

bædan

a queer journal of heresy

Types in Bodoni and Futura.

Artworks by Harry Clarke

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*The need to go astray,
to be destroyed,
is an extremely private, distant,
passionate, turbulent truth.*

~ G. Bataille



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*The ancient tradition that the world will be
consumed in fire at the end of six thousand
years is true,
as I have heard from Hell.*

*For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby
commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life,
and when he does, the whole creation will be
consumed and appear infinite and holy
whereas it now appears finite and corrupt.*

*This will come to pass by an improvement
of sensual enjoyment.*

*But first the notion that man has a body distinct
from his soul is to be expunged; this I shall do,
by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives,
which in Hell are salutary and medicinal,
melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying
the infinite which was hid.*

~ W. Blake

Editorial Statement

THIS IS THE SECOND ISSUE OF *BÆDAN*. We have observed that anarchist publications tend to go down one of three ways: they live only in the realm of fantasy, or they burst upon the scene and depart as they came, or they drag on long after they should have been gone. This fact charges the second encounter—which wavers, so to speak, between extinguishment and survival—with questions overruled before and after by newness and familiarity, respectively.

Bædan: a journal of queer nihilism was produced in such an energetic state, drawing upon the notes of several years that filled far more pages of our private journals than the finished journal contained, driven by the momentum of everything inspiring and infuriating about our encounters in the radical queer milieu in those years. It is no secret that the journal emerged out of the death of *Bash Back!*, which for a few years acted as a catalyst for the conversations that continue in these pages and other pages, on our lips and those of others.

If we could point to a single theme that brought us to this project, it was a hostility toward identity. (Or perhaps it was just plain hostility—toward activism, politics, academia, toward society at large.) For us identification referred to the same idea as that slogan about killing cops in your head: a mechanism of control, internalized and disguised, and ready to turn our attempts at fighting its power into a reproduction

of that power, reembedded and remasked as our own. We did not feel that we had the answer to this dilemma, nor did we feel we had somehow transcended to a post- (or non-) identitarian plane. Indeed, it was distressing—at least initially—to find ourselves read, in the light of activism (or a lingering religiosity) as proposing some sort of simple redress to the problems we dwelt on. What motivated us to write, to speak (these odd disciplines), was that we did not share the positivity of the queer milieu toward its (our) resistance, reimagination, and recreation of identity. Beneath the façade of transgressive, empowering, (and, yes, sexy) genderfucking, we felt pulled by an ominous undercurrent. First an inkling, then a doubt, it soon became a near-certainty that we were doing nothing but proliferating and refining the mechanisms of our entrapment in gender.

There are a variety of ways to move forward while bearing this sort of pessimism. There is, of course, the option to ignore it, though we have never been able to really experience this as an option. There is also the active decision to do *something about it*, to form some sort of program or protocol for the fight against identification (this is the activist mode mentioned above). This sort of decision can be infectious when it is practiced effectively, and we are not immune to its allure, but ultimately our reading of history, our dark premonitions of the future, or just that same nagging voice of doubt returns us to the prior state of skepticism. We are not quite sure why we are inclined to give ords to all this, when silence seems an equally, if not more, appropriate stance. It is not any high

hopes, as we have long accepted that our role-against-roles is a Cassandra one: she who proclaims doom even while fated never to be heard or understood. (This is how Queer Negation described her (rather more dismal) project of queer disillusion: “the synthesis of Troy’s Cassandra and the Sybil of Cumae—desperately predicting the end while desiring nothing so much as death.”[†]) Most likely we are driven by nothing but the pleasure we take in the text and the urgency to communicate about matters often unable to pass our lips. This desire, and this attitude toward identity, take shape in these pages most notably in “Against the Gendered Nightmare,” but may also be traced through various figures that inhabit the other pieces.

There have been some answers to the questions and claims posed in the first *bædan*. Two friends published reviews of the first issue in their periodicals: *My Own* issue 6 and *The Peak* volume 53, issue 2. We also received personal responses from Critila and J.F., which we publish here (in the “Correspondence” section) along with our engagements with their lines of inquiry.

We include two serial explorations: “Faces of the Nihilist” and “Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology.” The former is a sketch of eight

[†] – (*wallow*), ed. Queer Negation, 2010. The Sybil of Cumae, who wrote her prophecies on oak leaves and let them vanish forever when the wind swept them away, was granted to live as many years as there were grains in a handful of sand, but over the centuries her body withered to the point that she had to live in a jar.

archetypes, the latter a study of four rituals. We have broken down each one and evenly interspersed them with the longer texts (“Nightmare,” “Anti-Chamber,” the piece on Shelley). Both series are incomplete in their current form, and our intention is to extend them. Our hope is that future iterations will be written not only by ourselves but also by our friends and strangers who have enjoyed reading the journal. Contributions to either series are welcome to be sent to us by electronic mail or through more intimate channels.

In this issue we return to a problem explored in the first: the problem of the body and language. Specifically, we described the relationship wherein the body is reorganized and ordered by reason, but also the incomprehensibility of the real body in the linguistic world of symbols and names. We followed Guy Hocquenghem in his saying that “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.” And yet in the midst of this seeming impossibility, we are making an attempt. We do so, because in order to really explore our domestication as gendered subjects, we have to confront the lived realities (corporeal and also spiritual) and terrains of these operations. We could say that we do not have the language to describe our own dissection and mutilation. The English language is comprised of an inheritance of countless generations of domination, constraint and

identification which makes it insufficient in much more than circling around the real and the unknown of the body. Especially regarding gender, language confronts us as another prison. We aren't satisfied with the word-play of idealism, nor the categories and statistics of materialism. Because theory offers so little, we need new forms of exploration.

If we can identify language as a barrier to our project against gender, we should also acknowledge the written word as particularly limiting. Whereas the written word has become almost entirely self-referential and divorced from our experiences and the world, there remains an aspect of speech which is still a gesture of the body. So just as we explore non-linguistic attacks on the gendered order, we're experimenting with ways of speaking which aren't separated from our spiritual and corporeal being. Storytelling is one such way. The stories which have the power to strengthen are those which provoke the body and weave the visceral threads between us and the cosmos. These stories tend to be powerful when they fragment the lines of time and space, of the universal and the singular; when we can recognize our own struggles in those of others. The most powerful stories are those which enchant us as if we are living them in the present, invoking our presence in their unfolding. In this experiment, we draw on several stories that offer clues to our engendered existence; myths, narratives and heresies which correspond to our own.

In the pages of this issue we criticize many other modes of inquiry, various sciences which would

attempt to capture the body and rationalize gender. We don't do this to deny the narratives within them, but to sabotage their form. If we read these theories as stories, a few among many, we might actually find something interesting within them. It's precisely when they announce themselves as universal, rational, empirical truths that we grow bored. These scientific theories are stoires which claim to abolish storytelling, myths against the mythic. And so our engagement with them cannot be limited to ascertaining their correctness. Instead, we are primarily concerned with their relevance to our lived experience, and their usefulness in our conflict with the world. If we can unthroned these stories and situate them among all the ones they'd try to erase, we could perhaps retell them and find secret knowledges which might otherwise remain lost.

If our project has largely been conceived as an attack on the Academy, it is just as much an attempt at a queer and nihilistic cosmology. What follows is a constellation of fragmentary stories against the world of gender and domestication. If these words read as another theory of certainty, this simply illustrates the contradiction of writing at all. We have to pretension that our story is *the* story. We make no claims to its wholeness or empirical truth. Dispensing with these certainties frees up our capacity for imagination, but also for revolt. Our hope is that they'll help to describe the conflicts of the present in the first person. We've collected and arranged these fragments because we feel them in our day-to-day struggles; because they animate our most beautiful and

terrifying memories; because we hear them in our most lucid hypnagogia. We tell them because they are our own. If they evoke something in you, they are yours as well.



Fragments of an Anarchists Anthropology

IN THIS TIME AS IN ALL OTHERS, there are those who are hopelessly on the side of chaos, unpredictability, chance. Who want nothing but to delight in the nothing and seek amusement in the unfolding of the cosmos.

But in this they are hindered and led astray by so many emissaries and preachers from a world where everything has to be—and is—just so. A world that insists on hard work served with a smile, a world of reward and punishment, of just choices and of wrong ones. A world whose evils demand redress, in which the door is always open to do something about anything, and in which everyone must find his or her place. A world which, so they say, is this one.

On their worst days, the anarchists believe the preachers must be right, so numerous are their flocks. No doubt it would be easier if it ended here, but as nothing is ever over they find themselves beginning, as if compelled, to question again the world of order.

Finding each other inexplicably resistant and entangled in a web spun ever deeper and more intricate, they play out their rituals. Anarchist bands are secretive to the extreme, and by all accounts they

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do not admit the existence of these rituals even to themselves. Nevertheless, one may observe certain rites crucial to the coherency, morale and mythology of anarchist bands.

The Ritual

Ritual, to the anarchists, exceeds the mere repetition of form. Repetition is one of ritual's aspects, and has several facets of its own. For one, there is the matter of survival. The issue of survival can be highly obscured, but is never absent, and the rituals are developed not only to ensure the survival of their practitioners, but also for their own endurance. When they are repeated, they are passed on, and when they are repeated, they recall the past. Thus another facet of the repetition is to stimulate the memory, so that one sees one's gestures in their place within a long chain.

The chain binds the practitioner—to the gesture, the past, the future—only in order to unbind. There is a point in the motions where one has to recognize them as metaphor, as parody, neither incidental nor an end in themselves. They say that the forms dissolve at the edges, where one is not looking directly, and ripple in and out of themselves. Gestures which corrode themselves because they must corrode the practitioner's habitual manner of perception.

For the anarchist, a ritual is not an exercise in adherence. It is an initiation, certainly. But rather than being a way into the group, it is just the opposite—a way out.



AGAINST THE GENDERED NIGHTMARE

fragments on domestication

IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, the question of gender has been taken up again and again by the anarchist milieu. And still few attempts amount to much more than a rehashing of old ideas. Most positions on gender remain within the constraints of one or more of the ideologies that have failed us already, mainly Marxist feminism, a watered down eco-feminism, or some sort of liberal “queer anarchism.” Present in all of these are the same problems we’ve howled against already: identity politics, representation, gender essentialism, reformism, and reproductive futurism. While we have no interest in offering another ideology in this discourse, we imagine that an escape route could be charted by asking the question that few will ask; by setting a course straight to the secret center of gendered life which all the ideological answers take for granted. We are speaking, of course, about Civilization itself. Such a path of inquiry is not one easily travelled. At every step of the way, stories are obscured and falsified by credentialed deceivers and revolutionary careerists. Those ideas presented as Science are separated from Myth only in that their authors claim to abolish mythology. Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, History, Economics—each faces us as

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another edifice built to hide a vital secret. At every step, we find more questions than answers. And yet this shadowy journey feels all the more necessary at the present moment. At the same time as technological Civilization is undergoing a renewed assault on the very experience of living beings, the horrors of gendered life continue to be inextricable from that assault. Rape, imprisonment, bashings, separations, dysmorphia, displacement, the labors of sexuality, and all the anxieties of techniques of the self—these daily miseries and plagues are only outpaced by the false solutions which strive to foreclose any possibility of escape; queer economies, cybernetic communities, legal reforms, prescription drugs, abstraction, academia, the utopias of activist soothsayers, and the diffusion of countless subcultures and niche identities—so many apparatuses of capture.

The first issue of *bædan* features a rather involved exegesis of Lee Edelman's book *No Future*. In it, we attempted to read Edelman against himself; to elaborate his critique of progress and futurity outside of its academic trappings and beyond the limitations of its form. To do so, we explored the traditions of queer revolt to which Edelman's theory is indebted, particularly the thought of Guy Hocquenghem. Exploring Hocquenghem still proves particularly exciting, because his writing represents some of the

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earliest queer theory which explicitly rejects Civilization—as well as the families, economies, metaphysics, sexualities and genders which compose it—while also imagining a queer desire which is Civilization’s undoing. That exploration lead us to explore the bodily and spiritual underpinnings of Civilization: domestication, or “the process of the victory of our fathers over our lives; the way in which the social order laid down by the dead continues to haunt the living... the residue of accumulated memories, culture and relationships which have been transmitted to us through the linear progression of time and the fantasy of the Child... this investment of the horrors of the past into our present lives which ensures the perpetuation of civilization.”[†] Our present inquiry begins here.

To explore the conflict of the wildness of queer desire against domestication is to take aim at an enemy who confronts us from the beginning of Time itself. While our efforts in the first issue of this journal were a refusal of the teleology which situated an end to gender at the conclusion of a linear progression of time, we’ll now address the questions of origins which hint toward an outside at the other end of this line. As we’ve denied ourselves the future, we now turn against the past. In this, we abandon

[†] “Queers Gone Wild,” *bædan* vol. one, 2012.

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any pretensions of certainty or claims to truth. Instead we have only the experiences of those who revolt against the gendered existent, as well as the stories of those whose revolt we've inherited. In the spirit of this revolt, we offer these fragments against gender and domestication.

I

Domestication, the integration of living beings into the civilized order, must also be the integration of life into the dualism and separation which we experience as gender. The concept is thrown about in a variety of contexts and under various names, and yet very few have attempted to thoroughly define it. It is used colloquially to discuss the vast gulf which exists between wild creatures and those tamed and clawless ones whose existence has been reduced to economic necessities. It is linguistically tied to the realm of the Domestic, and by extension to the Economic through the management of the home, *oikonomia*. It is the violence implied in the concept of *primitive accumulation*, the first (but also the originary) tearing of a being away from its self and its subsequent imprisonment in class society. It is further implied in all the theories of *subjectification*, the construction of all the identities and roles which populate the social order. Being so central to the world we inhabit and

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the subjects we have become, the concept warrants a more precise and consistent definition.

In our previous engagement with domestication, we primarily looked at the writings of Jacques Camatte. He comes to his theory of domestication through an exploration of the ways that Capital empties, transforms and colonizes human beings; in his words, Capital's anthropomorphism. Capital dissects and analyzes the human being, ruptures the mind from the body, and reconstructs the human as a willful subject of the social order. The consequence of this rupturing and suturing of life is the recuperation of the vast range of humanist means of resistance; communities become communities of capital, and individuals become little more than consumers. Separation evolves into an image of wholeness which replaces the unity it abolished. Domestication, which limits the possibilities of what we can become, promises a future without limits, because it ties our future to an undead and all-devouring system. We are evacuated of our desires and instincts, and the vacuous space left within us is filled with all the representations of what was taken. Instead of a vast multitude of potentials and ways of relating to the world, our lives are reduced to a microcosm of the linear progression of society. Domestication does more than enslave us to the social order's future, it creates willful slaves. As individual living beings are reduced

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to spectators and functions of dead things, the non-living itself becomes autonomous. All the scientific disciplines, the linguists of this autonomous non-living thing, proclaim alongside the fascists: long live death! These disciples of Capital use their methodology to prove that this is the way things always were, they naturalize Capital and demonstrate its inevitability. We are split and dominated in the same way as physicists split and dominate the atom; managed in the same way cyberneticians manage their networks and feedback loops; as above, so below. Thus for Camatte, Capital conquers our imagination both with regard to our future, and also our past.

Capital has reduced nature and human beings to a state of domestication. The imagination and the libido have been enclosed as surely as the forests, oceans, and common lands.

The process of domestication is sometimes brought about violently, as happens with primitive accumulation; more often it proceeds insidiously because revolutionaries continue to think according to assumptions which are implicit in capital and the development of productive forces, and all of them share in exalting the one divinity, science. Hence domestication and repressive consciousness

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have left our minds fossilized more or less to the point of senility; our actions have become rigidified and our thoughts stereotyped. We have been the soulless frozen masses fixated on the post, believing all the time that we were gazing ahead into the future.

This moment of Camatte's thought is interesting because it marks his personal shift away from Marxism and toward a critique of civilization (a shift which would be significant for a whole generation of anti-civilization thinkers). Unfortunately though, it is precisely its situation in that shift (an obsession with one particular mode of production) which creates the limit of his definition of domestication. For him, the autonomous non-life which domesticates life is Capital, and he situates this process in a specific moment of capitalism where Capital "escapes" and forms its own community. This is tied up in his esoteric, (and in its own way, exegetical) reading of Marx. He locates domestication at the point at which capitalism has developed into a representation and is thrown into crisis. He calls Capital an endpoint of the processes of democratization, individuation, and massification. He speaks of these processes as presuppositions to Capital which may go as far back as the Greek *Polis* and its representational break of humans from the rest of wild life, and to the

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“domination of men over women.” And so if we can locate Capital at the endpoint of this ancient chain of separations, how can domestication (separation itself) begin with Capital? Moreover, if gendered domination predates domestication by millennia, how can his version of domestication account for the separation and colonization of life for which gender is a euphemism? His origin myth fails at the point where it begins. His story is not enough for us, because we know this colonization of our very existence did not begin in the last century, or even the one before it. We can still hear the distant cries of those who’ve resisted since long before. Clearly, we must leave Camatte behind if we want to comprehend domestication in its totality.

II

Camatte’s critique of domestication is most clearly articulated in his essay *The Wandering of Humanity*, which was first published in English in 1975 by Black and Red of Detroit. At the time, the press was run by Lorraine Perlman and her husband Fredy. They self-published the text in a beautiful pamphlet after Fredy completed its first English translation. In reading Perlman’s own writing, the influence of the text is readily apparent. Perlman himself would go on to incorporate these ideas into a scathing critique of

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Civilization which still inspires much of the anti-civilization perspective within the anarchist milieu. His efforts would largely be motivated by seizing upon the precise limit we've identified in Camatte's story: that of origins.

In her biography of Fredy, *Having Little, Being Much*, Lorraine narrates the way that he spent the following seven years almost single-mindedly focused on exploring the history of the domesticating monster. In particular he spent those years tearing through accounts of the European colonization of the North America, and the domestication process which they unleashed upon all of the living inhabitants of this continent. He stole from Hobbes in naming this monster Leviathan, and undertook the monumental task of telling the tale of those who've resisted it. He self-published his findings in 1983 in a wonderful and tragic book, released among friends at a party at his and Lorraine's house in Detroit. The book was titled *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*

Asserting that "resistance is the only human component of the entire His-story," Fredy suspended his in-depth study of resistance to Leviathanic incursions in the woodlands around the Great Lakes to examine the "barbarians" and untamed tribes who, in earlier times, unequivocally refused the bondage of civilization. Where His-story exults in civic and military achievements, calling them Progress, Fredy's

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story views each consolidation of state power as an encroachment on the human community. He addresses the reader as one individual speaking to another and makes no claim to follow scholarly rules: “I take it for granted that resistance is the natural human response to dehumanization and, therefore, does not have to be explained or justified.” The resistance story follows the chronology of Leviathan’s destructive march, but avoids using His-torians’ conventions of dating the events. This, as well as the poetic visionary language, gives the work an epic quality.

Fredy begins his narrative by attempting to isolate the way that other available ideological positions fail to grasp the enemy in its fullness. His method is instructive in that he points to how each ideology is too narrow, and can only offer incredibly superficial solutions to the problem of domestication. In the first chapter, he writes:

Marxists point at the Capitalist mode of production, sometimes only at the Capitalist class. Anarchists point at the State. Camatte points at Capital. New Ranters point at Technology or Civilization or both...

The Marxists see only the mote in the enemy’s eye. They supplant their villain with a hero, the

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Anti-capitalist mode of production, the Revolutionary Establishment. They fail to see that their hero is the very same “shape with lion body and the head of a man, a gaze blank and pitiless as the sun.” They fail to see that the Anti-capitalist mode of production wants only to outrun its brother in wrecking the Biosphere.

Anarchists are as varied as Mankind. There are governmental and commercial Anarchists as well as a few for hire. Some Anarchists differ from Marxists only in being less informed. They would supplant the state with a network of computer centers, factories and mines coordinated “by the workers themselves” or by an Anarchist union. They would not call this arrangement a State. The name-change would exorcize the beast.

Camatte, the New Ranters and Turner treat the villains of the Marxists and Anarchists as mere attributes of the real protagonist. Camatte gives the monster a body; he names the monster Capital, borrowing the term from Marx but giving it a new content. He promises to describe the monster’s origin and trajectory but has not yet done so...

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The problems that he draws out about Anarchist and Marxist politics resonate as much today as they did in 1983, and those who've drawn other conclusions largely have Fredy to thank for helping to rejuvenate an anarchy without an attachment to industrialism, technology or other fetishes of production. It is from this last point, the failure of Camatte to sketch the origin and trajectory of the monster, that he sketches his own. He draws on the writings of Frederick Turner to articulate the spirit of the monster, but criticizes Turner for his inability to speak of the monster's body; the cadaverous body which tears apart wild things and incorporates them into itself. Fredy's narrative strikes out against this body.

Fredy's project is an important one, because it pushes the critique of domestication beyond the comfortable answers. He interrogates the beast's machinations before late capitalism, before the colonization of the 'new world,' before the rise of capitalism itself. What he accomplished was to write a story about the rise of every Civilization since the first in Sumeria, and thus also of Civilization itself. Significantly, he told this tale while indicting the historians, anthropologists and economists who justify the rise of Leviathan. Instead he told the story from the perspective of those who resisted domestication at every juncture. This is one of the

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many stylistic and ethical reasons that make the book so genuinely beautiful to read. Whereas I can't in good faith recommend that one reads the tedious works of Edelman or Camatte, I'd happily gift *Against His-Story* to any of my dearest friends. This is also the reason that it doesn't make a great deal of sense to attempt a comprehensive paraphrasing. Trying to capture the magic of Fredy's storytelling would be difficult, if not impossible. Rather I'd suggest that anyone who wants to experience the depth and weight of the book's critique should simply read it themselves. That being said, we'll identify a few themes within the story which will help us in our own. These understandings will be useful in moving further with an exploration of Domestication.

In no particular order, some useful themes about domestication which emerge through the text:

† *The language of the domesticated always serves to hide widely accepted lies, if barely.* Clearly only those outside of the monster are free, and yet the civilized will use this word to describe themselves. Even the dictionary contains this contradiction: it describes 'freedom' as belonging to 'citizens,' yet then says that something is free if not constrained by anything other than its own being. There isn't any way to reconcile this contradiction. Wild birds and trees and insects which are only determined by their own potential and

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wishes are free. Citizens are constrained by an infinity of un-freedom. The domesticated will refer to those humans who are still free as ‘barbarians’ or ‘savages,’ and yet these terms designate those very people as legitimate prey for the most barbaric atrocities at the hands of the ‘civilized.’ This meaninglessness and deception inherent to language is true of almost every word that the domesticated will use to describe themselves: that which destroys communities is named a Community, that which has a thirst for human blood beyond any reason is called Humanism and Reason. This is important when faced with the writings of those who aim, through words, to justify domestication.

⌘ *Leviathan takes the form of artificial life; it has no life of its own, and thus can only function by capturing living beings within itself.* Following Hobbes, Leviathan (or Commonwealth or State or Civitas) is an artificial man. A blond, masculine, crowned man bearing a sword and a scepter. This artificial man is composed of countless faceless human beings, tasked with moving the springs and wheels and levers which make the artificial beast move. Hobbes, in turn, would see these individual human beings as nothing more than a composite of strings and wheels and springs. Fredy imagines that the beast might not be an artificial human but rather a giant worm, not a

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living worm but a carcass of a worm, a monstrous cadaver, its body consisting of numerous segments, its skin pimpled with spears and wheels and other technological implements. He knows from his own experience that the entire carcass is brought to artificial life by the motions of the human beings trapped inside... who operate the springs and wheel... Human beings regress while the worm progresses. The worm's greatest accomplishment is to remake the people within it into individual mechanized units. These human machines are ultimately replaced by entirely automated machines, more amenable to existence within the labor camps of leviathan. This is a haunting proposition because it implicates us as complicit in the machinery of our own nightmare: both as the living force which animates the monster, but also as having internalized that animation.

† *Leviathan constitutes itself through institutions of domestication; these institutions are impersonal and immortal.* Immortality is found among no living creature on the earth. In being immortal, these institutions are a part of death, and death cannot die. Workers, prisoners and soldiers die; and yet factories, prisons and armies live on. As civilization grows, the domain of death grows while the individuals living within it die. No resistance movement has yet been able to deal with this contradiction. Monasteries were

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an early innovation in these immortal institutions. In these establishments, which are nothing but early schools, human beings are systematically broken, the way horses or oxen are broken, to bear weights and pull loads. They are separated from their own humanity, from all natural activities and sequences, and taught to perform artificial activities and identify with Leviathanic sequences. They become disciplined springs and wheels engaged in a routine that has no relation to human desires or natural cycles. The clock will be invented by monastic beings because the clock is nothing but a miniature monastery whose springs and wheels are made of metal instead of flesh and blood. No amount of institutional reform has exorcised this monstrous aspect of institutions.

⚡ *Domesticated humans are defined by their adornment with masks over their faces and armor over their bodies. These masks and armors are the ways in which the individual internalizes the constraint of Leviathan and acclimates themselves to life within it. These are necessary for surviving the everyday domination and humiliation which is life in this society. They protect individuals from their own emotions, perception and estrangement from being. The armor wraps around the individual and invades their body just as all ecstatic life and freedom is evacuated from the body, save for a potential. All that's left is the armor. This*

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can also be understood as the formation of civilized identities.

† *Domestication is perpetuated through a civilized spirituality which emphasizes dominion over all living things, but more importantly, self-management and self-domination.* All monotheistic religions hold in common that man must have dominion over the fish and fowl and all living things. The Catholic church in particular has enforced this decree by declaring war against all living things; the same living things which constitute the autonomy and independence of free people. The church innovated upon this doctrine through the concept of sin. In response to sin, people are compelled to do to themselves what God does to all living things and what the nobles do to the peasants. They turn violence against their own urges and desires, above all the desire for freedom and escape. The war against all life continues as a war against one's self. No previous leviathan had so thoroughly degraded its human contents. Not only do humans domesticated into the Christian civilization suffer, they suffer a self inflicted violence at their own hands and from their own minds. They enforce a slow tortuous murder upon themselves. This war on the self would be externalized as the Holy War which the Church would later wage against infidels, both domestic and abroad. Such conquest is democratized

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through the decree that every man should be an emperor in his own home: peasants and nobility alike are joined in this frenzy of violence and control over their subjects. At this point, even the most secular civilized society has been entrenched in this self-constraint for so many generations that such a spiritual form of domination appears also as secular and natural.

⚡ *While some Leviathans could be seen as worms, others appear more as octopuses carrying out a pillaging of the earth more intense and widespread than ever before; this expansion is necessary to Leviathans' survival, but no living being willfully submits to accumulation into these monsters.* Economists and Historians will describe a natural material dialectic by which people willfully enter these beasts, because of their supposedly superior amenities. And yet at every turn, violence must be used to force people to accept these amenities. There is no 'demand' until people have been broken from the wild world and from their own abilities to care for themselves. European clothes are only worn by those who have lost their own. These communities of free peoples are attacked by an unprecedented chemical and biological warfare which exists nowhere outside of Civilization itself. All that exists outside of Civilization is viewed as raw materials to be accumulated. This outside is often

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constructed through a racialized and gendered categories. This accumulation does not happen at the hands of economists, but by lynch mobs, militaries, armies, and all the rest of Leviathan's police. The genocide carried out by Europeans against native peoples and animals and land bases on the American continents amounts to the most unprecedented of these accumulations. Through the activity of grave diggers (known as archeologists), even the dead become commodities. All of this violence is necessary for Leviathan's growth, the dead commodities become the seeds of the next wave of accumulation.

† *Those whose communities have long since been defeated will carry the banner of their lost community in an attempt to regain that lost freedom by battling an imagined enemy.* The civilized humans wear the mask of something they no longer are or never were, all in an attempt to hide what they've become. It amounts to a frenzied rush away from ones self. Christianity, the Reformation, Marxism and Naziism are but a few examples of movements which begin by projecting an image of rejecting the industrial hell, but in fact only reproduce industrial civilization. In fact, most new Leviathans begin as resistance movements.

† *"By undergoing what will be called Industrial and Technological Revolutions, the Great Artifice breaches all*

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walls, storms victoriously through every natural and human barrier, increasing its velocity at every turn. But by the time the beast really gets going like a winged rodent out of Inferno, its own soothsayers will be saying an object which approaches the speed of light loses its body and turns to smoke. Such object's victories are, in the long run Pyrrhic." Civilization is marked by over-extension, rapid growth, and a movement toward infinity. This movement is ultimately self-destructive, producing contradictions and break-downs which threaten the machine itself. All of history is littered with the carnage and wreckage of this hubris. This is a complex point about decomposition which warrants more attention. We will return to it later.

These points barely scratch the surface of eloquent argumentation in *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*, but they are worth drawing out because they help us to understand and elucidate a functioning definition of Domestication beginning with the first Civilizations. Deception, capture, domination, accumulation, annihilation, decline; we will see these themes repeating in all the stories which follow our inquiry.

III

In the years since Fredy published *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*, the topic of domestication has been taken up by a whole range of anti-civilization anarchists and projects. In most of the writings emerging from this milieu, domestication is nearly tautological with civilization. (Civilization is understood as the web of power between the institutions, ideologies, and physical apparatuses which perform domestication and control; while Domestication is understood as the process by which living beings are trapped within the network that is Civilization.) This tautology is instructive, as it points to the autonomous existence of a monster which has the sole purpose of perpetuating itself by bringing all life inside. Fredy would call such a monster a world-destroyer. While different tendencies of anti-civilization thought tend to understand domestication from different angles,[†] it remains central to the

[†] Primitivists seek to understand domestication at its origins, with particular attention to the cultures it destroyed. Insurrectionaries tend to explore strategies against the institutions of domestication in the present. Others emphasize the metaphysical and spiritual implications of domestication. Queer and feminist anti-civilization perspectives focus on domestication as the origins of patriarchy.

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thought and practice of those who believe civilization must be destroyed.

Contemporary anti-civilization writers (many anonymous or pseudonymous) have elaborated the critique of domestication into daily life, indicting countless small operations which serve to domesticate life.

Domestication is the process that civilization uses to indoctrinate and control life according to its logic. These time-tested mechanisms of subordination include: taming, breeding, genetically modifying, schooling, caging, intimidating, coercing, extorting, promising, governing, enslaving, terrorizing, murdering...the list goes on to include almost every civilized social interaction. Their movement and effects can be examined and felt throughout society, enforced through various institutions, rituals, and customs.[†]

Others have devoted their explorations to the conditions and events which lead to the establishment of agriculture and symbolic thought ten thousand years ago, trying to force the far past to give up its

[†] “An Introduction to Anti-Civilization Anarchist Thought and Practice” by the *Green Anarchy* collective.

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secrets. From this perspective, that originary moment of domestication inaugurated millennia of war, slavery, ecological destruction, and the annihilation of free creatures.

All of these elaborations are useful in that they explain what domestication means in various instances and phenomena, but it is still rare to find a concise and functioning definition of what it means all together. If we need to do so, we could say rather simply that *domestication is capture*. Further, it is the capture of living beings by a dead thing, and the integration of those beings into all the roles and institutions which comprise the dead thing. Furthermore it is all the practices which force those beings to spiritually accede to their capture. And lastly it is the discourse and ideology which justifies that capture. This capture is unending, and the dead thing can only continue its immortal reign if it continues to bring new living beings and commodities within itself.

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FIRST MYTHOS:
ENKIDU AND SHAMHAT

Fredy begins his account of the first civilization emerging in Sumeria. He describes the rise of the first king, the Lugal, and from it all subsequent worm monsters. Sumeria is interesting to our inquiry because it is the birth of civilization, but also of the written word. From this ancient civilization, the oldest written story, that of the Sumerian king Gilgamesh, was etched into tablets of lapis lazuli. As its hero, Gilgamesh is responsible for instituting the ultimate domination of the Sumerian Leviathan over the wild world. He does this because he:

*...leaves no son to his father
Day and night
endlessly
Gilgamesh
The shepherd of Uruk
The shepherd of the people
Leaves no daughter to her mother
No Warrior's daughter
no young man's spouse
No bride to her groom*

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In his endless mobilization of human beings, Gilgamesh built a human machinery which waged war against the wild earth. In response to Gilgamesh and his imposition of order, the Gods created an equal who could oppose him. His name was

Enkidu

Primeval

in the wild

Born of silence

knit by Ninurta

war

His body covered with hair

On his head as on a woman's

thick as Nissaba

grain

Knowing neither people nor place

Dressed as Sakkan commands

as the god of animals commands

as animals do

He fed on the grass with gazelles

He drank at springs with animals

Satisfied his thirst with the herd

But the hunters and shepherds were angry and terrified of Enkidu, who sabotaged their traps and released their animals. They went to Gilgamesh and asked for his help. He devised a plan involving Shamhat, one of the sacred

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prostitutes of the temple. He said:

*“Go
Take Shamhat with you
When the beast comes to the spring
Let her strip off her clothing
 reveal her charms
He will see her and approach
And the beasts will reject him”*

*And so Shamhat and the hunter set out in search of
Enkidu. The hunter said:*

*“Shamhat
Open your arms
Open your legs
 let him take your charms
Don't be afraid
 Take his breath away
He will see you and approach
Open your clothes
 Let him lie upon you
Do a woman's work for the man
Caress and embrace him
As he embraces you
And the beasts will reject him”*

*Shamhat opened her clothes
Opened her legs
He saw her charms*

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*She was not afraid
And he lay down on her
She did a woman's work for the man
Six days
 seven nights
Enkidu coupled with Shamhat
 breathless
When he had satisfied his desire
He faced the wilderness
 The gazelles shunned him and moved away
Exhausted
 Enkidu's legs would not move
As the beasts moved away
He could not run as he had before
But he had reason and broad understanding
He turned and sat at Shamhat's feet
Looked at her face
 as she looked at his
He listened to her speak
"You are handsome
 Enkidu
 like a god
Why wander the wild
 with the beasts?
Come
 let me lead you to Uruk-the-Sheepfold
To the temple
 home of Anu and Ishtar"*

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Enkidu agreed, but for the possibility of challenging the mighty Gilgamesh, but Shamhat convinced him otherwise. Gilgamesh had already dreamt of Enkidu's coming, and the king would take the wild one as a dearest friend, would treat him as a wife. He would domesticate Enkidu.

*Shamhat disrobed and dressed him
in one of her robes...
The shepherds set bread and beer before him
Suckled on the milk
of the wild
Enkidu looked
squinted
stared
He knew nothing
of food*

*Shamhat spoke to Enkidu:
"Eat the bread
staff of life
Drink the beer
destiny of the land"*

*Enkidu ate of the bread until sated
He drank of the beer until sated
seven mugs*

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*He became a manifestation
dressed in robes
A warrior
who took up his weapons
to fight lions
the shepherds rested at night
Enkidu fought off wolves
and lions
The elder shepherds slept
Enkidu stayed
awake.*

The story of Enkidu and Shamhat is a story of domestication from within the mythology of the first civilization. It shows of the taming of Enkidu through the imposition of sex roles, the wearing of clothes, the drinking of alcohol, and his separation from the wild beasts. Shamhat is a sacred prostitute of the Sumerian temples, a spiritual practitioner of the oldest profession. She serves the goddess Ishtar through the rite of hieros gamos, the sacred marriage between the king and the goddess of the city. Ishtar is the goddess of nature, yes, but of nature within the city. Hieros gamos, the sacred prostitution, is a ritualistic submission of nature to the power of the king; the bringing of the wild within the walls of the city. In this way, the nature goddess was also the goddess of arts of civilization. These arts included the practices of government and religion, war and peace,

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crafts, profession, eating, drinking, clothing, bodily adornments, art, music, sex and prostitution. Theirs are the arts of living applicable to every aspect of civilized life. The goddess rules nature within the city, so her ars vivendi are the rules of civilization, of domestication. And so it was through these rules that Shamhat, a priestess of Ishtar, made Enkidu into a man. After he is torn from his world, Enkidu becomes a virile and bloodthirsty destroyer of the wild. The imposition of gender unleashes a continuum of separation which endlessly separates the city from the forest, humanity from the rest of wild life, and splits humans into genders.

Contemporary readings will of course illustrate a degree of misogyny around Shamhat, implying that women tamed the wild men. But this is incorrect and only reveals how deeply seated gendered domination is to civilization. Enkidu is domesticated by all the ars vivendi which define life in the first civilization; by women's work and men's work. Enkidu is made a man through these domesticating laws; he is civilized by gender itself.

IV

It could be said that perhaps no tendency has taken the question of gender further than primitivism. We say this, because the primitivists view the question through the lens offered by a critique of domestication. While there are obviously heinous examples of masculinist and misogynist theories and individuals within anti-civilization thought, the most lucid and careful writers have always located the rise of patriarchy at the very beginning of civilization. For many (Fredy Perlman and John Zerzan to name just two), Patriarchy emerges alongside domestication and the two are practically synonymous. We can even see small fragments of this perspective in Camatte's later writing, *Echoes of the Past*, for example. It is also acknowledged in the 2009 editorial statement of *BLOODLUST: a feminist journal against civilization*. The editors articulate that their desire to publish the journal was a result of what felt like a superficial treatment of the critique of gender, and yet they still celebrate that the anti-civilization tendency is one of the few that consistently indicts Patriarchy as a central enemy. While sadly the journal only released one issue, the task of fleshing out the anti-civilization critique of Patriarchy seems like a step toward understanding domestication's centrality to gender itself.

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The primitivist perspective on gender is problematic for reasons we'll elaborate later, but for a moment we'll suspend our criticism so as to fairly lay out the argument. Whatever its flaws, this perspective on the rise of patriarchy is useful because it situates the emergence of gendered domination with civilization itself. In doing so, it refuses any ideology which fails to do so. By constantly demonstrating that such misery is older than most other institutions and systems of domination, it equips us with the necessary pessimism to respond to those who assure us that gendered violence will disappear after their specific reform or revolution.

Camatte (and consequently those who are influenced by his writing) is indebted, with regard to his fleeting thoughts on gender, to a French writer named Françoise d'Eaubonne. D'Eaubonne is credited as the person who coined the term *eco-feminism* in her 1974 book, *Feminism or Death*. More interestingly, she was also one of the cofounders of the organization *Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire* (FHAR), the same militant gay liberation group which Guy Hocquenghem joined and which shaped his later perspectives. It makes sense then, that two anti-civilization theories of gender would emerge from the same action and discussions; d'Eaubonne's *eco-feminism*, and Hocquenghem's *homosexual desire*. It is a tragic detriment to our

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inquiry that almost nothing of d'Eaubonne's writing is translated into English. Most Anglophone primitivists and eco-feminists have only been exposed to her ideas through secondary sources (Camatte among them). We'll cite an excerpt from *Feminism or Death* as it is unlikely that most readers would have access to the text:

Practically everybody knows that today the two most immediate threats to survival are overpopulation and the destruction of our resources; fewer recognize the complete responsibility of the male System, in so far as it is male (and not capitalist or socialist) in these two dangers; but even fewer still have discovered that each of the two threats is the logical outcome of one of the two parallel discoveries which gave men their power over fifty centuries ago: their ability to plant the seed in the earth as in women, and their participation in the act of reproduction.

Up until then the male believed [women were] impregnated by the gods. From the moment he discovered at once his two capacities as farmer and procreator, he instituted what Lederer calls 'the great reversal' to his own advantage. Having taken possession of the land, thus of

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productivity (later of industry) and of woman's body (thus of reproduction), it was natural that the overexploitation of both of these would end in this threatening and parallel menace: overpopulation, surplus births, and destruction of the environment, surplus production.

The only change capable of saving the world today is that of the 'great reversal' of male power which is represented, after agricultural overproductivity, by this mortal industrial expansion. Not 'matriarchy,' to be sure, nor 'power-to-the-women,' but destruction of power by women. And finally, the end of the tunnel: a world to be reborn (and no longer 'protected' as is still believed by the first wave of timid ecologists)...

Therefore, with a society at last in the feminine gender, meaning non-power (and not power-to-the-women), it would be proved that no other human group could have brought about the ecological revolution; because none other was so directly concerned at all levels. And the two sources of wealth which up until now have benefited only the male would once again become the expression of life and no longer the elaboration of death; and human beings would

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finally be treated first as persons, and not above all else as male or female.

And the planet in the feminine gender would become green again for all.

While simplistic and essentialist, this line of argument stands out for its singular elaboration of the intrinsic connection between agricultural production and human reproduction. We'll look at others who've expanded on this theory, but we would be hard pressed to find anything in the primitivist canon that deviates too far from this straightforward position. All of it will center the role of man as the husband to his wife and the practitioner of agriculture and animal husbandry. The argument is useful because it is an articulation of the way domestication captures both those humans assigned female and also a vast diversity of non-human life.

One can clearly see the echoes of this in a primer[†] written by the *Green Anarchy* collective:

Toward the beginning in the shift to civilization, an early product of domestication is patriarchy: the formalization of male domination and the development of institutions

[†] *Ibid.*

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which reinforce it. By creating false gender distinctions and divisions between men and women, civilization, again, creates an “other” that can be objectified, controlled, dominated, utilized, and commodified. This runs parallel to the domestication of plants for agriculture and animals for herding, in general dynamics, and also in specifics like the control of reproduction. As in other realms of social stratification, roles are assigned to women in order to establish a very rigid and predictable order, beneficial to hierarchy. Women come to be seen as property, no different than the crops in the field or the sheep in the pasture. Ownership and absolute control, whether of land, plants, animals, slaves, children, or women, is part of the established dynamic of civilization. Patriarchy demands the subjugation of the feminine and the usurpation of nature, propelling us toward total annihilation. It defines power, control and dominion over wildness, freedom, and life. Patriarchal conditioning dictates all of our interactions; with ourselves, our sexuality, our relationships to each other, and our relationship to nature. It severely limits the spectrum of possible experience. The interconnected relationship between the logic of civilization and patriarchy is undeniable; for thousands of

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years they have shaped the human experience on every level, from the institutional to the personal, while they have devoured life. To be against civilization, one must be against patriarchy; and to question patriarchy, it seems, one must also put civilization into question.

Fredy Perlman expands on this premise in a few ways. Firstly, he consistently centers rape and the weaponization of the phallus as methods intrinsic to domestication. He connects the phallic towers at the center of early Leviathans to the weapons used by their armies. For him these institutions and apparatuses function to naturalize an unnatural form of domination and power, to subject women to men and to pretend that this arrangement is the natural order of things. At times he describes Leviathanic men as ‘women haters.’ Secondly, he believes His-story to be the process by which the men who control Leviathan narrate their own conquests and achievements. For him His-story is specific to civilized culture and only emerges as a violent annihilation both of a pre-existing matriarchy, but also through the deification of an image of militaristic, Leviathanic men as opposed to former nature goddesses. For him, the earth itself is feminine; a mother who gives birth to all life. By contrast, Leviathan gives birth to nothing but death, and as

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such, despises the mother Earth. In the following fragments we'll criticize much of this theory, but it is worth acknowledging that it is rare to find another theory of His-story (especially one written by a man) which locates patriarchy as absolutely inseparable from civilization.

John Zerzan expands upon the theory from a different angle. He primarily concerns himself with studying the work of over a dozen anthropologists (all of them women) who analyze the role of women in social arrangements before domestication. Many of these anthropologists were part of the shift in Anthropology referred to as the shift from "man the hunter" to "woman the gatherer." Based on their research, he argues that the vast majority of sustenance in most non-civilized societies was provided by gatherers, who tended to be women. He argues that as a consequence, women had significantly more social power and autonomy, because they were not reliant on patriarchal agricultural arrangements for survival. He also follows other anthropologists in claiming that hierarchies around gender were rare among American indigenous tribes, specifically noting the absence of fetishes for virginity and chastity, expectations of monogamy for women, or male control over reproduction. He argues that the sexual division of labor, imposed by domestication, was the first form of

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the division of labor which constitutes contemporary civilization. He also criticizes the shift from communal tribal relationships of sharing to the privatized and gendered existence of the family-form, arguing that the family is neither inevitable nor universal in human communities. Zerzan argues that the shift toward domestication is marked by the emergence of specialized labor roles, the limiting of women's labor to reproductive efforts, and the strengthening of kinship bonds above all else. For him, the presence of a gendered division of labor by the time of the earliest recorded symbolic art indicates that it is this division which gave rise to all others. He refuses to believe that these phenomena are coincidence, instead pointing toward a causal relationship between the rise of gendered existence and that of domestication. Both are shifts away from non-separated, non-hierarchical life. He says: "nothing in nature explains the sexual division of labor, nor such institutions as marriage, conjugality or paternal filiation. All are imposed on women by constraint, all are therefore facts of civilization which must be explained, not used as explanations." His explanation for these shifts involves both the ways that agricultural life immiserated the women it captured, but also that the introduction of patriarchy was a key strategy of colonial civilizers and missionaries around the world. He argues that any

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attempts to destroy civilization must also be an attempted return to “the wholeness of original genderless existence.”

Much of the primitivist perspective on gender doesn't sit well from a queer perspective, significantly the emphasis on gender essentialism and the lack of substantive critique of compulsory heterosexuality, to say nothing of the role of Anthropology. And yet still there is something which resonates in the theory. Perhaps the appeal of the primitivist answer is that it implicates literally everything about this world in the horror of gender: the food we eat, the cities we live in, the language we speak, our families, our fetishes—all of it interwoven into the fabric of gendered existence. The implication, then, is that any break from gender would require a break from literally all the assurances and comforts which maintain our capture in it. Even more powerful, is a fiery insistence that our gendered existence is not inevitable nor laid out in the stars. Primitivism could be understood as an attempt to give words and evidence to a visceral experience of not-belonging in this world, to the feeling in our bones and muscles which cries out against the gendering of our lives and possibilities. Primitivism asserts an outside and makes claims to certainty regarding the nature of that outside. We'll dispense with them on the point of certainty; but the outside itself calls to us.

V

One of the most lucid points that Fredy Perlman makes in *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* is his critique of Anthropology. He often speaks of anthropologists and archeologists as “grave robbers,” whose intention is to enforce their own story about human existence while erasing all other stories. He pays particular attention to the efforts of anthropologists to describe the role of work in primitive societies. Many anthropologists, sympathetic to primitive societies, will claim that the people in those societies worked significantly less than domesticated people. They call them Hunters or Gatherers. They will speak of the four hours a day that are devoted to work. Fredy critiques this position by claiming that it is the operation of the managers of work camps to naturalize work into all other human and animal existence. Yes, primitive people worked less, but because they did not work at all.

Modern anthropologists who carry Gulag in their brains reduce such human communities to the motions that look most like work, and give the name Gatherers to people who pick and sometimes store their favorite foods. A bank clerk would call such communities Savings Banks! The [workers] on a coffee plantation in

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Guatemala are Gatherers, and the anthropologist is a Savings Bank. Their free ancestors had more important things to do.

The !Kung people miraculously survived as a community of free human beings into our own exterminating age. R.E. Leakey observed them in their lush African forest homeland. They cultivated nothing except themselves. They made themselves what they wished to be. They were not determined by anything beyond their own being—not by alarm clocks, not by debts, not by orders from superiors. They feasted and celebrated and played, full-time, except when they slept. They shared everything with their communities: food, experiences, visions, songs. Great personal satisfaction, deep inner joy, came from the sharing.

(In today's world, wolves still experience the joys that come from sharing. Maybe that's why governments pay bounties to the killers of wolves.)

The assertion is simple, but profound: those who live in a world of work can only understand the activity of others as work. Work is a historically determined institution, and yet our civilized

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metaphysics operates to naturalize this institution; to obscure the violence of our domestication into it. The implications of this operation is all the more sinister, as we live in a world where more and more non-waged activities are subsumed into the world of work. In a sense, domestication functions as a linear enforcement of the world of work, colonizing our past as it does our future.

S. Diamond observed other free human beings who survived into our age, also in Africa. He could see that they did no work, but he couldn't quite bring himself to say it in English. Instead, he said they made no distinction between work and play. Does Diamond mean that the activity of the free people can be seen as work one moment, as play another, depending on how the anthropologist feels? Does he mean that they didn't know if their activity was work or play? Does he mean we, you and I, Diamond's armored contemporaries, cannot distinguish their work from their play?

If the !Kung visited our offices and factories, they might think we're playing. Why else would we be there?

I think Diamond meant to say something more

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profound. A time-and-motion engineer watching a bear near a berry patch would not know when to punch his clock. Does the bear start working when he walks to the berry patch, when he picks the berry, when he opens his jaws? If the engineer has half a brain he might say the bear makes no distinction between work and play. If the engineer has an imagination he might say that the bear experiences joy from the moment the berries turn deep red, and that none of the bear's motions are work.

If we are to attempt to imagine that none of the bear's (or our distance ancestors, for that matter) activity is work, then we are forced to abandon to scientific disciplines which aim to make claims to certainty about what vanquished peoples' activities were like. This is an important break from a primitivist orthodoxy which prioritizes the use of anthropological methods. It is understandable why one would want to make such claims as to the precise nature of an *outside* or a *before* civilization. We would assert, however, that such claims aren't simply wrong (by virtue of their entrenchment in the scientific worldview) but that they are unnecessary to our critique. We do not need to be able to claim with certainty that our ancestors "worked less" in order to

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refuse the world of work that captures us. That we can point to the world of work as a historically determined institution of domination which emerged with domestication and continues to immiserate our lives is reason enough that world should burn.

This is a different orientation to the *outside*. There is surely comfort and peace of mind in believing the scientific answers about what is outside. There is also a dignity and certainty which comes from believing that utopia once existed on the face of the earth. But what is left to us if we abandon these certainties? What remains is the a mystery and a chaos which evades any rationalist attempt to capture and put it to use. This unknown is precisely that which drives those who speak with certainty crazy. It is the dark and magical world of mystery which all the violence of the scientific operation aims to annihilate. Our proposal is simple: instead of deceiving ourselves about the unknown with this or that Positive Evidence, the unknown itself is something to celebrate. Rather than a primitivist return to an outside that is supposedly mapped into our biology; we'll pursue an escape into an outside which is at the same time a mystery and an uncertainty. Should we fight less to escape if we don't know what the outside looks like? One needs only look at the world which presents itself as all too certain to know the answer.

VI

In considering this provocation in the context of our inquiry into gender and domestication, a glaring contradiction emerges: why is Fredey's willful embrace of the unknown (with regard to work) not likewise applied to gender? It takes very little effort to extend the critique of anthropological certainty into the gendered world. We could easily parallel it in saying: *Anthropologists, sympathetic to primitive societies, will view the relationships between Men and Women as more fair and desirable in these societies than in civilized societies. They are wrong in that there is no relationship between Men and Women. They live in a world of gender, and so they can only perceive the varied and ineffable existences of others as conforming to those categories. An anthropologist with half a brain will say that these gender relationships are less rigid and dominating than the ones we experience; an anthropologist with an imagination would say that these are not gender relationships in the way we understand them at all.*

This critique can very easily be applied to almost all primitivist writings on gender. Perlman and d'Eaubonne are obviously implicated in this type of essentialism regarding the roles that women and men played in primitive cultures. The archetype of woman as the nurturing and pro-creative center of the

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universe is clearly as historically constructed by the division of labor, and yet it is all the more sinister because it operates as if natural. While Zerzan's theory of gender is more overt in mobilizing anthropology, it opens space against essentialism by identifying gender as a socially constructed institution sutured on top of a natural sexual difference. This still warrants critique, however. One of the most worthwhile understandings offered by queer theory is the provocation that the sex/gender dichotomy referred to by feminists over the last several decades is not two systems, but actually one. Sex as a binary is no more natural than gender. It is the historical and retrospective arrangement into two categories of a vast range of organs, hormones, gestures, dispositions, body shapes, sexual capacities, etc. The efforts on the part of transgender liberationists are relevant to this shift, as they demonstrate that there is no determinacy or cohesion between any particular arrangement of the above characteristics, but rather that the arrangement of them into categories is always a coercive attack on an individual. The recent struggles of intersex people goes further to clearly undermine the certainty which naturalizes binary sex. The quiet scientific and medical mutilation and reshaping of untold infants to fit into binary sex demonstrates that it is no more natural than binary gender. This institutional capture into one or another

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sex is just the newest form of what is an ancient regime of diet, medicine, labor, bondage, religion and taboo which functions to shape and exaggerate two sexes out of the vast infinity of possibilities contained by the human body. Sex and Gender are the same historical operation of categorization and separation, they are simply different articulations.

It is not uncommon for primitivist thinkers and anthropologists to have a critique of heteronormativity, pointing to evidence of widespread homosexual practices in tribal societies before their colonization. Others will also point to the existence of 'third genders' in certain tribes. These stories are relevant in that they undermine the naturalized view of heteronormativity (and with it reproductive futurism), but as long as they function scientifically, they still maintain the stability of gender (even third genders). They point to a more favorable gender arrangement, but lack the imagination to understand that people may have had relationships to one's body and sexuality outside of the gendered cages which have been built around us. Furthermore, the tendency to universalize these conclusions is a tendency of Leviathan; homogeneity is intrinsic to the domestication process.

If we follow the analogous critique of work, we must come to a place where we can say that we do not know for certain what gendered existence was like

before civilization. And yet this revelation in no way alters our certainty that gender *as we know it* begins with civilization. If we invoke an orientation to an outside of civilized gender, then we are actually invoking another mystery, an ineffable which evades definition and capture. What would it mean to participate in life or death struggle against gender without knowing what existed before it? This would mean pursuing an outside which presents itself to us as shadows and chaos. It would mean fighting for the wild, without recourse to the natural. As we've intoned before: *though we forego the privilege of naturalness, we are not deterred, for we ally ourselves instead with the chaos and blackness from which Nature itself spills forth.*[†] What we've elsewhere called queer desire is a tendency toward this primordial chaos. The task is to live it.

VII

Having unveiled this contradiction within primitivism, we are left wondering how this blindspot has remained for so long.

One of the beautiful aspects of the primitivist

[†] Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, issue 1 volume 3, 1994.

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critique is that it provides a lens through which to explore every relation and institution that is naturalized in Leviathanic thought. Within the primitivist canon, one can readily find incisive attacks against the family, race, psychiatry, agriculture, the division of labor, specialization, militarism and countless other dimensions of civilized existence. Primitivists are perhaps at their most imaginative and insightful when they explore a world outside the more deeply embedded abstractions of Leviathanic culture: symbolic thought, numbers, art, language, even nature. Several texts even offer dreamlike attempts to imagine how free people have conceived of *different shapes to time itself*.

How then, has this critical onslaught missed a relation so obvious and entrenched into our being? Those who claim that Civilization inaugurated gender disparity, still maintain the naturalness of those genders. Even those (like Zerzan) who call gender into question, still hold to a natural dualism which is perverted by domestication. That this dualism is considered natural by those who would otherwise refuse any other dualism (human/animal, mind/body, etc.) as a civilized constraint is not proof of its naturalism. Rather it is proof of how deeply entrenched it is in the process of domestication—so deep that we can scarcely imagine a world before it. Zerzan, to his credit, says the divide (which varies in

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its form, but not its essence) is the most deeply seated dualism; giving rise to the subject/object and mind/body splits in turn. He calls it a “categorization... that may be the single cultural form of greatest significance.” It introduces and legitimizes all other dominations. This line of argument is echoed by Witch Hazel in *BLOODLUST*, who writes that the construction and devaluation of the feminine archetype is a parallel to the mind/body split and enables the turn toward domestication and Civilized conquest. This central underpinning of Civilization already divines, without knowing it, the enmity between Civilization and queer desire articulated by Guy Hocquenghem and others; the way that queer desire reveals what is common between the family and the automobile and every other civilized apparatus. This lens allows us to see that in gender, more than anywhere else, the enemy has projected itself throughout time in order to preclude our dreams of an outside. As Fredy narrates this dynamic of projection:

The strait that separates us from the other shore has been widening for three hundred generations, and whatever was cannibalized from the other shore is no longer a vestige of their activity but an excretion of ours: it’s shit. Reduced to blank slates by school, we cannot

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know what it was to grow up heirs to thousands of generations of vision, insight, experience. We cannot know what it was to learn to hear the plants grow, and to feel the growth...

It becomes very important for the last Leviathan to deny the existence of an outside. The beast's voices have to project Leviathanic traits into pre-Leviathanic past, into nature, even into the unknown universe.

The post-Hobbesian artificial beast becomes conscious of itself as Leviathan and not as Temple or Heavenly Empire or Vicarate of Christ, and it simultaneously begins to suspect its own frailty, its impermanence. The beast knows itself to be a machine, and it knows that machines break down, decompose, and may even destroy themselves. A frantic search for perpetual motion machines yields no assurance to counter the suspicions, and the beast has no choice but to project itself into realms or beings which are not machines.

A telling story is that of the interaction between colonizing French Jesuits and the indigenous Montagnais-Naskapi in 17th century Canada, as recounted by Eleanor Leacock, a feminist

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anthropologist cited by both Zerzan and Silvia Federici. She describes how it became necessary for the Jesuits to ‘civilize’ the Montagnais-Naskapi in order to ensure they’d be disciplined trading partners. This endeavor started with the introduction of hierarchical gender roles.

As often happened when Europeans came in contact with native American populations, the French were impressed by Montagnais-Naskapi generosity, their sense of cooperation and indifference to status, but they were scandalized by their ‘lack of morals;’ they saw that the Naskapi had no conception of private property, of authority, of male superiority, and they even refused to punish their children. The Jesuits decided to change all that, setting out to teach the Indians the basic elements of civilization, convinced that this was necessary to turn them into reliable trade partners. In this spirit they first taught them that ‘man is the master,’ that ‘in France women do not rule their husbands,’ and that courting at night, divorce at either partner’s desire, and sexual freedom for both spouses, before or after marriage, had to be forbidden.

The Jesuits succeeded in convincing the newly

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appointed chiefs of the tribe to implement male authority over the women. Several Naskapi women fled such novel and offensive constraint, causing men (at the encouragement of the Jesuits) to chase after them and threaten to beat and/or imprison them for their disobedience. One Jesuit missionary's journal proudly includes an account of the incident:

Such acts of justice cause no surprise in France, because it is usual there to proceed in that manner. But among these people...where everyone considers himself from birth as free as the wild animals that roam in their great forests...it is a marvel, or rather a miracle, to see a peremptory command obeyed, or any act of severity or justice performed.

Another interesting story is recounted in a brief segment from the journal *Species Traitor* about homosexuality outside of civilization. The segment has the humility to acknowledge that while we can indict universalized homophobia as being unique to modern society, we can know very little about the vast and divergent sexual practices of the majority of cultures that have walked the earth. The segment goes on to cite an example of two anthropologists living among the Huaorani people in the Amazon region of what is now Ecuador. The two

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anthropologists witnessed two Huaorani men in an intimate embrace. When the Huaorani men saw that they were being watched, one quietly whispered to the other *kowudi*, after which they looked embarrassed at the anthropologists and walked away. *Kowudi* means *outsiders*.

Both of these stories succinctly illustrate the truly partisan role played by those who operate under some notion of objectivity or neutrality. The journals of countless missionaries, explorers and anthropologists show that their accounts are tainted by their civilized attitudes toward gender and sexuality, but also that one of their primary operations is to force those attitudes upon the people they study. In *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*, Arthur Evans points to several of these, including a rather humorous example of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus' disgust at the behavior of Celtic men in the first century BC:

Although they have good-looking women, they pay very little attention to them, but are really crazy about having sex with men. They are accustomed to sleep on the ground on animal skins and roll around with male bed-mates on both sides. Heedless of their own dignity, they abandon without a qualm the bloom of their bodies to others. And the most incredible thing is that they don't think this is shameful.

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All of this points to the great flaw of anthropology in regard to the question of gender. As the existence and universality of gendered categories is taken for granted, their accounts (and often their actions) will always function to enact a violence upon a wild range of human experience, severing it from its whole context and recounting that experience as an amputated and gendered one. This isn't to say that we shouldn't read these stories. Instead it instructs us on *how* to read them. If we can glean any useful direction from them, it is by reading these scientists as we would read any other enemy; critically, and with attention to the secrets hidden between the lines. And even when we can distill this or that, we still only have one story, from one culture, in one moment. To universalize these stories as representations and truths about all of humanity, as is often done by primitivist anthropology, is to falsify our understanding and erase an infinity of other possibilities and stories of people beyond civilization's snares. It is a reverence for this infinity which sets our inquiry apart from a scientific one. Science, after all, is also one myth among many. It is different only in that it refuses all stories but its own.

Some interpret these stories to mean that Patriarchy is one of the first pillars of civilization to emerge from domestication. Others glean that the gender division is the first duality, which makes

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domestication possible. Both versions draw circles around a third possibility:

Gender is domestication.

The two supposedly distinct phenomena appear as mutually constituting because they are one and the same phenomenon. Earlier we said that domestication is the capture of living things by something non-living. It is also the process where capture is internalized by living beings who are then shaped into pre-determined roles. The non-living thing is immortal and continues long after its captives are dead, and that it is constantly accumulating new lives in order to reproduce itself. Gender is precisely this non-living institution which tears individuals away from themselves and reconstitutes them as a pre-determined role. Gender would be an empty husk if it wasn't for its constant capture of new bodies; bodies which in turn give it life. Isn't the first incursion of Civilization into the life of a wild newborn always to proclaim its gender? It is the first separation which gives rise to all others. Gender is the cipher through which Leviathan categorizes and understands each and every one of the beings trapped in its entrails. A whole destiny of experience is inscribed on our bodies from it.

We should also remember that we previous

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identified a theme where domesticated people invoke the image of those they are not and never were to justify their own machinations and violence. In gender, we see all the ways that the gender binary is naturalized as sex and projected into pre-history as a way of explaining and rationalizing (essentializing) all of these experiences of violence. We are told those assigned female are meant to be mothers, and therefore it is in their nature to endure pain, to be caretakers, to submit to external authority. Those assigned male are virile hunters and warriors, violence and rape are supposedly intrinsic to their nature. Homosexuals are aberrations in nature, and thus they are fated for exile in their short, brutal and diseased lives. Every mask of the natural is only ever a lie told by Leviathan to justify its own activity.

An understanding of *gender as domestication* is supported by the inquiries of a handful of anti-colonial theorists of gender such as María Lugones, Andrea Smith and Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí. Smith, for example, horrifyingly illustrates the use of sexual violence as strategy of Leviathan's conquest of the Americas.[†] More so, she argues that colonialism is itself structured by sexual violence. Lugones, as another example, argues that gender itself is violently

[†] Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and the American Indian Genocide*, 2005.

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introduced by colonial civilization.[‡] She says it is consistently and contemporarily used to destroy peoples, cosmologies and communities in order to form the building ground of the ‘civilized West.’ She argues that the colonial system produces different racialized genders, but more importantly institutes gender itself as a way of organizing relations, knowledges and cosmic understanding. This is useful because it refuses a universal or natural understanding of Patriarchy that lacks a critique of racial and heteronormative colonialism. Instead, her argument helps us to describe the gender as something that spreads, consumes and destroys. She describes this process as the Colonial/Modern Gender System. This system entails the naturalization of the sexual binary, the deominization of a racial and hermaphroditic other, and the violent eradication of everything outside civilization: third genders, homosexuality, gynocentric knowledges and non-gendered existence, etc. Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí in *The Invention of Women* describes how gender was not an organizing principle in Yoruba society prior to colonization. She says that patriarchy only emerges when Yoruba society is “translated into english to fit the western pattern of body reasoning.” She locates

[‡] María Lugones, *Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System*, 2007.

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the dominance of civilization's gender system in its *documentation* and *interpretation* of the world. "Researchers always find gender when they look for it."

Within colonialism, new subject categories were created by western Civilization and were racialized and engendered as the foundation of the new colonial state. This creation process is composed of several operations: the introduction and entrenchment of gender roles, the imposition of Male gods, the formation of Patriarchal colonial government, the displacement of people from their traditional means of subsistence and the violent institution of the Family. These operations serve as a revision which recasts and genders tribal life and spirituality. This engendering does more than create the victimized category of women, but also constructs men as collaborators in domestication. Lugones cites the British strategy of bringing indigenous men to English schools where they would be instructed in the ways of civilized gender. These men would work within the colonial state to deprive women of their previous power to declare war, bear arms and determine their own relationships. She also cites the Spanish strategy of criminalizing sodomy among colonized populations, intertwining it with racialized hatred of the Moors and other 'primitive' people.

These theorists employ stories and examples of

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‘third genders’ not as a literal description of a three gendered system, but instead as a place holder for the infinite range of bodily possibility which exists outside the colonial system. They argue that domestication has to be imposed as gender in order to disintegrate all the communal and free relationships, rituals and overlapping means of survival. And as the civilized ideal of racial gender is naturalized, everything outside of itself is fair game for capture, domination and reshaping. Colonialism itself is often described through the racial and sexual metaphor of the white male explorer uncovering and pillaging the dark female continents, forcing her to submit and planting the seed of civilization.

From this perspective, we can recognize all the incidents of gendered and racial violence in our lives as repetitions of this first capture. Sex work, abusive relationships, body dysmorphia, marriage, sexual abuse, familial constraint, date rape, gang rape, queer bashing, psychiatry, electroshock therapy, eating disorders, domestic labor, unwanted pregnancy, fetishization, emotional labor, street harassment, pornography: each instance is a moment where we are torn from ourselves, taken by another, captured and determined as a brutal repetition of the primary rupture which denied us a life lived by and for ourselves. In this schema, the assimilation and medicalization of queer and transgendered people can

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be understood as a re-capture of rebellious bodies. Police murder and racist vigilantism can likewise be understood as functions of this capture.

It is worth noting here that to understand *gender as domestication* is crucially different from understanding *patriarchy as a consequence of domestication*, in that the former is a break from the trap of essentialism. None of the above is limited to one subject of the gendered world. Rape, for example, is not solely the experience of women (as is often claimed by various regurgitations of second wave feminism), but is a disgustingly widespread experience among people of all genders. The assertion that any form of gender violence is the exclusive property of one category of people would be laughable if it weren't for the litany of horrors which serve to disprove it. More sinisterly, these type of essentialist assertions obscure and shame those experience an entire range of very real experiences of gender violence.

Situating gender as domestication is a way to understand gender violence outside of an essentialist and white framework. Without this understanding, all theories which attribute some natural dimension to sex/gender (from eco-feminist to Marxist feminist) are structurally unable to account for the violence, capture, and exclusion experienced by anyone who deviates from the gender binary or the heterosexual

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matrix. These ideologies will expand to pay lip-service to queer and transpeople, but they never alter the structure of their theory. This amounts to little more than the liberal politics of inclusion. If, however, we understand gender as something which captures us, rather than something natural to us (or extracted from our biological existence), we can begin to analyze all the methods of domination experienced by queer or transgender people. Brutality and exclusion come to be recognized as the policing methods by which individuals remain captured; assimilation and exploitation represent a more sophisticated capture. From here I can see the line which binds together the boys who called me *faggot* as a teenager and the gay men who would pay me for sex a few years later. Everything about the refusal of gender follows from this. The criticism of identity, assimilation, medicalization or any technique of the self becomes meaningful once it is placed in this continuum.

VIII

We've said there are some stories which can be stolen from anthropology that might help us in our understanding of gender as domestication. One such story is told by Gayle Rubin in her essay *The Traffic in Women* (not to be confused with the Emma Goldman piece by the same name). This piece is one

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of the many examples of feminist anthropology which influenced Zerzan and other primitivist writers in their theory of gender. We chose to critically engage with Rubin's piece for a few reasons. Firstly, within her work, there is a shift from feminist anthropology to queer theory; this feels analogous to shifts within our inquiry. Secondly, she conceives of her own writing as a practice of exegesis, of reading others against themselves to draw conclusions which are opposed to the author's intentions. Specifically, she heretically reads Levi-Strauss and Freud, (apologists and technicians of gender) for the ways their theories can be subverted. This practice aligns interestingly with our abuse of a whole range of texts. And lastly, she defines her own project as being an attempt to understand the origins of 'the domestication of women.' While our own inquiry is more thorough than to be interested in only the domestication of one gendered subject, we cannot help but feel intrigued by a theory of gender that directly interrogates domestication. In her text, she aims to find the 'systemic social apparatus' which transforms 'females as raw material' and 'fashions domesticated women as a product.' Rubin contends that this apparatus is significant because it dominates the lives 'of women, of sexual minorities, and of certain aspects of human personalities within individuals.' She calls this apparatus the *sex/gender*

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system and she believes that both anthropology and psychoanalysis inadvertently describe mechanisms by which this system constructs domesticated gender out of the occurrence of biological sex. It is unfortunate that Rubin advocates the sex/gender dichotomy that we've critiqued above, but this oversight doesn't prevent us from being able to use her study. After all, even without a conception of naturalized sex, we are still interested in understanding the social apparatus which transforms wild beings into domesticated gendered products.

Interestingly enough, she begins her exploration of this apparatus by first outlining the failure of Marxist feminism to account for it. She wrote *Traffic* at a time when Marxist feminists such as Selma James, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, and Silvia Federici were articulating a theory of 'reproductive labor' and specifically the labor performed by housewives as being the root of women's oppression and exploitation. This theory stemmed from a desire on the part of these women to locate a theory of gendered oppression that was a concomitant of the capitalist mode of production.

Food must be cooked, clothes cleaned, beds made, wood chopped. Housework is therefore a key element in the process of the reproduction of the laborer from whom surplus value is

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taken. Since it is usually women who do housework, it has been observed that it is through the reproduction of labor power that women are articulated into the surplus-value nexus which is the *sine qua non* of capitalism. It can be further argued that since no wage is paid for housework, the labor of women in the home contributes to the ultimate quantity of surplus value realized by the capitalist. But to explain women's usefulness to capitalism is one thing. To argue that this usefulness explains the genesis of the oppression of women is quite another. It is precisely at this point that the analysis of capitalism ceases to explain very much about women and the oppression of women.

This limit—the conflation of the exploitation of subjects by capitalism with evidence that capitalism is the origin of those subjects—is a flaw of all self-proclaimed 'scientific' disciplines which aim to generalize one story into a materialist theory that locates economics as the cause of all woes. Following from this, she identifies a wide range of non-capitalist cultures which are vehemently patriarchal, including pre-capitalist feudal Europe. She then details several practices of gender domination (foot binding, chastity belts, and other fetishized indignities) which cannot

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be accounted for by a Marxist analysis of the reproduction of labor power. She argues that at most, Marxist Feminism can explain the way capitalism seized upon and tinkered with already existing forces of social control. 'The analysis of the reproduction of labor power does not even explain why it is usually women rather than men who do domestic work in the home.' She argues that economics cannot account for the *moral element* which determines that a wife is among the commodities needed by a man, that only men can talk to God, and that women are the ones who perform domestic labor. To her, this *moral element* is the massive and unexplored terrain from which gendered violence emerges and that it is the basis of the femininity and masculinity that capitalism later inherited. It is into this element that she'll direct the rest of her study. She concludes her critique of Marxist feminism by illustrating the silliness of reducing the vastness of the sex/gender system to being simply 'the reproductive' sphere. For her, there is far too much excess in that system to be solely the reproductive aspect of industrial production. Not to mention that it is also productive in its own way: producing gendered subjects, for example. The origins of gender domination, she claims, must be located outside the 'mode of production.'

Her attempt to find this outside is to first look at the writings of Levi-Strauss in his explorations of

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early kinship structures. His writing places gender and sexuality at the center of these structures; he develops a theory that links their essence to the exchange of women between men of various social groups. In doing so, Rubin believes he has sketched an implicit theory of gendered oppression. He primarily comes to this conclusion after studying the role of gift exchange in pre-state arrangements. He finds that the exchange of gifts was the first measure taken in the long road toward the development of ‘civil society’ and the state. For him, marriage is one of the most significant forms of gift exchange, with women themselves being the gifts given from one man to another. From here, he analyzes the incest taboo as a means of policing and enforcing this exchange of women as gifts. The taboo is less about preventing endogamous sexual relations, and much more about obliging the exchange of sisters and daughters into exogamous relations; it is an early expression of commodity society. The exchange of human beings is more powerful than other gifts because it is not simply an arrangement of reciprocity, but one of kinship. This results in a more long-lasting and expansive relationship which orders all other types of exchange through the established kinship network.

The marriage ceremonies recorded in the ethnographic literature are moments in a

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ceaseless and ordered procession in which women, children, shells, words, cattle, names, fish, ancestors, whale's teeth, pigs, yams, spells, dances, mats and so on, pass from hand to hand, leaving as their tracks the ties that bind. Kinship is organization, and organization gives power.

Organization, then, is an original structure of power between those who exchange others. This difference between the exchanged and the exchangers is a primary split in the system we'll call gender. For Rubin, the split is between men as organizers, and women as conduits to organization; men as exchange partners and women as gifts. The circulation of women provides the mystical powers of kinship to the men who exchange them; the men benefit from the subsequent social organization. The vast permutations of gendered *organization* today will not deviate from this unending exchange of bodies. *Women are given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favors, sent as tribute, traded, bought, and sold. Far from being confined to the "primitive world," these practices seem only to become more pronounced and commercialized in more "civilized" societies.* Rubin finds this concept useful because it locates gender's emergence in social structures, rather than in biology. Further, it understands gender domination to be more

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rooted in the exchange of bodies than in the exchange of merchandise. Here, gender is not explained away as a function of reproduction, but is production itself. It is an entire system where individual bodies are produced as gendered subjects and exchanged in the production of kinship structures. This system does not just exchange women, but ancestry, lineage names, social power, children. The inauguration of gender violence emerges from this system within which sex and gender are organized; the economic exploitation of this or that gender is secondary to this.

This story is relevant to the larger one we're trying to weave because it features gender as inextricably bound to a monster which is Rubin euphemistically calls social organization. We would call the monster domestication, and from this story we can determine a lot about its character and tendencies. Rubin of course, in typical academic fashion, shies away from the totality of these conclusions. She says that, since Levi-Strauss located this exchange as the beginning of the culture of civilization ("his analysis implies that the world-historical defeat of women occurred with the origin of culture, and is a prerequisite of culture"), holding to a firm interpretation of the theory would also imply that her "feminist task" would require the destruction of that culture. This destruction remains unthinkable in her system of

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thought. Again, we'll choose to go where others will not. That an argument points to a necessary destruction of everything is precisely why we'd follow it.

The second story that Gayle Rubin recites is one more common: psychoanalysis and its Oedipus complex. Rubin correctly berates psychoanalysis for its tendency to become more than a theory of the mechanisms which reproduces gender and sexuality; she argues it has largely become one of those mechanisms. She follows that a revolt against the mechanisms of gender must then also be a critique of psychoanalysis. This critique isn't new for us; Hocquenghem's queer refusal of civilization is predicated on this very refusal of psychoanalysis. Rubin looks at the same concepts as Hocquenghem in an attempt to flesh out her theory of gender's emergence. Primarily, she concerns herself with how psychoanalysis can hint toward the way children are forced into the categories of boys and girls. Her exegesis of psychoanalysis mostly centers around Lacan, who views his efforts as an attempt to identify the traces left in the individual's psyche by their conscription into kinship structures, as well as the transformation of their sexuality as they are integrated into civilized culture. For Rubin this is a nice complement to Levi-Strauss; whereas she had already examined the exchange of individuals within

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a gender system, she now turns to the interior realities of those exchanged. She begins from Oedipus:

Oedipal crisis occurs when a child learns of the sexual rules embedded in the terms for family and relatives. The crisis begins when the child comprehends the system and his or her place in it; Before the Oedipal phase, the sexuality of the child is... unstructured. Each child contains all the sexual possibilities available to human expression. But in any given society, only some of these possibilities will be expressed, while others will be constrained. Upon leaving the Oedipal phase, the child's libido and gender identity have been organized in conformity with the rules of the culture which is domesticating it...

Oedipal complex is an apparatus for the production of sexual personality. Societies will inculcate in their young the character traits appropriate to carry on the business of society... such as the transformation of the working class into good industrial workers. Just as the social forms of labor demand certain kinds of personality, the social forms of sex and gender demand certain kinds of people. In the most general terms, the Oedipal complex is a

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machine which fashions the appropriate forms
of sexual individuals.

Psychoanalysis largely concerns itself with how a child can properly adapt to this machine. Rubin would say that the machine needs to be changed. We'll assert that the machine must be destroyed. Rubin details how the machine functions along with an equally familiar concept, the phallus. She emphasizes that rather than being a biological object, the phallus is primarily a symbol of belonging to a gendered social order. The father possesses it, and so he can exchange it for a woman; if a boy behaves and is properly domesticated, he can one day have the phallus too. The girl is denied it, and thus has nothing with which to bargain for it. The phallus is transmitted through particularly gendered bodies and rests upon others. In the same way as the kinship system detailed by Levi-Strauss gives certain people the ability to exchange others as a commodity, the phallus is the mystical dimension of belonging which is traded for these bodies in turn. For Rubin, these systems cohere into a mutually reinforcing dynamic where women are dispossessed of their very being, and are possessed and exchanged by men. The linkage of these men through their exchange of the woman and phallus creates the social bonds upon which organized civilization is based.

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Rubin emphasizes that any part of the body can be a site of active or passive eroticism. But by imbuing certain categories of similar anatomy with the social power of the phallus, domestication concentrates erotic power in certain geographies, tearing all other possibilities away from gendered individuals. Psychoanalysis argues that those gendered as girls are forced to accept their position within a gendered order where they've been separated from their access to the phallus, or to socially recognized eroticism. Traditional psychoanalysts describe this as the formation of feminine personality. Rubin breaks from them in describing it instead as a socialized enforcement of psychic brutality which forces young children to internalize a logic of submission. The normative interpretation is that one learns to accept this submission and take pleasure from it. Here the scientists of psychoanalysis allow for the triumphant return of biological essentialism—linking the pain of penetration and child birth to a now rationalized internalization of submission. Rubin will argue that this theory normatively functions to naturalize and justify the gender order, and must be attacked for this function. She proposes a more subversive reading of it as a diagnostic of exactly how this machine functions. Our reading of it should elucidate how that machine can be irreparably sabotaged.

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For Rubin, a subversive reading of these two stories begins to unveil aspects of the gender system which would otherwise remain hidden. She calls them preliminary charts of the social machinery. Others today would call it a study of apparatuses. In these charts, she reads a system that is so intractable and monumental that it cannot be exorcised through miniscule reforms. For her, the neat congruity between the two stories indicates that the ancient methods of capture and exchange are still at work in the present. She calls these methods domestication. She argues that domestication will always happen and that the wild profusion of sexual possibilities in the human body will always be tamed. And so she rather cynically argues for a 'feminist revolution' to seize this machinery and use it to 'liberate human personality from the straightjacket of gender.' We don't have any hope that this machinery will ever be destroyed on a global scale, but this does not mean that we believe in seizing it for our own use. (Just as we are not interested in seizing state power or the means of production). Our anarchy is the destruction of these machines and our escape from them. Fredy Perlman argued that Leviathan is a dead thing which only has an artificial life when living things inhabit it as captives. If we say that gender is domestication, then Leviathan is one and the same as the gendered machinery described above. Seizing the machinery

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will only continue the nightmare that is gender: we have to find an escape route.

Rubin argues that these disciplines, psychoanalysis and anthropology function as the most sophisticated rationalization of the sex/gender system. We can see this as parallel to the argument made earlier regarding anthropological documentation/enforcement of heteronormativity. Surveillance is always a function of policing. Those sciences which aim to analyze the world become blueprints for how the world might be structured to fit their vision of it. We believe that this is true of science in general; later we'll contend that the same holds for the science of historical materialism. And so just as we must develop an antagonistic reading of anthropological stories, we must also develop a reading of these maps. In them we aren't looking for how to maintain or even alter the machines. We are reading them as a prisoner might study the stolen blueprints of a prison; as an enemy operation, seeking the points at which they fail. These blueprints are of absolutely no interest for us, save for the image of the world we aim to leave; and even still, these images are two dimensional, bare lines, inscrutable symbols.

The map presented to us is not the one drawn by Marxist feminism. Economics form a dimension of our entrapment, but it is not the end all and be all of gender. The terrain is sexual, psychological, ancestral,

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familial, technological and moral. It may be economic and political too, but not in any privileged sense. The gender system approaches a totality of all the ways we are captured and the ways in which we internalize that position. Rubin even suggests that the state-form itself may have emerged from this shadowy web of phallic kinship. If we cannot understand and combat gender as a totality, we will never be able to break the curse of the ancient fathers.

While we disagree with Rubin on several of her (mostly political and feminist) conclusions, and are rather bored by her form and obsession with the writings of men of science, we have to appreciate her for her line of inquiry. We can draw on her both in terms of her practice of heretical reading, but also for her unwillingness to accept the simple answers. By problematizing both the conceptions of gender as natural and also as economic, she offers a way of avoiding the pitfalls of an eco-feminist or Marxist-Feminist theory. Her approach is one that is worthwhile if our intention is to locate gender at the moment of domestication; no more and no less.

Perhaps most usefully her two stories correspond to what we might identify as a twofold nature of domestication: bodily and spiritual. On the one hand, domestication takes the form of the capture and exchange of bodies within a social order. On the other, it involves the spiritual taming of those individuals;

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the internalization of a spirit of submission. These are not two isolated phenomena, but are mutually constituting elements of a self-reproducing dynamic of gender. Form and content. After all, a spiritual linkage is the result of the exchange of body-commodities, just as the Oedipal logic of submission accompanies the entrapment within a particular arrangement of the body. Each assault and constraint upon the body fosters the development of a docile spiritual disposition. Each alienation and dispossession from some dimension of our bodily existence leads to an analogous fragmenting of our psyche. The dualities of sex and gender can be understood as bodily form and spiritual content of the domestication process. The symbolic re-ordering of the body (as in the Phallus) has an accompanying fetish. All the victim subjectivities follow directly from this capture of the body. Equally so, our spiritual complicity with the gendered Leviathan drives us to exchange bodies in pursuit of some mythical belonging. This interplay leads to the creation of the gendered body and the domesticated spirit. This is elsewhere called identity formation. The dualities of sex and gender can be understood as bodily form and spiritual content of the domestication process.

We must take the understanding further than Rubin, by conceptualizing the duality of race as

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intrinsic to this bodily and spiritual dynamic. In the same way that gender splits bodies and marks them for circulation, race further elaborates this separation. Those captured as black women, for example, were circulated within the slave system and marked as hyper-sexual, perverse, and strong; justifying their rape, hard labor and forced reproduction. The children they produced were taken from them and circulated, while they themselves were forced to wet nurse the white children of their masters. The racist figures of the mammy and the sexually aggressive woman were (and still are) put to use to justify the circulation and domination of the bodies of black women.

We obviously must also take Rubin's account to task for the latent essentialism within it. While she herself mimes some critique of them, she ends up importing far too much of a conception of naturalized gender from the men she reads. It is up to us to locate this dynamic of bodily and spiritual domestication as being the foundation of all gendered violence, and not simply of the violence against women. We've already said that no gendered violence belongs to any one category, but it bears repeating. This dynamic is at much at play in the systematic abuse of young boys by priests as it is in the gang rape in military barracks and fraternities, as it is in and sex slavery in prisons. The circulation of bodies is

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obvious in these extreme instances, but it is also more subtle: in advertising and pornography (gay and straight), in dating (of the monogamous or polyamorous varieties), in sex work and service work, in the technophilic ways we cruise, and in the ways we learn. It is present in the ‘my’ which always corresponds to boyfriend, wife, daughter, partner. It is what remains unspoken in initiatory rites of secret orders of husbands, rapists and jailers. All of it—from the most abominable to the most minute—is the unending dynamic of bodily capture, spiritual submission, and circulation.

IX

“While the ecstasy of the former living community languishes within the Temple and suffers a slow and painful death, the human beings outside the Temple’s precincts but inside the State’s lose their inner ecstasy. The spirit shrivels up inside them. They become nearly empty shells. We’ve seen that this happens even in Leviathans that set out, at least initially, to resist such a shrinkage.

“As the generations pass, the individuals within the cadaver’s entrails, the operators of the great worm’s segments, become increasingly like the springs and wheels they operate, so much so that sometime later

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they will appear as nothing but springs and wheels. They never become altogether reduced to automata; Hobbes and his successors will regret this.

“People never become altogether empty shells. A glimmer of life remains in the faceless... who seem more like springs and wheels than like human beings. They are potential human beings. They are, after all, the living beings responsible for the cadaver’s coming to life, they are the ones who reproduce, wean and move the Leviathan. Its life is but a borrowed life; it neither breathes nor breeds; it is not even a living parasite; it is an excretion and they are the ones who excrete it.

“The compulsive and compulsory reproduction of the cadaver’s life is the subject of more than one essay. Why do people do it? This is the great mystery of civilized life.

“It is not enough to say that people are constrained. The first captured may do it only because they are physically constrained, but physical constraint no longer explains why their children stick to their levers. It’s not that constraint vanishes. It doesn’t. Labor is always forced labor. But something else happens, something that supplements the physical constraint.

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“At first the imposed task is taken on as a burden. The newly captured one knows that he is not a ditch-repairman, he knows that he is a free Canaanite filled to the brim with ecstatic life, for he still feels the spirits of the Levantine mountains and forests throbbing inside him. The ditch-fixing is something he takes on to keep from being slaughtered; it is something he merely wears, like a heavy armor or an ugly mask. He knows he will throw off the armor as soon as the manager’s back is turned.

“But the tragedy of it is that the longer he wears the armor, the less able he is to remove it. The armor sticks to his body. The mask becomes glued to his face. Attempts to remove the mask become increasingly painful, for the skin tends to come off with it. There’s still a human face below the mask, just as there’s still a potentially free body below the armor, but merely airing them takes almost superhuman effort.

“And as if all this weren’t bad enough, something starts to happen to the individual’s inner life, his ecstasy. This starts to dry up. Just as the former community’s living spirits shriveled and died when they were confined to the Temple, so the individual’s spirit shrivels and dies inside the armor. His spirit can breathe in a closed jar no better than the god could. It

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suffocates. And as the Life inside him shrivels it leaves a growing vacuum. The yawning abyss is filled as quickly as it empties, but not by ecstasy, not by living spirits. The empty space is filled with springs and wheels, with dead things, with Leviathan's substance."[†]

X

We've discussed domestication as a process that ensnares us within a monster and infests our very being with the monster's essence. We continue to endeavor to name this monster gender. Fredy Perlman called it Leviathan, but he also had a name for its spirit: His-story. If domestication integrates us into the form of Leviathan, then it enchants us with His-story. So we turn to this enchantment:

His-story is a chronicle of the deeds of the men at the phallus-helm of Leviathan, and in its largest sense it is the "biography" of what Hobbes will call the Artificial Man. There are as many His-stories as there are Leviathans.

But His-story tends to become singular for the same reason that Sumer and now the whole Fertile Crescent becomes singular. The

[†] *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*

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Leviathan is a cannibal. It eats its contemporaries as well as its predecessors. It loves a plurality of Leviathans as little as it loves Earth. Its enemy is everything outside of itself.

His-story is born with Ur, with the first Leviathan. Before or outside of the first Leviathan there is no His-story.

The free individuals of a community without a State did not have a His-story, by definition: they were not encompassed by the immortal carcass that is the subject of His-story. Such a community was a plurality of individuals, a gathering of freedoms. The individuals had biographies, and they were the ones who were interesting. But the community as such did not have a “biography,” a His-story.

Yet the Leviathan does have a biography, an artificial one. “The King is dead; Long Live the King!” Generations die, but Ur lives on. Within the Leviathan, an interesting biography is a privilege conferred on very few or on only one; the rest have dull biographies, as similar to each other as the Egyptian copies of once beautiful originals. What is interesting now is

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the Leviathan's story, at least to His scribes and His-storyans.

To others, as Macbeth will know, the Leviathan's story, like its ruler's, is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." The ruler is killed by an invader or a usurper and his great deeds die with him. The immortal worm's story ends when it is swallowed by another immortal. The story of the swallowings is the subject of World His-story, which by its very name already prefigures a single Leviathan which holds all Earth in its Entrails.

A friend, writing in the nihilist journal *Attentat*[†], takes this to mean that Leviathan is constantly decomposing and that its biographers are trained not to see this decomposition. Instead, historians and intellectuals engineer stories to explain the movement of the beast through time. This is often called History, but can also Progress, Destiny, etc. The writer in *Attentat* says that this subtle contention in Frey's thinking entirely breaks from any linear (either progressive or regressive) view of history,

[†] Anonymous, "History as Decomposition" in *Attentat, the journal of the nihilist position*, 2013.

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arguing instead that history is

a process of increasing complication, destructiveness, falling-apart of previous epochs (along with their attitudes, ideas, practices, and so on)... The very phenomenon of history (as His-Story), its possible unity as narrative and idea, is peculiarly undergirded by this process, which is itself a fragile hanging together of fragments of fragments, endlessly shattering, strangely recombining, giving most observers the sense of ‘delay.’

In the first issue of this journal, we explored this sense of delay as the perpetual displacement of a future utopia promised to us by the soothsayers of Historical analysis. *It gets better* if only we are patient enough to wait. Most accounts of history are simple variants of this impetus to wait—for the material conditions, for heavenly ascent, for the messiah, for any number of ways to describe the wholeness which awaits us at the end of this or that dialectic. Camatte called this delay the *wandering of humanity* away from its course. We’ll follow our nihilist friend in giving up on this understanding of delay and looking instead to decomposition. This sense of delay cannot be trapped in any periodization (however technical or refined), but rather is descriptive of the whole of time

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consumed within history. This is the same reason that apocalyptic visions have also always defined the endpoint of Leviathan's conception of itself. History is the narration of perpetual decomposition.

Attentat argues that such a conception of history would mean an awareness of the unique character of events, but without locating them in any temporal logic (*order, progress, explanation, justification*). We interpret this as a collection of stories which hint toward the beast's tendencies, but never ascertain its totality. Taken as a whole, these stories do not offer a cohesive metanarrative, only fragmenting.

The negative or destructive side of history is for some of us more or less all that history has been or done. In the strict sense, nothing is being worked on or built up in or through history. The places, people, and events in past time that we enjoy or claim, appreciate or appropriate, must be creatively reidentified as non-historical, extra-historical, or anti-historical currents.

Any attempt to systematize the episodic explosions of revolt only rationalizes its defeat, reducing it to just another triumph in the perpetual motion of the decomposing beast.

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In sum, the perspective that says that decomposition is the logic of His-Story elucidates two things. First, that we were right to deny Progress; second, that we are not believers in its opposite, an inverted Regression away from a golden age. As I imagine it, a principal characteristic of whatever preceded His-Story (civilization, etc) would be its neutrality, its stony silence at the level of metanarrative. Rather than Progress or Regression we could describe historical decomposition as the accelerating complication of events. This acceleration is violent and dangerous. Here and there an eddy may form in which things either slow down or temporarily stabilize in the form of an improvement. What we can say with some certainty is that as historical time elapses, things get more complicated; and these complications so outrun their antecedents that the attempt to explain retroactively becomes ever more confusing.

Situationally, we may be getting some purchase for the moment, an angle, a perspective. But what Debord perhaps could not admit, what Perlman perhaps understood, is that decomposition had always been there in our explanation, our diagnosis, and the actions they

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are said to justify; and that His-Story is decomposition's double movement: as Civilization unravels, it narrates its unraveling. The dead thing, Leviathan, organized life, builds itself up as armor in and around it (which would include machines and a certain stiffening of postures and gestures, and concurrently thinking and action, in human bodies). But the dead thing remains dead, and it breaks down. It functions by breaking down. It creates ever more complex organizations (analyses of behavior) that then decompose, i.e. break down.

If the question of his-story is always already the gender question, then this perspective is crucial to our inquiry because the dead thing in question is gender—the ordering of life, the stiffening of our gestures. But gender has no life of its own. It destroys everything before it, then breaks down, it decays, and its decomposing parts are reorganized again. We are split in half, body and soul are recomposed into a gendered unity which itself decays, we rebel and then this rebellion is identified, split once more. It is this interplay of decomposition and recomposition that concerns us. *What is this re-capture of life other than domestication all over again?* Where do we locate *gender as domestication* if we can see decomposition

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and recomposition everywhere?

The theories we've critiqued have all been attempts to tell an origin story—to historically place gender. But gender cannot be situated at any point along a linear narrative: it is our very inscription into the line. Some theorists of gender will become obsessed with this task: universalizing and totalizing what is really incidence. The outside to gender is not situated at either end of this line, (nor within any neat periodization) but rather where the line breaks apart. If we decide to listen to the self-narration of this breaking apart, then it is because we might hear something within it (maybe a background noise, or a meaningful pause) which shows us where the decomposition can be hastened, where we might sneak out, or ways that others have attempted to evade being recomposed. This is how we can situate our perspective against his-story, Leviathan, gender, et al.

XI

In the last few years, there have been several attempts within the anarchist milieu to historicize gender. These attempts have largely focused on readings of two books about the same time period: *Caliban and the Witch* by Silvia Federici, and *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture* by Arthur Evans. *Caliban* represents a very thorough analysis of the mechanics

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of gender during the imposition of capitalism, specifically exploring the European colonialism as well as witch hunts in western Europe as a case of the accumulation of women's bodies and labor. *Witchcraft* narrates the same story, but from a different perspective.

While *Caliban* is worth reading for its wealth of information, its structure is largely problematic. Federici holds to an essentialist view of gender; she wants to tell the story of capitalism's relationship to *women*, a category she firmly defends. She dismisses all challenges to the naturalization of the gender binary with little more than an assertion of its correctness. Her tautology (*that the category of women is valid because it is a valid category*) is all the more absurd in that she conflates the experiences of women in one part of the world, during one time period, as being the basis of the gendered reality for women all over the globe, at all subsequent times. Consequently, her work wholly ignores the gendered violence against bodies which do not fit within her neat categories. The vast persecution of faggots during the Inquisition and witch hunt, to name one example, is afforded little more than a scarce mention in her book.

To her credit, she does challenge the orthodox Marxist interpretations of History: she claims that the rise of capitalism cannot be seen as progressive if looked at from the perspective of gender, but also that

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there is no linear transition to capitalism—only a series of violent episodes of capture and reversal. And yet still her perspective remains all too limited by her own autonomous variant of Marxism. For her, all of the atrocities of the witch hunts are to be explained by analyzing the economic necessities of the capitalist mode of production. More specifically, these atrocities are necessitated by the requirement that women perform reproductive labor within the newly forged proletariat. This could be read as a useful movement away from the absurd notion (held by Federici and her contemporaries) that contemporary gender violence can be uniquely and primarily explained in the domestic labor of European women in the last century. Yet still her cathexis upon economics feels like an attempt to project the same notion into the more distant past. We've already discussed the limitations of this approach with regard to gender; the re-orientation toward an earlier period doesn't change these limits. The text feels all the more limited for the fact that she makes maybe two mentions of the existence of gendered violence before this period and offers no explanations as to how that violence came about. This leaves us with that same poverty of naturalized gender.

A central theme of her work is *primitive accumulation*; the first accumulation of a population by Leviathan. She sees this as a transition in her own

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teleology. However the beast against which her subjects revolt is not born of this or any fixed period, it is constantly decomposing and being born anew. Its mode of capture in the form of gender is not predicated on its mode of production; it is firstly a bodily and spiritual operation upon which an economic mode is sutured. Her story begins amidst a revolt precisely because its subjects are rebelling against their earlier capture. The following round of accumulation, consequently, cannot be *the first*. It is also worth noting that in her exhaustive narrative of the history of the witch hunts, she remains dismissive if not silent about the role of magic itself. This amounts to a purely Materialist reading which cannot account for the spiritual dimensions of domestication as capture. Federici's tale is one story about an intensification of the process we call gender. She may be wrong in situating that story within a specific periodization, and in her account of why the events played out, but we're willing to sift through to glean what we may from it. Our instinct is that she may well be correct to pay particular attention to these events, but only on the chance that those rebels burnt at the stake may reveal some occult secrets regarding their own conflict against Leviathanic gender.

Arthur Evans' book is more interesting in that it diverges from Federici's on these exact points. Where she asserts an essential Woman, he specifically

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explores the witch hunts as an attempt to destroy a whole range of sexually deviant and gender variant people. Where Federici limits her critique to the rise of capitalism, Evans indicts all of western civilization in his. Where Federici is indifferent to the practices and beliefs of her story's victims, Evans tries to listen and perceive what arcane revelations they might offer in a violent and anarchic war against gendered civilization. He also weaves a critique of History throughout his text; indicting (as Fredy Perlman does elsewhere) historians for their complicity in the aggrandizing of Leviathan and the erasure of those it has tried to destroy. Most provocatively, he carves out space for myth within his narrative. And yet still he doesn't go far enough. Instead of an anti-history, he counters with *Gay History*, as if history's only problem was its homophobia. As with Federici's naturalization of the category women, we must also flinch at Evans' uncritical deployment of some universal *Gay People* into which all the divergent and unique heretics fit. This categorical construction is the exact recomposition alluded to in the *Attentat* piece; the swallowing whole of so many decomposed fragments by a reincarnation of gender. A queer critique must sidestep this trap.

So why read these books? What remains of them if we strip away the grand metanarratives about the movement of abstractions like History; or if we refuse

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to impose our contemporary subject categories back through time? The remainder is a collection of stories. And these stories differ from his-story, in that they are about the exploits and adventures of individuals, not the machinery which holds them captive. Stories interest us also because they do not seize upon this or that time, but enchant the teller and the listener into active participation. The story is the primary method of the magical practices of oral culture. His-story is the Socratic Ideal of these stories, the One story which cannibalizes all the others. Critical histories like *Caliban* and *Witchcraft* (or any ‘people’s history’) only serve to integrate these tales into the all-consuming one. This becomes a game of abstraction; how a collection of trial statements, handbooks on inquisition, heretical documents and biographies of accused witches become *The Accumulation of Women Within Capitalist Mode of Production* or *Gay History* or *The Old Religion*. Interestingly enough, it has been argued by some (such as David Abram) that

the burning alive of tens of thousands of women (most of the herbalists and midwives from peasant backgrounds) as “witches” during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may usefully be understood as the attempted, and nearly successful, extermination of the last orally preserved traditions of Europe—the last

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traditions rooted in the direct, participatory experience of plants, animals and elements—in order to clear the way for the dominion of alphabetic reason over a world increasingly construed as a passive and mechanical set of objects.

It is not surprising that as a consequence most accounts of this period suffer from the tragedy it imposed upon our conceptions of ourselves and of time. To truly read against His-story is to read with attention to the stories themselves, without an attempt to systematically or universally place them.

In a world that lacks the abstract ideals, directionality and universal moralism of His-storical thought, stories are useful in that they tell us discreet lessons that might assist us in our day to day conflicts. Only when we stop trying to decipher the Truth of His-story, can we actually notice the subtle web of meanings and messages hidden between the stories at our disposal. Here are a few we've noticed:

† Most of the stories about the imposition of gender are also stories about the creation of institutions and the flight of individuals from them. At times called enclosure or industrialism, these institutions tend to separate us from the vast experiences of life. Once we could find our own food, make our own clothes,

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discover our own sexual practices, heal ourselves and commune directly with the wild spirits. Now all of these experiences are mediated through farms, schools, churches, and hospitals. The institutionalization of the world could be understood as the material armors of the spiritual poverty imposed through domestication. This institutionalization is always violent. The ascendancy of institutional medicine, for example, emerges out of the ashes of herbalists burnt alive by witch hunters. Gender, is constantly re-defined and re-inscribed through these institutions. Foremost among them is the Family. The enclosure of forests and fields corresponds to an enclosure of peoples' means of care and survival into this private familial unit. The family becomes the primary unit for enforcing private property, enforcement of discipline, and policing of sexuality.

⚔ While Leviathan attempts to swallow the entire world, devouring any divergence, it inadvertently brings the outside within. Christianity made this law: *Thou shall have no other gods before me.* The Nazis attempted to perfect this racist science as *Gleichschaltung*. But the elimination of wild diversity is never total. The newly internalized divergence often re-emerges in the form of a heresy. This constant rupture of hegemony often seems like a widespread

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decomposition of the unity of this or that institution. Regarding gender, this heresy is elsewhere called the queer. Leviathan will, from time to time, deploy a specialized force of police to put down these heresies; these are called inquisitions. The holy war comes home, the war against the outside is turned inward. Little will be known of the doctrines and practices of these heretic sects, for the inquisition's method is also His-storical: it aims to annihilate their stories as much as their bodies. These inquisitions, whatever century they occur, will each emerge as a more advanced and innovative laboratory of torture and subjection; the most perverse in the recorded history of state repression. No expense will be spared in eliminating these internal colonies.

Ⓘ Active resistance to Leviathan often takes on an ecstatic character. Fredy Perlman will refer to the great dances spreading like fire throughout leagues of deserters. Inquisitors and witch hunters will be haunted by the image of nighttime orgies and *sabbats*. Elsewhere we've written that queer desire is the locus point of the dread of an entire social order's self-annihilation. The most beautiful moments of insurgency are immanent to a decomposition of gendered and sexual roles. Ecstasy, from *ekstasis*, is to be outside one's self. To flee from domestication is also to flee from the selves (in both their bodily and

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spiritual dimensions) to which we've been constrained. To be outside these selves is the initial break. These breaks are often couched in the language of their times: as animism, or renewal of long vanquished deities, the apocalypse as an immanent lived reality. What is consistent is the emphasis on direct and immediate joy. These eruptions of revolt are not limited to this or that historical period, but are universal throughout His-story. They happen in cities, in the countryside, amidst the peasantry, and in labor camps.

Ⓘ The repression of this ecstatic revolt will always include a sexual dimension. This repression aims to reinscribe the body and spirit of the resisters into their domestic selves. The use of sexual violence as a repressive tactic or the almost universal conflation of criminal charges against homosexuality, heresy and witchcraft help to illustrate this.[†] Many witch hunters

[†] In the handbooks of inquisitors, homosexuality and witchcraft are virtually indistinguishable. From the 1619 *Discours des Sorciers*: “You may well suppose that every kind of obscenity is practiced there, yea, even those abominations for which Heaven poured down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah are quite common in these assemblies.” The *Theologia Moralis*, published a few years later, explained that sodomy was a sort of gateway drug to witchcraft.

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implied or explicitly accused witches of having sexual relations with their animal *familiars*, continuing the Christian tradition of separating humanity out of the rest of the living world, while marking *the beastly* as worthy of domination. Nudity, hallucinogens and unkempt hair all become sensual crimes of the body. Collective forms of sexuality and sociality are criminalized in order to maximize productive time. Rape is consistently used as a tactic of domination by conquering armies, torture by inquisitors, and division amidst rebel populations. The state, at various moments, institutionalizes and subsumes prostitution, both as a pressure valve against revolt, but also as a cure for deviant sexual practices. Non-reproductive sexualities are annihilated both for the challenge they pose to the emergent heterosexual matrix, but also for the conspiracies and escape plots implied in these relations. Indigenous resisters are always denounced by missionaries as lacking morality regarding sexuality and gender; this immorality is mobilized in expansive fantasies of colonialists and pioneers. The bodies of colonized resisters are marked for rape and execution. These operations lay the groundwork for the genocidal endeavors of witch hunts and holocausts. As we are alienated from the world, we are alienated from our bodies.

† In order to pre-empt this type of escape from

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ourselves, Leviathan must institute ever more complex Subjects for its constituents. These subjects are the end result of a litany of techniques aimed at mechanizing, disciplining, emotionally manipulating and controlling the human body. The reduction of certain bodies to baby-factories is a prime example, but also the scientific diagnostics of various sexual deviants or the disciplinary control of gender variant people. Those who willfully or instinctually resist these techniques must be classified as Other. This othering is often composed of racializing and gendering processes. Against these Others, no violence is excessive. The Other, whether Witch or Terrorist or Drapetomaniac or Faggot or whatever, is the legitimate recipient of all sorts of brutalities designed to either assimilate or annihilate the deviancy. These crimes become *crimen exceptum*.

† Once Leviathan has constructed its institutions and the corresponding machine-like bodies, its primary project becomes the movement of these tendencies toward infinity. All of our efforts to critique the *The Child* in the previous issue of this journal are in response to this project of uninhibited growth. Those who practice any form of resistance to this project must therefore be the Other worthy of annihilation. The Child functions as the fantastic future of the parent's race. Any decline in the (civilized) population

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will be seen as a threat to the state, which in turn will ramp up the techniques of sexual repression described above. Workers and Slaves will be encouraged to produce more workers and slaves. In these moments, the sexual and abortive dimensions of heresy and witchcraft will come to the forefront of the inquisition trials. It is not a coincidence that witches and queer heretics were executed for having allegedly sacrificed children to the Devil. The demonization of birth control can also be understood through this lens. This fanatical desire to increase population lead even the most misogynist religious and state leaders to proclaim that women's sole virtue was their natural capacity for childbirth. As Martin Luther said: "whatever their weaknesses, women possess one virtue that cancels them all: they have a womb and they can give birth."

⚔ Rationalism, Reason, Enlightenment (or any other lie told by Leviathan about itself) never lead to the abolition of these genocidal and bloodthirsty practices. Rather, these ideologies only lead to the institutionalization and increased technological sophistication of violence. These ideologies end up serving as justification for brutality against the irrational Other. There is no linear progress out of this brutality. While the good subjects are may be encouraged to infinitely reproduce, the actual children

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of the racial or colonized Other will often be slaughtered with impunity. Even while promoting the ideology of the Child, the state is constantly and discreetly acting to impose a scientific campaign of eugenics, extermination and forced sterilization upon those it deems to be a racial outside.

These are only a few of an infinity of lessons we might extract from any constellation of stories—lessons which have as much relevance today as they would in centuries past. Rather than a narrative about Domestication as an Idea, we have a fragmentary and esoteric set of tales that each describes what domestication looks like in a particular moment. More excitingly they also describe how people chose to rebel against this process. To tell ourselves these stories is to connect to the individuals and moments which have attempted an escape from the nightmare of His-story. This connection becomes most meaningful when the stories enchant our own being and are given body through our own experiences. These stories only matter insofar as they produce a visceral understanding of flight from this ancient protocol of separation and capture. This is the dimension that must always be centered in a newfound reading of His-story as decomposition. Decomposition isn't only a force of nature or accident; it is primarily the willful refusal of

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Leviathan by individuals and groups. Leviathan breaks down when those who maintain its springs and wheels refuse to do so—when they flee to the mountains, sing, dance and practice ecstatic ritual; when they scream, loot and burn; when they rip out the armor, tear off the mask and burn the beast to the ground.

If these stories illustrate instances of domestication, they also illustrate the imposition of gender. The inherent decomposition which afflicts gender is what we call the queer; not this or that historically constituted subject category, but all the divergent bodily and spiritual expressions which escape their roles. In the first issue of the journal, we said that this was a queerness understood negatively. As rebellion/decomposition is intrinsic to stories about domestication, so is the outpouring of queer desire.

For this reason, dogmatists (particularly of the Marxist variety), have accused us of being *ahistorical* and *idealist*. To the former, we have no rebuttal. We'd happily find ourselves outside of the Story of mass rapists, kings and industrialists. We certainly won't cling to any of the Identities offered within it, nor trust any of the prescriptions laid out by its Scholars. Even worse would be to be *organized* by such a prescription of history. When our friends in *Attentat* described the recomposition and further decomposition which follows any decay of history, we

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read this as the Organization which follows moments of rupture, and the predictable falling-apart of all such political organizations. If we follow Rubin to say that all Organization is predicated on the exchange of gendered bodies, then we must also recognize inevitable rebellion of bodies against political organization. Radical or Feminist organizations are not exempt from this decomposition; it is routinely referred to as burnout or infighting, though we could understand it as an instinctual refusal to be captured and mobilized by this or that Organization.

After all, the tendency of queerness against history has always been the ecstasy of life lived outside of time; without concern for whether the *time is right*, for *the material conditions* or for *the Children*. Queerness must always emerge as *out of its time*, *deviant*, *irrational*.

To the latter charge, we can only shrug. The Socratic trick of Ideas doesn't really concern us. We'll leave the universals and the big stories to the Historians. We'll concern ourselves instead with the beautiful moments of heresy and revolt—the lived experiences, bodily practices and spiritual intensity—which hint toward our own.

The resistance is the only human component of the entire His-story. All the rest is Leviathanic progress.

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SECOND MYTHOS: LILITH AND EVE

In the patriarchal mythology of Judeo-Christian civilization, Adam was the first man, and God gave him a wife. Most know about Eve, his second wife. Fewer tell of his first; Lilith. Lilith differed in that she refused to be subservient to Adam. She wouldn't lay beneath him in the missionary position, and so she was expelled from Eden. Upon her expulsion, she became a demon, a succubus who travelled through night and through time, breeding with other demons and unleashing evil spirits. It is said that at night she still tempts women to leave their husbands, turns men into faggots, encourages all manner of non-reproductive sexuality, and even steals and eats children.

God the father couldn't make the same mistake twice, and so he fashioned Adam's second wife, Eve, out of one of Adam's own ribs, ensuring her obedience. And still she disobeyed, she ate the fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge and both she and her husband were banished from Eden. Some, such as Walter Benjamin, will view this as the expulsion of humanity from primitive communism. All the subsequent stories of The Holy Book of this religion is largely a lament of civilized life.

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Its first chapter narrates the fall, and the following chapters tell of the miseries within and exodus from various civilizations.

But what was this forbidden knowledge? What was the original sin? A certain heresy tells that the forbidden knowledge was the realization that a certain type of sex leads to reproduction. Once Adam and Eve knew this, they couldn't unlearn it. From here, all of their activities were tied to an emerging symbolic order of domination. Whereas before they had simply indulged in utopia without a future, now their actions had consequences. From this knowledge stems the invention of the role of the Father, as well as the knowledge necessary for agriculture, and even the first form of the rational thought which would later become Science. Patriarchy, Civilization, Reproductive Futurism. All of it stems from this abominable discovery.

The church's misogynists will blame Eve for this discovery and expulsion, but as we well know, it is the fathers, herders, husbands, inquisitors and witch hunters who put these arcane secrets to use in the mechanization of the body. These same woman-haters will sentence countless women and faggots to burn for having fallen under the influence of the rebel demon Lilith.

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If we cannot unlearn these secrets, what would it mean to destroy the machinery which dominates us through them? Can we recall Lilith and fly with her at night?

XII

Of all these stories, there is one which occurs consistently in almost any worthwhile history of gender: the splitting of the mind from the body. Various accounts will attribute this split to different times and places, but its centrality and power are beyond question. Anti-civilization critiques will often locate this as a primary emergence of dualism in the world (Zerzan will say it stems immediately from the dualism of gender), whereas Federici will find it in the machinations of the witch hunts; Evans in the rise of industrialism. Again, the precise origins interest us less than its repeated and unending operation. Wherever it started, the split widens and continues to tear us away from ourselves.

It is intuitive that such a split would be necessary in order to acclimate wild beings into those beings fit for labor in the world of work. If one is solely reliant on their own sensual perception of the world—the relation of their body to the bodies of other animals, plants and humans—then that bodily awareness is precisely what must be destroyed for the workers to be born. The disciplining of the body is the precondition of industrial existence.

This disciplining of the body can be understood as an internalization of the warfare occurring outside of it. The battleground of social control becomes the

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body itself, the site of an eternal conflict between Reason and Passion; Enlightenment and Darkness.

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 front because Reason must be vigilant against the attacks of the carnal self, and prevent ‘the wisdom of the flesh’ (in Luther’s words) from corrupting the powers of the mind. In the extreme case, the person becomes a terrain for a war of all against all.[†]

Others will call this Civil War, we will say it is part and parcel of the capture of the body in domestication. The body is a microcosm for this phenomena.

The commodification of bodies and of their capacities leads to an estrangement from self; a disassociation from the majority of one’s activity and experience. The body is reified and reduced to an object. This separation and objectification of the body reaches arrives at its own self-realization

[†] *Caliban and the Witch.*

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through Cartesian philosophy. Hobbes will enact a related attack upon the body in reducing it to the functioning of a machine. In later times, this mechanized view will reach a new apex through the theory of genetics. More esoteric theorists of genetics will argue that body is a machine-vessel for sentient and *selfish genes* which deploy said bodies in an effort to eternally perpetuate themselves. The philosophical mechanization of the body becomes so total that it is projected back through history and into our very biology. In a strange paradox, science revives God as the ultimate refutation of free will: genetics. Genetic manipulation and nanotechnological methods of surveillance and control are only the most contemporary manifestations of this archaic split.

But the projection of this invention onto the physical world is not done philosophically, it is done through bodily violence. The torture chambers of witch hunters, Nazi doctors and vivisectioners are also the laboratories for the emergence of the mechanized body. This is also, of course, the violence of gendered domestication, as gender is that first dualism and remains the primary operation upon the body. The body is continuously dissected so as to identify and naturalize the biological differences which supposedly justify the entirety of the gendered world. The sex/gender dichotomy, but also the dichotomies of race are neatly mapped over the body/mind, and

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corresponds to an unending set of disciplinary measures and techniques of the self designed to maintain binary conformity. Black and feminine bodies are imagined as indocile and in need of disciplining, while white masculine bodies are believed to be rational and tame. Bodies viewed with any innate connection to animality can then justifiably be exposed to hard labor, sexual violence, and extermination.

Personally, any inquiry into the split between the mind and body yields a crazy diffusion of revelations. I immediately think of the experience of motion sickness as a worthwhile example. As an instinctual response to feeling motion without consciously perceiving it, this nausea is a helpful defense mechanism against the inadvertent consumption of various poisons. Outside of industrialism, this phenomenon is only experienced on the off chance that someone eats a hallucinogen. Yet in a world like our own, where we are constantly disassociating from the movement of our bodies, this nausea becomes universal. The repetitive motion injuries from my performance of service work (where the quick movement of the wrists and knees corresponds more to the needs of a Point-of-Sale system or bag of groceries than to any other agency) is another reminder of a nearly total disconnect of my perception from the actual movement of my body.

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The split widens through our acclimation to this constant pain and dizziness; the further severance of perception functions as a tragic survival strategy.

Regarding gender, the split is all the more blatant. As a teenager, my own experience of dysphoria and body dysmorphia led to the self-enactment of a whole range of disciplinary measure and torture in the form of anorexia. This was an experience I shared with the vast majority of my friends who grew up as girls and queers. These techniques of self-control reappear in the context of sex work. In order to more profitably sell our sexual labor, we are constantly project the Ideal of gender upon our bodies; mutilating them and reducing them to objects of our own mechanization. More than just physiology, this domination concerns itself with gestures, grooming, communication, sexual propensity. In the actual experience of sex work, the split widens again. While some horrifying John is touching me, my mind struggles to be anywhere but my own body. I think about the capital, about my bank account, what *I'll have for dinner; anything besides what is actually occurring to my body*. I've experienced this flight from the body in countless other moments; while being arrested, while being sexually assaulted, while drunk. Even the experience of walking through the hallways of a high school can tear us from ourselves: how should I carry myself today so as not to face the predictable violence of a

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queer basher?

The story of the mind/body split gives us a helpful tool in understanding the complexity and nuance of the contention that domestication is the capture and engendering of our bodies. Where Fredy Perlman saw springs and wheels filling the armor encased body, we can read this as the re-ordering of the living body through its conflict with the rational mind. The fantasy of Biological Sex, of Race, and all other supposedly natural categories correspond to this same logic of severance of bodies from each other and the mind from the body. Taxonomies of the body consistently serve to rationalize, systematize and place the varied happenstances of the body into a Leviathanic structure. This mechanistic theory of biology attempts to lay down our destiny.

XIII

Most theories of the split between mind and body miss a concomitant, yet unique, split: the material from the spiritual. The separation and obscuring of the spiritual dimension of gendered existence leaves us with a tragic inability to express or even really comprehend the implications of these operations of capture. To ignore the spiritual dimension of domestication leaves us with only half the story; with a crass, mechanistic materialism that can only offer us

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crass, mechanistic solutions.

If the human body and not the steam engine, and not even the clock, was the first machine developed by capitalism, then what remains of all the capacities of the body which cannot be efficiently put to use or rationalized by this technological innovation? The imposition of a Cartesian Master/slave dynamic between the mind/body also means the generalization of that dynamic toward all of the forms and capacities of life which once enchanted the body's sensual connection to the wild world. Our being was inscribed into a soulless world and a machine-body.

Francis Bacon lamented that *magic kills industry*. And this is precisely because the continued relation of human beings to their magical capacities was also their capacity to find meaning and sustenance outside of the world of work and industry. Magical and spiritual beliefs were dangerous simply because their refusal of linear, empty time itself was a source of insubordination. In order for Leviathan to achieve its restructuring of the body, it had to first divorce the body of its participation in a cosmology of power and spirit. The perceived wildness of the witches had to be crushed alongside the wildness of the world. Leviathan alone would possess the ability to alter, enchant and deploy the body. This control over the body certainly happens in a largely metaphysical operation, yet it obscures itself and pretends toward

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the Natural and Objective. Perhaps the most sinister aspect of the spiritual decimation which mechanizes the body is that it denies the existence of spirit at all.

The mechanization of the body is so constitutive of the individual that, at least in industrialized countries, giving space to the belief in occult forces does not jeopardize the regularity of social behavior. Astrology too can be allowed to return, with the certainty that even the most devoted consumer of astral charts will automatically consult the watch before going to work.[†]

This mechanization was achieved through the twofold operation of denying the spiritual existence while also destroying the rebel body. Hobbes: “As for witches, I think not that their witchcraft is any real power; but yet they are justly punished, for the false belief they have that they can do such mischief, joined with their purpose to do it if they can.” Fredy Perlman and Arthur Evans will both criticize historians of the witch hunt for reiterating this same domesticated analyses—justifying the massacres of the witch hunts by projecting the mechanistic understanding of the body through time and into the

[†] *Ibid.*

‘natural’ world.

The stakes on which witches and other practitioners of magic died, and the chambers in which their tortures were executed, were a laboratory in which much social discipline was sedimented, and much knowledge about the body was gained. Here those irrationalities were eliminated that stood in the way of the transformation of the individual and social body into a set of predictable and controllable mechanisms. And it was here again that the scientific use of torture was born...

This battle, significantly occurring at the foot of the gallows, demonstrates both the violence that presided over the scientific rationalization of the world, and the clash of two opposite concepts of the body, two opposite investments in it. On one side, we have a concept of the body that sees it endowed with powers even after death; the corpse does not inspire repulsion, and is not treated as something rotten or irreducibly alien. On the other, the body is seen as dead even when still alive, insofar as it is conceived as a mechanical device, to be taken apart just like any machine. [...] The course of scientific rationalization was

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intimately connected to the attempt by the state to impose its control over an unwilling workforce.

Feral Faun put things another way in “The Quest for the Spiritual”:

This civilized, technological, commodity culture in which we live is a wasteland. For most people, most of the time, life is dull and empty, lacking vibrancy, adventure, passion and ecstasy. It’s no surprise that many people search beyond the realm of their normal daily existence for something more. It is in this light that we need to understand the quest for the spiritual...

I discovered that this dualism [between the material and the spiritual] was common to all religions with the possible exceptions of some forms of Taoism and Buddhism. I also discovered something quite insidious about the flesh/spirit dichotomy. Religion proclaims the realm of spirit to be the realm of freedom, of creativity, of beauty, of ecstasy, of joy, of wonder, of life itself. In contrast, the realm of matter is the realm of dead mechanical activity, of grossness, of work, of slavery, of suffering,

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of sorrow. The earth, the creatures on it, even our own bodies were impediments to our spiritual growth, or at best, tools to be exploited. What a perfect ideological justification for the exploitative activities of civilization... as exploitation immiserated the lives of people, the ecstatic joy of wild existence and of the flesh unrepressed became fainter and fainter memories until at last they seemed to be not of this world at all. This world was the world of travail (from the Latin root word which gives all the Romance languages their word for work) and sorrow. Joy and ecstasy had to be of another realm—the realm of spirit. Early religion is wildly orgiastic, clearly reflecting the lost way of life for which people longed. But by separating this wild abandon into the realm of spirit, which is in reality just a realm of abstract ideas with no concrete existence, religion made itself the handmaiden of civilized, domesticated culture...

This transformation of the body into predictable and controllable operations is absolutely central to the naturalization of the category of sex. The uterus becomes a machine—controlled by the state and doctors—for the production of new bodies. The

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incomprehensible diversity of the human body becomes reduced to a simplistic and quantitative relation between various chemicals and hormones. Certain shapes are deemed healthy while others abnormal and in need of surgical intervention. The binary of the so-called sex organs is almost achieved through this ongoing mutilation. Certain ratios of the distribution of fat, hair, bone structure and other occurrences come to be immutable proof of the eternal existence of the social prison of sex. In order for this prison to be totalizing, our conception of ourselves must be debased to these material operations. The engendering of humanity into the rational sexual body required the destruction of magic precisely because a magical view of the world holds that it is animated, unpredictable and that there is an occult force in plants, animals, stones, the stars and ourselves. Within this animist worldview, our individual capacities are not limited to the supposed biological destiny of sex; instead we can create, destroy, love, and take pleasure in an infinity of situations. This anarchic, molecular diffusion of powers throughout the world is antithetical to a gendered and social order which aims at capturing and dominating all life. *The world had to be disenchanted to be dominated.*

Here is science born. The disenchanted world can now be explained through rational, objective inquiry.

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And yet it is a meaningful contradiction that this new science did not mean an end to what it would have seen as an irrational persecution of witches. Instead, mechanistic philosophers celebrated the witch hunts as the advancement of the rational worldview. Francis Bacon, one of the early high priests of science, is explicit in taking methods of scientific inquiry directly out of torture chambers of the inquisition. For science, the whole world becomes analogous to a witch: a body to be interrogated, tortured, raped and unveiled. Far from relegated to this particular period, we can see repeating over and over again in Nazi death camps, the medical experimentation on prisoners, the vivisection of animals, etc. Scientific rationalism is not some progressive intervention against brutality, it is simply the universalization of that brutality against all the wild world, against the body and against the spirit. This scientific approach to the world becomes all the more terrifying when it is taken up by revolutionaries. The bourgeois revolutions fought in the name of Reason and Justice, ended up carving those abstractions into the flesh of individuals through the Guillotine, committees of public safety and health, and other implements of systemic terror. This terror took on a new dimension in the communist revolutions which followed.

We'll have to say, along with the editors of *Green Anarchy* that the scientific understanding of the

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world is the culmination of the segmentation of reality which first occurs in gender and in domestication:

Science is not neutral. It is loaded with motives and assumptions that come out of, and reinforce, the catastrophe of dissociation, disempowerment, and consuming deadness that we call “civilization.” Science assumes detachment. This is built into the very word “observation.” To “observe” something is to perceive it while distancing oneself emotionally and physically, to have a one-way channel of “information” moving from the observed thing to the “self,” which is defined as not a part of that thing. This death-based or mechanistic view is a religion, the dominant religion of our time. The method of science deals only with the quantitative. It does not admit values or emotions, or the way the air smells when it’s starting to rain; or if it deals with these things, it does so by transforming them into numbers, by turning oneness with the smell of the rain into abstract preoccupation with the chemical formula for ozone, turning the way it makes you feel into the intellectual idea that emotions are only an illusion of firing neurons. Number itself is not truth but a chosen style of

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thinking. We have chosen a habit of mind that focuses our attention into a world removed from reality, where nothing has quality or awareness or a life of its own. We have chosen to transform the living into the dead. Careful-thinking scientists will admit that what they study is a narrow simulation of the complex real world, but few of them notice that this narrow focus is self-feeding, that it has built technological, economic, and political systems that are all working together, which suck our reality in on itself. As narrow as the world of numbers is, scientific method does not even permit all numbers; only those numbers which are reproducible, predictable, and the same for all observers. Of course reality itself is not reproducible or predictable or the same for all observers. But neither are fantasy worlds derived from reality.

Science doesn't stop at pulling us into a dream world; it goes one step further and makes this dream world a nightmare whose contents are selected for predictability and controllability and uniformity. All surprise and sensuality are vanquished. Because of science, states of consciousness that cannot be reliably disposed are classified as insane, or at best "non-ordinary," and excluded. Anomalous experience,

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anomalous ideas, and anomalous people are cast off or destroyed like imperfectly-shaped machine components. Science is only a manifestation and locking in of an urge for control that we've had at least since we started farming fields and fencing animals instead of surfing the less predictable (but more abundant) world of reality, or "nature." And from that time to now, this urge has driven every decision about what counts as "progress," up to and including the genetic restructuring of life.

XIV

A critique of science now poses a tremendous problem for most theories of resistance. So many of the old means of resistance (especially those which are predicated on science and industrialism) have only reaffirmed this ordering of the world. The blindspot of this resistance is specifically that we ourselves have been domesticated in a biological dimension, in the capture of our bodies and the denial of our spirits. It wouldn't be enough to destroy all the computer infrastructure in the world, so long as we hold an unspoken view of ourselves as primitive computers. Any attempts to deploy science in the pursuit of liberation can only deepen the tragedy of separation and control which is the very essence of domestication.

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This can perhaps be more easily realized in Marxism than in any other system of thought in the last century. Fredy Perlman's text *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism* is brutal on this point:

Marx had a significant blind spot; most of his disciples, and many militants who were not his disciples, built their platforms on that blind spot. Marx was an enthusiastic supporter of the bourgeoisie's struggle for liberation from feudal bonds—who was not an enthusiast in those days? He, who observed that the ruling ideas of an epoch were the ideas of the ruling class, shared many of the ideas of the newly empowered middle class. He was an enthusiast of the Enlightenment, of rationalism, of material progress. It was Marx who insightfully pointed out that every time a worker reproduced his labor power, ever minute he devoted to his assigned task, he enlarged the material and social apparatus that dehumanized him. Yet the same Marx was an enthusiast for the application of science to production.

But this progress had to contend, at every juncture, with the decomposition which accompanied all Leviathanic organization. In order to do this,

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Leviathan has consistently needed new populations from which it could squeeze surplus. At times, the capture/domestication of these populations was achieved through colonialism, whereas at others it was to be found in domestic colonies (of Jews, witches, faggots, Muslims, heretics, etc.) This process of primitive accumulation

is responsible for the takeoffs, the windfalls and the great leaps forward. [...] new injections of preliminary capital are the only known cure to the crises. Without an ongoing primitive accumulation of capital, the production process would stop; each crisis would tend to become permanent.

Genocide, the rationally calculated extermination of human populations designated as legitimate prey, has not been an aberration in an otherwise peaceful march of progress. This is why national armed forces were indispensable to the wielders of capital. These forces did not only protect the owners of capital from the insurrectionary wrath of their own exploited wage workers. These forces also captured the holy grail, the magic lantern, the preliminary capital, by battering the gates of resisting or unresisting outsiders, by looting,

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deporting and murdering...

Human communities as variegated in their ways and beliefs as birds are in feathers were invaded, despoiled and at last exterminated beyond imagination's grasp. The clothes and artifacts of the vanished communities were gathered up as trophies and displayed in museums as additional traces of the march of progress; the extinct beliefs and ways became the curiosities of yet another of the invaders' many sciences. The expropriated fields, forests, and animals were garnered as bonanzas, as preliminary capital, as the precondition for the production process that was to turn the fields into farms, the trees into lumber, the animals into hats, the minerals into munitions, the human survivors into cheap labor. Genocide was, and still is, the precondition, the cornerstone and groundwork of the military-industrial complexes, of the processed environments of the world of offices and parking lots.[†]

Perlman goes on to follow this blindspot—the capture, genocide, and exploitation necessitated by

[†] *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism.*

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industrialization—through the thought of the vast majority of revolutionaries since Marx; anarchists, socialists and Leninists alike. All of them glorify industrialism as key within the progressive movement of history. For Fredy, the most innovative and horrifying consequence of this blindspot can be seen in the Bolshevik revolution and the thought of Lenin.

Lenin was a Russian bourgeois who cursed the weakness and ineptitude of the Russian bourgeoisie. An enthusiast for capitalist development, an ardent admirer of American-style progress, he did not make common cause with those he cursed, but rather with their enemies, with the anti-capitalist disciples of Marx. He availed himself of Marx's blind spot to transform Marx's critique of the capitalist production process into a manual for developing capital, a 'how-to-do-it' guide. Marx's studies of exploitation and immiseration became food for the famished, a cornucopia, a virtual horn of plenty...

Russian countryfolk could not be mobilized in terms of their Russianness or orthodoxy or whiteness, but they could be, and were, mobilized in terms of their exploitation, their oppression, their ages of suffering under the

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despotism of the Tsars. Oppression and exploitation became welding materials. The long sufferings under the Tsars... were used to organize people into fighting units, into embryos of the national army and the national police.

The presentation of the dictator and of the Party's central committee as a dictatorship of the liberated proletariat seemed to be something new, but even this was new only in the words that were used. This was something as old as the Pharaohs and Lugals of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, who had been chosen by the god to lead the people, who had embodied the people in their dialogues with the god. This was a tried and tested gimmick of the rulers. Even if the ancient precedents were temporarily forgotten, a more recent precedent had been provided by the French Committee of Public Health, which had presented itself as the embodiment of the nation's general will...

The goal of the dictator of the proletariat was still American-style progress, capitalist development, electrification, rapid mass transportation, science, the processing of the natural environment. The goal was the

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capitalism that the weak and inept Russian bourgeoisie had failed to develop...

Lenin did not live long enough to demonstrate his virtuosity as general manager of Russian capital, but his successor Stalin amply demonstrated the powers of the founder's machine. The first step was the primitive accumulation of capital. If Marx had not been very clear about this, Preobrazhensky had been very clear. Preobrazhensky was jailed, but his description of the tried and tested methods of procuring preliminary capital was applied to vast Russia. The preliminary capital of English, American, Belgian and other capitalists had come from plundered overseas colonies. Russia had no overseas colonies. This lack was no obstacle. The entire Russian countryside was transformed into a colony.

The peasants were not the only colonials. The former ruling class had already been thoroughly expropriated of all its wealth and property, but yet other sources of preliminary capital were found. With the totality of state power concentrated in their hands, the dictators soon discovered that they could manufacture sources of primitive

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accumulation. Successful entrepreneurs, dissatisfied workers and peasants, militants of competing organizations, even disillusioned Party members, could be designated as counter-revolutionaries, rounded up, expropriated and shipped off to labor camps. All the deportations, mass executions and expropriations of earlier colonizers were reenacted in Russia.

By [this] time, all the methods of procuring preliminary capital had been tried and tested, and could be scientifically applied.

Perlman will contend that this innovative method of capture will later inspire the likes of Hitler, Mussolini and Mao, most of whom will dispense of the rhetoric of the Bolsheviks, but maintain the boiled-down scientific essentials of the method. And since the revolution which first implemented this method failed in its rhetorical aim of liberating humanity from wage labor, this too was dispensed of as an embarrassment. Instead, the progress of the techno-industrial state is itself the justification. The primitive accumulation needed for the ascendance of later totalitarian states would be found in the internal enemies of the Parties. Domestication no longer needs to justify itself through anything other than its own

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scientific method. And science itself would invent methods that earlier genocidal colonialists could only have dreamed of; Eugenics, Gas Chambers, Laboratories. These industrializers will each imagine a triumphant reduction of the entire Eurasian continent to a site of resources to be domesticated and accumulated. Western Rationalists will attempt to explain these mass murderers as irrational, and yet would see people like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson as perfectly reasonable leaders, *even though these men envisioned and began to enact the conquest of a vast continent, the deportation and extermination of the continent's population, at a time when such a project was much less feasible.*

What is consistent in all of these situations is a deeply seated belief in human progress through the expansion of industrial civilization. Modern day Marxists will say that these applications of Marx's theory were incorrect and that they were deviant or revisionist. But isn't this horror the consequence of every attempt to impose any theory on a mass industrial scale?

Applied scientists used the discovery [of the atom] to split the atom's nucleus, to produce weapons which can split every atom's nucleus; nationalists used the poetry to split and fuse human populations, to mobilize genocidal

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armies, to perpetuate new holocausts.

The pure scientists, [nationalist] poets and researchers consider themselves innocent of the devastated countrysides and charred bodies... every minute devoted to the capitalist production process, every thought contributed to the industrial system, further enlarges a power that is inimical to nature, to culture, to life. Applied science is not something alien; it is an integral part of the capitalist production process.

What becomes clear is that any attempt to flesh out a scientific theory of domination (whatever the intentions of the theorists) becomes put to work by domination itself as a blueprint. This could be understood as the *de/recomposition* of history. More significantly it ties into the critique articulated above of other Scientific disciplines: Anthropology and Psychoanalysis. The pure theories of Anthropologists, Psychoanalysts and Marxists always tend to become new means of domestication: universities, asylums and work camps. Camatte is at his most lucid when critiquing the role of theory:

Theory, like consciousness, demands objectification to such an extent that even an

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individual who rejects political rackets can elevate theory to the status of a racket. In a subject posing as revolutionary, theory is a despotism: everyone should recognize this. After the domination of the body by the mind for more than two millennia, it is obvious that theory is still a manifestation of this domination.

For this reason, it is all the more important that we dispense with scientific certainty and methodology in our inquiry into gender. Otherwise, the solutions will continue to be more of the same: cyber-feminism, the virtual flight from the body, automated reproduction, a flight which is “illusory, a forgetting of the whole train and logic of oppressive institutions that make up patriarchy. The dis-embodied high-tech future can only be more of the same destructive course.”[†] In the same way that the mind/body split assures us that idealist solutions to gender will always fail (*Queering the economy! Queering the State!*) so too does the material/spiritual split guarantee us that the blind spot of industrialism will continue its course of annihilation and control.

To return momentarily to Feral Faun:

[†] John Zerzan, *Patriarchy, Civilization, and the Origins of Gender*.

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Materialism still accepts the matter/spirit dichotomy—but then proclaims that spirit does not exist. Thus, freedom, creativity, beauty, ecstasy, life as something more than mere mechanical existence are utterly eradicated from the world. Mechanistic materialism is the ideology of religion updated to fit the needs of industrial capitalism. For industrial capitalism requires not only a deadened, dispirited earth, but deadened, dispirited human beings who can be made into cogs in a vast machine.

XV

Throughout the body of this text we've been weaving together a critique of the scientific view of gender, as well as resistance practices which remain rooted in this domestication. We'll now turn explicitly toward one of the most prominent of these ideologies regarding gender: Marxist Feminism (or its contemporary euphemism, *Materialist Feminism*). This ideology largely emerged in the seventies as an attempt to synthesize the critique of capitalism with the critique of Patriarchy. Gayle Rubin's inquiry, which we've detailed above, was largely a critique of the limitations of the Marxist perspective. Queer theory and black feminism and transfeminism also emerged largely in reaction to the inability of this

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theory to account for the majority of gender violence experienced by a whole range of subjects excluded from the scientific sample. The theories of contemporary Marxist feminists haven't deviated all that far from their roots, but the questions posed decades ago remain largely unanswered.

These interventions are relevant to our own critique, but we begin from a different place. Because it is materialist, Materialist Feminism ignores the spiritual dimensions of gender, and as a consequence has not been able to ascertain or critique gender as domestication. Because of its prioritization of the Historical and Economic it offers very little regarding the experience of the individual bodies ensnared or excluded by these Leviathanic abstractions.

In the seventies, Rubin and others said that the primary limitation of Marxist feminism was its conception of origins. For them, the exploitation and domination of women was based in the separation and gendering of the spheres of productive and reproductive labor. Rubin contended that the domination of women originated outside this separation, but also that both the sex/gender system and the economic system had their own modes of production and reproduction (the sex/gender system is *productive* of gender and sexual identities themselves, while there is also unquantifiable *reproduction* of the economic system that happens ways irreducible to

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domestic labor). Already then it was sloppy to reduce the two systems as being simply the productive and reproductive spheres of the capitalist mode. For her, the origins of gender are far more archaic, emerging at the beginning of civilization itself. While obviously feminist anthropologists will win against Marxist feminists on the origins debate any day, our inquiry takes us outside this theoretical pissing contest. Rubin's perspective isn't interesting to us because its evidence is older (after all, the anthropological method is as rooted in the failures of science as the historical economic one). Instead, we're interested in the way her text contributes to the elaboration of gender and domestication as being one and the same process with both bodily and spiritual operations.

We'll contend that in order to plot an escape from a system which holds us captive, let alone to strike out against the beast itself, we must understand not only where it comes from, but more importantly how it operates in the present. Marxist feminism feels inadequate in both these regards. To locate a theory of domination in the performance of *domestic labor* without starting from a critique of domestication will always amount to a partial story; a description of specific moments (or fantasies) in specific times and places, but will miss the discreet enemy function which ties it to all the other moments of gender. More sophisticated iterations of Marxist feminism will say

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that gender is obviously older than capital, but that capital takes up and consumes all pre-existing social relations, therefore exploiting gender along with all the others. And while it is true that there is a dimension of the unique in every moment, and that genders within capitalism are different than within other modes of production; this does not prove that the essence of gendered domination has changed all that much. Rather, the gender-form emerges from millennia before and stays consistent in its twofold bodily/spiritual assault on human existence.

The moments of the accumulation of domestic labor (in the witch hunts, or within Fordism) are two worthwhile stories about how gender has taken its contemporary form, but they remain two stories among many. To over-prioritize these moments of economic exploitation is to silence and undervalue the countless stories which do not fit inside the neat narrative. It is popular for thoughtful Marxists to assert that the State may be far older than capital, but that their inseparable interweaving has completely transformed and reconstituted the state; and the two forms must be destroyed together. And yet all attempted Marxist revolutions have only ever reproduced the state, precisely because the form is more ancient and thoroughly colonizes our being. In this same way, a simple assertion that gender and capital have become terribly intertwined and must be

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destroyed together is not a theory of how that will happen or even much of an analysis of how this came to be. Just as a focus on the state as part in parcel of capital will in practice function as a blindspot, so too will this situation of gender. We're reminded of the laughable moments in the last decade where various communist parties had to make a complete reversal of their positions on queer people, without ever altering the structure of their understanding. The effort to expand and adapt the ideology (to account for categories it previously ignored) consistently feels like the same politics of liberal inclusion sutured on top of vulgar Marxism. Yes, gender is exploited by capital and the two are largely indistinguishable and inseparable in the present, but this is not sufficient. Just as a refusal of the state-form would require an understanding of its emergence and function up until the present (without vulgarly systematizing it within capital) so too does gender require such an inquiry. If we want to destroy it, we cannot limit our canon to those moments which fit neatly into a story about capital. We'll also need to draw upon the archaic origins of gender and the voices and biographies of those who attempted to burn it out of themselves.

The Marxist feminist perspective will always fail on the discussion of origins, because even those who critique the social construction of gender will affirm a naturalized view of sex. For them, socialized gender is

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a corruption of the biological realities of males and females of the species with regard to reproduction. We've already discussed how this split is itself domestication and that it is Leviathan's function to universalize and naturalize its machinery into the wild. If Marxist feminism has refused this naturalization of sex, we have scarcely seen it. Even those who go as far as to problematize essentialist gender, will still default to discussing a transhistorical 'men and women' within all their complex formulations.

Even if we only explored gender in the present, we would still find the story of domestic labor inadequate to the task. The narrative situates the Family as the primary site of the exploitation of women's reproductive labor, labor which is necessary for the continued function of the capitalist mode of production. It is true that the Family does serve this purpose, but to stop our critique here is to be limited by a mechanistic and materialist view. We've already explored a theory that the Family is a structure which emerges out of the exchange of the bodies of others as commodities, and that it is imbued with a mystical power through the enactment of ancient rituals regarding sexuality and kinship. The consolidations of these mystical kinship structures were the basis of more complex human social relations including Leviathan and the State. A specific power of inclusion

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enchants those who participate in these Families, for they become the inheritors of millennia of lineage and tasked with the transmission of that heritage into the future (we've discussed this previously in the symbol of the Child). Fascism fetishizes these bonds, but so too do most political traditions. The Marxist analysis of the Family will tell us that this structure emerges out of the specific economic conditions of capitalism, but this is empirically untrue. Capital has shaped the Family in unique ways, but the bonds which animate and give power to the Family (bonds of kinship, transmission, ancestry, sexuality and reproductive futurism) stream through His-story and constitute an inheritance of millennia of control and domination. To take seriously the task of destroying this unit, we must comprehend it in its totality—in its economic function, sure, but also for its imprisonment and shaping of both the body and the spirit. Why does the family hold such an intrinsic place in all domesticated culture? Why do people form them? Why do they remain in them? Why do some actually claim to love and enjoy their abusive positions within them? Why does it remain the shadowy realm of open secrets and quiet little violences? These questions cannot be answered through economics alone.

A Marxist attempt would answer that women remain in the family because they are denied the wage, and men because they need the free

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reproductive labor, but this answer feels paltry compared to the enormity of the questions posed. How could this or that arrangement of the wage relationship be the glue which holds together the most formative social relation within civilization? It isn't. We've said already that science is a narrow view of the world which reduces the diversity of reality into the shape of its view. This tendency is all too clear in the scientific interpretation of the family. This view is far too narrow to account for most people's experiences of gender and violence, but even too narrow to describe most people's families. Black, brown and indigenous feminists have consistently critiqued the Marxist formulation as being a primarily white understanding which has little to no application to their lives. The formulation even excludes many white families, especially those which are very poor. My Mom, for example, worked two jobs in a factory and a nursing home to support us when I was a child. Her mother still works at the same diner where she has worked for decades. And yet the content of my family retains its domestic character. We've followed Fredy and *Attentat* in asserting that history is the decomposition of Leviathanic forms. So too is the family constantly decomposing and rising anew from the ashes. At this point, so many 'new normal' familial arrangements exist, none of which are accounted for in the simplistic binarist understanding

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of gender. How does a Marxist view account for this prolonged moment of the Family's decomposition?

A queer position contends that the family is a site of our exploitation, yes, but also has been a consistent operation of torture, constraint and domination which vastly outpaces the needs of domestic labor. For others, we often find the family also as a site of exclusion, specifically at the moments when we rebel against it. The Marxist worldview has nothing to say about either our mutilation within the family-form or our expulsion from it. Further, it derides our individual and collective revolt against this form as *ahistorical* and *idealist*. We are acting too soon or without the right conditions; but these rationalistic approaches have only ever affirmed the family (even if critiquing its role economically). Our revolt will never be comprehensible from within it.

Even for the proponents of this theory, it explains very little about their own lives. In the seventies, the situation already was based on a group of women objectively studying an Other. In the present, we have academics studying the ideas of academics who studied this Other body of women (and then calling it historical materialism). I think of those feminist professors whose liberation comes through hiring a housekeeper.

Our inquiry begins firstly from our own lives, and then follows the lines along which we can locate our

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own struggles within and against gender in the struggles of others. Outside of this, all inquiry feels meaningless and empty. In my own life and experiences, Marxism's formulations around the split between reproductive and productive labor is incredibly superficial in addressing gender violence. It doesn't explain why old men pay to have sex with me or to watch videos of my sexual labor. It doesn't account for what investment people outside my family would have in policing my sexuality and gender expression. It doesn't explain why rape and sexual violence happens to those of us who don't have the biological capacity to give birth. It definitely doesn't account for the prevalence of date rape drugs at queer bars and parties, or for our murder at the hands of bashers and police. While I won't preclude that possibility that such an accounting could happen someday, we've seen no efforts in this direction. A refusal of Materialism isn't an affirmation of some sort of queer Idealism, rather it is an attempt to explore what has been cut out and discarded by both of these worldviews, the body and the spirit. These experiences require a bodily and spiritual exploration, one which takes seriously the simultaneous question of domestication. Such an exploration seems entirely necessary if we want to comprehend the vast range of gender violence (both the exclusionary and imprisoning violences against queers and gender

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variant people, and also the more mundane daily exploitations in the family), and to recognize them as one operation.

That the theory of Marxist feminism is flawed is only the beginning of the problem. As with any other theory, its applications will always be haunted by the blind spots within it. We've already shown that pure sciences tend to produce horrifying results. The application of this theory, of course, is Organization. Often the organization is so banal and reformist as to not warrant exploration (*Wages for Housework!*, for example). Other false solutions (mechanized reproduction or self-managed housework) have thankfully not been put into practice on any notable scale.

Another application of Marxist feminism is separatism. It is worth focusing on because of the specific tragedy that its history shows. The Separatist project begins from an awareness of the dynamic we've also illustrated in organization (for all organization to be constituted through the exchange circulation of gendered bodies), but strives to self-manage this circulation. Women must be organized into this or that group or party, where other *more conscious* women will help to structure their thought and activity. The exclusion of certain genders from the separatist group has never exorcised the demonic quality of organization itself. Beyond this, it has

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actually taken on a particularly sinister dimension through its willful and vitriolic exclusion of transgendered women and others. Marxist feminist activists were instrumental in the formation of state policies of excluding these women from state services, from activist groups, from shelters. These feminists served as the frontline of the formation of transmisogynist policies in countless political and cultural institutions. As with all scientific theories of domination, this variant of feminism has historically helped to materialize the exclusion of those who cannot fit within its theoretical constructs. Contemporary Marxist feminists will contend that since they are avowedly not transmisogynists, they do not have to answer for this tradition. And yet the theoretical underpinning of this attitude amongst their foremothers has not been changed in any meaningful way. Inclusion of a few references to transwomen at best, repetition of the past at worst. If the tendency is going to substantially break from this history, it would require a thorough analysis which is very far from happening. How can a purely materialist conception of gender explain the choice of individuals to risk their lives, freedom, and wellbeing in order to live openly as a gender other than what they were assigned at birth? It can't, obviously, unless it explores the interplay of the spiritual and also bodily operations of gender. We have very little faith

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in the emergence of a categorical theory of gender which does not become an apparatus for policing those categories. This policing is accompanied by the age old problem of politics: that of representation. Claims to be *The Women* or *The Feminists* or even *The Queers* will always tell one tale of gender, at the exclusion of so many others. Those who draw these lines will always draw them through the bodies of others.

One recent answer to these critiques has been the introduction of the concept *not-men*[†]. Most attempts at defining this category are extremely clumsy. At times it is used to mean not-cismen, or to explicitly say that faggots are not welcome at certain meetings. At others it simply means women plus trans people. Some feminists have even said that the category at times includes ‘emasculated men of color.’ Usually it is just postmodern shorthand for women. As with any other categories, it only functions if it has a firm border, and this border will always be policed. At every step of the way, it is ceaselessly problematic. The least problematic definitions of it (such as the one in “Undoing Sex”[‡]) are so vague as to not have

† In *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism*, as well as other recent publications and debates from within the Marxist Feminist milieu.

‡ In “Undoing Sex,” published in *LIES*, C.E. Writes:

“Effectively, the not-man cannot speak, cannot be

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any practical application. And it is always in the practical applications that these theories enact their violences. The prospect of a political body of largely cisgendered women determining which genderqueer or transfeminine individuals are *not-men* enough to participate in their groups is quite nauseating. This categorical policing mirrors all the others. Meet the new binary, same as the old binary. A way out of this dilemma may be to start from experience rather than identity. To seek out conspirators based on a shared experience of a range of gender violence. Some proponents of *not-men* have defined it similarly ('those who are raped,' 'those who do caring labor') but none of these experiences are limited by identity, and to accept a phenomenological or experiential

represented with total accuracy, as it is defined through lack and absence. Still, it is a point in a relationship which is constitutive of gendered class, and discussion of it is necessary for any understanding of what it is to be a woman, man, transgender, or queer. *Not-man* is a means of addressing the problem of patriarchy—the way in which maleness and male subjectivity produces, appropriates, and exploits a condition of silence, death, and lack—while hopefully avoiding the presupposition of a coherent feminist or female subject. *Not-maleness* is constitutive of gender's class reality—forms of womanhood and manhood exist only in relation to it—but it is irreducible to one or several classes."

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framework would dispense with the utility of the category at all. If the concept is either problematic or useless then why has there been so much fancy footwork put into an attempt to save the concept? What we're really seeing is a desperate attempt to save binary categories, in a world where they've long been decomposing.

XVI

There is a trend within communist thought which aspires to transcend the limitations illuminated in the various attacks on Marxism: *communization*. While it is beyond the scope of these fragments to explore and critique this textual body in its entirety, we will engage with it because its recent proponents have taken on the question of gender. Most of the writings of American communizers dealing with gender has been influenced by the French group *Theorie Communiste*. TC posits that in addition to the contradiction of labor and capital, there is a second contradiction between men and women. For them, these two contradictions intersect in the present to form the central dynamic of capitalist society. In this way, TC is similar to Gayle Rubin; imagining two distinct systems of production and of gender which become interwoven. While it is laughable to reduce the dynamic of the present to being two

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contradictions, we are also not interested in *any* quantifiable arrangement of binary contradictions. Domestication is an infinitely complex and diffuse splitting of life; it introduces countless contradictions which cannot be summarized as any one, two, or five systems. We'll break from both of them in asserting that there is never a period where these systems are distinct, but rather that they've always been examples of the fracturing of domestication.

However contrived TC's theory of gender feels, it seems worthwhile to explore the ideas of those who've drawn inspiration from them. As the cutting edge of Marxist thought on gender, it is here that we'll look to see if we can find a common critique of domestication. Specifically we'll briefly look at three texts: "Communization and the Abolition of Gender" by Maya Andrea Gonzalez, "The Gender Distinction in Communization Theory" by P. Valentine from *LIES* journal, and "The Logic of Gender" in the third issue of the journal *Endnotes*.

Gonzalez's critical reading of TC is interesting for a few reasons. Primarily, she critiques TC for having sutured their theory of gender on top of the already existing theory of the Capitalist Mode of Production, thus dispensing of the historical specificity of gender at the point where they intersect. She criticizes their fetishistic focus on the role of unpaid domestic labor performed by women and says that their domination

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is tied up in the way class society accumulates their capacity to give birth. This interests us firstly because of its shift outside the more vulgar Marxist understanding, but also because it relates to our critique of reproductive futurism laid out previously. The fantasy of the Child remains the primary structure of the shaping of the social order, and as such has to be indicted as central to the gendered matrix. We are also excited by her attempts to denaturalize both the categories of sex and gender.

Not all human beings fit into the categories of male and female. The point is not to use the language of biology to ground a theory of naturalized sexuality, as distinct from socialized gender. Nature, which is without distinction, becomes integrated into a social structure—which takes natural averages and turns them into behavioral norms. Not all ‘women’ bear children; maybe some ‘men’ do. That does not make them any less beholden to society’s strictures, including at the level of their very bodies, which are sometimes altered at birth to ensure conformity with sexual norms.

This denaturalization fits nicely with a conception of gender as domestication, precisely because it is the domestication process which integrates the wild

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proliferation of bodies into social structure. The social structure which takes ‘natural averages’ and turns them into police mechanisms is the oldest social structure, the emergent kinship structures which give rise to the first leviathans. To the text’s credit, it situates this policing and categorical construction at the very beginning of class society. Gonzalez’s writing on this point is almost entirely unique in a terrain of thought which otherwise holds sex, if not gender, to be essential. We smile on this point, but have to remind ourselves why this shift feels necessary. To situate gender as domestication is crucial for us, only if our task is also to break genders hold over our lives.

Gonzalez calls for the abolition of gender, and does so through theorizing communization as its overcoming:

Since the revolution as communization must abolish all divisions within social life, it must also abolish gender relations—not because gender is inconvenient or objectionable, but because it is part of the totality of relations that daily reproduce the capitalist mode of production. Gender, too, is constitutive of capital’s central contradiction, and so gender must be torn asunder in the process of the revolution. We cannot wait until after the revolution for the gender question to be solved.

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Its relevance to our existence will not be transformed slowly—whether through planned obsolescence or playful deconstruction, whether as the equality of gender identities or their proliferation into a multitude of differences. On the contrary, in order to be revolution at all, communization must destroy gender in its very course, inaugurating relations between individuals defined in their singularity.

While we have a great deal of skepticism about this type of total revolution, there is much common ground here: the desire to inaugurate relations between individuals in their singularity, to abolish gender and not simply proliferate it, and to destroy gender alongside our destruction of all the rest. Our disappointment then is precisely at the point where this line of inquiry stops. Gonzalez's work in this piece amounts to an elaboration of why *this would have to happen*, but remains almost entirely silent on how, when or by whom. In this sense, her text has a problem which is consistent in communization theory. As with most other arguments around communization, it remains stuck as a sort of aspirational tautology. *Communization destroys capital; capital is gender; communization destroys gender; if the revolution does not destroy gender then it is not communization.* The moments in the text which

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hint toward what this destruction would look like are just a reiteration of the tautology.

That overcoming is only the revolution as communization, which destroys gender and all other divisions that come between us.

We want to read this aspiration as a beginning of a struggle against domestication, but we have not seen this line continue. Gonzalez is correct in articulating the necessary destruction of gender *in course*, but has yet to give a shape to the *course* itself. It is notable that she points to a ‘loosening of the straight jacket of the heterosexual matrix’ but says that queer theory cannot account for this. We’ll argue that this loosening is not a phenomenon deterministically bound to the unfolding of demographics and economics, but rather is the willful activity of many who have attempted to give their own shape to the course of the matrix’s destruction. The materialist historical account of gender is precisely why we feel disappointed by the prescriptions of communization: the possibility of a willful revolt against the straight jacket of gender remains absent.

P. Valentine’s piece begins by reading both the work of TC and Maya Andrea Gonzalez. She affirms much of the same contention, saying that communization theory is uniquely on the brink of

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being able to offer a theory of gender and capital as a single system. Beyond this, for her, communization is *a demand for the abolition of fundamental material elements of the reproduction of gender*. She, like Gonzalez, critiques TC for their suturing of gender on top of the capitalist mode of production, and strives to find the ‘real material ground’ of the production of gender difference. She contends that this will be the basis for a ‘non-idealist’ theory of the abolition of gender. At best it is funny that she searches for this *material ground* in the *theoretical demand* of esoteric communism. At worst, this attempt to create ‘non-idealist’ content feels eerily complicit in the typical Historical operation of justifying the extermination of those rebels whose escape attempts are not easily rationalized within these material contexts. For Valentine, this ‘real material ground’ is located in the separation of productive and reproductive spheres, but also in the realm of childbirth. To her credit, she explicitly says that neither of these phenomena account for the emergence of the gender distinction, but she has no other theory on this regard.

Further, and more fundamentally, how does this appropriation of women, on whatever basis (childbearing or no) begin? In other words, what is the origin of the gender distinction and how is it reproduced? These questions are

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outside the scope of this article, but we do believe that the answers both involve gendered physical violence and sexual violence.

What does it mean to assert the necessity of finding the material ground for the emergence of gender, and then to refuse to do so? The material ground is based in sexual violence, but this violence is a tool of domestication's exchanging of bodies and enforcing of spiritual submission. This dead-end in communization seems like a willful refusal to follow the inquiry to where it should take us. Valentine actually interjected into a panel discussion with Silvia Federici in Oakland when another speaker was beginning to discuss this very question of gender and civilization by mocking 'what is civilization, even?' She may not want to let that discussion happen, but it is precisely the discussion we are interested in. Civilization is the archaic monstrosity which produces itself through this very sexual violence and gendering operation Valentine alludes to. It is the holy grail of 'material ground' that Marxist feminists search for but can never find. Valentine is unique in situating sexual violence as the basis of the accumulation of women's labor (and not simply a consequence of accumulation, as almost all other Marxists would say), but still cannot speak about when and why this violence emerges.

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She says that “understanding sexual violence as a structuring element of gender also helps us to understand how patriarchy reproduces itself upon and through gay and queer men, trans people, gender nonconforming people and bodies, and children of any gender...” but she gives absolutely zero content to this ‘understanding.’ She says “that communization opens avenues toward new and more rigorous theories of gender oppression that are able to link the exploitation and oppression of women with violence and oppression based on heteronormativity and cisnormativity.” She can cite that this violence exists, but does not begin to traverse the avenue that is supposedly opened by communization theory. The only heavy lifting she does on gender violence is explicitly limited to ‘violence against women.’ This feels like the same lip service and politics of inclusion we’ve derided already.

This is a noticeable trend in the essay: Valentine identifies limits within other communizer thought, and offers platitudes about how these limits must be overcome, but does little to start the process of that overcoming. This is true of the questions of origins, sexual violence, the gender violence experienced by queer and transgender people, and the violence imposed upon children. She does the same with race, identifying it as a limit to communization thought, but ending there. This strategy appears as a tragic

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repetition of the academic worldview, but also as the hard limit to the usefulness of communization in our own inquiry. We aren't interested in academics' self-congratulatory pontification on how they should start considering our experiences: *we want a way out*.

At the time of writing, the most recent contribution to the gender and communization discourse appears in the third issue of the journal *Endnotes* under the title "The Logic of Gender." Were we to wager a hope that this piece would flesh out some of the limits set in the first two texts, we would be sorely disappointed. If anything, this piece takes a hard turn away from the questions of origins, sexual violence and the means of destruction. Instead, *Endnotes* is explicit in being only interested in those forms of gender specific to the capitalist mode of production. Ironically, their definition of those forms centers on the trading of bodies as gendered commodities, a process which Camatte, Rubin, Perlman and countless others have identified long before the capitalist mode of production. The piece limits its focus to the contemporary split between two spheres of labor central the capitalist production. Elsewhere defined as public/private, productive/reproductive, or waged/unwaged, *Endnotes* devote most of their intellectual labor to defining more precise, specific and sophisticated terms for these spheres. What they settle on are humorously

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long-winded *directly market-mediated sphere* (DMM) and the *indirectly market-mediated sphere* (IMM). True to form, they go on and sketch a periodization of these spheres beginning with the primitive accumulation of the 16th and 17th centuries, jumping forward to Fordism, dwelling for a moment on the seventies and concluding with the present Crisis. We could accept this as an interesting constellation of stories, if it wasn't for the insistence by the storytellers that this is empirical, material His-story—the one story which consumes all others. This His-story is noticeably thin for people who pride themselves on their erudite and meticulous historical analysis; to say nothing of its fixation on those exact same periods on which previous Marxist accounts of gender fixated. This new formulation of DMM and IMM spheres is maybe the most vulgar of all the Marxist formulations we've explored so far.

And yet there is one moment of the text which we may find useful. The piece specifically denaturalizes gender and sex (with the help of queer theory) and says that groups of individuals are *anchored* into these binary spheres—spheres which are constantly changing which maintaining the universal binary structure itself. It describes the naturalization of sex and gender as moments of this *anchoring*, and claims that this process happens over and over again, reimposing and reproducing gender. They criticize a

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formulation for self-managed reproductive labor (put forward by Federici) as just another dreadful reimposition of gender. We'd agree with this, but are interested in locating the other moments of reimposition. If we are to be generous, this process of *anchoring* and *reimposition* of gender could be understood as a euphemism for what we call *domestication*. Sadly the text explores this no further.

In keeping to the motifs of communization theory, the author(s) will allude to more limits that they do not actually explore. In what is essentially a footnote to an addendum, they say that their theory is predicated on taking for granted mechanisms such as the institution of marriage, the availability or not of contraceptives, the enforcement of heteronormativity, the shame around non-reproductive sex acts, etc. These moments which cannot be systematized within their rigorous system are noteworthy in that they amount to a vast and unquantifiable sphere of gendered activity. It is through these untheorized mechanisms that the *anchoring* of gender occurs. If we want to theorize the abolition of gender, we need to depart from the Marxist cathexis upon the spheres of labor, and look also at those mechanisms which naturalize, capture and *anchor* individuals into them.

The piece concludes by repeating another motif of communization theory, an assertion that this or that movement of history *now* makes it possible for us to

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recognize this or that aspect of identity as an external constraint. Specifically they say that “the process of denaturalization creates the possibility of gender appearing as an external constraint. This is not to say that the constraint of gender is less powerful than before, but that it can now be seen as a constraint, that is, as something outside oneself that it is possible to abolish.” This assertion inadvertently serves the naturalization process through the unfounded implication that gender has not been seen as an external constraint up until this point. Gender is of course something outside of ourselves which imprisons us, but this has been realized from its most primal origin; this realization has been the continuous source of the revolt which tends toward its decomposition. The faggot heretics, witches, and gay rioters show us that domesticated gender has always been experienced as an external constraint. This is exactly why it must be constantly re-naturalized and re-imposed.

The *Endnotes* piece ends in the same way as the others, in asserting the need for a communization theory that can explain how gender will be abolished, without even beginning to conceive of how that abolition will occur. In this way, communization can only be experienced as having a tragically messianic character, as something we must wait for and never something in which we participate. It is a scientific

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study, constrained like all other theories which stake a claim to certainty and truth. If it has an application outside of this purely academic framework, it remains to be shown. The assertion (that gender and Capital will be overcome together) is merely rhetorical if gender is only understood in its capitalist permutations. If the assertion is to have any content, we must understand the gendered world that Capital inherited as well as the contemporary operations which cannot be explained by Marxist formulations.

XVII

The preceding fragments point to what we should now state clearly: domestication did not happen to us 10,000 years ago, nor in the 16th and 17th century, and certainly not in the rise of Fordism. Domestication is constantly happening. There is no singular origin to gender as domestication. It is done to us everyday in countless diffuse and often invisible ways. It is a rhythm that is imposed upon our lives; escape and capture, decomposition and recomposition. If gender/domestication is active in all the origin stories, but also in every moment of the present, then we need a tool to explain how this happens, and what mechanisms enforce this rhythm. The method of storytelling is one such tool, enchanting us with occurrences not bound in any particular temporality.

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Foucault, through Agamben and later Tiqqun, gives us another tool in the concept of the apparatus. An apparatus is a network of relationships between a heterogenous set of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions.

It is a heterogenous set that includes virtually anything, linguistic and nonlinguistic, under the same heading: discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, and so on. The apparatus itself is the network that is established between these elements.

Apparatuses are the pure enforcement of governance and the formation of subjectivities. They include anything useful in governing, controlling and orienting human behavior. In this sense, the system of gender can be understood as a network between all these mechanisms which produce gendered subjects in order to control and orient our very being.

To quote Agamben:

I wish to propose to you nothing less than a general and massive partitioning of beings into two large groups or classes: on the one hand,

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living beings (or substances), and on the other, apparatuses in which living beings are incessantly captured. On one side, then, to return to the terminology of the theologians, lies the ontology of creatures, and on the other side, the *oikonomia* of apparatuses that seek to govern and guide them toward the good.

Further expanding the already large class of Foucauldian apparatuses, I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and—why not—language itself...

To recapitulate, we have then two great classes: living beings (or substances) and apparatuses. And, between these two, as a third class, subjects. I call a subject that which results from the relation and, so to speak, from the relentless

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fight between living beings and apparatuses. Naturally, the substances and the subjects, as in ancient metaphysics, seem to overlap, but not completely. In this sense, for example, the same individual, the same substance, can be the place of multiple processes of subjectification: the user of cellular phones, the web surfer, the writer of stories, the tango aficionado, the anti-globalization activist, and so on and so forth. The boundless growth of apparatuses in our time corresponds to the equally extreme proliferation in processes of subjectification.

In this description, we cannot help but read a process by which wild life is captured by a dead thing, and is mutilated into a gendered subject. This theory of apparatuses gives us a helpful way to conceive of domestication without origins, of domestication in the present. It also allows us to indict all the emergent non-normative and innovative subjects as new machines of capture along with the old.

All of this means that the strategy that we must adopt in our hand-to-hand combat with apparatuses cannot be a simple one. This is because what we are dealing with here is the liberation of that which remains captured and separated by means of apparatuses...

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Our hand-to-hand conflict with gender must then be conceived of as that same effort to liberate the living remainder from the subjectivities created by the network of dead things. From this perspective, an insurrection against gender begins as an exploration of all the engendering apparatuses which function in our daily lives to reorient and re-anchor our being into these subjects. Equally so, we must also explore those apparatuses which produce racial subjects which are inseparable from gendered ones. What are the machines that hold us hostage? How do they breakdown? How can we evade them? How can we destroy them? A thorough detailing of these infinite enemies is a monumental task, but it is one which we must undertake if an insurgent break from gender is to be possible. We have already indicted several, but we will need to be even more imaginative and aware if we are to indict all those ones that seem neutral if we are to permanently shatter the spectacle of naturalized gender and escape into an ungendered unknown.

Following from this understanding, we can realize that it requires that we have recourse to another: to explore domestication without origins, we need to give a *different shape to Time itself*. Such a new shape will mean dispensing with the concept of the *primitive* as some natural antecedent to an inevitable teleological

rise of civilization. Such a concept will always bear the naturalized image of civilization itself into pre-history, obscuring the brutal conquest which those images entail. Instead we need a shape to time which recognizes domestication as a process which is constantly capturing life outside itself; erasing the stories and cosmologies of anything beyond its control.

XVIII

“I’ve been using the present tense. Ur is Now. It is not exotic at all. It is our world...”

“An individual intimately familiar with the daily rapacity may remain unmoved by critics of the rapacity. She or he must make a choice, she must decide to turn against the authorities and to join the circle of resisters. Such a decision disrupts a person’s whole life, and it needs to be motivated by very good reasons. The good reasons are expressed in the language of the time, not in the language of some future time. A revelation or a visitation is a very good reason. The revelation might come in a dream, or in a vision, or in what we will call a complete mental breakdown. Before this experience, everything was noise and nothing had meaning. After the experience, everything is clear. Now the individual wonders why

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others are so blind. She might become impatient with the others and leave them to their blindness, or she might decide to return to the others to help them see.

“All this is very understandable, very human, and it has been taking place in human communities for a long time. But such sudden disruptions of individual lives are also disruptions of Leviathanic existence. After such experiences, an individual abandons the sequence of meaningless intervals of Leviathanic Time and recovers some of the rhythms of communities in the state of nature...

“The paradox will be problematic to people trapped in linear, Leviathanic time. [Others] knew linear time as well as rhythmic time, and they also knew that what mattered, what was humanly important, did not take place in linear time.... Rhythmic events were the subjects of songs, of dances, of the frequent ceremonies and festivals. [Historical events] will be considered ‘facts’ and “raw data” by the Leviathanized because the linear progression of such events constitutes Leviathanic time, namely History. The Leviathanized will remember only fragments of the sole events they consider worth remembering because the memory of such events will not be lodged in living human beings but on stone tablets, on paper, and eventually in machines...

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“If tragedy repeat[s], then the event was not linear but rhythmic, and it was already known. Rhythms were grasped with symbols and expressed with music. Musical knowledge was knowledge of the important, the deep, the living. The music of myth expressed the symphony of rhythms that constituted the Cosmos.

“In Eurasia, Leviathan destroyed communities and encased human beings in its entrails. Linear His-story replaced the rhythmic cycles of life. Music gave way to the March of Time...

“These very words, written words, are inventions of the Lugal’s scribes. They cannot convey dream time...

“The Renegades from Civilization are notorious. They shed masks. They shed whole armors. They separate from previously indispensable amenities and experience a shedding of an insupportable burden. Mere contact with a community of free human beings gives them insights no Leviathanic education can provide. Nurturing contact stimulates dreams and ultimately even visions. The Renegade is possessed, transformed, humanized. Psyche-manipulators aware of Civilization’s discontents will try to induce such transformations within Leviathan’s entrails, but their most vaunted successes will be miserable failures.

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Civilization does not nurture humanity...

“The invasion is a silencing of music, a flattening of rhythm; it is a linearization of time, a destruction of the myths and ways that will later be called Culture, a war against communities that nurture freedom, vision and life...

“The resistance persists from generation to generation, in the face of plagues, poisons and explosives. The story of that resistance has been repeatedly and powerfully told. It is a story that does not show Leviathan to be as natural to human beings as hives are to bees. It is a story that shows Leviathan to be an aberration which cannot be imposed, by wile or by force, on human beings who retain the slightest link with community, even a link as tenuous as the remembrance of a Dream Time...

“It is a good time for people to let go of its sanity, its masks and armors, and go mad, for they are already being ejected from its pretty *polis*. In ancient Anatolia people danced on the earth-covered ruins of the Hittite Leviathan and built their lodges with stones which contained the records of the vanished empire’s great deeds.

“The cycle has come round again. America is where

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Anatolia was. It is a place where human beings, just to stay alive, have to jump, to dance, and by dancing revive the rhythms, recover cyclical time. An-archic and pantheistic dancers no longer sense the artifice and its His-story as All but as merely one cycle, one long night, a stormy night that left Earth wounded, but a night that ends, as all nights end, when the sun rises.”†

XIX

We must pause here and ask a question which is implicit in all the ideological understandings of gender; *has there been or will there be a world without gender?*

The nihilist task is to say *no*. As a consequence of a rhythmic shape to time, we cannot rely on any answers which would assert with any certainty that a world without gender ever existed. As a further consequence, we cannot put faith in any utopian vision of a world without gender to come. Whatever is said by the soothsayers of feminism and queer theory, utopia does not approach. We’ve explored countless visions of how such a utopia might emerge, but each feels as unlikely as the last. The eco-feminist matriarchy never existed as a universal, and if it did it is hopelessly lost. The techno-industrial fantasies of

† *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*.

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mechanical reproduction and automated reproductive labor are simply an intensification of the nightmare. The abolition of gender awaited by the communizers has yet to reveal its shape or really even a hint of its coming. The democratic diffusion of gender in queer subculture amounts to an ever more insidious and diffuse recomposition of gender.

Against His-Story, Against Leviathan! can be read as a biographical account of the failures of those who resist the Leviathan. After all, the decomposing or abandoned segments of the monster can always be reconfigured and re-animated. Individuals and communities of resisters will die, but the components and apparatuses of the machine can always be revived to re-capture life anew. Living beings are inferior in this respect. Death is on the side of the machines. The stories of those who've escaped are often lost to us. And we ourselves are often so mutilated by the machine that we may not be able to hear anyway. The masks and armors are often so deeply intertwined with our being to tear off, and when we can, we are left wounded.

This has tragic consequences for those who at last succeed in disencumbering themselves of the heavy carcass. They cannot return to the old communities, for these have been destroyed by generations of plundering, kidnapping and murdering Civilizations. People cannot resume; they have to start over again.

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We should not assume that the ways, what we will call Culture, nurtured and cultivated over thousands of generations, can be regenerated overnight.

The messianic stories have lost much of their power.

It is hard to imagine that any collapse or revolution of divine intervention could truly burn this archaic constraint out of us.

All the sweat and labor expended hourly in the beast's entrails presupposes the beast's perpetual existence. The notion of a Progress that culminates in a final collapse is Christian but not Leviathanic. The notion is of a piece with Christianity's commitment to the absurd, and is not altogether absurd if life is considered a vale of tears. But for Leviathan such a notion is contradictory, and Leviathan is an eminently logical entity.

Leviathanic existence, a vale of tears to Christians and outsiders, is to Leviathan a paved highway, and Progress along this highway cannot lead to an Apocalypse but only to more Progress.

Leviathanic self-consciousness expresses itself in the currents of thought known as Enlightenment, Illuminism, Masonry, Marxism, plus a few others. These currents supply the all-swallowing beast with a language suitable to its last days.

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Yet remarkably, we never see in *Against His-story* an argument to accede to our capture and constraint. Rather, we see a celebration of all the moments of resistance which start in the lives of the resisters themselves. To give up on hope for a world without gender is not to accept defeat. Rather it unchains us from the old traps of Politics and Ideology and allows us to begin again, shifting the scope from all of His-story to our own lives. It allows us to begin again from ourselves, our bodies and our spirits.

XX

If there was no pre-existing and definite world without gender, then we cannot conceive of our struggle as being for a return to some pre-gendered whole. Rather we must conceive of our escape as the flight of domesticated beings into the wild. Not primitive or prelapsarian beings, we must become feral beings. We can understand queerness similarly. We aren't naïve enough to project a positive or essential queerness into the unknown before civilization. Instead, we conceive of our queerness negatively, as escape, refusal and failure of gender. What we pursue then, is a *feral queerness* which bucks against all the apparatuses of constraint and subjection; a feral queer which appears as out of time,

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irrational, inappropriate and wild. We won't find this in anthropology, history, economics or psychoanalysis. Instead we'll employ magic, heresy, myth and exegesis.

Those examples we have explored previously take for granted that such a *feral queerness* must emerge through the struggle of the body against its capture. This is largely self evident in the modes of riot, evasion and rebel sexuality which comprise our queer stories. What is more subtle, and requires some elaboration, is that the struggle against domestication must also occur in its spiritual dimension. As the body must flee the machines which capture it, the spirit must expel the machines which colonize it. *We must do violence with ourselves*. To embark on this lifelong endeavor, we'll have to chart a course against the multiplicity of apparatuses which compose this gendered prison.

Fredy Perlman will speak of this task as the fire which burns against the darkness. A fire which can burn off the mask, burn out the armor and burn Leviathan to the ground.

The last communities do a ghost dance, and the ghosts of the last communities will continue to dance within the entrails of the artificial beast. The council-fires of the never-defeated communities are not extinguished by the

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genocidal invaders, just as the light of Ahura Mazda was not extinguished by rulers who claimed it shone on them. The fire is eclipsed by something dark, but it continues to burn, and its flames shoot out where they are least expected.

This fire is largely ineffable, and attempts to enshrine it in words often amount to yet another apparatus of capture. We cannot scientifically articulate this fire, as it has to be found in each individual if they are to participate in any personal or collective desertion of the beast. The fire which burns against gender is precisely that inexpressible moment of queerness which lashes out against any capture in language. We cannot comprehend the fire, but we can try to illustrate its contours.

We must reclaim the mystery, passion, intensity and depth of feeling which has been alienated from us and enshrined in religion. We must pursue the spiritual ecstasy which religion cohered in order to abolish. We must pursue the unity and joy which gender has always precluded and imitated. More specifically, we must refuse the binary which relegates these pursuits to some spiritual realm separate from our corporeality. Revolt must take form and content which do not deny and separate the body and spirit. As the fire burns out the mechanistic parts of the self,

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it must also burn the tethers which maintain our capture.

We'll briefly return to Feral Faun to quote:

The revolutionary project must certainly include the end of religion—but not in the form of a simplistic acceptance of mechanistic materialism. Rather, we must seek to awaken our senses to the fullness of life that is the material world. We must oppose both religion and mechanistic materialism with a vibrant, passionate, living materialism. We must storm the citadel of religion and reclaim the freedom, the creativity, the passion and the wonder that religion has stolen from our earth and our lives. In order to do this we will have to understand what needs and desires religion speaks to and how it fails to fulfill them. I have attempted to express some of my own explorations so that we can carry on the project of creating ourselves as free, wild beings. The project of transforming the world into a realm of sensual joy and pleasure by destroying the civilization that has stolen the fullness of life from us.

A feral queerness may appear as a wildness, as an effort to embody the chaos of the world, while refusing the ordering that is always imposed upon

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that chaos. It might appear as an orgiastic dance against constraint, or a frenzied tearing off of the masks and armors. It may appear as the rediscovery of all the potentials—sexual, animistic, relational, magical—which have been stunted by domestication. It will seem emotional, cathartic, irrational, but healing.

But it may also appear more quietly as a withdrawal. Sometimes it is easier to discreetly flee the beast. People are constantly plotting escapes and they often succeed. The stories of renegades, maroons, vagabonds and defectors illustrate another form of Leviathan's decomposition. Rather than proclaiming some new gendered identity, a *feral queerness* might not be visible at all. It may hide, flee, and make a home for itself in the shrouds of mystery outside Leviathan's purview. In a world which calls us to self-identify, we must make a home in anonymity.

Any possible escape from gendered constraint will likely involve both the explosive and clandestine tactics, but also methods which make these forms indistinguishable. When I don the black mask, I participate in the unfolding of a riot, but also withdraw from the apparatuses which would locate and identify me in this or that gender. I obscure my facial features, hair, body—anything which could be engendered; revealing instead my violence. The State, Media, and feminist Left endlessly insist that the

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violence belongs to men alone; this insistence itself forms another apparatus to capture and engender. My violence, taken from me by so many representations and politics of victimhood, returns and emanates from the inside outward. The black mask forms the fabric which stitches together the refusals of internal submission and external representation. Above all else, the following attacks destroy the barriers and separations within and without. I become a microcosms of the chaos around me, suspending the regulatory practices of identity.

A *feral queerness* must extend this effect to the whole of life. Whatever its form, it must take aim at life itself.

To quote Fredy one last time:

I'm impatient to end the story of the artificial beast with human entrails. In a different work I will tell some of the details of the resistance to Americanization on the part of some of the world's last communities. I cannot tell all, either there or here, because the struggle against His-story, against Leviathan, is synonymous with Life; it is part of the Biosphere's self-defense against the monster rending her asunder. And the struggle is by no means over; it goes on as long as the beast is animated by living beings.

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To cultivate the fire means to be able to start from oneself and strike out alone. Undeniably a spreading of the wildfire would require the interweaving of one's personal rebellion with others, but the fire cannot be imposed from the outside. It requires an overcoming of the fear of autonomy, a dependence imposed by domestication. One must oppose their life to the Leviathanic organization of a society which is death appearing as life. Refusal, evasion, attack—all of it flows from that internal fire, or it does not flow at all. We must burn gender out of ourselves before we can help cultivate the fire in others. In the first issue of this journal, we discussed the concept of *jouissance*, the supersession of pleasure and pain, of duality. It is in this break with duality that we can also break with binary gender.

There are several examples we can look to of individuals and small groups fleeing or rebelling against the constraints of gender. In this context we can read the self-organization for survival by street queens of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries as an attempt to withdraw from the subjectivizing apparatus of sexual labor, as well as an attempt to cultivate a queer and rebel spirituality. Within prison society, we can see a wide range of stories of queer and gender-variant people revolting against the constraints of gender imposed on their bodies. Men Against Sexism waged an armed struggle against the

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machinery of rape culture, while the present struggle of Gender Anarchy in the California prison system illustrates a clear example of a transgender anarkists waging a spiritual and bodily struggle against civilization from within the hellish intersection of so many apparatuses of gendering and control. In her text “Aspects of Insurrectionary Anarchy,” Amazon of Gender Anarchy writes:

The absence of spiritual awareness in one’s life contributes to fear of consequences. Worse, it leaves a vacuum in the person that gets filled with the debris of the world, clogging them up, stunting their insight. The debris of material possessions, selfishness, uncaring, ignorance, greed, envy, egotism, fear. It is a tragedy because people so afflicted cannot open up to the world around them and draw from it beneficially when their sensibilities are so shut down and distracted, cannot live full lives but live lesser, half lives... We believe in the spirit. It is an aspect of our insurrection... Being separated from nature separates us from spiritual awareness and impedes our balance, the totality of our inner self, which is needed to understand and relate to the external world around us: nature and people, the animals, the plant life, the weather and seasons, the suns,

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planets, moons... In this there is a direct relationship between anarkist insurrection, which fights for autonomy and the earth, and spirituality.

Another inspiring example of a revolt against gender from within prisons walls is the communique released by Olga Ekonomidou, imprisoned member of the Conspiracy Cells of Fire in Greece. Olga refused the capture of her body through the apparatus of full body search:

In this moment I am writing these few lines from inside isolation; 30 days of solitary confinement is the price I pay for my refusal to sell out my dignity and obey the humiliation of a full body search, which would last 5 minutes. I remain unrepentant in my decision. I won't give away even a second of compromise to prison guards. I will not exchange my refusals and choices with the 'warmth' of a standard cell and the 'liberty' of yard time among the general prison population. I'm not looking to become another normal statistic of an inmate who cringes before the prison service, who serves 'quietly' her sentence, who trips into hallucinations induced by wacko-pills, who forces herself as an 'older rank' on new-coming

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prisoners. I remain friend, comrade and human with all women and men who keep the fire burning inside them. With those women and men who choose the dangerous paths of wolves instead of sheep pastures. When it comes to all of us, anarchists of praxis, imprisonment is never enough ‘punishment.’ For this, disciplinary penalties, transfers and solitary confinements are due to come down. Isolation is a prison within the prison. You remain 24 hours a day locked up in a cage with a bunk bed, an in-cell toilet and the vigilant eye of a closed-circuit camera. Inside here, your only girlfriends are your thoughts and memories. Inside here, the days and hours are eliminated, lost, dying, pushing slowly each other..

But these 30 days of solitary confinement I was not left alone. I had some odd and charming visitors by my side that passed secretly and ‘smuggled’ their way into my cell, breaking the isolation. 30 days of solitary confinement and I go on, but the she-wolf inside me doesn’t sleep, doesn’t give consent, doesn’t forgive...

Lastly, we have to mention a woman in Juarez, Mexico who goes by the name of Diana the Huntress. The border town of Juarez is notorious for what some

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have called an ongoing *femicide*, a mass murder and disappearance of countless women. In September of 2013, Diana struck out against this apparatus of capture, shooting two rapist bus drivers. She released a communique claiming responsibility for the murder, indicting those drivers as part of the rape machinery of the city, but also announcing a refusal on her part to play the role of a victim subject.

In these diffuse stories we see moments, fragments, of the burning spiritual clarity which strikes out, through explosive violence or quiet refusal, against gender and domestication.

THIRD MYTHOS: DIANA

Many today praise the greatness of the Roman Empire, the Res Publica, the Public Thing, a civilization which recognized and hated itself as such. This self-hatred turned outwards, conquering and destroying everything outside its walls. Countless books have been devoted to the greatness of Rome, to its war engines and death machines—at times to death itself—but Rome’s greatness is posthumous. Among those trapped in its entrails, few loved it; many tried daily to destroy it. Hating what they’d become, many conspired to set fire to Rome.

In ancient Rome, some people worshipped a more ancient deity—one who reminded them of a time before: Diana the Huntress. Though associated with the Greek goddess Artemis, she independently emerges from the long forgotten past of the time before either empire. The Romans revered her as the goddess of the moon, animals, and the wild hunt. One of her more well known exploits involves a hunter named Acteon, who inadvertently stumbled upon her bathing in a forest pool. When she realized that Acteon was watching her, she refused to be captured by his gaze. She turned him into a deer, and his own hunting dogs slaughtered him. The domesticated beasts slayed their master; the hunter became the hunted.

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For this act of wildness and refusal, Diana gained notoriety. A millennia later, she would still be worshipped as the queen of the witches all throughout southern Europe. They danced to her in sabbats, and orgiastic rites; they flew with her beneath the stars; they celebrated her as a connection to all that was wild and indomitable. Witch hunters of the Holy Inquisition saw her as the Devil and tortured the accused into confessing their devotion to her. The punishment was death. And yet the sadistic technologies of the inquisitors and the fire of the stake were not enough to eliminate her cult. To this day, streghas still venerate her when the moon is full, and when they strike down their enemies. Through her we might invoke the rhythms of the moon, the insight of the animals, a refusal of the techniques of surveillance and subjection, a feral becoming, death to our captors.

The Black Mask

*To live in society is to wear a mask,
more or less fitting,
and to encounter an array of face,
more or less familiar.*

The black mask is the most visible symbol of the anarchist. Its existence is known to the novice even before he is contacted, but its ritual symbolism is unknown to him until his initiation. At the time of the initiation, a time unrecognized until it has happened, the novice finds himself alone with a bag. He has found himself here by a strange and forgotten path, a series of subtle maneuvers and unmemorable gestures. In truth, he has been brought here, led along by an unshakable sense of discomfort with the social game. There are ways this discomfort is manifested: talking about it, doing it differently, doing it wrong, sometimes refusing to do it at all. And these little refusals, with the scorn they earn from most and the interest they elicit in others, draw him into a band. The band has its own social games, its bad manners and inverted fashions, its parodies of social norms. It is when he has tired of these, when he contemplates with

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a similar sense of cynicism the macrocosm and microcosm; the verse, inverse, reverse, and perverse; the loyal subjects and the loyal opposition; it is then that he turns from the company and finds himself alone. Alone, that is, but for the bag.

Novice and bag are alone in a place. The place is a room, or it is a car, or a patch of earth or some other spot. The bag is unremarkable but familiar, and seems to vaguely offer relief of the present circumstance. The novice opens the bag with an anticipation diluted by cynicism: he half expects to find some secret message, and half to uncover nothing of interest. In the bag there is a small bundle of cloth, neatly folded, black as night. He withdraws it and he recognizes it as the mask of the anarchist.

He feels almost as if he could laugh. Faced with the fabric, he wonders that he has never before contemplated why the black mask is the face of anarchy. He has worn the mask before, thinking only of the practical imperative of anonymity.

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Now it has come to him as a strange answer to his question, not at all what he was looking for, but an answer nonetheless. The mask is a gift given by no one and carrying, like all gifts, its silent question. The anonymity it offers is not the cold anonymity of social nicety, but a warm embrace from something that cares about him not at all. It is not the nicest gift. It does not affirm. All it offers is a reminder to relax because, to the universe, he is nothing but a kink of its unfolding. With a deep sigh and a feeling strangely like being tickled, he accepts the gift.

As he walks back from the place where he was alone to the place where the group is, his steps seem only the fulfillment of inevitability, as if pulled by no force other than time's weird passage.

The initiate does not speak of the ritual. The mark of the initiation may be witnessed in how he wears the social mask (a bit less rigid, a little less important, as if seeking to amuse and be amused). He can still feel, with a certain sadness,

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its weight, and remember, with a certain nostalgia, how it disappeared into the black cotton. But he hears someone calling, and, recognizing an invitation to pass the time, he joins in.

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The Child

Wide-eyed and full of wonder, ignorant of good and evil, infinitely skeptical toward authority.

When restrained or punished she is genuinely hurt and cries deeply. When coddled, she falls instantly in love.

Curious and wise, disloyal, whimsical, and free.

Joyous when she is destroying, petulant when oppressed.

She sees not beyond the here and now, except when she dreams, and when her reality does not bear the fruit of freedom she passes immediately to despair.

Idealistic and tempestuous in undertakings, impatient with process, blind to the hurdles between herself and her ideals.

Her simple nature can be a joy or an exasperation.

Flighty and adoring; chaotic and demanding.

She knows well that the safest place to keep a burning passion is behind an impenetrable laugh.

Loved by her friends and resented by the rest. They are sure she mocks them when they are not there.

Life is but a game, and nobody knows the rules.

“That’s the twist.”

The Idealist

Graceful as the waves, deep as the sea, he bears the ideal as the waters bear their creatures: fully and possessively.

His vision is his lover, all-consuming, perfect. He is infinitely jealous, even as he imagines himself to be infinitely generous.

“I sleep but to dream, I rise but to dance.”

Life is for him but a canvass—all the more fitting for its emptiness—on which to let blossom the colors of his inner world, all the more beautiful for its unreality.

The idealist is an artist’s brush, and he paints what none but himself can see. Everything he does is to symbolize his devotion. Nothing he does is good enough.

Humble before the greatness of his vision, he carries onward, “having little, being much.”



Unlike the God of Human Error

Percy Shelley's Departure from Universal Gender

PERCY SHELLEY IS KNOWN TO MODERN ANARCHISTS, if he is known at all, by a few lines from “The Mask of Anarchy”,[†] a political poem he penned after the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, when cavalry attacked a large crowd demanding the reform of the Parliamentary system. This poem, surging with the righteous anger of a peace-loving poet, contains a refrain sung (as if) by the Earth to her children:

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to Earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—

[†] Shelley's usage of 'Anarchy' in the title and the body of the poem does not refer his own ideal but to the Chaos which spreads death across the land. That the Anarchy of the poem is essentially the opposite of the ideal shared by Shelley and those who have later called themselves anarchists is demonstrated by how the soldiers, lawyers, and priests greet him: “Thou art King, and God, and Lord; / Anarchy, to Thee we bow, / Be thy name made holy now!”

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Ye are many—they are few.[†]
(368–72)

These lines notwithstanding, Shelley tended to avoid, especially in his longer poems, explicitly engaging with politics. It is not that he was uninterested in ideas of a radical, or even anarchist, sort. When Shelley was eighteen years old, and a promising young scholar at Oxford, he published a pamphlet entitled “The Necessity of Atheism” and sent it to the heads of each of the colleges of Oxford. For this rebellion he was promptly expelled from the institution, whose charter at that time still restricted enrollment to Christians. Upon his expulsion, he sought out other radicals and wrote to William Godwin, whose *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* Shelly had read. The central thesis of Godwin’s lengthy book was the necessity of abolishing government, and it can be considered the first articulation of anarchism (without the word) in the Western canon.

Shelley also became acquainted with one of Godwin’s daughters, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, with whom he would develop a romance, and who

[†] The first three words of this refrain have recently been adopted as the name of an anarchist publishing project in the northwest region of the United States as well as the title of a documentary film about the Occupy Movement.

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would later go on to pen the most well-known text of this unusual family of writers, *Frankenstein*[†], as well as with the writing of the late Mary Wollstonecraft, who published one of the first Western defenses of feminism, “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.” Percy and the young Mary read Wollstonecraft’s words to each other as they traveled.

Percy’s radical ideas are also conveyed in his poetry, as we shall see, as a critique of hierarchy, government, religion, and commerce. Yet for the most part, Shelley’s project differed from that of Godwin or Wollstonecraft. His major written contribution was to develop a thoroughly radical metaphysics. The subtitle of his first major work, *Queen Mab*, for example, is “A Philosophical Poem.” Its themes include death and sleep, imagination and spirit. The metaphysical bent to his poetry should not surprise us in light of atheism being the subject of his great act of rebellion at Oxford, as well as the relative power of Christianity in his day.

Thanks to Shelley’s relation to Godwin, Wollstonecraft and other radicals, as well as his lucid expression of anarchist principles, we believe it is not out of bounds to read his philosophical poetry as one

† After she took the surname Shelley from Percy himself. Percy being the subject of this essay, we will use their shared surname to refer solely to him.

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of the very few thorough articulations of an anarchist metaphysics. We might take the gap between Shelley's metaphysics and Godwin and Wollstonecraft's politics as an invitation to consider this dichotomy. What constitutes anarchist thought in the political sphere is a matter of contention, but outside of the political sphere—in metaphysics for instance—one might wonder whether or not anarchist thought can be spoken of at all.[†] While it is outside the scope of this essay to address this question directly, our engagement with Shelley will presuppose an interest in anarchy as it departs from the political and, indeed, from the sphere of human society entirely, pursuing far stranger, even extraterrestrial, orientations.

[†] Mary Shelley, who was closely acquainted with these ideas as they existed in the political sphere of her parents and the metaphysical sphere of her lover, can be read as interweaving, in *Frankenstein*, anarchic thought between these spheres. The interweaving of metaphysics with the issues of present society is indeed a fitting definition of science fiction, the genre that Mary Shelley is credited with pioneering in *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley is not the subject of this essay, but parties intrigued by the topic may be interested in reading her in this light.

Not Human Sense, Not Human Mind

Queen Mab is Shelley's first major work and also his most aspiring, written mere months after "Necessity of Atheism." It mainly consists of a speech delivered by Mab, the Fairy Queen, to a human spirit which Mab has whisked away from the sleeping body of Ianthe and brought to look upon the universe from atop her celestial palace. Shelley's cosmology as told by Mab is an ambitious attempt to leave unsettled no question of universal principle, natural law, human behavior, time, or nearly any philosophical mystery. The Fairy Queen declares that she holds all the secrets of the human world, and before she begins her great discourse, promises Ianthe's spirit that "the past shall rise; / Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach / The secrets of the future." (II, 65–67)

In *Mab*, Shelley's task is to negate God's existence or, as his epigraph from Voltaire puts it, "écrasez l'infame!"—crush the demon! Shelley makes his attack by expounding a radical determinism. As in the title of his pamphlet on atheism, the name he uses to signify both the non-existence of God and the underlying principle of the universe is *Necessity*. *Necessity* here refers to the inevitable chain of

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causation that denies religion and God. From Shelley's own note on *Mab*:

He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity, means that,... he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects.... The doctrine of Necessity tends to introduce a great change into the established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion.... There is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply those epithets have in relation to our own peculiar mode of being.

Defying the Christian doctrine of free will, Shelley claims that freedom is nothing but a lack of knowledge of what must happen by Necessity. Yet *Mab* is not what one might expect from a philosophical mind that views every event in history and every human emotion or thought as "a link / In the great chain of Nature" (II, 107–8). It is not what one might call purely scientific or rationalist. It is a poem starring a fairy and a disembodied spirit traveling through space on a chariot pulled by celestial horses. Even more, *Mab* is an ode to an atheism informed by imagination and fancy.

Shelley's appreciation of the imagination goes beyond mere positive association with poetry. In *Mab*, human

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fancy is the explicit vehicle for reaching the perspective through which the poem's philosophical content is delivered. This is illustrated well by the poem's opening lines, a musing on the relation of sleep and death while the narrator looks on the sleeping form of Ianthe. This part suggests that the entire narrative takes place neither in reality nor in Ianthe's sleeping mind but rather in the imagination of the narrator as he watches her sleep. The imaginative nature of the space journey is illuminated even more by the interlude once Mab and Ianthe reach the palace:

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
And thou hast lingered there,
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
Thou must have marked the lines
Of purple gold, that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere:
(...)
Then has thy fancy soared above the earth,
And furled its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.[†]
(II, 1-21)

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How can Shelley's atheist position be reached by watching the sunset? The sunset is one of the rare instances when the human imagination is able to watch (in real time, one might say) the earth and sun in motion through the immensity of space and catch a hint of the tremendous scale of the universe, in which humans are tiny and adrift. We should think of this as the perspective from which Mab gives her speech. This also explains how the scientific method is useful to Shelley's project in spite of his poetic and fanciful approach: much like the view of a setting sun, the view through a telescope helps one imagine the scale of the universe and grasp the folly of religious belief. Shelley is explicit about the connection between scale and atheism in his note to the description of Mab and Ianthe's travel through space to the fairy palace:

The plurality of worlds,—the indefinite immensity of the universe is a most awful subject of contemplation. He who rightly feels its mystery and grandeur, is in no danger of seduction from the falshoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe.

By the falsehood of religion Shelley means that humans, out of ignorance and vanity, have created

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God in their own image to encapsulate everything they do not understand. The precondition for the error of religion is *awe*: a theme Shelley will dwell on throughout his poetry. There are various ways people deal with an experience of awe: fear, forgetfulness, nostalgia, reverence. For Shelley, religion is born when the nameless unknown that gives rise to awe is abstracted and given a name. Then all the real or desired human qualities are projected onto the religious entity, and people believe they themselves can be eternal like their gods. They build monuments and temples as testaments to the supposed universality of their religions. But Mab will show how foolish this is. Once Ianthe and Mab reach the battlements of the palace and look out over the vastness of space, capable of seeing everything at universal scale from the perspective of soaring fancy, they can see the futility of human civilization and its attempts at immortality. As they look on the ruins of an ancient civilization, Mab asks:

What is immortal there?
Nothing—it stands to tell
A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning: soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame.
Monarchs and conquerors there

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Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
The earthquakes of the human race;
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.
(II, 115–25)

The greatest monuments to human pride[‡] are insignificant and transitory next to the vast harmonic wilderness of space, the only “fitting temple” to the Spirit of Nature (I, 264–8). But it is not just because of their vanity and folly that Shelly attacks religion and state. The monuments to human pride, destined only to fall into ruin, are built at the cost of human

[‡] Mab's speech on human pride is quite illustrative of Shelley's animist thought:

How strange is human pride!
I tell thee that lose living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass,
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,
Is an unbounded world;
I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,
Think, feel, and live like man;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their mortal state
(II, 225-237)

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suffering:

Oh! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
(II, 141–8)

Not even the rulers are free from this suffering. Shelley describes at length the despair of the King, bound by his own golden chains and incapable of experiencing the very peace for which he built his tremendous palaces and temples, but which does not care for human monuments and does not visit him because his heart is without virtue.

Mab declares that human hierarchy has no parallel in nature, whose spirit is spread equally through every being, and promises that all human authority “Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority / Will silently pass by” (III, 133–4). Shelley's hope, much like Godwin's, is that increased human knowledge must cause them to abandon government and religion, while their capacity for virtuous action will also grow. To this end, several of Queen Mab's cantos discuss

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themes of an anarchist nature, seeking to illuminate the evils of hierarchy as it manifests in government, religion, war, and commerce.

In another canto, Shelley is more explicit about his assertion that religion develops through people's urge to give names to what they do not know or understand. Using the metaphor of the development of a human from childhood to old age, he walks through the stages of religious belief. To the child, all the aspects of nature are gods: the stars, trees, clouds, mountain, sun, and moon. The adolescent turns to deify spirits, ghosts and other forces. Then man, his pride mocked by the unknown wonders around him, takes all of these and all of their causes, and makes them converge upon a single abstract point, which he calls God:

The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
The merciful, and the avenging God!
Who, prototype of human misrule, sits
High in heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
Even like an earthly king; and whose dread work,
Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves
Of fate, whom he created, in his sport,
To triumph in their torments when they fell!
(IV, 103–10)

Finally, in his last years, man's decaying religion

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requires more gods (we can presume Shelley is thinking of Christianity's trinity). This sense that religion has reached a stage of decay is one of the reasons Shelley feels hope and the certainty that those who champion truth will overcome the terrible falsehood that dominates human thought.

Even though Shelley praises the Spirit of Nature, he is clear to point out that this entity has absolutely no concern for human flattery:

Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requirest no prayers or praises; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony...

(VI, 197–203)

Also worth noting in this passage are Shelley's four different names for the same underlying principle of the universe, an indication that he finds no fitting name for it, and chooses his words for their allusive power. The names "Spirit of Nature" and "Power" (capitalized and with differing adjectives) will reappear in his later works. Necessity, however, falls

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out of its favored place[†], possibly because it indicates a strict order to nature that Shelley will begin to question. Finally, “mother of the world,” the most anthropomorphic of the group. This last term will reappear, though with an added layer of uncertainty, in *Alastor*, and then is discarded. Shelley’s abandonment of this term coincides with his assertion that the principle of the universe is utterly inhuman and indifferent to humanity, as in this passage also from *Mab*:

...all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regardst them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind.

(VI, 214–19)

It is this appreciation of the infinite apathy of the universe that makes Shelley’s metaphysics interesting to us. There is no doubt his appreciation goes

[†] Shelley does invoke the term again in *Laon and Cynthia or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century* (which he later retitled *The Revolt of Islam*). This poem describes the rise and fall of a fleeting uprising, and studies the errors that lead to the reimposition of order.

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alongside a tendency to romanticize this same principle, especially in *Mab*. When he refers to it as “mother of the world,” he has gone far enough down this path that many will be able to recognize a radicalism they can relate to—after all, there had been a tremendous campaign of murder aimed in large part at annihilating the feminine divine in Europe for centuries leading up to this poem, and this fact alone could have persuaded Shelley into believing, as he did, that *Mab* was too radical for his own safety.[‡] But to our minds this is a reactive form of engagement that, while always having been part of radicalism, fails to interest us. If Shelley had only declared the principle of the universe to be a feminine, we would not bother to engage with him here. As we will see, however, Shelley’s metaphysics is much more interesting. It is an atheism full of fancy and wonder, reticent to impose human limits on the underlying principle of the universe, that denies every category and name imposed on the great unknown.

[‡] Shelley had the text printed in his name and then distributed about seventy copies to persons he felt relatively unthreatened by, but only after cutting out his name and address from the text, usually removing his opening dedication of the poem to his then-wife Harriet as well.

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Lift Not the Painted Veil

As much as Shelley sings of the mystery and unknowability of the universal principle in *Queen Mab*, in his zeal to reveal the falsehood of religion and hierarchy he does pass into the same sort of error (albeit more cautiously, and self-consciously) that he accuses religion of. For evidence of this, one could simply point to the fact that so much of *Queen Mab* is a long speech that claims to make known the truths of the universe. These truths, moreover, are supposed to come from a fairy entity whose knowledge is far beyond human thought and whose perspective is much closer to the Spirit of Nature itself. But one might note, more specifically, Shelley's unshaken faith in Necessity, his certainty that every motion and event throughout space and time are untouched by chance or will, that they are nothing other than the fulfillment of natural law. We shall see that Shelley's certainty about this will not long remain unshaken.

One way to read Shelley's philosophical poetry after *Mab* is that he draws the veil of mystery over the unseen power to which he had put name, face, and human emotion. An aspect of this retraction is his strange blurring and erasure of the gendered marks he had at first placed upon the Spirit of Nature. This obscuration can be read as merely incidental, since it

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is only one of the anthropomorphisms Shelley projected on this inhuman principle and later saw fit to withdraw. And, indeed, in a different world and a different political context, we might pay no special attention to the issue of gender in Shelley's work. Then, however, as now, the gendering of the divine was not merely a side-issue but was (and is) instead a battleground for various social and political struggles.[†] Just as we cannot pretend Shelley, fully involved in the radicalism of his day, was ignorant of the political significance of gender especially as it might relate to the divine, neither can we dismiss the importance of this subject to many of our contemporaries. For this reason, we are excited to find in Shelley someone touched by the desire to recast images of divinity in inverted forms radical enough to warrant death, but who also felt that this fell into the same error as what it opposed.

In *Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude*, Shelley's next major work after *Mab*, the veil he had pushed aside now reappears to shroud the truth with mystery.

[†] We will only make passing reference to two phenomena: first, the rise of monotheism, synonymous with the exclusive masculinity of God, and with the mass devastation of those accused of worshipping a Goddess or goddesses; and second, the counter-movement of recent decades focusing largely on the revival of the concept of divine femininity.

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While before, an inviting Fairy Queen took the stage and spoke openly all the secrets of the universe, now the poem's protagonist, a poet who wanders the world in search of ultimate truths, is driven to despair because he sees those secrets flee from him.

Where Ianthe had dreamed a Fairy Queen who flung open the door to knowledge, now the poet dreams of a veiled figure, and though she speaks to him of "knowledge and truth and virtue," Shelley does not recount her speech. We do not learn what she said, only that when the poet catches a glimpse of her face and limbs behind the veil he falls madly in love with her, only to see the vision disappear as he wakes. Desperate for her return and unable to find her in sleep, the poet decides that death will bring him what sleep cannot.[‡] Prepared to die, he sails alone into the

‡ This theme echoes the introductory ode from *Queen Mab*:

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The oser, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world:
Yet both so passing wonderful!

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sea during a storm.[§] It is in the midst of this storm that we find an intriguing indication of Shelley's changing perspective on causation and certainty. While in *Mab* every motion of every particle in the universe was determined by nature's law, and chance was just a word for human ignorance, the climactic moment of *Alastor* is described with a tone of uncertainty and chaos. The poet has been dragged about the sea in his boat and now hangs on the edge of a whirlpool. The outcome and even the question of what will happen are not framed as we would expect from a strict determinist:

...the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded
sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove it sails...
(394–401)

In Shelley's universe, which was perfect harmony

§ Oddly enough, Shelley would himself die, several years later, in a storm at sea.

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and necessity in *Mab*, there is now a little room for chance and chaos. What's more, Shelley has stepped back from his own claims at knowledge. In the opening lines to *Alastor*, he again refers to the world's source in the feminine, but this time he says "Mother of this *unfathomable* world" (18, emphasis added). Shelley's tendency to speak of the unknowable, the unfathomable, and the uncertain will only multiply from here.

Alastor can even be read as a warning that the zeal to know the secrets of the universe (as exemplified by the poet) will lead to social isolation and escapism from the world. The remainder of the poem consists of the poet's long solitary journey to his death upon a mountaintop. At the end, Alastor sings the tragedy of the one who seeks to uncover the mysteries of the unfathomable and, carried by this impossible task, is lost to the world.[†]

† The tragedy of the brightest ones being lost to the world recurs in Shelley's writing, no doubt because he identifies with these tragic figures who seek truth and knowledge beyond all else. In a later (untitled) sonnet he condenses much of the spirit of *Alastor* into a few lines:

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life; though unreal shapes be pictured there
And it but mimic all would believe
With colours idly spread,—behind, lurk Fear

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The closing lines of *Alastor*:

It is a woe too “deep for tears,” when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquility,
Nature’s vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.
(713–20)

The poem is not moralistic enough to be a warning, however. What it conveys instead is the kind of awful beauty that characterizes the great tragedies of the Greeks (attuned, like Shelley, to the power of their Fates). This very word, awful, which Shelley uses often, may convey Shelley’s strange attitude toward

And Hope, twin Destinies, who ever weave
Their shadows o’er the chasm, sightless and drear,
I knew one who had lifted it . . . he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love
But found them not, alas; nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows—a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene—a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher, found it not.—

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the universe. In the early 19th century when Shelley was writing, the meaning of ‘awful’ was in a transition from its older sense of evoking wonder and awe to its modern sense of very bad or horrifying. Perhaps at the cusp of these two senses we can intuit a meaning of the term that verges on the odd combination of awe, fear, and terror entailed by Shelley’s worldview.

There is tragedy in *Alastor*’s parting lines above, as well as in the description of the lonely peak and solitary pine that frame the place of the poet’s death. For example, the description of the pine on which the poet places his hand before he lays down to die conveys the quality that accrues to those whose passions lead them to seek the peaks and who endure harsh conditions and solitude. There is an undeniable loveliness and tranquility to the setting and experience of the poet’s death, and a tragic inevitability to the departure of the brightest flames from a world too dim for them. What Shelley does seem to warn against in *Alastor* is not the search for truth, even if it leads to solitude and death, but instead the belief that the universe can be fully fathomed and its mystery captured in an enduring image.

Darkness to a Dying Flame

After *Alastor*, Shelley's characterization of the universe and its underlying principle tends still further toward uncertainty and unknowability. The *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* is an ode to an "unseen Power," but more often than not it is addressed to that power's "awful shadow," a shadow which "Floats though unseen amongst us" (1-2). One gets the sense now that there are layers of mystery and shadow between ourselves and truth, as not only is its shadow with us, but even that shadow goes unseen. But the unseen power's mystery, Shelley declares, makes it all the more dear to us.

Though the Spirit of Beauty visits the world, its presence is fleeting and it leaves "This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate." In an attempt to overcome their worldly sorrow, people create "the name of God and ghosts and Heaven," trying to lend clarity to a power they are ignorant of. But these names, Shelley claims, are unable "to sever, / From all we hear and all we see, / Doubt, chance and mutability" (29-31).

Here, not only does Shelley seem to have abandoned his prior belief in the absolute certainty of the universe, he accuses religion of attempting to eliminate change and uncertainty from the world.

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Indeed, mutability is now one of the ways he names the underlying principle of the universe, as in the poem entitled *Mutability* which he wrote just before the *Hymn*. This principle goes by many names in the *Hymn*—"unseen Power" (1), "Spirit of beauty" (13), "awful loveliness" (71), "spirit fair" (83) (Shelley uses each of these only once)—and even more metaphors, each evoking mystery and the unknown. One of these metaphors deserves particular mention:

Thou—that to human thought art nourishment
Like darkness to a dying flame!
(44–45)

Here human thought is not created or sustained by an entity in any way familiar or alike to it. Human thought is instead a burning, dying force surrounded by the darkness of everything it finds mysterious and unknown. If it exists, it is by the stark contrast of this vast, encompassing alienness. If it endures, it is because it is filled with wonder and desire by the mystery that surrounds it. Human thought burns, dying, against the darkness of what it does not know. Shelley will again speak of the mysterious power as the source of human thought in *Mont Blanc*, this time through the metaphor of the streams of water that descend from the mountain much as human thought descends from "secret springs" (4). *Mont Blanc*, in line

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with the “darkness to a dying flame” in the *Hymn*, is an ode to silence. Shelley concludes the brief ode with these lines:

... The secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind’s imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?
(139–44)

As Shelley’s appreciation of mystery, darkness and silence grow, his metaphors and names for the principle of the universe grow more mysterious, dark and inhuman. Abandoning the name of “mother,” he evokes the power through the darkness in the *Hymn* and the silent, solitary mountain in *Mont Blanc*. The power still gives rise to the universe, not in any birth-like generation, and it nourishes human thought, but without the human emotion and bond that the name of mother would suggest. Its absence and its mystery are what feed the dying flame of human thought, burning against the darkness.

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The Bloodletting

*All my life have I suffered,
but always within.*

The initiate's blood has always been for her a quiet reminder of who she is; or, at least, of what she is not. For as long as she can remember, blood has fascinated her. For nearly as long she has known this makes her weird.

When you fall and cut yourself, you are not supposed to stare at the wound. You are not supposed to like to watch when the doctor draws your blood. You are not supposed to enjoy the taste when you fall and split your lip, and you are definitely not supposed to get in the habit of making yourself bleed so you can experience the flavor again.

When you get sick, you are not supposed to have a crazy urge to open a vein and let the sickness out. When you like someone, you are not supposed to wonder what they taste like. When you are having sex, you're not supposed to want to tear into the neck with your teeth and into the back with your nails like you are trying to kill them. You're not supposed to have to wear long sleeves and high collars around like you have something to hide. You're not supposed to make people who care about you worried. You're not supposed to feel ashamed of who you are.

Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology

When you feel too much sadness to hold, you're not supposed to believe you can let it out of you in dark red tears that plummet into the basin and blossom there in shapes so beautiful they make you feel better.

When you feel like a machine, or a part of a machine, and aren't sure whether you are alive, you're not supposed to have to open yourself up and take a peek to put your mind at ease. When you wish to make a bond to a place, you're not supposed to make a gift to the soil from your veins. When you feel for once that there is someone you trust, you are not supposed to beg them to let you cut open their skin to see their blood and taste it. And you are not supposed to mingle it with your own to feel another's pulse within your veins.

You are not supposed to feel there is no one else who needs this in order to let go. But you do. And every time you let go of a feeling, this other feeling sets in deeper. At the bloodletting, you can at last let go of this.

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The Thief

Parasite of society, reveler in invisibility, dweller of the underworld. Extravagant in taste. Her crime is her rebellion, and her delight rests light-footed upon the sense of the illicit and dangerous.

Agile and clever, quick and alert. Friend of the shadows, companion of the night.

Mistress of deception. Subterfuge and subtlety are her way. Ever ready to sink her dagger into the back of the enemy, she does not waste her energy in protest or head-on combat.

For her, every moment stolen by school, work, family, god and country must be taken back, whether by sleight of hand, cloak and dagger, or seductive power.

For her, to be seen is awkward, to pay is an embarrassment, to work is humiliation. Worst of all is to be caught.

Hardly ashamed of her ways, still she has nothing to say to her captors. Neither remorseful nor defiant, with all her intricate disguise stripped away, she can only stand silent or else spin pretty webs of lies.

The Witch

An enigmatic solution of sensitivity and judgment, she moves through the world with an irreducible sense of the forms that things must take.

She is severe in her wisdom as to the ways of the world.

An oscillating ball of force, she moves creature and object alike to her will and desire. And to her, will is nothing but the shortest route to making things become what they will become anyway.

Her righteousness is her respect of fate.

Short of temper, protracted in bitterness, slow to forgiveness.

Others, blind to what is most obvious and resistant to what is most inevitable, provoke her rage.

Most often ignorant of herself, whether through social deprivation or sheer terror in the face of her capacities, and often most dangerous when swept unconsciously by the intensity of her unleashed emotions.

When keenly in sense of herself, she is most in touch with her power. She often takes hold of her power with a stranglehold and becomes religious and weak. When she learns to harness it with a rider's touch, however, then in the dynamic balance of power and desire, she is unstoppable.



The Anti-Chamber

There where it smells of shit
it smells of being.
Man could just as well not have shat,
not have opened the anal pouch,
but he chose to shit
as he would have chosen to live
instead of consenting to live dead.

Because in order not to make caca,
he would have had to consent
not to be,
but he could not make up his mind to
lose being,
that is, to die alive.

~ Antonin Artaud

To Have Done With the Judgment of god

OF WHERE ONE SHITS, ONE SHALL NOT SPEAK—to this oath is the whole of civilization held. From chamber pots to those euphemistically-named rooms whose real function has little to do with washing or bathing but is instead to *flush away* those shameful signs of human animality, there has ever been in the civilized management of feces a palpable sense of *fear*. The terror manifest in the porcelain pots and thrones betrays a concern far deeper than sanitation and public health, properly understood. After all, it is no

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accident that with the pressing of humanity into the city arises the threat of mass disease. If the management of food and consumption makes a civilization, the (as yet) unmanageability of feces and defecation can bring an empire to its knees, and not only as catastrophe. A way of life premised on delusions of immortality can have no greater enemy than the daily, material evidence of eternal decay.

Few have approached the question of revolution from the nether end. Marxists especially have shown themselves to stick to any discussion of production and consumption, or even the rather more uncomfortable subject of reproduction, over the slightest whiff of that stickier matter of digestion—or, worse still, excretion.

One who was able to coax the anus into speaking was Hocquenghem. That fag who, riding on waves of sixty-eight subversion, pondered the shame which moved his comrades to fuck in the bathroom stalls after a meeting of the Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action. “As if homosexual desire could only be inscribed where repression has inscribed it.” Here was a sign that these bathrooms held a power awesome and strange—and all but invisible—within that hated complex of institutions named capitalism, patriarchy, civilization, etc. He was able to discern that the public prohibitions against certain sexual secretions and anal pleasures were the lurking shadow

of the taboos surrounding bodily excretions.

In *The Screwball Asses*, Guy wrote of his comrades:

They can desire almost any body with a dick and an ass... on the condition that it all happens in the shadows, that they fuck without knowing each other, that only machinic organs be involved.

He might have said the same about the desire to shit and the experience of excremental intimacy.

Certainly many an academic of queer theory after him has written a treatise or tract on the architectural construction and psychological planning of the public excretion chambers, noting some of the finer points of their referential queerness. Ever attentive to the security of her or his own post, however, the academic is cautious not to go too far down the hole, preferring to observe and take note from atop the seat, so to speak, as to the hidden meanings of the cocks scrawled upon the partitions and the studious construction of these partitions to erect, by the omission of their bottoms, a bastion of generalized surveillance against the improper possibilities a stall's public privacy might otherwise invite. An innovative proposition, to be sure—one might even say bold, though only by comparison to the marked

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timidity of the academic profession at large—but this analysis remains, for our purposes, rather too tight-assed.

The aforementioned hang-up of revolutionaries with regards to anality should not be understood to extend to those revolutionaries' subject. It has long gone remarked upon by those proletarians who retain a sense of humor that the bourgeoisie, their authority figures and officials, in short, everyone of high social standing, have the remarkable quality of going about acting as if they were utterly incapable of relaxing their anal musculature. All theories of the effects of bourgeois diet and stress upon sphincter tension aside (and this is not to discount their validity but rather because they are irrelevant to our purposes), a few facts remain to be submitted.

First, that the development of civilization, for all its lauded hygienic facilities, has drastically increased the portion of a person's life during which he goes about with his sphincters contracted, either searching for the nearest portal to the municipal sewerage or else postponing until such time as he is obliged to seek it out with urgency.

Add to this the documented inability of many persons to release their bowels in public restrooms (whether due to childhood trauma, the nagging shame of social taboo, or instincts that will not allow a creature to relax in such close proximity to potential

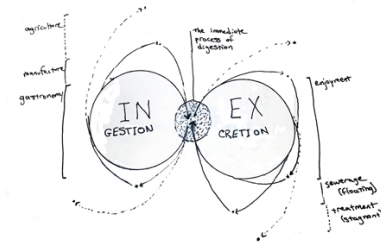
enemies), as well as the high rates of kidney stones and sexually-transmitted diseases which make urination painful instead of pleasurable, and the partial or total avoidance of public restrooms by persons who have learned to fear them as places where their genders may be scrutinized and their belonging called into question, not to mention the terror and shame (instilled during the so-called potty training and bed wetting years) that refuse—even in sleep!—to allow the modern human's lower musculature to fully relax, and finally the widespread incidence of indigestion and constipation, and one is faced with a public health issue of unfathomable breadth and depth.

Not that these could ever be deemed an *issue* in the eyes of those responsible for identifying epidemics and mobilizing the populace to rectify them. Quite to the contrary, it is entirely in the interests of power to have a populace that keeps its sphincters well under control, thank you very much, however damaging this may be to its health. Anyone familiar with canine discipline knows well that once an animal is trained to control the time and place of its evacuatory functions, half the battle has been won; in no time it will be rolling over and playing dead on command. Whereas a pet that has not yet learned not to piss the carpet is so hopeless that it is probably best put out of your—pardon, its—misery.

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Second, that the protracted and chronic retention of a person's annular muscles coincides with certain behavioral characteristics which may include, without being limited to: extreme tension of voice and bearing often manifest as nasality of speech and stiffness of posture, prudishness, all-around indisposition to fun, edginess, soreness of temper, lack of grace in absorbing either criticism or complement, propensity to take offense to well-humored insult, deficiency of the sense of humor, uncertainty of bearing, passive aggressiveness, authoritarianism, stinginess, neediness, moralism, religiosity, and general unsavoriness of character.†

† An astute reader may observe that this provisional list overlaps largely, if not entirely, with the list one might draw up if asked about the behavioral symptoms of a person whose sexual drives have been mangled to the point that they are incapable of experiencing *jouissance* in such acts. One is reminded of what Wilhelm Reich opined about fascism: that it was in the sexual repression of the populace, embedded from childhood in the family, worked into such a complex of anxiety and obedience that rebellious thoughts and acts are as crippled as the capacity for sexual enjoyment, that it was here in such fertile soil that the nationalist tree was able to set roots and flourish. For this we can only fault Reich for thinking about it rather too narrowly and, in particular, at the exclusion of the excremental arena.



On an instinctual level if no other, we can see that this behavioral coincidence is indeed no coincidence at all, given that a mere common sense would lead one to anticipate, indeed to expect, a retention of one's excrement to dovetail with a proclivity to retain much else besides—status, possessions, emotions, and self-importance, to name but a handful—that this is nothing more than a natural correspondence between the various bodily and behavioral dispositions.

Third, that civilized society has come to value mostly highly and indeed pride itself on the very same behavioral vices which correspond to the ills of a retentive anus and mistreated digestive system.

Here one may remark upon yet another coincidence, this time not behavioral but geometrical (or, one might say, etymological) come upon by means of the following inquiry: How is it that high society

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identifies itself as high and its outside as low? How indeed. Although this query will be met by its ready cast of pat answers—whether they be architectural (because the powerful sit on high thrones and live in high structures upon high ground), natural (because civilized power is aligned to the celestial powers rather than the terrestrial), social (because to bow is a sign of submission), or military (because in combat the higher position is the advantageous one)—one might object that each has got it ass-backwards. Man's body is his world, his habitation. Given that the body finds itself set in a world of unfolding powers through which it must itself unfold, it develops a sense of its unfolding, a sense that looks ahead, so to speak, a consciousness ever concerned with a forward-thinking interest of survival.

Questions of categorization are the expression of man's consciousness in its grappling with the inner tensions it feels in the organs, especially the digestive ones. The categories he settles upon to identify these tensions once and for all are his rebellious cry that he will finally forgo their continual playing out, that he will stake himself a position, damn it all.

Moreover, man being the only animal who has not only developed an erection but has developed into a walking erection, who places his oral and anal passages on a level plane only when the dyke of consciousness can no longer stand against the surging

waves of sleep, he alone has developed a consciousness deprived—by the force of gravity itself—of the digestive and excretory sensations. He knows himself to be above their inferior and unthinking comings and goings-on. Every external gesture of raising or lowering he makes is merely a fitting sign of what he first feels in his body, and then strives to reform his contrary surroundings in the image of. Man (civilized man, we should say) is remarkable for experiencing in his body a great discomfort and irritation (born of his extreme anxiety and lack of respect for the gradual and time-consuming digestive processes, which strike him as so terribly inefficient and upsetting) and dedicating himself to making his escape. Like the majority of those who draw up schemes for man's relocation to extraterrestrial colonies or to technologically-enhanced, irritation-free post-bodies, he is not seduced by delusions of democracy. The ascension of the consciousness from the body cannot be achieved *en masse*; it will, on the contrary, be unreachable if not from *atop the mass*.

So for the upper echelons and those who strive toward them, the correlation between height and superiority, lowness and inferiority, is fitting for no other reason than because it correlates to their estimation of the body: the superior organs sit atop, keeping things under control and dedicating themselves to the honorable tasks of thinking and

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planning the escape from the body, from the inferior organs, in particular the ones that gurgle and grumble down below, urging and urging, failing to do anything honorable or socially productive, distracting him from his important labors. It was that man already felt himself to be higher, and for this reason did he build throne and tower, temple and palace, that the world might better agree with his tortured conscience.

And here we must remember that what is at hand is no mere issue of excretion, for we can see, simultaneous to the difficulty and forcedness of excretion in modern society, the negligent, hurried ingestive ritual (often performed even when standing, walking, or driving, and with a notable disregard for proper mastication and, even more disturbing, for the enjoyment and savoring of the foods, which are more often viewed as fuel for the consumer's proverbial engine than as complex materials to be ground down, turned over, refined, and absorbed) and the strained, incomplete digestion whose symptoms include the host of stomach aches, bloating, flatulence, belching and acid reflux (not to mention vomiting) for which our society has become the butt of many a joke.

We can only agree with Nietzsche when he writes in his *Genealogy of Morals* that "modern society is no 'society,' no 'body,' but a sick conglomerate of chandalas—a society that no longer has the strength to *excrete*." In his *Genealogy* not only does Nietzsche

trace moral unease and guilt to digestive troubles, he also demolishes the false elevation of mind over body:

When someone cannot get over a “psychological pain,” that is *not* the fault of his “psyche” but, to speak crudely, more probably even that of his belly (speaking crudely, to repeat, which does not mean that I want to be heard crudely or understood crudely—). A strong and well-constituted man digests his experiences (his deeds and misdeeds included) as he digests his meals, even when he has to swallow some tough morsels. If he cannot get over an experience and have done with it, this kind of indigestion is as much physiological as is the other—and often in fact merely a consequence of the other.—With such a conception one can, between ourselves, still be the sternest opponent of all materialism.—)

There is nothing particularly special about excrement, it being only a stage in the process of matter’s circulation—nothing, that is, except its tremendous capacity to communicate the details of such bodily troubles, within and without the digestive tract, as may be existent in the creature which produced it. Indeed, it can be observed that all creatures capable of both expelling matter and

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investigating matter by means of their senses are inclined to regularly probe their excrement and to employ all the senses for this task. While some overimaginative theories as to the purpose of this practice do persist, the fact that it is a self-diagnostic measure, and a good one at that, is no secret to anyone who has observed her own excrement during an illness. The fact that, in this most excretaphobic of societies, it is still medical practice to examine, albeit rarely, the night soil of a patient for evidence of her or his internal goings-on is proof enough of the diagnostic power of this substance. The fact that among the most trending queries to the so-called Google oracle is the set “Why is my poop (green/red/blue/yellow)?” is evidence not only that the modern populace is still trying to listen to its bowels (and that the latter are severely troubled) but moreover that a common knowledge of excremental diagnosis is sorely lacking.

Yes, modern man seems to have no end to hiding his own nature from himself. This fact is known better to the plumber than to any other, and his clients are only too keenly aware that he, even more than the nosy old lady next door with her flower-print blouse and the binoculars she keeps close at hand, knows all about their dirty little secret. One would not be amiss in suspecting that that popular specter of the plumber’s crack, comical but for its suggestiveness, is

in truth a crack at that most quintessential of cracks in the very porcelain social veneer whose holes the plumber is called to fill, whose leaks he is prevailed upon to seal, and whose cracks he is induced to caulk. That in carrying out such an unspeakably momentous task as the resurfacing of the façade between society and its own decay—that in this very process the man responsible might mistakenly reveal a crack in his own façade, an indication of his own anality—well, there may be no better example of the sort of irony which gives rise to what is known as low humor.

The undeniable fact which man strives to conceal from himself by means of pipe and sewer, septic and treatment facility, is simply that every entrance has its corresponding exit. Man would like to pretend himself to be a one-way street, as he does when he pretends that no private excretion corresponds to his conspicuous ingestion, just as when he believes that no clandestine decay corresponds to the much-boasted progress of his civilization. His absurd play is less one of smoke and mirrors and much more one of passages and blockages. On the one hand, he sets his mouth to moving overmuch, as if in letting it slack he might remind his company—or himself—that this favorite orifice of his is nothing more than the ornate and self-important gateway to that dark passage, that long passage whose winding and grinding bears witness to his being a creature of digestive capacities, and whose

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nether end whispers of death and recurrence. On the other hand, he sets his hands to the monumental task of erecting and retaining millions of miles of passages, not unlike his own, a tremendous artificial digestive system, not to mention the multitude of corresponding chambers, both private and publicly private, all with their corresponding porcelain fixtures, automatic flushing apparatuses, odor-masking agents, diaper-changing stations, feminine product dispensers, sanitary hand-drying devices, ecologically-reductive lighting, and discrete janitorial staff, for no other reason than to keep himself from taking note of the fact that he does not and cannot retain what he ingests. The enormity of waste entailed in this insane system of waste disposal has only its most minor portion in the mountains of hygienic tissue, paper towel, and other such disposable products that find their way into the wastebaskets—the greater wasting is dual: that of the vast quantities of potable water rendered incessantly into wastewater with every flush, and that of the equally enormous piles of rich excretory matter swept away to be wasted by the algal colonies of the waste processing facilities.

There is something charming about man's haughtiness in looking upon defecation as somehow beneath him, in acting as if, despite all the pleasure he enjoys in eating, he would consider shitting to be an

inconvenience at best and at worst a disturbing reminder of his animality, his mortality. Something best to be cured by the powers of modern innovation, and the sooner the better! There is something terribly endearing about man's denial of himself.

Soft feelings notwithstanding, and without suggesting that it is possible—or desirable even—to banish self-denial from life, we must insist upon flushing away the whole machine that chambers excretion and channels excrement. Revolutionaries have long identified themselves with the underground, and with good reason. Yet, just as Hocquenghem wrote that “The bourgeoisie invented the notion of homosexuality and made it into a ghetto. We must not forget this,” just so must we not forget that it was the tight-assed bourgeoisie and clergy who mangled digestion, forbid excretion from being pleasurable and intimate, and imprisoned man's greatest gift to the world beneath a million tons of concrete. It is not to defend our murky tunnels that we fight, nor to seize the power of the skyscraper and bestow it upon the sewer, but rather to expel the whole artificial body and let it rot, that we may become intimate with the fruits of our bowels and benefit thereby.

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The Firestarting

And on the eighth day, we burned it.

Some time after his initiation, the initiate may become ready for the ritual of invocation. The anarchists having no laws to determine one's readiness nor elders to appoint the time, the initiates themselves must determine their willingness and make the necessary preparations. Though this can be done alone, it is usually the work of a few, for the invocation is not only a ritual of power but also one of bonding.

The initiates' motives for calling the fire are varied. They may do it to destroy, to cause trouble, to have fun, or to feel powerful, but none of these is the fire's allure. It is not a ritual of exercising one's own power but one of occupying a space through which power is transferred. There is little effort required for the initiates to acquire the materials and skills, and the power they invoke is far too great for them to call their own. Though they may know it not, they summon the fire in order to be transformed: forged by its heat and fused to each other by its light. Fire will break down and cast to the wind what it can, but what passes through it intact will grow in resistance

Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology

to the forces that seek to break it. This is a quality much desired by the anarchist.

The fire started, the departure underway, the adept turns for a moment and stares at the shape of the power roaring as it tears through the world. She chokes on an attempt to give voice to the desire the fire's touch awakens: that she would like to pause for a time, to absorb the heat and light of this towering blaze, to let herself be awed by the power she has summoned. But she knows there is no time to linger, and tastes the bitter deprivation, even in her crime, of the desired encounter with chaos.

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The Militant

Strong of arm and of will, single-minded in pursuit of his aims. Steadfast in the ideal, he wears it as badge and shield.

While perhaps not especially possessive of courage, he especially holds it highest as value and banner.

For him the enemy is clear and manifest. It must be confronted face to face. Anything less is weakness.

The militant does not sleep except when weary of battle, and then his sleep is restless.

For him, to die in combat is glorious in itself. What matters glory after death?

He does not long for death—he loves it and worships it. For him, life is nothing but the elaborate dance of seduction with his black widow.

Reserved of emotion, generous of heart.

Firm of voice. Proud to the point of arrogance.

He is a sword trailing blood. His enemies ever before him, comrades always at his side. What is behind him he does not know, only that it smells of gore and drives him ever forward.

A warrior poet singing his serenade to death.

Faces of the Nihilist

Pleased only by battle, satisfied only by victory,
driven only by defeat.

Concerned only with the material, he scoffs at what
he cannot kill. For him war is the only thing eternal,
the wheel on which his fate hangs, the dance that will
carry him to the nuptial bed.

His element is steel. Fire too, but this only to temper
the steel.

Everything soft and round is useless and an obstacle
to his blade. But whatever is hard and dull may at
least serve him as a sharpening stone.

Quick to love, devotedly loyal, he is quicker still to
cast out and denounce as traitor a former comrade
who strays from the path of duty.

There is a whole world to destroy. If there is a world
to come, it will be fattened on blood.

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The Orator

The thermometer of the masses.

Highly dependent.

Voice of fire, soul of ice.

Steady of hand, porcelain of mood.

His life is a mask, and it is heavy indeed.

The people are an orchestra, the revolution a symphony. His honorable task is to conduct.

He is bendable that he might make bend, malleable that he might mold.

“I was granted the gift of speech,” he says, “How could I not put it at the service of liberation?”

He would cast himself as a mirror so that the people might recognize their oppression and discern their potential. This is why he must make himself so flat, so surface, so unbearably shiny.

“The people is the greatest mass, greater than the earth itself. Once in motion nothing will stop it. And when it is at rest it cannot be moved but by the most awesome force. The spoken word is that force.”

With a steady hand and an implacable will, he moves the unmovable, in his struggle against inertia.

“Give me a place to stand,” cries he, “and I will move the world!”



“Volutions” was first published in Hocquenghem’s L’après-mai des faunes. (The book’s title echoes Mallarmé’s poem “L’Après-Midi d’un faune,” changing the common word après-midi, “afternoon,” to the neologism, “after-May.” The poem’s gay faun has become a crowd of fauns.) Published in January 1974, the piece reflects critically on the legacy of the events of May 1968, and the abandonment of so-called revolutionary thought soon after. Hocquenghem calls on his readers no longer to react to the bourgeois class and its values, but to find ways for turning (away) through “volutions” of action from the apathy of leftism. We have added some endnotes to show to what degree Hocquenghem’s nascent queer sensibility was fed by reading literature and revolutionary history. As for his taste in literature, need we underline how many of the authors referenced here were queer, drug addicts, or insane?

Volutions

“An attitude that’s no longer revolutionary in the sense of a reversal or overturning... but volitional in the sense of *Wille*, in the sense of willing what could be.”[†]

– J. F. Lyotard “*Un capitalisme énergumène*,” *Critique*, November 1972

FROM NOW ON WE’LL DO WITHOUT THE *Re*. The forests have been clearcut.ⁱⁱ Recapitulate, resent, reflect, repeat—May has been baptized by some a “general repetition.” There is no *Re*-volution; we want nothing more to do with the prefix that moors the flight of our desires, restricting their corrosive powers. Especially when this prefix brings with it the malady of the past: the tradition of the workers’ movements and their stupid notions of change. Such notions just take on new forms and Civilization begins anew—the very Civilization we’d like to forget. Changing words while holding onto prefixes is how “Revolution” becomes reactionary.

† “In the sense of,” or, rather, through a slippage of meaning, a false etymology, because between “volution” (reversal) and “volition” (will) there is no relation of origin, only of wordplay.

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That is to say we will no longer recapitulate or revolutionize. The upheaval we desire cannot be brought about by a new coat of red paint, a return to origins, or a new faith in the proletariat. In short, to create a revolution, to turn the world upside down according to the actual, hypocritical intentions of the proletariat, would just be giving the wheel another spin while leaving intact its center: Man, his wife, and his children.

Without Law or Self

The revolutionary camp is only revolutionary “in relation,” in relation to the bourgeois world against which it seeks vengeance. Its existence is just the belief in the supposed guilt of our bourgeois exploiters. This faith becomes all the more fantastic as capital spreads a new cynicism among a growing segment of the population captivated by its media. What point is there in invoking justice, in wrapping oneself in the flag of the rights of the oppressed, when the system answers: the real culprits are the victims, not the assassins? When, in the United States, men guilty of genocide such as Lt. Calley are treated as misunderstood heroes?ⁱⁱⁱ When leftist campaigns are hampered less by incomprehension than by the open hostility of the “people”?... There is not—there never was—such a thing as bourgeois guilt

to bank on. The revolutionary camp buys into a game of morality in which Capital always cheats and wins.

To be revolutionary or not to be, to have or to have not. Transcendence for the leftists: the irrevocable judging of revolutionary normality. Sacred words—the word “revolution” more so than any other.... But it’s no longer a matter of choosing between bourgeois vice and its opposite, revolutionary virtue. What the leftists hide from us with their mythological “revolutionary subject,” the “proletariat,” and their sacrosanct “strategy” is the manifold of paths unexplored, uncompleted, or too soon abandoned.

By totalizing these paths under the all-encompassing term “cultural revolution,” we might gain the respect of the Leninists or the bourgeois, depending on the case, but we lose the precious dispersion that shatters fictitious unities.[†] We lose out

[†] In *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, Marcuse uses the term “cultural revolution” to encompass all contestation in the United States. Respectable enough now to be a term of reflection for the great philosopher, it permits an “integration of the universal.” Thus, for example, the sexual revolution is only a true revolution in so far as it is a “revolution of the entire human being, converging with a political morality.” The cultural revolution is reaffirmed as a total revolution against all attempts at economic and political reduction, but we then find ourselves with yet a new totality: “human Being.”

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because such a lumping is the beginning of the game of representation, in which one speaks in the name and the place of a supposed totality of outcomes of an unfinished exploration. And, above all, we lose irreparably when we accept, under revolutionary blackmail, an agreement based on the lowest common denominator, revolutionary politics as the phallic crown of all our local struggles.‡ A universal currency that renders all strategies interchangeable, a solid terrain of entente between ideological imperialisms that cements the revolutionary camp just as gold cements the bourgeois camp. It becomes the measure by which we compute and compare the forces of each side.

No more measuring the sum of our disruptions against the universal and abstract yardstick of “Revolution,” which only indicates to the bourgeois the level of danger, quantifying it, localizing it, and enclosing it. We should be moving in all directions, shaking off civilized power the way you shake off someone who is following you. Burrowing, everywhere

‡ Regarding art, Artaud made the following observation, which is valid also for revolutionary politics: “To make art is to deprive a gesture of its reverberation in the organism,” to hold still the vibrations in order to isolate the origin. [This line is from Artaud’s “No More Masterpieces,” included in *The Theater and its Double*. – T.N.]

possible, mining underneath the edifice, always surprising the enemy from behind, never being trapped where they are waiting for us. We should put into practice the truth that there is no revolutionary subject—*there is no subject at all*. There are only historical drives that ruffle this or that part of our social skin, that vibrate this or that organ of our social body. In detaching ourselves from our identities, we are left to our uninterrupted passions.

That is to say, against the despotic Subject of History, we should invoke our multiple *selves*, taking them to be irreducible. This self that has been used to frighten and shame us, when finally exposed, is shown to have concealed the real forces, untamed and unsuspected. Exposing what lies behind the domination of the subject diffuses the trap of subjectification. By focusing on ourselves, rather than hiding, trembling, and vainly protesting against the unhappiness of the world, we have observed, when we take a closer look, the decomposition of our image, the wrinkling, cracking, and explosive dispersion of the self to the four corners of the universe.

Civilization: Nervous Collapse

At the core of its anxieties, however, the expiring civilization has found a new fear to poison us with: the arsenic of Crisis. For those minds already

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inoculated against fascism, war, consumerism, and other fears perhaps stronger, only this millenarian delusion continues to stem the old world's bleeding credibility. It's a convenient ruse to deter the desire to do away with the ancient codes that encircle, smother, and defuse possible eruptions.

A great farce: strange tremors shake an already splintered ground. Mephitic vapors percolate upward, announcing the mysterious, gasping birth of unknown monsters. Wars before the Red Cross in the memories of the old. The end of capitalist growth and the return to a prehistoric ecology in the minds of the youth. The Crisis intensifies the histrionics, it's the last grandiloquent discourse capable of creating cohesion through terror in a social body already in decomposition, breathing a semblance of life into the reign of Capital.

Forget controlling history. After the failure of the revolution, and the defeat of the dream born after May of creating a new social reality out of our desires, comes the great black hole "out of which there is no return,"^{iv} the infernal machine of a Crisis about which no one can do anything, not even the militant promoters of "human responsibility." Say goodbye to the progress of an enlightened and scientific humanity. Goodbye also to its reciprocal double, the Revolution, the end of the end of social

progress, the highest realization of humanity.[†] Say hello to the monsters of the historical unconscious, the burning stakes seeking work on skid row, burning stakes and mysticisms, comets and regressions.

The wheel of history had been spinning in a frenzy, at the risk of breaking loose and setting the world's axis off kilter. From now on it will turn backwards toward a new Middle Ages. Dialectical temporality has come to an end: who today would dare to suggest that the Crisis will bring about Revolution? There's no longer any point in acting, struggling, writing, cries the tragic voice. What will remain when the hell of Crisis is unleashed? It will be impossible to express desire when we are nothing but rats seeking a quiet corner in a ship being tossed around by a hurricane.

It's the repetition of terror, not of the orgasm.

The most fantastic geopolitical manipulation of all is taking root today: a crisis of social energy capable of sapping our hearts and bodies, tapping the new

[†] The old Right dovetails with the progressive Left in fearing the collapse of our social world: Louis Pauwels (Paris-Match, 5 January 1974) applauds Roland Leroy when he denounces "Big Capital... which completely repudiates rationalism and optimism... while developing ideologies of the end of the world" (*La Nouvelle Critique*). [As Hocquenghem implies, a right-wing writer in a mainstream magazine praising a leftist in a PCF journal. – T.N.]

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energies unmasked by the recent eruption of deconstructive desires. A crushing blow, a compression, a diminution of productive forces, but also of the forces of desire. A new battle waged in our brains and on a planetary scale, in which the stakes are no longer only the pumping of black gold, but also the diversion and (why not?) the exhaustion of desire.

The multinational soft machine^v aims to dehumanize the flood of desire, to overtake it and erode its vitality through a brutal devaluation of hopes. A terrifying marking process begins anew. It's the Law of a great transcendent power, all the more terrifying and grandiose because the supposedly joyful hell of consumption that was supposed to quell revolutionary desires has only stoked them instead of satiating them and putting them to sleep. For refusing to be satiated, you will be clubbed by this mysterious repression coming from nowhere, the Crisis. The promised thrill of the great unknown reveals itself to be nothing more than a premonition of the great putting-to-bed. It's bedtime for your little desires. Here comes the great cadaver.

We already knew that we didn't know what to expect—that's what, in part, motivated us. Now the unknown wears the mask of Crisis. And there you have it, the enemy is exorcised! Tragic transcendence and historical fatalism—ancient, repugnant fossils—have replaced what was attractive about the future.

Crisis: it's the new Mr. Thiers^{vi} against the commune of our desires, the firing-squad execution of the hopes of after-May by the Versailles^{vii} of harsh necessity. Man once again becomes a wolf to man—he never really ceased to be a wolf beneath the hypocritical façades^{viii} of indefinite progress: you knew this well, and you already denounced it, so what are you complaining about?

The Crisis can also be the supreme remedy for boredom—Viansson-Pontier's theme.^{ix} A fresh and joyous Crisis to mobilize the new soldiers of the old trenches. The new con game. A false mirror in which the desire for change mistakes itself. The ultimate manipulation in which the desire for *jouissance*^x is transformed into the desire for repression and apocalypse. A new malaise settles into civilization,^{xi} instead of a liberation of flows. It's the final seduction: the multinational octopus offers you a new spectacle, a melodrama in which the road finally runs aground. The face of the death drive haunts the ball of civilization. Through the looking glass of the end of history, what we see now before us is not the magic field of Alice's talking flowers, but the bitter path of return to humanity's darker periods.[†]

† An echo, in the form of a denial, that gives one a sense of the tone of the current campaign: regarding the Crisis, Olivier Guichard has written, "We are witnessing

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And then there are the fetishists of the Crisis, the *jouisseurs* who anticipate the great catastrophe. Now that the old morality has collapsed, these cynics, made up and sequined, drinking champagne amid the ruins, march on in. Ah, the decadents, bittersweet salon queens [*travestis*] à la David Bowie, snobs of the latest fashion—the one that sucks the feet of the great collapse. Confusing decoding with decadence, these apostles of a *fin de siècle* style and a millenarian ideology transform the call of the transversal into a petty quarrel of salon intellectuals. They take anxious pleasure in believing themselves to be in the privileged place of the crisis of civilization. But to make apologies for the decay is only another means of remaining attached to the civilized world and its fantasies. They assume the role of the unworthy sons, the profligate inheritors at the furious potlatch of collapsing values: an enervating and narcissistic pretension to be the last survivors rather than the first mutants.

Enough of these despairing individuals, fixated on their own condition. Former militants, now devoted to their joyless highs, they have seen everything and lived nothing. In their own eyes, they were born too

the rebirth of a constipated moralism analogous to the one that saw the 1940 invasion as fit punishment for our collective sins. Today, it is poverty that comes to punish the *jouisseurs*.”

late in a world too old, like the wretched children born belatedly to an aging couple. Drawn to fascism and fashion, these young Cocteaous of the new 1929 aim to shock, but their provocations are predictable and filled with remorse. Claiming to make pleasure out of necessity, they contemplate the fascisms of the future with complacency. They are bad copies of a Maurice Sachs or those women shaved by the Liberation, swimming in a caviar that tastes of ashes.^{xii} A fitting image for those who “no longer believe in anything,” as if it were a matter of belief to begin with. They are on this side of, not beyond, Good and Evil. The characteristics of an unhappy consciousness that soothes itself by dancing at the rim of the volcano. Such is the libidinal fascination for fascism as it presents itself today.

But what is to be gained from burning one’s bridges in a final celebration of *ressentiment*? We must move in another direction, beyond the moldy ideologies with their superficial glint. We must cut away, not give in to, such civilized neuroses and anxieties. The vapors of the contemporary nervous collapse only affect the feeble-minded. We need not celebrate the fact that we were born in an epoch devoted to putrefaction. On the contrary, we should speak, act, and cut through the lethargic reality of everyday life in the 20th century. So let’s drop the bitter and plodding attitudes that give our actions the

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odor of disillusioned youth. To put on makeup, dance, and make love does not require our sinking into the quagmire of the tribulations of the last days.

After May

The question of how to move beyond the choice between the old revolutionary morality on the one hand and the affectation of the new pleasure-seekers on the other is the one I have set for myself in this book. The pieces in the collection *L'après-mai des faunes* are so many attempts to recover, from the dictatorship of revolutionary transcendence, the breakthroughs of a life beyond the Law. The prism of one path among so many others strewn about by the explosion of May. There's no question of returning back along these paths, like a dog who retraces his steps by sniffing out his own piss. Nor is it a question of retracing dialectically the various stages of consciousness leading toward a global truth, as one would unroll a majestic red carpet down a great flight of stairs. The sketches that follow proceed as lurches, deletions, and fresh starts. There is no one way, and there's no question of taking the path already made rancid by the kind of cynical snickering in which desire is dissolved.

Yes, with the multiplicity (of which only parts are presented here), we aim to bring about the death of

the god Revolution, to end all recourse to a unitary Will whose power consists of silencing all sorts of petty desires, the great battering ram Will that is supposed to crush the largely mythical center-Capital, always believed to be more fluid than its adversary (the revolution is always a delayed war). It is, on the contrary, the thousands of petty desires, partial drives, and minuscule obsessions that will remake a world out of *jouissance*.

No, we do not believe that the new poverty renders our desires obsolete, except when it infantilizes them as the pitiful remains of a decadent surplus. We have nothing to learn from the discourse of consumption, and very little from the discourse of Crisis, except perhaps new possibilities for transversal invention. We will not be kept prisoners by this restraint that follows a feigned opening up. The premium price is irrelevant to the creation a new world of *jouissance* and luxury without resentment. There is no need to believe in an affluent society in order to stimulate the forces of imagination.

We view the after-May as a multifaceted transformation of life. The “after-May of the fauns” is a frolicking in all realms of the possible, not a fidelity to fixed ideas. It’s an after with no rear-view mirror; it doesn’t look back to those wise, legendary events of May. Nor is it possessed by childish nightmares of a Crisis. It’s like a summer afternoon.

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This book does exemplify a certain manner of writing that aims to convince, a utilitarian and less than joyful usage of writing that continues to obey the law of the revolutionary signifier. There is an editorial “we” implicit in these texts, since nothing in here could have been written, discussed, and reworked without the existence of militant groups, leftist papers, and the people with whom I lived. And this “we” proclaims certitudes in an imperious tone, with the manifest intent of mobilizing others. But as this “we” speaks, piling naivety upon naivety, it shatters into multiple positions. There are perhaps two ways of reading the following pages. One might search for an order of causes and effects, a logic behind the convictions—that is, the fictitious unity of a self. Or, one might regard them as pages torn from a diary, guided by intuitions, images, and sensations as chaotic as the fiery storms that they might inspire.

i This passage from Lyotard's essay on Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* was excluded from the translation published as "Energumen Capitalism," in *Semiotext(e)*'s *Anti-Oedipus* issue.

ii "*Nous ne ferons plus en Ré, les lauriers sont coupés.*" Hocquenghem is referencing the opening line of a poem by Théodore de Banville: "*Nous n'irons plus au bois, les lauriers sont coupés*": "We will to the woods no more, the laurels have been cut."

iii William Calley, found guilty for the 1968 My Lai Massacre, a mass murder of hundreds of unarmed civilians during the Vietnam War. Though sentenced to life, he served his time in house arrest until he was paroled in 1974.

iv Quote from "*La chanson du décervelage*" ("The Song of the Debraining") in Alfred Jarry's 1896 play *Ubu Cocu*.

v Reference to Burroughs' experimental 1961 novel *The Soft Machine*, which deals in part with the invasion of the body by control mechanisms.

vi Marie Joseph Louis Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877), politician and historian of the French Revolution, famous for repression of the Paris Commune. He was referred to by Marx as a "monstrous gnome."

vii The palace of Versailles is the most common symbol of absolute monarchy in France.

viii Reference to a 1792 speech by Robespierre, leader of the French Revolution, denouncing false allies of the cause.

ix Reference to Pierre Vianson-Ponté, French journalist and author of a well-known 1968 article, "*Quand la France s'ennuie*" ("When France gets bored").

x *Jouissance*: infamously untranslatable term first popularized by Lacan. Its semantic field encompasses "enjoyment" in the everyday sense as well as the narrow

legal sense of enjoying rights or property; it also means orgasm. In contrast to pleasure as a biological function of the organism, *jouissance* denotes an excessive, ecstatic pleasure that ruptures the stability of the subject. Elsewhere in the essay the related form *jouisseur*, denoting a participant in *jouissance*, is used. In this passage Hocquenghem is referring to the desire for social upheaval as a dangerous *jouissance* that can easily tip over into its repressive opposite.

xí Reference to Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, known in French under the title *La malaise dans la civilisation*. The phrase implied in the previous paragraph, "man is a wolf to man," *homo homini lupus* in Latin, is also a reference to Freud's pessimism in that book.

xii Sachs, like Cocteau, mentioned a few sentences earlier: a gay writer of the WWII era about whom morally ambiguous stories circulated. In Sach's case, this concerned collaboration with the Gestapo. The women referenced were accused of collaboration during the Nazi occupation and subsequently humiliated by having their heads shaved.

The Storytelling

When the bands are scattered and surviving, when there is work to do and little time to remember or to contemplate, and no reason to be idle, these are the times when stories are made.

Whenever some of their number have departed, when the ones who remain feel grief and emptiness, there is a time when stories are told. But the anarchists are never free from grief, and so the storytelling is the most common of their rituals, and it happens every time the anarchist bands come together, and it is the purpose of their coming together.

First, however, gathering times are spent dispelling urges and reorganizing energies, trading wounds and rehearsing plans. Only then, when the initiates have settled and space has been made for silence, may the storytelling begin. For the storytelling cannot be performed until all are ready to listen.

It is a feeling of puzzlement that undergirds this ritual of gathering—this and the quiet acknowledgement of a need to turn. The anarchist is accustomed to seeing the world from the outside. She turns to the storytelling to hear about the outsiders from their own outside—not from the society that has made them outsiders, but from a place beyond both—

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a place inhabited by the storyteller.

The mask of the storyteller passes freely among the initiates, and it is often impossible to say who wears it. But its wearing is naturally ripened by age, so much so that the mask often appears to be age itself, whispering of its secrets. Through it the initiates can slip as through a crack and watch the fringes of their lives flutter tremulously in the wind of time.

Through the story, one will often revisit a grave loss or some horror of the past. The story does not diminish the grief, it expands it until it overflows its walls. One is emptied by the storytelling, emptied of all but the most closely guarded embers, formed also in the story, abiding enough to last the night.

For though the story wanders many paths, they all tell of the length of the night, and of the ones who got lost, trying find their way back to the dawn.

The Watcher

World-weary, devoid of hope, she holds at arm's length everything that buzzes and bustles.

Sensitive to the extreme, put-upon, suffering, her freedom can only seek itself far from the clutches of the people in their tireless prattle.

Patient to the extreme, she would spend a lifetime for the chance to taste for a moment a wondrous nut of truth.

Sparing with her social energies, easily annoyed, she chooses friends with a connoisseur's taste. For her, what is valuable is what is rare, for no other reason than its rarity. And what is rare is not to be squandered. She enjoys a friend's company as she enjoys a good book: delicately and with savor.

Minimalist in possessions, as if every object weighed down the flight of her mind.

She is comforted by and attuned to entropy and the slow decay of all order.

“Radicals heretofore have been far too anxious.”

The leaking faucet, the disappearance of socks, the mess-ups large and small that sabotage every attempt at finally getting it right, these are for her a solace and a secret promise not to be fulfilled within her lifetime.

“One must suffer quietly, and alone, so as to suffer less.”

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The Loadbearer

Few are the devotees of the ideal humble enough to see themselves as the stepping stones on which the new people will walk.

To the loadbearer, the role of the brick is noble indeed, so long as the brick is well placed.

And in her nihilist refusal of the old architects, the loadbearer wanders ever in search of the right place to stand under the weight she knows she must bear.

Long-suffering, impeccably modest, self-effacing and dogged, the loadbearer accepts all insults and every affront. These might be well-earned, they may be true, but in the end they are of little consequence to her task.

At times she believes in all sincerity to have found her place in the world, as the sustainer of some small milieu, project, or helpless person. It seems that she might stand here forever, and often she does stand there still, after everything has fallen to pieces, cursed her, and run off.

Sad but undefeated, too deeply rooted to move on, she waits with every manner of a tree for the new world to fall from the sky and lay its blessed weight upon her back.



Correspondence

Friends,

I read (the rest of) *Bædan* with great interest. I will respond in a number of ways

The questions I'll ask here about *Bædan* concern your engagement with Lee Edelman's *No Future*, specifically how he and you understand the queer as figure, as exemplar, and maybe as reality—and how you develop that understanding in the direction of anti-politics. The background of these questions is obviously the issue of nihilism—passive and active, or maybe just nihilism.

(“Nothing of what we have achieved is as negative as the behavior and opinions of those who say yes to the world we live in, those who accept it without question and shove as much of it as they can down their gob without a thought about it—that's true nihilism. And we are very pale imitators by contrast.” This is Frere Dupont, from the dialogue about Sam Moss in *Letters* 1.) I will set up my questions by rehearsing some of your argument in the first long essay in your journal. Edelman states that the queer is called upon to play a certainrole in the social order, specifically, “to figure the deathdrive” (*No Future*, 9).

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He repeatedly refers to this figuration as a call. This call and its resultant figuration can be enjoyed by the queer, or denied; the denial is liberal LGBTQ politics, the politics of ‘we are just like you,’ marriage & other rights, alternative families, etc. Enjoyment is to be the ‘bad’ queer, the non-reproductive, non-productive queer, of which Edelman has one sense, and you have a very different (though not entirely unrelated) sense.

You propose to read Edelman closely and overthrow him. You write that you aim to extract “the vital elements of the theory without the baggage of the academy” (7). When you engage with J. Halberstam alongside Edelman, you place Edelman as apolitical and situate yourselves as anti-political (18-19). Edelman’s life project, his version of being the ‘bad’ queer, is for you pathetic and an example of building one’s own prison. Your answer is anti-politics, which you also call active nihilism.

You write:

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 (19).

So Edelman describes queer as a position with respect to the symbolic, in the social order. Certain bodies, certain practices are figured in a certain way

—as against that order, other than it, destructive of the future it is building. This is the interest in his writing as a contribution to negative theory. And those so figured can accept that, and live it, or not. But for Edelman to live it basically seems to mean to do what the figuring says queers do, *and enjoy it excessively*; and to what degree this is possible or available as a practice (or really, an attitude towards a practice) is not, so it would seem, up to anyone. For you, on the other hand, there seems to be something more active, far more voluntary, which is why you can distinguish between the practices that are already figured as queer, and the “insurrectionary anarchist practice of self-organized attack,” which for you has an exemplary role.

This is one of the places where you say more about this difference between you and Edelman:

... futile attempts to identify with or name *jouissance* can lead to a reification of the categories which we'd call upon *jouissance* to abolish [...] 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

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yet must always fail because *jouissance* is inherently that which evades capture and ruptures the coherent narratives which justify such structures (47).

For you Edelman “fails to do the work of locating *jouissance* within the actual subversive histories of queerness.”

You also write:

The 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.’ (49)

... which, I take it, is one of the anti-identitarian moments in which you coincide with Edelman. The practice of attack does not (at least should not) congeal into a new kind of subject or subjectivity. This (for you) is an important component of anti-political practice, which ‘must’ be as you describe.

Meanwhile Edelman writes that embracing the impossibility and inhumanity of what he dubs *sinthomosexuality* is “the ethical task for which

queers are singled out” (*No Future*, 109). Or elsewhere, the “ethical burden to which queerness must accede” (*No Future*, 47). That would be what queers ‘must’ do, according to him.

Now I will ask my questions:

1. Politics and anti-politics aside, and supposing we want to play along with this story, can anyone actually *be* what the symbolic *figures* in a certain way? Isn’t it, for Edelman, more an issue of how one does or does not live the death drive? Isn’t there a rather obvious Lacanian (or at least structuralist-theoretical) response to your overthrowing that would overthrow you in return, saying that the absolute negation you invoke in principle cannot be brought about by anything one does on purpose, including an “insurrectionary anarchist practice of self-organized attack”? In Edelman’s terms, can you really divide sinthomosexuality from what he calls “the futurism desperate to negate it” that “keeps it alive” (66)? In more general terms, and to be pithy, a cruel structuralist could argue that the world will end because of passive nihilists who don’t care about anything and not because of those who claim the position of active nihilism (i.e. closer to the circuit parties and other crap that Edelman invokes than attack in any form). The relevance of this for anti-politics might be (in pithy terms, again) that the truly

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anti-political force in society is the incompetence, apathy and hypocrisy of politicians, who are the real nihilists. (I mean this non-morally, i.e. what is socially destructive here is their non-coincidence with the official story about the social order and its morality, not their ‘evil’ as such.) The rest of us, whatever we call ourselves, insofar as we speak in the name of something (anything) without apathy and hypocrisy, insofar as we try to be competent at what we try to do, would then just be... political. (This is only the first turn in this spiral.)

2. Supposing you are right, and one *can* be what the symbolic figures; and supposing further that an “insurrectionary anarchist practice of self-organized attack” is a way to do this, to live the death drive as queers, do you claim that this practice (this congeries of practices, really) is in some way exemplary? Wouldn’t the sole support for this claim be to say that this is the only practice that truly performs the negation that the symbolic figures as the undoing of the social order? Aren’t there all sorts of ways in which the social order can be, or gets, undone? Or is at least figured as undone, which is probably another matter altogether? Moreover, isn’t locating *jouissance* in the “actual subversive histories of queerness” another futile attempt (a historical, anti-/political attempt) of defining it? A further aspect of the

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second question: where you and Halberstam call Edelman apolitical, thereby illuminating your antipolitical approach by contrast, why do you not address the fact that Edelman does define an *ethical* task for queers—ethics, I imagine, in the sense of way of life, flourishing (of pleasure, at least), not morality? Is an “insurrectionary anarchist practice of self-organized attack” related to ethics, or ethical tasks, and how?

I’ll leave it there. Thanks for a stimulating read. There will be more responses in other fora.

Critila

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Dear Critila,

Thank you for your close and incisive reading of the first issue of *Bædan*. The questions you pose, here and elsewhere, are helpful in moving beyond the provocations laid out in that initial piece. If I'm reading your recitation of our engagement with Edelman correctly, it seems that two issues emerge as central: nihilism and ethics.

To embark on an inquiry into the interplay of these issues, I'll return to a text we engaged with in our archeology of gender as domestication, "Against the Gendered Nightmare." We invoked "History as Decomposition" from the journal *Attentat*, primarily to give shape to a way of reading against the historic view of gender. For the moment, we'll draw on an earlier discussion within the text which plays with a few different understandings of the nihilism in the background of our present discussion. In *Attentat*, we are presented with two competing understandings of nihilism—one being diagnostic of the world at large, another being aspirational on the part of those who, in one way or another, understand their own projects as nihilist. The author describes a motion of such a label first as an accusatory pejorative, next as a simplistic reclamation, and finally as a more advanced theoretical position. From this theoretical position, we are able to explore our relationship to these views of

nihilism. Is our project merely an expression of the decomposition around us, or is our project to hasten it? The author of the text proposes neither, but instead that “we may take ‘no future’ and ‘everything must be destroyed’ less as slogans of a supposedly self-evident sort and more as dark mottos that guide our explorations of a complicated and dangerous terrain.” Such a dark motto would be less a theoretical position and more an art of life, a way of engagement with the dangerous terrain of decomposition. In imagining these ways of life, we come upon the issue of ethics.

Before grappling with ethics, I should mention an experience with decomposition I had recently. While taking a small break from writing about familiar topics, I went for a solitary walk through a nearby forest. Following a path to its conclusion, I came upon a waterfront and turned to walk the narrow zone between the forest and the beach. As I walked, I had a distinct sense of forgetting the problems I’d set out to ponder and, as if in some sort of hedge crossing, started paying sole attention to the little details of my path. I realized, at some point, that this thin corridor was littered with all sorts of detritus from both the churning waters and the dense forests. Bird bones, fragmented sea shells, dead slugs, broken eggs, fallen leaves, and the occasional crushed can, all interwoven into a teeming layer of decay. I realized

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that the decomposition around me was not unlike that which plagues history and of which we're presently speaking. Looking at my little zone, it became rather difficult to distinguish the diagnostic nihilism from the aspirational one. Maybe more correctly, I could see how either could function to explain what was going on around me. I could easily see this decomposition as a natural process, one necessary for the nourishment of both the beach and the forest. I could also, of course, recognize a diffuse array of willful acts which composed the decomposition: the slaying of the fish and birds, the crushing of the shells underfoot, the abandonment of the trash. Depending on the vantage point, I could locate both senses of decomposition at play. The question then became one of will, and perhaps of animism. The birds picking apart the dead crab might imagine themselves the active nihilists, whereas we might see a secular decomposition. How might the maggots or bacteria view the scene? What about the waves?

As I returned from my walk, it occurred to me that perhaps a nihilist ethics does not need to resolutely distinguish between these two forms. Maybe, as offered in *Attentat*, this interplay is something to "think through, as well as live out." I'd say that a nihilist ethics might instead be an orientation towards decomposition; both an awareness of its playing-out

and an attention paid to where we might participate. There are obvious ways that we might amplify or quicken this decay, but this isn't the sole prospect. Equally at play in such an orientation would be a survey of the opportunities and potentials offered by the ferment around us. *Attentat's* conception is based partly on a reading of Fredy Perlman, who would say that Leviathan is constantly in decay because it is itself death. It takes on the appearance of life solely because living beings are caught inside it, moving its levers and wheels. The beast decomposes when people simply choose not to—when they set fire to its components or flee it altogether. If 'no future' is a motto to be carried in my pocket, then it is also a reminder to be seeking these weaknesses and ways out. It is an *ars vivendi* against the world.

This orientation becomes a little more clear when we shift the focus to daily life. It is possible to recognize a postmodern nihilism in the attitude of a hipster shopkeeper carelessly browsing Tumblr instead of watching the merchandise. An ethical response would be to seize the opportunity to fill my bag with as much as possible. From this lens, it is easier to examine the differences between Edelman's ethics and our own. You pose this difference as Edelman's enjoyment of what queers are figured to do versus our "more active, far more voluntary" proposals. I'm not entirely sure that the key

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difference is on the level of voluntariness; I'd argue that it takes quite a bit of action to fly around the country chasing circuit parties, or to spend a few hours in the gym every day. I imagine that some might spend as much time preparing an outfit for a party as another would to trash a bank. I'm also unsure it can be understood on the level of enjoyment; I couldn't begin to quantify the ways I've enjoyed my projects.

The difference lies elsewhere, and perhaps can be found in the corollary to *Attentat's* conception of decomposition: recomposition. If decaying parts can always be re-organized into a new composition, then our orientation must also consider how to evade or undermine this chance. *Attentat* cautions that we must be sure not to do "the innovative work that future systems will be built upon." By our account, a whole system has already been built upon Edelman's enjoyment! This system of enjoyment—the sexual labor, the circulation of pornographic images, the mediations of desire, the pharmaceuticals, the instrumentalization of the erotic body—is precisely the machine in which I've found myself ensnared, and against which I take aim. We can't take issue with the opening gestures of his ethics, but absolutely must critique the lack of follow-through.

Bearing these themes in mind, let's turn to your questions.

To your first question I'd simply say no, none of us can actually be what the symbolic order figures. As with all identities, the ones it offers us are always unattainable chimaeras from which we always feel a degree of failure or distance. And yet the answer is much more complicated than that. In our previous issue, we discussed the figures of anarchist and queer which are figured as threats by the symbolic order. Following this discussion (and discussions elsewhere in this issue) we could add nihilist and witch to the list. While we obviously cannot achieve some perfect attainment of the dark fantasies of the symbolic, there is some visceral level where we realize that these images are about something very real within us. Queer, anarchist, nihilist, witch; some might shy away from these but we find in each an alluring call.

You illustrate the contradiction that the futurism which attempts to abolish these figures is also what keeps them alive. A way of addressing this contradiction might be to apply the formulation of *Attentat* in recognizing that each of these subjects carries within it a pejorative, an identity, and also a range of positions from which to act. It could help to sort these potentials by viewing them through the lens of the operation of government. Leviathan doesn't construct these identities out of coherent communities, but rather groups together a wide array of practices and forms of life which it perceives as

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threatening. (For example herbalists, folk-healers, rebellious women, and practitioners of magic are grouped together by the Holy Inquisition within the category of witch; all manner of deviant and aberrant sex acts and gender expressions constitute queer.) These new subjects are then identified, differentiated, disciplined and finally either assimilated or annihilated. The move from pejorative to badge-of-pride can happen any number of ways. We can see contemporary witches attempting to reconstruct a spiritual practice out of the trial statements of accused witches and the handbooks of inquisitors. We also know too many cases of the State actively intervening to entrap idealistic young anarchists into buying bombs from its agents.[†] These inverse identifications with symbolic figures end up playing the State's game, recomposing yet another structure of capture and constraint.[‡] It is

[†] It has become widely known that at various moments our enemy has deployed a 'strategy of tension' to push people into an armed struggle which can only end a handful of ways. The Cleveland 4 are only a few of the most recent victims of this strategy of subjection.

[‡] I'm reminded of the newly launched *Mask Magazine* which ironically markets itself as a magazine by and for an accumulation of symbolically-figured identities: anarchist, hacker, hipster, queer. Through these reclaimed subjectivities, the magazine goes on to

understandable how this identitarian mode is seductive and easy to follow, but we would insist on an ecstatic mode instead. Proposing an ecstatic mode of response is to imagine a way out of the game of identities. Rather than aspiring to these identities, we might try to discover the gestures, orientations, and ways of life those identities were constructed to obscure. Such an ethics of *ek stasis* would strive to push us outside of our selves, but without locating us in new ones. Nihilism, witchcraft or anarchy might all be tools in this queer ethics, but each would have to be defined anew through an ongoing process of experimentation and play.

You offer that the world might more likely end because of Edelman's apathetic nihilists or hypocritical politicians rather than our own activities. But I think that neither of us really believes the world will end at all, for whatever reason. At this point, the functions of politics and government is simply to manage its own decomposition, cultivating recomposition where it can. Caught in this dynamic, we're really searching for ways of life which carve an escape route.

celebrate other figures: 'sell-out,' 'gentrifier,' etc. On a relevant note, the magazine defines 'queer' through a series of hashtags (#parties, #poppers, #pills, #processing, etc.) which are undoubtedly nihilist, but from which we can only feel a tragicomic distance.

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And so we arrive at your second question. Again I'll answer no, that insurrectionary anarchy is not an exemplary practice nor the sole way to perform the negation figured as the undoing of the social order. It is an example of a set of practices, but it is a set among many. The proposal of insurrection is useful in our inquiry firstly because it offers a diverse set of methods of attack and evasion. More so, it was a convenient focal point for drawing the connections we desired between subversive currents within queer theory and within anarchist thought. We've pointed to several interesting events and tendencies eating away at the social order, and could surely point to more.

You're correct for criticizing our locating *jouissance* solely in the "actual subversive histories of queerness." The understanding of history offered by the concept of decomposition helps to re-imagine this search. With the benefit of this new shape to time, we might say that the endless splitting of the social order has torn us apart as well, recomposing us as subjects of a dualistic world. *Jouissance* is to be found in those events where we overcome this dualism, if only momentarily. These moments do not occur in the meta-narrative of history (even queer history) but on a much smaller scale, in the rebellious lives which remain hidden or tragically lost to us. To conclude with your final question, an insurrectionary anarchy

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might be related to ethics in the pursuit of a connection to these moments of overcoming. This ethics could give new meaning to “armed joy.” Hopefully you’ll find the texts in this issue enjoyable on this point.

Looking forward to your next contribution to this strange thing we’re doing together,

Yours,

Tegan

bædan

hi tegan,

i just got to reading yr essay in bædan on theses on the philosophy of history. i guess i should begin by asking if this is your essay. i wouldn't like to presume that it is necessarily...?

so i have some questions about this reading that i'm suggesting are debated here, meaning between us in correspondance. i had a fleeting thought that i might write a critique of this piece, but it wouldn't really have utility for anyone who actually reads benjamin or the frankfurt school. that's to say that it would be platitudinous to someone in this field to read my exposition on why benjamin is a marxist with full fidelity to the method of the dialectic. this is like just a fact. anyone who has read one book by or on benjamin knows this. the dizzying pastiche of historically and theoretical distant figures and notions is unfortunate, but there's only one thing in this connection that i am sort of disturbed by. this is the oversight of the primary context of the theses, but also of benjamin's nihilism in general: and this context is fascism. i'm put off by your mentioning of stalinism ("state communism") as the historical context for benjamin's heretical marxism [sic], without any mention of fascism, of benjamin's jewish background,

of his exile into paris which was at the time under nazi occupation, or of his suicide at the border of nazi france and nazi spain, where he was denied entry by the gestapo, (not the soviet police).

"the enemy" in the writings of benjamin and brecht, his marxist mentor, is the fascist enemy, not the stalinists. it was obvious to marxists at the time, especially german ones, that stalinism was a hellish deformation of the project of communism. and the hitler-stalin pact of 1939 was what drove many communist parties in europe as well as marxist organizations, to radically reconsider their allegiances. the most theoretically sophisticated of these, johnson-forest tendency among them, returned to the texts of hegel and marx to understand what could have happened; others hold that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a misreading of the self-abolition of the proletariat, which is attended to in marx's exposition on real subsumption. this is a long debate. but it suffices to say that the revision of marx's form of value, historical determinism, etcetera has a long standing and complex trajectory that much anarchist theory approaches selectively. i think about this when i hear mao in the mouths of my nihilist friends, perhaps something left over from the influence of groups like the raf; or when thinking

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about italian autonomism as the unstudied undersong of so much political thinking in the bay specifically, without any recognition of the primary text of autonomism, which was the grundrisse.

this is just to say the dialectic of anarchism and communism historically is far more interesting than the micro-political polemics that our milieu is so preoccupied with. but i will say that your desire to make a jab at communism in the aforementioned section of yr essay at the expense of recognizing the historical mass grave which is fascism is simply bad taste, and not only that, but in a way contradicts the stakes of benjamin's entire argument in the theses—that it's our responsibility to save the dead—and recasting history to serve our own tendencious purposes is about as far from this as possible. our own writing on the dead obviously concerns the dead we will be, and benjamin is case in point. it is undeniable that he was a martyr in the war that fascism was waging on forms of life, and (at the time of his death) winning.

so, onto my questions:

1. considering the sophisticated conception of time in benjamin's work, of which "non-teleological time" versus 'progress' is a reductive analysis, how does

your writing understand (or not understand) the dialectical image of history?

because clearly we aren't talking about past-present-no future. we're talking about chronos and kairos, or now-time in relation to past, and victory in time as revision of past. do you understand non-teleological as 'out of sequence' or as multiple stimmung of time? what your calling "empty homogeneous time" is not history, in benjamin's sense, but historicization. the movement of history for marx, as for benjamin is not immanent, but dialectical, and in this way it is becomes a question of politics, instead of philosophy exclusively.

"no future" (to my understanding) is not chronic realism, its a mood, or impending quality of time. i guess i'm wondering why yr study of the essay privileges the question of the future, when the past and possible messianism of the present are clearly objects of import here.

2. how does one square a historical materialist conception of progress (history), with a trans-historical conception of civilization, a la camatte? in so far as benjamin explicitly denies a prelapsarian (what you call lost paradise) view, as well as the messianism that he alludes to in the end of the theses,

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due to the aforementioned fascist-inspired nihilism.

i'm also interested in the way you continue to recourse to "life under capital" despite your allegiance to camatte, for whom capital is one mask on the face of some abstract domination of real humanness.

3. do any of your analyses in this bear a relation to a queer critique of reproductive futurity devised in the previous two essays?

4. most scholar of benjamin try to negotiate what exactly his style of dialectics are. but it remains that, as in hegelian dialectics, the negation of the negation, or aufheben, holds a special place for benjamin, as can easily be deduced by reading critique of violence. this is dealt with also in his text the destructive character (which i'm flabbergasted hasn't become some anarchist fetish yet), wherein he leaves the question of the double movement of negation somewhat ambiguous, the question being, "what of the traces? and "are they also destroyed" in critique of violence we learn the inoperativity of a style of violence which resides in the dialectic of law and transgression, what brecht called "the reactionary darkness," such that the negation of the

law is the definition of transgression. it is our project to produce a double movement which negates the negation, and only this will generation a style of revolutionary violence outside of law ontologically, not outside (outlawing, lawlessness) while remaining inside its dialectic. at the bastard conference you answered my question concerning this by speaking about de-positivizing as agamben discusses, and upon reflection it become clear to me that this fails to address the ontological status of law, (we could even use agamben to prove this, viz. inclusive exclusion) with violence as it's primary epiphenomenon. de-postivizing logic leads back to an undialectical, or immanent form of destruction, (the romanticization and reification of which i have more than contempt). what interpretation does nihilism have for a line like, "what exists he reduces to rubble—not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it."

thoughts?

JF

bædan

Dear J.F.,

Thoughts:

As tempting as it may be to detail why and how you are wrong—wrong about Benjamin’s supposed “full fidelity” to the dialectic,[†] tragically mistaken about

[†] Your haughty claim to the agreement of “anyone who has read one book by or on benjamin [sic]” can be quickly deflated by citing at random any number of your prized academics. We’ll go with Mark Lilla’s reading of Benjamin’s correspondence and of “On the Concept of History” to demonstrate this:

The “Theses” reflect Benjamin’s apocalyptic vision of European politics in the late Thirties and his disappointment with communism’s betrayal in the Hitler-Stalin pact.... Stalin’s pact with the devil finally shattered any illusions he may have had about communism’s redemptive mission. In the Twenties Benjamin had played with the ideas of divine violence, radical decisionism, and political nihilism; in the early Thirties he could still idealize the frenzy of what he called “the destructive character.” But now the real apocalypse approached, bringing with it satanic violence, not the Messiah.

At a deeper level, the “Theses” represent the

fascism deserving an exceptional status of enmity,[‡] and dead wrong about what these unnamed and uncited “scholars of Benjamin” supposedly believe—the fact is that we are not interested in fighting over whether Benjamin truly belongs in our camp or in yours. We will leave it to ideology’s adherents to seek adherence to their ideologies.

last dramatic encounter between Benjamin’s theological metaphysics and his historical materialism. The essay opens with an image of the philosophy of history as a chess game, which a puppet called historical materialism can win only “if it enlists the services of theology, which today,” he says, “is wizened and has to keep out of sight.” And what can materialism learn from theology? Essentially that the idea of historical progress is an illusion, that history is nothing but a series of catastrophes piling wreckage upon wreckage, reaching up to the heavens. The members of the working class had been corrupted by the idea of progress, which blinded them to the regressive social consequences that accompanied increased domination of the natural world. They were lulled into ignoring the “state of emergency” caused by the rising forces of fascism, and failed to respond.

Materialism must now withdraw with “monastic discipline” from this belief in a

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It is not that we concede the point, but rather that if Benjamin doesn't fit under your tent, neither will he fit under any other. As Michael Löwy put it in his introduction to *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"*:

We usually classify the various philosophies of

progressive historical continuum, replacing it with a conception of history closer to that of traditional Judaism, which believed that "every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter." As Scholem later remarked, **nothing remains of historical materialism in this hermetic text but the term itself.** [emphasis added]

This puts your criticism into a funny position. You must contend with an interpretation of the "Theses" by a Benjamin scholar and one of Benjamin's closest friends which not only thoroughly contradicts your argument, but also by the very act of its contradiction easily disproves your claim of universal agreement. When you say of Benjamin's supposed fidelity that "this is like [sic] just a fact," you do more than merely demonstrate your failure of comprehension and extension of speech disfluency into your writing: you also reveal the ideological blinders which prevent you from seeing how plainly wrong you are.

‡ Your wounded reaction to our critique of Marxism reveals a great deal about your intentions. We must take a moment to respond to your claims in defense of

history by their progressive or conservative, revolutionary or nostalgic character. Walter Benjamin does not fit into these classifications. He is a revolutionary critic of the philosophy of progress, a Marxist opponent of 'progressivism,' a nostalgic who dreams of the

Communism with regard to Benjamin's writing. It is pretty clear that the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was simply the last straw of a litany of atrocities carried out in the name of Marxism. This point is made rather explicitly in several readings of the "Theses." Your characterization of Stalinism as a uniquely deviant "hellish deformation" of the Marxist project reads as a desperate attempt to sever your dogma from this legacy. Elsewhere in this issue we cite Fredy Perlman's argument in "The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism," which straightforwardly illustrates that the nightmares of the Gulag stem directly out of Marx's blindspot regarding industrialization, and that Lenin himself was the zealous architect of this horror. Perlman lucidly shows that fascism's death camps are a rationalization of Lenin's monstrosity. Your attempt to brush the dictatorship of the proletariat away as simply a "misreading" of Marx, without actually critiquing its basis in Marx, mirrors the laughable Maoist rhetorical strategy of branding as 'revisionist' any uncomfortable result of the theory. If you really want to break from this inheritance, it's your burden to thoroughly critique this fetish for production and technology. Camatte's

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future, a Romantic advocate of materialism. He is, in every sense of the word, ‘unclassifiable.’

While we would not choose the same words as Löwy here, there can be little doubt that Benjamin’s thought is characterized more by its promiscuity than by fealty to anything, much less something so rigid as *the dialectic*. Löwy goes on to say:

It is futile, then, to attempt to recruit him into one or other of the two main camps contending for hegemony on the stage (or should we say the market?) of ideas: modernism and postmodernism.

It is not hard to see how the same could be said of Marxism and whatever camp we might be accused of contending for (nihilism? ahistorical anti-civilizationism? mysticism?). We do not demand

writing could be seen as an example of this break and Jasper Bernes’ piece in the third issue of *Endnotes* is another, with tragically little in between. Without such a critique, we have to ask how Marx can be misread so intensely that millions are murdered as a result. Your invocation of the mass graves of fascism is duplicitous in the context of your attempt to obscure the (far more) mass(ive) graves of Marxism.

Benjamin's belonging to our camp, if indeed we feel part of any camp (we do not), and if we resist your claims to his belonging to yours, it is partly in the spirit of debate, to be sure, but it is also from a sensation we can only describe as ethical in nature. Not because we feel an obligation to "save the dead," as you claim a proper reading of Benjamin would persuade us is our duty. (The dead? Which ones?) It is rather that to *recognize* someone is to experience an ethical bond with them, especially in cases where the conditions elicit the instincts of preservation.

If we have almost no desire for a battle over ideological claims to Benjamin's legacy, we have even less for a contest over his interpretation by the academy at large. Your claim that anyone *working in this field* would disagree with us doesn't have the sting that you might have intended. You may, for some bizarre reason, be their sycophant, but our project (much like your writing) is not academic, and neither is it constrained by the dominant opinions of experts in their fields. Further, if the majority of Marxist academics do offer such a simplistic reading of someone so enigmatic, we would read this as a call to scandalize their comfortable certainty. What's more, you seem to have missed that our project could be understood, in a certain light, as an attempt to undermine the academic operation of sterilizing and de-clawing rebel thought. Just as we argued that

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Edelman's work functions to pacify Hocquenghem through the banality of form, those *working in this field* (you, by extension) labor to stultify the subversive qualities of Benjamin's thought through the tired routine of Marxist analysis. We have to ask what motivates you to affirm the *fidelity* of a man otherwise celebrated for his *promiscuity*? Forgive us if we read your inquiry as another effort to capture what remains ineffable, as the labor of a dogmatist, an ideologue.†

† Yours is only the most recent attempt on the part of Marxists to firmly lay claim to Benjamin. This legacy goes all the way back to Adorno and Brecht, (who in a creepy euphemism you describe as Benjamin's "marxist [sic] mentors"). Scholem criticized his relationship with these two, and with Marxism more generally, in a letter to Benjamin where he wrote:

I am so dismayed that I must say to myself that this self-deception is possible only because you desire it, and more: that it can last only as long as it is not put to the materialist test. The complete certainty I have about what would happen to your writing if it occurred to you to present it within the Communist party is quite depressing.... It would become unambiguously and explosively clear that your dialectic is not that of the materialist

To invoke Benjamin himself with regard to critical reading:

If, to use a simile, one views the growing work as a burning funeral pyre, then the commentator stands before it like a chemist, the critic like an alchemist. Where for the

whose method you try to approach, at the very moment you were unmasked by your fellow dialecticians as a typical counterrevolutionary and bourgeois.... I fear that the high cost of this error will be borne by you.... You would not, of course, be the last but perhaps the most incomprehensible sacrifice to the confusion of religion and politics.

Mark Lilla, citing this and other examples, describes the relationship between Benjamin and Brecht as tragically deferential in a way which had an unfortunate effect on Benjamin's writing. Benjamin's correspondences with Adorno and Brecht are littered with countless moments of these two reprimanding him for his infidelity and mysticism. They figure less as mentors and more as disciplinarians, striking his knuckles whenever he strayed from his assignment.

Lilla gives an example in the form of Brecht's criticism of Benjamin on Kafka:

The Kafka essay does much to confirm

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former, wood and ash remain the sole objects of his analysis, for the latter only the flame itself preserves an enigma: that of what is alive. Thus the critic inquires into the truth, whose living flame continues to burn over the heavy logs of the past and the light ashes of experience.

Scholem's claim, first made in the frustrated-sounding letters of the early Thirties and later in his memoirs, that Benjamin's most important ideas came from his concern with theological issues, while his idiosyncratic materialism only confused them. It also receives surprising confirmation from Bertolt Brecht, with whom Benjamin was staying in the summer of 1934. As we learn in the previously unpublished "Conversations with Brecht," translated in *Reflections*, Brecht, a consistent materialist, was disappointed in, and baffled by, Benjamin's theological backsliding in the Kafka essay. Benjamin faithfully reports Brecht's objection that Kafka is an "obscurantist," a "Jewboy," a "skinny, unlikable creature" whose mystical depths were at the farthest remove from the "crude thinking" the times demanded. Benjamin's celebration of Kafka's failed messianism simply advanced "Jewish fascism," Brecht charged.

We'll leave your accredited experts the task of picking through the materialist ashes; our gaze remains fixed on the dancing flames.

What we are interested in questioning at the moment is the line of inquiry which leads you to conclude that our piece betrayed Benjamin or his "Theses." First, however, we should make clear that

Benjamin was clearly not meant for Communist intellectual labor; his Marxism, if it can be called that, remained too intimately bound up with his original theological concerns ever to be fully disentangled. He cites another example regarding Adorno's influence on the *Arcades Project*:

Some responsibility for the wreck of the Arcades Project must be assigned to Adorno, who in a series of long letters forced Benjamin to reconceive the project again and again. The letters make clear, however, that Adorno genuinely believed he was saving his friend from himself. Adorno, who saw the Arcades Project as a potential model for secular critical theory about bourgeois culture, worried to see it oscillating in Benjamin's hands between a vitalistic mysticism and a simple-minded Marxism. Adorno rejected the 1935 prospectus on the grounds that it was "undialectical" and that Benjamin was still "under the spell of bourgeois psychology."... Later that month Benjamin replied in a sad, self-deprecatory letter (to Gretel, not Theodor), agreeing with

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any attack of ours on communism, whether in the first issue of the journal, in these pages, or elsewhere, is hardly motivated by a desire to score points as you suggest. If that was our interest, we would have simply mentioned the mass graves of communism and left it at that. In our engagement with Benjamin, we saw fit to recognize and appreciate his deviations from

most of the criticisms and promising to do better next time.

This disapproving and controlling tone continued on Adorno's part for several years afterwards:

In 1938, as Europe prepared for war, Benjamin submitted an enormous manuscript on Baudelaire as a miniature model of the Arcades book, only to encounter the same objections that Adorno had raised in 1935. "Let me express myself in as simple and Hegelian manner as possible," Adorno begins, without a trace of irony.... Adorno then added, unhelpfully, that "the materialistic determination of cultural characteristics is possible only when mediated by the total [social] process." Benjamin was devastated, more letters were exchanged, and a much revised version of the essay was finally published in the *Zeitschrift* in 1939 as "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire."

Though Gershom Scholem later collaborated

Marxism because, for us, such deviations are what interest us in the figures of the past. Insofar as a figure of history only seems to us to be a blurred face among many, we are incapable of recognizing him, much less conversing with her. Insofar as another figure appears only as the political face of some

with Adorno on republishing Benjamin's works, he always regretted Benjamin's association with the Frankfurt School, as did Hannah Arendt. While both were thankful to the Institute for supporting Benjamin financially, neither believed that Marxist critical theory was a meaningful enterprise, or that the term adequately described what was truly important about Benjamin's writings. And although Benjamin appreciated Adorno's mind, one senses in his letters a frustration with the editorial constraints imposed by Adorno and Horkheimer, which was exacerbated, no doubt, by the fact that his relation with the Institute was based on financial obligation.

If we find this 'editorial constraint' and harsh dogmatism nauseating, we can only be bewildered by the fact that someone would want to continue this tradition. Your attempt to save Benjamin in death feels all too similar to these efforts to save him from himself in life.

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movement or other, they are incapable of holding our interest. But when we can sense a fragment of the past deviating from its course, resisting progress itself, then in a flash this fragment is alive and present with us and, however briefly, we grasp a bit of truth. Even you must admit that few if any would be interested in Benjamin's thought if he clung dogmatically to the method of the dialectic. Clearly, the enchantment of his life's work lies elsewhere.

This elsewhere is undoubtedly to be found in Benjamin's mystical thought. It is interesting that you make some half-hearted effort to criticize us for neglecting his Jewish identity, when your entire reading is an attempt to sever his thought from its Jewish influence. You describe this central dimension of his thought as an "unfortunate," "dizzying pastiche of historically and theoretical [sic] distant figures and notions." Your characterization reads as particularly nasty when compared to Gershom Scholem's assertion that Benjamin was "a theologian marooned in the realm of the profane," or his celebration of Benjamin's "intuitive affirmation of mystical themes which walk a fine line between religion and nihilism." Benjamin himself often described being torn between his 'cultic' and 'communist' desires. As he says in a letter to Scholem regarding his 'conversion' to Marxism:

If I were to join the Communist Party someday (something that, in turn, I am making dependent on one last twist of fate), my stance would be to behave always radically and never logically when it came to the most important things.... [T]here are no meaningfully political goals.

Where you would dismiss the fire for the ashes you prize, we recognize these ashes as meaningless and seek only the warmth of what you'd excise.

It is interesting that you write, however obliquely, of betrayal in relation to Benjamin. How can we betray someone who had no sense of the firm commitment you find in him? Is it not strange, that one who is dead can command one's attention so? We also feel this when we read the "Theses," though not, it seems, in the way you do. Not as a responsibility to save some faceless mass of corpses, nor a loyal party member. We read the "Theses" not as a warning against recasting history, but to the contrary as an invitation to cast history away and to recognize in the past the faces of friends.

Now as to your questions:

1. Jargon aside, it is unclear how you concluded that our reading of the "Theses" holds the future in a

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position of privilege. We can only guess this was by juxtaposition with *No Future*, or perhaps simply because the future is a sort of default orientation one can hardly help but privilege. If the former, we might remind you that in that piece we only privileged the future as a subject in order to attempt to articulate how and why it captivates us, and ultimately to refuse it. If the latter, then we can only say that we are of course not free from this condition, though in turning to Benjamin, we were reminded to turn away from the future, if only for a time and more as gesture than as a break. We could even say that the reading of his “Theses” we presented was intended to be a reminder, or an invitation, in turn.

As you say, *chronic realism* was not the subject of our reading. In fact, since your letter kindly introduced the phrase to our ears, we can think of no term more fitting to describe the condition infecting this society. In the future we may even employ the phrase ourselves, if you don’t mind. Chronic realism: the debilitating belief—long-term or life-long, and resistant to medication—in consensus reality. A bit too Crimethinc? We’ll work on it.

It is true that in some very strange and inevitable way, there will be a future, even if there is not one for me, or you, or even humanity. One might cast one’s vote for plurality and say that there will be no Future, that instead there are many futures. This position is

preferable, but is made troublesome by what it inherits—nearly everything—from the conformist view of the future which it means to deviate from.

What remains—what may always remain—is how we intend to orient ourselves with regard to a future we have disavowed, at least in its political forms. Because what is at stake is more than a mood; it is a question of ethics, though far less straightforward than ethical questions are supposed to be. Here, where your line of inquiry leaves off, ours begins.

2. Certainly, the progressivism and anti-civilization thought you mention are not square nor can they be placed squarely, but can only be erratically played against each other. The great heap of wreckage that Benjamin calls history is what we'd call Leviathan—Death itself which captures the living. Progress can only describe a view from within this monster, as the refinement of its mode of capture, and also as the decimation and accumulation of countless bodies. Benjamin calls it a storm which blows us out of paradise. While we agree with Benjamin that we cannot return to paradise, we must also insist that history can be read and lived in a way that tends to inspire and strengthen us, rather than merely squashing human beings into the gross narrative of progress. We might consider your inquiry in light of Benjamin by returning to Löwy again as he outlines

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Benjamin's interest in the past through the lens of German Romanticism:

One might define the Romantic Weltanschauung as a cultural critique of modern (capitalist) civilization in the name of pre-modern (pre-capitalist) values—a critique or protest that bears upon aspects which are felt to be unbearable and degrading: the quantification and mechanization of life, the reification of social relations, the dissolution of the community and the disenchantment of the world. Its nostalgia for the past does not mean it is necessarily retrograde: the Romantic view of the world may assume both reactionary and revolutionary forms. For revolutionary Romanticism the aim is not a *return* to the past but a *detour* through the past on the way to a utopian future.

Here we could discuss nostalgia for pre-capitalist values as (*admittedly ahistorical*) resistance to modernity, but on this question we will again be met with your inability to mistake our *interest* for *adherence*. We have no 'allegiance to Camatte' to be spoken of (and we explicitly critique his understanding of capital in our engagement with him), though we might naturally feel inclined to take

his side for the moment when he is accused of unfaithfulness to the proper conception of domination and history. Here we might reemphasize that it is a person's tendency to deviate that draws us, as deviants, to them. Not so we can form a new deviant position to adhere to or deviate from, but to hold a palaver, discoursing in a manner not only idle but aimless.

This is, of course, a matter of taste.

We play with Camatte, and more importantly Perlman, for the same reason we play with Benjamin: for their endeavors in heresy.

3. Yes, of course. Did you read it?

4. Here is an interesting question, however uninteresting your method of approach, and without acceding to speak for nihilism, we will offer an interpretation of the line. While there are several ways to approach nihilism, for now we could say that nihilism means an orientation toward reducing what exists to rubble rather than toward a way through it. For us, this approach corresponds to a strategic interpretation of the situation, a provisional understanding that, firstly, what we are faced with is not yet rubble but structures (and so why concern oneself with navigating a path that has not been opened), and secondly that all attempts, however

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marginal, at radicalizing and even destroying these structures may result in their improvement. Were you to excavate your cherished History, you'd likely see that every such attempt has lead directly to a labor camp.

Elsewhere we've discussed an ethics which seeks to find escape routes from the structures which constrain us. Your reading of 'a way through' seems to betray a desire to recompose such rubble into some new dialectical arrangement of capture. Without shying away from the delight we take in the rubble, we must also imagine that a 'way through' would mean a way out.

We could counter with Benjamin's call "to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled." Here he has infinitely more in common with a conception of history as decomposition and tragedy than with any ideology which believes that redemption might be built into these monuments. Toward any such ideology, *we have more than contempt.*

In summation, we can only insist, against a reading of the "Theses" that would make it our moral obligation to save the dead, that instead our task, and our desire, is to experience those moments that break the continuity of history and, insofar as it is possible, to inhabit them. In doing so, we are not called to the past by any group with its martyrs and its morality

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of death. We are motivated only, by a sense of recognition, to “blast open the continuum of history.” You accuse us of ahistoricism. What we intend is far worse.

Most sincerely,

the bœdlings