civil order to be redefined and by plummeting ourselves, our children and grandchildren into an age of godlessness. Indeed, the very foundation of Western Civilization is at stake." Before the self-righteous bromides of liberal pluralism spill from our lips, before we supply once more the assurance that ours is another kind of love but a love like his nonetheless, before we piously invoke the litany of our glorious contributions to the civilizations of east and west alike, dare we pause for a moment to acknowledge that he might be right—or, more important, that he ought to be right: that queerness should and must destroy such notions of "civil order" through a rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity?

Edelman's desire for a queerness that would hear itself called a threat to the social order and takes this as a challenge rather than an insult is paralleled by the text "Criminal Intimacy," authored by 'a gang of criminal queers' and published in the anarchist journal *Total Destroy* in 2009:

> The machinery of control has rendered our very existence illegal. We've endured the criminalization and crucifixion of our bodies, our sex, our unruly genders. Raids, witch-hunts, burnings at the stake. We've occupied the space of deviants, of whores, of perverts, and abominations. This culture has rendered us criminal, and of course, in turn, we've committed our lives to crime. In the criminalization of our pleasures, we've found the pleasure to be had in crime! In being outlawed for who we are, we've discovered that we are indeed fucking outlaws! Many blame queers for the decline of this society—we take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and it's moral fabric—they couldn't be more accurate. We're often described as depraved, decadent and revolting—but oh, they ain't seen nothing yet.

This position of ownership of the negative means a liberatory conspiracy between the enemies of society. It allows us to escape the traps that lie in any attempt at affirming a positive counter-narrative. One cannot deny the destructive and anti-social potential of queerness without also affirming the social order. One cannot argue against the anti-queer paranoia which imagines us to be enemies of God and state and family without implicitly conceding the legitimacy of each. The hope for progressive notions of tolerance or combative activism to undo this fantasy is an expression of the desire for assimilation into society. Even 'radical' or 'anti-assimilationist' queer positions attempt to deny this negativity and to create space for queer representation in the State or queer belonging within capitalism.

We'll follow Edelman as he elaborates on this idea:

> Rather than rejecting, with liberal discourse, the ascription of negativity to the queer, we might... do better to consider accepting and even embracing it. Not in the hope of forging thereby some more perfect social order—such a hope, after all, would only reproduce the constraining mandate of futurism, just as any such order would equally occasion the negativity of the queer—but rather to refuse the insistence of hope itself as affirmation, which is always affirmation of an order whose refusal will register as unthinkable, irresponsible, inhumane. And the trump card of affirmation? Always the question: If not this, what? Always the demand to translate the insistence, the pulsive force, or negativity into some determinate stance or "position" whose determination would thus negate it: always the imperative to immure it in some stable and positive form... I do not intend to propose some "good" that will thereby be assured. To the contrary, I mean to insist that nothing, and certainly not what we call "good," can ever have any assurance at all in the order of the Symbolic... [W]e might rather, figuratively cast our vote for "none of the above," for the primacy of a constant "no" in response to the law

of the symbolic, which would echo that law's foundational act, its self-constituting negation.

Again, a simple shift can apply this argument to the discursive and imaginary constructions of anarchists. Many anarchists find themselves compulsively responding to negative characterizations of our intentions and dispositions. In the face of an array of flattering accusations—we are criminal, nihilistic, violent, sowers of disorder—the proponents of a positive anarchism instinctively respond by insisting that we are motivated by the highest ideals (democracy, consensus, equality, justice), seek to create a better society, are non-violent, and believe anarchism to be the greatest order of all. Over and over again anarchists and other revolutionaries offer their allegiance to society by denying the reality or possibility of their enmity with the social order.

Leftist notions of reform, progress, tolerance, and social justice always come up against the harsh reality that any progressive development can only mean a more sophisticated system of misery and exploitation; that tolerance means nothing; that justice is an impossibility. Activists, progressive and revolutionary alike, will always respond to our critique of the social order with a demand that we articulate some sort of alternative. Let us say once and for all that we have none to offer. Faced with the system's seamless integration of all positive projects into itself, we can't afford to affirm or posit any more *alternatives* for it to consume. Rather we must realize that our task is infinite, not because we have so much to build but because we have an entire world to destroy. Our daily life is so saturated and structured by capital that it is impossible to imagine a life worth living, except one of revolt.

We understand destruction to be necessary, and we desire it in abundance. We have nothing to gain through shame or lack of confidence in these desires. There cannot be freedom in the shadow of prisons, there cannot be

human community in the context of commodities, there cannot be self-determination under the reign of a state. This world—the police and armies that defend it, the institutions that constitute it, the architecture that gives it shape, the subjectivities that populate it, the apparatuses that administer its function, the schools that inscribe its ideology, the activism that frantically responds to its crises, the arteries of its circulation and flows, the commodities that define life within it, the communication networks that proliferate it, the information technology that surveils and records it—must be annihilated in every instance, all at once. To shy away from this task, to assure our enemies of our good intentions, is the most crass dishonesty. Anarchy, as with queerness, is most powerful in its negative form. Positive conceptions of these, when they are not simply a quiet acquiescence in the face of a sophisticated and evolving totality of domination, are hopelessly trapped in combat with the details of this totality on its own terms.

In *No Future*, Edelman appropriates and privileges a particular psychoanalytic concept: the death drive. In elaborating the relationship of "queer theory and the death drive" (the subtitle of *No Future*), he deploys the concept in order to name a force that isn't specifically tied to queer identity. He argues that the death drive is a constant eruption of disorder from within the symbolic order itself. It is an unnameable and inarticulable tendency for any society to produce the contradictions and forces which can tear that society apart.

To avoid getting trapped in Lacanian ideology, we should quickly depart from a purely psychoanalytic framework for understanding this drive. Marxism, to imagine it another way, assures us that a fundamental crisis within the capitalist mode of production guarantees that it will produce its own negation from within itself. Messianic traditions, likewise, hold fast to a faith that the messiah must emerge in the course of daily life to overthrow the horror

of history. The most romantic elaborations of anarchism describe the inevitability that individuals will revolt against the banality and alienation of modern life. Cybernetic government operates on the understanding that the illusions of social peace contain a complex and unpredictable series of risks, catastrophes, contagions, events and upheavals to be managed. Each of these contains a kernel of truth, if perhaps in spite of their ideologies. The death drive names that permanent and irreducible element which has and will always produce revolt. *Species being, queerness, chaos, willful revolt, the commune, rupture, the Idea, the wild, oppositional defiance disorder*—we can give innumerable names to what escapes our ability to describe it. Each of these attempts to term the erratic negation intrinsic to society. Each comes close to theorizing the universal tendency that any civilization will produce its own undoing.

Explosions of urban rioting, the prevalence of methods of piracy and expropriation, the hatred of work, gender dysphoria, the inexplicable rise in violent attacks against police officers, self-immolation, non-reproductive sexual practices, irrational sabotage, nihilistic hacker culture, lawless encampments which exist simply for themselves—the death drive is evidenced in each moment that exceeds the social order and begins to rip at its fabric.

The symbolic deployment of queerness by the social order is always an attempt to identify the negativity of the death drive, to lock this chaotic potential up in the confines of this or that subjectivity. Foucault's work is foundational to queer theory in part because of his argument that power must create and then classify antagonistic subjectivities so as to then annihilate any subversive potential within a social body. Homosexuals, gangsters, criminals, immigrants, welfare mothers, transsexuals, women, youth, terrorists, the black bloc, communists, extremists: power is always constructing and defining these antagonistic subjects which must be managed. When the smoke clears after

a riot, the state and media apparatuses universally begin to locate such events within the logic of identity, freezing the fluidity of revolt into a handful of subject positions to be imprisoned, or, more sinisterly, *organized*. Progressivism, with its drive toward inclusion and assimilation, stakes its hope on the social viability of these subjects, on their ability to participate in the daily reproduction of society. In doing so, the ideology of progress functions to trap subversive potential within a particular subject, and then to solicit that subject's self-repudiation of the danger which they've been constructed to represent. This move for social peace fails to eliminate the drive, because despite a whole range of determinisms, there is no subject which can solely and perfectly contain the potential for revolt. The simultaneous attempt at justice must also fail, because the integration of each successive subject position into normative relations necessitates the construction of the next Other to be disciplined or destroyed.

Rather than a progressive project which aims to steadily eradicate an emergent chaos over time, our project, located at the threshold of Edelman's work, bases itself upon the persistent negativity of the death drive. We choose not to establish a place for queers, thereby shifting the structural position of queerness to some other population. We identify with the negativity of the drive, and thereby perform a disidentification away from any identity to be represented or which can beg for rights.

Following Edelman further:

> To figure the undoing of civil society, the death drive of the dominant order, is neither to be nor to become that drive; such a being is not the point. Rather, acceding to that figural position means recognizing and refusing the consequences of grounding reality in denial of that drive. As the death drive dissolves those congealments of identity that permit us to know and survive as ourselves, so the queer must insist on disturbing, on queering, social

> organization as such—on disturbing, and therefore on queering ourselves and our investment in such organization. For queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one. And so, when I argue, as I aim to do here, that the burden of queerness is to be located less in the assertion of an oppositional political identity than in opposition to politics as the governing fantasy of realizing identities, I am proposing no platform or position from which queer sexuality or any queer subject might finally and truly become itself, as if it could somehow manage thereby to achieve an essential queerness. I am suggesting instead that the efficacy of queerness, its real strategic value, lies in its resistance to a symbolic reality that only ever invests us as subjects insofar as we invest ourselves in it, clinging to its governing fictions, its persistent sublimations, as reality itself.

This negative queerness severs us from any simple understanding of ourselves. More so, it severs us from any formulaic or easily-represented notions of what we need, what we desire, or what is to be done. Our queerness does not imagine a coherent self, and thus cannot agitate for any selves to find their place within civilization. The only queerness that queer sexuality could ever hope to achieve would exist in a total refusal of attempts at the symbolic integration of our sexuality into governing and market structures. This refusal of representation forecloses on any hope that we ever have in identity politics or positive identity projects. We decline the progressive faith in the ability for our bodies to be figured into the symbolic order. We decline the liberal assurance that everything will turn out right, if we just have faith.

No, instead we mean to "unleash negativity against the coherence of any self-image, subjecting us to a moral law that evacuates the subject so as to locate it through and in that very act of evacuation, permitting the realization, thereby, of a freedom beyond the boundaries of any image or representation, a freedom that ultimately

resides in nothing more than the capacity to advance into emptiness."

A non-identitarian, unrepresentable, unintelligible queer revolt will be purely negative, or it won't be at all. In the same way, an insurrectionary anarchy must embrace the death drive against all the positivisms afforded by the world it opposes. If we hope to interrupt the ceaseless forward motion of capital and its state, we cannot rely on failed methods. Identity politics, platforms, formal organizations, subcultures, activist campaigns (each being either queer or anarchist) will always arrive at the dead ends of identity and representation, We must flee from these positivities, these models, to instead experiment with the undying negativity of the death drive. Edelman again:

> The death drive's immortality, then refers to a persistent negation that offers assurance of nothing at all: neither identity, nor survival, nor any promise of the future. Instead, it insists both on and as the impossibility of Symbolic closure, the absence of any Other to affirm the Symbolic order's truth and hence the illusory status of meaning as defense against the self-negating substance of *jouissance*... [Queerness] affirms a constant, eruptive *jouissance* that responds to the inarticulable real, to the impossibility of sexual rapport or of ever being able to signify the relation between the sexes. [Queerness] then, like the death drive, engages, by refusing, the normative stasis, the immobility, of sexuation... breaks down the mortifying structures that give us ourselves as selves and does so with all the force of the Real that such forms must fail to signify... the death drive both evades and undoes representation... the gravediggers of society [are] those who care nothing for the future.

We'll return soon to the concepts of futurity and of *jouissance*, but to conclude this point, we'll assert that an insurrectionary process can only be an explosion of negativity against everything that dominates and exploits us, but also against everything that produces us as we are.

Not for the Children

In an above passage, we cited a text by J. Halberstam in which they state their intention to re-work Edelman's theory into something more *explicitly political.* We share Halberstam's dissatisfaction with Edelman, for whom queer negativity amounts to little more than lecture circuits, circuit parties, hours at the gym, Botox, and the crass narcissism of gay life. As we will argue later, Edelman's theory is heavily indebted to the work of Guy Hocquenghem, but Edelman fails to apply Hocquenghem's critique of queer subculture to his own life, foolishly choosing to ignore what the latter warned in *The Screwball Asses:*

> As long as we are not burned at the stake or locked up in asylums, we continue to flounder in the ghettoes of nightclubs, public restrooms and sidelong glances, as if that misery had become the habit of our happiness. And so, with the help of the state, do we build our own prisons.

In order to flee the self-constituted prisons described by Hocquenghem, we must turn Edelman's own critique against him and the pathetic form of his life project. Our argument remains that his project must be taken beyond its own limits. In fact, it is the very detachment of this theory from any practice of revolt that weakens the potential power in *No Future.* To reach a conclusion of apolitical detachment through queer negativity is weak thinking. We are interested instead in a praxis through which queer theory and queer revolt are fused in an elaboration of active nihilism, of *anti*-politics.

To return to Halberstam for a moment:

> No future for Edelman means routing our desires around the eternal sunshine of the spotless child and finding the shady side of political imaginaries in the proudly sterile and antireproductive logics of queer relation. It also seems to mean something (too much) about Lacan's symbolic and not enough about the powerful negativity of punk

> politics.... Negativity might well constitute an anti-politics but it should not register as apolitical.

Halberstam is correct again to critique Edelman's over-reliance on psychoanalysis. In this regard, we can only really interpret his methodology as a cop-out, a way to elaborate queer negativity from the safe positions of the academic or the analyst. We'll further agree that negativity should be anti-political as opposed to apolitical. However, to be honest, we're not really sure what 'punk politics' might be, and fear that they'd probably be as terrible as any other politic. On this point, it is important that we define our anti-politics as refusing all political logic: representation, mediation, dialogue with power. And so, once again, we must abandon queer academics and their easy answers. We diverge from Halberstam in that we will not locate our anti-politics in any music genre or the subculture that accompanies it. Instead, we'll attempt to show that the lack in Edelman's thought would be completed by the anti-political tendencies of an insurrectionary anarchist practice of self-organized attack.

Edelman's critique of politics begins with the figure of the Child. All political positions, he argues, represent themselves as doing what is best *for the children*. Politicians, whatever their parties or leanings, universally frame their debates around the question of what policies are best for the children, who keeps the Child safest, or what type of world we want to be building for our children. The centrality of the Child in the field of the political is not limited to electoral politics or political parties. Nationalist groups organize themselves around a necessity to preserve a future for *their children*, while anarchist and communist revolutionaries concern themselves with revolutionary organizing meant to create a better world for future generations. Politicians concern themselves with different children depending on their varying from ideologies, but the Child stays constant as a universal Möbius strip,

inverting itself and flipping so as to be the unquestioned and untouchable universal value of all politics. Politics, however supposedly radical, is simply the universal movement of submission to the ideal of the future—to preserve, maintain and upgrade the structures of society and to proliferate them through time all for the sake of the children. The Child must always name the horizon and the beneficiary of every political project.

It is for this reason that Edelman contends that queerness finds itself missing from all political discourse:

> For the liberal's view of society, which seems to accord the queer a place, endorses no more than the conservative right's the queerness of resistance to futurism and thus the queerness of the queer. While the right wing imagines the elimination of queers (or of the need to confront their existence), the left would eliminate queerness by shining the cool light of reason upon it, hoping thereby to expose it as merely a mode of sexual expression free of the all-pervasive coloring, the determining fantasy formation, by means of which it can seem to portend, and not for the right alone, the undoing of the social order and its cynosure, the Child. Queerness thus comes to mean nothing for both: for the right wing, the nothingness always at war with the positivity of civil society; for the left, nothing more than a sexual practice in need of demystification.

The Child, of course, has very little to do with real children. Like all people, children are enslaved under the political order of the state and capital, expected to bear the burden of being the innocent beneficiaries of political initiatives. No, rather the Child is the fantastic symbol for the eternal proliferation of class society. The Child represents the succession of generations and the continuation of this society beyond the lifespans of its living members. All politics, being concerned primarily with the Child, then reveal themselves to be only ever a process by which to manage and secure the continued existence of society. As enemies of society, we are also enemies of politics.

To quote Edelman:

> The fantasy subtending the image of the child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought. That logic compels us, to the extent that we would register as politically responsible, to submit to the framing of political debate—and, indeed of the political field—as defined by the terms of what this book describes as reproductive futurism: terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations.

If the varying discourses of politics are only ever about the Child (as society's future), queerness must be anti-political because it marks a fundamental interruption of the societal norms and apparatuses that exist to mandate the reproduction the Child. Yes, queer sex can be non-reproductive sex, but we cannot define queerness through such overly-simple and naturalistic logics. Queerness, beyond being the negation of the heteronormative family matrix, must also be practiced as a willful refusal of the political imperative to reproduce class society. In a world where all social relations are enchanted by our obligation to the Child as the future of the social order, we must break those communal relations and break the stranglehold of politics over our daily lives. Queerness must be an outside to politics, an antagonism against the political, or it isn't queer at all.

By Edelman's account:

> Queerness names the side of those "not fighting for the children." The side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism. The ups and downs of political fortune may measure the social order's pulse, but queerness, by contrast figures outside and beyond its political symptoms, the place of the social order's death drive: a place, to be sure, of abjection

> expressed in the stigma, sometimes fatal that follows from reading that figure literally... More radically, though, as I argue here, queerness attains its ethical value precisely insofar as it accedes to that place, accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social while insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every social structure.

Queerness, as we'll thus conceive it, is not locked in a dialectical battle of queer identity versus normative identities, nor of queer politics versus heteronormative politics. Rather our queer opposition is leveled against the false oppositions which politics always serves to represent. Queerness marks the space which is outside and against political logic. Insurrectionary anarchists are no strangers to this space. While leftist anarchists articulate their activity as politics, insurrectionary anarchy doesn't concern itself with such abstractions. We flee from all political roles which we're called upon to symbolize, whether those constructed by the media or by those self-appointed leaders of struggles. Unlike most other self-declared revolutionaries, we are not fighting for a utopian future (communist, anarchist, cybernetic). We are not looking for victories that will be enjoyed by symbolic children in a future society. We are not fighting for an abstract ideal. We are not creating a world, and we are not motivated by anything outside of ourselves. Our anti-political practice, our attempts at insurrection, emerge purely from the context of an awareness of our daily lives. If we speak of social war, it is because we're experimenting with types of relationships and combat in order to attack the social order.

In order to genuinely break from politics, we must develop forms of struggle that shatter the illusions with which politics are made necessary. To quote Edelman again:

> Politics names the social enactment of the subject's attempt to establish the conditions for [an] impossible

> consolidation by identifying with something outside itself... deferred perpetually of itself. Politics, that is, names the struggle to effect a fantasmatic order of reality in which the subject's alienation would vanish into the seamlessness of identity at the endpoint of the endless chain of signifiers lived as history.

Politics is such a sinister force because it is moved by an alienation and lack rooted in society's foundations. To remedy this ennui, individuals turn to politics to discover some universal truth to struggle for—a comfortable abstraction to fill the void in their experience. This is a paradox, of course, as this alienation is intrinsic to capitalist society, and politics can only ever reproduce that society, and therefore its concomitant misery. The fantasy of politics promises to suture one's empty subjectivity to some abstraction outside of oneself in an attempt to find some meaning, to situation oneself within history, to really do something. Like a form of performance art, politics acts as a great representation of resistance to society, yet as mere representation remains inseparable from the symbolic order. The reality of politics is that it offers nothing; a nothingness that corresponds to the meaninglessness of social life.

An insurrectionary, queer anti-politics functions to interrupt the closed circuitry of emptiness-politics-emptiness. Halting the ceaseless pursuit of a better world for the Child, our project centers itself on immediate fulfillment, joy, conflict, vengeance, conspiracy and pleasure. Rather than politics, we engage in social war. Without demands, we expropriate what we desire. Instead of representation, we rely on autonomous self-organization. We do not protest, we attack. As with our queerness, our anti-politics strives to escape political identification or ideological attachment to this or that political subjectivity.

> Acceding to this figural identification with the undoing of identity, which is also to say with the disarticulation of

> social and symbolic form, might well be described as politically self-destructive... but politics (as the social elaboration of reality) and the self (as mere prosthesis maintaining the future for the figural child), are what queerness, again as figure, necessarily destroys—necessarily insofar as this "self" is the agent of reproductive futurism and this "politics" the means of its promulgation as the order of social reality... Political self-destruction inheres in the only act that counts as one; the act of resisting enslavement to the future in the name of having a life.

Evading the Trap of the Future

It should be obvious through Edelman's treatment of the relationship of politics to the Child that the cathexis which captures all political ambition is a drive toward the future. The social order must concern itself with the future so as to create the forward-moving infrastructure and discourse to proliferate itself. Edelman's name for this insistence on the Child as the future is reproductive futurism. Reproductive futurism is the ideology which demands that all social relationships and communal life be structured in order to allow for the possibility of the future through the reproduction of the Child, and thus the reproduction of society. The ideology of reproductive futurism ensures the sacrifice of all vital energy for the pure abstraction of the idealized continuation of society. Edelman argues that "futurity amounts to a struggle for Life at the expense of life; for the Children at the expense of the lived experiences of actual children."

If queerness is a refusal of the symbolic value of the Child as the horizon of the future, queerness must figure as being against the future itself. To be specific, our queer project must also pose itself as the denial of the future of civilization.

Edelman argues that "the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form." He locates this queer anti-futurity as being the primary fantastic justification for anti-queer violence: "If there is no baby and, in consequence, no future, then the blame must fall on the fatal lure of sterile, narcissistic enjoyments understood as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore as responsible for the undoing of social organization, collective reality, and, inevitably, life itself." He invokes the anti-queer interpretations of the Biblical destruction of Sodom to describe the ways in which the collective imaginary is still haunted by the notion that a proliferation of queerness can only result in a persistent threat of societal apocalypse. Thus in the name of the Child and the future it represents, any repression, sexual or otherwise, can be justified.

> The Child, immured in an innocence seen as continuously under siege, condenses a fantasy of vulnerability to the queerness of queer sexualities precisely insofar as that Child enshrines, in its form as sublimation, the very value for which queerness regularly find itself condemned: an insistence on sameness that intends to restore an Imaginary past. The Child, that is, marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity: an erotically charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity that is central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism. And so, as the radical right maintains, the battle against queers is a life-and-death struggle for the future of a Child whose ruin is pursued by queers. Indeed, as the Army of God made clear in the bomb-making guide it produces for the assistance of its militantly "pro-life" members, its purpose was wholly congruent with the logic of reproductive futurism: to "disrupt and ultimately destroy Satan's power to kill our children, God's children."

Edelman goes on to cite the ways in which reproductive futurism is intrinsic to white supremacist ideology and

white nationalism; bound as the Child is to notions of race and nation:

> Let me end with a reference to the "fourteen words," attributed to David Lane, by which members of various white separatist organizations throughout the United States affirm their collective commitment to the cause of racial hatred: "we must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." So long as "white" is the only word that makes this credo appalling, so long as the figural children continue to "secure our existence" through the fantasy that we survive in them, so long as the queer refutes that fantasy, effecting its derealization as surely an encounter with the Real, for just so long must [queerness] have a future after all.

To bolster his argument about the repressive nature of reproductive futurism, Edelman cites Walter Benjamin in describing the way in which the fantasy of the future was intrinsic to the spread of fascism in Europe. Edelman, via Benjamin, describes "the fascism of the baby's face," a phrase meant to illustrate the absolute power afforded to the ideology of reproductive futurism. This fascism of the baby's face serves to reify difference and thus to secure the reproduction of the existent social order in the form of the future. No atrocity is out of the question if it is for the Child; no horrible project of industry should precluded if it will serve to hasten the future of industrial civilization. Armies of men, imperial and revolutionary alike, have always lined up to the slaughter in the name of the Child.

But we needn't look any further than today's headlines to see the symbolic power the Child's face deploys in the service of the social order. This year, the nation has been captivated by two horrific examples of the death-regime of white supremacy in the United States. Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida and Bo Morrison in Slinger, Wisconsin: two black youth murdered at the hands of racist vigilantes. While the systematic murder and imprisonment of black

people is so commonplace that it cannot make headlines, these stories have swept the nation particularly because of the way they intersect with the narratives of innocence and childhood. Specifically in the case of Trayvon Martin, whose future was taken from him at the age of seventeen, a debate is raging centered around his character and his innocence with regard to his symbolic place as the Child.

One side of this debate circulates a "angelic" picture of his face to assure society of his child-like nature. The other side circulates a doctored picture of him wearing a grill as a kind of racialized testament to his adultness. Each side feverishly examines the 'evidence' to argue whether or not he had attacked his murderer before he died. What's at stake in this debate is Trayvon's symbolic position as the Child: if he represents the Child, his murder is the atrocious destruction of his future (and by extensions everyone's). If he is not the Child, then his killer acted out of the need to protect the future of his own community (and the children within it) from a perceived (even if falsely) threat. While politicians as high-ranking as the President invest Trayvon with the burden of carrying the futurity of their own children, others continue to assert their second amendment right to own weapons so they may protect theirs.

Bo Morrison was also murdered by a racist homeowner, and his killer continues on with impunity because he can claim that he needed to eliminate any threat to his children. Young black men who figured, like the queer, as threats to the family were destroyed in the Child's name. In each instance, the entire discourse is centered on the Child while entirely obscuring the reality of the actual young individuals executed in the Child's name.

Pundits articulate the measures that could be taken by parents and the state to restore the promise of the future: a ban on guns, more responsible gun ownership, the removal of 'hoodies' from children's wardrobes, neighborhood

watch, more policing, "justice." These horrific killings demonstrate that there truly is no future. It is this truth which young people everywhere are awakening to. They are swarming the streets *en masse*, hoods up, to outrun the police and snare the flows of the cities. They are walking out of school—that banal prison of futurity—in order to loot stores and be with their friends. They are preparing and coordinating, so that the next time one of them is burned at the stake for the sake of the Future, they'll make the city burn in kind. The fires of Greece, London and Bahrain hint toward the consequences of such an awakening.

To further ground Edelman's theory of the Child and contemporary debates around reproduction in the specific historical context which gave rise to Capitalism, we'll turn briefly to the work of Silvia Federici in her book *Caliban and the Witch*. In *Caliban*, Federici studies the rise of Capitalism in Europe through the process of primitive accumulation. For Federici, the shift from feudalism to capitalism was only possible through the accumulation of the bodies of women and consequently through the development of their bodily capacity into a site specifically for the reproduction of a proletarianized workforce. Her history illustrates that rather than a seamless transition, the period was marked by a constant oscillation between insurrection and counter-insurgency. She characterizes the peasants and proletarianized workers who rebelled against the State and in the wake of the black plague as having "no care for the future," severed as they were from any comfortable teleological fantasy. She argues that the autonomy and power which peasant women (and queers) held over their own bodies had to be destroyed in order for the nascent bourgeois class to turn them into machines of reproductive labor.

We'll quote her in elaborating the specific way in which the construction of the atomized unit of social

reproduction—the family—was crucial in the process of putting down early medieval revolt against capitalism:

> In the middle ages, migration, vagabondage, and the rise of crimes against property were part of the resistance to impoverishment and dispossession; these phenomena now took on massive proportions. Everywhere—if we give credit to the complaints of contemporary authorities—vagabonds were swarming, changing cities, crossing borders, sleeping in the haystacks or crowding at the gates of towns—a vast humanity involved in a diaspora of its own, that for decades escaped the authorities' control.... A massive reclamation and reappropriation of the stolen communal wealth was underway.... In pursuit of social discipline, an attack was launched against all forms of collective sociality and sexuality including sports, games, dances, ale-wakes, festivals, and other group-rituals that had been a source of boding and solidarity among workers.... What was at stake was the desocializaton or decollectivization of the reproduction of the work-force, as well as the attempt to impose a more productive use of leisure time.... The physical enclosure operated by land privatization and the hedging of the commons was amplified by a process of social enclosure, the reproduction of workers shifting from the open field to the home, from the community to the family, from the public space, to the private.

Through her argument, Federici consistently turns to the historical atrocity which was the witch hunts as the primary figure of the destruction of women's power and the subsequent accumulation of their bodies as womb-machines. She specifically argues that in the 16th and 17th centuries, a collective narrative circulated in attempt to foment anti-witch paranoia and fervor which charged witches as being child murderers. Common conceptions held that witches would, under the guise of being healers, enter the homes of their employers and sacrifice their children to the Devil. At a time when states and families were becoming largely concerned with population decline,

this fear lead to a tremendous hatred against those accused of witchcraft. Here, we see the emergence of the primacy of the Child as the governing symbol of the ideological and material reproduction of class society. Witches, and medieval women more broadly, can then be situated within the structural category of queerness laid out by Edelman: the category of those who refuse enslavement to the future in the form of the Child. It is also of note, though Federici only mentions it in an endnote, that there was a very strong association between witchcraft and queerness, and that countless queers met their deaths during the witch hunts.

Federici argues that with

> ...the enslavement of women to procreation... their wombs became public territory, controlled by men and the state, and procreation was directly placed at the service of capitalist accumulation... Marx never acknowledged that procreation could become a terrain of exploitation and by the same token a terrain of resistance. He never imagined that women could refuse to reproduce, or that such a refusal could become part of class struggle.... Women going on strike against child making.

This blind spot within Marx's thought must remain present in our critique of reproductive futurism and its social order. It is useful to examine the moments where people willfully resisted the reproduction of society through the subtraction of their bodies from the flows of futurity. It is readily apparent how, at the historic moment described in *Caliban*, the literal refusal to create children was a practice of resistance to the state's domination of their bodies. This bodily resistance and refusal is vital still today, but our contemporary struggle is not one solely waged against the requirement to produce actual children. We are confronted with the symbol of the Child whose interests and whose face governs the operations of politics and of all political subjects. A different kind of strike will be necessary to refuse the fantastic power of the Child.

Another useful critique which Federici levels against Marxism is that from the perspective of women, it is impossible to argue that capitalism has ever been progressive or liberating. She argues that if we recognize that class society emerged out of the massacre of thousands of women and the development of their bodies to suit the needs of industry, then we must acknowledge that capitalism has universally meant degradation and exploitation for women. While it isn't anything new to argue that capitalism means exploitation, this argument is linked to our analysis because it specifically indicts and refutes the teleology (specifically Marxist, but deployed by many other ideologies) which says that capitalism was a necessary step on the pathway toward utopia. By rejecting this progressive ideology, Federici fundamentally calls into question the narrative stability of reproductive futurism, which assures us that history moves us toward paradise, and that the present arrangement is but a step along the path.

If we're to fully understand why the complex of the Child, the political, and reproductive futurism have entwined into such repressive conditions, we would be well served to analyze the specific dynamics of capitalism as it evolved through the counter-revolution of the past several decades. Specifically, we'll need to look to capital itself as a force which colonizes life and re-makes it in its image. For this, we will turn to the work of Jacques Camatte in his essay "Against Domestication":

> The future industry has come into its own and assumed an enormous scope. Capital enters this new field and begins to exploit it, which leads to further expropriation of people and a reinforcement of their domestication. This hold over the future is what distinguishes capital from all other modes of production. From its earliest origins capital's relationship to the past or present has always been of less importance than its relationship to the future. Capital's only lifeblood is in the exchange it conducts with labor

> power. Thus when surplus value is created, it is, in the immediate sense, only potential capital; it can become effective capital solely through an exchange against future labor. In other words, when surplus value is created in the present, it acquires reality only if labor power can appear to be already available in the future. If therefore this future isn't there, then the present (and henceforth the past) is abolished: this is devalorization through total loss of substance. Clearly, then, capital's first undertaking must be to dominate the future in order to be assured of accomplishing its production process. (This conquest is managed by the credit system). Thus capital has effectively appropriated time, which it molds in its own image as quantitative time. However, present surplus value was realized and valorized through exchange against future labor, but now, with the development of the future industry, present surplus value has itself become open to capitalization. This capitalization demands that time be programmed and this need expresses itself in a scientific fashion in futurology. Henceforth, capital produces time. From now on where may people situate their utopias?

In the course of Camatte's life, his work in "Against Domestication" marks a shift in his theory from left-communism to anti-civilization ideas. This piece would later inspire a tremendous amount of Anglophone anti-civ theory. His argument is that the specific future-oriented nature of capital—its tendency to accumulate the future—allowed capitalism to develop into the monstrosity that it is. Beyond just appropriating the living labor of human beings and commodifying it as dead labor, Camatte argues that capital has colonized human beings themselves, constituting their very being and re-creating human relations into communities of capital. He describes this process—the anthropomorphizing of capital—as domestication. In coming to colonize every aspect of life within industrial society, capital thus comes to dominate individuals' futures as much as their presents. Camatte continues:

> The established societies that existed in previous times dominated the present and to a lesser extent the past, while the revolutionary movement had for itself the future. Bourgeois revolutions and the proletarian revolutions have had to guarantee progress, but this progress depended on the existence of a future valorized in relation to a present and a past that is to be abolished. In each case... the past is presented as shrouded in darkness, while the future is all shining light. Capital has conquered the future. Capital has no fear of utopias, since it even tends to produce them. The future is a field for the production of profit. In order to generate the future, to bring it into being, people must now be conditioned as a function of a strictly preconceived process of production: this is programming brought to its highest point....
>
> Domination of the past, the present and the future, gives rise to a structural representation, where everything is reduced to a [combination] of social relations, productive forces, or mythmemes, etc, arranged in such a way as to cohere as a totality.

This totality is our situation. History is only the record of centuries of defeat and the triumph of capital over the dead. The future is a horizon dominated by its representation as the sphere of expansion possibilities and new technologies. And around us are the innumerable institutions, technologies and processes that would use us as the submissive tools for this process of domination. This is what it means to describe capitalism as a totality. This is why we don't simply argue against a specific economic system, but against industrial society itself; not for a particular management of the means of production, but against them altogether.

That capital now forms the horizon of our lives is evident. To say "no future" means to say that we have no future except for one drifting at sea, blown at all times by the winds of the unfolding crisis of the capitalist mode of production. Precarious employment, lifetimes of debt,

the impossibility of retirement, the need to constantly remake oneself through countless techniques-of-the-self in order to bring oneself to market as a pretty new commodity, rent, bills, credit: the facts of our own daily reproduction force us to continually sell, not just our bodily capacity, but our futures as well. Every time we offer up our body in a medical study, or turn a trick, or run a scam, we are wagering our futures against the daunting task of surviving another month in hell.

The editors of the anti-state communist journal *Endnotes* write in their second issue:

> Capitalist self-perpetuation presents itself as eternalization it appears infinite, without a beyond. Since this relation projects itself into an infinite future, revolutionary theory necessarily concerns itself with rupture, with an interruption in the very temporality of the relation.

What could such an interruption look like? How can we imagine a force capable of blockading the ceaseless flow of time into the future? Let's return to Edelman. He cites a passage from a campaign for a 'parents bill of right' (a political campaign aimed a 'strengthening the family'):

> It is time to join together and acknowledge that the work that parents do is indispensable—that by nourishing those small bodies and growing those small souls, they create the store of social and human capital that is so essential to the health and wealth of our nation. Simply put, by creating the conditions that allow parents to cherish their children, we will ensure our collective future.

Edelman continues by analyzing the campaign:

> Ignore for a moment what demands to be called the transparency of this appeal. Ignore, that is, how quickly the spiritualizing vision of parents "nourishing and growing... small bodies... small souls" gives way to a rhetoric offering instead the far more pragmatic (and politically imperative) investment in the "human capital... essential to the health and wealth of our nation." Ignore, by so doing, how

> the passage renominates those human "souls" as "capital" [and] prompts us to "cherish" these "capitalized" humans precisely insofar as they come to embody this thereby humanized "capital." Ignore all this and one's eyes might still pop to discover that only political intervention will "allow... parents to cherish their children" so as to "ensure our collective future"—or ensure... that our present will always be mortgaged to a fantasmatic future in the name of the political "capital" that those children will thus have become.

And thus the ideology of reproductive futurism comes full circuit within the context of future-oriented capitalism. The full force of the political and symbolic orders is put into the thrust to reproduce—to reproduce the Child. But here we see that capital's ever-expanding reach claims the future and even the souls of not-yet-born children. Capital must continue to expand, and can only do so by appropriating each of our futures, and even those of the children we could someday have. And the forward-thrust of reproductive futurism must serve its purpose, to continually procure sacrifices to the unending process of domestication where capital comes to possess all life. Capital is our future; and yet there is no future. It is within this contradiction—the expansion of capital into all areas of life versus the impossibility of living a life within capitalism—that we must orient our study and theorize how we might interrupt the endless perpetuation of the present order.

To do so, of course, requires an acute skepticism toward the fantasy of the future. Edelman:

> We might like to believe that with patience, with work, with generous contributions to lobbying groups or generous participation in activist groups or generous doses of legal savvy and electoral sophistication, the future will hold a place for us—a place at the political table that won't have to come at the cost of the places we seek in the bed or the bar or the baths. But there are no queers in that future as

> there can be no future for queers, chosen as they are to bear the bad tidings that there can be no future at all... That future is nothing but kid stuff, reborn each day to screen out the grave that gapes from within the lifeless letter, luring us into, ensnaring us in, reality's gossamer web.

This belief in a future for queers that Edelman points to is most recently demonstrated by the "It Gets Better" campaign, a series of viral YouTube videos directed at queer youth which promise them that life must get better if only they're patient enough. Celebrities, politicians and people of all walks of life joined together to champion the beautiful inevitability of a better future. In the campaign's response to the very real atrocity of queer teen suicide, it only pushes the atrocity away and encourages its audience to submit patiently to continued misery. In trying to drive death off, they drive off life, replacing it with sacrifice and waiting for a better future. The campaign promises a fulfilling world which exists beyond the nightmare of high school, yet somehow fails to mention the waking nightmares of debt, work, family, disease, depression and anxiety which the future must surely deliver.

Of these videos the most vile and perhaps the most telling is a recent release by the San Francisco Police Department depicting queer police officers telling their coming-out stories and assuring the viewers of the better future to come. Along with these assurances, they further implore queer youth to call on the police department if in need, declaring "it will get better, and until it does, we'll be here for you."

The future will continue its mirage-like spectacle, promising redemption yet continually deferring its delivery. The further we progress down its path, the farther we'll be from the utopia it teases us with. We'll consistently arrive where we imagined the future would take us, only to find that the desert of modern life continues to stretch out in every direction—that the passage of time

has continued to deliver us up anew for pure repetition of the same: the same exploitation, alienation, depression, meaninglessness. If queerness is to be our weapon, we must fanatically avoid any tendency toward reproductive futurism that would dull our daggers. We must refuse the institutions of the future, whether high schools or police departments, that eternally immiserate our present. If we are to cease the skyward growth of the pile of queer bodies sacrificed at the feet of the future, we must silence the chorus of *it-gets-betters* and attack, here and now, at whatever is making it unbearable.

If it is our intention to participate in insurrection against domestication and capital's futurity, we mustn't be deceived by the fleeing utopias of reproductive futurism. Instead we must situate ourselves within our present, and studiously explore the methods of sabotage, interruption, expropriation and destruction that refuse futurity's domination. Or, as Edelman puts it:

> If the fate of the queer is to figure the fate that cuts the thread of futurity... then the only oppositional status to which our queerness could ever lead would depend on our taking seriously the place of the death drive we're called on to figure and insisting, against the cult of the Child and the political order it reinforces, that we, as Guy Hocquenghem made clear, are "not the signifier of what might become a new form of 'social organization,'" that we do not intend a new politics, a better society, a brighter tomorrow, since all of these fantasies reproduce the past, through displacement, in the form of the future. We choose instead not to choose the Child, as disciplinary image of the Imaginary past or as site of a projective identification with an always impossible future. The queerness we propose, in Hocquenghem's words, "is unaware of the passing of generations as stages on the road to better living. It knows nothing about 'sacrifice now for the sake of future generations... it knows that civilization alone is mortal." Even more: it delights in that mortality as the

> negation of everything that would define itself, moralistically, as pro-life. It is we who must bury the subject in the tomb-like hollow of the signifier, pronouncing at last the words for which we're condemned should we speak them or not: that we are the advocates of abortion; that the Child as futurity's emblem must die; that the future is mere repetition and just as lethal as the past. Our queerness has nothing to offer a symbolic that lives by denying that nothingness except an insistence on the haunting excess that this nothingness entails, an insistence of the negativity that pierces the fantasy screen of futurity, shattering narrative temporality with irony's always explosive force. And so what is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to insist intransitively—to insist that the future stops here.

Naming the Unnameable

A crucial concept in Edelman's project is the term catachresis. Catachresis can be defined as either the use of a term to name something which cannot be named, or the misuse of a word to describe something. For Edelman, any use of the word queer must always be a catachresis, as it mistakenly gives a name to the unnameable. This concept is a tool to critique all of the political and theoretical processes that affirm an identity category in the place of our unnameable project. For Edelman, the fundamental unnameable is the death drive: the undoing of civilization, and our own undoing, pulsing within the existent. He says that "it is in fact because it is unnameable with all the resonances you can give to this name, that it is akin to the quintessential unnameable, that is to say death." While we might locate our unnameable drives and projects differently, we are forced to come up against the political logic of catachresis and confront the urge to give a name—and therefore a representation and a politics—to what is essentially ineffable in our lives.

Edelman's argument is specifically leveled against Judith Butler and her project for radical inclusivity. Against Butler he argues that attempts at legitimizing and including any subject into politics must always fail. While one might agitate for the inclusion of a particular catachresis which names the anti-social void, that void remains untouched, and another name must be given to it. The social order's necessary Other cannot be abolished through the reform-oriented integration of each successive other into the project of representative politics. Another Other must rise to fill the void. Society will locate another enemy subject to discipline and to destroy.

Against Butler and her conceptions of social justice, Edelman argues:

> Committed as she is to intelligibility as the expanding horizon of social justice, Butler would affirm "our own power" to re-articulate by means of catachresis, the laws responsible for what she aptly calls our "moralized sexual horror." Such a re-articulation, she claims, would proceed through the repeated scandal by which the unspeakable nevertheless makes itself heard through borrowing and exploiting the very terms that are meant to enforces its silence. This, of course, assumes that the unspeakable intends, above all else to speak, whereas Lacan maintains ... something radically different: that sex, as the "structural incompleteness of language is that which does not communicate itself, that which marks the subject as unknowable." No doubt, as Butler helps us to see, the norms of the social order do, in fact, change through catachresis, and those who once were persecuted as figures of moralized sexual horror may trade their chill and silent tombs for a place on the public stage. But that redistribution of social roles doesn't stop the cultural production of figures... to bear the burden of embodying such a moralized sexual horror. For that horror itself survives the fungible figures that flesh it out insofar as it responds to something in sex that's inherently unspeakable: the Real of sexual difference.

For Edelman, queerness is the ineffable which escapes the ability to be named: "queerness as name may well reinforce the symbolic order of naming, but it names what resists, as signifier, absorption into the Imaginary identity of the name." And so this critique of the naming and subsequent inclusion of deviant subjects must call into question the structures which produce normative and deviant subjects from the beginning. Our struggle cannot be one for this or that identity, but rather against the representative politics of Identity altogether.

Edelman:

> The agent responsible for effecting their destruction has been given many names:... global extermination of meaning... gravediggers of society... whatever refuses to allow parents to cherish their children... homosexuals... the death drive and the Real of *jouissance*.... So [queerness] knots together these threats to reproductive futurism. No political catachresis, such as Butler proposes, could forestall the need to constitute, then, such a category of [queerness]. For even though, as Butler suggests, political catachresis may change over time the occupants of that category, the category itself... continues to mark the place of whatever refuses intelligibility.

And so the question that is posed concerns the refusal of intelligibility. Contemporary arrangements of power have abolished the silence that once accompanied the dark ineffable desires of queerness and destruction. Rather than an injunction against speech, the power of biopolitical democracy is specifically to make us speak. Cybernetic relationships ensure that each of us as a speaking subject has the ability to name ourselves, aestheticize ourselves, deploy blogs and social networks and avatars to represent ourselves. The contemporary function of power can be understood as one unending move toward intelligibility—one of moving what had been blind spots into new subjects to be marketed; new identities to be surveilled.

We are captured by the state every time we make ourselves intelligible. Whether demand, political subject, or formal organization, each intelligible form can be recuperated, represented, or annihilated.

Our project then must proceed in the recognition of the paradox that its being made truly intelligible—even by us, even *to* us—would be its defeat. We must seize the possibility of a life neither constrained by nor produced through the omnipresence of capital and state. It is precisely by the fact that words fail to describe it and programs fail to bring it about that we can know this life. As such, any imperative to put this ineffable project into words must be understood as a compromise of what must be an uncompromising project. There is no language which can make our intentions comprehensible to the social order. Any move toward such comprehensibility would be a betrayal of the specific antagonistic character of our project against that social order.

Camatte elaborates on this point:

> This is a revolution of life itself, a search for another way of living. Dialogue should be concerned only with the plans and ideas for realizing this desire. No dialogue can take place between the social order and those who are to overthrow it. If dialogue is still seen as a possibility, then this would be an indication that the movement is faltering. Underlying all this is a profoundly important phenomenon: all human life from the very beginning of its development within capitalist society, has undergone an impoverishment. More than this, capitalist society is death organized with all the appearances of life. Here it is not a question of death as the extinction of life, but death-in-life, death with all the substance and power of life. The human being is dead and is no more than a ritual of capital ... but to those great number of smugly complacent people, who live on empty dramas and fantasies, this demand, this passionate need, just seems irrational, or, at best, a paradise that is by definition inaccessible.

And so a queerness which opposes society must embody the death drive of what has become death-in-life, the intrinsic negation of a social order predicated on the use of life for its ends. In this project, we have nothing to gain by speaking the language of, or making demands to, the existent power structures. It is specifically these structures' ability to comprehend antagonism that makes intelligibility synonymous with recuperation.

Edelman returns to Butler:

> Small wonder then that her subversive act, her re-articulation of the norm, while promising to open what Butler calls a radical new field of the human, returns us, instead, to familiar forms of a durable liberal humanism whose rallying cry has always been, and here remains "the future."
>
> But what if it didn't? What if ... all those doomed to ontological suspension on account of their unrecognizable and, in consequence, unlivable loves, declined intelligibility, declined to bring [themselves], catachrestically, into the gambit of future meaning—or declined, more exactly, to cast off the meaning that clings to those social identities that intelligibility abjects...
>
> Such [queers] would insist on the unintelligible's unintelligibility, on the internal limit to signification and the impossibility of turning Real loss to meaningful profit in the Symbolic without its persistent remainder: the inescapable Real of the death drive. As embodiments of unintelligibility, of course, they must veil what they expose, becoming, as figures for it, the means of its apparent subjection to meaning. But where Butler... conduces to futurism's logic of intelligibility by seeking no more than to widen the reach of what it allows us to grasp, where she moves, by way of the future, toward the ongoing legitimation of social form through the recognition that is said to afford "ontological certainty and durability" [queerness], though destined, of course, to be claimed for intelligibility, consents to the logic that makes it a figure for what meaning can never grasp. Demeaned, it embraces de-meaning as the

> endless insistence of the real that the symbolic can never master for meaning now or in the future.

Here Edelman invokes the Lacanian concept of the Real, or that which escapes articulation through symbolic structures. The Real is the indescribable and unnameable characteristic of our lived experience. The Real is the irreducible essence of revolt, pleasure, conspiracy and joy which comprises our project and which continually evades representation by politicians or surveillance by police apparatuses. To the contrary, Intelligibility offers two options: legitimization and democratic inclusion, or delegitimization and repression.

Jouissance

Having sketched out the critical components of Edelman's thought, it's time to turn to the question of our lived experience. If we refuse politics (with its positive projects, reproductive futurity and drive toward intelligibility) we are left with the question of what means of enjoyment immediately exceeds it. How to constitute the purely negative project that is called for by such a rigorously critical conception of queerness?

To articulate such an escape, we must look outside the framework of the teleologies which promise progressive paths toward utopia, outside the abstract symbolic world where politics and identity function. Edelman would urge us to look to the psychoanalytic realm of the Real: the material and affective facts of our existence which escape representation and signification. For Edelman, the real of queerness—which cuts through the positivist baggage of identity—is *jouissance*. He writes:

> Queerness undoes the identities through which we experience ourselves as subjects, insisting on the Real of a *jouissance* that social reality and the futurism on which it relies have already foreclosed. Queerness, therefore is never a

> matter of being or becoming but, rather, of embodying the remainder of the real internal to the symbolic order. One name for this unnameable remainder as Lacan describes it, is *jouissance*, sometimes translated as "enjoyment": a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning and law.

It is useful, in understanding this concept of *jouissance*, to follow Edelman in thinking the elements of queer reality which escape representation: the remainders, as he'd term them. These remainders are what is left over after capital colonizes the positivities of queerness—its fashions, parties, academic pursuits, aesthetics, labors, social networks—and after politics integrates intelligible queerness into its symbolic order. And so what is this remainder? What remains after one subtracts the progressive ideology of inclusion, the humble victim, the upstanding citizens, the eccentric selling points, the fluid permutations of Identity, the volumes of theory? What remains is *jouissance*.

Edelman describes *jouissance* as a supersession of the boundaries of pleasure and pain, a shattering of identity and law. We should analyze this distinction between pleasure and pain as being an inscription of the social order into our bodies. And in the same way, it is the mundane and miniscule pleasures produced through contemporary power arrangements which keep us dependent on those arrangements for our well-being. *Jouissance*, in abolishing both sides of this distinction, severs us from pain as a self-preservation instinct and from pleasure as the society's alluring bribe. It is the process that momentarily sets us free from our fear of death (literal or figurative) which is such a powerful inhibitor.

We can locate this *jouissance* in the historic moments of queer riot: Compton's cafeteria, Dewey's, the White Night, Stonewall, and countless other moments where

queer bodies participated in rupture—throwing bricks, setting fires, smashing windows, rejoicing in the streets. But more to the point, *jouissance* is located in precisely the aspects of these moments (and of others unknown to us) which elude historians, the ones which cannot be captured in a textbook or situated neatly within narratives of progress for queer people, or of rational political struggle for a better future. *Jouissance* is the rage which boils over in the first queen to set a fire; the hatred of an entire social order which flows through one's veins while they set a dozen San Francisco police vehicles on fire. It is the ecstatic bliss that must have shivered its way through the spines of any blessed enough to hear the siren songs of those police cruisers wailing in flames. *Jouissance* is the way that the sexual encounters immediately following such riots were totally incommensurable to the mundane sex of daily life.

Jouissance is the driving *élan* of queer sex culture, and yet it is precisely that element of queer sex which still cannot be locked up in an industry, sold as a commodity or scheduled at some mass commercialized ritual. While each element of the sex industry attempts to resolve some fundamental lack and to integrate one's desires into a coherent subjective experience, *jouissance* is specifically that element of sexual desire which makes such a union impossible. It is a desire for *jouissance* which sends us into the night seeking to overwhelm our bodily capacity, to disintegrate the corporeal limits of ourselves, to truly flee from what and who we are. It is specifically this remainder, which defines the unbridgeable chasm between the public sex culture of New York and San Francisco in the seventies (massive squatted sex warehouses, perpetual orgies, a culture of cruising which entirely dissolved the distinction between sex and the rest of life) and the so-called cruising of the cybernetic era (Grindr, craigslist, sparsely attended and overpriced parties at failing sex clubs). This

distance might also be understood as what separates the anarchy of an orgy from the democratic ideology of purist polyamory. *Jouissance* is the unnameable desire that one hopelessly attempts to summarize before giving one's body to another: "I want to be negated."

Jouissance is that essence of queer criminality which cannot be reduced to any vulgar determinism. It is the joy found in the retribution of robbing some bourgeois john, the thrill of theft, the satisfaction of destruction. It is because we are addicted to the intertwining pleasure and pain which brings us again and again into the streets: seeking to riot or fight or fuck. It is specifically the pursuit of the unnameable *jouissance* which causes, without fail, to risk everything in sacrifice to some more grand chaos. This *aufheben* of the categories of pain and pleasure is also the overthrowing of our attachments and investments in political activism, stable identity, and reason. The negativity of *jouissance* is the same that drives us away from obligations to the economy, the family, the law, and, above all, the Future.

Edelman:

> This *jouissance* dissolves such fetishistic investments, undoing the consistency of a social reality that relies on Imaginary identifications, on the structures of Symbolic law, and on the paternal metaphor of the name. Hence, there is another name that designates the unnameability to which *jouissance* would give us access: Behind what is named, there is the unnameable. It is in fact because it is unnameable with all the resonances you can give to this name, that it is akin to the quintessential unnameable, that is to say death. The death drive, therefore manifests itself though in radically different guises, in... *jouissance*....
>
> To the extent that it tears the fabric of symbolic reality as we know it, unravelling the solidity of every object, including the object as which the subject necessarily takes itself, *jouissance* evokes the death drive that always insists

> as the void in and of the subject, beyond its fantasy of self-realization, beyond the pleasure principle.

It is worth following Edelman in cautioning against the ways in which *jouissance*, or more specifically, futile attempts to identify with or name *jouissance*, can lead to a reification of the categories which we'd call upon *jouissance* to abolish:

> To the extent that *jouissance*, as fantasmatic escape from the alienation intrinsic to meaning, lodges itself in a given object on which identity come to depend, it produces identity as mortification, reenacting the very constraint of meaning it was intended to help us escape.

Any attempt to situate *jouissance* as a positive project can only ever be a step away from it. Circuit parties, pornography, social networking applications, political demonstrations, activist organizations, art: all of these strive to recuperate *jouissance* into some alternative structure, and yet must always fail because *jouissance* is inherently that which evades capture and ruptures the coherent narratives which justify such structures. This critique is particularly ironic coming from Edelman, whose own practice as a *'jouissieur'* never seems to exceed participation in those same circuit parties, academic conferences, senseless hours at the gym and lavish shopping sprees. He specifically advocates "the meaningless eruption of *jouissance* associated with the 'circuit parties' that gesture toward the circuit of the drive." In his affirmation of this or that element of contemporary gay culture, he fails do the work of locating *jouissance* within the actual subversive histories of queerness (compared to which, gay culture can only be just a pathetic substitute). It's important here to reassert that our conception and praxis of *jouissance* absolutely must go beyond the limitations of Edelman's work.

Queerness, conceived entirely in the negative, names the *jouissance* forbidden by, but permeating the social order itself. It is the specific reason why we can say that

behind the facade of the normal operations of life within capital, there is a subversive current which infallibly and irrationally lashes out against the conditions of the existent. This is why we can also say that in moments of widespread rupture and revolt, there exists a powerful and sinister drive to assimilate revolt back into the circuits of politics, identity, and the economy itself. This tension explains why urban revolt, as witnessed in London or Oakland, must be rationalized by activists, politicians and police agencies as the expression of finite grievances by coherent communities. And yet this contradiction is also why routine traffic stops or raids by police officers have triggered pain and death for those officers at the hands of those they are accustomed to governing.

Returning to Edelman once more:

> This I suggest is the ethical burden to which queerness must accede in a social order intent on misrecognizing its own investment in morbidity, fetishization, and repetition: to inhabit the place of a meaninglessness associated with the sinthome; to figure an unregenerate, and unregenerating, sexuality whose singular insistence on *jouissance*, rejecting every constraint imposed by sentimental futurism, exposes aesthetic culture—the culture of forms and their reproduction, the culture of Imaginary lures—as always already a "culture of death" intent on abjecting the force of a death drive that shatters the tomb we call life.

The negativity of *jouissance*, which we understand to be the vital characteristic of our queerness, is the methods by which we expose the banality and horror of contemporary life. If the social order consistently produces moments of rupture and anti-social violence—expropriation, riot, looting, street fights, sexual depravity, spree arson, hacking—these moments expose society for what it is: hell on earth. Our acquiescence to the pull of *jouissance* functions as a mirror into which society must gaze and recognize its decadence, the impending actualization of its

undoing. In the context of such horror, our task is then to "materialize the force of negation, the derealizing insistence of *jouissance*."

This material force of negation must be one that goes on, not only to disrupt the daily circulation of society, but also to sabotage the apparatuses which function to reproduce us as subjects within those flows. We must, as Edelman says, "break open with *jouissance* and launch [ourselves] into the void around and against which the subject congeals."

Jouissance must be the attack on those all the subjective apparatuses that entrench us into Identity at every turn: education, careers, identity politics, political identity, bank accounts, biometric surveillance technologies, internet avatars, communication infrastructure, *ad nauseam*. Capitalist subjects are formed through the perpetual war between living beings and these technics, and so any project to abolish capital and its subjects must study and liquidate these apparatuses. An insistence on *jouissance* is to consistently intervene in this war against symbols on the part of the unsymbolized remainder which is exploited in the game of subjectivity. *Jouissance* is the range of deviant and subversive practices which connect our struggle against society to our refusal to be its subjects.

That we pursue *jouissance* does not make us queers. Our queerness isn't that reified identity but is rather "a mode of enjoyment at the social order's expense." (Edelman). And in doing this, we must resist any recuperative tendency to identify *jouissance* with any identity or grouping of identities. Jack Halberstam critiques Edelman on this point:

> The gay male archive, because it is limited to a short list of favored canonical writers is also bound by a particular range of affective responses. And so, fatigue, ennui, boredom, indifference, ironic distancing, indirectness, arch dismissal, insincerity and camp make up..."an archive of

> feelings" associated with this form of anti-social theory. But, this canon occludes another suite of affectivities associated, again, with another kind of politics and a different form of negativity. In this other archive, we can identify, for example: rage, rudeness, anger, spite, impatience, intensity, mania, sincerity, earnestness, over-investment, incivility, brutal honesty and so on. The first archive is a camp archive, a repertoire of formalized and often formulaic responses to the banality of straight culture and the repetitiveness and unimaginativeness of heteronormativity. The second archive, however, is far more in keeping with the undisciplined kinds of responses that Bersani at least seems to associate with sex and queer culture and it is here that the promise of self-shattering, loss of mastery and meaning, unregulated speech and desire are unloosed. Dyke anger, anti-colonial despair, racial rage, counter-hegemonic violences, punk pugilism, these are the bleak and angry territories of the anti-social turn; these are the jagged zones within which not only self-shattering (the opposite of narcissism in a way) but other-shattering occurs.

We again find it useful to follow Halberstam's criticism, and we'll happily appropriate the negative affects named above. And yet we must constantly repeat the importance of severing these affects from belonging to any subject. Edelman may be wrong for focusing on the gay male subject, but then so too would Halberstam's more inclusive project fail by focusing on others. Edelman fails for exploring *jouissance* only within the fields of literature and film, and this failure wouldn't be fixed (as Halberstam argues) by widening the canon of artwork to explore. No, we must experience queer theories limits here, in its attachment to identity and to art altogether. Specifically because we want to engage with *jouissance*, that unnameable remainder, we must avoid the positivities to be named in literature and identity. Our project of negativity and *jouissance* will be one that is located in the subversive potential hidden by daily life—a potential which cannot

be trapped in subjectivity, but instead possesses subjects and turns them against themselves.

We'll conclude our attempts to articulate *jouissance* by returning to Jacques Camatte in his essay "This World We Must Leave," written by the time he'd already concluded that any struggle against capital must seek to destroy domestication, and by extension civilization itself:

> The crisis postulates a choice, a decision, and thus enforces itself because there is a difficult and unusual situation. This is true both for the Capitalist Mode of Production and for humans, without forgetting the interference between the two.... There is a rigorous determinism that leads to a certain realization, a determinism that can only be put in question again if humans become capable of breaking their domestication. The choice for [humans] appears as the acceptance of [their] destructive multiplication of life or the domination = restriction of its inhuman quantitative multiplication, which would allow its continuance. To abandon a certain fear of death which forces it to look for life in the extension of life, multiplication and progression of life. Reproduction is a certain fear of death and [humans] live it in its extension and not in the intensity of living; that translates the uncertainty in the world as if the species was not yet sure of its existence on the planet. The intensity of living implies a reflection of life on itself, then there is enjoyment by the resorption of life inside the living [being] and not delegated to another generation.

The capitalist mode of production must respond to the situation which throws its very future into crisis. It will respond, in part, by proliferating a wide array of alternatives and measures (austerity, re-adjustment, sustainability) which might ensure its continued viability. For all of us implicated in the 'interference' between capitalism and humans, these measures will confront us as the new conditions of our own immiseration and survival. All of the options presented for us are always already held hostage by the specter of reproductive futurism. In each case we

are forced to identify the extension of our own lives with the extension of the capitalist social order eternally into the future. Austerity confronts us a new ethics to be integrated into our own being if we are to ever be assured a future within this failing civilization. We will be expected to work and suffer, and to be paid solely in the assurance that the future will continue its death-like march through time. The economists and politicians will offer a plethora of false options and will foreclose on the possibility of a real break.

While the statist managers of capital must globally enforce a regime of austerity and structural re-adjustment in order to maintain their future (by whatever means possible), a new social movement has emerged which figures the future another way. In the United States, the Occupy movement can be understood as a form by which anti-austerity struggles could take shape and agitate for a *different* future. For some within the movement, this means arguing for a return to a failed Keynesianism, a structural investment in a future for the welfare state. They argue that they are not anti-capitalist but that they are specifically trying to 'save capitalism' from the fundamental contradictions which ensure its failure. Against this reformist position, the radicals within the Occupy movement argue instead for a *prefigurative* politics, through which activists and other radicals demonstrate that 'another world is possible.' This position focuses on experimenting with and perfecting forms of struggle and organization which they imagine to be blueprints for a utopia to come. Prefigurative politics, as with all politics, invests its energy and faith into the hope that if we only do the hard work now, our efforts will be redeemed in a future society.

And so the dialectic of reproductive futurism continues to unfold in the context of a deepening crisis. Whether arguing for the defeated project of social democracy, the reactionary strategy of a militarized privatization

and re-structuring, or the prefigurative politics of the new encampments, each position re-asserts the ideology of reproductive futurism, which demands a lifetime of immiseration and sacrifice for the possibility of a better world for our children. And yet each option delivers us, again and again, to deathly repetition. We are asked to choose between the concentration camps of a neo-fascist austerity on the one hand and the self-managed poverty of the urban occupation encampment on the other, between an emaciated means of reproduction in the home or a 'collectivized' means to reproduce ourselves in the plazas. One option expects us to sacrifice so that the economy might survive and the other so that we might be redeemed by a constantly deferred utopia. Regardless, the Camp, as central figure of contemporary reproductive ideology, is situated at the horizon, eclipsing that unspoken option which would shatter the double-bind of futurity and austerity.

This unstated option, the one laid out by Camatte and in a different way by Edelman, is that intensity of living which would break our domestication and end our investment in civilization's future. This intensity of enjoyment (the literal translation of *jouissance* from the French) must be the same *jouissance* which shatters our subjective enslavement to capitalist civilization. It is that exact current which permeates all of society and delivers to the necessity of insurrection against all that exists and for a joy which we cannot name. This *jouissance* is the resistance which is hidden by, and yet integral to every social structure. Within the spectacles of the anti-austerity demonstrations and the plaza occupations lies the unnameable remainder which does not promise a better future. It is the unassimilable and ineffable tendency for people to self-sabotage any efforts at political organization. It is the darkness so feared by the right and so denied by the left. It is what the police must be called on to repress and the organizer to assimilate.

If the activist milieus and the Left had staked their entire future on Occupy Wall Street (OWS), it is because its represented a desperate gesture of a social order whose future is falling away. The global capitalist media has been quick to compare and contrast the supposedly peaceful, democratic movement of the plazas with the violent irruption of the lumpenproletarian youth in London. What separates one body of dispossessed youth from another is specifically their disposition to the question of futurity. For the indignant occupiers, their future is something gambled away by financial institutions, to be won back through righteous struggle. For London's riotous scum, a future is something they've never been promised, save for one of poverty, boredom, police violence or prison. Behind the hopeful facade that was OWS, a thousand Londons lay concealed. Our insurrectional project is the erosion of that hope and the insistence against the possibility of the future.

This insurrection cannot be understood as another event deferred to the future, but rather a possibility to seize life in spite of and against the social order. The promise of *jouissance* is not to deliver a more revolutionary futurity, but an irruption of irreducible negativity. While the activists sacrifice themselves at the police lines, the youngsters and ne'er-do-wells smash the unguarded windows of police cruisers and help one another through the shattered plate glass doors of cafes in order help themselves to the sweets within. While the assemblies determine how to articulate reproductive futurism 'from below,' the *jouissiuers* fuck, vandalize, expropriate, and conspire. Flash mobs in Milwaukee and Philly, demonstrations turned to looting, churches set alight, irresponsible sexual adventures, shipments blockaded, explosions of the gender distinction, street parties turned street fights, jail escapes, boulder-traps set for police officers, infrastructural sabotage: countless moments where the ideologies and structures

which ensure the self-reproduction of the social order are destroyed at the expense of an irrational enjoyment; an enjoyment fixed in the present without a care for the future. What we term the commune is not a model for another evasive utopia, but rather the process which intertwines these diffuse moments of pleasure, pain, and joyous attack.


MESSALINA.

Queers Gone Wild

Having exhaustively analyzed the theoretical body of Edelman's work, our task is to distinguish what is useful to our project from what is hopelessly lost in the abyss of the academy. While the immense weight of Edelman's cultural criticism and purely abstract engagement with Lacan can surely be discarded, it is the insurrectionary potential of his thought that we wish to cleave out of his books and use as a tool for an anti-political praxis. To do this, we must explore the ancestral queer revolutionary to whom he's hopelessly indebted. So we now turn to the work of Guy Hocquenghem.

Beyond being a writer and queer theorist, Hocquenghem was a queer revolutionary who participated in the revolt of May '68 and was seduced by Deleuze and Guattari's radical ideas on desire. After being purged from the Communist Party for his homosexuality, he joined the FHAR (Front Homosexuel d'Action Revolutionnaire) becoming the first fag to be a member of the group of lesbian separatist militants. Ultimately he forged a critique of the militant left and developped a queer theory which called for nothing less than the destruction of capitalism, the family, the state and ultimately civilization. The vast majority of his work remains untranslated into English, and Anglophone queer theory is all the more impoverished for this absence. The wonder of his work, however, did not elude Edelman, who cites Hocquenghem sparsely throughout *No Future*. Although Edelman only attributes a handful of pretty phrases to Guy, we'll argue that Lee's project of queer negativity is deeply indebted to the former's work. Queerness as negative, the refusal of reified queer identity, insistence against the succession of generations, the critique of the family as the foundational structure of the social order, the critique

of politics, conceptions of a destructive *jouissance*: all are to be found in Hocquenghem's theory, and without being diluted by layers of academic bullshit and bad puns. We experience it as a horrible tragedy that Guy died of AIDS before he could shape a more prolific canon of queer theory, and yet it is in his memory that we carry this flame.

Capitalism, the Family and the Anus

"Capitalism, the Family, and the Anus" is the first chapter of the largest volume of Hocquenghem's work to be translated to English, *Homosexual Desire*. In it, he lays out a theory of the foundational structures of capitalism as a preface to his theory of a queerness that might annihilate those structures. Hocquenghem's theory of capitalism is largely engaged the work of his contemporaries, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in their tome *Anti-Oedipus*. Elaborating on their work, he argues that all of capitalist society is reproduced through the specific relationship of the family—namely, the Oedipal relationship. This concept is used to describe the way in which capital must respond to the fundamental disintegration intrinsic to its reign. While the process of accumulation rips bodies and lives away from the contexts which give them meaning and provide for their ability to sustain themselves, the Oedipal relationship of the family functions to capture the chaos of this unravelling and to reorient human lives into the scheme of reproduction:

> The family is therefore constructed as an artificially re-territorialized unit where social control has been relocated and in which forms of social organization can be reproduced. The father becomes a familial despot, and the mother, for example, an image for earth and country. Thus the privatized individual that psychoanalysis studies within the Oedipal family unit is an artificial construct,

whose social function is to trap and control the disorder that haunts social life under capitalism.

We've already explored at length the symbolic order that the family is called on to defend, but it is worth elaborating that the family is a capitalist form that is made to function as the basic building block of the social order. Discipline, work ethic, duty, law, morality, the gender distinction, sexuality, and of course futurity are all inscribed into children's bodies through the machinations of the familial matrix. In the following from Hocquenghem we see the germinal seed of Edelman's entire argument concerning the intrinsic link between the family and reproductive futurism:

> By becoming a father in turn, the former child hands the Oedipus complex down to his own descendants like a torch of civilization, and takes his place in the great lineage of Humanity. The absolute need for the Oedipus complex to be reproduced—and not produced—explains why childhood conflicts with the father image are finally resolved by the son's stepping into his father's shoes and founding a new family: indeed, the whole progress of society rests on the opposition between successive generations.

We'll follow Hocquenghem in asserting that civilization, and the class society which is its content, is entirely reliant on the successive reproduction of the familial unit in order to inseminate future generations with its values. The social order is born anew in the body of each child, as it is transmitted from parent to their offspring in an endless forward movement. It is also here that we can locate the uncited source of Edelman's arguments concerning the figure of homosexuality which must terrorize this familial fantasy:

> Homosexual neurosis is the backlash to the threat which homosexual desire poses for Oedipal reproduction. Homosexual desire is the... terror of the family because it produces itself without reproducing. Every homosexual must

> thus see himself as the end of the species, the termination of a process for which he is not responsible and which must stop at himself.... The homosexual can only be a degenerate, for he does not generate—he is only the artistic end to a species.... Homosexuality is seen as a regressive neurosis, totally drawn towards the past; the homosexual is incapable of facing his future as an adult and father, which is laid down for every male individual.

This terror is the basis for what Edelman describes as the fantasy on which anti-queer paranoia is based; that complex of dread and desire so intrinsically tied to queer sexuality, that bodies might find ways of intercourse which do not produce the child and are not concerned with the reproduction of the social order through its tiny body. For Hocquenghem, homosexuality is not a coherent identity or community, but instead a social category created to capture all the polymorphous and queer desires which cannot fit neatly into the social form of the Family. Queerness comes to figure the catch-all fantasy for all the unnameable nightmares which haunt the capitalist social order.

Hocquenghem describes a growing imperialism of society which functions to attribute a social status and definition to everything, even that which cannot be classified. And so the destructive and polymorphic desires which lurk at the core of social relations are captured into a specific identity rather than being a capacity which could seduce or enchant any body:

> Capitalism, in its necessary employment of Oedipalization, manufactures homosexuals just as it produces proletarians, and what is manufactured is a psychologically repressive category.... They amount to a perverse re-territorialization, a massive effort to regain social control in a world tending toward disorder and decoding.

This disorder that homosexuality is called upon to symbolize runs deeper than that which plagues Oedipal reproduction. Beyond the Family as capitalist

unit, Hocquenghem also describes the specific way in which the individual is constructed as the subject of capital and the family. For Hocquenghem, the individual in inherently caught up in what he describes the privatization of the anus. He describes the anus as the secret, the shameful, the abject part of every body around which individuated subjectivity must form. It marks the real bodily threshold which separates human individuals from one another.

> Freud sees the anal stage as the stage of formation of the person. The anus has no social desiring function left, because all its functions have become excremental: that is to say, chiefly private. The great act of capitalist decoding is accompanied by the constitution of the individual: money, which must be privately owned in order to circulate, is indeed connected with the anus, in so far as the anus is the most private part of the individual. The constitution of the private, individual, proper person is of the anus; the constitution of the public person is of the phallus...
>
> Every man has an anus which is truly his own, in the most secret depths of his own person. The anus does not exist in a social relation, since it forms precisely the individual and therefore enables the division between society and the individual to be made. To reinvest the anus collectively and libidinally would involve a proportional weakening of the great phallic signifier, which dominates us constantly both in the small-scale hierarchies of the family and in the great social hierarchies. The least acceptable desiring operation (precisely because it is the most desublimating one) is that which is directed at the anus.

For Guy, the psychic significance of the anus in self-construction is precisely why homosexual desire links the destruction of futurity in the family to the self-shattering embodied in *jouissance*. To be fucked in the ass is to sabotage the bodily integrity through which the individual and his realm of the private is constructed. Hocquenghem

argues for the deprivatization of the anus and the formation of what he terms 'anal groupings'—forms of sexual collectivity which destroy the Family and serve no purpose in the social order's future. In grouping anal desire, queer formations are able to sabotage all the psychic fantasies which lie at the heart of the civilized order.

From Jeffrey Week's preface to *Homosexual Desire*:

> He argues that since the anus has been privatized by capitalist/phallic domination, we need to group it, which means, in effect, to reject the individualized notion of homosexuality as a problem. Practicing homosexuals are those who have failed their sublimation, who therefore can and must conceive their relationships in different ways. So when homosexuals as a group publicly reject their labels, they are in fact rejecting Oedipus, rejecting the artificial entrapment of desire, rejecting sexuality focused on the Phallus...
>
> He argues that when the anus recovers its desiring functions, when laws and rules disappear, group pleasures will appear without the sacred difference between public and private, social and individual. And Hocquenghem sees signs of this sexual communism in institutions of the gay subculture, where scattering or promiscuity, representing polymorphous sexuality in action reigns...
>
> To fail one's sublimation is in fact merely to conceive social relations in a different way. Possibly, when the anus recovers its desiring function and the plugging-in of organs takes place subject to no rule or law, the group can then take its pleasure in an immediate relation where the sacrosanct difference between public and private, between the individual and the social, will be out of place. We can find traces of this state of primary sexual communism in some of the institutions of the homosexual ghetto, despite all the repression and guilty reconstructions which these undergo: in Turkish baths, for example where homosexual desires are plugged in anonymously, in spite of ever-present fears that the police may be present.

The Parasites of Society

We'll turn briefly to another of Hocquenghem's texts: *The Screwball Asses*. In it, he levels a critique of the (communist and homosexual) Left that is quite applicable to the various leftist and revolutionary political formations we still encounter.

His simple yet crucial pronouncement is that "to demand the recognition of homosexuality as it is is simple reformism." This single line foregrounds our entire refusal of identity politics and the quest for intelligibility with which it is solely concerned.

He continues:

> Like the women's liberation movement that inspired it, the revolutionary homosexual platform emerged with Leftism and traumatized it to the point of contributing to its debacle. But while they fissured Leftism by revealing its phallocentric morphology and its censure of marginal sexualities (and of sexuality in general), these autonomous movements, despite their refusal of hierarchy, continued and continue to replicate the conditioned reflexes of the political sector that produced them: logomachy, the replacement of desire by the mythology of struggle.

Politics, even a queer politics, must always be based on the sacrifice of desire in the service and representation of this or that struggle. For Hocquenghem, activist structures and militant organizations are as much a part of the self-constituted prisons he argues against. He goes on to write: "We might have hoped that homosexuality could tear classic activism away from non-desire and create a true celebration of our colluding desires, but that was without taking into account the bad conscience of homosexuals. We must admit that the wildfire was short-lived."

We'd be wrong to apply this formulation solely to the activity of mainstream LGBT activist groups. This fundamental limit of political activism is applicable to the

most radical queer or militantly anarchist individuals. Militancy and activism can only ever guarantee a short-lived wildfire, which cannot ever sustain the flames of an unintelligible drive of queerness and anarchy. Guy writes of militants that "they freeze the event into a role," and "the militants of the gay movement have just as much of a natural tendency to become specialists on homosexuality as psychiatrists and social workers."

Guy continues:

> Leftism has passed through, and Leftism dries up whatever it touches. Whatever comes from Leftism will remain permeated by terrorism and factionalism. For fear of not following the tacit scripture or counter-scripture that is supposed to unite us, in that environment we always feel as if we were the students or the professors of those who have spoken last, even if this is against our will. We could even say that the desire to deconstruct all relations of power, the uninterrupted lookout for relations of power, creates an additional, hallucinatory power relation. Of course within the FHAR, there are and have been attempts made to reject this whole mechanism of the persecuted and the persecutor, but the crisis has not been resolved. Today, the collective body of revolutionary queers lies emptied, lifeless and useless; and this happened faster to the FHAR than to any other leftist group.

While he situates his critique through his own experience with the FHAR, we can each surely locate mistaken investments of our own energy into similar revolutionary groupings, and the way that burnout inevitably accompanies such an engagement. If we are constantly resisting the feelings of emptiness, lifelessness and uselessness, we should pay close attention to the fields of activity in which we're engaged, and attempt to locate what vampiric forms are depleting our energy. We'll undoubtedly find that always this depressive ennui is situated in a dynamic where joyous experiments in desire are subjugated to the sacrificial call of "the struggle."

In his characteristic style of innuendo, Guy tackles the anxiety that characterizes activism:

> The leftist is nether a player, nor a *jouisseur*; he just drills people, regardless of whether he wants to liberate homosexuality or the proletariat. Never overwhelmed, the Leftist just saves himself for next time. The Leftist does not have time on his side. He's always in a rush. He produces speed everywhere so as to force you into hysterics or into a daze. But its not the kind of speed that propels you far away so that you find yourself stunned at having covered so much ground, stunned by the change of perspective and of thinking. Instead, its the haste of the monkey scratching at the same spot till a sore develops.

The anxiety Guy describes is located in the terrorizing hold that the Future has upon activists. Because a better tomorrow requires tremendous 'good work' today, Leftists of all stripes are caught in a never-ending anxiety of activity, yet never get any nearer to their fleeing utopias. That the revolution is so close on the horizon and yet flees from us means that we can't afford the immature and irresponsible practices of *jouissance* which could distract from the sombre struggle at hand. The ideology of Leftism is truly a living death for all who it entrances. Leftists argue that we must destroy power relationships, and yet they leave unchallenged the power relationship of reproductive futurism which necessitates an endless project of self-discipline and self-control.

Hocquenghem argues that opposed to this sombre struggle must be an insurgent project based in joy. "Strangely enough," he writes, "whenever we speak of joy, professional revolutionaries only hear what churches or ideologies have put there." We are not professional revolutionaries, nor joyless prophets interested in spreading ideology. Rather we must set our stake on practices of joy and *jouissance* resonating to unleash an insurgent contagion.

Here is Hocquenghem at his finest:

> All revolutionaries will have to become parasites of society, and more and more irresponsibly at that, or they will still be the knights of some morality or another. Our energy is devoted to the destruction of the animal that feeds us.

Only such a project of parasitism could resist the dead ends of activist frenzy and militant escalation. We must live, fight and enjoy at the expense of our enemies. Such a project is a queer in that it must depart from the paths laid out for us and refuse the specialization and captivity to time inherent in activism.

Uncivilized Desire

In Hocquenghem's work, the negative potential of queerness is intrinsically tied to his conception of desire. In *Homosexual Desire*, he puts it as follows:

> If the homosexual image contains a complex knot of dread and desire, if the homosexual phantasy is more obscene than any other and at the same time more exciting, if it is impossible to appear anywhere as a self-confessed homosexual without upsetting families, causing children to be dragged out of the way and arousing mixed feelings of horror and desire, then the reason must be that for us twentieth-century westerners there is a close connection between desire and homosexuality. Homosexuality expresses something—some aspect of desire—which appears nowhere else, and that something is not merely the accomplishment of the sexual act with a person of the same sex.

Desire, not specifically homosexual, is the tendency within society which also figures its undoing. Desire is the polymorphous and perverse overflowing that refuses to be captured within Oedipal reproduction or locked up in identity. Queerness, in its association with desire, names the negativity which is the nightmare of the social order. Desire, then, cannot be reduced to sexual attraction or

orientation. Desire is a chaotic field which escapes representation, and so the repressive field of normative desire can only refer to it by the figures of those whose sexual practices are outside its matrix of intelligibility. The danger and fear associated with queerness are in relation to this unthinkability.

From Jeffrey Weeks' introduction to *Homosexual Desire*:

> For the aim is to find unalienated forms of radical social action, and these cannot be traditional centralized structures (especially of the working class), because these, too, are complicit with capitalism. The model of alternative modes was provided by the spontaneous forms of activity developed in France in '68, fusions of desire which escape the imprisoning force of the normal. Schizoanalysis provides the alternative: the schizophrenic is not revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process is the potential of revolution, and only in the activity of autonomous, spontaneous groupings, outside the social order, can revolution be achieved. The result, which is central to Hocquenghem's project, is a worship of the excluded and marginal as the real material of social transformation.

In this analysis, we can draw important ties between Hocquenghem's project and the insurrectionary anarchist project as we conceive it. The intertwining of the desires of autonomous groups in the process of struggle is exactly what we understand to be an insurrectionary process. Not the massified expansion of a party, but rather the multiplication and diffusion of anal groupings. Only by avoiding the old-forms of 'revolutionary' or 'working class' organization can we side-step the traps which are laid out by recuperation. To orient ourselves around desire, and to pursue the 'blissful enjoyment of the present,' would mean to disavow the progressive ideologies of reform, inclusion, movement building, or incremental change.

> The homosexual does not seek a peaceful and harmonious adjustment to society, and his effusive inclination... leads him along a path of ceaseless struggle. In short, the homosexual has not developed into a partner of human society. Here, human society means of course the Freudian model, in which homosexuality can only find a place according to the sublimated Oedipal mode. On the other hand, the homosexual points the way to another possible form of relationship which we hardly dare call society.

Though the assimilationist tendencies of the homosexual movement have certainly proved that there isn't anything inherently radical or anti-social about homosexuality, Hocquenghem is endeavoring here to describe a specific tendency within the movement which escaped representation. We might call this the Real of negativity so closely bound up in queerness, the desire for disorder hidden in the social order itself. The anti-social relationships which draw their potential from queerness could be understood as the potential for an autonomous movements against society.

> The appearance of autonomous movements, movements which reject the law of the signifier all the more because they create a law for themselves, has completely upset the political world. The confusion is total, since the links between these desiring situations do not occur according to the logical model of the signifier-signified but prefer to follow the logic of the event. It is therefore no use trying to work out the relationships between these movements in rational or strategic terms. It is incomprehensible that the gay movement should be closely connected with the ecological movement. Nevertheless, it is so. In terms of desire, the motor car and the family heterosexuality are one and the same enemy, however impossible it may be to express this in political logic.

Here Hocquenghem perfectly expresses the way in which desire is bound to a refusal of the future, a purely negative critique, and an anti-political praxis. Politics

cannot rationally express why the motor car and the family are the same enemy of queerness. And yet, for us, it is abundantly obvious why these, and literally every other apparatus of modern society must be annihilated. Lacking the means to express this destructive desire through politics, only an anti-politics can elaborate a process by which queer desire can be materialized against the physical arrangement of the social order. The car, the family, the school, the prison, the boutique, the surveillance infrastructure: each an expression of a civilization in the face of which our most potent desire is its annihilation. For him, the undoing of civilization must be linked to a movement based in the uncontrollability of desire.

Hocquenghem again:

> The gay movement appears basically uncivilized, and it is not without reason that many people see it as the end of reproduction and thus the end of the species itself. There is no point in speculating whether the class war might be replaced by a war of civilization, which would have the advantage of adding a cultural and sexual dimension to the political and economic struggle. Going to this extent would mean challenging the very concept of civilization, and we must retreat with Fourier to the notion of a struggle against civilization understood as the Oedipal succession of generations. Civilization forms the interpretive grid through which desire becomes cohesive energy. Wildcat movements among workers, actions which take place outside the commonly accepted political frameworks and which make no formal claims, not even for the seizure of power, are part of the disintegration of that coherence. The most honest leftists will cite the desire for a new society as evidence of absence. It is already too much to believe that the "wildcatter" is a future civilized person, as the child is a future adult. The gay movement is a wildcat movement because it is not the signifier of what might become a new form of social organization, a new stage in civilized humanity, but a crack in what Fourier calls the "system of the falsity

> of civilized loves"; it demonstrates that civilization is the trap into which desire keeps falling.... The great fear of homosexuality is translated into a fear that the succession of generations, on which civilization is based, may stop. Homosexual desire is neither on the side of death nor on the side of life: it is the killer of civilized egos.

And here, long before Edelman ever put pen to page, is the vital link between the fantasy of futurity, the construction of the coherent self, and their intersection in reproductive futurism. To oppose reproductive futurism, and the reproduction of the social order through the endless succession of generations, is to signify the end of civilization as well as the subjects which comprise it. This destruction is to be found in the degeneration and disintegration of social structures into the queer formations which exist in constant pursuit of *jouissance* and without a care for the future. The proliferation of these queer autonomous groups does not prefigure a better world; these groupings of desire can only confront civilization as a negative, anti-political, wild force.

This finds its echo in Susan Stryker in "My Words to Victor Frankenstein":

> Though we forgo the privilege of naturalness, we are not deterred, for we ally ourselves instead with the chaos and blackness from which Nature itself spills forth. If this is your path, as it is mine, let me offer whatever solace you may find in this monstrous benediction: May you discover the enlivening power of darkness within yourself. May it nourish your rage.

Our queer position against civilization is not based on some notion of naturalness, eternally linked as we are to signifying the outside of any idealized natural order. Queers must always figure those types of unregenerative, non-productive beings which have no place in a natural order. Neither is our struggle to prove the legitimacy of, or attempt to naturalize queerness. Nature itself is a

disciplinary category of civilization used to define and classify wild life. Instead, as Stryker insists, we'll ally ourselves with the 'chaos and darkness' from which nature spills forth. This chaos and darkness, being the same unintelligible force which Hocquenghem calls homosexual desire, which Edelman calls the death drive. We locate ourselves in the spilling forth of the same chaos which promises civilization's undoing.

The Body and Language

In the same way that we've shown the indebtedness of Edelman's critique to Hocquenghem in regard to his refusal of politics and positivity, it is equally important that we demonstrate the ways in which he also draws on Hocquenghem's critique of language through the lens of *jouissance*. When Edelman criticizes the logic of intelligibility in politics, this is actually a rather shallow reading of Hocquenghem's deeper criticism of language in general. For Guy, language is an apparatus within which desire is trapped and which must always fail in its project of representation. It is within this context that we can further explore the relationship of these ideas to anti-civilizational thought.

In *The Screwball Asses*, Hocquenghem deploys *jouissance* both as what escapes representation in language and also as the force which can interrupt the domination of language over life. Hocquenghem begins the essay with a small notice:

> Let me begin with the admission that what follows is exclusively addressed to those individuals with whom I cannot make love. For everyone else, the festivity of bodies transforms speech into a servant of the body, nothing else. It is not useless to specify this: we only speak of sex in front of people with whom it does not take place or who likewise admit to having no desire for us.

With this caveat, he insists on a fundamental incapacity of language to capture the form of bodily struggle he argues for. Following him, our struggle must also begin from this disjunction. We engage with language insofar as we can deploy it in service of the body. We speak, we put word to paper in order to send a wink to those with whom we have not yet or cannot at present conspire in a practice of *jouissance*. For if sex is unspeakable, that does not however exclude speaking from being a sexual medium. For our co-conspirators, those with whom we've shared unmentionable experiences, these words can only approach the real of our project, can only serve as feeble reminders of a covenant we share in the pursuit of wildness. For the rest, there is seduction.

Hocquenghem indicts all existing 'radical' discourses as party to this fundamental disjunction between the body and any attempt to capture its struggle within language:

> Both for dialectical materialism and for psychoanalysis, the material is the non-body. All struggles for the return of the body have been so contaminated by the non-body that when they speak of the body they only accentuate its exile. We forget that the content of speech is only the container of our universe.

At several points throughout the text he implores his readers to break from the tyranny of language, "to speak with the body rather than with words, or to live our corporeality rather than speak of sexuality." He asks, "when will we be able to shatter the power of words by the movement of our skins?"

This contradiction between the body and language is not unique to Hocquenghem's thought. We'll return to Silvia Federici's book, *Caliban and the Witch*, wherein she historicizes this contradiction and situates it in the process of the domestication of human beings. She argues that "one of the preconditions for capitalist development was the process that Michel Foucault defined as

the 'disciplining of the body,' which in my view consisted of an attempt by the state and church to transform the individual's powers into labor-power."

She argues that this process of disciplining the body took the form of a conflict between reason and the passions of the body:

> The outcome is reminiscent of the medieval skirmishes between angels and devils for the possession of the departing soul. But the conflict is now staged within the person who is reconstructed as a battlefield, where opposite elements clash for domination. On the one side, there are the forces of Reason: parsimony, prudence, sense of responsibility, self-control. On the other, the low instincts of the Body: lewdness, idleness, systematic dissipation of one's vital energies. The battle is fought on many fronts because Reason must be vigilant against the attacks of the carnal self, and prevent "the wisdom of the flesh" from corrupting the powers of the mind. In the extreme case, the person becomes a terrain for a war of all against all.

Others have described this 'war of all against all' as the fundamental condition of an omnipresent civil war that is consistently raging, permeating the social order and interrupting the myth of social peace. This narrative is quite similar to a conception of queerness developed by Hocquenghem and later elaborated by Edelman, which understands queerness to be an ever-present violence, a potential which any body is capable of. If we follow Federici here in understanding the conflict between Reason (and its servant: language) and the Passion of the body, we can situate our queerness as a partisan force within this battle. Federici goes on:

> This conflict between Reason and the Body, described by the philosophers as a riotous confrontation between the better and the lower sorts... the battle which 17th century discourse on the person imagines unfolding in the microcosm of the individual has arguably a foundation in the reality of the time. It is an aspect of that broader process

> of social reformation, whereby, in the age of reason, the rising bourgeoisie attempted to remold the subordinate classes in conformity with the needs of the developing capitalist economy... That battle against the body that has become its historic mark... The reform of the body is at the core of the bourgeois ethic because capitalism makes acquisition "the ultimate purpose of life," instead of treating it as a means for the satisfaction of our needs, thus it requires that we forfeit all spontaneous enjoyment of life.

Here we are reminded of Hocquenghem's explanation of *jouissance* as "blissful enjoyment of the present." Federici's historicism temptingly offers a historical-material structure for the whole of our critique. The desperate struggle of bodies against the future and in pursuit of *jouissance* is the same struggle which opposes capitalist development from the beginning. The conquest of Reason over Passion corresponds to the domination of the bourgeois order over the rebel body, because it is precisely the same struggle, manifest in each and every body.

> The body, emptied of its occult forces, could be caught in a system of subjection, whereby its behavior could be calculated, organized, technically thought and invested of power relations... The development of the body into a work-machine, [was] one of the main tasks of primitive accumulation.... Like the land, the body had to be cultivated and first of all broken up, so that it could relinquish its hidden treasures. For while the body is the condition of the existence of labor-power, it is also its limit, as the main element of resistance to its expenditure. It was not sufficient then, to decide that in itself the body had no value. The body had to die so that labor-power could live.

Federici describes how this disciplinary war was waged so as to separate bodies from their capacity for *jouissance*, in order to commodify them as labor-power.

> By transforming labor into a commodity, capitalism causes workers to submit their activity to an external order over

> which they have no control and with which they cannot identify. Thus, labor process becomes a ground of self-estrangement... This too leads to a sense of dissociation from the body, which becomes reified, reduced to an object with which the person ceases to be immediately identified.

It is this fundamental estrangement, located in the process of primitive accumulation which she says forms the basis of our contemporary alienation from our bodies, our terminal enslavement to abstraction and language.

Federici explains that this disciplinary violence has always focused on the eradication of non-productive ways of being:

> The violence of the ruling class aimed at a radical transformation of the person, intended to eradicate in the proletariat any form of behavior not conducive to the imposition of a stricter work-discipline... Nakedness was penalized, as were many other unproductive forms of sexuality and sociality.

Here we see the tyranny of the Child traced back through time and embedded in language itself. The assault upon the body by Reason and Language has always been to eliminate all non-productive desires and capacities. Reproductive futurism then becomes the framework through which certain forms of social engagement are militarily enforced while others are eradicated.

This militaristic and scientific approach to disciplining the body functions through the body's capture within language. Federici argues that "in mechanical philosophy we perceive a new bourgeois spirit that calculates, classifies, makes distinctions, and degrades the body only in order to rationalize its faculties, aiming not just at intensifying its subjection but at maximizing its social utility." Here the linguistic and discursive institutions of Identity and Sexuality function alongside all other racializing and gendering apparatuses encode alienated bodies with particular values and functions—values and functions which serve to

reproduce society in every body and every instant. Federici argues that this is necessary for the regime of any capitalist future.

> From a capitalist viewpoint... here the future can be anticipated only insofar as the regularity and immutability of the system is assumed; that is, only insofar as it is assumed that the future will be like the past, and no major change, no revolution, will upset the coordinates of individual decision-making... The fixation of the body in space and time, that is, the individual's spatio-temporal identification, is an essential condition for the regularity of the work-process.

She continues later:

> Also from the point of view of the abstraction process that the individual underwent in the transition to capitalism, we can see that the development of the human machine was the main technological leap, the main step in the development of the productive forces that took place in the period of primitive accumulation. We can see, in other words, that the human body and not the steam engine, and not even the clock, was the first machine developed by capitalism.

If Federici is correct, if our very bodies have been destroyed and re-made into work-machines, and if these machines are the original machines which constitute the capitalist social order, then we must take our very bodies as machines to be sabotaged; our very corporeality, as Hocquenghem argues, must be the field of combat.

The battlefield is within each of us. The war of passion against reason, beyond being an external struggle must also be a struggle we wage against ourselves. We must struggle no less violently within ourselves as individuals than we struggle against the external enemies who seek to enforce the disciplinary regime of society's future. In the list of managers and police with whom we battle, we must include the managerial and policing apparatuses which operate in our very being.

We can return to Hocquenghem in *The Screwball Asses* to be reminded that "trying to destroy power is an even greater lure, especially if we neglect to shake off this very particular form of power called self-domination."

Starting from a critique of civilization, we can understand this self-domination as a result of our domestication into subjects. Locating language and symbolic thought as engines of this domestication then as a consequence, our very capacity to think has been colonized from birth onward through this process. As such, we must turn to those forms of struggle which are not justified by Reason. We must turn to that ineffable *jouissance* as a tool in combat against domestication. Let's turn again to the critique of domestication so that we might employ their help in elaborating *how* we might break the forward motion of capitalist time.

To Destroy Sexuality; To Destroy Domestication

In the previous section that deals more closely with Edelman's work, we cited Jacques Camatte in claiming that *jouissance* takes place as the destruction of the domesticati on intrinsic to civilization. In order to further elaborate Hocquenghem's queer project against civilization, we'll explore the concept of domestication and what it could mean to undo it.

Domestication, Oedipal to the core, is the process of the victory of our fathers over our lives; the ways in which the social order laid down by the dead continues to haunt the living. It is the residue of accumulated memories, culture and relationships which have been transmitted to us through the linear progression of time through the fantasy of the Child. It is this investment of the horrors of the past into the materiality of our present lives which ensures

the perpetuation of civilization. To quote Camatte again from "Against Domestication":

> What is to stop people from transforming all these crises and disasters, which are themselves the result of the latest mutation of capital, into a catastrophe for capital itself? The explanation for this is to be found in the domestication of humanity, which comes about when capital constitutes itself as a human community. The process starts out with the fragmentation and destruction of human beings, and the final outcome is that capital is anthropomorphized.

And so, within the ideological constraint of reproductive futurism, revolt against civilization is unthinkable because capital has so thoroughly colonized our very being, that to imagine our own survival is to always already be thinking about the perpetuation of civilization through the self-reproduction of capital. We have no community to fight for, and no humanity to save, because both are already thoroughly disintegrated and have been replaced with the community of capital and its anthropomorphized subject: the civilized ego. To move on to Camatte's later essay "The Wandering of Humanity":

> Today the human being has been engulfed, not only in the determination of class where he was trapped for centuries, but as a biological being. It is a totality that has to be destroyed. Demystification is no longer enough. The revolt of human beings threatened in the immediacy of their daily lives goes beyond demystification. The problem is to create other lives. This problem lies simultaneously outside the ancient discourse of the workers movement and its old practice, and outside the critique that considers this movement a simple ideology (and considers human beings an ideological precipitate).

It is a harsh reality to acknowledge that the restructuring which we have undergone through the process of domestication is more horrifying than to merely shape us as subject. Capital reaches to our very biology, the

objective fact of our being in the world. Starting from there, we must further acknowledge that a struggle against civilization must also be a struggle against ourselves as we are, to destroy the structuring of our bodies as vessels of the social order. Here we must seek out, following Camatte's previous insistence on *jouissance*, that series of self-shattering measures which could constitute a project against domestication. As Camatte puts it, "the human being is dead. The only possibility for another human being to emerge is our struggle against our domestication, our emergence from it."

Camatte continues to elaborate in "Wandering":

> The phenomenon which emerges today does not in the least destroy the negative evaluation of capital, but forces us to generalize it to the class that was once antagonistic to it and carried within itself all the positive elements of human development and today of humanity itself. This phenomenon is the recomposition of a community and of human beings by capital, reflecting human community like a mirror. The theory of the looking glass could only arise when the human being became a tautology, a reflection of capital. Within the world of the despotism of capital neither a good nor an evil can be distinguished. Everything can be condemned. 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.

Here again, the projects of queer negativity and the struggle to destroy domestication intersect. Capital's capture of every positivity in civilization mandates the purely negative project. And the tautology wherein capital and human beings perfectly express one another emphasizes the need for our project to, queerly, call into question our domestication into the various social roles. As Camatte writes, "each individual must be violent with him/herself in order to reject, as outside themselves, the domestication

of capital and all its comfortable self-validating 'explanations.'" It is for this reason that we concern ourselves with the queer desire to locate subjectivity's sutures and tear them out.

In Hocquenghem's work we find words that put so beautifully everything we would want to, so we will quote at length from "To Destroy Sexuality":

> Although the Capitalist order appears to be tolerant, it in fact has always controlled life through its affective aspects, constraining it to the dictates of its totalitarian organization based on exploitation, private property, male dominance, profit, and profitability. It exercises this control under all of its various guises: the family, schools, the work place, the army, rules, discourse. It unfailingly pursues its abject mission of castrating, oppressing, torturing, and mangling the body, all the better to inscribe its laws upon our flesh, to rivet into our unconscious its mechanisms for propagating slavery.
>
> The capitalist state uses retention, stasis, scarification and neurosis to impose its norms and models, imprint its characters, assign its roles, promulgate its programs... It permeates our bodies, forcing its roots of death deep into our smallest crevices. It takes over our organs, robs us of our vital functions, mutilates our pleasures, harnesses all of our 'life' productivity under its own paralyzing administration. It turns each of us into... a stranger to his own desires.
>
> The forces of capitalist occupation continually refine their system of aggression, provocation, extortion so as to use it along with a massive reinforcement of social terror (individual guilt) to repress, exclude and neutralize all those practices of our will that don't reproduce those forms of domination. And so this thousand-year-old reign of unhappy gratification, sacrifice, resignation, codified masochism and death perpetuates itself. Here reigns castration, reducing the 'subject' to a guilt-ridden, neurotic, industrious being, little more than a manual laborer.

This older order, reeking of rotting bodies, is indeed horrifying, but it has forced us to direct the revolutionary struggle against capitalist oppression there where it is most deeply rooted—in the living flesh of our own body....

We can no longer stand by idly while we are robbed of our mouths, our anuses, our sexual members, our guts, our veins... just so they can turn the into parts for their ignominious machine which produces capital, exploitation and the family.

We can no longer stand by idly while they control, regulate, and occupy our mucous membranes, the pores of our skin, the entire sentient surface of our body.

We can no longer stand by idly while they use our nervous system as a relay in the system of capitalist, federal, patriarchal exploitation. Nor while they use our brain as a means of punishment programmed by ambient power.

We can no longer not 'come' or hold back our shit, our saliva, our energy according to their laws with their minor, tolerated infractions. We want to explode the frigid, inhibited, mortified body that capitalism wants so desperately to make out of our living body...

Wanting the fundamental freedom to enter into these revolutionary practices entails our escaping from the limits of our own 'self.' We must turn the 'subject' within ourselves upside-down; escape from the sedentary, from the civilized state and cross the spaces of a limitless body; live in the willful mobility beyond sexuality, beyond the territory and repertory of normality...

We're not concerned with simply breaking down [the] official sexuality as one would break down the condition of one's imprisonment within any structure; we want to destroy it, to get rid of it because in the final analysis it functions as an infinitely repeating castration machine designed to reproduce everywhere and in everyone the unquestioning obedience of a slave...

What we want, what we desire, is to kick in the representations so that we might discover just what our living body is.

We want to free, release, unfetter and relieve this living body so as to free all of its energies, desires, passions crushed by our conscriptive and programed social system.

We want to be able to exercise each of our vital functions experiencing their full complement of pleasure.

We want to rediscover sensations as basic as the pleasure in breathing that has been smothered by the forces of oppression and pollution; or the pleasure in eating and digesting that has been interrupted by the rhythm of profitability and the ersatz food it produces; or the pleasure in shitting and sodomy that has been systematically assaulted by the capitalist establishment's opinion of the sphincter. It inscribes directly upon this flesh its fundamental principles: the power lines of exploitation, the neurosis of accumulation, the mystique of property and propriety, etc. We want to rediscover the pleasure in shaking ourselves joyously, without shame, not because of need or compensation, but just for the sheer pleasure of shaking ourselves. We want to rediscover the pleasures of vibrating, humming, speaking, walking, moving, expressing ourselves, raving, singing—finding pleasure in our body in all ways possible...

We seek to open our bodies to other bodies, to another body; to transmit vibrations, to circulate energies, to arrange desires so that each is free to play out its fantasies and ecstasies so that we might live without guilt and without inhibiting all the sensual intra- and interpersonal practices we need so our day-to-day reality won't turn into the slow agony that capitalism and bureaucracy project as a model existence. We seek to rip out of ourselves the festering rumor of guilt that for thousands of years has been at the root of all oppression...

We want to be rid of all roles and identities based on the phallus.

> We want to be rid of sexual segregation. We want to be rid of the categories of man and woman, gay and straight, possessor and possessed, greater and lesser, master and slave. We want instead to be transsexual, autonomous, mobile and multiple human beings with varying differences who can interchange desires, gratifications, ecstasies, and tender emotions without referring back to tables of surplus value or power structures that aren't already in the rules of the game.

Birds of Fire

To conclude our elaboration of queerness as wildness, as a madness attacking the civilized social order, we'll return briefly to Edelman's critique in *No Future.* In keeping with his academic field of cultural criticism, he turns to a series of works of literature and film in order to structure his argument. While we find most of this navel-gazing to have absolutely no application outside of the academy, we'll critically engage with one such object of Edelman's work: Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds.*

In his engagement with Hitchcock's classic horror film, Edelman argues that the antagonists of the film, the birds, represent what he describes as the future-negating force of a brutal and mindless drive, which is queerness, flying over the San Francisco Bay and interrupting various manifestations of familial order and heteronormativity.

> The choice of the children's party for this first fully choreographed attack suggests the extent to which the birds take aim at the social structures of meaning that observances like the birthday party serve to secure and enact: take aim, that is, not only at children and the sacralization of childhood, but also at the very organization of meaning around structures of subjectivity that celebrate, along with the day of one's birth, the ideology of reproductive necessity.

Edelman, following Hocquenghem, describes the way in which the birds function against the hegemony of language, erratically singing and screeching, warning of the immanence of their attack. This is not unlike those ancient descriptions of 'barbarians at the gates' which depict civilization's enemies as being horrifyingly incoherent, waging war not only against the material foundations of civilization, but also against its tyranny of reason. Edelman describes Hitchcock's birds: "The verses they sing perversely veer from sense to nonsense, back and forth, with no clear sense of direction, mixing narrative fragments that allude to a failure of heterosexual domesticity." He goes on:

> We might suggest that the birds in Hitchcock's film, by virtue of fucking up—and with—the matrix of heterosexual mating, desublimate the reproductive rites of the movie's human lovebirds, about which, as about the products of which, they don't give a flying fuck. They gesture, that is, toward the death drive that lives within reproductive futurism, scorning domestication in the form of romance, which is always the romance of the Child...
>
> They come because coming is what they do, arbitrarily and unpredictably, like the homosexuals Keyes condemns for promoting "a paradigm of human sexuality divorced from family and procreation, and engaged in solely for the sake of... sensual pleasure and gratification." They come, that is, to trace a connection, as directly as the crow flies, between disorder in the family and the rupture, the radical loss of familiarity, unleashed by *jouissance*.

Edelman works here to tie together, through the symbol of the birds, the irrationality of queerness with the refusal of reproductive futurism. For him, the birds represent the flooding forth of bodies taken by *jouissance*, bodies without a care for the law or heteronormativity or the mandates of reproductive futurism.

> Insofar as the birds bear the burden of [queerness], which aims to dissociate heteronormativity from its own implication in the drive, it would, in fact, be more accurate to say that the meaning of homosexuality is determined by what the film represents in them: the violent undoing of meaning, the loss of identity and coherence, the unnatural access to *jouissance*, which find their perfect expression in the slogan devised by Hitchcock himself for the movie's promotion, "the birds is coming."

He describes the birds in a way not unlike the terror with which servants of order will always describe resistance to such order: "more and more birds, indistinguishable, all as similar to each other as clones, alight as the visual antitypes to the reproductive future, that the children as figures of increase themselves, should signify and assure." This moblike anonymity is the hallmark of the ways in which states consistently describe their enemies. Whether foreign or domestic, anti-state resistance is always cast as the faceless, indistinguishable, animalistic mob: the black bloc, fantastic terrorists, irrational rioters, sexual deviants—always the dark formless mass of the Other functions to terrorize a social order predicated on recognition, rationality and normalcy.

Edelman describes the birds as "the unacknowledged ghosts that always haunt the social machinery and the unintelligibility against which no discourse of knowledge prevails." As enemies of society embedded within it, we obviously find ourselves in this reading. As those whose desires cannot possibly be captured within the fields of political intelligibility, we must see the birds as symbolizing our own struggle. A struggle that Edelman describes as waged against "the domestication, the colonization, of the world by meaning."

While he never cites it, it is abundantly obvious that in describing this domestication of the world by meaning, Edelman is borrowing heavily from Hocquenghem's

understanding of the body as colonized by language through the process of domestication. Edelman here deploys the birds as a metaphor for the bodily struggle within which Hocquenghem located himself and his comrades, the same which we understand to be our own.

Edelman, one last time: "Thus the birds in their coming lay to waste the world because they so hate the world that will not accept them that they, in turn, will accept nothing but the destruction of that world."

Here we must understand ourselves as the birds or else the text offers us nothing. Our project is to lay waste to the world, and so it cannot base itself upon a tame survey of film and literature. No, if we are to accept nothing less than the destruction of the world then we must indict Edelman's fields of study as being intimately tied to the self-reproduction of that world. We must dispose of the baggage of art and academy, but in doing so we must expropriate those dangerous kernels of subversion which the academy only holds by having taken them from us in the first place. If we are to take anything from Edelman and his birds, it must be the conception of resistance as a storm-like mass, a de-centralized swarm of bodies ceaselessly attacking their enemies. Pursuant to a reading of the birds, our storm must be irrational, incomprehensible, anonymous, mob-like, offensive, de-meaning, incoherent, and unrelenting.

We can follow Halberstam again in critiquing Edelman's apolitical attachment to his field and in imagining another monstrous form such resistance could take. Halberstam writes:

> In my work on "alternative political imaginaries," the alternative embodies the suite of "other choices" that attend every political, economic and aesthetic crisis and their resolutions. Queerness names the other possibilities, the other potential outcomes, the non-linear and non-inevitable trajectories that fan out from any given event and lead to

unpredictable futures. In *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, social historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker trace what they call "the struggles for alternative ways of life" that accompanied and opposed the rise of capitalism in the early seventeenth century. In stories about piracy, dispossessed commoners and urban insurrections, Linebaugh and Rediker detail the modes of colonial and national violence that brutally stamped out all challenges to middle-class power and that cast proletarian rebellion as disorganized, random and apolitical. Linebaugh and Rediker emphasize instead the power of cooperation within the anti-capitalist mob and they pay careful attention to the alternatives that this "many headed hydra" of resistant groups imagined and pursued. We need to craft a queer agenda that works cooperatively with the many other heads of the monstrous entity that opposes global capitalism...

We turn to a history of alternatives, contemporary moments of alternative political struggle and high and low cultural productions of a funky, nasty, over the top and thoroughly accessible queer negativity. If we want to make the anti-social turn in queer theory, we must be willing to turn away from the comfort zone of polite exchange in order to embrace a truly political negativity, one that promises, this time, to fail, to make a mess, to fuck shit up, to be loud, unruly, impolite, to breed resentment, to bash back, to speak up and out, to disrupt, assassinate, shock and annihilate, and, to quote Jamaica Kincaid, to make everyone a little less happy!

While we appreciate Halberstam's attempt to situate the monstrosity of queer negativity within Linebaugh and Rediker's history of insurrection and revolt, we must again criticize Halberstam's partial critique. While our resistance may very well take the form of a many-headed hydra, those heads are not "alternative possibilities" or "political imaginaries." Nor are they modes of artistic expression.

If we can determine anything from our project of queer negativity, it is that capitalism has an unlimited capacity to tolerate and recuperate any alternative politics or artistic expression we could imagine. It is not a political negativity that we must locate in our queerness, but rather a vicious anti-politics which opposes any utopian dreams of a better future residing on the far side of a lifetime of sacrifice. Our queer negativity has nothing to do with art, but it has a great deal to do with urban insurrection, piracy, slave revolt: all those bodily struggles that refuse the future and pursue the irrationality of *jouissance*, enjoyment, rage, chaos. Ours is not the struggle for an alternative, because there is no alternative which can escape the ever-expanding horizons of capital. Instead we fight, hopeless, to tear our lives away from that expanding horizon and to erupt with wild enjoyment now. Anything less is our continued domestication to the rule of civilization.

Thankfully, the monstrous tendency we refer to is not something solely trapped up in history books or pitifully represented in various cultural productions. Rather, is a living, dynamic, queer tendency intrinsic to and perpetually at war with the social order. We can see it in the fires across the world, illuminating the reality that everywhere bodies are refusing their enslavement to civilization's future. We see the monster's shadow in the strikers in Montreal who refuse the future-oriented appeasement offered by the State and whose attacks have spilled over from a student strike toward social war. We see this also in Seattle, where a mob smashed symbols of capital and law on this May Day. We see it in San Francisco and Oakland where the dispossessed and excluded converge and disperse with an erratic rhythm so as to lay siege to police stations, attack yuppie establishments, burn cars and spread havoc. In New York, we see bodies throwing themselves into the metropolitan abyss so as to snarl and obstruct the unending flows. Across the globe, wild bodies are finding one

another and engaging in the timeless conspiracy against the existent. In every nation, they burn, they loot, they sabotage, they maim. The birds continue to fly together, to tear and peck and shred the sinews of a social order they detest.

Some beautiful expressions of this tendency toward wildness are to be found in the actions and writings of individualist anarchists in the territory dominated by the Chilean State. We'll excerpt one particular communique issued by some beautiful birds within the storm-like fight being carried out there. This is from "The Revolt Continues Until Total Liberation" by the Individualist Cell of Birds of Fire:

> There they were, the voracious youth again, destroying everything, erecting barricades, clashing with police, nothing could stop them... There is fire and passion in their hearts, love and hatred in their insides, courage and decision. The beauty of chaos has returned to grace the streets, it is not only fire that adorns the asphalt, it is also the energy of the youth, the abolition of the sexes, everyone in the struggle...
>
> To raze the school is possible today, like was done in... those places intentionally lit ablaze by those beautiful *pajarillas* who understand that this destruction is a great step towards the conquest of life...
>
> The journey is intense and difficult, it always has been, when individuals fed up with their miserable conditions organize and attack. One cannot be afraid of those who organize only for one specific goal although it is only to destroy, because at this point we know that to build, we must destroy... And all the reasoning these petty politicians supposedly have when they talk about the problem of education does nothing for anyone, because the discontent grows and advances, although the bureaucrats and businessmen almost always end up winning.
>
> And they believe that to repress passion is a simple thing,

that with a little tear gas and a little water they will snuff it out, like any other flame, so they will have to be reminded that they are wrong, again and again, those idiots.

The night always illuminates our steps, just like free love allows us unlimited bliss, to find us with the beautiful silence of obscurity, or at the feet of the fresh rays of the rising sun; (rays which don't caress those awkward workers drooling over the bus windows and subway glass), running into the heat of a barricade, it's magic, like something supreme, or can only God be supreme? We burn the churches with their pedophile priests inside, we watch those cowardly abusers from the front to spit in their faces... another day comes, but this is one of the beautiful ones, because we will combine the sun that caresses us with its heat with an emancipatory fire full of joy and hope...

Here are the barricades again, with those sensual forms we are drawn by the fire...

The individual who moves toward the greatest happiness possible will never stumble, her journey is unique and without equal, there is nothing that can stop her, not the cops in red who beat her with sticks, not morality imposing its limits, not the police infiltrators who dirty her path, not the din of their sirens to silence her... imposing norms, morals, discipline, gods and their idiotic doctrines, we always forget society and its dominions, and cast ourselves naked into an encounter with our inner beings...

"We feel alive when we shudder with the perfume of the flowers, with the songs of the birds, with the crashing of the waves, the sound of the wind, the silence of solitude,"* we feel alive when we tremble with the heat of the fire, with the caress of chaos, with the nights of revolt...

"We rushed into the chasm, to respond to the voices of our dead,"† they who died fighting with weapons in their hands and immense golden stars in their eyes, those

* Emile Armand, "To Feel Alive"
† Renzo Novatore, "Toward the Creative Nothing"

who are immortal like punky Mauri, like Claudia Lopez, who on any given night found themselves facing death so gracefully. Yes, because those of us who choose to live an intense and dangerous life, death receives us with open arms, caresses us and kisses us...

Why don't we fear death? Because "we are used to thinking that death is nothing to us, because everything, good and bad, resides within sensation and death is the deprivation of the senses. Death is nothing to us because when we exist, death is absent and, when death is present, then we no longer exist."*

It's true, we want everything, we dream of huge banquets and shun bread and tea, we want grand orgies and reject monogamy. We believe in free love because we know "that jealousy, and exclusive romance, conjugal fidelity, kills off part of the self, impoverishes sentimental personality, narrows analytical horizons, among other things. And furthermore, in love as in almost everything else, it is only abundance which annihilates jealousy and envy..."† We want to run together with the animals in the fields and the forests, we want to bathe naked on the beaches, rivers and lakes and not end up at a precinct for indecency.

"We reassert the right to live naked, to take off our clothes, to wander naked, to join together among nudists without any concern of discovering the body's resistance to temperature, this is to affirm the right to the disposition of individual corporeality..."‡

The revolt is here, we must increase our participation, our generous egoism needs to contribute, for now, to the struggle, to gather and organize ourselves for specific ends such as destruction, enjoyment, loving camaraderie, encounters with chaos, advancing towards the dawn of the creative nothing, then returning to our hiding places, to rejoice and dance with the birds, to nourish ourselves with the energy

* Epicurus

† Emile Armand, "Love Between Anarcho-Individualists"

‡ Emile Armand, "Nudism"

of the trees, to feel the ocean breeze, to hear the lovely melody of the wind...

We have already said it and we'll say it again: our revolution has already begun, we make it from day to day, making free love, declaring ourselves against every god and religion, deconstructing the dominating language that they imposed on us, openly opposing any society, we make it when we stop being men and women and become unique human beings.

To put it quantitatively: among boundless occupations, ours is the search for total satisfaction, endless joy, pleasure, eternal happiness...

It is the hour of the social tragedy!
We will destroy, laughing.
We will burn, laughing.
We will kill, laughing.
*We will expropriate, laughing. And society will fall. The fatherland will fall. The family will fall. Everything will fall, since the free man has been born. The time to drown the enemy in blood has arrived...**

Contrast the words of these comrades with Hocquenghem's depiction of professional revolutionaries: "strangely enough, whenever we speak of joy, professional revolutionaries only hear what churches or ideologies have put there... the concept of joy is never brought up."

It is easy enough here for us to allow the birds to speak for themselves. Everything is apparent in their words: revolt inextricable from joy, the pleasure and beauty of the struggle, the necessary destruction of gendered and sexual roles, the refusal of any morality and constraint on love and bodies, the intrinsic connection of pleasure and happiness to destruction, the association with the death drive, the insistence of *jouissance*, the refusal of any ideologues or politicians who would seek to manage revolt.

* Renzo Novatore, "Toward the Creative Nothing"

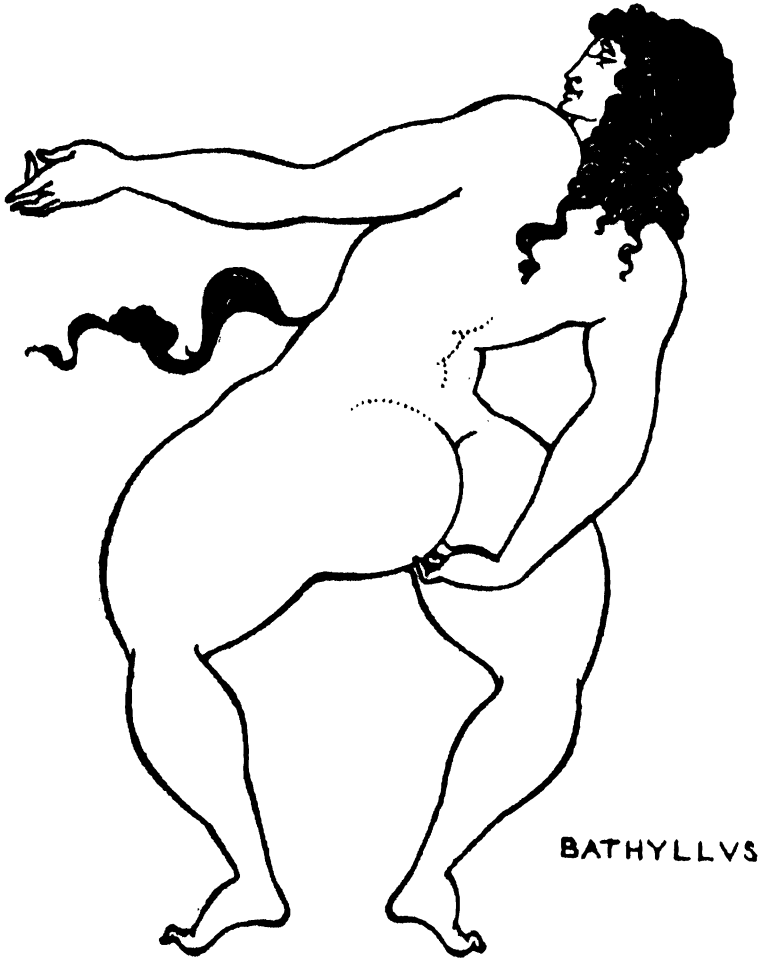
This tendency is not unique to particular territory, whether of the Chilean State or any other. Rather, everywhere that bodies conspire together to revolt against their futures, there will be, insisting against the possibility of a better future, we who take immediate enjoyment in destruction, in feasting, orgy, running wild, and bathing naked, in loving, hunting, dancing and laughter, and all the rest of life.

Alongside them, we must insist that our struggle be all at once queer, wild, destructive and joyous.

We'll conclude with words that are taken from another communique claming the arson of a bank in Santiago of Chile:*

> This action gestated in the eternal hatred of a life rotted by a world of adults, a boring life of cement and rules... in every time they categorize us in men and in women, in every day of school, in every punishment, in every childhood dream transformed into adult realism... in each one fallen, each one murdered, in each and every particle of bastard asphalt...
>
> Long live chaos, may chaos burn, may chaos smile on our lips, and may all of us who are against every form of oppression, may we every second of our daily lives laugh and dance in the ruins of the cities of the world and of the burning universe and its blazing caretakers...
>
> Fire to all the prisons! To all the families! To all the sexual genders! To all authority and all the cities...

* In February 2012. See <waronsociety.noblogs.org/?p=3330>.


BATHYLLVS

To Win All the Time

> *"Read what was never written," runs a line in Hofmannsthal. The reader one should think of here is the true historian.*
> ~ Walter Benjamin, omitted notes to the theses on history

Earlier, we made a passing reference to Edelman's citation of Walter Benjamin's last writing, his theses "On the Concept of History." Edelman reveals little engagement with the theses, but a reading of them alongside *No Future* reveals various links: a refusal of teleological narratives, a critique of progress, a refusal to struggle in the name of the future.

Despite the similarities, an engagement with the theses demands that we break from the foregoing theory of futurelessness. We will seek to demonstrate that in truth Edelman's engagement with Benjamin's concept of history is like his perspective *vis a vis* the future: only at the level of appearances, entirely missing out on what lurks out of sight.

If at times we have said that the future is bleak and empty, if at times it seems that this is the entirety of what we mean when we say "no future," then these have been times when we spoke in terms of what Benjamin calls empty, homogenous time. And it is quite clear that in those terms, there *is* nothing to hope for and nothing positive in the future. But this is not all there is to say on the matter. Benjamin encourages us to take up a conception of time that assures not only the fullness and heterogeneity of the past, but also that of the future.

At the end of an early draft of the theses, he makes note of an inspiration that he works into the theses and then omits from the final draft. He writes that the Jews inquired into the past in the same way that the soothsayers

inquired into the future—with an eye to learning its secrets—and were forbidden from looking into the future, but that the future did not therefore become "homogenous, empty time. For every second was the small gateway in time through which the Messiah might enter." Let us proceed with this in mind.

To Face the Past

"On the Concept of History," Benjamin's last text, is his most important if only because it functions as his ultimate critique of progressive logic and the underlying premises of all progressive concepts of revolution. Edelman, in his treatment of Benjamin's critique, cites the ninth thesis. We, like Edelman, will begin in the middle:

> This is how the Angel of History must look. His face is turned towards the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at its feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is this storm.

Of Benjamin's various metaphors for understanding history, that of the angel runs parallel to his reference of the saying that the historian is "a prophet facing backwards." The two different readings of this saying parallel, in turn, his distinction between his concept of history and the conformist one. He says that one way to read the saying is as a description of the position taken by the historian of empathy who is marked by despair and *accedia*, doomed to drown in his conformism to the tides of history. A very different reading of the saying could describe

well the posture of the historian who, like the Angel of History, turns his back to the future in order to set his sight on the past. He does this in order to take hold of the true picture of the past that appears momentarily and without warning in a moment of danger. For in another parallel metaphor Benjamin describes "an occurrence of ball lightning that runs across the whole horizon of the past," illuminating moments that had been up until that point left dark and mysterious. From the juxtaposition of these metaphors we can gather that while on the one hand progress may be a storm always blowing the angel away from a broken world that he faces, frustrating his desire to stop and make it whole, nevertheless this same storm produces the very flashes of light in which a moment of history unexpectedly "present[s] itself... as a moment of humanity." He continues: "In this moment, time must be brought to a standstill."

It is this standstill, *jetztzeit*, which may also be translated as now-time, that is at the heart of the theses. In the sixteenth he writes that the true historian "cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time takes a stand and has come to a standstill. For this notion defines the very present in which he himself is writing history."

For Benjamin, the concept of a causal chain of progress is a smoothing-over, or reduction to a common denominator, of what is in truth an eternal catastrophe. He points out that "the basic concept in myth is the world as punishment." This ancient concept has taken on a more terrible modern form in "the eternity of punishment in hell," which "substitutes an eternity of torment for the eternity of a cycle." It is worth noting, however, that Benjamin does not straightforwardly claim that hell is the reality of living in modern times. Rather, he describes hellish punishment as akin to the way in which a student is held after school, not allowed to run outside and play, forced to repeat the

Sisyphean task of writing lines by hand repeatedly, e.g. *I will not expose the ignorance of the faculty.* It is no mistake that Benjamin would depict hell as so reminiscent of the conformist historian's domain.

We might link Benjamin's denial of progress with our own by pointing out that progress is nothing but a daily catastrophe of life in the world of the commodity. We can see this catastrophe around us everywhere: the architecture of the cities, the physical infrastructure of the multi-form prison, the endless apparatuses which exist to extract our energy to turn it into dead labor, the monotonous agricultural killing-fields, the ever-expanding ecological dead-zones. All processes that have dominated, extracted, and paved over generations of the living. Civilization's homogenizing process is constantly intensifying and accelerating. Technological advances and other progressive developments are perpetually revolutionizing the armed disaster which confronts us as the future.

It is clear that Benjamin's view is similar when he describes history and culture as the spoils carried by the rulers as they triumphantly proceed, tramping upon the prostrate bodies of the oppressed. "A historical materialist," writes Benjamin, can only view these spoils "with cautious detachment. For in every case these treasures have a lineage which he cannot contemplate without horror.... The historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from this process of transmission as far as possible."

Like Benjamin and the angel, we would like to pause for a moment so fair, awaken the dead and piece together what has been smashed. But what blows us away from being able to do this is progress itself. It is as if the very passage of time, or more accurately the manner of its passage, has caught us up and distances us from the present moment itself. Indeed, if there is only ever one time, then there is also a manner or concept of time's movement—progress—capable of blowing us away from being present in it.

One might contend that Benjamin promotes quite the opposite: to turn away from one's time, as in the monastic tradition, in order to achieve the resurrection he writes of. What he describes in certain terms, however, is the turning of one's back on the future, an act he places in tandem with the destruction of historicism's picture of history and the conformism that dominates it. Benjamin writes that the "visionary gaze" that requires one to turn away from the future makes "the historian's own time... far more distinctly present... than it is to the contemporaries who 'keep step with it.'" The key to how the backward-facing prophet is so present in his own now is that he resurrects the past in the present moment.

It is worth noting that Benjamin's work cuts a sharp line through Marxist thought, as he claims to hold to a concept that is true to Marx's life-work, while criticizing the way that Marxists have been made into the tools of the ruling classes. Indeed, in light of Benjamin's critique of historicism for focusing on the famous figures of history and overlooking the labors of the anonymous, one can begin to perceive that Marx's followers would in fact fall into conformist historicism *by definition.* More specifically, Benjamin's position is an utter dismissal of the teleological narrative that contends that history and progress move us inevitably toward paradise, a narrative which he pins especially on Social Democracy.

For Benjamin, the conclusion of the movement of history through time is not some inevitable utopia—capitalist, communist, or otherwise. Rather than viewing the progression of civilization as an accumulation of gains and reforms toward freedom and justice, history can be seen as the continuous defeat of the exploited by their oppressors; the intensifying alienation of beings and their re-construction into capital. History not only serves to justify today's rulers, but also to encode our memory with a narrative that reads historical events as a necessary chain of events along

the path toward some future revolution or techno-utopia. He describes this as "a view of history that puts its faith in the infinite extent of time and thus concerns itself only with the speed, or lack of it, with which people and epochs advance along the path of progress."

We must then understand Benjamin as heretical from a Marxist position, which sees the victory of the bourgeoisie in centuries past as a crucial step in accordance with the laws of history. He refuses the notion that the rise of capitalism was necessary to develop the means of production for the purposes of communism or liberation. More importantly, his critique rejects the role of revolutionary as he who would seek to accelerate the movement of history toward communism. For Benjamin, the Marxist justifications for a whole range of horrors—the transitional state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and so on—amount to little more than a blind faith in the progression of time, a fetishization of the very same storm which never ceases to drive us from paradise. Analyzing the real implications of state communism in the time since, we can undoubtedly recognize the gulags, the revolutionary police, the mass murder at the hands of the state, the rapid industrialization and the concomitant eco-devastation as some of the winds of this terrible storm.

In Michael Löwy's book-length treatment of "On the Concept of History," *Fire Alarm*, he analyses the text thus:

> Benjamin criticizes the essential article of faith of unimaginative, reductionist Marxism common to the main strands of the left: the quantitative accumulation of productive forces, of the gains of the labor movement, of the number of party members and voters in a movement of linear, irresistible progress.

This aspect of Benjamin's criticism situates him in a kind of correspondence with Jacques Camatte in turning away from Marxism and arriving at a deeper

critique of capitalism. In "The Wandering of Humanity," Camatte holds that "historical materialism is a glorification of the wandering in which humanity has been engaged for more than a century." For Camatte, any ideology which argues for the "growth of productive forces as the condition *sine qua non* for liberation" is an aimless wandering away from the primitive anarchy which is destroyed by capital's hegemony. This wandering in Camatte's thought is analogous to Benjamin's angel being unable to resist the thrust of the storm. Benjamin's thought also forshadows the anti-civilization positions of Camatte and others by juxtaposing a lost paradise with a progress that continually drives us away from the possibility of recovering what has been lost.

Benjamin's view is unconcerned with all the various historicist conceptions of the past. But in comparing his rejection of grand narratives with the postmodernists' claim of doing the same, we agree with Löwy that Benjamin's "de-legitimation of the grand narrative of western modernity, his deconstruction of the discourse of progress and his plea for historical discontinuity are immeasurably far removed from the postmodernists' detached gaze on current society." On the one hand, Benjamin equips us to refuse any periodization that could allow for modernity or post-anything. On the other, the specificity, spirit and vigor of his words blast through time, present to us in a way that today's theorists, supposedly closer to us in time and ideas, utterly lack even in their most furious assaults on the social order.

To Awaken the Dead

Benjamin's second thesis on history puts forth that, if we recognize that the past can be noted as present in such a way that refers to redemption, then "there is a secret protocol [or appointment] between the generations of the past

and that of our own.... For it has been given to us to know, just like every generation before us, a *weak* messianic power, on which the past has a claim. This claim is not to be settled lightly." Here Benjamin begins to situate the centrality of the dead to his project. In describing the idea of a *weak* messianic power, he speaks of the ability of the living to somehow redeem the past. The way in which the dead are present is as the "caress" of a "breath of... air," as an "echo," or as a sister who one no longer recognizes. In other words, the past is present and everywhere, touching us every moment and "in the voices we hear," but only suggestively, in and in spite of our own inability to recognize it. But the possibility for redemption, the weak messianic power, lies in the chance that *we might.*

In the intimate, ever-present opportunity he describes there is a tremendous deal at stake. For, he writes in the fourth thesis, the "refined and spiritual things" that live in the class struggle "as confidence, courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude, and have effects that reach far back into the past... constantly call into question every victory, past and present, of the rulers."

Later, turning to the historians he criticizes as tools of the ruling classes, Benjamin makes it clear in his seventh thesis that their resurrection of the past is an entirely different kind. The nature of the sadness—rooted in an indolence of heart—that Flaubert described feeling in his historical study of Carthage is clearer, Benjamin says, when we remember that the historian's empathy is always with the victor, and thus with the present rulers. It is the kind of sadness, then, that gathers to the loyal servant or minion in knowing that it is being used for its ruler's purposes.

Observe the difference between that one and "the chronicler, who recounts events without distinguishing between the great and small, thereby account[ing] for the truth, that nothing which has ever happened is to be given as lost to history." With this, Benjamin frames his assertion

that a full past befalls a redeemed humanity which in all of its living moments is able to cite its presence. For Benjamin, this is the task of the historical materialist: to cut through the process by which historicism only accounts for great events and takes the side of the victors over the vanquished, to account for absolutely everything.

The historical cutting-through takes place at the point when "the true picture of the past" flies past or flees from us, at the point when one may seize hold of an image of the past as it flashes up in a moment of danger. The danger here is precisely that the image of the past, going unnoticed, might disappear. It is the danger that the originator of the image that passes through time as much as its recipient will "becom[e] a tool of the ruling classes" if any present moment does not recognize itself as *intended in* the image.

Benjamin further clarifies this threat in that "the only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious." How are the dead threatened by the enemy? Nearby, Benjamin describes "a conformism that is about to overpower" them and, parallel to the metaphor of seizing the picture of the past, writes that each generation must attempt to wrest this picture away from that clutch.

Benjamin's haunting insistence that the dead are themselves somehow at risk as much as we ourselves highlights how much is at stake in the moment when the image of the past threatens to disappear. The enemy drowns the dead and their struggles under its glimmering narrative, unable to account for the truth. Historicism can spin any event into its story, even (if not especially) as relates to class struggle and revolution, but only by squashing them. The threat that faces the dead is the same as that which faces us: if caught by conformism, we will all be molded as

nothing more than tools of the rulers' story. This is echoed in the twelfth thesis when he describes the erasure of the legacy of Blanqui by the Social Democrats, saying that they "preferred to cast the working class in the role of a redeemer of future generations, in this way cutting the sinews of its greatest strength. This indoctrination made the working class forget its hatred, nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than by the ideal of liberated grandchildren."

Here we see the most obvious way that Edelman is informed by Benjamin's thought: his refusal to be motivated by the symbolic ideal of liberated children, and yet we are simultaneously confronted with the inadequacy of Edelman's critique. Instead of an attitude of detached rejection toward the future, what Benjamin confronts us with is the real hatred against the rulers and the rule that seeks to have the dead as its pawns in the present as much as it sought to do while they lived. The same process that would have us live in sacrifice and enslavement in the name of the future generations.

We can return again to the territory dominated by the Chilean State to draw inspiration from the articulation of memory in the anarchist struggles there. What follows is from a text dedicated to Mauricio Morales, entitled "Memory as a Weapon," from the Chilean anarchist publication *Germen*, which beautifully illustrates a conception of remembrance not unlike Benjamin's:

> To pierce the erasure of time, remembering and assuming the different contexts and the unrepeatable idyllic and exactly equal conditions is a direct and real support to the social war. To sharpen, expand, and make evident the conflict against the powerful is extremely necessary and possible in the present as well as in the past. Our combative history is the rebellion of different exploited who decided to actively oppose the established order, breaking free from the different forms of normalcy of their time.

Memory; the past is our present, its thoughts have been ours, its desires to attack are the same as ours today. We are talking about the history of revolt for centuries, years, or a pair of painful months. Now we are here remembering Mauri, comrade of so many fighters, but not only is this memory individual, it is also the continuation of the urgent need to oppose domination....

To remember the struggle in the present is to glimpse which road we have walked upon, to help understand where to place our next steps—this is to use insurrectionary memory to replant ourselves tactically and strategically in combat against the oppressive reality.

The redemption of comrades and combatants past and present is in our hands, the names and lives of comrades like Mauri, Claudia, or Johnny are in us and will not be forgotten, nor engulfed by the beast only to later be vomited by some intellectual with dates of the revolt.

To remember that these are not abstract ideas like some game, but that social war is actualized by comrades of flesh and bone through actions, expressions, and decisions in moments of their lives is what is truly potent and makes the combat carried out by them reproducible, in order to really sharpen our present offense.

Memory is a weapon, but it is necessary to know how to aim and shoot at power or else it is only a sterile act, trapped in history or emotion. Insurrectionary memory is our weapon!

Dear punki Mauri: our best memory is to continue confronting the order of those who fancy themselves masters of your life.

While the we can point to numerous global examples where one of power's innumerable murders was marked by not just the usual mourning and visions of a better future but also an open upsurge of hatred, the sequence of revolt in my own local situation can be traced to the

rioting that erupted after the murder of Oscar Grant at the hands of transit police in Oakland, California. While the insurrection following the murder of Alexis in Greece felt like something tragically removed from my own daily life, the several riots in Oakland showed that such explosion could emerge in my own context. While in the following days and months, activists and politicians of all stripes attempted to capitalize off of a re-writing of these riots, the words of participants demonstrate a project of memory and hatred which evades capture in politics. The following passage from the text "You Can't Shoot Us All," a first-hand account of the Oscar Grant riots in Oakland by someone who participated, serves as an example of this project:

> When we realized that, in the eyes of the powerful, our lives are just piles of bones waiting to be shattered, arteries and veins on the verge of tearing open, hearts and lungs that stop beating and expanding at the moment they pull the trigger, the only thing left to do was to come together and make them tremble before us...
>
> I wanted to break windows, to set fires, to strike fear into every cop on the streets that night. I wanted to show the powerful that they, too, would learn the meaning of violence, just as we have been forced to learn it time and time again. They needed to understand that we don't forget, we needed to feel that we were still alive...
>
> Later that night, as the cars were still burning, we talked with friends, discussing ways to keep fighting, way to ensure that the memory of the dead continues to haunt the living. In the following weeks, we continued to fight in the streets. It was on those warm January nights, evenings which now seem so distant, that I met some of the greatest people I have ever known. Our friendships have created the foundations of a network of struggle and formed basis for a different kind of community...

> I, identifying with a man whose photograph was not unlike my own reflection, wondered if people who did not see themselves in Oscar Grant at least saw in his image their friend, their neighbor, their classmate, someone whose life was worth fighting over. I hoped that there were white people who, after watching a video of a black man being murdered by the police, would be angry enough to break windows. In time, I met these people, because they fought alongside us, throwing bottles and chunks of concrete, cursing the police and writing the names of the dead along the walls of the city...
>
> This system exists to erase memories, to evict us from our childhood homes, to incarcerate our loved ones, to execute the fathers of children too young to fully understand what happened. Our struggle has been an effort to create memories that they can never take from us. Running toward the sunset, we have found that the horizon only moves farther away. We awake every morning to the same cycle of death and power that we escaped in our dreams the night before. Yet we continue to trudge to the ends of the earth, we continue to fight. It is when the air is still, when all seems quiet, that we are planning our next move.

To Make History Explode

Benjamin:

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that accords with this insight. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism.

This, from the eighth thesis, ties in with his "Critique of Violence" in which he lays out a broad critique of the legal system as a system of violence that divests individuals of all violence. He illuminates the link between the two texts when he writes in the critique that "the critique of

violence is the philosophy of its history"* because it must look beyond just "what is close at hand" to attain a truly critical approach. What is at stake for Benjamin in this critique is that a full understanding of the development of violence can give insight into "the breaking of this cycle... the suspension of law with all the forces on which it depends as they depend on it, finally therefore... the abolition of state power." Keep in mind, as we move from reading his philosophy of the history of violence to his theses on the philosophy of history itself, that both concern themselves with this same break.

The realization of Benjamin's vision of state abolition is defined as a break with a historical cycle in which violence creates law, preserves law, and in which "either new forces or those earlier suppressed" violently overthrow the existent law in order to "found a new law, destined in its turn to decay." The possibility of a break from the whole cycle rests on the recognition that if the existing law can be broken today, then an attack on law itself can soon be made; and that if there is "violence outside the law, as pure immediate violence," then "revolutionary violence, the highest manifestation of unalloyed violence by man, is possible." Although the Critique also points to another, more subtle task beyond this one, what we will keep in mind as we proceed is this concept of revolutionary violence, since for him this is to call an end to law and its violence.

From Benjamin's omitted notes on history:

> Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quite otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train—namely the human race—to activate the emergency brake.

Benjamin's emergency brake is never expressed as something to wait for. Indeed, to Benjamin it is the Social

* "The philosophy of its history" here echoes the title of the theses on history, alternatively translated "On the Philosophy of History."

Democrats who treat their task as infinite, ideal, and who treat time as "an anteroom, so to speak, in which one could wait for the emergence of the revolutionary situation." On the contrary, he writes that "in reality, there is not a moment that would not carry with it *its* revolutionary chance—provided only that it is defined in a specific way, namely as the chance for a completely new resolution of a completely new problem."

In the fourteenth thesis, Benjamin says that "what characterizes revolutionary classes at their moment of action is the awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode." He describes that on the first evening of the Paris Commune, revolutionaries stood "at the foot of every clocktower [and] were firing on clock faces to make the day stand still."

An enmity toward time is important for us because the concept of abstract, empty time seeks to domesticate us as slaves to progress. The numerical clock-time represented by the hour functions to regiment and dictate daily life while measuring our labor power in its exploitation by capital. It is the structure of the futurity that forces us away from the real of the now. This is why a friend recently reminds that one day of insurrection is worth a thousand centuries of normality.

For Benjamin, the moments that interrupt the progression of empty capitalist time are a kind of messianic time. Messianic time is the unmeasurable duration which contains unlimited possibilities. It does not exist in linear capacity, but instead exists as an interruption of linear time. Messianic time exists in splinters which are diffused through the empty fabric of capitalist time. We can recognize in these splinters that negativity which is intrinsic to the social order; the irrational now-time which threatens to suspend the reproductive drive of the future, to interrupt the continuum of history.

Benjamin insists in his notes that anyone who "wishes to know what the situation of a 'redeemed humanity' might actually be, what conditions are required for the development of such a situation, and when this development can be expected to occur, *poses questions to which there are no answers*" (emphasis added). This kind of seeking for answers so common in revolutionaries is futile by Benjamin's account. Since each moment contains its own unique revolutionary chance, to look for the general conditions in which revolution can develop is to fall into conceiving of time as homogenous and empty. The revolutionary chance itself is not defined by its being a further development in a historical continuum but is instead a cut or stoppage, a chance to blast a way out of the continuum. Indeed, Benjamin makes quite explicit that this notion is at odds with Marx's followers who have misunderstood "classless society as the endpoint of historical development." He remarks to the contrary that classless society must have "a genuinely messianic face" restored to it.

One way to contextualize interruption is to think through the strike. This should also be interesting in light of recent attempts at rekindling the flame of the revolutionary general strike, in relation to which the discourse around violence has appeared again as a trap on all sides.

While the model of the strike is explicitly referenced in the "Critique of Violence," it is absent—rather conspicuously—from the "Concept of History." In the former, he writes about the strike which appears in the class struggle as a form of violence. He distinguishes between different aspects. On the one hand is the strike as extortion—violence used by labor as a means toward securing an end, which the state sanctions as a legal right in order to "forestall violent actions [such as the burning of factories] the state is afraid to oppose." The revolutionary general strike departs from the strike-as-extortion and becomes a crisis to which the state understands it must respond with

violent suppression. It has to do this lest the strike find its way to the very heart of the state. Because, in such a strike, "the state fears above all else that function of violence which it is the object of this study to identify as the only secure formulation of its critique."

What then is this secure formulation of the critique of violence? It is the critique of the state itself. Given that any strike is a kind of interruption or stoppage, nevertheless it is generally understood that there will be a return to work once a demand is met. In what Benjamin calls the political general strike, a set of politicians take this method beyond the demands particular to a workplace and apply it to a demand for them (the politicians) to take power, at which point there will be a return to work. All of this bears only the most superficial resemblance to what Benjamin describes as the form of the strike that takes place rooted "in the determination to resume only a wholly transformed work, no longer enforced by the state." In contrast to the political general strike, this other "form of interruption of work," the proletarian general strike, is "pure means," "nonviolent," and "anarchistic."

The reason that these two forms are "antithetical in their relation to violence" bears some further inquiry. To Benjamin the political general strike is violent because it "causes only an external modification of labor conditions," which are in themselves violent, and has as its aim the strengthening of state power, which is both violent and the arbiter of violence. The proletarian general strike is nonviolent because it is the abolition of the state—the real critique of violence put into effect. And the "really effective critique" of violence "coincides with the critique of all legal violence."

Figured another way, the task of interruption requires us to locate the clocktower that we could fire upon to stop the day. Homogenous time no longer flows through the monolithic machines in the city centers. Now, a range

of technological advancements have diffused and integrated the machinery of time into our very thoughts and rhythms. Everywhere we go, we are surrounded by and permeated with devices which serve to manage the regime of time. Where once a singular apparatus mediated our relationship to time, its dictatorship is now imposed by an innumerable array. A desire for interruption must now reckon with the countless apparatuses that segment our memory and integrate our very being into capitalist time. But rather than waste time lashing out against all these clocks one after another, let us cut through to what underlies them.

History's servants promise us a shining future. Whether by means of technological innovation, hard work and sacrifice, or the Revolution, we are assured of a heaven-on-earth of light and crystal. But all of these glimmering apparatuses can only serve to adorn the monumental pile of wreckage in which we live. All around us, the carnage and corpses of our ancestors form the architecture of our daily existence. Not only the walls and freeways and shopping centers, but the smart phones, pornography, surveillance and entertainment systems—all monuments to the same enemy that has never ceased to be victorious. Capital, Leviathan, civilization, society: so many names for the process which turns life into an assemblage of death, which would integrate us as machines into a grander machinery. Futurity is the logic that drives this regime of subjection and assimilation, but is also the science which desecrates our memory of those who also struggled; the treachery which turns their struggles into so many more ideological cadavers. Where living beings once struggled to be free from futurity's domination of their lives, we are told that they dutifully sacrificed themselves for society's future. We too are called upon to procreate and raise up children who might one day live better lives than we. But just as we were born into the halls of the

dead, so too would our children be the stillborn janitors of these halls, breathing circuits embedded in a massive cybernetic cadaver. Ghosts call out to us: they ask that we tear apart the sutures of this Frankenstein's monster which they've come to constitute. They call on us to cremate their remains and bury the ashes, to end the reign of the dead over the living.

To Face the Dwarf

We will conclude in the same manner as Walter Benjamin begins his theses on history:

> There was once, we know, an automaton constructed in such a way that it could respond to every move by a chess player with a countermove that would ensure the winning of the game. A puppet wearing Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent on all sides. Actually, a hunchbacked dwarf—a master at chess—sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophic counterpart to this apparatus. The puppet, called 'historical materialism," is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is small and ugly and has to keep out of sight.

History tells us that Benjamin's theses on the concept of history were never meant for a public readership. Instead they were written as several copies of the same letter, addressed to his closest colleagues. Through this dispatch, he sought to communicate what he knew to be vital information to those he loved and conspired with.

In telling the parable of the dwarf and the automaton, he was reminding his comrades that to bring about the real state of exception—to not only defeat fascism, but to defeat the enemy all the time, present, past, and future—they would have to understand philosophy to be

nothing but a machine that was created to conceal something, to make moves at the board under the guidance of a hidden genius. Where the Marxists take Marx's philosophy as the answer for how to win the class struggle, they tragically mistake what it *appears as* for what it is intended to *effect*, and they become lost. Because even when they believe they are winning, they are in truth nothing but its pawns. The distinction is not about what *side* one is playing, but on what *level*.

For every pretty theory that presents itself, study it only in the way that a cat studies its prey: for the enjoyment of the hunt, to be sure, but also so as to seize upon whatever unique revolutionary chance may appear as in a flash of lightning. So that when that narrow gate opens, you pounce without a moment's hesitation. In the meantime, by all means, enjoy the diversion of the theory's lines and moves, but if you are to avoid becoming its tool you must ever have in mind to shatter the system of mirrors and confront the dwarf that has been pulling the strings all along. Faced with this ugly little creature behind all the lines of play you've enjoyed and suffered, able at last to read the lines of its face and the dark of its eyes, as time stands still and the entirety of the past falls to you, you will have to make a deeply ethical decision that nothing in all the games before could prepare you for. The only decision that truly matters.

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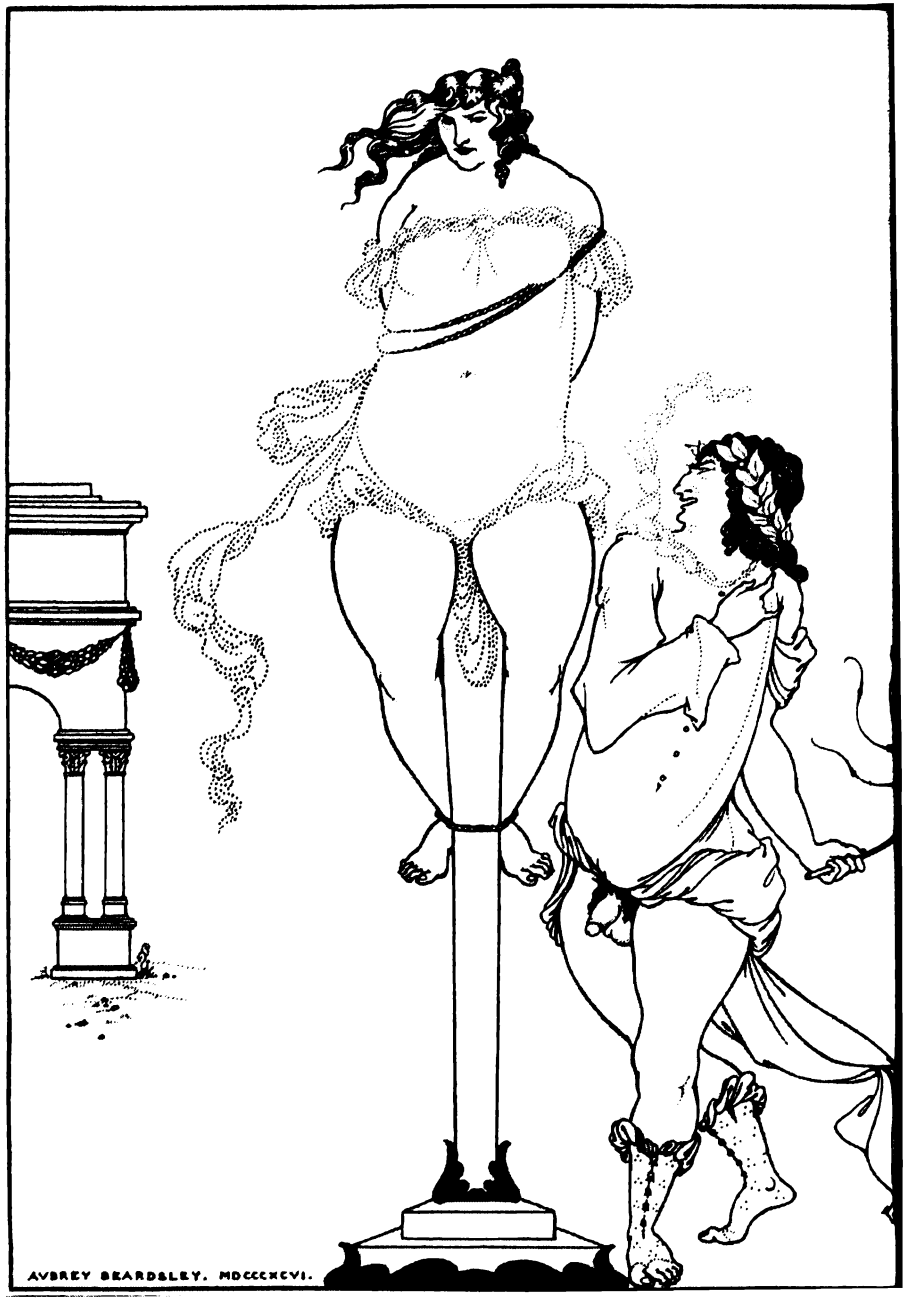
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The following lecture was presented at an anarchist conference held in Milwaukee in May of 2011. In the wake of the defeated anti-austerity struggle months earlier in Wisconsin, the Crisis Conference was organized as a space for anarchists to theorize intervention into the unfolding crisis and the nascent resistance to austerity.

Identity In Crisis

Contention One: A Crisis of Reproduction

I

While economists, politicians and technocrats of all varieties endlessly speak of this or that detail of *the crisis*, they remain caught up in diagnosing what they perceive as a periodic crisis of the capitalist mode of production. What goes unspoken is that all the various crises of production, consumption and accumulation are simply minor breakdowns within a systematic process that confronts us as the domination of our very lives. This latter is itself a great crisis, one born from the moment we were dispossessed of our ways of being and accumulated as workers, and which in our view constitutes the fundamental crisis of alienation and production within industrial civilization.

The same process which removes us from the world and makes us into workers also renders us irrelevant as workers. Through generations of violence, our ancestors were destroyed as living beings and recreated as a pool of labor-power. The products of the labor of each successive generation form the structures that affirm capital and render future labor-power redundant. And thus, the so-called industrial reserve army becomes a lazarus layer of surplus population, irrelevant to yet hopelessly reliant on the means of production for survival.

To put this yet another way, the current crisis cannot be viewed as a result of the actions of a class of greedy bankers, unscrupulous lenders or even a result of the concentration of fortune in the hands of a ruling class. Rather, we have to view our current situation as the inevitable outcome of alienated labor—the process by which our activity and ability to reproduce ourselves is taken from us and used to dominate our lives. All of the energy that is routed into production that is not our own congeals to form a system of apparatuses that become the only—and increasingly alienated—means by which reproduction is possible, alienating us from any possibilities to live outside the capitalist system. The continued existence of the capitalist mode of production is contingent upon the reproduction of the alienated self. While the analysis of reproduction by Marx (and by many Marxists) focuses on this as taking place in the sphere outside of work where the various activities necessary to sustain the workforce's lifeforce are carried out, we will argue that the relative disappearance of labor from the industrial sphere coincides with the appearance of work's logic in every aspect of life. The reproduction of the self, then, becomes a primary productive operation rather than a mere secondary support to the productive process.

We'll quote Marx in writing:

> "Proletarian" must be understood to mean, economically speaking, nothing other than "wage-labourer," the man who produces and valorises "capital," and is thrown onto the street as soon as he becomes superfluous to the need for valorisation.

The primacy of this throwing-on-the-street exposes the fundamental crisis of subjectivity under capital: the collapse of the worker's identity. It is from this position—that of the street—that we will begin our analysis.

1.ii

Though we are continually further removed from the means to provide for ourselves, we cannot view this situation as simply a crisis of this particular mode of production, when it is the very crisis of living within class society. Our irrelevance in the process of production and the misery of self-reproduction is not an abstraction, but a reality that haunts and animates our daily experience.

In Wisconsin's anti-austerity struggle of early 2011, we can witness a particularly apparent aspect of the process of expulsion and immiseration that has been unfolding across the globe for decades. Politicians are quite honest when they claim that the system can no longer afford to care for the growing surplus populations without the means to care for themselves. Union contracts are dissolved so as to more easily cast out irrelevant or unnecessary workers. Funding for services, education, housing, food, and health are devastated. Teachers vote for their own pay cuts in order to preserve a dying system. Union bureaucrats offer to concede every possible aspect of their constituencies' livelihoods in a desperate attempt to cling to their own positions in the bureaucracy. "Representatives" flee their positions because they can do nothing else.

Policing is expanded and prison terms are dramatically lengthened in order to quarantine surplus populations. At all levels, the state is reduced to and exposed as its primary function—the management and discipline of the growing population of bodies who are entirely unnecessary to the continuation of the economy. In order to prevent the chaotic revolt of these bodies, more diffuse and sinister forms of policing are deployed. Through a whole series of mystifications, police-logics are internalized within the protest body. The ideals of democracy, non-violence, and civil disobedience serve to re-route popular rage as a desperate plea for the continuation of

a system that first exploits us and then, when we are no longer necessary, leaves us to die.

To this deeper crisis, there is no reformist or progressive answer. Progress itself has only meant an intensification of the alienation and the division of labor at the heart of the fundamental crisis of class society. A renewal of the workers' movement would be meaningless for those who might never be able to even be traditional workers—a status quickly becoming the norm. An expansion of the welfare state can only act as a band-aid fix, a ploy for social peace. Even if the solutions offered by the Left were tenable, they'd be entirely undesirable all the same. When protesters say "this is what democracy looks like" they are entirely correct—this situation is exactly what democracy looks like: a shit sandwich, without the bread. For those who constitute the ever-growing and intrinsic outside to the economy, there is no integrated operation or mode of protest that can save us. Our choices are obvious—austerity and the continued immiseration of our daily lives, or the immediate destruction of the means of production and the class society they produce.

1.iii

We will quote at length a communique that circulated during an earlier struggle against this system of universal and deepening austerity, "Communique from an Absent Future" by Research and Destroy. This communique elaborated a theory of the crisis with regard to the university system in the state of California. It is relevant to our discussion because it poses the crisis in terms of a crisis of subjectivity:

> For those whose adolescence was poisoned by the nationalist hysteria following September 11th, public speech is nothing but a series of lies and public space a place where things might explode (though they never do). Afflicted by

the vague desire for something to happen—without ever imagining we could make it happen ourselves—we were rescued by the bland homogeneity of the internet, finding refuge among friends we never see, whose entire existence is a series of exclamations and silly pictures, whose only discourse is the gossip of commodities. Safety, then, and comfort have been our watchwords. We slide through the flesh world without being touched or moved. We shepherd our emptiness from place to place.

But we can be grateful for our destitution: demystification is now a condition, not a project. University life finally appears as just what it has always been: a machine for producing compliant producers and consumers. Even leisure is a form of job training. The idiot crew of the frat houses drink themselves into a stupor with all the dedication of lawyers working late at the office. Kids who smoked weed and cut class in high-school now pop Adderall and get to work. We power the diploma factory on the treadmills in the gym. We run tirelessly in elliptical circles.

It makes little sense, then, to think of the university as an ivory tower in Arcadia, as either idyllic or idle. "Work hard, play hard" has been the over-eager motto of a generation in training for... what?—drawing hearts in cappuccino foam or plugging names and numbers into databases. The gleaming techno-future of American capitalism was long ago packed up and sold to China for a few more years of borrowed junk. A university diploma is now worth no more than a share in General Motors.

We work and we borrow in order to work and to borrow. And the jobs we work toward are the jobs we already have. Close to three quarters of students work while in school, many full-time; for most, the level of employment we obtain while students is the same that awaits after graduation. Meanwhile, what we acquire isn't education; it's debt. We work to make money we have already spent, and our future labor has already been sold on the worst market around. Average student loan debt rose 20 percent in the

first five years of the twenty-first century—80-100 percent for students of color. Student loan volume—a figure inversely proportional to state funding for education—rose by nearly 800 percent from 1977 to 2003. What our borrowed tuition buys is the privilege of making monthly payments for the rest of our lives. What we learn is the choreography of credit: you can't walk to class without being offered another piece of plastic charging 20 percent interest. Yesterday's finance majors buy their summer homes with the bleak futures of today's humanities majors.

If the university teaches us primarily how to be in debt, how to waste our labor power, how to fall prey to petty anxieties, it thereby teaches us how to be consumers. Education is a commodity like everything else that we want without caring for. It is a thing, and it makes its purchasers into things. One's future position in the system, one's relation to others, is purchased first with money and then with the demonstration of obedience. First we pay, then we "work hard." And there is the split: one is both the commander and the commanded, consumer and consumed. It is the system itself which one obeys, the cold buildings that enforce subservience. Those who teach are treated with all the respect of an automated messaging system. Only the logic of customer satisfaction obtains here: was the course easy? Was the teacher hot? Could any stupid asshole get an A? What's the point of acquiring knowledge when it can be called up with a few keystrokes? Who needs memory when we have the internet? A training in thought? You can't be serious. A moral preparation? There are antidepressants for that.

The collapse of the global economy is here and now.

1. iv

The disintegration of the guiding narratives of futurity and social expectation marks a real crisis in our own reproduction as subjects. One was told that on the trajectory of the locomotive of life would be suburban homes on mortgage, white picket fences, marriage, 1.5 children, comfortable unionized jobs, two automobiles, a big television. One was told to view his family, his home, his very life as the future product of his own "hard work." But none of this will exist for us. For many of us, it never did and we would never have desired it. And yet, the period marked by the industrial revolution of daily life and the real subsumption of daily activity through machines (dishwashers, automobiles, microwave ovens) has come to an end. Forget the suburbs. This is a crisis of the individual atomized reproduction of the capitalist family unit. People are being forced out of their homes and their union jobs in droves. What is a family, even? The regime of hostile privatism is in crisis. We are seeing all its hallmarks disappear as the ideology of whiteness is thrown into crisis. The middle class, and with it, middle class subjectivity are disappearing from the face of the earth.

The construction of the middle class had as its foundation the home mortgage. Home ownership on mortgage effects several things at once: a shift from working-class identity to middle-class identity, a change in the alignment of actual class interests (insofar as one's interests come to involve the value of one's home), and the weight of lifelong debt (necessitating more and more work in order to pay it off). Additional markers of middle-class position were a stable career and ownership of small amounts of stocks. The collapse of the housing market, the loss of any reality of stable employment in all but a few sectors, and the collapse in the stock market (severely cutting into the financial basis for retirement in 401K plans, etc.) all add

up to the massive looting of the middle class. This process cannot, however, be simply described as widespread proletarianization, nor does it signal the inevitable collapse of the capitalist system. On the contrary, the current crisis is a crucial battle in the struggle between the potential for insurgency on one hand, and the potential for another restructuring of class society on the other.

The crisis of whiteness bears with it a set of unique opportunities, but also a set of crippling limitations. The limits: Those who are recovering from middle class delusions can be seen *en masse* concerning themselves with what brand of tape to use so as not to hurt the walls of the capitol building, or thanking the armed police officers about to arrest them, or believing that the police and the union leadership is on their side, or having a whole range of absurd ideas that the problems they face can be fixed by a recall election. Never mind a whole mythology of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. Some rather large pushes, activists, if you wish to become dangerous.

The opportunity: Those for whom any *event* was always experienced as something that happened to *other people* are beginning to see themselves as the people they read about in the news: unemployed, homeless. Those for whom history was thought to have ended have found themselves the victims (and agents) of its ceaseless progression (and potentially its explosion). Divorced from a past, from any means to reproduce themselves, from any of the fictions promised to them as children, people are beginning to call into question all the assumptions and narratives upon which our social order is based. Those who months ago could never have seen themselves occupying buildings or sabotaging their workplaces have begun to find new ways to act together. To a certain degree, people are positioned to see that their own survival will be predicated on their own self-activity to destroy the conditions that have shaped their abysmal future.

The collapse of traditional subject positions begets the emergence of new class positions of exclusion: on the one hand total abjection and unwaged labor and on the other a diffusion of technologies-of-the-self constituting a global petite bourgeoisie. More realistically there will be a complete indistinction and oscillation between these positions. The grim reality is that each individual will have to bring continually-innovated and newly-commodified aspects of her existence to sell on the market, or else starve.

Contention Two: Re-creation and Technologies-of-the-Self

The new middle class is a class divorced from the promise of steady employment, of stable home-ownership, burdened with ever-increasing debt and the ever-increasing necessity (since nothing can be taken for granted any longer) for self-upgrades in order to have a chance at continued employment. A middle class for whom the self becomes a zero-capital enterprise, a class of individuals who are at once utterly proletarianized (dispossessed, thrown into the street) and yet the pettiest of the bourgeoisie, managing their own beings as little businesses. This new disposition replaces the structural role of the older forms of middle-class subjectivity (namely, the suppression of class struggle through the bonding of workers' survival to the survival of capitalism, and the intensification of the necessity of work through enormous quantities of debt) by positioning the individual in conflict with himself. Class war becomes something that is waged internally between one's proletarian interests and one's "better interests," between self-management and unmanageability, between the refusal of work, the scarcity of work, and the impetus to work more

and more... The struggle in Wisconsin saw slogans such as "save the middle class"—which meant to save its structural form—but what the current struggles are effecting (because of their positive character) is a restructuring of capitalism toward the *global, virtual* middle class.

We can give the name real subsumption to the process by which a world created and operated through our muscles becomes a world operated through energy in the form of fuel. Real subsumption marks the ability of dead labor to dominate the living. When we say dead labor, we mean a vast array of machines and apparatuses, produced by the living activity of humans that is taken from them and comes to mediate their relationship to their own survival. This is the ultimate achievement of capital: total alienation. The shift to privatized and commodified homes (made possible by the increasing centrality of machinery in our daily lives) marked the onset of what can be called the real subsumption of life under capital.

While the real subsumption of life under capital is taken for granted by many, we believe with the advent of a whole new set of machines and apparatuses, that we are now experiencing what could be called the real subsumption of subjectivity. By this we mean the colonization and economization of what it means to be alive at all—the totality of our features, looks, interests, relationships, dispositions, inclinations, sexuality, gender, tastes, body parts, physique, etc.

We can follow Foucault in his exploration of what he called technologies-of-the-self. It seems natural that after twenty-five years of inquiry into the production and disciplining of subjectivities (madness, deviancy, criminality, sexuality) Foucault would turn to the study of the ways in which people can deploy power to shape themselves. He named technologies of the self as the ability of individuals to effect, by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and

souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of perfection or immortality. Through this analysis, we can begin to see the emergence of a situation wherein each individual body can become the capitalist—the entrepreneur—of itself and the very possibility of its life. For each entrepreneur of the self, the (supposed) entirety of his "being" constitutes his own private property, his own capital, his own profit-logic. This entrepreneurial subjectivity reveals the dreadful reality that we all have the opportunity to become whatever we can make of ourselves, and then to bring the product to market.

2.ii

Just as what we would roughly identify as formal subsumption is made possible by the production of certain machines at the business level (mining equipment, transportation infrastructure, factories) and real subsumption is enabled by the production of specific machines at the domestic level (household appliances, personal transportation), the phase of *real* real subsumption is effected by the deployment of an entirely new set of machinery at the personal level—this time, the vast network of hardware and software that comprises the world of information technology.

Put another way, through the process of total subsumption, individuals have been deconstructed and concurrently reconstructed as a crossing of apparatuses and technologies of the self. It is now impossible to speak of an individual as being a body bound by flesh: instead, we have the intersection of Facebook profiles, smart phones, bank accounts, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, social security numbers, tagged pictures, health and criminal records, gym memberships, DNA profiles, fingerprints, lists detailing our tastes music/books/films, model

portfolios, mug shots, fetish chat rooms, online hook-ups, typefaces, degrees, screen names, avatars, tablets, Twitter feeds, Grindr, Flickr, Socializr, Tumblr, iSnitch applications, GPS coordinates, risk statistics, drivers licenses, surveillance footage, blog entries, friend networks and whatever might turn up through the Google search of a name.

In the same way we are alienated from a life outside the machinery in which dead labor congeals, we are equally alienated from conceiving of our bodies or being called by our names outside of the innumerable apparatuses that conceive, identify, name, measure and track us as data points. The domination of machines over our lives is nearing perfection. These apparatuses alienate us from our communication, relation, befriending, seduction. What's more, they now comprise the totality and the process by which we identify, name and constitute our (current and potential) selves and relationships. The individual is dead. Atomization proliferates forever.

2. iii

The combination of an ever-increasing lazarus layer of surplus population, the vast diffusion of technologies of the self, and the *real* real subsumption of life and subjectivity under capital coincide to produce a new economic-social terrain wherein every aspect of what could be called an individual has been fully integrated into their quantifiable market value. The collapse of traditional subject positions is managed through the proliferation of a new positions: app designers, graphic designers, cyber sex workers, queer theorists, feminist publishers, social network engineers, trend hunters, eBay sellers, social justice activists, performance artists, porn directors, spammers, party promoters, award winning baristas. We are forced to continually define ourselves, to enact countless operations upon ourselves so as to produce ourselves anew each day

as someone worth taking to market—our basic survival depends on the ceaseless deployment of increasingly discreet technologies of the self. Everything is for sale: our sex appeal, our fetishes, our tattoos, our radicalism, our fashion sense, our queerness, our androgyny, our fitness, our fluidity, our abnormality, our sociability. Facebook and Twitter function as the new resume. We are caught in the unending necessity to be continually educating, training, exploring, perfecting, and fine-tuning ourselves. Our continual self-invention is both economic imperative and economic engine.

2. iv

Let us quote at length from the essay "Preliminary Notes on Modes of Reproduction" by 'gender mutiny,' published in the journal *Pink and Black Attack*:

> You can hear it on the street and in the workplace, in the college classroom and the executive boardroom, at the latest radical convergence and at the beach, at dance parties and in underground venues: the logic of duality is *sooo* last millennium.
>
> We are living in a postmodern world, and you are a postmodern girl. Which is to say, you are not really a *girl* as such.
>
> Postmodernity is a social order that takes places as social disorder; it is the form of the destabilization of formerly stable forms. Destabilization could be said to begin by attacking binary structure but it immediately, incessantly, and necessarily goes on to destabilize whatever structure; postmodernity is thus characterized by its destabilizing force and not by whatever modernist strictures linger about. The traces of modernity are merely modern, which is to say *old-fashioned;* the paradoxical need to go beyond the modern is what characterizes the frenzy of post-modern activity. The form of structure today is a post-structural modality akin to the Situationist dream of

fluid architecture — a modal and mobile form of structure whose engine is a strong distaste for anything static.

Primary in postmodernity's (de-/re-)structuring is a shift in sexual differentiation — the very structure which constituted the means by which life was understood to be created. The destabilization of binary oppositional sexes constitutes a crisis in the family and in the reproduction of life, but this crisis is not one that must spell the end of reproduction. A host of techniques of biotechnology, cyberproduction, and social work are emerging to enable 'queer' reproductive possibilities and to overcome the limits of the human womb which too easily ceases to function.

An analysis of postmodern sexual reproductive technologies falls short, however, of recognizing the way in which the central questions of reproduction have been displaced from the act of baby-making to the production of selves, just as the centering of baby-making in procreationist thought usurped the former importance of the question of God's creation of the cosmos.

The primary mode of reproduction in a post-dialectical world is the reproduction of the individual. We call this mode of reproduction 're-creationism.'

Postmodern singularities are not created by God or their parents, but constructed through pluralistic processes that are increasingly 'artificial,' 'social,' and at the same time—paradoxically—self-realized. These processes are the processes of identification.

The ontological maxims of re-creationism are neither "God made me" nor "my parents gave birth to me" but "I made myself, therefore I am," "I am made and remade through everything," "I am what I eat," "I am not *me* without my phone," "I am a self-made man," &c. One's creator is either oneself or everything outside of oneself; it is both simultaneously. The fault for one's existence can no longer be put upon a specific creator (no longer can one rant at God "why did you create me?" or hate one's parents for

bringing oneself into the world); it is only oneself who is to blame while at the same time *everything is to blame.*

The pluralistic reproductive process cannot suffer limits. Its reproduction is always an ontological operation, a veritable explosion of reproductive modality that cannot be analyzed in forms of 'trinarism,' 'quaternism,' &c. These do not exist. Once binary reproduction has been destabilized, this destabilization reproduces itself and the rhyzomal 'towers' from a network—a multiplicitous (post-)structuralism rather than a balanced structure.

The idea now is to produce more towers, unique and individuated, decentralized, matrixial, marching across the landscape at an ever-increasing rate. The hegemony of the Twin Towers has fallen only to give way to a whole metropolis of skyscrapers—a psychogeographical skyline, a horizon of possibilities and futures....

The postmodern worker is the self-made and self-managed worker. Stable long-term employment—unionized, salaried career opportunities with their attendant job security, benefits and pensions—is disappearing while part-time, short-term, piecemeal, casual, waged and self-employed work take its place. The proletarian must take on a certain *flexibility;* he must continually 'upgrade himself' through continual education and training. Meanwhile, labor becomes more efficient and the market becomes less prone to rewarding non-work. Re-creationism is thus both an economic imperative acting upon labor and an imperative—a drive—in the interests of the economy.

Meanwhile, re-creationism provides the only market-expansion opportunities that late-capitalism has available to itself. No longer able to reach new geographic demographic markets through traditional expansion, capitalism today must create new markets out of nothing or else expand into extra-dimensionality. New markets now require new subcultural-forms and identity-forms. The tendency of market expansion in late-capitalism is towards there being a market for each individual and ever-new

markets as individuals re-create their identities, bodies, and desires. Static forms can only impede this expansion; thus, a certain self-hatred must be made to drive old forms into undesirability, and a taste for the new, hip and abnormal must be cultured.

Identities must be produced—produced *as commodities and for commodities.* Identification, that is, the process of re-creationism, is what produces these identities. Inherent in this production is a certain form of anti-identification that opposes itself to stable, essential, static and, ultimately, *old-fashioned* identity-forms in order to compel the production and marketing of new ones.

Each new identity is a new tower to which consumers can flock to escape the passé nature of the old ones. Eventually—that is, soon and very soon—there will have to be a tower for each person *("You know, there could be as many genders as there are people...")*, in fact many more, and the scale of such production far surpasses the limits of the old workplaces. The Fordist production line can make multiple, identical products, but today each new identity must have the air of the unique. The 'creative' labor of identity production is thus displaced from the old workplaces. By social imperative and desire, the individual is put to work, unpaid, to create new identities 'for himself.' (Reproductive work—whether baby-making, class struggle, or Facebook—is always unpaid.)

The postmodern Spectacle is a collection of images that must increasingly be produced uniquely by and for each individual (the ghost of reproduction must not linger on the screen), but it must also enable a certain form of 'social interaction.' An apparatus of Spectacle production that is socially networked affords its producer/consumer a profile and newsfeed unique to him but also the ability to 'connect' with his 'real' friends. Reality, in the end, is the product.

Contention Three: Swerve / Negation

i

In an effort to isolate a strategic horizon and to avoid certain dead ends, we will consider the proposals of radical queer theorist Micha Cardenas in her recent book *Trans Desire*. Throughout the book, Micha offers her experience with a radical porn collective as an example of what she believes to be a subversive praxis of biopolitical resistance through porn production. She begins:

> This paper will work with a process ontology, a concept of material reality that is constantly in the movement of becoming, in the churning flux of the chiasmic unity, a reality unbound in its material richness, where scales of observation can be wildly traversed in time and space, where everything is multiplicity and it is only the limited view of our current perceptions that creates the occasional appearance of wholeness and stillness.

Her "churning flux of chiasmic unity" is nothing new to us. There is already a name for this "reality unbound in its material richness": capitalism. The image of re-creationism we elaborated in the third point of our second contention could very succinctly be described as throwing of bodies into this churning flux as bodies "constantly in the movement of becoming." We read "becoming" as a continuous series of technologies of the self, a constant stream of status updates, an endless fine-tuning and re-writing of one's identity to be more perfectly compatible with the needs of the market. Cardenas begins with the sinister postmodern operation of valorizing the meaninglessness of life under capital. If this is our framework, we are doomed from the start.

Under the heading "Creating a Queer Porn Commons" Cardenas goes on to describe her work with Sharing is Sexy (SIS):

> I will examine the Sharing is Sexy collective as an example of porn production as radical political gesture... I would like to discuss a collaborative project which I am participating in, Sharing is Sexy (SIS), as a material example [of a] collective project that aims at creating queer porn that is licensed under a Creative Commons, By Attribution, Non Commercial, Share Alike license. The process of creating and distributing porn is used to create radical queer community and to facilitate new conceptualizations of gender and sexuality.
>
> SIS uses non-commercial license to facilitate a porn making praxis, to be able to invite someone to experiment with the expression of their sexual desires and to know that no one is making money off of it (or very little money at best, in the case of bandwidth). SIS does not want porn corporations to use their content and resell it with massive infrastructures, which SIS would consider commercial use.

There is a failure of understanding here in the belief that the absence of an immediate exchange of money qualifies something as non-commercial or anti-capitalist. The simple fact that one is not paid for one's labor is not enough to disqualify it from being labor. A great deal of labor, perhaps even the majority, is unwaged. An wide array of unpaid work has been subsumed so as to still produce a great deal of value. One isn't paid to update their Facebook profile. No licensing in existence can truly exempt something from the market. Where she says "distribution to create radical queer community" we can read "investment in the creation of new radical queer markets." These techniques of self-production can be as queer or as radical as possible, this will only cement their position as the *avant-garde* of capital.

She goes on:

> I am interested in an experimental, materialist, affective approach to epistemology or meaning. I am approaching SIS as a concrete exploration of the possibilities of porn

> production, as a form of biopolitical resistance, and as an attempt to apply open source methodologies to cultural production with my own body and emotions.

It is unclear what is meant here by 'biopolitical resistance.' Porn is clearly a biopolitical terrain: a zone of the deployment of power that works to construct human subjectivity and sexuality. Where Micha goes astray is in only conceiving of power a top-down operation, as purely normative. The sexual practices portrayed in her porn, however radical they may be, are just as constructed and constructing as the dominant practices found in any other porn. If we are to read this as "biopolitical resistance" then we are naming as resistance what is simply the status quo functioning of pornography: to produce and discipline the sexual desires of its viewers. Changing the imagery does not change these productive forms of control. Beyond this, the application of open-source methodologies to cultural production is simply descriptive of cultural production as it already functions. Social media is the perfect example of the way in which our bodies and our emotions are put in the service of production thorough "open source methodologies."

She continues:

> With respect to oppression of subaltern identities, non-oppressive porn that does not 'contain' oppression is not enough. SIS strives to make anti-oppression porn that challenges the institutions of oppression along lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Similarly with capitalism, I still harbor hope of making anti-capitalist porn that challenges the existence of capitalism.

Micha's ambitions become increasingly dubious as we go on. No such cultural production, however "anti-oppressive" its content, can escape the fundamentally oppressive structure of the institution. It is still reliant on mediated production, distribution and consumption of sexuality. It is disseminated through material channels of dead labor

based on real exploitation. A strong argument can be made that any gesture to integrate or assimilate marginalized groups into structurally flawed forms only acts to legitimate the form itself. We remain alienated regardless of the flavor of the now vindicated alienation. Secondly, to even evaluate the form in a vacuum, one must question what it means to be anti-oppressive in nature, especially when "anti-oppression" has become just another label to increase the value of any commodity: people still pay thousands to attend anti-oppression classes and academics use the trendiest brand of identity politics to sell books and fill rosters. The consumption of anti-oppressive porn is in no way intrinsically anti-capitalist. In fact, it is merely pioneering the way for pornographers to market a new brand of sexual commodities to the most discerning ethical consumers. One needn't search too hard on Google to realize that this is already the situation.

In the section "Building Queer Network Subjectivities, Community as Resistance to Biopower," she goes on:

> We are facilitating a process of building new genders and sexualities by making porn more accessible because the viewer can know that the images were not made under exploitative conditions, the images are free and they are licensed to be shared. Creating a dynamic of sharing is important to us in order to facilitate dialogue and processes of feedback or exchange and allowing new shapings of desire to come out of those feedback processes...
>
> The activity of SIS can be seen on numerous levels as an act of biopolitical resistance: it challenges commodification of expressions of queer desire, allows the collective members to explore their own desires, and facilitates community offline and online through dialogue and the sharing of content, building a queer porn commons. SIS not only provides the conditions of possibility for the creation of new subjectivities that challenge gender and sexual norms for its participants but it also acts as biopolitical

> information vectors, spreading embodied resistant desires. Radical queer media, distributed on the net or passed hand to hand in zines, but also with live events like burlesque shows, can act as lines of flight, potentials of inoperativity, spreading from the individual act of creative world building with one's body or one's community to other people and other places. These radical transmissions virtualize techniques of biopolitical resistance in the minds of the viewers, individuation in new assemblages and deterritorializing queer resistance to biopower...
>
> With pornography, this function of the imagined subject in the fantasy can operate like the mirror stage, where the subject imagines themselves one way and gradually becomes that.... A challenge for Radical porn, which often presents a viewer with a new conception of what is possible, would be to understand how to enable a viewer to identify with the person portrayed in the work....
>
> This porn is more authentic, and therefore more erotic because it is easy to relate to because these are real people, normal people, people like you.

There is nothing about the production of new genders and sexualities that resists capitalism; to the contrary, this production is fertile terrain for new economic growth, as we have already established. But this delusion may bear with it a certain kind of truth—or, to be more precise, a misconception of a truth. It makes sense here to speak of transsexuality, because this particularly self-conscious process of producing new genders operates as a microcosm of the whole social production of new subjectivities of which we are speaking. Transsexuality bears a totally negative aspect that relentlessly destroys capitalist subjectivities, yet this negativity is bound within a productive process that continually produces new capitalist subjectivities.

3.ii

It is revealing that the emphasis of Sharing is Sexy is in the act of sharing itself. It is crucial for us to continually bring our analysis back to this point as sharing marks the real limitation of this strategy, but also of an entire set of ideas that believe that sharing is the revolution, is communization, or is the end of the commodity relationship. There is a criticism of this line of thought within theories of communization that articulates a bright line between sharing and communization as the totally negative material undoing of capitalist society and its corresponding forms. From the text "Reflections around Call":

> In call the term communization is systematically understood as 'making common.' in the previous quotation for instance the 'acts of communization' are described as 'making common such-and-such space, such-and-such machine, such-and-such knowledge.' That which is to put in common is use, as when it is said that to communize a space is to liberate its use.... In the same logic, if communization is 'making common,' then communism is systematically assimilated with sharing. The theme of sharing is omnipresent in *Call*...

The point is not that sharing and communism have nothing to do with another, but we have trouble understanding how they can be synonymous. Sharing already exists in capitalism: social institutions as important as the family function on the basis of sharing, and even in countries where capitalism is the oldest and where familial relation reduces itself to its simplest expression (the parent-child relation), capital, even economically, would not survive without this form of social sharing

We will follow this criticism. Sharing may very well be sexy, but despite Micha Cardenas' (or Food Not Bombs' or the lending library's) insistence to the contrary, it has nothing to do with the undoing class society. Sharing is

desirable, and even beneficial, but capitalism will allow for almost an unlimited vision of sharing so long as the structural reproduction of the commodity relation is not challenged.

Let us take this criticism further, by locating the Self alongside the state, the commodity, the family, and gender as a fundamental form of capital and consequentially a terrain in which to do battle, and a limit to be destroyed. From here on, we cannot allow ourselves to be limited to a vision of unlimited sharing between coherent Selves. Such maintenance of the atomized forms, regardless of what is held between, is just a reshaping of misery. Rather, it is necessary to immediately engage in the sabotage of the Self, the strike against subjectivity. What separates me from you, what forms me and constitutes my entirety must be put into question and undone. Beyond the obvious need to destroy my gender, my race, my class position there is the more vital need to struggle against my image, my technologies of the self, my singular debility.

3. iii

In thinking about what it means to struggle against identities and predicates, we can look to the idea of *the swerve* articulated by the group Theorie Communiste. The swerve, a reference to the way flowing water hits a rock and is necessarily split into two streams, is perhaps the best way to describe how in the course of a struggle, any subject must reach and experience its own subjectivity as a limit, as an objective constraint, and to struggle against it. Through struggle, one must reach the point at which it becomes impossible to both continue to struggle and to maintain one's self.

> For the proletariat, to act as a class is currently, on the one hand, to have no other horizon than capital and the categories of its reproduction, and on the other, for the

> same reason, it is to be in contradiction with, and to put into question, its own reproduction as a class. This conflict, this swerve in the action of the proletariat, is the content of class struggle and what is at stake in it. From daily struggles to revolution, there can only be a rupture. But this rupture is prefigured in the daily course of the class struggle each time that class belonging appears, within these struggles, as an external constraint which is objectified in capital, in the very course of the proletariat's activity as a class...
>
> The proletariat's action as a class is characterised by a swerve within itself through practices that externalise their own existence as class practices as a constraint which is objectified in the reproduction of capital. It is no longer possible to do anything more as a worker, while remaining a worker. This confrontation of the proletariat with its own constitution as a class is now the content of the class struggle and what is at stake in it is the putting into question by the proletariat of its own existence as a class and of all classes.
>
> Currently, the revolution is predicated on the supersession of a constitutive contradiction of the class struggle: for the proletariat, being a class is the obstacle that its struggle as a class must get beyond, abolish. Class unity can no longer be formed on the basis of wage labor and the struggle over immediate demands as a prerequisite for its revolutionary activity. The unity of the proletariat can now only be the activity in which it abolishes itself by abolishing everything that divides it.

While we certainly reject any deterministic or scientific approach to explaining how a revolution 'must' happen, the theories of anti-state 'communizers' are interesting specifically because they reject the core tenets of Marxism: workers' identity, the role of the Party, class unity, valorization of the means of production, the dictatorship of the proletariat, formalism, even the workers' movement itself.

Any practice that aims to elaborate the swerve within the set of struggles that will emerge through the course of the current crisis must begin with a study and understanding of the subject positions being put into question by the crisis itself. The desire is for struggles to reach the point that there is a swerve against the positions that the participants are desperately attempting to cling to. Those occupying buildings, refusing to leave their foreclosed homes, sabotaging their places of work, defying their predicates, disobeying the regime of whiteness, violently rejecting middle class complacency, must all inevitably come up against the brutal truth that each social role marks a real limits to their activity, and that the possibility of supersession of these limits is found within their activity itself.

In the same way, those who champion the collapse of the old subjects while proposing the formation of new ones must be confronted at all costs. To struggle for a new fluid identity must be seen as the bearing the limitation of all struggle for identity, as being merely the management of the decomposition of capital so as to restructure and preserve it. For us there can be no affirmative or positive subject, only an undoing of the material foundations of subjectivity.

3. iV

Some proposals:

- The widespread practice of identity theft (which effects not only the expropriation of resources from financial institutions but also the unraveling of those institutions' ability to accurately identify individuals by linking with any degree of certainty an individual and his official identity—name, SSN, account number);
- The rise of the Anonymous phenomenon that began

with petty 4chan hooliganism and went on to "troll society" (launching attacks from the cover of internet anonymity through practices of trolling, slander, leaking of huge quantities of confidential information including personal accounts data, massive online piracy networks for software, music, films, porn, books, etc,—not to mention IRL piracy in Somalia or anywhere—DDOS assaults on various institutions and organizations, especially agents in information control and management, attacks and creation of counter-repressive technology networks in solidarity with North African rebels experiencing severe government repression of internet communication);

- Total refusal of debt (giving the collectors the runaround);
- Flash mob expropriations and attacks;
- Pushing the inherent contradictions of identity politics towards their most extremist conclusions in order to undermine any logical basis that its circulation still retains (and outright attacking its priests);
- Wearing masks and destroying things;
- Squatting, looting, workplace theft and all forms of expropriation that make it possible for us to live in refusal of the apparatuses that produce us as workers or any other subject.

What these practices have in common is twofold: the sabotage of the systems of identification (by which we mean the technological networks by which an individual can be identified by financial, governmental, and social institutions as being his unique self—i.e. his social security number; as possessing certain attributes; and/or as belonging to a group, class, society, etc.), and some level of secrecy or anonymity on the part of the saboteurs. These latter practices (Anonymous, wearing literal or figurative

masks, mobbing, secret societies, and so on) demonstrate that individuals necessarily take on, or emerge as, new forms of negative-being while assaulting systems of identification. Negative-being bears no relation to the forms of liberal, reductionist, being-in-common-at-the-lowest-common-denominator type of group mentality that is promoted by slogans about sharing, consensus, direct-democracy, equality, nor to the hip performance-art-style production of new subjectivities, but rather enacts in-itself the negation of the subject (the refusal of obedience, of attribution, and of identification) and thus of the very foundation of liberal society.

If we can return to Micha for just a moment:

> This leads to my critique of sabotage as an important political strategy. Sabotage assumes a single world, assumes that the worker spends most of his days in the factory making machines or in the cubicle writing software, and therefore his best chance of resistance is in sabotage. Our strategy with SIS values subversion over sabotage, focusing on reuse of the garbage of capitalism for our own purposes of world building. In our heterotopic world and multi-faceted identities, it makes sense for us to bring home the cameras we use at work for photographing products and use them to produce queer anti-capitalist porn.

Micha is correct in her recognition that the old workers struggles are doomed. Where she is dead wrong is in her conclusions drawn from this. This society is re-constituted in every moment of every day. All the normative gestures carried out by society's members reproduce the social relationship of capital, and the not-so-normative gestures have their niche markets too. All of us—and especially the hip and radical among us—are positioned as workers in a social factory with no outside that is busily churning out new subjectivities and methods of tracking, identifying, categorizing, and managing them, and whose machinery is ripe for sabotage. Subversion can only offer us a surface

level restructuring, a re-arrangement of elements that has never been in any way related to the possibility of destroying capitalism. No, we need to recognize that sabotage remains our invariant task. We are speaking here of a sabotage of the technology and social networks that assign, monitor, classify, and designate subjectivity.

To return to the figure of pornography: The dead labor of thousands of boys not unlike myself, extracted from them in the form of the capture of their image and the spectacle of their sexuality is put into service. I am structured, formed, constituted by the unending reproduction of these specters. I, like an innumerable population of bodies, am captured by these images and animated by them. If it would have ever been possible to separate my own desire from the desires of the apparatuses that shape me, it isn't any longer. Through a miserable range of techniques of the self, I am re-created like Adam in the image of the God commodity, the dead labor taken from bodies for the cost of a wage. Through the successful application of these techniques, my self also becomes a marketable commodity. My sex, my hips, my tattoos, my particular skill set is alienated from me as an image, taken, multiplied, deployed through an almost endless network of apparatuses (tablets, computers, iPhones, network cables, servers, wifi, memories, bodies, fantasies) so that my dead labor may infinitely haunt bodies in the way all of ours are haunted.

There is no subversive practice that can undo this haunting of the living by the dead. For the ceaseless reproduction and exploitation of my image, and all images that are put into the service of the commodity relationship to be halted in even the slightest way would require the total sabotage and destruction of every apparatus that acts toward this reproduction. We cannot orient ourselves towards the subversion of the cyborg network that enchants us as commodities. We have to take it all down.

3. V

We will end with an anecdote. With the vast depletion of disposable income and the advancement of new technical forms, Borders has been the first major bookstore chain to need to close their doors. Walking through their stores before the massive closures, one found shelves entirely empty of books, genre signs hanging in disarray, security apparatuses unplugged and hoping to be bought. Even if one had wanted to purchase an item, it would have been utterly impossible since no employees could be found—they were all too busy smoking cigarettes and gossiping. In this moment of crisis, of restructuring, of re-creation we cannot be caught in the traps of glorifying either the dying forms, or the emergent new ones. We are not for the book as physical or electronic commodity. We don't care about Borders any more than we will care about whatever capitalist enterprise will replace it. Rather, we need to discover the truth hidden in plain site. One need only to look to the banners hanging above the doors of each closing Borders location to read, in bold-face text:

Final Days

Everything Must Go

Musings on Nothingness

And Some of Its Varieties

I should have liked to talk to you about encounters.
I have a notion that the moment that provoked—
or provokes—them is located outside time,
that the shock spatters the surrounding time and
space, but I may be wrong, for I want to talk about
the encounters that I provoke and that I
impose upon the lads in my book.
Perhaps some of these moments that are set down
on paper are like populous streets on whose
throng my gaze happens to fall: a sweetness, a
tenderness, situates them outside the moment;
I am charmed and—I can't tell why—
that mob of people is balm to my eyes.
I turn away, then I look again, but I no longer
find either sweetness or tenderness.
The street becomes dismal, like a morning of
insomnia; my lucidity returns, restoring within me
the poetry that the following poem had driven out:
some handsome adolescent face, that I had barely
caught a glimpse of, had lit up the crowd;
then it had disappeared.
The meaning of Heaven is no longer strange to me.

~ Jean Genet

We were shadows, shadows in what
you refer to as "everyday life":
countless invisible figures you walked past in the streets.
Faces that reminded you of something but you were
never sure of exactly what.

~ anonymous

Abandon yourself to peace, to the point of annihilation.

Humility

I should have written nothing* at all, but it is far too late for that. Sin and guilt† have entered the world‡—never mind where from, since in any case it would do no good to close that box—and I am no longer striding the crests of my dreams, filling my lungs with air and expelling it again, now instead I am manipulating the keys of a machine§ striving to thus let my dreams pour and play out across the space of an information-obsessed plane of existence.

* Nothing, nil, zero, naught. The Germanic root of 'thing' meant not an object but an appointed time. The origin of the word 'naughty' is parallel to, but more interesting than, that of 'nothing.' Its sinister meaning is related to its derivation from 'naught,' whose etymology (*nawiht*, nothing) reveals a further delight in the Old English *wiht* (thing, creature), of Germanic origin (still appearing, albeit very rarely, in the modern spelling 'wight.')

† 'Sin,' through the Germanic sense of transgression, is ultimately rooted in the sense of being true. Is this from the sense 'he is truly be the guilty person,' or because to be true necessitates transgression? Guilt is of unknown origin.

‡ The world, originally just the domain of 'human existence and affairs' or 'humankind' (its pre-Germanic root was literally 'age of man:' *wer-* [man, as in 'virile'] *-ald* [age, as in 'old']), has been extended gradually include most everything, as we well know.

§ Via a many-layered and intriguing etymology one may reach through Latin and Greek to that a machine is kind of a means for enabling one's ability to do something.

There exists no good reason* to occupy this space, especially when I have the heights and depths of life wholly available to me at any moment, and yet something compels me, God help me.† I have no hope that I will save anyone this way. Not even myself. I know I will not even reach to prevent the wretched‡ from abusing whatever I create. It is a fact that to take something from oneself and put it out into the world is to let it escape and become everything you didn't want it to be. They say this is so for God the Father as for every human father. I do not believe in either one, but their stories both hold a strange beauty for me.

One can create a monster§ or a babe; the difference is purely aesthetic. But it is this question of creation. Many simply put it aside, to their own loss. They still create things but they deny they are doing so. They are befallen by atrophy.¶ Others take on the question of creation by accepting the market assurance that whatever makes money must be good because, so the logic goes, people buy things that are good.** They become lost to the world of production. Others, in reaction to this, turn toward smaller and smaller circles to keep their creatures safe from the real world. But these spaces are either infected by the social disease or else suffocate for lack of oxygen.

There are some rare exceptions. No one can say where

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* If we go back far enough to the pre-Latin we find the origin of our word 'reason' rests in counting things.

† The origin of 'God,' via the Germanic, means to call upon or invoke.

‡ The 'wretch' was once the German hero or warrior *recke* (Cf. 'wreck'). It is thus a just account of the banishment and sorrow intrinsic to the hero.

§ Of Latin origin, 'monster's root (*monere*, to warn) reminds us that misshapen animals were once regarded as foreboding omens.

¶ From the Greek *atrophos* (malnourished) negative of *trephein* (to fatten) as in *trophy*.

** It is a fact that long before 'good' was ever used to refer to property, it meant something with the quality of goodness, and before that it was only an adjective. Before even it took on a moral color, its Germanic root referred simply to what fit or belonged together.

they come from. They destroy all that has come before. They blow into a dying ember. Without them there would be nothing at all.

Now, we have to say that the whole world without them would be an empty* dull† pale‡ and suffocating lifeless and deathless nothingness, and that they themselves are also a nothingness, but an ecstatic explosion of creative destructive nothingness. So it will be worth keeping in mind that there is a huge and unspeakable gap between the qualities of different sorts of nothingness. Otherwise everything will be overcome by an immense confusion.§

The first aspect which ensures that there is something interesting rather than nothing is the explosive energy of the sun. The second is the implosive energy of the earth. These provide for the habitation of a thin membrane where their intercourse takes place. Here there exists a tension between them. Much life forms by rebelling against being crushed into the bowels of the earth and the depths of the sea, whether this rebellion is volcanic, evaporative, or organic. Life must protect itself from being lost in the emptiness of space or scorched in the heat of the sun, and so it also flows, crumbles, burrows, glides, swims, falls and floats downward. This might be all, were it not for something else. Organization, organism, orgasm.¶

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* Empty once meant unmarried, at leisure. Literally to have not.

† Referring to lack of wit before taking on the sense of lacking (mental, then physical) sharpness, 'dull' is of a *dusty* pre-Germanic origin.

‡ Before it was used to distinguish between races, 'pale's root words refer to a lack of saturation, as in 'pallid,' and not to a lack of darkness. Its dullness of color could be grey, brown, white, or yellow.

§ From the Latin *confundere* (to pour together).

¶ All with the same root. But of them, orgasm has the purest relation to its pre-Latin root *-werg* (to do, related to *-wrog*, urge) which is the origin of 'work' (Germanic), 'energy' (Greek), 'urge' (Latin), and 'orgy.' The original urging takes on the meaning of swelling, becoming excited, in the Greek *organ*, to then become *orgasmos*, 'orgasm.' The others come by way of the Latin *organum* (organ or instrument, as in an organ of the body's functioning).

Flexibility

The incredible rise of yoga* as a recent phenomenon among certain populations in the United States can hardly be attributed solely to a need for stress-reduction practices in an environment that is becoming increasingly stressful, nor even to hollow people's frantic search for more authentic spiritual practices which must, as a precondition for their interest, be drawn from somewhere at least east of Constantinople. Rather, it must be seen as a physical practice which forms part of the total demand of the postmodern economy for people to become more flexible† in every way.

In other words, the demand of the economy is no longer that one simply conform or adapt, but even more that one takes upon oneself a dedication to the labor of becoming flexible, that one see it not as simply the necessary submission to a pressure exerted from outside but instead to act as if it would be ideal to no longer even be able to feel any externally-imposed force as such. To believe in oneself as the agent‡ of one's own life, but to see oneself thus also as the agent of the control§ of the same.

In this world, the static individual is the sorry loser, the irrelevant nobody because the tides shift so rapidly that it is no longer a matter of steadfastly weathering the storm nor of hurrying to keep up with the latest fashions and trends, but in actuality a spiritual, metaphysical discipline of becoming so flexible as to become the waves themselves and be washed peacefully in the sea of society.

Whenever the postmodernist speaks of becoming, not being, we must ask, "becoming what?" For, if

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* 'Yoga' and 'yoke' are yoked together by their common root *jugom* (to join or unite).

† Flexibile derives quite naturally from a Latin root meaning to bend.

‡ Latin *agentem* (effective, powerful).

§ 'Control,' exerting authority, derives from the Latin *contrarotulus* (a rotating counting device used to keep records).

postmodernity was birthed in the revolt of May '68, its maturation has been under the decades of punishment for such a transgression. And the answer will always be, in the end, becoming capital.

The challenge is not to make a staunch appeal to the past forms of life but to critique those that arise today, to refuse to presuppose their awesomeness simply from their newness.

In becoming there is always a gap between being-this and being-that. The affirmation of becoming as more fundamental than being (*a la* "nothing is static, that is mere myth; the essence cannot be frozen because everything is always mutable, so a thing is never itself and a being cannot identify since it will become other in the process; so becoming is primary and being is mere reduction to falsity..."), however, fills this space positively, or at least tries to incorporate an existential negativity* into the realm of the symbolic order, logical systems, and the functioning of the existent (which is no longer really the existent, but instead the scope of all becomings), negating its negativity by positing it as axiomatic† to the order of things (rather than as excluded as by the old logic-systems and ontologies), which are no longer understood as things nor necessarily ordered, but it would be absurd to expect this chiasmic flux to be anarchic when in fact it is founded upon the attempted incorporation of an ontological negativity into a system of ontological subjectivity.‡

Yes, all becomings are being thrown under the rule of biopower, if the postmodernists have their way.

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* Latin *negativus* (that which says no).

† The Latin *axioma*, the founding principle, is regarded as already established. This apparently derives from its material worth, or *axios*, which in turn came into meaning through the development of scales to measure weight. The first part of the pre-Latin root *ag-ty-o* (weighty) is *ag-* (to move), also the root of 'act,' 'action.'

‡ The subject is the one who is thrown under power, as evidenced by its Latin origin: *sub-* (under) *-iacere* (to throw).

But what does this mean? Things cannot get worse, can they? It means that the unfolding of postmodern rule is a complex and systematic ruse, not a simple sovereign rule nor a dialectical machine. It is a creeping and pervasive trick that gets people going to meditation* classes and buying indulgences in more-ethical consumer products. It has people going on walks† with headphones on and into virtual‡ reality to play and socialize with their real friends. It terrorizes the population with cyborg-futures in the movies and, while the debate rages§ on about the ethics of implanting machines in human bodies, human's bodies already spend most of their time implanted in machines. (We could be more precise and point out that there is no resistance to but only more demand for the improvement of the interfaces between human and machine, such that as these interfaces become more streamlined, seamless and user-friendly, humans are turning into machines and machines into humans because the point of their separation which is the interface is becoming more efficient, more transparent, more permeable, less of a true separation.) And so cyborgization¶ goes on unchallenged on its course because people have no chips implanted in their body

* Whatever its more refined flavors, 'meditation's origin lies in the measures necessary for proper statecraft. It shares the same root as the Greek *medon* (ruler) and Latin *modus* (measure) from which we receive 'mode,' as well as the Modern English term 'modern.'

† A peculiar word, 'walk' took on its shape from the Old English *wealcan*, (to toss or roll [something]). It thus shares a common root with 'vulva' and 'revolve.'

‡ 'Virtual' comes from the Latin *virtus* (excellence, literally manliness), then quite inexplicably comes to mean 'being something in fact though not in name,' which bears absolutely no relation to its common modern sense of computer simulation.

§ The Latin *rabies* (madness, fury), also the virus.

¶ 'Cybernetic' plus 'organism' becomes 'cyborg.' 'Cybernetics' was coined by the Wiener who founded it, based on a Greek word meaning 'good at steering,' this because cybernetics was developed to make machines better at steering, a skill once proper to humans.

and believe that they are safe. The fear of implantation merely functioned as a distraction, propagated through the Spectacle, from the workings of the Spectacle in reality, from what it is truly effecting by means of its distracting from itself through itself. The idea is for people to see the images on the screen but never to see the screen itself nor the logic of the images' movement and story. The answers are always right in front of you, but your perception of everything is always preventing you from truly perceiving anything at all.

I hear:

"Do you want to walk?"

"Eve, we're going to walk."

Right here there is a sign advising that the water is too polluted* to eat fish from, or even swim in. Right there is part of an infrastructural system that turns trees into commodities. At my feet is a plaque reminding park-going citizens that a major lumber company donated money to build the park.† Passersby talk about some gossip in a way that pretends real concern and other emotions. Why would someone say that they are appalled if they actually are? Either it's a ruse or they have lost any meaningful way of communicating. I suppose it goes hand-in-hand to accept such platitudes and to lose the idea of what real emotions feel like, or to use referents to emotions because showing them is impolite, and then losing them in the process. *How appalling.*

The gossips‡ whisper when they come near as if they were talking about a real and important secret...

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* 'Pollution' was originally the discharge of semen anywhere other than its proper place, an act considered defilement.

† 'Park': an enclosure. The probable root meant the fences themselves.

‡ The Old English *godsibb* (godparent) was extended to any relative, especially those asked to attend a birth, then to the kind of talk engaged in by relatives or familiars, and only recently to rumor. The related 'sibling' has remarkably egoistic roots, as the pre-Germanic sense of kinship from which it derives refers literally to *one's own.*

Earlier a grossly cheerful young woman was talking about her friend who is depressed. It goes without saying that being depressed is bad and he needs to get over it...

"Nancy?"

"Yeah, she's so emotional sometimes!" Disapproval.

"It's so pretty*... Look at the capitol over there. Wow... I wish I had my camera I could take a picture it's so pretty."

Flatly. Almost like she doesn't believe what she's saying any more. Like she might crack at any moment, lose the false appearances and unleash a flood of... well, something real, anyway. Like a dam that's fit to burst she's just plugging up holes and pretending. She looks at the sign that warns that the water is poisonous. She has a sick half-smile stuck to her face. Does she not see?

"This is a pretty little grass here... sea grass or something..." (referring to part of the landscaping)

"Ornamental grass?"

"Yeah..."

"The water over there is beautiful..." (the same woman who just read the sign) "...postcard or something."

You can't quite see the mountain because the huge barge-loading crane cuts it into thirds.

There are kids playing a game† of combat. The boy changes the rules on the fly. "No, you didn't kill me, I'm invincible to bullets." They learn quickly‡ from their parents how rules work.

"Counted my pillows and I had like 40..."

She laughs.

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* 'Pretty' gets its sense from *prett*, meaning a trick (Germanic).

† 'Game' (and its cousin 'gamble') derives from pre-Germanic *gamann*, literally people together.

‡ Germanic, lively, from a root for living from which 'bio-' also comes.

How rules work

Rule* is always arbitrary.† Its arbitrary nature exists beyond the question of what purpose any particular rule serves or what explanation can be given for it. Rule is its own explanation and justification,‡ founded only upon itself and the negation of its negation. The child asks "why?" and an answer may be given but this answer will meet the following "why?" until the authority figure has lost all capacity and patience, admitting that it is simply "because I said so," to which there is no recourse. Yet power has revealed its nakedness.

The exception to the rule proves the rule. The exception has nothing to do with the negation of rule. The negation of rule is not its suspension, but rather the recognition of its nakedness. The emperor who is wearing no clothes is less laughable than the subjects who pretend he is clothed. The absurdity of the ritual carries its own destruction by destroying all who are duped into it.

The particular rule may have a reason. The critic points instead to its function, which is force. The fact remains that it is arbitrary because rule itself relies only on reason itself and force as such. To be more clear, it is arbitrary because it does not care about its own reasoning, does not care for its own reasoning, and does not measure itself by its own reasoning. Reason is merely its outgrowth, *a certain manner of extending itself.*

Something is arbitrary if it is based on choice or whim and not on any reason or system. So rule is both arbitrary

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* Closely related to 'right,' 'rule' derives from the Latin *regula* (a straight stick or guide) from which we also get 'regulate.'

† Meaning deciding on one's own discretion and will, 'arbitrary' comes from the Latin *arbiter* whose name conveys the fact of his *coming and going* (as witness or judge)—in other words, a kind of displacement inherent in the legal process.

‡ A curious concept, 'justice' unsurprisingly derives from a Latin concept of (especially legal) right, *ius*. The Old Latin *ious* only found its way into the common tongue by influence of the religious cults.

and non-arbitrary. It is a system that is not based on a system, but is nevertheless systematic in itself; a reason that is not based on reason. What is the reason for reason? Always just *because I said so.*

Reason lacks playfulness with itself and with any deviations from it. It is thus both arbitrary and serious. The queer finds this funny and laughs at the rule, and the ruler, and the straight line.

There is no such thing as a straight line to be found anywhere except for one place, and that is the beautiful world of pretend known as mathematics. Once an enjoyable diversion, an amusing gamble between companions to see who could travel farthest away on a flight of fancy,* mathematics somehow became a serious† game that today imposes itself on every child as a discipline mandated by the state.

Some will object that straight lines do exist, in the things that humans make, and others will say that a sunbeam travels in a straight line, but neither assertion is true.‡ Man-made rulers and even computer-drawn lines are only crude approximations of the impeccably straight and true lines that exist only in our own minds. The sunbeam's path is curved by, among other things, the forces of gravity and the curvature of space.

All straightness is farce,§ more or less successful.

As mathematics has become more serious, it has manifested an overwhelming¶ and terrifying** desire to become

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* 'Fancy' is a recent (six centuries back) contraction of 'fantasy,' whose roots have to do with picturing to oneself.

† Ultimately a matter of having weight, 'serious' has a different heavy root than 'axiom,' one that did not come to bear material worth.

‡ Behind the pre-Germanic sense of good faith, 'truth' derives from a likeness to the steadfastness of a tree (*-dru*, tree, as in 'druid').

§ Originally to stuff, as with meat. Latin.

¶ Turning upside-down: in Middle English *whelmen* is to turn over.

** It seems that every variety of fear resonates with trembling: the ancient origin of 'terror' meant to shake.

more than a complex game playing* with numbers, a desire to produce information monsters to solve problems, and to try by all means to make the world as it understands it (a complex system of information, a large matrix of data points), and the world as it is, one and the same.

I don't understand this.

But in any case, something has always escaped† it. At first, nearly everything escaped it, all that mathematics could do was try to count the grains of sand on the shore‡ until one was forced to erupt in laughter at remembering one of the simple beauties of life. But then, zero§ was invented. This was a strange concept having to do with nothing, but what the invention of zero accomplished, completely by accident, was an incredibly fast way to express and perform calculations on numbers that were once impossibly large, too large to even conceive of. One still could not count all the grains of sand on the shore, but thought began to gradually lose its humor.¶

Humor

What can be said at all can be said clearly,
and what we cannot talk about
we must pass over in silence.
~ L. Wittgenstein

1

1.1 The total quantity of energy in the universe is constant.

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* Once revelry, frolicking, enjoying music, from Germanic *plegan*.

† To get out of the grasp of your pusuer, quite literally leaving them with only your cape. Latin.

‡ Shore from pre-Germanic *skur-* (cut) related to 'shear.'

§ From the Arabic *sifr*, cipher (empty, null), from Sanskrit *sunya-m* meaning empty place or desert.

¶ A long and amusing path takes us to get *wet*. Completely aside: Per H.W. Fowler, among the eight types of humor, humor (as a subset of itself) is the one interested in discovery in the realm of human nature.

1.11 Magic* is a form of energy.

1.12 If magic once existed in the world, then it follows that it must still exist.

1.13 Everything tells us that magic once existed but does not anymore. So it must either be that magic still exists, or else everything is a lie.

aside: Every irruption of magic belies everything.

1.14 Magic can be defined as all phenomena such as cannot be modeled through a system of mathematical functions such that the models have a reasonably strong capacity to predict the behavior of the original phenomena.

aside: One may raise the challenge: But how does one determine a reasonably strong capacity? There is no way to establish a rubric for the measurement of such a datum except through the establishment of a rubric for the measurement of reasonability itself. This latter rubric is, however, reasonably enough defined: the citizen is the one who is logical and thus can know what is reasonable. The one who shows herself to be mad† can reasonably be disqualified from citizenship.

1.15 As such, all turbulent‡ phenomena (atmospheric, aquatic, mineral, animal or cosmic) are magical.

remark: Likewise, all unobserved phenomena are magical.

1.2 Were it not for the practice of scientific§ inquiry, everything would be magic and nonsense.

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* 'Magic' sits aside the machine as a kind of power. They share the same root in their relation to the capacity to do.

† From the pre-Germanic *ga-maid-jan* (changed, abnormal), related to 'mutate.' The old English word of choice for madness was once 'wood,' an adjective of a different Germanic origin than the wood of trees. It comes from a root *wet-* to blow, inspire, or spiritually incite.

‡ From the Latin *turba* (turmoil, crowd) as in 'disturbed.'

§ Looking further back than the roots that deal with knowing, we find that 'science' derives from separation, cleaving, division, rending. In this it shares the same with 'consciousness' as it does with 'shit.'

1.21 Scientific inquiry thus has a way of making unpredictable phenomena become predictable.

aside: From the perspective of scientific inquiry, it was for a long time considered illogical and inconceivable that inquiry could possibly convert phenomena from an unpredictable flux into controlled behavior, as if the whole natural world was entirely made up of unruly schoolchildren who stood quite still and walked in perfectly straight lines when being overlooked by their stern* and serious master, but who would immediately start to play and fight and act chaotically† when no longer stared at. The fact that the proof of this is actually quite straightforward and apparent never occurred to the perspective of scientific inquiry until a few of its adherents had looked at such small things so closely and for such a long time that their eyes had begun to cross and their data came out all wrong. At this point they came to a very definite conclusion, which was that things were much more uncertain than they had thought, and that their observation caused some very uncertain clouds‡ of possibility to snap into place like schoolchildren or objects in the more recent versions of Adobe InDesign.

cont'd: Having been so heavily observed by scientists for centuries now, things in the world tend to behave in a substantially more predictable manner while under human observation. Like an animal that has learned to run away from all humans, not knowing which of them might be carrying weapons, or like the transparent worm-shaped§ spots¶ one sees drifting across the film of one's vision,

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* 'Stern' is a cousin to 'stare' and 'sterile,' all from a pre-Germanic root for stiffness.

† The Greek *khaos*: the gaping abyss is vast and empty, like a yawning mouth. The sense of disorder did not arise until the modern era.

‡ Originally a mass of rock (as in 'clod'), 'cloud' was extended almost a millennium ago to the things in the sky by similarity of appearance.

§ 'Worm,' from Germanic meaning worm, serpent, or dragon.

¶ A 'spot' was once specifically a moral stain before being taken up for other uses, such as the stains left by immoral activities. Germanic.

which escape one's trying to look at them directly,* all magic tends to flee from all civilized humans. This is, however, a condition that is far from irreparable.

1.22 The name for the way in which scientific inquiry converts the unpredictable into the predictable is seriousness.

1.23 Seriousness cannot destroy humor. Seriousness is nothing more than the lack† of awareness of humor, just as science is nothing but a manner of looking that overlooks magical phenomena.

remark 1: It will tell you, in all seriousness, that it doesn't see anything funny at all.

remark 2: Everything is funny, so the joke is everywhere to be seen, but seriousness just does not see it. It is not even quite clear why not.

> ***aside:*** Perhaps, with the laughter of the unseen constantly ringing in its ears and not knowing what to do, seriousness blushes to such a great extent that the blood rushing in its ears makes it so that seriousness can no longer hear it.

remark 3a: Seriousness is always trying to catch humor, but it will never get it.

remark 3b: Seriousness is especially funny.

remark 4: To laugh at oneself is the greatest form of humility. To take oneself seriously is the most terrible form of arrogance.

> ***aside:*** Nevertheless, he who laughs at himself is full of himself, and he who takes himself seriously is empty of himself.

1.24 Laughter always immediately destroys seriousness.

aside: The trick is that seriousness has a funny way of always coming back.

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* In 'direct' we have again a word that concerns itself with guiding or setting straight. (See 'right,' 'rectum,' 'regulate,' etc.)

† 'Lack's source was used to describe a just-trickling spring.

1.25 Much of laughter is silent, and much of humor is dry.

aside: For that matter, it must be admitted that seriousness is fully capable of laughing. It's just not all that convincing.

1.3 A prediction which is arrived at by means of the scientific method has a definable probability of being correct. This probability is between 0 and 1.

1.31 A prediction which is not arrived at by means of the scientific method has an undefinable probability of being correct.

aside: The alchemists who paved the way for science were attempting to accomplish feats that the later scientists would consider hopelessly impossible and magical. Yet in their slow, certain* way, scientists today still seek the same goals of transforming lead into gold and achieving immortality. This can be observed by the pursuit of controlled and practical nuclear fusion, which could turn lead into gold, and by the reappearance of the quest for eternal life among the stated goals of the transhumanist movement.

cont'd: In their strange, backwards, and unconscious way, however, outside of their field of vision, the scientists have already accomplished both of these feats. If they were able to recognize their accomplishments for what they are, they would certainly behave much in the manner of Doctor Frankenstein toward his creature.†

1.32 If the thing predicted happens,‡ the prediction is correct, and if not then it isn't. That's all there is to it.

remark: From this we can observe that prediction is a losing proposition.

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* In fact, certainty is, like science, based on separation.

† This prediction was not arrived at by means of the scientific method.

‡ 'To happen' once meant to occur by hap (by chance). 'Hap,' little used today, is of Germanic origin (chance, fate, luck).

aside: From the perspective of science, a cat in an irradiated container is both alive and dead until the scientist looks in the box. But the scientist is dead all along.

1010

2.1 The most pressing problem in mathematics is the question of whether or not there exists a mathematical process capable of solving every mathematical problem.

2.11 Said problem has not been solved.

2.12 The second most pressing problem in mathematics is the question of whether or not there exists a mathematician capable of getting the joke.

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3.1 Sexual intercourse is whatever takes place between a phallus* and an orifice.†

remark 1: Understood energetically, a phallus is whatever has an explosive (or repulsive) energy, and an orifice is whatever has an implosive (or attractive) energy. Understood materially, a phallus is whatever protrudes and the orifice is whatever consumes.

remark 2a: Thus the five primary human orifices are the mouth, the anus, the cunt, and the eyes. The six secondary human orifices are the ears, the nostrils, the naval (the orifice which begins to atrophy upon birth), and the urethra. The tertiary human orifices are the one thousand one hundred pores‡ of the skin.

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* Like orgasm, it is ultimately a matter of swelling, since the phallus introduced into Greek by the cult of Dionysus that worshipped it was always erect.

† Via the Latin *orificium*, speaking of the mouth.

‡ Greek *poros*, also a pore, literally a passage or way.

aside: One of the three hyperbolic sexual fantasies is that of having every orifice fucked* at once. The atrophied form of this fantasy is the double or triple penetration, while its sub-cosmic form is the simultaneous penetration of all of the one thousand one hundred and eleven orifices.

remark 2b: The six primary human phalluses are the head, the four limbs, and the cock or clitoris. The twenty-seven secondary human phalluses are the nose, the ears, the tongue, the chin, the nipples, the ten fingers and the ten toes. The tertiary human phalluses are all the three thousand three hundred hairs of the body.

aside: The second hyperbolic sexual fantasy is that of having every one of one's phalluses sucked at once. Atrophied forms of this fantasy appear in fetishes† such as toe-sucking, while its sub-cosmic form is the simultaneous felatio of all of the three thousand three hundred thirty-three phalluses.

remark 3a: The atrophied phallus is convex, and the atrophied orifice is concave. The strength of the phallus is thus conceived of in relation to the extent of its protrusion, and for the orifice its depth.

remark 3b: The pure phallus, however, protrudes infinitely, and the pure orifice is infinitely deep. These are thus neither concave nor convex, but hyperbolic.

aside: The human cock, which protrudes finitely and has its own orifice in the urethra as well as its many pores, is therefore not a pure phallus. The human cunt, whose depth is finite and which has its own phallus in the clitoris as well as its many hairs, is therefore not a pure orifice.

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* Parts of 'fuck's etymology read more like a detective story than scholarship, but point to the Germanic *ficken* (to fuck, earlier to move quickly back and forth, and earlier still to itch or scratch).

† From a Portuguese word for sorcery, further back in its Latin roots it refers to the act of creation.

aside: The sun is nearly a pure phallus, and the earth is nearly a pure orifice. Neither, however, is pure or hyperbolic.

aside: The supernova is closer still to a pure phallus, and the black hole to a pure orifice. Neither, however, is pure or hyperbolic.

aside: The Big Bang would have to have been a pure phallus, and the Big Crunch would have to be a pure orifice.

3.12 All intercourse takes place between a phallus and an orifice.

aside: Indeed, all intercourse takes place between the pure phallus and the pure orifice, since these are the beginning and end of the universe, respectively.

3.13 Therefore all intercourse is sexual intercourse.

3.14 All human intercourse is queer.*

remark 1: Queer refers to whatever is not heterosexual.

remark 2: The veracity of this proposition can be demonstrated by means of a simple proof: Heterosexual intercourse is whatever intercourse takes place between a pure phallus and a pure orifice. Since there exists no human being who is a pure phallus or pure orifice, every body having one thousand one hundred eleven orifices and three times as many phalluses, it thus follows that human intercourse cannot be heterosexual.

remark 3a: Not only is all human intercourse queer, but no form of human intercourse is more queer than any other.

remark 3b: Some forms of human intercourse are, however, straighter than other forms of intercourse. For example, the penetration of a cunt by a cock is straighter than the penetration of an ear by a tongue, which is in turn straighter than the penetration of an anus by a fist, which

* Of Germanic origin, queerness comes from being oblique or off-centered, an imperfection that can make a wheel or machine part wobble awkwardly (or interestingly). Further back in time we find this notion derives in turn from twisting and turning.

is in turn straighter than the penetration of a naval by a nose, and so on.

> ***aside:*** The preceding remarks may seem contradictory, but it is only because straightness can only be understood as a measurement, a question of how closely a particular fuck measures up to the grand old fuck between the pure phallus and the pure orifice. Queerness cannot be understood as a measurement, but only as the humor in the face of the fact that no measuring stick can ever be right, that the rightness of any measurement can only be measured by how far off the mark it is relative to another stick.

remark 4a: It is illogical to claim that a given person is heterosexual, since only a couple can be heterosexual.

remark 4b: But it is likewise illogical to claim that a given couple is heterosexual, when what is meant instead is that the couple is remarkably more successful than most couples at presenting itself as approaching the heterosexuality of the intercourse between the pure orifice and the pure phallus.

remark 4c: A given human couple presents itself as tending toward heterosexuality to the extent that its members are extremely polarized from each other in terms of the various gendered attributes which include physique, personality, dress, and mannerisms.

> ***aside:*** Here is the ideally feminine woman with the hypermasculine man. He is at least a head taller than she. He has put his arm around her, and it is the size of her thigh, it as if it is his cock that holds her around the waist, as if his member were the size of her thigh. They show themselves off as if to provoke in every passerby the staggering thought of such a large member penetrating such a small body, as if they were playing at being daddy and girl (which is still one of the most popular fantasies, though it may cloak itself as schoolteacher and student, father and babysitter, and so on) and she is made up so well that

on the one hand it is strikingly obvious how made up she is, but on the other hand this face is understood by anyone who is watching to be nothing but the perfect expression of her true nature, which is to say her superficiality, and this again has the effect of staggering the onlooker, who can hardly imagine how a girl so lacking in depth could take it from such a beast of a man. What a champ; it must be truly painful.

remark 4d: For the heterosexual fantasy draws its fascination almost purely from the obsession with the penetrative act being performed at the most extreme levels of stretching, as if the heterosexual imagination's ideal fantasy would be the image of some monstrous cock, possessed perhaps by a titan or by Zeus himself, penetrating inexorably into the tightest of holes.*

aside: Thus the third hyperbolic sexual fantasy concerns itself with the degree to which a tight orifice is stretched by a large phallus. It has as its atrophied form the fetish for a large cock or fist penetrating a tight hole. On the sub-cosmic level, its forms are birth and death. On the cosmic level, this and the other two hyperbolic sexual fantasies converge as the passage of the infinitely-large body of God through the infinitely-small hole of a moment in time.

remark 4e: In the heterosexual imagination, the polarized couple is understood to possess a strong (re)productive power, while the imperfectly gendered couple possesses a weak (re)productive power, perhaps to the point of sterility.

aside: A given human couple may present itself as tending toward homosexuality to the extent that its members are extremely similar to each other in appearance. To the extent that this similarity is performed in the manner that heterosexuals perform difference, it is a farce. But while to the heterosexual imagination the importance of intercourse is understood as (re)productive and

* 'Hole' has the root *kel-* meaning to hide, shared with 'cell,' 'conceal,' and 'hell.'

strengthened by polar difference, intercourse understood queerly is a narcissistic endeavor that proceeds in spite of the tremendous variations between different individuals.

remark 5: Understood queerly, all intercourse is queer, while intercourse in the heterosexual imagination is measured as more or less straight.*

aside: In the queer understanding of society, it can be seen that the strong (re)productive force that the polarized couple exerts does not pass from their loins to their offspring (as they themselves believe) but rather from their image onto everyone who perceives one pole of that couple as his or her ideal and strives to realize it him or herself. However futile, this effort (which is queer both in that it rests on the fact that people are not real men or women and in that people have to go through at least one sex change in the course of this effort) is itself a powerful (re)productive process.

aside: Thus does the queer understanding of society grasp that no one is a man or a woman except to the extent that they strive to realize the ideal man or woman and trample desperately upon the backs of whoever they find beneath them in an enormous game of king of the hill where the hill is a pile of human bodies.

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4.1 All logic is phallic logic.†

remark 1a: This can be demonstrated by the fact that all logic consists in propositional energy: the putting-forward of various‡ elements, definitions, claims and proofs.

remark 1b: This is further demonstrated by the fact that logic is universally repulsive in nature.

remark 2: The counter-argument might arise that the

* A truth can be discerned from the Germanic root of 'straight,' which has nothing to do with perfect lines and is all about tension. Indeed, 'stretch' and 'strain' both derive from the same point as straight.

† From *logos* (word, speaking).

‡ 'Variety' gets its sense from bodily variation; it is related to 'wart.'

existence of negational logical processes would negate the claim that all logic is propositional or positive. It is true that there is negational logic. However, this logic is only negates certain specific claims. Indeed, all negational logic can be seen to negate a certain claim only and ever for the purpose of justifying the opposite of said claim. Moreover, even negational logic must put forward a series of positive claims in order to reach the denial of the opposite claim. Hence, all logic is negative only ever deceitfully and in passing and is always positive and propositional in its true process and aim.

aside: There might be said to exist a kind of logic that is negational of all logical propositions without putting forward any propositions of its own. These qualities, however, would disqualify this hypothetical kind of logic from being logic at all.

4.11 Given that all logic is phallic, there is also an orificial counterpart to logic, namely madness.

aside: When speaking of orifices and orificial tendencies, it is technically incorrect to posit that they exist, since they do not and cannot. This is a difficulty not yet resolved, and the expression ought to be taken for what it is, while keeping this caveat in mind.

4.12 The intercourse between logic and madness is thus heterosexual intercourse between a pure phallus and a pure orifice.

4.13 The intercourse between logic and madness is governed by logic. Madness yet has a tendency to defy every form of this governance.

aside: When logic tightens its grip, madness tends to act like a liquid. When logic forms a bowl to hold it, madness evaporates. When logic encapsulates the gas, madness burns away. When logic uses this fire for itself, madness perishes. When madness perishes, logic perishes with it.

aside: This relation can be seen in the organism, whether single-celled or complex. To have substance, the

organism must incorporate and breaks down solids to build itself, but to not stiffen and freeze it must drink water and become water. But to not dissolve away it must envelop the water in a membrane. But to not be pierced and thus lose its insides it must be able to sense dangers and move around them. To move and sense it must have energy. To have energy it must absorb this from the sun. Since the sun is not always present it must store energy in a certain form and burn it later. This storage of energy makes it a potential target for other organisms seeking energy. And so on.

aside: For the most part, the game of survival and death is governed by the logic of survival, and would proceed with or without consciousness. However, consciousness is more than a mere coincidence, happenstance, gift from God, or defiance of God's will. It is also the greatest trick by which to guarantee a precise and brutal play of the game of survival.

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5.1 Creation is never purely phallic except when it is the creation of logic.

remark: Thus is the creation of logic rightly called mental masturbation.*

5.11 Unconditional love† takes three forms. The first is

* 'Masturbation' is to defile oneself (*stuprare*, related to 'stupor' and 'stupid') by hand (*manus*).

† The impoverished Modern English has one word where it once had several. Variations of *sibb* (see above) covered familial affection. 'Love' is of Germanic stock and carries the caring and desiring aspects of love, which were distinguished in Greek between *phileo* (as in 'pedophilia') and *erao* (as in 'erotic'), along with *agapao* (which became the out-of-use English 'agape,' for the Christian charity unaffected by passion; lost on the church was the irony that it comes from a root sense of desire shared by 'whore' and the first word of Kama Sutra) and *stergo* (the paternal love of the parent toward the child as well as the ruler toward the subject). Back in the Germanic lineage, 'friend' and 'free' both have their roots in an ancient idea of love.

the love of the creator for its creature. The second is the love of the creature for its creator. The third is the love of oneself. All other love, such as occurs between creatures, is conditional.

remark 1a: The creator's love for its creature is only natural, as it is a perverse form of egoism. One must only observe how the parent adores the baby and thinks it to be so perfectly lovely even though it is so obviously stunted and ugly, cries all the time even at night when one is sleeping, and feeds constantly. This is because in its adoration of its creature it is trying in a roundabout way to love itself.

> ***aside:*** Every creator is utterly incapable of directly loving itself. If this were not so then what in the world would conceivably motivate it to create?

remark 1b: The creator's love for its creature is also the greatest cruelty imaginable.

remark 2: The creator is able to love its creature unconditionally because it believes it to be its own. However, its creature is not its own, so all hell breaks loose.

remark 3: The other form of unconditional love, the creature's love of its creator, is the purest form of love, since it is directed at the one who got it into this whole mess.

aside: Christianity has got it all backwards. It teaches that the creature's denial of its creator is what brings hell into the world, that the creator makes a great sacrifice by forgiving this sin and through this sacrifice repairs the horrible suffering. In this story, the creature's love of the creator should be only natural, since the creator has sacrificed everything to forgive the creature. Yet the creator is unable to secure this supposedly natural act except by offering a pie-in-the-sky reward: sacrifice for me through your whole life, and I will redeem and reward you after your death, forever.

aside: It's a trap.*

* In some ancient religions, it was taboo to speak the word for horse.

5.12 Always there exists a tension between the force the creator exerts and the force the creature exerts. In this tension, is not possible to not be a traitor. The only question is which kind one will be.

remark: Many believe that betrayal is inherently bad and that it can be avoided. This is strange. Everyone and everything in the world demands a pledge of loyalty. What's more, most of these pledges were contracted in one's name before one was born. To never betray anyone or anything is to always betray oneself. Thus it is impossible not to betray anyone.

aside: Still, when there exists the chance to save the life of a friend, a chance that is likely to cost one's life, one must always choose the friend.

> ***aside:*** This is so for no other reason than because such an act is the very meaning of friendship.

5.13 The creator always allows its creature an unlimited play of choices, always within limits. This is the nature of the tension which is usually understood in terms of free will and determinism.

remark 1: The one limit that every creator makes is that its creature may not deny the creator. In the Torah, the heavenly form of this limit is the First Commandment, and its earthly form is the Fifth Commandment.

remark 2: Many creators set a limit by which sex must be understood as sacred, while the body must be understood as debased. Sexual intercourse is thus supposed to be understood as a special transcendence of the body, a divine intervention.

> ***aside:*** This idea is inseparable from the idea that the creature was born from the creator's sexual intercourse. To deny it is to deny the creator.
>
> ***aside:*** It is also the creator's perverse manner of asking the creature to always think of its creator while in the throes of intercourse.

5.14 Freedom, which is as different from choice as creating a monster is from creating a baby, is the creature's betrayal of the creator.

remark 1: It is important to note, however, that a true betrayal, a true act of freedom, can only be possible if the creator feels true unconditional love for the creature.

remark 2: Only rarely does a creator feel unconditional love for a creature. It usually can only love its creation, which is perfect, but sees its creature as flawed. This is again because of the creator's egoism. The creator can only love the part of its creature that is its own, and to the extent that its creature is not its own the creator cannot love it.

5.15 The form that the creature's betrayal of the creator takes is the denial of the creator.

5.16 The creator's betrayal of the creation is a self-betrayal. The creature's betrayal of the creator is a self-assertion.

remark: The question may be raised: Does the creator forgive the creation's betrayal? This is a way of asking whether the creator's love is love truly unconditional. But the question falls flat, because the point of the betrayal is this: There is no creator. There never was.

5.2 When the creature sacrifices for the creator and when the creator sacrifices for the creature, what is lost is life itself.

remark: The creator's self-sacrifice is great, the creature's self-sacrifice is small and pathetic.

5.21 Life is neither matter nor energy, therefore it can truly be lost. Its loss is death.

remark 1: Death is a kind of depth. Most death, however, lacks depth.

remark 2: Danger is the closeness of death.

remark 3: When one is close to life, death can never be far.

5.22 Redemption for such loss can only come through the greatest of sins. A betrayal.

remark 1a: A betrayal is not only a death, but a murder.

remark 1b: A death that is also a murder can be said to have depth.*

5.3 Time† the experience of the tension between means and ends.

remark 1: Science is nothing but the definitive severance of this tension. Thus can it observe cause and effect.

remark 2: In annihilating the tension between means and ends, one develops a tension between oneself and what exists.

remark 3: It is the case that the scientific perception of time being distorted by gravity can only be arrived at by means of a more fundamental distortion, which is time itself.

remark 4: What differentiates moments from each other is the substantial variance in the qualities, or intensities, of this tension.

aside: A tension may have an extensive quality, but an extensive quality never be really intense. Only intensities can be intense.

remark 5: An insensitivity is a lack of sensual intensity.

5.31 Sensual intensity finds itself close to cleanliness. In this sense does cleanliness find itself next to godliness.

remark 1: One can easily perceive the truth of this by observing that a human differs from a pure phallus or a pure orifice precisely to the extent that a human is dirty and the pure is pure.

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* From the Germanic *deupaz*, depth's sense of deep, hollow gave rise to the additional senses of mysterious and solemn.

† 'Time,' like science, consciousness, and shit, derives its sense from cutting, dividing, but through Germanic lines. It was originally used as a specific time, and only later abstractly for continuous duration.

aside: Dirtiness consists of layers of dead skin and bodily secretions thinly coating the surface of the body, wax building in the ears and dust getting in the eyes, but it goes all the way to the point of being a being with a body, with a collection of orifices and protrusions which distance one from being the pure phallus or pure orifice.

aside: Every form of cleansing is an attempt to heighten a sense, to clarify a way of perceiving the world. Thus does one wash out all of one's orifices in order to heighten the senses: one rinses the wax from the ears to heighten the sense of hearing, scrubs the pores to sensitize feeling, dusts out the naval to heighten the atrophied sense of direct connection to another being, flushes the anus to intensify the perception of death, and washes all of the crevices of the body to stroke the sense of the unknown. But one does not cleanse a phallus, which in any case does not collect so much dirt except within its crevices.

remark 2: The pure phallus and the pure orifice are perfectly clean because they have no crevice in which to collect dirt. This is because of their hyperbolic shape (the infinite protrusion of the pure phallus and infinite depth of the pure orifice).

aside: The eyes are washed every few seconds as one blinks. Thus sight is considered the sense closest to God. The cunt is washed every month as one bleeds. Thus pleasure is considered the sense furthest from God.

remark 3: Orgasm is a hyperbolic sensual intensity. This can be observed from the fact that orgasm is greater than the sum of all the sensations that give rise to it. In this sense, orgasm is along with the pure phallus and pure orifice both pure and hyperbolic. Orgasm is neither pure phallus nor pure orifice, but rather an experience of their intercourse. It is thus akin to the thin membrane where the intercourse of the sun's repulsion and the earth's attraction are in balance and where one can find enjoyment.

remark 4: The gap between cleanliness and godliness can be sensed by observing how cleanliness may heighten sense but may not deepen it.

5.32 One can understand enmity as taking two forms. The first is enmity without kinship. The second is the form that enmity takes place when two brothers find themselves on opposing sides of a war.*

remark: These two forms of enmity could not be more at odds with one other.

5.33 At any given moment, there is only one thing to do that can truly be considered great.

remark 1a: All but one its aspects are highly mutable. What is immutable is its presence.

remark 1b: Often it is also the most difficult thing to figure out.

remark 2: The easiest way to figure out what it is is to think of the last thing you would think of.

aside: The process that gives rise to it is thus completely foreign to the process of logical inquiry.

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6.1 The difficulty that exists within the sphere of computer technology as concerns issues of efficiency, random† data, complex algorithms, and of course the imminently important field of cryptography,‡ all comes down to the inefficiency of using a model based on pure orifices and pure phalluses to map and calculate the behavior of impure orifices and impure phalluses.

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* The Germanic relatives of 'war' suggest its original sense was bringing into confusion.

† 'Random' is from the Frankish root *rant* (running).

‡ From the Greek *kryptos*, hidden, and *-graphy*, which ultimately derives from carving or scratching in stone.

remark: I refer, of course, to the binary system of computation.

remark: If a researcher wants to understand randomness they need look no farther than /b/.

6.11 One of the most pressing tasks that society has set itself is to develop computing machines capable of manipulating non-binary and random data at rates of efficiency substantially surpassing existing technology, for cryptographic purposes.

6.12 What scientists have yet to understand is that there has never been a scientific breakthrough achieved on the basis of the scientific method.

remark: Indeed, every scientific breakthrough has been a break *through* the scientific method.

6.2 Any statement that is true is also a truism.

remark: All discourse consists of nothing but an endless series of affirmations no more insightful than remarking that water is wet, phrased in more or less interesting and more or less roundabout ways. The rest are lies.*

aside: Lies are there to make things interesting.

6.21 By its very nature, a logical system can never consist of more than the sum of its parts and can never attain insight, properly speaking.

remark 1: Or, more accurately, it can only attain insight if there occurs the intrusion of a foreign agent, a eureka!

remark 2: In other words, the outcome of a logical process is entirely predictable.

* Earlier forms of 'lie' referred to speaking untruths but also to deceit and betrayal in general.

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You have to do away
with the mind, as with literature.
I say the mind and life communicate at all levels.

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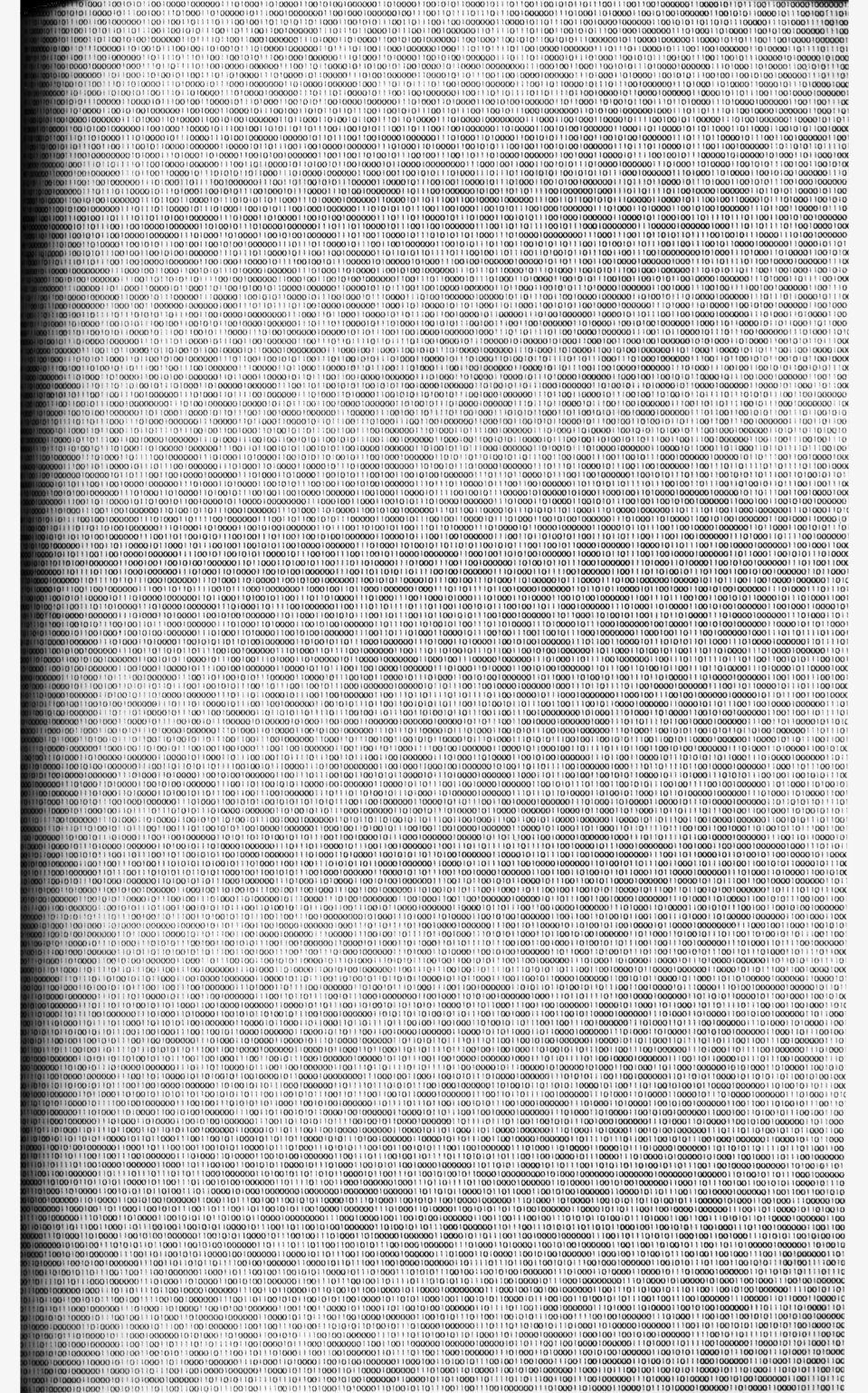

Three Texts from *Tout*

AND

AN APPENDIX

Guy Hocquenghem

Translator's note

What follows are translations of three interconnected texts from the April 1971 issue of the journal Tout*: an introductory editorial, and the two calls that made public the existence of the FHAR (Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire* [Revolutionary Homosexual Action Front]*) and its relation to the MLF (Mouvement de libération des femmes* [Women's Liberation Movement]*). The issue that included these pieces was seized by the French authorities on grounds of obscenity.* Tout *was an ultraleft "spontaneist" publication that appeared between 1970 and 1971. The title means "Everything" and the subtitle was* "Ce que nous voulons: TOUT!": "What we want: EVERYTHING!"

These pieces were unsigned in Tout*; Hocquenghem effectively claimed them when he included them in his collection* L'après-mai des faunes: volutions. *In that book, published in 1974, he prefaced them with a note that we have included as a critical appendix.*

Our Bodies Belong to Us

This was supposed to be an "apolitical issue," an on-the-ground issue about everyday life. It was intended to testify to everything that Big Politics, even leftist, refuses or represses. And what has surged up, what this issue is witness to, is what are called (in a scornful, ashamed, or medical way) sexual questions. But aren't these questions, those posed by our bodies every day, at the center of life?

The revolutionaries who refuse to acknowledge this fact, to see its implications and their relevance, have the same attitude as those who, at the time of the Dreyfus affair, claimed to represent the working class and the revolution and affirmed that "it is an affair of the bourgeois and does not interest the proletariat."

So, the fags, and the dykes, women, prisoners, those who got abortions, the asocial, the mad...

No one has spoken for them; they have spoken for themselves... and, on the basis of their desire and their oppression, they demand to be able to do what they want with their bodies.

It was the Movement of women for their liberation that first brought to consciousness this demand to freely express one's desires, to exist just as one is; its appearance caused a rupture in our attitude, our understanding, and our capacities for making revolution. They showed how their oppression extends into all aspects of life, and from there, all the possibilities of subversion. A campaign such as that around abortion attacks the bourgeoisie's entire conception of life, while at the same time being a concrete battle against laws and power. This campaign also shows us the limits of Leftists: they accepted the battle against laws, but for them it is ultimately a way of reestablishing harmony in couples or the family (seriously shaken these days), and to dissimulate this demand that is already emerging in such a massive way:

FREE DISPOSITION OF OUR BODIES.

Since our childhood, we have been made ashamed of our bodies. First of all, we are prevented from jerking off on ridiculous medical pretexts; we are prevented from putting our elbows on the table, we are prevented from ever being naked. We are made ashamed of our bodies, because they translate our desires, even when we do not dare to speak them. We are told: submit in your flesh—wear ties, slips and bras, do the military salute, keep off the grass, do not sit down in your boss's office, remain seated in class...

For Those Who Think They Are "Normal"

You do not feel that you are oppressors. You fuck like everyone else; it is not your fault that there are sick people or criminals. You can't do anything about it, and you are so tolerant. Your society—if you fuck like everyone else, it's obviously yours—has treated us like a social scourge for the State, an object of spite for real men and a subject of fright for housewives. The very words that are used to designate us are your worst insults.

Have you ever thought about what we feel when, one after the other, you say words like: "queer, fag, bitch, scum"? When you say to a girl: "dirty dyke"?

You protect your daughters and sons from our presence, keeping them from us as if we had the plague.

You are responsible, each of you, for the ignoble mutilation that you have made us suffer in disapproving of our desire.

You who want revolution, you have wanted to impose your repression on us. You fight for the Blacks and you yell at the cops that they like it in the ass, as if there were no worse insult.

You, worshippers of the proletariat, have maintained, with all your efforts, the virile image of the worker; you have said that the revolution will be the deed of a gruff, male proletariat, a big burly man with a deep voice and imposing shoulders.

Do you know what it is like, for a young worker, to be a closeted homosexual? Do those of you who believe in the formative virtues of the factory know what somebody feels when his fellow workers treat him like a "fag"?

We know. We know because we know ourselves, because we know each other, because only we can know it. We are, along with women, the moral mat on which you wipe your conscience.

We say here that we have had enough. You will no longer bash us, because we will defend ourselves; we will chase down your racism against us even in language.

We will say more: we will not be content to defend ourselves; we are going to attack.

We are not against the "normals," but against "normal" society. You ask: "What can we do for you?" You can do nothing for us as long as each one of you remains a representative of normal society, as long as you refuse to see all of the secret desires that you have repressed.

You can do nothing for us as long as you do nothing for yourselves.

For Those Who Are Like Us

You dare not say it; maybe you do not even dare to say it *to yourself.*

We were like you a few months ago.

Our Front will be what you and we make of it. We want to destroy the family and this society because they have always oppressed us. For us, homosexuality is not a means of bringing down this society; it is our situation first, and society forces us to fight it.

We make no distinctions among ourselves. We know that homosexual men and women live different oppressions. Men betray male society; homosexual women are also oppressed as women.

Homosexual men, as men, benefit from advantages that women do not have. But women's homosexuality is perhaps less scandalous to men, who have used it as a spectacle.

We must set out the contradictions that exist between us.

We want to know how our alliance with the MLF can happen without submission to heterosexual ideology.

We need you to know how.

Repression exists at all levels. From childhood one undergoes the brainwashing of hetero propaganda. Its goal is to uproot our sexuality and to reintegrate us into the *natural* fold of the holy family, the cradle of cannon fodder and of capitalist or stalino-socialist surplus value.

We continue to live with this repression every day, risking surveillance, prison, banishment, insults, bashings, mocking smiles, and commiserating looks. We insist on our status as a social scourge all the way to the complete destruction of all imperialism.

Down with the money-society of hetero-cops!

Down with sexuality reduced to the reproductive family!

With active/passive roles!

Stop hiding!

For self-defense groups that will oppose the sexual racism of hetero-cops with force.

For a homosexual front that will have as its task to attack and destroy "fascist sexual normalcy."

Appendix

from *L'apres-mai des faunes*

The twelfth issue of *Tout*. Finally, the twelve strokes ring out on the clock of sexual liberation. The desiring body stands up and marches, stunning the militants and those who put sex into the struggle without really knowing where they were headed. This issue 12, which officially declared the existence of the *Front homosexual d'action révolutionnaire* and supported the MLF, sold the most issues of that journal, or of any of the leftist organs of the time. Not long after, it was seized by the authorities for reasons of obscenity.

A break with the silly, smutty story of Reich-style sexual liberation. But also a break with the dominant sexual conformism among youth, who saw missionary position hetero coitus as the natural and most elevated form of the revolution in mores.

However, what the new slogans revealed is still an ego-body, not so much liberated as devoted to liberalism. "Our bodies belong to us," "liberation of our bodies," affirms the editorial. Liberalism, since it was supposed that each and every one could return to a basic freedom to use their body as they wanted; humanism of a sexual *habeas corpus* that set aside the truly rich part of social sexualization. It is at best a declaration of the rights of bodies—an '89 of sex.*

Soon enough, the dross of this ideology became apparent. After the affirmation of a personal sexual responsibility, new statutes congealed in the gloomy affirmation of clearly delimited and autonomous categories: queers and women. The unclassified irruptions were ignored,

* "'89" refers to 1789, date of the approval of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen by the French National Constituent Assembly.

lacking any rights in "liberation movements" that used liberal psychology. There were hardly any *travestis** in the FHAR, even less in the MLF.

Above all, hanging on to the thesis that "our bodies belong to us," we let a rupture heavy with consequences for the discourse on sex slide away—a rupture already present in Sade/Fourier (the *Nouveau Monde Amoreux)*: the fact of the non-anthropomorphic nature of sexuality. Demanding the ascription of sex to the free and conscious person perpetuated an old deception. Our bodies, belonging to us—what sadness! Each body "belongs to all those that want to enjoy it" would have been a more satisfactory formulation.

Dangers of a sexual ideology that has barely emerged from personalist limbos: the FHAR ignored the pederast boy-lovers, interlopers because they live their passions beyond the loaded question of children's "consent." Wrapped up in the new sexual liberation, the high schoolers, the newly found troops of the newly inaugurated Front, boasted of their false free choice, which moved them to live their "spontaneous tastes" with each other. The refusal to recognize heterodox desire, that of the adult towards the child, to take up a fundamentally transversal example, can always be explained by this supposed "freedom of choice."† The hell of categorical enclosures is paved with good liberatory intentions.

Fortunately, despite some "sexologists" wearing priestly expressions, no one in France will demand reintegration into dominant morality.

{Translation by Critila}

* Transvestites, probably transfolk in other senses. –tn.

† On this question see *Émile perverti*, R. Schérer (R. Laffont, 1974).

Jouissance is the driving *élan* of queer sex culture, and yet it is precisely that element of queer sex which still cannot be locked up in an industry, sold as a commodity or scheduled at some mass commercialized ritual.

While each element of the sex industry attempts to resolve some fundamental lack and to integrate one's desires into a coherent subjective experience, *jouissance* is specifically that element of sexual desire which makes such a union impossible.

Jouissance is the unnameable desire that one hopelessly attempts to summarize before giving one's body to another: "I want to be negated."