

# **Here at the Center of a World in Revolt**

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# Contents

A dream that ends in shouting . . . . .	3
<b>Theory</b>	<b>6</b>
A Brief History of the Machine . . . . .	6
No Gods . . . . .	7
The Word and the Body . . . . .	9
Species and Relational Beings . . . . .	11
Determinism, Determination . . . . .	13
Ashes to Ashes, Network to Network . . . . .	16
The Family Values of Production . . . . .	20
The State as Warfare . . . . .	26
Recovering the Imaginary . . . . .	31
Democracy and White Supremacy . . . . .	36
Stable State, Moving Capital . . . . .	39
The End of Class . . . . .	42
Ludd's Last Laugh . . . . .	46
Information as Knowledge, Alienated . . . . .	48
An Anarchist Theory of Value . . . . .	52
Insurrection as Catharsis Reversed . . . . .	59
Revolution as Panchentric Society . . . . .	61
<b>Practice</b>	<b>64</b>
The Ecosystem of Revolt . . . . .	64
Starting Points . . . . .	66
Rhythms of Rebellion . . . . .	68
Making History . . . . .	72
The Stormcloud on the Plain . . . . .	73
Appearances and Appearing . . . . .	78
Conflictivity and a Well Balanced Struggle . . . . .	83
Hurdling the Enclosures . . . . .	85
Emma Goldman's Piano . . . . .	90
A Beautiful Chaos . . . . .	94
Allies, Enemies, and the Left . . . . .	99
The New Communes . . . . .	102
Riot to Insurrection to Revolution . . . . .	104

## A dream that ends in shouting

Here we are. At the end of futures. Even the apocalypse has been stolen from us. The misery is at once obvious and easy to ignore. The blinking lights of the carnival pull our attention ever away from ourselves. Why struggle to look elsewhere when the only other vista is the tableau of our defeat and our powerlessness to reverse it? Our animal selves are still alive; we see this in the eruptions of rage that periodically burn through even the most civilized of cities. Only, we've found no way to communicate with this side of everyone that is still open to fury. Insurrectionism is coming to an end, eclipsed by an enduring failure to communicate. The insurrection is easy. It's meeting that's so hard.

Between flashing lights and the fires of war, most people have made the easier choice, as most people always will at any point in history. Thanks to this laziness the species has survived. But is our inclination towards survival driving us to extinction? If only. We're afraid it won't be that simple.

The most romantic of those who have thrown their lives in with the struggle have chosen to believe that fossil fuels are the apex of capitalism's technological repertoire, and thus collapse is inevitable, because a future of collapse and mass starvation is so much more comforting than one in which this Machine goes on forever, always inventing escapes to the traps it creates for itself. The most sociable are turning the battlefield into a garden, creating their little piece of anarchy so they can share it with neighbors and sleep at night without thinking about the ones who have been shot down or locked up. The most pragmatic of those who have disavowed the comforting distractions still seek some alliance in the order of things; they seek numbers to hide their isolation; they use the tools the Machine gives them to dissimulate their powerlessness. And the most determined can only speak of destroying everything, of fighting only for today because it hurts too much to hope for the improbable, to imagine a future we can't believe in.

Even those of us who have chosen to rebel have made the easier choices within our rebellion. In the end we are not so different from the majority. This is comforting, somehow.

There is an invisible force at work chaining us to this misery. The depth of our defeat can only be explained by a silent excavation that has been undermining us more profoundly than we've ever been uprooted before. Hopelessness is nothing new. But the absence of dreams should strike us as loud as a thunderclap.

Once the rulers took over everything, once they had invaded every last corner, they didn't demobilize. The war measures only intensified. But what were they invading, if the whole world was already taken?

The key to their ongoing victory hides within an ancient lie. They prepared this battlefield a long time ago by blinding us to its existence. The easiest war to win is one your enemy does not know you are fighting.

The one world was overrun, and now they are invading the other, the world whose existence we have been tricked into forgetting, and every year we are weakened by defeats we do not know about.

The Machine has succeeded in imprinting even in our dreams the feeling that its triumph is permanent. And though machines do run on their own fuel reserves, and could keep going for a time without any input, it would be a mistake to assume that this one has no engineers, that all of us are powerless pawns of a force called history. In fact, there are engineers, there are people who are incredibly powerful. Just as we, they are not free. This elite gets its power precisely from

its ability to repair and improve the Machine. They are not unified, except in being chained to the Machine, and they are not a shadowy, omnipotent conspiracy, though they regularly conspire in the performance of their duties. They are people like us, but in positions of influence, where they take technical measurements and draft plans for maintenance or expansion. Just like we do, they live inside reality, which is the product of the Machine. But we, unlike them, are disloyal, and our desires do not conform to their imperatives.

You already know the name of this system's animating logic, its very spark: it is called control. Control is the all-seeing eye, the sublimated collective memory of the truncheon, shackle, and whip. It is the cop in your head who never needs punish you because you are already in line. Because the Machine now occupies the entire globe, it is only in the imaginary that uncontrolled worlds exist. Unfortunately for the Machine, the imaginary springs eternally. It does not respond to rational conditioning and its relationship with the material world is not mechanical. A reality that pretends to be universal constantly faces the threat of being exposed as a sham. Thus it invades the same territory again and again, each time plowing deeper to scoop up the roots of rebellion. Those of us alive today have been colonized and recolonized, the frontlines have crossed us repeatedly. And still we resist. But we do so without hope. Though the imaginary is invincible, this time they have conquered imagination, and we really have nothing left. Nothing but an impoverished choice, between avoiding the devastating gaze of our own hopelessness, or clinging to the fables of another generation's imaginings, wholly inadequate for the times it has fallen on us to live through.

What torch, what flame, will we carry to those who will take up the struggle after us?

If we can accomplish one thing, may it be to generalize the realization that though reality believes in itself, it is a fabrication. Its development and its expansion are the result of the efforts of those same engineers who are addicted to it. It is, in other words, a twisted imaginary that opiates those who have destroyed their connection with the world and lost their way back.

Every time the Machine has reinvaded a territory, its advance has been directed and informed by its engineers. They assess and improve strategies for the Machine from their various departments—marketing strategies, investment plans, methods of police control. They are not aware of the contrived nature of their actions anymore than the General is aware of the sociopolitical process that created the army he leads. Nonetheless an army is not an unconscious, inevitable force as mechanical and blind as its components. Neither is it inevitable that people plug themselves into the Machine. The reality that leads them to do this is not created blindly. It can be unmade by those who see it clearly.

It is time to wake up again into the Dream. To shout "fire!" in the theater, not as a hoax, but as a promise. To give battle in both worlds at once, and to simply negate our obvious defeat, because the Machine can never dictate the terms of our surrender if the reasons we rebel remain illegible to it. Destroying us has always been the last resort of repression, because we are the Machine's most valuable resource. It has thrived by welding its survival to our own. But if we define survival not in material terms but in the continuing of rebellion, in the passing on of a Dream, an Idea, then we become the wolf in its flock, the sugar in its gas tank, and the gremlin in its gears.

Somewhere, we need to find the courage to be hopeless. To face our defeat, and go on fighting, but this time with the whole of our- selves, with blind rage and with long sight.

Unlike land, unlike loved ones, relations, forests, health, customs, collectivities, imagination cannot be taken by force; it can only be surrendered, but at any moment, we can recover it. It is the tiny weapon smuggled into the prison, the bare minimum for plotting a grandiose escape.

Outnumbered, defeated, disarmed, corralled; we have come to the moment of craziness, beyond hard and easy choices. It is time to launch a counterattack in both worlds at once.

For the anarchist majority of human history, people have usually made the easier choice, avoiding the state, running for the hills. Now there's nowhere left to run. When you're cornered, attack. Always attack.

LZ & JR  
Somewhere on the margins  
Sometime between 2009 & 2011

# Theory

It is a theoretical and practical certainty that theory and practice are not intrinsically separate spheres but different moments of an inseparable whole. We reflect on our practice and put our theory into action. To contemplate theory and practice, to write about them both, from a moment of reflection that comes between moments of battle, is to introduce a question of mood to this reflection. Theory, then, becomes a constellation of stories that help us remember how we came to be here. It is not an immediate memory—not the tactical learning we piece together with our friends from days of struggle—but an attempt to dialogue with those who are no longer here, to create for ourselves a place to stand, in rejection of the coordinates we find ourselves mapped into. To theorize, as rebels, is to reaffirm a greater family, to identify that which we wish to carry with us.

*“Bring me your ghost,  
devouring sadness.*

*Some ask to be forgiven.  
Let us be haunted.”*

—A Postcard From The End

## A Brief History of the Machine

Control is the animating logic of the machine, its inner mechanical principle. Reality is what it produces. The proto-machine, arising in several different parts of the world in varying form, was patriarchy. Several of these machines began creating rudimentary forms of the State. In many places these structures were over- thrown. One proto-machine successfully created God, which was a very powerful virus that crippled social relational understanding, self-reliance, and people-with-nature. People still existed through their relations, for the nature of the world had not changed, but because they stopped to understand themselves in the world around them, these relationships increasingly became circuits of harm.

When one proto-machine that had adopted the God virus—stealing it in fact from a group of rebels who sought to use it as a weapon—fractured and almost crumbled due to barbarian invasion and internal weaknesses, God persisted, even infecting the invaders, who already carried with them a different but analogous form of patriarchy. In time the ground was prepared and the Machine could advance again throughout Christendom, which was one of the receptive domains created by the God virus. From Christendom came Whiteness, impelled by the emergence of a global accumulation needed to fuel the Machine’s new war plan, Capitalism. Capitalism allowed the many statist fragments of the earlier imperial machine to link together and save themselves from rebellion and disunity, coalesce and realize their ideal on a higher plane. This new State has conquered the whole world. But there has always been resistance. Rebels are those who do not

submit. Radicals are those who remember the depth of their loss. Insurgents are those who rise up. Organizers are those who plan and create. Anarchists need to be all of these.

## No Gods

In every socialist who salivated over progress, in every materialist who predicted the future, in every syndicalist who talked about increasing production, in every idealist who attacked a heresy, God was resurrected a little.

Abram Solomonovich Grossman said that “the strength of anarchism lies in its total and radical negation of all the foundations of the present system.” In many instances we have not lived up to this ideal. We have abolished God but not orthodoxy, we reject the State but still view our lives from above, in the permanently non-ecstatic out-of-body experience that the Machine trains us in.

It is a foundation of monotheism and of rationalism that there is one Truth. This is a fundamental doctrine of the reality we are fighting. But even the scientists have been forced to concede that there is no such thing as objectivity. Velocity and position are relative; observation always affects the observed. Nonetheless, the possibility that truth is multiple and contradictory is still assumed to be fallacy. Both the Enlightenment concept of logic and the State itself require all their subjects to stand in line.

It is no coincidence that anarchists, especially those most closely approaching their ideal, have not established totalizing theories or histories. This has been our weakness from the perspective of academics, historians, and other functionaries of the Machine. It is one of our many weaknesses that is in fact a strength. For obvious reasons the creation of a unified narrative has long been a central impulse of the Machine. History, whether produced by modernists or Marxists, has been an attempt to get all the facts to corroborate one another. But our project requires no alibi. Let all the truths speak in their own voices. We’re not afraid of chaos.

Was it Archimedes who said, “Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough, and I can move the world”? There is no such place to stand. Gravity as much as facts stem from our position relative to other bodies in a moving space. There is no absolute up nor absolute down.

Facts can be evaluated from specific perspectives; they cannot be evaluated on their own merits. An anarchist history or theory denies that there is only one place to stand from which the facts can be evaluated, but, recognizing the limitless possibility of standpoints, does not shirk the responsibility to take a stand. History is a project, and an anarchist history is a conspiracy of perspectives that take aim on the High Ground, not to occupy it, but to throw it down, so that there should never again be one perspective that is legitimized above all others.

Julieta Paredes was on to something when she said, “We are anarchists not by Bakunin or the CNT, but by our grandmothers, and that is a very beautiful school of anarchism.” Anarchism is most present in the multiplication of paths to anarchy.

Accordingly, there can be no monistic anarchist theory. We can benefit from many contradictory theories, each a helpful lens that describes a part of the world. This does not mean that everything is true or everything is valid. There is also a lot of bullshit, but there’s no need to stupefy ourselves to the point of only being able to see one truth in order to separate the valid from the bogus. In fact, the fashionable sort of relativism is a function of monistic reality; reality is not interested in a debate, it is interested in being believed. For the educated classes from whom

the Machine's engineers are recruited, it is important to learn competing versions of governing theories, but the withdrawal, for relativists, from one theory to zero is a logical development precisely because reality is not to be presented as something questionable: it is an immutable set of circumstances to be accepted, and therefore a relativistic detachment from all perspectives (a mirror, rather than a hammer) is an effective way to simultaneously explain and delegitimize social conflict. Relativism is the corollary to professionalization: when fact-checking becomes the prerogative of a special profession, no one else has access to an external truth to legitimize an attack on existing conditions. Anything can be considered, nothing can be undertaken. Everything is simply "your own personal opinion." Reality protects itself with a moat of the inane.

In the final analysis, relativism is an indispensable practice because it provides a democratic platform for brief and nonconfrontational conversation between strangers on a train or at the office, allowing for easy communication in a world fraught with conflict.

If we do not shirk a belief in our experiences, if we do not abdicate the personal sovereignty that legitimates our attacks, how are we to find new compass points in such a distorted terrain? The most extreme, nihilistic of rebels, if they accept the dichotomy of right and wrong and take up the opposing pole, the Devil's cause, end up recreating what they reject, because in that opposing pole still exists the logic and form of the other, just as one side of the bowl implies the shape of the reverse: one is convex and the other concave and these are opposites but their logic is mutual.

Materialism must also be transcended. We found it sharpened our minds, it gave us a new way to look at history, but it owes too much to the Machine. The Machine too needs sharp minds.

Materialism, as a mechanistic worldview, only bears fruit in hind-sight. It chokes up and putters to a halt before the chaos of the present moment. It is telling that in one of the great philosophical contests of the 19th century, between Marx and Bakunin, the former easily won a predominant place in the pages of history, the halls of government, and the vocabularies of academic disciplines; yet Bakunin, running from insurrection to insurrection and authoring no reproducible theoretical framework left his rival in the dust when it came to predicting how history would unfold, where the revolutions of the following decades would occur, and what would become of the state the pretends to wither away. Could it be that simple social intuition could bring us closer in touch with the world than a rigorous scientific method? Well, obviously.

Objectivity is a red herring. Material conditions cannot determine or create culture in any measurable way because it is culture that perceives and reshapes material conditions. Material and cultural reality are inseparable. They are inextricable parts of the same whole, and their separate existence is limited to the words we have invented to describe different aspects of one thing.

Confronted with this, advocates of materialism might claim the primacy of the material, since, after all, the physical world clearly predates human consciousness and culture. But this is little more than a chicken and egg trick. Thomas Aquinas used the same logic to prove the existence of God: the cause always precedes the effect, therefore there must be an original cause.

The definition of government and the hypothesis for its evolution offered by Marx and Engels is hopelessly flawed. Society cannot be divided into substructure and superstructure, the economy and its organizing committees; it is propelled and wracked by a multiplicity of forces acting on one another, rising and falling in relative importance. The more detailed explanation of the rise of capitalism offered by world systems theorists offers only the most general of dialectics. To explain the acute causes of its development they can proffer no materialist or other mechanisms but must refer to a complex of factors that refer to profit motives, power motives, networks

of knowledge, arbitrary strategies and even the religious tendencies of rulers. To complete the picture we would also have to examine the patriarchal and ecocidal motivations of rulers. If we are so disposed, we can find under each of these lenses the metrics that would allow us to explain everything in their own terms. But rather than discovering the base of an ontological pyramid, the original cause, we are simply allowing ourselves to be tricked by the absoluteness wielded by every possible perspective.

Without acknowledging the implications—more anarchist than Marxist—of their work, Braudel and Arrighi describe a “dichotomous” relationship of partnership between territorialist and capitalist powers, between sometimes indistinguishable government and business organizations. Their exhaustive combing of history cannot support the view of a society, a culture, a state structure that answer simply and unilaterally to the needs of capital. And the historical rules they discover or reiterate apply to classes of people who have chosen to follow particular logics; the rules do not cut across logics or tame the original fact of choice.

A colonizing culture arrives and sees a desert. The natives see an oasis. They are resettled; a desert is born. The same culture steals and encloses the commons, predicting scarcity. They cut down all the trees because nature, they believe, demands production. The soil dries up and famine breaks out. Scarcity is born.

A survey is made of all the egalitarian societies recorded in the annals of the colonizers. The scientist looks for the common factor, the common mode of production, the common geographic conditions, out of which this egalitarian ethos has grown. The only commonality he finds is a cultural determination on the part of the members of those societies to be egalitarian. In materialist terms, this is circular logic. Unfortunately for the materialists, it’s also true. And, to take this scientist into uncomfortable terrain, we have to point out that, therefore, this is not egalitarianism as a condition, but anti-authoritarianism as a project. The naturalness of social arrangements was destroyed by historical materialism. The dialectic of material forces is destroyed by anarchy. Free will returns to humankind. Nature evolves from a static condition awaiting the plow, to a mechanical force that changes over time, to a creative web that is its own protagonist. Social arrangements are natural again. Nothing is the same.

The Machine will never win, and we will never lose, because It has chosen an impossible project. Negation is the force at the center of everything. Total control only accelerates entropy.

Our dialectic is nothing more than the fertile tension between the void that exists at the center of everything, and the inexplicable urge of creation that pulls itself out of that void. Rocks thrust up from the ocean, only to be worn down again by the waters of time. The earth coalesces out of swirling dust cast from the solar furnace, which will one day expand and consume it, some billion years before it also snuffs out. The universe hurls outwards from a singularity, into the expanding space it creates for itself, its own cold tomb of irreversible distension, yet it is suggested: are new universes born out of black holes?

Why not? We already know it well: “the passion for destruction is a creative passion.” This is why their walls will never hold us back for good.

## **The Word and the Body**

For the first time in a long time, insurgents are speaking about rage and desire as appropriate justifications for the declaration of war. Anarchists are taking Emma Goldman’s quote farther

than she could have imagined; dancing is not only allowed in this revolution, it has become a primary means for seizing space. In our forefathers' revolution the orgy and the riot didn't even border; now the line between them has been lost. Our bodies, vacated for so long, are filling up again, and it feels good.

In the beginning, there was the Word.

This beginning is a fracturing of the world into word and body, one of the earliest alienations. Mathematics and taxonomy are the Word in its purest forms. Abstractly they are beautiful, but they also function as the language of control, the calculus and architecture that aim the guns of the social war and corral its victims.

Biopower finds its precedent in the Bible, whole books of which concern themselves with disciplining the body. But capitalism has given the Machine new means to subordinate the body to the word. The body need no longer be despised because now it can be perpetually vacated, perpetually recuperated, perpetually harnessed. Our fantasies, menstruations, masturbations, diseases, fears, and exhaustions need no longer be cause for shame, just because they contradict the quantitative demands of the Machine. Now they can be worshipped with commodities. Every commodity, consumed, extinguishes its value like the spirit of an animal sacrificed on the altar flying up to God. Bring the next ram.

But the same hatred of the body is still there. The theories may have changed, but the shift from theonomic nation-states to biopower cannot hide the continuity of the underlying logic of control. This is nowhere clearer than in the sanitation of menstruation. What more fundamental instance is there of the body asserting itself against all artificial schedules, of life insisting on the primacy of its own rhythms? And what mundane condition has been more despised? The Bible treated menstruation as sickness and did not hide its disgust for those bodies that could not keep from asserting themselves over and against the imperatives of the culture.

Biopower adopts a neutral, medical stance, but even blindfolded one could hear how it holds its nose and tiptoes around the subject. Menstruation is still sickness and under capitalism sickness is something to be suppressed with the appropriate application of commodities while one carries on with the demands of labor. The conservatives malign women as inferior workers because of this disadvantage while the progressives produce images of women in smart suits with sleek tampon dispensers tucked in their handbags, women who never slow down. The body must not be allowed to assert itself against the regime of work.

When the body is sick, one can modify one's leisure time, watching a movie, consuming a pint of ice cream or a half-cup of cough syrup instead of going to the gym, but for some sicknesses or discomforts not even one's children should know of the pain that inhabits the body they share space with.

Misery loved company, but the atomized proletariat of today prefers to keep their less dramatic but equally ubiquitous discomforts to themselves. The Machine has fabricated a landscape in which even at the depths of suffering it is less unpleasant to choose among the officially proffered options than to resist, to transgress, to fight back, to step out of line. The lessons of the Holocaust were well learned. We will walk through the very last door as long as it is the easiest of a well managed set of choices.

Monsieur Dupont suggest an appropriate metaphor: society as a system of highways. There is one point of departure which we may never revisit but always flee, not even looking back like Benjamin's angel because of the wreckage that would ensue if we took our eyes off the road. But we have before us an infinite number of exits, none of which take us off this closed

circuit of highways. We want to go fast but not too fast. We could never want to stop, except at a scenic overlook or refreshment center. And we could never talk about repression. Some places have concrete walls but in others there are only soft shoulders. There are no oppressors, only regulations and regulators which, though we may disagree with the particular limits they set or how impolite they are when ticketing us, are clearly there for our own good. What would it even mean, to speak of resistance on a highway?

The expansive desire of the Machine to pamper us, a tendency it once only shared with its favored engineers but that is now cropping up even in the colonies, may masquerade as a triumphant return to the body, but within this sterilizing dichotomy there is no hope for completion. Reversing a hierarchy's given values has only ever been a trick to preserve the hierarchy. Picking up the torch from Christianity and the Greeks, who split the atom of body and soul, western science took the patient to the operating table and discarded the unnecessary half. While promoting an Enlightenment discipline of mind over matter, the new priests of progress proved the nonexistence of spirit, and insisted the mind was just another physical machine. They took the soul out of the world, and left only dead matter, which could be transubstantiated without the least ritual into whatever resources, fuels, machines, or riches were deemed necessary. When mounting resistance and the need to expand production into the realm of desires led to the appearance of that figure known as the consumer, a tamed hedonism came back into style. The same Machine that had waged a centuries-long campaign against the pleasures of the flesh began to oblige the whims of the consumer body. But it is a mute body. It has been stripped of the word, of its possibilities for collective recognition and self-discovery. The proffered menu of caprices approaches the infinite, but any attempt to skip the menu and explore a wider world is severely disciplined.

We are not demanding more options, cheaper prices, or a new deal. We are ripping up the social contract because it was never written in our own words, and because it represents the prevention of a social conversation, not its beginning. Our visceral rage and anxiety are all the reasons we need, precisely because the Machine explains away these symptoms in its own terms. We are rejecting its solutions to our maladies because we are the ones who know our bodies best, and we've only begun to explore.

## **Species and Relational Beings**

Humans are species and relational beings. We are not sovereign individuals as held by liberal philosophy and its fatal foe, egoism. Stirner destroyed liberalism on its own terrain, revealing all the institutions enshrined by the Enlightenment to be in fact a cage built around the sovereign individual, with the hallowed rights being a paltry wage for its dignity. But the idea of the sovereign individual is too über and not enough mensch. People do not live according to coherent and consistent opinions which they formulate in reflection and enact upon the world. We are not sovereigns walking over, imposing on, and extracting from an immobile landscape. We exist by relating with dynamic and protagonizing environments. In every moment, we are a positionality, in relation to other beings and to an active space. Given the Machine's suppression of the world, this manifests minimally as a position within situations. The same people are starkly different in different situations. The only continuity is a narration that can reflect on one's changing position, and a will that can grow or wither over time as it determines reactions to a situation or even positions itself strategically.

We exist through our relations in a web of life. We breathe with trees, feast with microbes, bleed with the moon, sweat with crowds, and think in generations. This is why we are relational beings. It is not simply a question of being impoverished by the loss of these relations, but of the impossibility of understanding ourselves outside of them.

As species beings, we have complementary differences. Kropotkin's revision to the theory of evolution illustrates the permanent possibility of the commune: we never survive individually, only collectively. As such, we evolved with a complementarity, because historically our organism has been the community and not the single body. The propensities and abilities of some of us go one way, and with others, they go another way, just as the liver and the kidneys can only be understood in their complementarity. Any political proposition that does not take this complementarity into consideration is a suppression of the human community. Democracy, with its insulting, mathematical concept of equality, is a declaration of war on our natures.

Some can tell stories. Some interpret dreams. Some can hear the world. Some speak loud enough for everyone to hear, and others know how to win over our reason or move our hearts. Some speak in private. And others speak with their hands. To call one of these politics and ignore the rest is the beginning of hierarchy.

A few people are hardheaded; their actions are coherent and consistent with their beliefs. They can mistake themselves for sovereign beings. And they may lead the others out of a stupor, a bad habit, out of enslavement. But they are often the same ones who lead them into a new lie. All societies have had their prophets to lead them in rebellion or saddle them with a new state.

Craziness also has its place in the social body. While the majority persist, even in circumstances they would be wiser to reject, the crazy few serve as an indicator species. The rationalism of the mental health regime serves to insulate the naïve ones who have adapted to misery, to silence those who rave against it, and to medicate the symptoms it produces.

In her pessimistic years, Emma Goldman opined that some people are simply born anarchists. Perhaps this is true. Vestigial characteristics push us towards vocations that serve a community which no longer exists. Some are born healers, others historians, some are builders, others explorers, and others rebels. Life in the community would be intolerable if everyone were a rebel. A conformist majority probably deserves some credit for the survival of the species. The success of the Machine has been augmented by its ability to engineer situations in which those who position themselves passively will go along with the desired flows, and those more likely to rebel will dedicate themselves to reforming the system. We are faced with a prison ecology that has a niche for every type of person.

It is important to recognize that while these differences are essential, they are also dynamic, historical, and above all, tempered by their situational existence. A person's nature will manifest as a tendency to interact in a certain way with their situation, but the situation itself plays at least as great a role in defining their positionality. We do not speak of positions on a chessboard that people choose and move into, but rather a way of understanding and modifying one's relation to the world as it moves around them.

To restrict our positionality, the Machine's opinion managers are careful to offer us a moral-political language limited to safe dichotomies: dictatorship/democracy; chaos/order; violence/peace. The natural complementarity of people drives even opponents to form a whole, and in the alienated terrain of politics this has been made to work against us. The timid reformists and the radical purists recreate and protect each other; neither wants to rock the boat. The opposites within a false dichotomy support each other through the sharing of a language. A certain idea of

coherency leads them to withdraw from the complexity of the world and shore up their position against it.

An awareness of our complementarity can lead us to replace the age-old attempt to enforce a position with a focus on our own positionality. Each of us has a different role to play, and it is the symphony of these roles that defines the strength or weakness of our struggle, not the triumph of one role over others. The trick is to learn how to play with neither a conductor nor sheet music, tossing out rhythms to see if others pick them up.

Two positions that are normally opposed, social and antisocial anarchism, can reach an honest complementarity, as the one urges on society for what it could be, and the other attacks society for what it has consented to become.

Unity is a trojan horse. It is a principle of militarism. Only an army needs unity. And in any war between two armies, the principle of militarization always wins.

Different groups of insurgents will find all the unity they need in a practice of solidarity as they attack the Machine from a multiplicity of angles. Our enemies, or those among us who strategize on their behalf, are the ones who would like to see this multiplicity coalesce into a single front. Discipline and dependence (on a decision-making structure or productive assemblage) are the key elements of militarism. They allow and require unification, which can occur autocratically or democratically. To desert, we need self-motivation and complete autonomy of action. These principles in motion always lead to a diversification of the struggle, and not its homogenization, for all the feelings of commonality that solidarity might breed.

## **Determinism, Determination**

The apologists and the primitivists have both been discredited. Civilization did not arise from any material needs, but from choice, or the intentional lack thereof. Some societies developed immense irrigation works and other infrastructure projects without ever erecting a state. Some hunter-gatherers developed coercive patriarchies, and some densely populated agriculturalists prevented the emergence of patriarchy until long after colonization.

A surplus is a facile explanation for the rise of hierarchy, because surplus is not an objective reality but a cultural value. Only those societies have surpluses that choose to see needs as minimum requirements, that do not value the gift, the feast, the potlatch as modes of distribution. Even in an agricultural society where a community must try to grow more because they might end up with less, viewing “more” as surplus rather than as bounty or abundance can only be the result of certain cultural values a society chooses to adopt over time. Such a choice will provide the material means for further cultural evolution along the same trajectory, but mere material circumstances determine nothing.

Levels of technology provide opportunities for the development of social hierarchies, but the hierarchies themselves only arise where the people don’t determine to banish the logic of control and foster a logic of mutual aid. When tools are replaced by machines, the machines inscribe specific social relations, but at the beginning of this process, the new machines must be introduced through force, by a social power strong enough to get away with such an imposition. The social relations inscribed by the machines must therefore already be nascent. If the mechanical loom had only been an “invention” that had appeared in the social marketplace and spread on the ba-

sis of its usefulness and acceptance, the luddites would have made sure that industrial capitalism died in its cradle.

In fact for over a century popular revolt and sabotage throughout Europe prevented the spread of the new machines. There had to be police forces at the command of bosses who already held power within the social relations being intensified by the mechanical loom in order to impose the spread of this new technology and prevent its being sabotaged by those worst affected. The machine, then, is a shackle. It makes a certain domination unquestionable, but there must already exist the constable and the prisoner to enact the reification of this logic.

In the history of state-formation in Southeast Asia, James C. Scott documents that, while states could only arise in sedentary population centers where the mode of production was legible and appropriable for authorities, the one did not determine the other. Concentrations of population based on sedentary, irrigated rice cultivation often existed for generations without state authority. When they were taken over by a state they just as often overthrew it, and after the collapse of the state, the irrigation infrastructure and the population core sometimes continued on as before. If anything, these population centers were more stable and effective in the absence of state authority.

Neither technology nor geographic conditions can accurately be said to have determined state formation. On any local timeline, state formation is not an inevitability; however, because it is a human possibility, given enough opportunities it will eventually arise. This is why it becomes necessary to understand this process and imagine how it might be transcended. Primitivism has often chosen to dehistoricize stateless peoples as two-dimensional models rather than rising to the challenge of imagining a historically shifting statelessness.

There are, for the purposes of this analysis, three kinds of stateless peoples. There are those who existed without state contact, whose cultural attitudes towards authority we can know almost nothing about, though it can be tempting to compare them to recent stateless peoples with a minimum of state contact, such as those of the Australian continent two centuries ago, many of whom exhibited minor hierarchies of status, age, and gender, suggesting the absence of mistrust towards authority.

Secondly are those stateless peoples whose experience is largely defined by their historic resistance to the State, either through flight to the mountains or jungles or through defensive warfare. The former tend to exhibit extreme distrust towards authority and a structural prevention of any kind of domination, whereas the latter have been on the cutting edge of the struggle against colonization, sometimes allying themselves and thus sharing their methods with fully incorporated State subjects in rebellion. In the second category are also many pragmatic stateless peoples who emulate certain forms of authority and seek to gain favorable positions with respect to neighboring states, without being dominated by them. Many pastoral nomadic societies fit this description.

The third kind exists in our imaginary: post-state peoples who have finally defeated the project of control and have integrated cultural technologies of anti-authoritarianism into every stitch of the fabric of their daily lives, in ways that surpass our current conceptual abilities.

None of these stateless peoples offer us theoretical answers. The third group is hypothetical. The first group failed at preventing the State, and they are unknown to us. And peoples of the second group cannot be turned into a theoretical model for fully incorporated state subjects for a variety of reasons. Replication on the basis of external observation is an operation befitting colonialism. It also hurts the replicators by divorcing them from their own lived experience. Its

usefulness for a liberatory struggle is doubtful. State subjects can struggle in solidarity with modern stateless peoples, and thus be influenced by them, but we cannot simplify their struggle into a model that we redeploy in our own situation.

Struggles against the State must proceed from our own needs and our own histories. This does not mean, however, that we should return to the eurocentric narrative of the proletariat which either attempts to force remaining stateless or anti-state peoples into the ranks of the working class or marginalizes them as some idyllic antiquity totally irrelevant to our own experiences. Working from particular and interconnected histories rather than universalizing, segregating, or essentializing histories, we can work towards our future, stateless selves.

By understanding the processes of state formation and conceptualizing our struggle as the seed of a new world, we can embody anti-state practices that will not only prevent the reemergence of the State in some unlikely future in which we've destroyed the Machine, but will also allow us to sow a richer, more coherent anarchy now.

Essentially, states formed by developing the principle of militarization in a chaotic, centerless social body. Unity of purpose, the disciplining of behavior, and the subordination of subsistence and pleasure to the execution of tasks are all components of this process. The areas of development are many, and they took different paths in different societies. For a state to form, people needed to centralize and unify decision-making. Because it is impossible to control all decision-making, rulers need to create a formal sphere in which decisions attain greater legitimacy and can thus over-ride decisions arising from the complementary informal sphere.

Ritualization provides a useful distraction for this separation and a justification for the greater legitimacy given to formal decisions. The awe inspired by a ritual leader or the illusion of participation created by the assembly form can foster the idea that a decision made on one day by one group of people can be binding henceforth and on other people who belong only symbolically to the same group. In other words, deciding becomes alienated from taking action, word becomes law, and writing in stone shifts from mere graffiti to the mobilization of social power.

Justice, as the centralization of conflict resolution and the banishment of "diffuse sanctions", is closely related to this process. In its earliest stages, justice is largely a matter of convenience. By trusting conflict resolution to a small group of old people with good reputations and equal connections to all the parties in a dispute, people save themselves a lot of messy work. When, over time, certain families win more status and wealth or a society mobilizes for war, this same, benign tradition of justice can become an instrument of power.

The ability of either of these bedrocks of the State to develop hangs upon a critical question of social values: whether authority provokes awe or distrust. Whereas irreverence is a hallmark of antiauthoritarian societies, the manufacture of status has been one of the Machine's oldest productive activities. Weak hierarchies in horizontal societies generally produce the status on which they rely by pandering to antiauthoritarian values. Those who share the most, for example, gain the most social influence, whereas the selfish are self-excluding. Given such social values, the upward expansion of authority is strictly limited. But where people consent to give symbolic value to power, the ceiling is suddenly raised. The principal objective of early states was the manufacture of status.

Monuments, temples, and mass rituals served as banks attempting to accumulate spiritual value. For this reason, religious, political, and economic power were not separate in early states. The priests were both bankers and farmers, for as long as capital was spiritual they had to devise better machines to harvest the value people could only give willingly. In one part of the world,

these machines utilized transcendence, elsewhere awe, and elsewhere obedience. The religion of obedience developed into the God virus, which waged an ecological alienation that paved the way for the primitive accumulation of a new kind of capital, and served as an imaginary precursor for a State that was both all powerful and ever present.

As states expanded, they typically interpreted the logic of control as a project of conquest, and one after another they overreached and crumbled. The birth of the global State and thus the triumph of the Machine can be pinned to the state abandonment of spiritual capital in favor of productive capital, which unlike the former can be coerced; and the reinterpretation of control not as a unique project but as a shared religion. The democracy of the Greeks and the republicanism of the Romans were revived as strategies of winning participation in a common project. The fact that the urge towards empire wrecked these two civilizations but that in the latter case their supposed enemy, the Germanic tribes, were the ones to preserve their dream, served a useful lesson. Control would now be pursued as hegemony among collaborating factions, rather than conquest by self-isolating emperors.

In times of peace, this factionalism is held together by the fostering of a common identity, an increasingly humanistic project. It's no mistake that one of its most spectacular manifestations today hearkens back to the ancients: the Olympic Games.

In times of war, there are a set of ground rules that stand in the way of total conquest. Rulers who go too far in expressing their desires for conquest and centralization are attacked by other rulers for endangering the common project, as were Napoleon and Hitler. The United States, and Britain before, have ruled so long precisely because they preserved the game, because they opted to control instead of to conquer even when they had the military might to succeed in the latter. They recognize, as do their lesser allies and petty opponents, that a leading state is not analogous to an emperor but to a gifted student who keeps the entire class on track.

The expansion of the Machine has not been determined by historical rules but by the effective incorporation of lessons learned. We have aided the process to the exact degree that we have not determined to do otherwise.

## **Ashes to Ashes, Network to Network**

The Israeli military and French riot police are learning about decentralization. The CIA and FBI study networks on Facebook. Capitalism as a whole is undergoing a major decentralization. Through bio- and nanotechnology, intelligence itself is being situated within the materials produced, from smart wool to smart bombs. Many of the new methods aim for growth by allowing automated production at a smaller, more efficient scale. The factory as a site of conflict is dispersed. The Middle East as a geopolitical pressure point is being edged out by technologies that seek to produce electricity, even oil, anywhere on the planet. The old corporations are trying to manage this dispersal and provide continuity through the transition, but more than a few giants have proven to be dinosaurs. These pyramidal institutions have found themselves outmaneuvered and befuddled by chaotic, decentralized networks one too many times. They're trying to keep it under wraps that they're learning from their betters. What they themselves don't know is that they're going back to their roots.

The proto-machine, patriarchy, succeeded in creating hierarchical social structures; however the reason for its diffusion and resilience is that patriarchy functions as a network.

It is a common idea that the universe is comprised of pairs of opposites. Many societies see the world in terms of feminine and masculine elements. This same idea can lead to an ethics of balance and mutability, or one of separation and immutability. By creating idealized genders, by understanding bodies as imperfect realizations of one or the other ideal rather than hosts to a flux of opposing energies, patriarchy demands a normative performance of its members in which they cannot succeed. No one can be both Venus and the Virgin Mary; no one can fill the shoes of Hercules and Solomon; no one contains only the characteristics of one pole and none of its opposite.

Patriarchy's double-edged idealism, its pantheon of beautiful figures, makes everyone incomplete. But like a good snake-oil salesman, it has the cure for the disease it has hypnotized its audience into experiencing. Within the framework of the romantic/reproductive couple, patriarchy offers completion. By promising one fulfilling, intimate relationship it is actually stealing a world of such relationships and simultaneously dooming the couple to dissatisfaction and mutual exploitation by demanding they carry the world all on their own, where otherwise a whole community of hands would be there to hold that weight.

Through the categorization of love and friendship and the separation of these different types of relationships, patriarchy impoverishes them both. People are tricked into nourishing themselves through what is depriving them. In this way, patriarchy creates a scarcity dynamo, locking people into relationships of dependence. Time and again, the Machine has encountered addiction as a useful ally for increasing control.

Inside this framework, the abuse cycles and successive generations turn to the same deprivations. This is why patriarchy takes on such different manifestations in different relationships rather than following the irreversible, patterned flows of power that are indicative of institutional relations; this is why a patriarchal system often lacks clear power holders and why many patriarchies have existed without specialized enforcers or centralized structures: because each individual and each couple and family recreate it themselves, on the basis of their own unique experiences.

These miniature cycles of abuse and control sap networks of their liberatory and chaotic potential by erecting walls of privacy and jealousy, prohibiting a whole list of loving relationships and dispersing people to atomized households. Networks are stronger, more effective, more versatile, and more intelligent than hierarchies, but they can be tamed and limited. Patriarchy is so useful to the Machine, after this many thousand years, because it constantly neutralizes the liberatory potential of human relationships. There is a reason why segmentary lineage systems prevented the emergence of the State and eventually had to be abolished by it, but not so with patriarchy; though patriarchy privileges men, as a network system it cycles endemically. It does not create power holders who will fight the emergence of greater power holders. It only creates addicts and dependents.

Speaking ideally, no one is independent, no one exercises personal agency, no one executes decisions or programmatic action within this dynamo. Patriarchy is participatory. Men are privileged insofar as masculine perspectives and experiences are normalized whereas their feminine counterparts are exceptionalized, but the male ideal is as untenable for the half who must pursue it as it is for anyone else. The male role is privileged. Those who must perform it derive no agency from this arrangement.

Patriarchy has in its past wed itself to gerontocratic lineage systems. Now, it weds itself to capitalism. Because the latter is progressive, it demands a schizophrenic adaptability of patri-

archy. Thus it is that so little has changed in a society that legitimizes nuclear homosexuality, gives women unprecedented mobility, and supplies a truly new cultural production that features women as protagonists, rebels, and ass-kickers. Virginie Despentes identifies the counterbalance; never before have women had to perform their femininity so extensively as they must in exchange for this new mobility.

The form of patriarchy and the structures by which it propagates itself have changed completely since its multiple beginnings. The only continuity of this system can be found in the scarcity dynamo, in the self-perpetuating cycle of abuse and dependency.

Notwithstanding the present form assumed by patriarchy, when one's gender does not determine one's ascension as an engineer or power-holder in the Machine, it is vital to recognize the surviving legacy of violence that is directed against the feminine, whose primary recipients are thus women and children, and whose primary perpetrators are men and parents.

This violence is only one-sided in idealized terms, in that it is a violence of masculinity against femininity but not necessarily of men against women. In fact, men are more likely to die violent deaths, precisely because masculinity is an unattainable, competitive ideal and not a quality nor even a status automatically inhering to men. To be men, those assigned this possibility must compete for masculinity, punish femininity in those assigned the male role, attack those assigned the female role who perform masculinity, and obliterate those who throw the whole game into question by not evincing either role clearly.

The aiming of this violence originates in a one-sided war intentionally instituted by that which today no longer properly exists: an exclusively male power structure. This structure was the Church, a proto-state that arose in at least three related societies. The Church domesticated and administered the God virus, but where the Machine was to advance, the Church had to be defeated by the rebellions its own oppressions provoked, and then subordinated to a centralized State. Splinters of this proto-state that were not fully banished from the formal political realm, whether Shia or Catholic, typically slowed the growth of the states that grew up in their traditional territory.

Before its obsolescence, the Church accomplished a transformation of society that would prove indispensable to the development of capitalism and the defeat of the many rebellions against the emerging State: this transformation was the reanimation of patriarchy. Patriarchy had largely eroded in the cultural chaos and heretical rebellions that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire. The mixing of so many nations—Germanic, Celtic, Italic, Iberic, Slavic, Hun, Sarmatian, Semitic—each with their own specific patriarchy, some stronger, some weaker, and even a few that were not patriarchal, led to a peculiar historical situation in which there was no homogeneous blueprint for governing gender relations. On a world scale, what an odd society that would need such a thing as a will to indicate the distribution of one's inheritance, that it should not be culturally predetermined how one's lands or debts be parcelled out, but that this should rather be an arbitrary decision. The resulting European societies are equally rare among patriarchies in that they combine patrilineal and matrilineal forms of organization.

By the late Middle Ages, homosexuality and queer love were openly accepted in many places; women practiced contraception and abortion and even the Church was forced to respond with lenience; women could live alone or with other women in the growing towns and cities; women were present in most guilds and occupations, they held land and inheritance, and within marriage were full equals in many areas; they were healers and midwives and witches; in the heretical sects women and men practiced free love and lived together as friends or lovers without marriage; in

the peasant and anti-clerical rebellions they played leading roles and fought in battle—among the Taborites in the thousands, for one example.

As Silvia Federici has documented, the Black Death reduced European population by one-third, replacing the land shortage that gave lords the advantage before the mid-14th century with a labor shortage that gave peasants and urban workers the advantage. The lower classes disrespected their masters like never before, many opted for self-sufficiency instead of work, and when they did work they exacted wages up to six times higher than before, with men and women often paid equally. Increasingly, peasant and worker rebellions actually succeeded in the long run, as in Flanders. The end of the 14th century saw the beginning of a counterattack that would form the motor for the development of capitalism.

Farther east, Islam waged a distinct, less intensive disciplining of the new state subjects in response to different but related pressures. This process is visible to us, but only from a distance that would make our more detailed commentary on it inane. In theorizing, we necessarily focus on the stories we descend from. We don't want to transcend this limitation through pretensions to a universal expertise that will inevitably slide into orientalism, nor do we want to ignore this limitation by constructing a pure mythical lineage in which we haven't all gotten tangled up in the descent. The surest proof that history is still myth is in how earnestly it tries to keep its genres from mixing. To the contrary, we will try to err on both sides of caution.

In the Christian parts of Europe, the aristocracy and the patricians, the new bourgeoisie, began to intermarry and exercise power jointly. These same merchants at times joined the rebellions that shook up the old structures, unseating the clerical and military classes, but time and again they betrayed them before the aristocratic State could be destroyed, signalling a pattern that has continued to the present day. The bourgeois allied themselves with the princes, the new figures who coalesced out of a fragmented aristocracy and around whom a new centralized State could be built, and they impelled a new science of statecraft alongside the other sciences of categorization and control they were birthing at this time. Protestantism, obviously, was a great enabler of this process.

In a couple countries the bourgeoisie would overthrow the princes who pretended to become caesars, but the immediate compatibility between the constitutional monarchies and the new democracies proved they were both developing in the same direction and with a shared project.

A major part of the repression against popular rebellions throughout this period—drawing again on Federici—targeted women and was specifically designed to divide the lower classes and pre-vent rebellion. In a wave, nearly every municipality across Europe founded brothels, prohibited or at least discouraged homosexuality, and decriminalized rape, with the blessing and often the instigation of the Church. Meanwhile, the Church banned clerical marriage, cementing its male exclusivity by preventing the considerable political influence women exerted on their husbands. More dramatically, the Church instituted the Holy Inquisition, which was perhaps the first international agency to scientifically develop, employ, evaluate, and redeploy policing, intelligence, torture, and other repressive practices. Today's FBI owes much of its *modus operandi* to the Inquisitors.

The Inquisition especially targeted women, and the witch herself became the symbol of the heretic. Heretical meetings, pagan ceremonies, independent midwifery, contraception, abortion, rebelliousness, and non-married status were some of the main offenses that brought women to the rack or to the fire, and over two centuries tens of thousands of people were killed. When we speak of a self-circulating patriarchy in the present day, we must recognize that this was the level

of violence necessary to establish the alienation and damage that would allow a scarcity dynamo to develop its full potential.

Amidst this violence, women were pushed out of the trades; home labor (or reproductive labor) which had been as important as labor in the fields and workshops was devalued by the institution of the wage (given only to the now masculine labors performed outside the home); while at the same time the new class of male laborers was weakened with laws that set maximum wages, reintroduced slavery, legitimized the pressing of work gangs from those considered idle, and criminalized vagrancy, backed up by punishments that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. The Church assisted and to a certain extent coordinated all of this, by intensifying its demonization of women and the body, extolling labor, and ending its once generalized charity and favorable attitudes towards poverty.

With the strengthened division of public and private spheres and exclusion of women to the latter, collective women's activity that had previously built solidarity and counterbalanced male power was suppressed. Primitive accumulation, in other words, was contrived largely as a political measure to divide the lower classes and stimulate waged production that could provide a fledgling hierarchy with the resources it needed to develop its repressive potentials.

The reformed State proceeded to develop a mythology in which the evolution of hierarchy was a natural and unilineal progression, the relative equality of the Dark Ages was literally obscured, and the merits of chaos and decentralization maligned. The technological advantages developed by this new power complex abetted the doctrine of the superiority of hierarchy, while network-based modes of domination continued to restrict and divert outbursts of rebellion, until nearly all insurgents could be disciplined to embrace the ideology of the Machine within their own imaginary. The patriarchal revolutions only innovated new techniques of control. Thus, when the Machine trembled in the powerful and knotty hands of the proletariat, in the words of Renzo Novatore, the victorious insurgents overthrew the Machine's engineers, only to keep the technicians and the techniques.

Winning, they lost, again and again and again, until an old Idea that did not promise any easy victory rose from the grave, at a time when the peoples of the world had no mechanisms left to channel their sisyphian combat against the Machine—they had only their own hands, their own thoughts, their own rage, and suddenly, at the pinnacle of its triumph, the Machine was beset by new rebellions it could neither understand nor contain, and was forced, discreetly, to recognize the fragility of hierarchy, and relearn the ways of networks.

## **The Family Values of Production**

Marx may have been right about labor and capital as abstract forces in conflict, but in the lives of people these forces may find a perfect synthesis through the logic of production, which animates them both. Though Marx's analysis was infinitely more intelligent, Taylor's was more correct. Taylorism, the scientific management that revolutionized bourgeois praxis, demonstrated that the owners and the workers do in fact have the same interests, precisely because interests are culturally constructed. Capital and its scientists had already been long at work selling the rational view of interests as base material needs understood quantitatively. Once again, the culprit has the cure, as Capital's productive logic is best positioned to satisfy Capital's notion of interests.

Half humanist and half machine, Marx sympathized with the development of productive forces, and a part of his multifaceted critique stems from a belief that the proletariat is best positioned to liberate and advance those productive forces. Capitalism, insanely, is thus faulted for its inefficiency, just as the progressive faults government for nepotism, when nepotism is the last vestige of humanity in the halls of state. It is this side of Marx—the slave’s fantasy, the Machine-dream—that Marxists have taken up. Just as capitalism began as a sort of a game, so the analysis of value and investment has drawn the priests of capital into a shadow world where everything can be explained in the dialectical advancement of the Machine itself. Even resistance becomes a simple product of crises and contradictions in the economy.

Trained to understand interests as material and quantitative, Labor wants more wages, and contrary to the populist dogma of the socialists, Capital wants this as well. The Machine never intended for the bourgeoisie to be the permanently privileged agents of moving capital. Their forcible transformation from entrepreneurs and investors to mere bureaucrats demonstrates this amply. They were nothing but a vehicle, and this was the destiny of society as a whole. The figure of the consumer is the way for workers to be incidental to their work, and if anything to want to work more and more productively, so that in a positive sum game they could also earn more, buy more, consume more. Wages are not scaled to reproduce labor power and nothing else, leaving the worker just enough to keep working and not to die of poor health before producing more future workers. On the contrary, they are scaled to allow the worker to enjoy at least some of the fruits of production, to create new markets for further production, to consume, and thus to access that identity that unites the worker and owner as citizen and consumer.

Nor is this balance peculiar to a supposed consumer phase of capitalism. Even in the days when factory workers hovered on the brink of starvation and the repertoire of globalized commodities were limited to clothes and liquor, their wages were meant to be spent on these products. As the repertoire of products expanded, so too did capitalism’s desire to allow its producers to share in the bounty. In other words, although individual capitalists might be remiss in their generosity or short-sighted in their avarice, on the grand scale wages have been scaled not to reproduce labor power but to integrate workers into the productive apparatus. Even though at times the gross inequality created by the Machine’s constant concentration of power makes it seem as though capitalist exploitation had a unilateral character, from the worker to the owner or from the Global South to the Global North, it is both false and dangerous to assume that the Machine would ever prefer a simple parasitism over the opportunity to repeatedly link its elements into one another through a multiplicity of flows. Under the Machine, no identities—neither their privileges nor their burdens—are permanent.

We must not forget that capitalism is fundamentally democratic. It believes in a certain dialogue, a balance of conflicting interests, with a goal of political unification.

Aesthetics acted as an important mechanism in the early unification of erstwhile opposites. To give themselves legitimacy and status as a new ruling class, the bourgeoisie seized and even created the fine arts. This was their mythology. To govern a nation—state—a conglomeration of opposed interests in which the oppressed are expected to work and fight for their enemy—culture had to be popularized to create a national feeling. Technologies of physical reproduction (including pulp presses, photography, and audio recording) allowed this process of popularization to become commoditized and industrialized, deprived of its aura, and once displaced, mobilized as needed.

As increasing mobilization allowed these communicating instruments and their products to become globalized, the signified ceased to be wrapped up in a national feeling through a national aesthetic, and became an international feeling, which, needing an Other, subdivided into nonhierarchical subcultures delineated by aesthetic patterns. Where once, people expressed their identity through participation in work, religion, and military service, all of which created possibilities for their own refusal, now people express their identity through fashion, and fashion is created in every purchase, every act of survival through the market. Even at the minimal level, the cheapest brands of beer or clothing convey different aesthetics which assign one to different subcultures. Refusal itself can easily become a new aesthetic, and those who consume it as fashion are no longer negating the consumer choices that are originally refused, but commoditizing the path opened up by the original refusal. From punk to Derelict to DIY, rejection or transgression of fashion becomes a new fashion, and consumer choices multiply autonomously, democratically, pioneered by consumers themselves who deny refusal its ability to communicate a negation and insist that all refusal communicate an affirmation of the commodity form. Only by being a democratic system is capitalism able to constantly disarm subversion. Just as in politics, negation cannot inhabit any act of communication with the Market, and by extension with the people who inhabit the Market.

Perhaps the most intense manifestation of alienation is the fact that today, attempts to communicate with people generally result in nourishing Capital. Capitalism's great contribution to the Machine is that it makes negation increasingly difficult.

Aesthetics demarcate not different classes but different niches of consumption, signaling a transformation from vertical food chain to horizontal ecosystem. This infinite subdivision mends an important rift. Not only does it allow the Machine to trade in a hierarchical appearance for a pluralistic, egalitarian one; it also provides common signifiers of status, and is accompanied by common forms of entertainment. A millionaire and a beggar are very likely watch the same televised sitcom, and thus they are exposed to the same social narrative, which is centrally produced and diffusely reiterated. Simultaneously, each of these diffuse niches contain ladders, opportunities for better emulating the aesthetic ideal through more intensive consumption, thereby creating in each niche, from the hypercompetitive investors to the misbehaved gangsters to the blasé hipsters, a unifying rather than antagonistic relation between the richer and the poorer, the higher and lower on the ladder.

Because the process of branding and spectacularization is permanent, signifiers lose their ability to be disruptive. The only subversive gesture is the threat, where it suggests recourse to a force of attack. There's nothing subversive in a Rage Against the Machine t-shirt, or the black hoodies in the Rihanna/Jay-Z music video. There is something subversive about flagging a blue bandanna even if the gang it denotes membership in is overwhelmingly self-destructive, insofar as self-destruction is still an act of resistance. There is something subversive about walking through a rich neighborhood with a Mercedes star pinned to your jacket, even if you bought it at Hot Topic, as long as vandalism is an ongoing practice. There is something subversive about putting pictures of riots on a political poster, if the riot is a desire you are working towards realizing.

A symbol can only be subversive if it ties itself to an ongoing attack that can spread from its original iteration to the symbol's beholder. The symbolic production of the Machine, meanwhile, may be tied to an ongoing assault against its subjects, as in the case of "Tough of Crime" propaganda that is designed to produce the same fear among potential delinquents as an actual

police intervention; but more often than not this production uproots signifiers from their original existence, thus disrupting any direct communication between bodies, and ties them in to a coherent social narrative which the Machine lays atop—as disguise and alibi—its lines of supply and assault.

Socialist realism depicted square-jawed workers engaged in heroic acts of patriotism and labor. Stylistically as much as semiologically, this artistic production impoverished and ultimately destroyed these workers as first-order signifiers in order to communicate a politically correct message of unity and social duty that eclipsed the experience of the workers being robbed by the commissars or lined up against the wall by the busy bees of the Red Army who were zealously building communism on the ground. The Dadaists attempted to disrupt capitalism's symbolic relations and sabotage its enclosures of knowledge, but without the physical force such as the Leninists enjoyed, they could only create new tools to be put at its disposal. Their contribution was to revolutionize marketing, against their own intentions.

The Dadaist failure illustrates an interesting principal: anything that does not attack Capital nourishes it. There is no use in building alternatives to capitalism because capitalism is part of a Machine that conquers and assimilates everything that follows a different logic. There is no outside. Capitalism is a blackmail that permits survival only through participation. Simply in order to feed ourselves, we must work and produce value. Capitalism always eats first.

It could easily be thought that the social unit most cut off from the outside world—the home, the family in its private sphere might have some measure of autonomy. But it's nothing new to assert that the family is just a reproductive unit that keeps capitalism going. In its simplest traditional form, the husband carries out paid productive labor, the wife carries out unpaid reproductive labor to replenish the labor power of the husband (feed him, clean for him, provide him a place to rest) and develop the labor power of the children, raising them up to be workers, though in practice women frequently bore a heavy burden of secondary waged labor as well. It has been demonstrated often enough that the changes in the needs of the market throughout western history have played a determining role in the size and fluidity of the supposedly pristine family. TV commentator Glenn Beck's outburst that *The Coming Insurrection* is a manual for destroying the family is hilarious because the Invisible Committee argue that in fact the family is already destroyed. What is revealed is not a misreading but a cover-up. The family has long since been a discursive strategy to hide its own nature behind seemingly universal values of care and community.

Capitalism is the last white piece on a chess board played by a master against a novice. It always knows how to flee in a way that opens up new directions of escape. To protect itself from a growing yet partial feminist resistance, the Machine decreased much of the pressure placed on the family to serve as a tributary control structure, while simultaneously externalizing the household economy so stagnating capital could increasingly move through the vital tasks that had previously been managed in the dark, unwaged side of production. The autonomist feminists *Precarias a la Deriva* of Madrid signal these tasks to consist of care, attention, and sex, now carried out by an increasingly female workforce.

But care, though it truly must be re-placed at the center of social activity, can also be alienated from its own logic and bound to follow the logic of production, which is far from tender. Speaking of care in industrial terms, as the *Precarias* nearly do throughout their text, is as self-defeating as the project of harnessing production for our own ends. Within an industrial logic, everyone

and everything is harnessed. As Frere Dupont signals in “Dark Passage,” speaking of the hospital apparatus:

*“Institutionalised services in the end, and at the beginning, always serve as a matter of priority the programmed requirements for the processive reproduction of the systems themselves as distinct from any stated goal of the service; which becomes just one measurable output to be set against others. This means that the tolerable level of patient mortality is indexed to cost thresholds.[...]Biopower forecloses on all discourses of redemption and seeks instead to realise, or manufacture, the tangible potentials which it identifies in individuals. Where no useful, achievable, measurable potential is identified its institutions find no purpose, nothing to work on – the shadow, the potential that is care for care’s sake, is dispersed.”*

In a burst of rage, one might cry out that “capitalism is fucked,” a sentiment they may later feel to be inconsistent with a sex-positive outlook. But in truth, capitalism is fucked, and that’s the problem. Another control loop in the circuitry of the Machine is it’s ability to have us all fucking Capital and not each other, dedicating our erotic energies and the insecurities that arise from their inevitable frustration to elusive signifiers and their chimeric signifieds. The fact that pornography is the major user of bandwidth on the internet and thus a principal motor in the development and expansion of the same (which has become a greater producer of greenhouse gases than the airline industry) is not significant because of some resident evil in the act of sweating over the sight of naked bodies but because of the tragedy implied in all the alienated bodies uploading themselves to a virtual network in the impossible hope of encountering other bodies, while the subordinate set of bodies are saddled with an ingrained suppression of pleasure and a commodification that subjects them not to a scarcity of attention but to a dangerous and threatening abundance.

Consumer capitalism has often been something like the joyful New Testament to the Old Testament austerity of the State and its earlier mercantile capitalism. Capitalism seeks forgiveness and renewal whereas the State never forgets a grudge. The market, through the vital industry of pornography, offers an alienated release to the sexual control instituted by the State and its old partner, the Church.

The institution of this sexual control was a major offensive in the early development of capitalism. Entirely new forms of socialization had to be manufactured in order to achieve the Cartesian, self-disciplining individual, or, failing that, the disciplined Hobbesian mass, both of which were necessary for the participatory, democratic government that already in the late Middle Ages was taking shape in the dry docks of the Western project.

The Puritans excelled in the assault on popular celebration and sociable sexuality, though the Catholics also became more austere in order to create their own version of a work ethic. European and subsequently colonial populations began to grow sharply, while the amount of time spent working more than doubled. For all their juvenility, early CrimethInc. texts were theoretically right on the mark when they signalled ludic rebellion as an indispensable motion in the war against capitalism. Indeed the festival, as a celebration of worldly rhythms, a mode of communal socialization and cornucopia, a seizing of public space, and as distinct from leisure, is a contradiction of capitalism’s very origins.

As Silvia Federici has argued, at the birth of capitalism responsibility for the reproduction of laborers abdicated from the obsolescing feudal lords, but was not taken up by the new class of employers. The capitalists externalized the costs of their workers’ survival and the tab was picked up by the new State. Thus, the bosses could brutalize those on whose labor they depended, even

working them to death, while the State would keep busy enforcing reproduction or capturing new laboring populations, accounting for the systemic contradiction between murderous exploitation and a tendency to protect. The population crisis of the late 1500s in the colonies and the 1600s in Europe was the first international economic crisis, according to Federici. What we find, in the second great population crisis to affect the modern development of the Machine, is a great triumph for the forces of control.

Whereas the population crisis provoked by the Black Death only strengthened the position of the serfs, peasants, laborers, and artisans, already standing atop a swelling foundation of revolt, the population crisis provoked by genocide in the Americas and early capitalist impoverishment in Europe demonstrated the ability of the modern State to manage crisis to the favor of the Machine. The first crisis impelled the elite to create an absolute State to ensure a level of social control that was beyond them, and they only narrowly succeeded through a series of bloody wars. It was the new State they created that animated capitalism as a strategy of control. With the State and capitalism in place, the Machine was ready to institute new measures to coerce population growth and criminalize the working class while simultaneously assuming responsibility for its welfare.

Theorists in subsequent centuries would see population growth as a natural force, but in fact population growth in the face of crisis must be coerced by means of a vast array of techniques and implements of social control. Lacking this, at all other times in world history, population crises have led to overturnings of the social order, to a new equilibrium which is impossible within the paradigm that caused the crisis. In other words, the logic of production, which necessitated the growth of human population and the bulldozing of all negative feedbacks, overcame the final obstacle to converting human beings from a species in the world to nothing more than the fuel of the Machine that dominates us.

And in this process of coerced growth, women were assigned a particular instrumentality, taking on, in some sense, the importance of factories. Thomas Luther, one of the Machine's most brilliant technicians during this critical phase of development, summed up the productive role of women plugged into the Machine: "whatever their weaknesses, women possess one virtue that cancels them all: they have a womb and they can give birth". If states were to judge their wealth by the number of subjects, as the contemporary European thinkers did, then birth had to become a form of production, and the family itself to be reshaped into a sort of factory. The managerial principles in this factory were the subordination of unwaged female labor to waged male labor, the channeling of sexuality exclusively into monogamous reproduction, and the prohibition of contraception and abortion. Conservative family values, it turns out, are nothing more than admonitions against sabotage.

It is telling that contemporary academics insist on referring to all creative acts, from the renewal of culture to a baby's vocalizations, as forms of production. They are, after all, duty-bound to naturalize production in order to develop capitalism's alibi as a complex of neutral and necessary processes. But production is not only distinct from creation, it is in fact antithetical to it. Creation is the realization of our needs and desires in the world. Production is obedience to an instrument that has been put in our hands and whose purpose is beyond us. Production moves towards dependence on greater infrastructures, and leaves a trail of destroyed ecosystems in its wake. Those who seize the means of production, as opposed to those who reclaim their capacity for creation, are always faced with the choice of starving or returning to work in a world that looks very much like the one they've just left behind.

An unpragmatic attack on work itself is necessary to signal our antagonism towards those who want to keep things running. We, like so many others who have been smeared with the infamy of opposing this fundamental moral duty, also want to “hang the jerk who invented work.” CrimethInc. effectively define work as activity which we put more into than we get out of, or activity that is managed by others. Four generations earlier, Herman Schuurman of the proletarian Moker group wrote that “Work is the greatest affront and humiliation that humanity has ever brought upon itself [...] Once we no longer work, living will only just have begun.” Two generations before that, in 1886, one sector of syndicalist anarchists, after much debate, decided to pragmatically take up the demand for dignified work and a humane limitation of eight hours, tacking it on to the centuries-old tradition of ludic rebellion exemplified by May Day. Only in the late nineteenth century was the legacy of mutiny, sabotage, and refusal beginning to fade from the popular memory, to be replaced by a new revolutionary ethic of duty. Only a damaged memory can back the claim that the rejection of work stems from a petit-bourgeois degeneration of the anarchist tradition.

The priests of the proletariat and the gallant knights of labor have sold us on a crusade to a Holy Land that is not our own. In that pragmatic compromise, they set off in the direction signaled by the Machine.

Before succumbing to an almost leninist militarization, Derrick Jensen exhaustively revealed production to be an ethic of annihilation. Economy, then, is a project of liquidation through infinite division. The term economy refers originally to the domestic sphere, the home. The first alienation is the separation of the social into the political and the economic, the city and the home. A part of the same movement, one that must begin earlier and end later, is the separation of the social and the natural, and the eventual dispossession of people from the land, once the latter has been converted into property. Subsequently, the material of our lives is stripped from our interactions with them, so we are left with resources on the one hand and on the other decision-making processes that manage those resources. In this rubric we see that by addressing economic alienation without addressing political alienation, the Left only enthroned a phantom.

Due to an amnesia that unfortunately pervades their work, the Invisible Committee misses their mark; production is not now, but has always been primarily a means of control. Profit was only ever an alibi for the ideology of production, and an incentive to train novices in this ideology.

## **The State as Warfare**

In the first of his jungle novels, B. Traven tells a tale that is both parable and history regarding the creation of the State. It is a scam that must violently impose itself on self-sufficient communities, interrupting their indigenous rhythms to syphon off resources and eventually manufacture a need for itself. It is, ultimately, an employment opportunity for retiring warriors, for a parasitic and tyrannical class. The very worst of people, through employment in a state-making project, solidify into professional tyrants, where otherwise they might only have been village oafs.

Bakunin was never more right than when he argued that the State constitutes a specific and aggressive project towards society. Even the socialists fell prey to the democratic mystification when they understand the State as an instrument of a specific class that could, understood metaphorically thus, be transferred to a different class, just as a tool can pass from one hand to another. But it is the State more than anything else that creates classes. To possess the instru-

ments of government is to be the owning class, and in order to maintain that privileged position in the face of inevitable resistance, those who govern must constantly seek to increase their power. No state withers away. They are overthrown, or they advance.

The historically repeated results of state power disprove the materialist hypothesis of economic substructure and political superstructure. There is no bottom. Economic and political realities exist suspended from one another. They can operate on one another. But an act of surgery or engineering always requires the anaesthetized patient, the passive components. It is never a movement towards liberation.

In the words of Charles Tilly, “states make wars and wars make states.” But not only at the point of politogenesis is the State a war machine; in fact many vectors of state-formation were based more in relations of tribute or the production of justice, with warfare as a necessary but marginal corollary, as in the case of the Inca. Rather, state-building constitutes a war against a certain condition of existence, one based on relating with the world rather than relating to the State (the State, as a composite of materials from the world, ceases to be worldly exactly at the moment it begins to oppose all other forms of relating, thus creating the distinction on its own initiative). Additionally, in the historical period when a faltering elite decided to go on the attack by creating a new State that was fundamentally productive, this new alignment of power constituted itself as a counterinsurgency strategy, though it wasn’t until the 1950s, during the rebellions in Kenya and Algeria, that State engineers would analyze their situation in these terms. However, the earlier discourses of Holy War, when turned away from an external infidel and mobilized against state subjects, communicated the same strategic necessities in the language of the day.

What does it mean to talk about the State shifting from a configuration of institutions that is primarily parasitic to one that is primarily productive? Foucault explains the productive character of power, while Alex Gorrion offers a revision, strategically recentering the State not as a univocal entity (“the Sovereign” rejected by Foucault) but as a centralizing and evolving configuration of institutions and apparatuses that enact competing versions of a shared project. To this we must add another lens Foucault lacks: a longterm and multicontinental view of state-formation.

In his analysis of the multilineal evolution of states in Southeast Asia—where for every ten states that were formed, nine were destroyed by popular rebellion, flight, or their own inability to cope with environmental circumstances—James C. Scott identifies specific ethnicities that functioned as state-making “technologies.” Far from their mythical self-definition as whole, delineated cultural groups, ethnic categories in fact represent political strategies. In a fracture zone such as upland Southeast Asia, where the mountainous geography advantaged self-determination and exacerbated the inherent instability of states, ethnicity shifted frequently enough that in many cases it was a matter of political choice. Ethnicities identified with state-making projects were small cultural groups with a mythic, glorious lineage; a universal cosmology and salvation religion; military technology and the tendency to use it; writing and record-keeping technology; and a belief in their own superiority. They would generally settle in preexisting population cores built up around irrigated rice cultivation, as a political-military cadre and proto-class, and begin to impose taxes and rules in exchange for greater cultural glory and protection (from themselves or other groups like theirs). Though at any given time, as much as half of the dominated population might be slaves captured from elsewhere, the ruling group lent their ethnicity to all their subjects as a measure of civilizational advancement that in effect reflected their degree of obedience to authority. In time, to be Burman or Thai meant to be a subject of Burman or Thai state

authority, although these ethnicities came in as small invading groups with an imitative political project modeled on Han or Hindu states.

Proto-state nuclei not strong enough to conquer an entire population core simply raided for their sustenance and for slaves to sell to neighboring states. Given multiple state-making projects existing as a minority among majority stateless populations, communities based on sedentary agriculture might easily see the advantage of allowing a state to take root, if it meant protection from the constant raiding of weaker state-making projects, given that the taxation, exploitation, and domination carried out by a new, weak state is relatively light. Once the state becomes entrenched and reveals its true nature, it's too late to opt out. But rebellion and running away have always been latent possibilities. Throughout human history, many more states have been destroyed by these popular responses to authority than have successfully established themselves.

The State is, in other words, the ultimate protection racket, neither necessary nor inevitable, just onerous.

But it goes beyond this. The State is not only an imposition, but also the manufacture of dependence. The productive State's reliance on addiction can be seen in the sharp contradictions to be found in its treatment of those substances classified as drugs. On the one hand it has suppressed drug use, and on the other hand encouraged it. Understood at face value, this would constitute a massive and unlikely inefficiency. What is actually at stake is a continuously reinforced paradigm shift: the prohibition of magical plants and ritual foods and drinks, and their replacement with addictive drugs. The former motion is present in colonization and the disciplining of the new citizen-subject. The latter is present in the repression of autonomous communities, the manufacture of dependency, or the production of consumer needs and thus new opportunities for reappropriation or taxation. Often, the same substances move from one paradigm to the other, but they reveal themselves to be wholly transformed: from the wine of the peasants to the gin of the sailors; the coca of the Quechua to the cocaine of the drug cartels; the kola of the Igbo to the Coca-Cola of global capitalism; the poppy of the witch doctors to the opium of the British, to the heroin of the CIA.

Traditionally, alcohol was taken with food or mediated through occasional and ritualized bacchanalias, while distillation and the routinization of proletarian life transformed it into something completely different, a major shackle to the working class in the mind of early 20th century anarchists. However, those radicals who can only understand these substances within the current paradigm, and demand their prohibition, are siding with the Machine in its continuing project of colonization and rationalization. And those radicals who turn an obsession with the prior paradigm into a manifesto for countercultural experimentation or indiscipline have often been the footsoldiers in the State campaign of repression and addiction.

The current role of these substances does not define them eternally. And the criminalization of some of them does not signal their suppression. The State has always invented enemies to feed its prisons.

One invented foe the Machine has always sold itself as sword and shield against is Nature. The very source and foundation of our life in the world, recharacterized as a hostile power. For the forces of control, nothing is more deadly.

The bellicose organization of the State is nowhere more apparent than in its campaigns against the world. The war against nature has taken many forms. The world was depersonified and dismembered by science. Gardens were replaced by monocultures because these were easier to survey, to tax, and to destroy in the scorched earth responses to rebellion. People living by natural

rhythms were settled so they could be better policed. The US military defoliated the forests of Vietnam, so they could see the enemy. Mussolini drained the Pontian marshes near Rome, as Saddam Hussein drained the Euphrates marshes, as the real estate industry is draining the Everglades and the coal industry is levelling Appalachia. Each of these wild places were zones of rebellion and places of refuge for stateless or state-defying peoples right up into the 20th century. “Smooth space”—Deleuze and Guattari’s term that contrasts with the striated space favoured by the authorities—is a misnomer. It’s the friction, the darkness, the nooks and crannies that the State objects to. As James C. Scott describes it, the State must “flatten” everything in its dominion, at every level—geographically, linguistically, ethnically, economically—to make it legible, easy to read like a tax survey, easy to police like a grid of tenement houses. The jungle of existence must be replaced with a monoculture.

Although states require flattening, and different state paths converge in monoculture, a major conflict within the State is the war between individual states. Generally these wars are just a vigorous exercise that allow states to move beyond stagnation and become robust and competitive. When the stakes are high and supremacy is on the line, they can exhibit a vindictive fierceness reminiscent of jealous lovers. Whenever two states war, there is always some level of complicity. As Thomas Pynchon put it, “the real business of the War is buying and selling”. This is so because the State’s true war is always against society. In 1871, the Versailles quickly found that the conquering Prussian armies were their truest allies when the communards refused to be contented with bourgeois democracy. Those who made their last stand in the Père-Lachaise cemetery shared the fate of the dissident communists murdered by the International Brigades in Spain, or the victims of the Varkiza Peace Accords in 1945. And the American pilots who bombed the partisan stronghold of San Lorenzo in Rome in 1943 may have studied the seminal aerial campaign at Blair Mountain, twenty years earlier. States know to keep their friends close and their enemies closer. An alliance is often an effective way to clean house.

Despite their great enmity, the Soviet Union gave Nazi Germany a critical respite in their desperate retreat, time enough to liquidate the communist and anarchist fighters who had risen up in Poland. This collaboration is even evident in wars between states adhering to wholly alien models of organization, which one might assume to be mutually unintelligible, if legibility to the State were simply a question of the cultural precepts of a given set of rulers. Under pressure from European sovereign states, clan states in Africa mobilized to attack their decentralized neighbors, to provide slaves, save themselves, and improve their own situation. Mandala states in Asia were incorporated into the new colonial administration. Tributary states in South America were hijacked to impose levies, until population collapse required the colonial inauguration of biopower and the total replacement of the indigenous system with governments on the sovereignty model.

The tendency of a state, when encountering a weaker counterpart, is to absorb and integrate it, leaving in place as many autochthonous mechanisms as necessary to allow for a smooth transition. The tendency of a state, when encountering a stateless society, is to destroy it, scatter it, consume it, and leave not the slightest trace of its existence.

Here, the State reveals its parasitic origins and its productive pretensions. It fears all that can exist without it, and seeks to reorganize all life to keep itself alive.

The State is vulnerable and fragile. Whereas everything that does not attack Capital nourishes it, everything that does not obey the State threatens it. It must conquer and extinguish all autonomy.

Since the post-WWII advances in the science of policing, based in the simultaneous experiences of repression in Kenya, Algeria, Vietnam, the ghettos and the council estates, governments have understood statecraft to be the art of managing conflict permanently. Counterinsurgency is a continuous process.

Massacre or amnesty were the principal moods of the archaic State in the face of rebellion. Recuperation—the capturing and diversion of rebellious movements to plug them back into the Machine—is not an invention of democracy, as the Catholic saints can testify; however recuperation has been made a permanent feature of democratic governance, enabled by the primarily productive nature of power since the birth of capitalism, and currently carried out largely through market mechanisms. Constant processes of education, socializing, and reframing carried out in the schools and the media train people to take the interests of the Machine itself into account whenever formulating responses to social problems. An expansive, adaptive, and progressive culture of investment quickly hooks new forms of rebellion into employment opportunities. The democratic media legitimize those who attempt to take the reins of arising mass movements.

At the same time, the methods of repression have been excruciatingly fine-tuned. In the name of “prevention,” police forces carry out a constant disciplining process that deflects rebels towards the paths of voluntary recuperation. Those who step over the line are targeted with a normalizing repression that focuses on specific illegal acts in order to force the conflict into the discursive realm of criminality and undermine the affective reality of struggle. The police apparatus pretends to deal with isolated crimes rather than with a collective resistance. The extreme psychological pressure police and judicial forces have learned to wield since the days of the Inquisition forces those targeted to think strictly in terms of legality, which is a combination of ostracizing moralism, merciless threat, and possible salvation, encoded in a technical language that demands observance of form. Criminal trials are above all a decollectivizing medium.

If a heavier response is deemed necessary, the State enacts an instructive repression against perceived leaders or perceived everyman, “striking one to educate a hundred,” as it were. This form of repression is more apparently political in nature, though if the state in question enjoys a compliant and effective mass media, most people will ignore the case or view it in moral terms, as a necessary measure against a dangerous public enemy, without paying too much attention to the technical irregularities.

If this should still not suffice, even the democratic state has recourse to the sort of annihilatory repression associated with its dictatorial counterparts, and in fact all democratic states have drawn up initial plans for how to enact the latter, although actually doing so is a last resort for the grave and lasting damage to the democratic illusion of social peace and unity it would cause.

There is a similar continuum of police to military occupation when the target of repression is not a legible or semi-legible political movement but a disobedient internal population, such as a poor neighborhood or a racial minority.

It is indispensable to recognize, however, that while the Machine proactively guides processes of repression and recuperation and it tends to do so quite well, both repression and recuperation weaken the Machine. History is not the unilineal intensification and centralization of an Authority that moves all the pieces, but a story of the Machine escaping destruction and coming out two steps ahead time and again.

Repression undermines social peace, destroys resources, and chills productivity. Recuperation, on the other hand, demands a quid pro quo. For example, the Machine recuperated the women’s struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries, but to do this it had to weaken itself. The explanation

that capitalism suddenly needed women to reenter the workplace, after having expelled them in the 16th century and expelling them again from the new factories after the first phase of the Industrial Revolution, is facile, and retains all agency with the Machine itself. In order to recuperate the women's struggles, the Machine had to undo much of the power structure it created for itself at the end of feudalism and the beginning of capitalism. As always, these changes opened new opportunities for exploitation and offered new angles of control, but on the whole the advantage goes to us. From the defeat of the Levellers and the contemporary jacqueries to the height of the workingmen's International, an anti-authoritarian revolution was unthinkable because the greater half of oppression was hidden away in the private, feminine sphere, and the very categories it moved through were reproduced even by radicals. Now, a rebellion that crosses internal and external borders to build true solidarity is possible like no time since the early years of colonization.

While Capital smells an opportunity, the State mistrusts change for the rebellious desires it represents. Though they have distinct codes, the State and Capital form a blended force that is indistinguishable at the moment of disciplining our lives. But they do represent different aspects of the Machine. The State may be more constant in its ability to offer the chance of participation, but Capital is more enticing. Although capitalism was conceived as a war strategy, it has generally been pursued as a game, with no end and an exponentially expanding points system, played by the more light-hearted and opportunistic of the Machine's engineers. The engineers who concern themselves with statecraft, on the other hand, tend to be a dour, bitter lot, prone to remember the unending string of insults, threats, and defeats heaped on them by their inferiors.

If any distinction can be made, and it can be made at best partially, then we must assert that capitalism will most easily be destroyed through the destruction of the State. Capitalism is a great faker, frequently acting out coughing fits and great crises, keeping the rebels praying for collapse and distracting attention from the more vulnerable of the pair, the State, which puts on a hard visage to dissuade attack. In the absence of a functioning economy, the State always has recourse to war communism. But in the absence of the State, capitalism is helpless.

## **Recovering the Imaginary**

Many of the defeats in the globalized Western lineage of resistance can be located in the extension of our historical memory to the Paris commune and no further. But at this point, the last free peoples of the world were already facing the guns of a society whose lower classes had long since been colonized and recruited. May Day, 1886, draws its greatest strength not from what it began but from what it inherited.

What we have forgotten, in all these years of deprivation and exile, is that there is a real world and an imaginary world, and the latter is no less vital or true than the former. The Machine, with its ideological hegemony, military arsenal, and monopoly of legitimacy, has the upper hand in the real world. But in the imaginary world it must pay tribute to us: only thus does it survive. This tribute is understood by many radicals as recuperation, but to equate what the Machine is forced to do to appease the forces arrayed against it in the imaginary world with its clever strategy for controlling insurgents who have not achieved a radical rupture with reality is to exaggerate its power and misunderstand its nature. The understanding that reality is the product of the Machine is inseparable from the fact that the real world is the only one the Machine really

understands. One of the primary functions of reality is to establish a hierarchy between the two worlds and insulate one from the other. In a sense, reality is nothing if not the religion of the one world alienated from and set above the other.

But when the mathematicians are trusted to study the Word to its ultimate conclusions, allowed to operate independently so that they will not be impeded in the discovery and expropriation of new tools, what they prove is that the real cannot exist without the imaginary. Meanwhile psychologists and neuroscientists show that memory is reconstruction, while physicists run up against the discovery that perspective fundamentally affects what are considered to be objective criteria. This heresy has been disarmed and left with the relevance of mere trivia, because heresy as a category of control has been made obsolete by the alienation of information from experience. Nothing we may discover about the world will refer to our place in it, because the Machine has removed us from the world; we are suspended, hanging above it, taking notes. In this position, no truth can provoke rebellion because the condition in which we receive truth, our relationship to the space through which truth enters us, is predicated on alienation, on our status as exiles.

The Commune in Paris was an echo of the peasant imaginary during the Middle Ages. Under Roman rule, people were slaves or they were rebels existing at the margins of empire. The rebellions and invasions that brought down Rome accomplished a partial liberation. The serfs enjoyed more freedom than the slaves, they had direct access to land, and they fed and sustained themselves with their own activity, unlike slaves or workers, who each are chained to only a part of a dependent productive process, and rely on a hierarchical system of distribution to receive back a part of their product in a usable form. Because the serfs were tied to the land, they were the polar opposite of the precarious worker; a landlord was loathe to dispose of them for insubmission because they could not easily be replaced.

The land was divided into three categories. That belonging to the lord (ecclesiastic or aristocratic), which the serfs had to work periodically. That adhering to the serf, which was worked and passed down by individual families. That which was the commons, and was the site of festivals and the source of firewood, timber, fish, game, medicinal and magical plants.

The imaginary of communism, within the occidental trajectory of thought, finds its roots here.

Few peasants lived in and of the commons. But they touched, and this contact was enough. It was in the commons that the peasant imaginary took root and thrived, and towards the commons that the peasants' rebel desires always pulled them.

Villeins ran away for the high heath. Rejecting the religion of their masters, they were called "heathens." Robin Hood and his merry thieves lived in the forest. The Bogomils, demonized as "buggers" for their heresy, lived in the Balkans, the Cathars in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The independent towns formed by runaway serfs and free artisans reflected this identification: they were called communes. When the Machine enclosed the commons, cast out the Diggers and Ranters from their Edens, and colonized the rest of the world, these dreams of freedom had to retreat, until the only safe ground for the resistance was in the imaginary world.

The expansion of the Han Chinese state, which in another century or two could easily have accomplished what the European states did, albeit with a different methodology, fomented a similar process. The annihilation of the Miao rebellion was even bloodier than the eradication of the German Peasant Rebellion, and led to an even more enduring diaspora of rebel imaginaries, feeding the development of dozens of new stateless societies peopling the highlands with mythologies of revolt and tyrannicide.

The rebel imaginary has no obligatory center. The tale of May Day and commoning is only relevant to those who trace their legacy of struggle to one of a thousand roots of rebellion. It is valuable precisely because it is arbitrary, because we choose it over and against the sameness and amnesia democracy foists on us. The stories of Europe feature so centrally in the present narrative not for any objective reasons—after all, capitalism developed at its own margins—but solely because its authors trace their defeat to those lands. To one who feels his roots go back to the Niger watershed, rebel history and the development of the Machine do not pass through the Roman Empire, the Peasant Rebellion, and the beginnings of mercantilism. Perhaps they unfold in a tale of expansion, a tension between town and forest, between Islam and animism, the slow ascendance of kings suddenly accelerated by a new bargain brought by the seafaring foreigners: guns for captives. Then the illusion of the powerful state depopulating its neighbors suddenly replaced, after a conference in a faraway city, with total colonization, borders, and an intensification of genocide, cutting the link with those who had been spirited away to work on plantations, mixing with other nations, fermenting religions and conspiracies, slowly subjected to new disciplines, segregated, policed by those who had been fellow outcasts.

All of the histories are different, but in all of them we can find a tension between categorization and memory, dispossession and blending. The first term in each pair is violently imposed, in one case to segregate, in the other to mobilize. The second term is an act of resistance, in one case to not lose one's roots, and in the other to build an expansive solidarity with other dispossessed in the new circumstances. Lacking a healthy imaginary, many rebels have defended their own categorization or insisted on their dispossession as progress.

Against this, we look to the history of mutiny. For a time and in certain places, rebels could run away to live among those who were still outside the Machine and fighting against it, such as the Seminole, the Maroons, or the Kru. But as these were quarantined or crushed, what was left? Those who remembered their own world before the arrival of the Machine could pass on these stories and traditions until they were again strong enough to rise up and reclaim their lands. But those who did not remember, those who could no longer speak of any lands they belonged to?

When the commons were crushed on dry land, such outcasts turned to piracy as the principal insurrection of the day. And when piracy was crushed as a major threat to transatlantic commerce, the myth of pirates continued to grow, far in excess of the continued appearance of occasional mutinies or sea robbers. The spirit of those pirates in the imaginary world became a carrier of the dream, the Idea, the commune. The pirates were not a model of total freedom; nonetheless, the romanticization of pirates was a part of piracy from the very beginning—their own contemporaries made them a refuge for the idea of a free community.

Hundreds of years later, the imaginary pirates and the dream they carried appeared unharmed, immortal, on the banners of the anarchists in Gulyai-Polye, in the same way as the workers of Paris rebirthed the commune the peasants had dreamed of and passed on in the tales of old wives.

And what is May Day if not a relic pagan festival of mockery, debauchery, and resistance, brought by immigrant workers to the United States, and called upon to bring strength to an unprecedented struggle against the established order. The disciplined strike did not exist in the imaginary of the cowed American workers. But perhaps they could make the streets like to a village festival in the Old World, with everybody dancing and disobedient, and no one working. What is paganism if not a reconstruction necessitated by a starved imagination?

What we know of actual paganism in Europe, contemporary to the beginning and rise of Christianity, has little reflection in what was taken from it by rebellious traditions. Though they are

not the only specimens, Greek and Norse paganism both demonstrate striking similarities to Christianity, which should be no surprise as the one had a hand in creating it and the other in modifying it as it spread through Europe. But these religions also contained other elements that became attractive once they turned subversive, and in this way they rose to the top—nature worship, disobedience, bacchanalia, sexual freedom, magic, warrior women.

Paganism and witchcraft were reinvented as part of the struggle against domination under Christianity, barely surviving the rationalism adopted by later proletarian struggles, which finally, and unknowingly, inscribed their roots in their ongoing history by choosing May Day as the pivotal day for a battle they would not soon forget.

It is no coincidence that rationalism and the idea of progress repeatedly set these proletarian movements against their indigenous contemporaries, and ultimately against themselves. The existence of a proletariat is predicated on genocide. Marx's socialism requires first that people lose their roots, in order to avail themselves of a greater productive force that will solve the problems of scarcity that only ever existed in the Machine's imaginary. It makes perfect sense, then, that the Sandinistas oppressed the Miskito, or that the communards exiled on New Caledonia turned on the Kanak.

Aymara anarchist Yawar Nina speaks of the imagination as a field that is constantly bearing fruit, sustaining us and provisioning us for the future. Our origins are not lost because we are constantly recreating ourselves from our imagination; therefore we are deicides and anarchists. Against scientific rationalism, he champions poetic thinking as an inseparable part of the struggle to recreate the grammar of the world and to destroy the map his people have been forced into.

Japanese anarchist Osugi Sakae emphasized the importance of meditation during his time in prison. Today's Mapuche prisoners call on their *machi* to help them survive long hunger strikes. Yet most anarchists in the West have been aspiritual, proudly atheist. What they don't realize is that rationalism is the religion of the Machine.

It might help to acknowledge that what we have been told is possible is a mere noon shadow of everything that exists. Magic was cast away not because it does not exist—so many societies could not have been so stupid to dedicate themselves for so many centuries to something that brought nothing in return but some partial peace of mind. Rather, magic was cast aside because it is not reproducible, and because it demands reciprocity. It always reconditions a relationship with the world; therefore it is useless to the Machine.

Even under the most skeptical of gazes, something as fantastic as dancing to bring the rain is undeniably rich in accomplishments. Leaving aside a statistical analysis of whether the frequency of rain correlates to the presence or absence of rain dances, which presumes the rain dance to be a mechanism designed to produce a result, what do we find? The act of asking for rain opens up a conversation with the world. If the rain comes, the relationship between the conversants is revealed to be in a healthy condition. But if the rain does not come, the magic has not failed (whereas if a well does not deliver water, it most certainly does fail). The lack of rain also communicates something between the community and the world, reconfirming their relationship. If there isn't enough rain, they need to make some sacrifices, they need to restore a balance. In the short term, according to the skeptical gaze, the rain dance does not bring the rain. But it does condition a relationship of mutuality, love, and respect between the community and the world. And this in the long term shapes a community that is sensitive to the health of its ecosystem. Capitalism, on the contrary, is only interested in producing mechanisms that take, never giving

except with inter- est. After so much taking, in many parts of the world water is in fact becoming scarce. Thus, it is not at all false to say that the rains are lacking for want of rain dances.

However, science itself should not be dismissed wholesale, the way heretics typically burn away every trace of the former hegemon when they rise to power. The empirical method is a useful tool whose primary harm lies in the social relation and the mythical framework it is attached to. Having destroyed the framework, we can still learn from the method of inquiry. It is better, after all, to survive a disease than to never suffer it. “Immunity” means you keep the germ “inside your walls,” you incorporate it and use it, so it can never threaten you again.

We also cannot uncritically take up the Devil’s cause because magic and imagination are not unproblematic fields. The Confucian rationalism of the Han state tolerated the magical practices of the I Ching as Chinese folk magic was developed into a spiritual corollary of bureaucratic practices. The divine hierarchy mirrored the political one, and the process for requesting rain mirrored the process for requesting a reprieve on taxes. Magic, in this reality, served as meta-physical legitimation and training for worldly power. Meanwhile, fairy tales in the European tradition served to reinforce contempt for witches and unmarried women, fear of the forest, and reverence of the nobility, while the magical tradition of the Renaissance alchemists was a mystified movement towards the results-focused practice of Baconian science.

And the Renaissance tradition owes much to Christian spirituality and Judaism before it. Whereas in a mutual paradigm, sacrifice means bending to another’s needs and therefore respecting the other, the practice of sacrifice in Judaism and contemporary religions elaborated an instrumental relationship to the deity that would prefigure capitalism. It was not the supplicant, but the ram or heifer with its throat cut on the altar that was making the true sacrifice. The one holding the knife was benefiting from the spiritual labors of his animals, who through this ritual he transubstantiated into property. In a word, he had become an investor. The Catholic praxis postulated a specific number of Hail Marys recited or candles lit to cancel a sin or save a soul from purgatory. This view of magic not only trained its believers in operations of price and purchase, it also paved the way for the abolition of God, by profaning Him as a party to contracts in which the supplicant paid a price and expected results. To the annihilating equality of the contract, an earth-based magic counterposes the sustaining mutuality of balance.

But the naïve realism of the contract has triumphed and proliferated, and magic has been forgotten or infantilized. In a great assault on our most important line of escape, an entire industry of interactive video games, internet games, and movies has set itself the task of routinizing our imagination and colonizing the imaginary. The genre of fantasy, disseminated by *The Lord of the Rings* more than any other work, has been most faithless to its progenitor in its portrayal of magic. Gandalf’s magic exists as charisma, cleverness, and strength of will. Quite the contrary, the mages of *Dungeons and Dragons* and the spin-off products learn spells like techniques, perform the requisite gestures, expend the proportionate quantity of mana, and produce an eerily mechanical magical result. Gandalf’s “You shall not pass!” is more the invocation of the spirit of ‘36 than a precise incantation, predictable and reproducible, for some spectacular fireball.

Fortunately, the imagination industry relies on participation, and even those who do participate may protect themselves subconsciously, the way dreams bend and warp to hide and reveal what is most precious. The memories of what we think we lost are still there, in the imaginary world, resisting the attempts of the Machine to twist or belittle them. We can continue to ignore them only at our own risk: whether or not a rebellion defeats itself has much to do with its ability

to travel between the real world and the imaginary, to see through reality to the Machine behind it.

## Democracy and White Supremacy

White and black as racial categories are preceded in European literature by white and black as moral categories. Christendom is the progenitor of the white race. But whereas membership in Christendom required acts of allegiance and thus necessitated the existence of renegades, who so worried the European elite (possibly because they could rarely be sure how faithful the Faithful truly were), the possibilities of defection from whiteness would be hidden by rooting race in science and mapping the divisions onto the social relation, the distribution and circulation of world populations. One was born white or black, and to defect required either an active betrayal or an effective resistance, both frequently accomplished through geographical flight.

The colonial project eliminated any externality to race, as there was an externality to Christendom. As the last savage territories were conquered, there were no quilombos or indigenous communities for uprooted Africans and Europeans to run off to. The Other racial categories that in the past had been externalities were now incorporated as determinants of the worst possible relation to the productive apparatus—that of slave. The racial Others were no longer on the margins, but at the base of the economic pyramid. The oldest form of resistance to the Machine was eliminated in theory, and increasingly in practice. There would be no more running away.

With the Renaissance, the European elite laid their claim to the mythical lineage of civilization with renewed vigor. Their origin story in the civilizations of Egypt and Greece has little basis in fact, as the philosophies and sciences founded by the ancients were primarily transmitted and developed in the Middle East and Northern Africa. But this mythical history provided a claim to supremacy and legitimated domination on a global scale. Civilizational narratives are always progressive and expansionary. They went back to the oldest recorded history they knew of and claimed direct descent from it. It is only logical that they should bring this tradition everywhere, so everyone should have an opportunity to modernize.

The characteristic combination of progress and expansion in the civilizational project in general and in the colonial or white supremacist project par excellence, is the first clue that suggests the inherently democratic character of these projects.

This parallelism becomes more clear when we go back to the origin story that both white civilization and democracy claim for themselves: Ancient Greece. David Graeber astutely summarizes democracy as an essentially military formation, and in the Athenian city-state, where much of the population were slaves and only the upper crust could participate in decision-making, statecraft had undeniably military imperatives. Democracy was a social glue for the middle and upper classes, allowing all of those invested in power to come together to exercise it, in the prevention of slave rebellions, in competitive wars with other city states for the control of commerce, and regulation of the market.

The identical movement of democracy and whiteness is to divide and integrate. Whiteness is highly functional for the Machine, playing a strategic role of segregating oppressed groups and partializing their struggles. As long as a people's historical memory does not extend back to before their forcible integration by the Machine, specific groups will fight for the completion of the promises of civilization rather than their colonization by it. Not an end to the regime of

property, but more jobs, higher wages, less discrimination in the workplace. People who do not remember the warmth of the world will react to their exclusion to the Machine's colder periphery by demanding, or even fighting for, a more central role in their own domination. Both democracy and white supremacy speak the language of equality.

Nationalism, including counter-nationalism, always emulates the colonial ideal, although an anarchist willingness to engage with complexity may be all it takes to divert a national liberation struggle from nationalism towards internationalism. The Strandzha Commune of 1903 was born from the Bulgarian liberation struggle against the Ottoman Empire. The influence and leadership of anarchists promoted cooperation with ethnic Greeks and prevented the expulsion or killing of Turks living in the area. And the Ukrainian desire for independence cannot be ignored as a factor in the temporary success of the Makhnovschina, while the Shinmin Commune also fed off the aversion to Japanese domination, without empowering any autochthonous Korean elite.

We cannot deny our own particularity—national (cultural-linguistic) or otherwise—but to see this particularity as a basis for our separation from other particularities, to believe in our essential difference, is to limit solidarity, to mistake identity as single and ahistorical, and to foreswear the possibility of losing ourselves in the world. Identity is historical, positional, and shifting. Far from being artificial, this is exactly what makes it real. Shared identities that are historical—and that seek vengeance for the impositions of history—are a threat to the democratic ideal of a sovereign community and its contractual government that presumes to regulate all social conflict.

Race and racism are useful to the Machine. They were imposed on the poor and dispossessed directly in response to a long chain of motley insurrections that had the potential of uniting the whole world against the engineers and religion of the Machine. Though useful, they are not strictly utilitarian. Should we forget that whiteness believes in itself, we must only remember that it is the successor of an evangelical Christendom. Thomas Pynchon hit the bullseye in one passage: *"wait, wait a minute there, yes it's Karl Marx, that sly old racist skipping away with his teeth together and his eyebrows up trying to make believe it's nothing but Cheap Labor and Overseas Markets... Oh, no. Colonies are much, much more. Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul, where a fellow can let his pants down and relax, enjoy the smell of his own shit. Where he can fall on his slender prey roaring as loud as he feels like and guzzle her blood with open joy."*

Racism is one manifestation of the disgust the powerful have always felt with the insubordinate chaos of life, their hatred for all living beings that had not converted themselves to disciplined robots. When this hatred almost proved their undoing, they chose to paint the world with a finer brush, to enforce a selective discipline that served as an invitation. Those with whom they saw some possibility of understanding, because they spoke related dialects of the same language, descended from histories that referred to many of the same events and places, and shared similar customs, were to be given the possibility of joining the Elect. Like the doctor in *My Fair Lady*, the engineers were fascinated by the prospect of deploying their new sciences on their countrymen to fashion them into their vision of rational, civilized human beings. To accomplish this, they needed an imaginary receptacle to which to banish all the qualities this white proletariat would have to forswear. They needed an Other. What's more, they simply could not renounce the brutality that created the Beast of their imagining, or their fragile new economy would come to a halt. They had to select some for apprenticeship, and condemn the others to a more permanent slavery. Without the whip and scaffold, the raw materials for the workshops and then the machines of Europe, the commodities that kept the new urban workers fed, clothed, and drunk, and the gold and silver that paid the expanding armies would never have been produced.

With fits and starts and counterproductive explosions of brutality should their new students err, the men of the Enlightenment held their noses and tried washing the sinners of all that repulsed them. Once the dispossessed of Europe considered themselves white and helped themselves to the meagre privileges wrung from the bodies of their former allies in revolt, the engineers could consider the prospect of civilizing the savage races, and women too. But the democratic expansion of citizenship that came with the abolition of slavery and the granting of female suffrage was carried out with the same repulsion and the same genocidal brutality towards those who rejected the humanitarian mission. The hateful rabble had to be marched through a process of cultural hygienization before they could be invited to the table of civic conversation.

The institution of race served not only to divide and then discipline the dispossessed but also to cordon off their utopia. The place of the New World in the imaginary of the enslaved and kidnapped of Africa and Europe reflects less the cultural appropriation carried out by elite philosophers like Rousseau and more their own complete loss of reference to a real utopian past on their own lands (in the case of many of the Europeans), or the practical loss of access to those lands (in the case of the Africans or Irish). On an imaginary and physical level, for a time freedom became easier to attain for the new workers on the margins of the colonies than in their home countries.

As the civilizational project, pursued by the likes of Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Calvin, and Mather, gained ground in transforming the rabble into a disciplined army of self-governing rational men, the New World drastically changed its composition, from free land peopled by open societies which runaways could join and fight alongside, to an empty land where a new democratic, puritan utopia could be installed on a tabula rasa, where a new science could collect specimens and construct its assemblage of rational knowledge.

Where the exploited Europeans refused their own memory of utopia, their memory of themselves before they were workers, at their most solidaristic they could only consider giving the people of other continents a hand up, to join them as equals in their new identity as citizens and rational men. But considering themselves superior, lower class whites were just as likely to beat down their former allies. In fact militia service was a key institutional doorway to whiteness. Thus, the destruction of the rebellious utopia was necessary to the deployment of whiteness as a tool for the division and recuperation of struggle. The pernicious inclusivity of democracy requires the annihilation of any land, real or imaginary, external to State sovereignty.

Now that the entire world measures success in terms of inclusion in the project of civilization and the effective performance of the roles modeled by democracy and white supremacy, the necessary figure of the repugnant Other inhabits the civilized imaginary in the guise of the dangerous terrorist or the irretrievable primitive. The only apparent alternatives to democratic participation are prehistory or the Apocalypse.

The memory of some free haven outside of this civic totalitarianism is starting to come back. Indigenous peoples still in struggle against colonization have fought tooth and nail to retain their past because this past provides the vision of an independent future. Elsewhere, radical scholars have recovered the histories that refer directly to the rest of us. The struggles of anarchists have allowed these histories to bloom into new utopias, freeing our imaginary from the shackles of progress.

The generalization of this imaginary would be a major triumph. Previous generations of insurgents tried to build their utopia inside of this civilization. But the commune and the rational man cannot coexist. The absence of rebellious imaginaries that extend beyond the confines of civilization is the legacy of a specific defeat, and a fatal limitation to all our struggles.

## Stable State, Moving Capital

In the Roman Polanski film *Chinatown*, the detective Gittes confronts the businessman Mr. Cross about his plot to steal all the water of the Valley and channel it to a growing Los Angeles.

Gittes: *How much are you worth?*

Cross: *I have no idea. How much do you want?*

Gittes: *I want to know what you're worth. Over ten million?*

Cross: *Oh my, yes.*

Gittes: *Then why are you doing it? How much better can you eat? What can you buy that you can't already afford?*

Cross: *(a long pause) The future, Mr. Gittes. The future.*

It's about control.

The State, as an evolving configuration of institutions that manage an array of apparatuses, constituting a system whose imperative is social control, is intrinsically conservative. Capital, as a virus that moves through these institutions seeking to convert life in all its aspects into value in accordance with its imperative of accumulation, is intrinsically progressive. Being conservative, the State oversees an inherited set of borders and a status quo of social relations that impel it to surveille, project, and plan; the State is vigilant. Being progressive, Capital constantly inhabits its own frontiers, investing itself in its own expansion while necessarily losing a sense of its center of gravity; Capital is blind.

The Machine acquired the power to become a globally integrated system when it devised the coupling of State and Capital. Once this coupling achieved a total colonization of the planet and a relatively stable unification of its mechanisms, it launched a full invasion of the imaginary, taking its war against nature to unprecedented microscopic and macroscopic levels, so as to mechanize the very context in which the Machine operates; to kill the world and reanimate it in its own image. We can only guess at what type of catastrophe this phase of its project will climax in.

The modern State, in inventing itself out of the depleted empires that preceded it, unleashed Capital as a force for social control. The usurers, merchants, and speculators were already in place, but it took the State to expropriate self-sufficient communities (creating commodities on the one hand and producers on the other), protect commerce, and organize all the infrastructural and territorial projects capitalists would never undertake because they were simply not profitable. Enabled by this military operation, the usurers-turned-bankers could pass from being just another profession providing their product, to the torchbearers and architects of a new era. In some cases, the bankers sought out the governors to provide them with protection, inputs, and outputs, and in other cases the governors sought the banks to fund their wars, but in time the bankers turned to state-making and the governors occupied themselves increasingly with flows of business that surpassed their territorial domain.

The logic of Capital served as a secret handshake to unite a diffuse pantheon of bickering aristocrats, officials, and merchants. Anything that followed the logic of accumulation could be negotiated with. All else had to be tamed or annihilated.

It took some time for the new State to accumulate the power needed to live up to its ideal. The Hapsburg empire, a likely contender for the role of leading state, fell along with the great bank that funded it, because it failed to transcend its legacy as a territorial empire in order to become a productive machine.

Capital broadened the field in which the ruling class had shared interests. In the zero-sum feudal world, rulers usually found their shared interests only in the face of rebellion or a mutual enemy. Capitalism constitutes an expansive production of shared interests. As soon as power-holders began to follow the rules of Capital, they were constantly linked back into the ruling system. At times this created conflict between the bourgeoisie and conservative states that impeded the evolution of democracy and thus a continuous recomposition of a fluid ruling class. Much later, spectacular capitalism began to encourage not only powerful actors but also the most powerless of state captives to constantly link themselves back into the system.

But the evolution of the Machine is not a unilineal movement towards greater power. Capitalism is sensitive but blind. And the State is longsighted but unfeeling. The various components of the Machine often have to help themselves along a treacherous road, fleeing our resistance. What are often masked as economic changes are in fact strategic choices.

In parts of the Russian Empire and what is now Poland, capitalists first started internationalizing and favoring ownership in remote locales after anarchists had developed the practice of killing factory owners, who then lived in the same towns as the workers. And in the architecture of cities like Paris or Barcelona, spatial changes that most immediately wrought offensive military advantages against rebellion, such as wide avenues and the dismantling of the old defensive walls, in time became routinized as simply good business practice.

What are seen as blind processes of economic expansion often begin as reactive strategies of control. Profit can only exist in the graveyard of a bellicose social peace. More than a social motor in its own right, profit is the logistical mechanism that ties the bourgeoisie into the activity of provisioning the advancing army of the State.

In North America, unlike in Europe, the cities were built from the beginning in the interests of short term investment, which also meant they could be easily taken by an invading force, razed to the ground, and quickly rebuilt. Society itself was engineered to leave everyone defenseless in a landscape of planned obsolescence where attrition and reconstruction are routinized. Here, the interests of military control and capitalist speculation reach their highest level of confluence yet.

There is still a productive discordance between the dynamics of State and Capital. The city, or more appropriately urban space, consists of an entrenched bureaucracy and physical infrastructure with only the most sluggish mobility, while the mobility of capital has achieved hypersonic speeds and global dimensions. In the case of Detroit, the money flowed out, in various phases, almost overnight, while decades later the infrastructure is still fading, just faster than the pace of natural erosion.

The need of the city to redouble its efforts in attracting capital has led to a facile yet interesting discourse concerning the so-called creative class. The creative class contains not only producers of art and cutting edge culture but also chic consumers, trend setters, and trend followers. The theory of the new urban planners revolves around a strategy of revitalizing cities and attracting capital by first attracting and pampering the creative class.

The role of the creative class, ultimately, is to make the desert of commodity culture desirable again. Naturally, they can only do this by distinguishing certain parts that enjoy the illusion of novelty or progressiveness, contrasted against the obvious misery of the rest of the desert.

In this productive game of the avant-garde, even the sort of artistic terrorism that would have made the Dadaists proud can quickly be recuperated. Squats, no matter how crusty, that do not succeed as beachheads in the social war, or queer scenes, no matter how outrageous, that do

not maintain a combative daily existence—and these are not easy orders to fill—quickly become a preliminary sales pitch for the reclassification of a neighborhood. The challenging of cultural norms becomes the new norm, and as long as the combination exists of disgust with normality and wages that provide for a little more than survival, such opposition will be a lucrative and necessary trade.

Artists, to be truly revolutionary, must go so far as the Russian group Voina and declare war on reality. Their medium must be fire; their canvas, the streets. They must invade, not the conservative establishment galleries like the Dadaists, but the galleries of the very artists who presume to be rebels, as did anarchist artists from Occupy Wall Street.

Opposition, as a posture and not a practice of war, is a function of power whose purpose is to neutralize desire. Desire is a faculty that learns over time. If it is allowed to crystallize into relationships, it soon becomes too wise to be fooled by the lures of commodities. The desert must always be shifting and advancing so that the objects of desire remain ever on the horizon: this is the indispensable job of the cultural workers.

Capitalism has not sought to impose mobility so much as an uprootedness fixing people to a new role—a role that often necessitates movement between places and even between continents, but one that also comes with new requirements of immobility, seen in the strengthening of borders or the intensified organization of so-called free time.

The major point of confluence between Capital and the State, as it concerns our forms of life, has been the establishment, preservation, and intensification of our uprootedness. Where we put down roots, we strengthen our negation of the Machine. But a territory where the struggle grows strong is a territory where opportunities for investment have gone sour. As long as we must also follow capital—as workers or as autonomous parasites—we will abandon our own utopias, one after another. When capital flees, and there are neither jobs nor scams remaining, will our roots allow us to feed ourselves? In some cities, economic disintegration or the conversion to service economies have erased even the memory of what were strong workers' movements. But where disintegration has been more extreme, the opportunity has appeared to occupy abandoned ground and put it to our own uses.

However, capital does not merely shift. It accumulates in intensifying waves, and therefore zones of neglect will unsteadily diminish. Where we cannot be gardeners and build our physical continuity within the very earth, we must be nomads and leave our mark in the imaginary. By foreswearing the stability of firm ground, nomads stabilize their sense of self in a multigenerational community capable of surviving exile, and increase their capacity for resistance through contact with other such communities. If we must be exiled, we can become a diaspora, nourished by a warlike animosity towards all authority and linked together by the fiery dream of anarchy.

Rather than joining the masses or holding ourselves above them, we must recognize the universality of the dispossessed, reclaim our history as colonized barbarians, and thrust this history in the face of all those around us, for it speaks to their history too. Once the identity of the citizen is no longer the normalized default but a willing identification with the dream of power in rejection of the dream of the commons, we will truly have begun to fight back.

## The End of Class

Up to their eyeballs in the engine fluids of a drowning machine, tomorrow's intellectuals will never know that one of the most important philosophical developments of our times has been what a few anarchists and nihilists ironically refer to as "the prole strole," a neo-proletarian practice of walking around in a contemptuous posse through the pristine urban landscape simply fucking shit up. The strolling prole is the flaneuer of our time. The early 20th century flaneuer—the impoverished child of a disappearing petite bourgeoisie, kept on a diminishing allowance and walking the streets of Paris, moving aimlessly precisely so that they could observe the prescribed flows of movement and being by swimming against those invisible currents—represented the decomposition of a class. Messianic, the bourgeoisie sacrificed itself precisely so it could become universal, already having thrown down the false gods of the aristocracy, who in happier times had ruled by divine right. Practically speaking, there were fewer and fewer of those romantic pioneers who could simply amass a bit of capital, buy a factory or perhaps start an insurance company, pay for their children's keep until the age of 30 with the hope that they would end up well placed in the academy or ready to take over the family business, their future resting warmly atop a nest egg of acquired surplus value. More and more of them ended badly, landing on a Boardwalk piled high with two ominous red hotels, and Game Over meant being bought out and accepting positions in middle management, overseeing a small territory of flows incorporated into an expanding global network where once they had run an autonomous enterprise.

Nowadays increasingly few people can be said to truly own anything. The banks own virtually everything (or do they virtually own everything?) and who owns what belongs to the bank? Ownership is too stable a condition; the logic of the Machine far prefers management. After all, total control means that no one must be free, so the Machine successively abolishes all the Gods it invents, never allowing its priests to acquire real power. The bourgeoisie, so triumphant once upon a time, have been quietly dethroned. They were simply a tool needed for the construction of new apparatuses.

So too were the proletariat. For the fact that no one can be bourgeois but everyone must try to be means the absence of a proletarian identity. As a cruel joke, the Machine kept the proles alive physically, long after they had ceased to exist as a class, and the punchline is that wartime participation and stable factory jobs were the vehicle they were provided to advance into what was now being called the Middle Class. The past ghosts who had fallen in their thousands along the Somme, traitors to internationalism, and the future ghosts of empty lots and driveby shootings in millennial Detroit, betrayed by History, reached out and cried for them not to sign that contract, but the orphans of the proletariat had long since bought in to science and rationalism, and they no longer knew how to listen to ghosts. Their fate was sealed.

One culture to rule them all, one culture to bind them, the only classes now were Lower, Middle, and Upper. The division did not represent a conflict but a ladder that measured success at achieving a goal that they all shared: the accumulation of wealth. Unbeknownst to them, it was not their wealth they accumulated, and in fact simply by participating all of them achieved this goal equally; however the system of rewards functioned something like a lottery, leading to all sorts of confused discourses about merit and achievement, again causing the Machine to snicker. In fact some of these snickers were misinterpreted as seismic events, blackouts, or market recessions, though in at least one case the little jolt provoked a major urban riot, so the Machine has since learned to laugh, not more quietly, but more uniformly.

In the face of a crisis that comes at the apogee of a long period of decline in real wages masked by the theatrical presentation of increasing prosperity, suddenly substituted by a monologue of austerity that dramatizes a new loss in wages that is really a continuation of the prior decline, the Middle Class has decomposed. The more honest among them are starting to realize that beneath the headphones and Ray Ban sunglasses, they are nothing but sweeter smelling proles, and the designer scents are only a cover for their increasingly desperate odor. The decay of humanism reveals an animal reality, the way smell leads directly to truths that words can never touch. Even a popular band at the heart of the Culture Industry in the peak of Clintonian prosperity must admit, “despite all my rage I am still just a rat in a cage,” and millions of youths agree, united in their alienation, suspended first in their inability to form a collective force, and secondly in the disciplining of all new collective forces to participate in the Machine. The isolated rats of 1995 had, by 2004, at the pinnacle of rage, indeed coalesced into a Black Bloc, most visibly in Eminem’s election year music video, in which they walk from the cage of isolated rage willingly into the rat trap of the voting booth. The multiplying protagonists of the Hollywood-remade *V for Vendetta* similarly coalesce, walking past the military lines as peaceful spectators to watch the end of terrorism and dictatorship rather than to take up the struggle for freedom, as they do in the original graphic novel.

Their imaginations thus disciplined during the worst years of the Bush-era frustration, the masses responded accordingly in 2008, marching into the trap, believing in the possibility of CHANGE, which is precisely the word the meek and ahistorical antiglobalization movement (sorry, alterglobalization movement) previously used, instead of the more traditional choice, “struggle,” to avoid upsetting or frightening anyone.

And it is this inability to upset or frighten that some people, recognizing that they are neither Middle nor Lower Class but the Exploited, have thrown into the gutter, while they simultaneously litter and destroy as an act of contempt for the civic environmentalism that keeps the urban zone functioning.

The prole stroll is the constitution of a collective force, at the only scale currently available to us—small—in one of the few forms of organization that has not been recuperated by the system—the posse, the gang, the affinity group. Like the *dérive* of the Situationist, the prole stroll is movement against the regulated flows of urban space (or drift through those flows, lacking the destinations that animate them), but unlike the situation faced by the flaneurs a hundred years ago, there is no longer any excuse for contemplation; the only acceptable attitude towards the material surroundings and lawful flows is to negate and disrupt them. The prole stroll is a philosophical statement of the utmost profundity, which is why the guardians of philosophy ignore it as irrelevant, the guardians of news slander it as senseless, and its own proponents laugh about it as absurdity stacked upon other absurdities. For philosophy too is to be negated. The original flaneurs, the *peripatetics*, shouldn’t have drunk hemlock; they should have breathed fire.

There is no longer any excuse for contemplation because nothing is truly ours and none of what we can currently gaze upon may remain. A hundred years ago the exploited could think about taking over the factories and workshops and availing themselves of something useful, but nowadays production undeniably provides not for the community or even the population but for the network of production itself. Take your normal factory and think of what it produces. The ailerons for unmanned drones? The plastic minute hand for a disposable watch that will end up in a bag of breakfast cereal? Who could use such a thing? Nobody, and no-thing but the assembly line that has come to extend across the entire globe. What about the houses? At the very least

spare those from the fire of negation! But nowadays the buildings only last for a few decades, and the houses are built blind and numb, and can only remain habitable from one season to the next by being plugged into the grid for light and cooling and heating.

And our cars? At least we own those! But there could not be a riper target for destruction, a more apt material for burning barricades. The car owns us, precisely through what it enables; an isolated passing between work and home; not only the possibility but the imperative to be truly alone in the middle of a crowd; an accident-prone system of circulation that leaves us vulnerable to the most meaningless form of mass slaughter devised since World War I; a dependence on distant sources of fossil fuel whose very burning may end life as we know it.

In other words anything we might occupy will not be useful for long, so everything is a candidate for negation. Even a network of occupation that achieves coherence and the possibility for self-organization by occupying multiple points of production, as long as it seeks continuity by using the means of production to continue producing (which seems like the obvious thing to do), will recreate management, recreate exploitation, and fuel the Machine. A factory occupation that thinks about efficiency, that is not willing to burn the factory to the ground, has as its best possible future something like the Mondragon cooperative complex, which has produced surplus value more effectively than traditional capitalist ownership and management, and in fact has innovated new forms of management for the capitalists, to make their workers happy while exploiting them even more. Today, managers also use consensus process.

Occupation then is useful not because of the facilities it procures for us but for the faculties it builds in us: the capacity to take over space, and within that space to destroy and create as we see fit, which means to self-organize, and to attack and erode control. All the better that occupation should be temporary, then, because knowing that we cannot, in the short-term, win any material prize, we may be all the more cruel with the infrastructure we take hostage. What we win we take with us, and can use again wherever we go: what we win is the capacity to occupy.

This is another way of saying that we must be the first real Vandals, the first real barbarians, the first real horde. Because the truth of the matter is, thus far, everyone who has sacked Rome has been seduced by it. The pacifists would misquote Nietzsche and suggest that to fight a monster is to become it, but they have simply been seduced by the democratic myth of dialogue, and they don't realize that they are already monsters. So too were the barbarians already Romans. Those who marched through the marbled gates were not savages still green from the forest, rebelling viscerally against civilization. In fact they had already served in the legions, and were now turning on the aging Empire in order to cut it up for themselves.

Power has been smashed in many of its manifestations, many times, by those who did not subsequently seek power. The peasants of Aragon were never more free than after they shot the priest. Anarchy in the Spanish Civil War was not crushed by those peasants, it was crushed by the pragmatic ones who, rather than hanging all the politicians from the lampposts, selected the best ones to choose as allies.

Therefore, to sack Rome, we must do so as a horde, and never as an army, in every way possible. We must smash the fortifications without planning how they might be repaired, should we ever need to close them again behind us; we must walk naked before the clothed, without feeling shame; we must talk loudly among the educated, to teach them our words; we must burn their holy books without the least awe or ceremony; we must open the prisons, and walk through them until we are sure they don't contain a soul. We must burn the libraries and museums, but let the curious and romantic among us first take out any treasure they want, to fill the streets and

homes with, for we have no plans and no prohibitions. All the yammering about ends and means is a distraction: there was never any difference between the two, and we reject that alienation along with all the others.

The question is how, then, to become a horde?

And the answer, which we already knew from the beginning, is to start by finding one another, and never to stop. In friendship, we find each other every day. To order this encounter more permanently is to turn a friend into an object, and a troublesome one because it has legs and might at any time walk away.

Already we are seeing the outer limits of our capacity to find one another, and it is still a humble capacity.

A prole stroll may be small enough to fit on the sidewalk, a moving, low intensity occupation, nicking windows, defacing signs, and deflating tires as it rolls along, but its rowdy desire is to take over the streets. This way it not only disrupts but negates the control over the flow of bodies that is built into the urban space. But to accomplish this negation it needs to increase its collective force. An affinity group might do this with planning and preparation, growing into an affinity cluster and hoping to overcome the police counterpreparation through a combination of the adequate tools and the tendency of systems of control to break down. A posse or gang might do this with a flash mob, relying instead on the infectiousness of spontaneity and the slowness of systems of control to respond to unexpected situations.

The sorts of hordes we can muster now must stay on the move to avoid being encircled. But sometimes control breaks down, and we have the chance for longer term occupations. Such a project is dangerous, because it gives us something to be afraid of losing. To avoid becoming conservative, which is a different kind of encirclement, we must use these occupations as stepping stones for further attacks, even if and especially because that means risking these autonomous spaces.

And when, in a moment of crisis or rupture, what we seize is not something drained and abandoned by capitalism but something valuable and current, the lauded means of production, we must always be ready to destroy it. We can develop valuable capacities by learning how to run it, but never for the purpose it currently serves. Seizing the factory is like seizing the State: we become the thing that is occupied or utilized. The safest bet is always to destroy the machinery.

The short life of an occupation should not be construed as a defeat. What we are winning is not a space or part of the infrastructure, but the capacity to take over a space, to destroy or transform the infrastructure, and we take this capacity with us when we leave the occupation, ahead of the political encirclement, and go on to the next battle. We are a moving commune.

Barbarians will never confuse production with providing for ourselves. Production must be abolished, not organized. If our putatively creative acts are not provisioning our counterattack, they are only nourishing our enemy. A community garden is a propaganda poster for democracy or a beachhead for gentrification unless it feeds old people who are occupying against foreclosure, feeds workers on strike, feeds people who do not work so they can attack elsewhere, or devote their time to subversion. A community garden with no mural of our combatants or our struggles is nothing but the flower on our future grave.

This is what we mean by social war: not the need to understand ourselves as a class which was called into being in the first place by the Machine to serve its needs, but rather the need to understand ourselves as combatants. To understand that the present system constitutes a war against all of us, and it is not a war for profit but for control. The observation that no one institution

or structure lies at the base of this system but that all the institutions and structures of power move together because they are animated by a logic of control, and while the same logic may produce different plans for implementation, it reproduces similar patterns and projects similar goals. Therefore power is everywhere, it exists and reproduces itself in different forms and must be challenged in different ways.

What is needed of us then is not to recompose a class but to reconstitute society, for only in the graveyard of society has the Machine found any terrain for expansion. The conflict between classes has always been an engine of progress for the Machine. When one class fights another, the Machine only laughs. It exulted in the overthrow of the aristocracy, it giggled all throughout the dictatorship of the proletariat, and it sneers at the disappearance of the bourgeoisie.

Our narrative contains none of the dramatic conflicts familiar to Western culture: not man against man, nor man against society, nor even man against the machine, but rather society against the machine. And because society has no pretensions of being as homogeneous as a class, we must each find our own place in that struggle.

## **Ludd's Last Laugh**

The workers of Argentina who seized their factories came so close to answering the great riddle, and many of them picked the best possible answer. They failed for not realizing that history had posed them a trick question. The conundrum, "How will you run these factories?" has no solution that leads towards liberation. The best of them created a workplace without bosses, with collectivized management, and with direct relations of economic solidarity with suppliers and consumers; a workplace that built resistance in the community and defended itself from the cops. But they were still just perpetuating the project they had inherited, which was the manufacture of a product in the service of a lifeless system.

The answer to the riddle is to change the question to "What can we get out of these factories?" And the surest solution is to loot and pillage, and leave everything else in flames. The greater challenge would be to figure out how to adapt the factory to feed the horde, but this can only be accomplished by approaching the factory as a scavenger, a tinkerer willing and able to transform the machinery to satisfy a need the factory was never built to address.

The reason this solution has been so elusive is that most rebels have either been pro- or anti-technology. The latter have opted to stay in the streets and fight the forces of order, or to head for the hills, whereas the former have returned to the factories in triumph and reforged their own chains.

Understanding technology as something one can either favor or oppose relies on a simplistic dichotomy between nature and technology, which is to view humans as unnatural (or lost) and nature as static. Both views ensure alienation and confusion. Many animals use tools and many more shape their environment, to the point that it is misleading to talk about the environment as some clay that would be shaped. The environment, in fact, is a blur of creative forces and living beings that continuously sculpt one another in a chaotic equilibrium that will occasionally and radically shift to a new equilibrium.

Primitivists have done us a great disservice to draw the line at domestication as though this were the point of no return that leads inevitably to cages and factories. The mighty oak is nothing

if it is not domesticated by the squirrel, and we are nothing if not domesticated by our intestinal bacteria.

The curious thing about humans is that, for whatever reason, we have to figure things out. There are hunter-gatherer societies that didn't figure it out, that caused the extinction of other species, that act abusively to other animals, and there are also examples of agriculturalists who have figured it out and have learned to live in balance and value that balance. The only absolute is that the Machine abides no such society, and the Machine did require agriculture in its development, but the converse is not necessarily true, that agriculture will require the development of the Machine. It certainly hasn't for the leafcutter ants. Sedentary agriculture is a precondition for state-formation, but it is not a question of cause and effect. Until the modern era, agricultural societies in much of the world were stateless most of the time, and states that did form frequently fell apart without also triggering the collapse of the agricultural society.

Others draw the line at cities, which they claim to be a kind of socio-technological organization that inevitably entails domination. But these outward forms represented by specific artifacts are only containers for a host of meanings our society or our ideology wishes to naturalize. One who has only seen the city as a site of alienation from the countryside would find the medieval cities unfathomable, insofar as inhabitants maintained strong ties with the rural areas and continued to participate in farming (in other words, the city was not, simplistically, a site of resource imperialism that oppressed and exploited the surrounding countryside); in which the traditional elite often held little power and people could come to escape the conservative cultures of the rural areas and develop entirely new kinds of social organization, in turn influencing the scope of cultural possibility in the countryside. The subsequent bourgeois city destroyed the symbiotic urban-rural nexus by placing the city over the countryside in an exploitative and progressive relationship and in time destroying even the idea of other kinds of cities. "Bourgeois" itself comes from "burgher," which simply means "city-dweller," as does "citizen." In the lost language of the feudal lords, the artifact of the city communicated an entirely different set of concepts. "Commune," a word that now has idyllic connotations, refers to the shared walls of the city-dweller. The problem with technology is that it is commonly understood to mean the specific instruments that are little more than its representation. Proudhon was wisely skeptical of technological progress, whereas Marx, in dismissing the Luddites, insisted on a distinction "between machinery and its employment by capital", the mode in which it is used or the class to whom it belongs. Kropotkin, Rocker, and Malatesta all followed Marx on this point.

What the Luddites understood clearly is that under the Machine every technological development that produces the new instruments which become the center of the debate inscribe and produce a new mode in which society itself is instrumentalized. As Uri Gordon astutely sums up the problem, "Technologies fix social relations into material realities." Though this statement can be read both ways, the truth is that this fixing process goes well beyond machinery's employment by capital. Every machine requires a certain human interface; thus a machine, in being used, conditions human behavior. Therefore, to destroy the machine is to attack a powerful symbol of social change and to reject a seed of the more alienated social relations, a source of conditioning that further robs us of who we are. To destroy the machine is to insist on a difference between domination and influence—a difference academics have been afraid to make because it requires an ethical and committed taking of sides. They instead retreat to a facile postmodernism that correctly problematizes the vision of an individual sovereign to and unconditioned by his surroundings. But there is a vital qualitative difference, a question of will and freedom, between the

tools that sculpt us as we use them, and the mechanical onslaught whose advance we can accept or be crushed by. In the words of Walter Benjamin, progress is a storm blowing us backwards into the future from a singular catastrophe that has not ceased to grow. “Nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current. It regarded technological developments as the fall of the stream with which it thought it was moving. From there it was but a step to the illusion that the factory work which was supposed to tend toward technological progress constituted a political achievement.”

An attack on the machinery is also an attack on the most vulnerable part of the political will that foists such machinery upon us. For nearly two centuries, pre-luddites throughout Europe delayed the widespread use of new machinery. Their outrage and sabotage moved town councils and emperors alike to ban the new inventions. But in the meantime, the political power of the merchants grew, new opportunities to sell textiles opened up in the form of overseas markets, and the downtrodden came to accept their position and identity as workers, and thus would react more to their exclusion from work than to their much deeper oppression, the loss of skill and handicraft, the further expulsion from the land represented by the move from cottage to factory labor. Once these changes were cemented, the political elite reversed their position, advanced the interests of the merchants and industrialists, and protected the machinery like a sacred object, with lethal force. The Luddites are remembered, curiously enough, because they lost. In being crushed, they could be presented as backwards, archaic, an inverse symbol for progress.

Machinery does not spread itself. It is spread strategically by the apparatuses of the Machine. Progress is a political project.

The individual instruments have no spirit, but the complex in which they operate, the Machine, has a will of its own stronger than any that would seek to use it. Because the Machine can be destroyed, and because the instruments themselves have no spirit, these can be dislodged, transformed, and used in a completely different way. A factory will always be a factory, and workers who take it over will at best become their own boss, which is the worst thing in the world to be. But barbarians who take over a factory convert it to rubble, in the eyes of the Machine. It makes no difference if everything is razed and the vacant lot turned into a garden, or if some of the machinery is refitted for the making of something useful in the fulfillment of a project the barbarians have chosen for themselves. In either case the factory has been dislodged because the barbarians entered it as children, they willfully ignored its language and the projects it suggested to them, and instead saw everything as raw material, as existing for the first time.

And in either case, what they do will be referred to, by the spokespersons for the Machine in the unions and the police headquarters, not as occupation, but as sabotage. And for this reason, they need be especially barbaric, for sabotage, unlike an occupation, can never be legalized. It is always a declaration of war.

## **Information as Knowledge, Alienated**

Stephen Jay Gould, one of the few scientists to interrogate the doctrines of his profession, has shown how the rationalist preference for a progressive structure to knowledge favors a supremacist, hierarchical view of evolution, cultural as well as biological, while obscuring the multilineal, non-progressive nature of evolutionary processes. Just as Darwinism was used to provide a stronger basis for white supremacy than Christianity could, the production of scholar-

ship continues to provide alibis for ruling dogma. Science, as with democracy, contains built-in mechanisms for correcting errors, but the errata will always be kept off the front page. One sector of specialists sifts the accumulated, ordered knowledge of science looking for discoveries that reinforce ruling narratives. Another sector mines it for data that can guide readjustments to different mechanical processes. The data often contradicts the discoveries, but hyperspecialization prevents the contradiction from generating conflict.

The physics teacher Mr. Gibbs, in William Gaddis' *JR*, says it all when he tells his baffled students, "Since you're not here to learn anything, but to be taught so you can pass these tests, knowledge has to be organized so it can be taught, and it has to be reduced to information so it can be organized do you follow that? In other words this leads you to assume that organization is an inherent property of the knowledge itself, and that disorder and chaos are simply irrelevant forces that threaten it from outside. In fact it's exactly the opposite. Order is simply a thin, perilous condition we try to impose on the basic reality of chaos..."

Upon reading how the most rebellious peasants and heretics of the Middle Ages tended to contextualize their critiques of authority and visions for the future in reinterpretations of the Holy Scriptures of Christianity, today's insurgents are quick to dismiss or deride them. However most of today's insurgents readily adopt the rational worldview that the Machine chose as a replacement for Christianity. The joke is on us, then, because rationalism, unlike a thought-frame based on a fable, is pervaded by an instrumentality that uses the one who uses it.

The original accumulations necessary for the birth of capitalism have been based on a trinity of enclosures: of land; of social activity; and of knowledge. European colonialism required a new system of thought capable of categorizing the different knowledges being encountered throughout the world, just as physical resources were being studied, mined, and mobilized. Christianity lost its ideological function and became a limited moralizing force, while Baconian or methodological science was fabricated to reorder the world on a symbolic level, to strip all things of their aura and naturalize the process that saw them converted into raw materials for the Machine. The re-contextualization achieved by rationalism was the counterpart to the colonial violence that killed the world and uprooted all the things that had inhabited it. The encyclopedia is the counterpart to the zoo and the museum. Each apparatus hides the merciless brutality that was necessary to capture their various elements and bring them together on what is presented as a neutral page.

During the witchhunts, the authorities used the justification of supernatural danger in order to exterminate central aspects of life which they wished to portray as abominations and exceptions. Scientific rationalism, contrary to mass history, did not reject the witchhunts but actively or passively encouraged them while developing a more constant and skeptical science of social control that would reign once the abominations had truly been marginalized. Scientific rationalism is not based on a disbelief in magic but in an ongoing, ever present negation of it. It is capable of devaluing the imaginary but not, until now, of invading it; thus a magical reality has always existed as a barbarian on the frontier.

The new science evolved as an assault on magic and celebration; a valorization of the world as a disorderly warehouse of materials; a depersonalization of non-human animals, women, and non-European peoples; an acquisitive and exploitive study of plants, chemicals, and natural forces; and a practice of studying captive populations on behalf of their rulers in order to administer poverty, reengineer culture, and regulate population. One of the first functional enclosures of knowledge by the new science was the expropriation of health and birth by the nascent medical establishment. Popular healers and midwives were prohibited by vigorous state intervention

that included frequent use of the death penalty as well as more mundane sanctions, or they were subordinated to the newly professionalized healthcare carried out by exclusively male doctors. At a time when deaths from malnutrition and disease skyrocketed, earlier forms of social healthcare were impugned as ignorant and ineffective by those who had become the exclusive proprietors of knowledge and ability, whose medical methods have since been revealed to be worthless, fraudulent, cruel, and damaging, while the institution and power relations they inaugurated have not been questioned at all. As William Gaddis noted in another novel, all professions are “self-regulating conspiracies.”

Information is knowledge alienated. We have already seen how democracy constitutes the alienation of thought from action, the practical realization of Descartes’ dream of a separation between mind and body. Information, concomitantly, is the fluid of cognitive processes when we have been expropriated from the world, when we are denied interaction and the realization of our role in creating knowledge. Contrary to knowledge, information is not created; putatively it simply exists. A fact that is created, in the logic of information, is what they call a lie.

Information as an inert resource is to be mined and distributed by specialized companies just like any other resource. For this reason it doesn’t strike us as odd that there are special spaces in which “news” is communicated, and special people whose job is to tell us what is happening; nor that there are special spaces in which information is imparted, and special people whose job is to tell us what we know.

Chomsky provides a tight explanation of the checks and balances that ensure that corporate media will produce pro-business, pro-government propaganda, but he misses the opportunity to go much deeper and explain how the institution of media itself, as a pillar of democracy, is even more important as an instrument of control (one that is in fact capable of impeaching specific businesses or overthrowing specific governments in the broader interests of the Machine) because it expropriates us from our own opinions and awareness of the world. The centralized, one-way flows of information, the creation of an audience that cannot speak back, is a pacification.

Xabier Barandiaran explains the ongoing development of technology in terms of a Foucauldian relationship between knowledge and power. The dominant organization of knowledge reflects the reality of power; codes from within this organization of knowledge are used to produce new machines. In our jobs and in other roles such as consumer and citizen, we serve as conduits for the transmission of these codes. Scientists interpret surgical segments of the world in terms of code, whether that be genetic, digital, fractal, sociological. That code is fed to engineers who design machines based on the code, “a machine [being] the abstraction in code of the transformations a user exercises on an operand (forces on the movement of a wheel, castigation or soothing on the conduct of an individual, or a filtration system on the flow of information on the web).” Functionaries implement the machines, translating or disciplining natural systems into code in order to feed them through the machine. Analysts evaluate the ability of the machine to reproduce the code that called it into existence. Administrators plan the insertion of machines into an entire mechanical complex.

To speak of specific cases, field biologists explain life in terms of genetics. Biologists working in a corporate lab invent a procedure for manipulating genes, thus confirming the mechanical ontology of genetics and creating an opportunity to fix that knowledge form in a productive technological complex. Marketing workers, engineers, agronomists, and farmers distribute and implement the genetically modified seeds. Analysts evaluate their performance strictly in terms of various codes that all presuppose an unspoken Machine ideology: crop yield per hectare; net

profit; compatibility with preexisting machines such as pesticides and factory processing; return on investment; present and projected earnings; losses due to litigation. Administrators secure subsidies, legislate genetic patents, regulate possible conflicts with preexisting machines, and push to open new markets in order to globalize the implementation of the new machine.

In another case, theoretical sociologists explain social conflict in terms of crime and recidivism. Criminologists formulate a behavior modification program for prison inmates designed to reduce insubordination. Prison staff implement the program. Bureaucrats measure comparative rates of incident reports, attractiveness of the program to different sources of funding, potential for enabling a workforce reduction through decreased reliance on guards. Politicians approve the implementation of the pilot project in all the prisons in their jurisdiction.

Notice how in each of these cases, an apparatus is mobilized to deal with a problem (food availability, crime) which provides it with its reason for existence. Because of the partial transparency necessary to capitalism and democracy, these apparatuses do not have recourse to an occult conspiracy which would allow them to claim to solve a problem while secretly and intentionally perpetuating it. The schizophrenia of irreconcilable institutional needs (responsiveness to a problem and inability to solve it) is resolved, rather, through a bifurcation between practical and ideal criteria. The practical criteria are inferior yet predominant. They constitute a minor part of an apparatus' discourse but a major part of its operation. Through a discourse of solving ideal problems (such as hunger or crime) but mechanisms that test the solving of practical problems (commercial food output, insubordination), researchers and developers are able to communicate with capitalists and politicians through criteria based on shared elite interests but with a language based on the common good. In this way, the sincere and the cynical can work together to make sure the institutions receive the funding and new machines receive the investment they need to thrive.

Profit is not the goal of the Machine, it is an occult language that allows these unwitting conspiracies of control to exist, the fundamental check and balance that guides philanthropic practices to reproduce the problems they respond to.

An institution will ensure the rentability of its machines because this is its *sine qua non*. The quest for profit or funding is a thoroughly ideological operation that masks itself as a mundane practical concern, allowing the various professionals concerned to focus on the ideal criteria which they can only partially realize. In specific cases, genetic modification might increase crop yields and differing forms of incarceration might end a certain conflict interpreted as crime, but on the whole they increase food precarity and perpetuate crime. Through coding and professionalization, each functionary can reproduce their objective reality on a daily basis because their actions are at least partially responsive to their ideal criteria and at least sometimes generate an observable reaction on the level of those criteria. But because they are compartmentalized and reality only comes to them in the highly filtered language of code, they are never allowed to interact with a whole world and it thus becomes easy for them not to see that they are perpetuating the problem they think they are solving. The lab scientist only sees the yield statistics for the seed they are engineering, and not the indebted farmers forced off their land and into greater poverty. If the problem persists, it is because someone else in another department is dropping the ball, or—better yet—because they can't get enough funding or certain restrictions obstruct profitability, meaning they need to redouble their efforts on the practical criteria.

By the time people enter the workplace, they are already well trained to be pragmatic, passive conduits of the code. The ordering of education specifically preserves the alienation of knowl-

edge. In school, children are lectured on civic responsibility in a non-participatory environment, they are taught about liberty in a compulsory manner, they are taught about free speech in an institution organized like a prison, and they learn about learning by parroting lists of what are said by someone else to be facts. From the new German nation-state built by Bismarck on Prussian-style compulsory education to the Jesuit missions in the colonies, school has always been a knife to the throat of society.

In the science fiction novel *Ender's Game*, we see the possibility of learning as a real, collective process once the graded system of advancement is undermined. In order to train students capable of defeating a powerful alien adversary, the administrators at Ender's military school depart from a universal characteristic in hierarchical education systems, which is age grading. In the story, by allowing the mixing of age grades and the autonomous, multilateral distribution of knowledge, the instructors create a situation in which the children collectivize and revolutionize the very process of learning. Once Ender stops conceiving of the battle room as a two-dimensional space, this learning spreads to all the other children, and the first chapter in the lesson plan is skipped over and ripped out. The children, in other words, have created a community of knowledge that builds over time. One can imagine that after the novel has ended and the administrators replace the priority of creating the most capable warriors with the priority of reestablishing control over their institutions, they would have to reinstitute the age old artifact of age grades, alienating children from the community of knowledge they might create, returning beginning students to a mythical chapter one so their entire educational experience can be engineered. The authorities have to steal knowledge to give it back, because it's not about learning, but about order.

## **An Anarchist Theory of Value**

Capitalism—capital as strategy—began as such at the end of the Middle Ages, when merchants were partially accepted into the ruling class and, more importantly, rulers adopted their strategy of accumulation as a strategy for social control. One feature of the paradigmatic shift was that market exchange value was reinvested in the production of more value. But to be feasible accumulation needed the support of an entire host of institutions, apparatuses, and technologies. So how are we to understand the problem of accumulation if it was not simply a discovery but a social evolution?

Before the advent of production, the rulers directed their wealth—the stolen surplus—to the fielding of armies that could conquer trade routes or more territory; this was the principal known way to increase a polity's wealth. A very important remnant, after military costs, went to the construction of monuments that generated status and awe. The fact that this process declined in importance suggests not only that rulers saw the possibility for a more powerful arrangement, but also that their subjects had become disenchanted. The status and awe held by the mighty had lost their pacifying effect. The rulers were drifting back to earth. The cultural production of the Renaissance allowed merchants to become the symbolic equals of aristocrats, but to put the lower classes to work this new ruling consortium needed to shift their energies to other methods.

Once they decided to use the surplus to produce more surplus, how could productive efficiency increase if the commercial terrain were finite and a large part of the economic sphere autonomous and self-organizing? Surplus capital generated in a trade, reinvested back into the same trade, eventually destroys the wealth accumulated.

The greatest expenditure of the European states, for which they needed loans from the first banks, provides the answer: the exo-skeleton of capitalist value is military force. Most of the technological developments that permitted an increase in agricultural efficiency and thus the sequestering of a majority of the population for artisanal and later industrial labor came when industrialization was already under way. What's more, the earliest developments to increase efficiency were probably the work of the peasants and artisans themselves, strong-armed into surrendering ever more produce, hoping to save a little time, thinking they still lived under the merciful logic of the tithe, and not the heartless logic of accumulation.

Threatened by peasant and urban rebellions as well as competitive warfare between states, rulers swelled the size of their armies, emptying their coffers to pay for more mercenaries. These same mercenaries, in the postbellum, allowed them to drive the peasants harder. The simplest way to increase labor efficiency and thus the accumulation of wealth and the provisioning of armies, was to force the peasants and the artisans, often accustomed to only working one hundred days a year and at an easier pace, to triple and then quadruple their labor time. The first conquest of production was time. Time as the domain of cyclical natural flows giving to and taking from human activity was dismembered. With the invention of work as a quantified activity that defined and permitted the lives of those who were condemned to it, time was reduced to a razor across which bodies—human and otherwise—were dragged, measuring the rate at which pounds of flesh could be sheared from them.

The disruptions of warfare eroded local cycles of direct exchange and subsistence, breaking apart relatively stable communities and favoring the monetization of these activities. Additionally, states were forced by the scope of the new conflicts to rely on the hiring of mercenaries rather than the feudal or Roman methods for creating armies. Because mercenary armies were fed with wages rather than control of agricultural production, and wages earned became wages spent, war transformed into an industry that fueled capitalist accumulation, rather than simply being a means for acquiring resources in a zero- or negative-sum game.

Rebellion shook states out of their complacency and obliged them to employ new methods and strategies to ensure their survival. In what sadly is a common story in the history of state formation, resistance defeated made the Machine more robust, and opened new possibilities for expansion.

Colonialism quickly reached beyond the European continent in order to find the gold that could pay the mercenaries, as well as the routes that would cut out trade competitors and religious enemies. The earliest colonies in the Americas simply demanded tribute from their captives, on pain of death, to allow European states to refill their coffers. Once the native peoples began to die off in the gold and silver mines, at the same time as a wave of disease struck the newly impoverished European peasantry, the elites intensified their productive apparatus and took charge of the reproduction of their subjects. It was then that colonialism abroad took on the plantation form, aided by African slavery, to feed and clothe the European proletariat who, forced off their lands and into the workshops, began to labor with wholly new instruments, to create wholly new commodities, and on a massive scale do what previously every community had done for itself.

Along with the conquest of time, and the harnessing of women's fertility, the kidnapping and selling of human beings constituted a fundamental industry without which accumulation was inconceivable. Every part of this trinity of commodification was established by military and police methods. The fiduciary methods that accompanied them were instruments of logistics and administration.

The quickly developing states of West Africa provided a new market for the burgeoning manufacture of guns and cloth. They did not have to be conquered to be brought within the Machine. Trade backed by military force was enough, in exchange for the slaves that made the plantation economies of the Americas function. The expropriation of communal lands and the coercive imposition of population growth within Europe provided another surplus population. In the first two centuries of globalized colonialism, slaves from recently conquered Ireland or the urban slums of London or Antwerp labored alongside the peoples stolen from Africa on the plantations, mines, docks, and on the transatlantic ships that completed the circuit, as Rediker and Linebaugh amply recount.

Although all value is symbolic, the productive value generated by this triangular trade and ever since then is fixed rather than consensual because coercive force ties it to access to the vulgar necessities of life. In a pre-capitalist logic, gold achieved its value by provoking awe. As gold and other awe-inspiring or pleasure-inducing rarities came to be traded, a certain class of people learned to play a new game. By controlling or manipulating the trade of these rarities, they could accumulate even more of them. But if instead of being content with possession, they focused on accumulation, they could send their gold back into circulation and have it bring them even more. They might not actually have any gold on hand at any given time, but they had the idea of gold, an ever expanding amount of gold. They also discovered the spiritual sameness of all things, when it turned out they could convert wool or grain into gold, and gold earned in the future into gold commanded in the present, and all gold into the idea of gold. The only successful alchemists, they learned that all things are numbers, and they won their game by accumulating more numbers, without end or limit.

The military brotherhoods and prestigious families that had constituted ruling classes in the days when capitalists were simply merchants had no time for games. To them, the purpose of acquiring gold was to let it be seen, to have it in one's hands, to make their prestige and their military ability to horde wealth undeniable. Better to pay their soldiers in salt or in grain.

Because humans are symbolic beings at a spiritual rather than pragmatic level, symbols exert continuity. We tend to believe in them, rather than simply accepting them as convenient. Gold retained its symbolic value in the transition from spiritual value to productive capital even as the symbols themselves were turned inside-out and the ruling class switched strategies, from controlling access to the divine and—concomitantly—to people's allegiances, to controlling access to the commons and subsequently alienating them.

States have always organized agriculture and manufacture to structure within it the basic blackmail: surrender your surplus or starve. Relations of force bickered throughout the centuries over what counted as surplus and what counted as necessity, and feast and famine cycled regularly. By winning a crisis of governance that saw relations between ruler and subject take on a more expressly military character, and by abandoning the corrupted spiritual value of the priests in favor of the productive capital of the merchants, the Machine's newly reconfigured engineering class could proactively structure agriculture and manufacture according to a productive, speculative logic. They could only convert land into debt—perhaps the most basic operation of this new process—if they did not have to go to war every time they needed to expropriate land.

Whereas in the feudal system, famine among the peasants was followed by penury among the kings, the modern State won the power to extract feast from famine year after year by militarily defeating their subjects and then brutally imprinting the memory of defeat so as to guarantee

submission to future indignities. The now familiar balance of power in wage labor and the regular seizing of securities for debts was simply the institutionalization of this defeat.

Possession of gold is a symbol of the military power to maintain that possession. As gold as money is replaced by money as symbolic access to gold, and then by floating money as access to other monies, money becomes debt. But debt also communicates force, because without the power to collect it, debt is meaningless. In the last couple centuries of capitalism, the international institutions that set the rules for lending and commerce were controlled and created by the states that won the wars that periodically broke out between global powers.

Just in the last decades, economists and world systems theorists formed a choir in predicting that Japan would supersede the United States as the principal organizer of world capitalism, just because a majority of the flows of global capital had started to pass through Japanese networks. Their predictions—deflated when those who still controlled the global economy sent capital running out of the Japanese circuits with a few important adjustments—revealed their overestimation of the importance of money. Money is not the basis of power. It is a mere game and an occult language of political unification.

By pursuing capitalist strategies of accumulation, states expanded their access to the resources they needed for projects of warfare and social control. Successive communist revolutions proved that any state that entered into the logic of statist competition, as long as competing states were pursuing a capitalist strategy, would quickly have to adopt that same strategy. In different terms, Bakunin made the same argument against Marx one-hundred-forty years ago.

Just as merchants stumbled onto the game of accumulation millennia ago, Marxists, and subsequently economists, and then to a lesser extent world systems theorists, have become trapped in the game of scientific analysis of the economy. Flows of power, ideological motivations, and complex relations of force cannot be mapped within the methodology of science and the mystifying objectivity it produces. The economic sphere, understood minimalistically as the quantifiable movement of only quantifiable notions of value, is in fact the most simplistic parading as the most sophisticated; nonetheless in the scientific mentality of historical materialism it is the original cause in any chain of causation. Because complex systems tend to be self-organizing and self-organization produces patterns rich in correlation, the theories become self-confirming as they willfully confuse correlation with causation.

Capitalism is the expression of rationalism every bit as much as Western science or the modern state are. Accordingly, capitalism can no more be dismantled by struggles indoctrinated in its complementary philosophical form—rationalism—than those which attempt to instrumentalize its complementary political form—the nation state.

Early anarchists were rarely systematic, and while this was presented, in the rationalistic euphoria of the day, as evidence of their immaturity, it was in fact one of their greatest strengths. Marx and his entourage chose to study capitalism in a spirit of scientific inquiry, inevitably coming to sympathize with the quantitative logics they had immersed themselves in, reducing society to its quantifiable flows, and even explaining away rebellion as the mere consequence of objective weaknesses and crises within the system. By naturalizing production and extending it theoretically to all forms of activity and creation, by viewing the universe in quantifiable terms, by privileging efficiency and centering Capital as the chief agent of social change, rationalist radicals would position themselves against a world of living beings, misunderstand the nature of the power they confront, and reproduce its very essence.

Although many of us have also embraced rationalism, especially in our earlier days, anarchists have distinguished ourselves from the Marxists by choosing to study revolution as direct participants. By opposing ourselves to the State unequivocally, we quickly learned that it is not the tool of the dominant class but an active agent that constantly maintains and intensifies social hierarchies. By avoiding smug reductionisms, but attacking domination wherever and in whatever form we found it, we learned that power is not the capitalist quest for accumulation and its accoutrements, but a complex, multifaceted web of interactive elements that reproduce themselves on multiple levels in every area of our lives (some have unfortunately dumbbed this down to a list of discrete oppressions, while others have benefited from more Foucauldian directions). And by throwing ourselves into the struggle even when it was not opportune, we have discovered the non-systematizable fact that the possibilities of struggle are not determined by material conditions. On the contrary, struggle creates new possibilities and new conditions, in antagonism with the efforts of the State to restrict the possibilities and engineer the conditions.

As capitalism again shows itself to be in crisis, those who had little to offer to the struggle when the systemic contradictions were not so evident are coming back to the pulpit and dusting off old prophecies.

What is the contradiction this time, that promises to bring about the end of the system? Whereas the development of productive technology initially allowed value to hide its dependence on force, its further development threatens the logic of accumulation itself. The unfolding potential for robotics to make wage labor redundant is only the beginning. Nano and biotechnologies present the possibility of turning the universe itself into a factory, a factory in which workers are no longer needed. Without the worker, the consumer also becomes impossible, and without the consumer, the commodity. Does this contradiction threaten the continuation of the Machine?

An anarchist theory of value must root value outside of the self-referential theater of the market. The basis of value is control. For this reason, our wager is that the Machine can survive the intrinsic contradictions of capitalism, because capitalism has only ever been a control strategy employed by the State. As a strategy it has been transformative—the modern State as defined at Westfalen and as modified at Bretton Woods owes its survival to capitalism—so it will not be shed easily, but both the Machine and its principal structure, the State, will outlast it if they must.

If the current system is to remain fundamentally unchanged, the configuration of ruling states and the global institutions that organize trade and finance will have to change as power itself shifts. The change will not be quite as extreme as some are predicting, for military, political, and cultural reasons. For even though the center of capital can move from one continent to another in a few short years, the center of military power cannot, nor are the states that maintain those powers disposed to allow them to slide away so easily. Russia, after nearly thirty years of decay since throwing in the Cold War towel, still retains sufficient defensive military might that it can choose to threaten the economic stability of the West by shutting off the gas pipelines as a bargaining maneuver, something a weaker country like Iraq could never get away with. While some countries can threaten the global military hegemony of the US regime on a strictly regional level, no country or likely alliance of countries can threaten that power globally or—much more importantly—replace it, nor is such a possible replacement likely to arise in any foreseeable decade.

The end of US military hegemony, and not the end of US financial dominance (though the two are of course closely related), spells the end of the US-authored regime. But as stability-

ensuring hegemony erodes and competition and systemic chaos increase, capital will quickly flow to whomever can guarantee stability. And for the foreseeable future, that still means the US and its allies (most of whom are increasing in relative power). As other centers of power such as China are able to disrupt the current hegemony, they will either have to be annihilated or invited into the ruling configuration. History would suggest another world war. But after 70 years without hot wars between major powers, and the development of military technologies that do not only risk the lives of soldiers and civilians but of the powerful and their cherished monuments, a pacifist imaginary has taken hold in society from the middle class to the upper echelons of government. War against underlings is still good sport, or, elsewhere on the spectrum, a human rights issue. But across the spectrum war between major powers has become inconceivable.

Finally, the ruling classes of the West have been masters of the world for so long, it is unlikely that they will allow that mastery to pass to the feared and mystified Orient without either losing a war or easing into the idea through a more gradual shift of power. Just as Japanese investment in the US was thwarted through a sudden racial solidarity in the ranks of Anglo-Saxon capital, wealthy members of the Western nations who currently run the world can give each other favorable treatment even if it means missing out on some short term investment opportunities. Capital may have no nation, but capitalists and their invaluable allies in government most certainly do.

Accordingly, the most likely option is that world government becomes more democratic, as the US loses power vis-à-vis its allies (primarily the EU and Canada), and other previously hostile or neutral powers such as China, India, and Brazil are welcomed more fully into the club. There are Negriists and Marxists aplenty who are making the absurd prediction that states, particularly nation-states, are fast becoming obsolete with the rise of transnational corporations and superstatel government. But commerce has always occupied a space-of-flows that defies the territorialist logic of spaces-of-places like nations. At no point in thousands of years has this spatial dichotomy negated or superseded one or the other kind of space. Superstatel organization simply spells the permanence and intensification of coordination between states, which for the time being are likely to retain the mythology of nation-states. Permanent global coordination of states is no more likely to destroy the power of states than permanent stock markets were able to destroy the power of investors. On the contrary, they will amplify that power. Those of us who exert ourselves in the streets rather than in academia, at least, have no doubts that state powers are only increasing.

But the financial crisis is not the only one with a critical bearing on our future. There is also the ecological crisis, as previously autonomous capitalist logics run into the outer limits of the less malleable dynamics of the planet. And there is the previously mentioned technological crisis, which will unfold at the confluence of the peaking of fossil fuels, the benevolent problem of automation, and the deal-changing possibilities produced by nano- and bio-technology.

While most forecasts are calling for a tendency towards some form of totalitarianism, it is crucial to note that the totalitarianism we face is materially inscribed, and therefore depoliticized. Contrary to Alex Trocchi, who argues that the nature of power is increasingly autocratic and democracy is therefore either obsolete or subversive, and contrary to David Graeber and other well heeled anarchists like him who see in democracy something either liberating or convenient, claims to democracy—especially those arising within social movements—have become and will be increasingly key to the maintenance of power.

The forms of totalitarianism found in the arriving future will be structured into the material of society rather than imposed on top of it. It will not be an ideological option but a technolog-

ical fact. Everyone and everything will be monitored, regulated, and tracked, not even for their own safety, but primarily as a seemingly innocent consequence of technologies whose primary purpose is entertainment, communication, information, or transportation. As such, this totalitarianism is perfectly compatible with democracy, both as a pretension of government and as a claim of social movements. Facebook is a pithy example of this, hailed equally as a revolutionary tool by law enforcement and direct democracy activists.

Because of the inadequacies the strategy of accumulation is increasingly flaunting, the Machine needs our cooperation where before it only needed our consent (and where before representative democracy and capitalism, it only needed our fealty). We must cooperate in the organization of our own poverty, as the Lost Children's School of Cartography pointed out; we must cooperate in the innovation of solutions to urban and ecological problems that are surpassing the managerial abilities of the Machine's official engineers.

The strategy of accumulation is suffering blow after blow. Today, states are bailing out banks when at the beginning of the modern state, it went the other way around. And on an ecological level, the logic of capital is departing from the logic of control. The innovations of the technological-capitalist complex will undoubtedly continue to have important ramifications in the merging fields of social control and social responses to climate change. But the need for a boldly coordinated response—and failing that, emergency military measures—and for checks on accumulation suggest with an increasingly louder insistence to everyone interested in continuing the project that a new strategy may best serve their interests.

Many radicals influenced by the priests of Capital have mistook its logic as both universal and transversal. But as some have argued, capitalists already existed long before the emergence of the modern State; the difference is that during this emergence they were simply invited into power. Now, new invitations are being drafted. Rebels who mistake these invitations as a path to liberty are shooting themselves in the foot. Those who see the struggle for freedom as a quest for democracy are trading in their history for a populist recruiting trick.

If the reconfiguration of power does not allow the Machine to supersede its crises, it will have to abandon the strategy of capitalism. The ecological crisis and the technological crisis suggest another way forward.

The problem advanced earlier, when we asked what would the Machine do if workers as a whole became redundant to production, was a trick question. Because control is the fundamental purpose of any strategy the Machine adopts, we predict that even though it might be demanded in the interest of accumulation, the State will never give us up as we become irrelevant to production, because we are the necessary object of control. It is not accumulation, but we, who are its objective. Even with the most advanced robotics and nanorobotics, we cannot become superfluous to the Machine until that moment, distant but not improbable, when it decides to abolish life in the interest of controlling a perfect world of chemicals and machinery.

Thus, the future path the Machine is now forced to contemplate is the inauguration of a utopian socialism that will no doubt retain the name of capitalism. Labor will be abolished, production carried out in automated and decentralized factories overseen by a small number of technicians (probably selected on the basis of quantifiable ability and rewarded with material privileges), and the great mass of people, whose population will be regulated and whose material, cultural, and affective needs, articulated as rights, shall be guaranteed in new Constitutions to be hailed universally by progressives, will be encouraged in their own self-actualization within multiple pre-established channels (this cultural, artistic, intellectual, and affective activity may or may not

be masked as productive, depending on the leading ideology). The planet's biological processes will also be regulated, and crime will become physically impossible, as all citizens and all products will be tracked through a totally surveilled landscape, the surfaces of which will be coated in materials that do not permit their alteration through vandalism or senseless destruction. The basic components of this mega-apparatus are already on the market.

It should be noted that the capitalist evolution to socialism, already a theoretical possibility a century ago, only becomes a viable option when the question of social control is answered. It was never about scarcity. In other words, to evolve into socialism, capitalism did not need to evolve its productive capabilities enough to ensure that everyone could be fed and clothed; it needed to develop its policing capabilities enough to ensure that, without the blackmails of hunger and cold, everyone could be controlled.

The fragmented nature of power makes this option—which would require a bold strategic initiative on the part of the Machine's engineers of the likes not seen since the 1500s, as well as an unprecedented unification of the State and the abandonment of elite prejudices—the less likely response to the disintegration of capitalist power.

The military option, though it is less stable than the civic option, is already being deployed in its earlier phases. Perhaps it was a foregone choice, given that the crisis in accumulation broke at a point when the military institutions of the Cold War still held pre-eminence, not yet replaced by the institutions that would arise to deal with the global ecological crisis.

The reactionary option, best articulated in documents like NATO's "Urban Operations for the Year 2020", underestimates the State's new capability for control (it's no surprise that the top brass are missing this train, as its most potent forms are based in a socialist imaginary). Instead of socialism, they project a massive, global exclusion that far overshadows the worst miseries of proletarian existence one hundred years ago. Most of the world's population will live in sprawling slums, scraping together their own sustenance, suffering famine, disease, and climate crisis with great loss of life. They will be constantly suppressed by drone armies, and occasionally recruited to labor in intermediary areas where non-roboticized forms of industrial production take place, whereas a lucky few nation-states will organize as giant gated communities, enjoying unprecedented luxuries and a large, compliant, policed and surveilled service sector. But as an acutely unstable global system, it will also be inconsistent, probably including neglected pockets of anarchy, similar to the future envisioned in *Desert*.

But we should not get carried away with this specific kind of imagining. Understanding how the Machine actually works, pinpointing its most fundamental values, we can better predict the strategies it will adopt. But we must never mistake the Machine's vision as the only one, as the priests of Capital did before us. All of these possibilities are encouraged or inhibited by our own struggles, and possibilities that currently seem unreal, just ten years from now, could disrupt the dominant narrative of Reality.

## **Insurrection as Catharsis Reversed**

Pynchon's Tyrone Slothrop must disappear from his own novel in order not to be defeated. We already know all about the world order that was imposed after World War II; the triumph of the shadowy conspiracy that uses our anti-hero as a tool throughout his own book; the ascension of the megalomania that kills dreams even at the individual scale. Because the end of this historical

novel is already known, in order to win—either in the generic requirements of the detective story or those of the romantic musical, between which Gravity's Rainbow shifts—would mean to be assimilated. We can only hold on to our hope that Slothrop will somehow come through by watching him fade into a legend, and then, by forgetting about him.

Disappearance would mean something else entirely for Bulgakov's Margerita: the more inexplicable her disappearance, the more certain the triumph of her persecutors would have been, given the meaning of disappearance in Soviet Russia. In order not to lose, she has to fly off with the Devil.

And Garcia Marquez's family Buendía must simply shut themselves in their home and commit genetic suicide, because they can only save themselves by withdrawing from a world that bewildered their every attempt to find it, that when it arrived did so with the interruptive force of a tidal wave that washes away all the solid ground and then disappears again: a repeated arrival of absence.

The most powerful spells of magical realism cannot vanquish this knowledge: that the end has already been written. Tragedy is a foregone conclusion. And nothing in these last decades could be true that is not rank with the taste of disappointment.

The Happy Ending is nothing but the desperate propaganda of the Machine. Catharsis is to the present age what suppression was when the Catholics ruled the world: a psychological mechanism needed to blind us to the cracks through which light is constantly pouring. But perhaps the mind is not as plastic as B.F. Skinner wagered. In the end we burned the churches and killed the priests, and the Machine had to scurry to offer us the opposite of the diet we'd been kept on for so long. Since then we've been encouraged towards indulgence.

And the colonization of the imagination has this as its constant project: to offer up believable heroes, as often as not our very selves, and to comb the landscape of our domination for villains who can be duly defeated without changing the system within which the narrative takes place. This is the formula that guides a good half of Hollywood's output. Catharsis must take place within a war of masks.

The totality is incomplete. We are wagering that imagination can follow formulae for only so long. That there is a limit to the domestication of catharsis just as there was a limit to the power of suppression. Happy Endings delivered up in a feast of misery bear diminishing returns. Even Robin Hood narratives, though they continue to multiply, have proven an insufficient catering to rebellious desires. For at least two decades, now, the culture industry has been giving us villains that look increasingly like us, and heroes that look ever more alien. We are admitting to being the bad guys.

If the Spectacle really were all powerful, they would have made a movie out of a total revolution a long time ago, because control cannot resist the temptation to demonstrate itself. Instead, every rebellion on the silver screen is a rebellion that reaffirms the Machine. Our affective and imaginative landscapes are totally saturated with its transmissions, but the Machine still has to resort to cheap tricks. The engineers aren't all powerful. They're on the run, struggling to keep just one step ahead of our dissatisfaction.

And that dissatisfaction can boil over. We will revoke all the applause we have offered up, suck back in all the breaths we held for the fate of false protagonists, despise all the joy we evinced over hollow victories. All that stolen catharsis will come crashing back over us, and in a moment the realization that we have been cheated will demand one single outlet: vengeance. The day we

storm the box office of our marketed desires and demand more than our money back, all the streets will go up in flames.

Today, those of us who have already begun are showing what the human mind is made of, the limits of its malleability, the fact that it is elastic and not plastic. The future, contrary to everything we admit to be real, is unwritten; questions about the essence of the human mind and the depths of our spirit are unanswered. We are answering these questions now with our rage. Are we products of our environment, or members of the world? Which way the species evolves will be determined by everyone else, as they decide which answer moves them more.

## **Revolution as Panchentric Society**

If the idea of permanent revolt is to mean anything, it is that the center cannot hold. The world is polycentric, and so too must be society. If society has a center, it is the point where we lose. The State formed in the objective central ground of justice, the space created to fabricate unitary resolutions to conflicts. The decisions made in this symbolic center came to enjoy more legitimacy than the decisions of any lived space. It was thus a choke-point at which social action could be controlled, the foundation for the monopoly on decision-making that Carl Schmitt identifies as the basis for state power.

In the course of rebellious struggles, the center is the point at which revolutionary leaders meet with the leaders of the old order to betray revolution and reconstitute power. It is not the particulars of the arrangement that have defeated us, time and again, on the threshold of liberation, but the grammar of the deal and the very geometry of the meeting. The constitution of a fixed “We,” the inner circle which imposes its blueprint on the whole, is all the Machine has ever needed to crawl back up from a vicious battering and reimpose its dominance on the world. All the other possible ingredients for tyranny are mere flavoring.

The unicentric polity has been an assumption of nearly every revolutionary struggle since the Paris Commune. The chief exceptions have been the wars against colonization—Red Cloud’s War, for example—in stark contrast to the wars of liberation from colonialism or the movements for liberation from capitalism. Clearly, the assumption of the unicentric polity is a germ of colonialism itself. The demand for independence, as a reconstituted central polity, was the mark of recognition that signalled to leading engineers of the Machine that independence could be granted; the colony would do just fine without direct supervision.

Just as the new bourgeois individual required for democratic capitalism was self-governing, democracy and capitalism win our collaboration in governance by disciplining us to see the world from an objective viewpoint which is in fact the ontological and metaphysical perspective not of individual rulers but of the very needs intrinsic to the operation of ruling. This is reality’s mythical dimension and one of its continuous operations of social control. Nowadays, the ruling class is everyone who sees their life from above.

The view from the news helicopter, from the disaster management control room, from the cartographer, from the player standing over the Risk board or gazing at Civilization on the computer screen, all train us to internalize the perspective of those who are watching and ordering us. It is, in a word, the panopticon, of a sort that reaches the most opaque zones as long as we carry it with us.

The end product of all the expropriations and alienations imposed on us by the Machine is the only type of individual gullible enough to fall for an objective reality: the Western individual, who has no inalienable connections to the world—neither to natural forces, nor to places nor to histories nor to other living individuals. The only things the Machine admits as inherent to this individual are the guarantee of being kept alive, which is abrogated a million times a day whenever the imperatives of rule find it convenient, and a list of rights which are also honored more in the breach but even under the strictest observance would be an insult and a fraud, for they guarantee the individual the right to own other living things, including the activity or dead labor of other individuals, but they do not acknowledge the individual itself as a living thing existing within an interdependent network of living things. Thus an individual's rights protect it from being bodily assaulted but do not prevent the pollution of its environment even if such pollution proves fatal.

Permanent revolt is the destruction of objective reality and the mechanisms that impose it, and the refilling of the world with a pancentric society that continuously disperses power and vitality, knocking down centers as a friendly habit, a need for creation, a game, and a culture of violent, implacable self-defense. Pancentric society is the complement to a world that is constantly shifting, that has no single center. It is a society without blueprints, in which conflict is tended and never solved, in which every individual enacts their own solutions and their own desires within their own orbits of an interdependent network, in diminishing rings of influence. It is a heterogeneous society, in which people may put down inalienable roots in the world, and also move within the social networks to find their niche rather than suppressing their differences. It is a society of smooth space that regularly scatters concentrations of power and fractures rigid frameworks, not through a process of homogenization and bordering (Balkanization, as pop historians would have it), but through the unending multiplication of relationships and thus the multiplication of identities within each individual. This multiplicity is inherently creative and self-organizing. It is the principle of chaos, emergence, complexity, observable from the smallest atoms to the greatest social bodies.

The wisdom of anti-authoritarian societies that James C. Scott references, “divide that ye be not ruled,” turns on its head the admonitions of the mass movement anarchism of the CNT or IWW. In unity we are not strong, but vulnerable. The farmer's admonition against keeping all your eggs in one basket is far wiser than the leader's promise that unity is strength. The truth which the mass movement anarchists half perceived was that isolation is weakness. But by turning ourselves into a mass we make ourselves legible to the Machine. The only liberating opposition to isolation is solidarity; joint struggle and coordination within a collective force that is hopelessly, stubbornly fragmented—just like the world itself.

The opposition of individual and community is a false one, for every model of individual implies a community, and every community an individual. The Western individual is the building block of a community of commodities. The community of the homogeneous, disciplined revolutionists breaks down into well trained militants who will follow their leaders through any number of defeats. By abandoning blueprints as an artifact and rediscovering visions as an activity, we can reclaim the pancentric society that has room for all of us. Every single one of us is the center of society and therefore the master of our own activity, but because we understand ourselves not as separate individuals but as nodes of unending flows that only exist through our relationships, solidarity and mutual aid will be the most obvious organizing principles. Finally, the individualist and the communist can end their bitter war. The community will be regained through the

complicity of all our individual alienations. We will destroy everything, but only so we can mend this fracture.

Pick up your weapons: it is time to heal!

# Practice

...Makes Perfect.

*"I got a hand, so I got a fist, so I got a plan,  
it's the best that I can  
do, Now we'll say it's in God's hands  
but God doesn't always have the best goddamn plans does He?"*

–Wolf Parade

## The Ecosystem of Revolt

Revolt is a living thing. Not a single organism, but an entire ecosystem. More species are needed to make this ecosystem flourish than there are names to label them. The landscape has been ravaged by the Machine. We who stand up now are the very hardiest of weeds growing through the cracks in the asphalt. But we are at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding what makes those cracks, because this work is carried out by roots below the surface and microorganisms too small to see.

We want a world of permanent revolt but we do not understand what that means, because all we see of revolt is its forerunners. Once the asphalt is broken, the weeds give way to thickets; once the soil is cleansed, the thickets give way to trees; and in time the fast-growing trees give way to the slow, persevering trees. One never sees old-growth stands of dandelion, nor oak breaking through the concrete.

Permanent revolt is not the ascendance of the dandelion, who spurns both the asphalt and the oak as conservative. Permanent revolt is the healthy ecosystem that can sustain chaos and unfettered creation permanently. We live in such an impoverished world, it is almost impossible to imagine such an ecosystem of free beings, but it is only because the germ of those relations exist in our practice, which is one small sliver of a great potentiality, that a few of us can poke our heads through these cracks.

The one common feature of all previous works that have concerned themselves with encouraging revolution, has been their privileging of, and thus exclusive relevance to, one single species. All the factionalism of our checkered past cannot extricate pure critiques of strategy because the attempts have assumed that we are all the same species of rebel, or that only one true species of rebel exists. If one can see the fault in another's path it is because they are walking a different path, and may be equally oblivious to the flaws in their own path.

The very metaphor of paths, so overused, is nothing but an attempt to break out of the unilineal view of revolution without recognizing the multiplicity of life. If we all have a similar direction, we can all get there as we see fit—really there's no use at all in criticizing another's path. And what about those who are not walking? Are there simply walkers and sitters? Must we carry those who do not move themselves? What about those who are walking the other way?

Should they be shot? If it's a point we're walking to, then some can get there without others, so who cares about the rest? But if it's not a point, but a question of movement itself, will we arrive once enough of us start moving?

There is no path to revolution. There is only life reasserting itself. And if we allow ourselves to take part in this force, the question is not: which strategic direction is the correct one? which attitude is the most revolutionary?

The question is, what kind of creature am I, and how do I best relate to this chaos around me? Anarchist strategy, then, is not the articulation of an objective plan; it is, rather, developing relationships and projects that best strengthen our capacities, clear ground for others to flourish and relationships to multiply, and erode the Machine. Strategy, as with life, needs to leave the birds' eye view of our rulers and base itself in our own bodies. We will have a million strategies, not because there are a million paths that are equally valid, but because each of us will plan what to do with our own capacities and resources amidst the undulating chaos of a million other people doing the same thing. We must never again be an army for some general to deploy in the most effective way.

If one desires them, there are plenty of opportunities to test this hypothesis of an ecology of revolt. We knew a group of insurrectionists, very particular creatures: the kind with a brilliant critique of the Left, and a perfect understanding that their role was not to lead, but simply to spread examples of attack and to prevent the recuperation of struggles. They had planted themselves, appropriately enough, in a park that had been occupied by the whole neighborhood. Treat them as an imperfect manifestation of an idea, and you would never understand why they failed in their project, especially when their ideological opponents would also have failed, probably without even getting so far. While all the brilliant critics search for the correct idea that has somehow fallen through the cracks, a gardener could come along and tell you—don't plant tomatoes under walnuts. These particular insurrectionists (who were, mind you, very different from other insurrectionists, there being too many species for each one to have a proper name) prevented the politicians from taking over the park, but their analysis was so sharp, they were intolerable for the apolitical, happy-go-lucky neighbors to work with, and the park withered.

Meanwhile, in a similar project, a group of artists—of all people—succeeded where these insurrectionists had failed. To seize on the artists' method as the superior one would sorely disappoint our experienced gardener, because in any other soil those artists would have done what their kind do almost anywhere: sell out. But artists are sensitive types. Just a little bit of contact, a small dose of the right pollen, turns them into a much hardier breed. The distant presence of the insurrectionists made them more radical and more uncompromising. The insurrectionists could have improved the local soil even more if they had stuck to their own projects, recognizing that they do not play well with others. By simply communicating those projects to others and criticizing from a distance, they improve the fertility of the whole garden because whether or not they realize it they have a great influence on those they disagree with.

We are not waiting for everyone to start marching towards the horizon, as in that iconic Italian painting. And we are not trying to make everyone the same kind of rebel. We are also not going to escape this theoretical impasse by claiming apathy towards the actions of others, praying for a collapse, theorizing non-vanguardist minoritarian revolution on the basis of resonance or rupture or whatever else, and we certainly aren't moving into the woods to arrive on our own.

The greatest insurrections of our time fell back below the concrete because there wasn't enough life to sustain them. They illustrated good and bad strategies but they also made it

undeniable that, though we can all become nothing and everything in the fires of insurrection and the Machine cannot quench those fires, people will abandon the streets on their own when there is nothing left to burn, as long as there is not a ready supply of seeds to plant amidst the ashes. And even though they have been born anew in the cauldron of the insurrection, once the fires go out the others do not become rebels like us, they do not remain insurgents, and normality returns.

We need all of us. But all of us are already here, growing as best we can in a poisonous atmosphere. What's needed is not that those who remain beneath the asphalt start walking with us, but that we figure out how to relate to the other weeds so that we are creating niches for each other, and how to relate to the more cautious ones so that we can get nourishment from them at the same time as we help more sunlight filter down.

Our critique of the Machine-ways should never lead us to reject the people who enact those ways, because all bodies are in revolt. Bodies that are suppressing themselves need accomplices all the more.

## Starting Points

Any talk of revolution today must begin with the reality of isolation. The activists, commendably naïve in their attention to detail, addressed the problem as one of accessibility. The emptiness of our social centers, the meagerness of our protests, the depopulating of our meetings, must be a function of our exclusivity. A belief that inclusivity applies to our present situation is a belief that there are many more people out there waiting to join us, if only we could find a better way to invite them in.

Others spoke of our bubble, our ghetto. What they didn't realize is that the anarchist, with her ten friends, inhabited a much bigger bubble than her neighbors who, for all their sameness, seemed so numerous. If she could count on just five people who took their friendship so seriously they would risk themselves to have her back, then she enjoyed a social richness simply foreign to the middle class ideal of humanity.

The first realization for today's anarchists is that isolation is what every member of our society spends their lives producing. Isolation is the sea we swim in.

To destroy the Machine, we must destroy this isolation, but we condemn ourselves to inaction if we do not start fighting until we no longer feel isolated. Only when a struggle is strong can it begin to feel connected with the rest of society.

Our starting point is the reason we rebel, the recognition of our relationship, at once personal and generic, with the Machine. Every starting point offers the possibility for rebellion. There is no revolutionary subject, only a broad forest of starting points.

To begin, and every moment is a beginning, we need to look at who we are in the broadest sense of the word. Who we are is what we have, our relationships with the world, as belittled and disappeared as the world may be. What is our history, what do we carry with us, whom do we know, whom do we trust, whom do we love, who grows from us. With whom do we breathe, with whom do we eat, with whom do we dream or vent our rage or soothe ourselves? This symphony of contacts constitutes our self.

Within this self coincide a million other beings and with these beings, our struggle becomes possible and finds its meaning. In this self, we find what we lack, and what will allow us to go

on struggling for many lifetimes. Here we also see our closest friends, and here we see whether those we call friends are also those who allow us to struggle, those who enable us, or if friendship in our lives mirrors the food that does not nourish us, the water that poisons us, the drugs that dull us.

This self is the lived center of a concentric universe: this, to us, is the world. This is the only way to bring the world back to life, to kill the Machine.

At all costs, we must not approach strategy through mapping. Military counterinsurgency specialists, following the NATO Urban Operations model of “USECT,” begin by mapping a territory, not only in its physical and virtual dimensions, but above all by tracing the socio-organizational networks. Eerily, activists often conduct the same exercise, guiding their coalition campaigns by charting the relationships between allied groups, NGOs, sympathetic media outlets, public institutions that might be influenced, and so on.

Understanding our concentric universe requires a familiarity with the terrain, which in practice is starkly at odds with mapping’s objective of comprehending or striating the terrain. Maps always impose, and in the end, the more rugged the terrain, the more a map flattens it. Understanding ourselves within a concentric universe familiarizes us with our surroundings—makes us part of the same family—in a way that is only meaningful to us. It does not train us in the disembodied, top-down view of the mapmakers, and it does not discipline us into making our struggle legible to the engineers. This essential difference is the same one Deleuze and Guattari describe between the Gothic stonemasons with their “placings-in-variation” and royal science with its “normalized form” and “plane of organization.”

Once we reinhabit ourselves, we can see more clearly how to expand our bodies from the shallow husks permitted us by capitalism to the microcosms and demigods that we truly are. This is the search for accomplices. The search for accomplices is a cross-pollination with other beings with whom you can sleep better, heal yourself, publish translations, break out the windows of a police station, nourish yourself, incite your coworkers to sabotage, seize the streets, and any other of the ten thousand joyous tasks we must undertake.

The world has become so dessicated, all of us need to expand our relationships, both in their number and profundity. The affinity group is a pitiful but necessary remnant of the world as commune that we have lost. Masses are the material guided by politicians and disciplined by television; therefore we reject them. But we do need to find ourselves again in crowds, to become neighbors, to resuscitate families. Solitude will be an ever present companion, infamy and isolation our frequent reward. Without forswearing this truth, rebels must return to their people. The “war on society” or the “war against everything” is a juvenile fantasy, an expression of the weakness that has infected our own imaginary. Those few of us who are now insurgents will not bring down the Machine. It is society, everything, the totality, the world, which the Machine now has enmeshed in its gears, which will do that. Our future is a collectivity, larger, healthier, circular, permanently beset by the growth and rebellion of bodies trying to find their place within it.

We do not seek a majority, but we do seek more friends, accomplices, and allies. In a small number of these friendships, we seek to develop connections of profound trust and affinity. On a large scale, we seek to clarify and to pull taut the lines of enmity between society and the Machine, so that as many people as possible see the Machine as something foreign and inimical to them.

When we begin again as anarchists, whether this is the original moment we acknowledge our desire for anarchy, or the pause we take to reflect on our efforts after an important defeat or victory, after the erosion of attrition, we must wrap the struggle around us as a habitat, rooting ourselves and all the necessary forces in a broader organism fit to sustain us through not just one but many generations of adversity.

We must carry all of these forces with us, though depending on the level of specialization or diversification that best serves us, we need not concern ourselves personally with all of them as long as they thrive within the collective which gives us our existence.

These forces are the recovery and extension of our history, the sharpening of our capacity for combat, reskilling, the intensification and communication of our imaginaries, and the constant evaluation of our projectuality. We must implant each of these activities with a libertarian social relation, and every act must be a seed for the once and future commune.

## **Rhythms of Rebellion**

Many activists empowered themselves by scheduling their own lives but still they sought to fit the chaos of life within a box. A little machine can never liberate itself, and a body that acts like a machine will forever devour and choke on itself. The radicals will understand that the struggle also hibernates. It does not accumulate force like the pressure in a steam engine. Most places on the planet have their season where life must change its pace: the monsoon, the summer too hot, the winter too cold. Who could trust a revolution that does not retire a few months every year, that does not fully exist within the world? The struggle never stops. On the contrary it must constantly change forms, and one of these forms is hibernation, when it dreams, when it talks, when it mends, knowing that when the weather changes it will come back with more fury than before.

Also, each little cell, gang, and affinity group has its own rhythm that ebbs and flows with the moon or the tragedies of living. While our revolt needs a consistency, it does not need constance. It is good that we respond to each new aggression by the capitalists, to every environmental disaster so horrifying it sticks its ugly head above the unending horrors of the daily economy, to every murder by the police. But we cannot set ourselves a formula—that if the police murder and no windows are smashed, it is evidence of our weakness and apathy. Remember that the Barcelona squatters eviscerated themselves with the promise that “Evictions = Riots.” Some evictions move us less than others. Where would we get the energy to respond to all of them the same? Such is an energy of measured output, and only machines can make such a promise.

Our resistance must not be mechanical, but magical. We must never forget that magic was denied not because it does not exist but because it is of the world, because it operates on the principle of reciprocity, because it is not reproducible. The scientific caricature of magic frames a magician who chants out a precise spell for a determined result—a fireball or transformation into a frog. This is the sort of magic, obviously enough, that does not exist. What does exist is the fact that all laws can be broken. The one who becomes powerful in magic is the one who embraces this chaos. Who heals, who destroys, who reads minds, who turns invisible, by offering whatever of herself the world demands, assured of her own ultimate destruction and the sublime beauty thereof.

Time and again the Machine has opted for what is inferior but reproducible over what is superior and unique. We can only win by choosing otherwise.

A large part of that comes down to listening to the rhythms that resonate through our world. Our revolt is not a reproduction but a destruction of all templates. If the police murder there is neither a minimum nor maximum limit to our revenge. The imperative is rather that we free ourselves up to respond as needed, which also means as we need. In addition to the social intuition of knowing how much rage others feel, being attuned means knowing how much we are able to give, and taking heart from our responsiveness. Some days, a protest will be our answer, and this is not a weak answer as long as it is not the only one we allow ourselves to give. To protest is to take the streets, to reach out to those around us. It is a funeral procession for the one who has been murdered, and this is as great an honor as the burning of a police station.

Because we must ask ourselves, at this moment, if someone burns a police station as their response, and they are arrested, will we respond with more force or with demoralization? When we stand at the cusp of demoralization, our actions must be those that heal, that connect, that strengthen, by building connections within the ghosts of our communities, by speaking our minds to those who are classified as strangers, by remembering what is lost, by taking public spaces. This too must be a satisfying response. And the knowledge of our own bodies, of what we are able to give in a certain moment, is one of the most important developments in our struggle. We are not machines, and we cannot expect a measured output from ourselves.

This way too, we will be unpredictable, and we will sustain our struggle forever. On any day, the State will not know whether to expect a firebomb or a march or a blockade or a simple poster. And because these will all become adequate responses that answer to our needs, they will blend. All will become acts of rage and acts of love and declarations of war.

We must at all costs avoid a war of attrition, because in a war of attrition, costs become quantifiable, thus our dreams and desires are put on a scale.

Revolutionaries of the Machine fit the insurrection within timetables. Our strategy is to develop a rhythmic resistance.

This resistance must also recognize the complementarity of tasks in a struggle. The hierarchy of tactics, that sees more dangerous and difficult acts as more important, leads to the spectacularization and isolation of the struggle. It belittles the gifts that most of us have to offer; it is a patriarchal leftover of the heroic ideal. When the tasks of healing, remembering, speaking, and teaching are properly appreciated, more people can participate in the struggle, and the absurd division between violence and nonviolence will only retain meaning for reformists. We will not suffer a historical fracture when the brash and hotblooded ones end up dead, in prison, or in exile, because there will be so many others who survive and carry our struggle with them and transmit it to the next generation; we will not have to start from scratch as we have so many times in the past. And because we survive in our Idea, all of us will live forever.

In every community, there must be those who learn our history and tell stories, to us and to others who might join us, and to strangers so that they know of our existence. There must be those who attack the Machine, who learn the use of weapons and the science of sabotage, and who create visible signs of rebellion, negation, and revenge. There must be those who help us relearn how to feed, clothe, heal, and house ourselves not as consumers dependent on the Machine but as creatures in relation with the world. There must be those who write books or stage plays or paint murals that show the world as it could be, or more practical ones who debate and implement plans for ever more intensive forms of self-organization. Some of us will take on many of these

tasks, and others will focus on a few, but as long as we exist within our concentric universes, all of these activities will exist within our self. But the final task, the constant evaluation of our projectuality, must be undertaken by all of us, in many forms to facilitate our many propensities—in public debates and in private conversations—because we must not separate word and body or divide our social body into brain and lower organs. All together, we must discuss how we are projecting our rebellious desires into ongoing social conflicts, and whether our projects are meeting our needs. It is the collectivization of this final task that preserves us as a greater being that can act strategically without taking on the organizational habits of the Machine.

But even as this greater being, our strength will be dispersed. It is vital to know what balance of tasks to strike in order to replenish rather than exhaust our force.

Studying, relearning who we are, discovering our history, and connecting this coherently to our understanding of our surroundings, has been belittled too often as a mere intellectual activity. Any radical who truly feels the loss of all that has been stolen will instinctively try to fill up that hollow. The first conscious task, then, is connecting. In one direction, connecting to other rebels, so as to always feel the certainty of being part of this struggle. In the other direction, connecting to our neighbors in this shared isolation, so as to feel the possibility of the world and always gauge its health. The more honest we can be with our fellow prisoners in desolation, and the more complicity we share with them, the closer we are to seeing the rebirth of the world as commune.

In a place where the potential community of struggle is small, only a few tasks can be undertaken. The building of consciousness is constant and instinctive, while the making of connections is intentional but occasional, pursued through trips to radical events in other locales and awkward, fumbling attempts to share with a neighbor or coworker. The very weakest of rebel communities may have only enough energy for a single project. If this is the case, that project should meet the function of connecting, or gaining visibility.

By creating a project that builds for the good of the greater struggle, printing literature or publishing translations, for example, they may connect themselves with many rebels in other places, but they are unlikely to overcome the isolation they face in their own place. By creating a project that meets a local social need, distributing free food or organizing cultural events or a daycare, for example, they may find accomplices and gain some visibility but they are more likely to be limited by the overwhelming weight of reality. If they radically question this reality, all on their own, they may incur the ostracism that will defeat their project. Thus they train themselves in self-censorship and become alienated from the experience of struggle. By choosing a project designed to gain visibility, such as a propaganda group (using posters, public flyering, radio, or more creative methods) or a literature distro, they may find accomplices on the very basis of radical ideas and an inclination towards struggle, but they risk separating their ideas from action and losing the strength and insight that come from practice. This is almost inevitably the case when their project is a music group.

All of these potential dangers, however, pale next to the trap of creating an activist group or campaign designed to respond to some issue, because of the unrealistic expectations regarding victory and accomplishment, and the myopic parsing of reality into issues, upon which this approach relies. If, however, a visible social conflict already exists in this locale, the most necessary choice is to participate wholeheartedly yet critically, taking on a role that is both integral and marginal, attempting to introduce radical methods.

Many of the dangers posed by a project of connecting or of visibility can be minimized by an additional task the members of this little group might be able to fit in, during their nighttime hours. This is the attack, which binds them to the emotional reality of struggle, protects their ideas from pacification, and may give some local visibility to their rebellion. However, in such circumstances they must either opt to carry out attacks of an opaque nature that will not direct suspicions at themselves, or if they live in a peaceful climate under a permissive authority, to carry out attacks of a minor level that will not oblige the State to conduct a witchhunt against rebellious radicals. Engaging in an aggressive war of clandestine attacks that will end up with half of the group in prison is simply self-defeating.

If the potential community of struggle is somewhat larger, such that they may take on a few projects, it is best that one project gain visibility, a second project focus on making connections locally, and another, or perhaps the same project, accomplish a recovery of lost skills (for example, the skill of healing, used within a project that avails free acupuncture or massage therapy to a neighborhood). While allowing each of these projects to follow their own course, their participants should make sure to organize occasions to allow them all to form bonds, whether this is accomplished by trusted friends in different groups carrying out attacks together, or all of the assorted rebels in a locale coming together for a May Day picnic.

A common error made at this scale of struggle deserves mention. The opening of a physical space such as a social center is a satisfying achievement for a group of rebels, as it marks a qualitative advance in infrastructure, a source of visibility, and an appearance on the social map. But a social center represents a hidden danger. It is a movement inwards, off of the streets, at a time when the war for public spaces in most regions has almost, but not quite, been lost; it is an inducement towards conservatism, providing a group of rebels with something important that they can easily lose; and it is a major drain on energy that does not bring the results often expected. Even though a physical space might seem easy for outsiders to approach, consumer society is self-segregating and relatively few people who are not already a part of the rebels' social network will enter the space or begin to participate in it. And unless there are a multitude of other initiatives in town that are crying out for a space, the organization of a social center is redundant. It often takes up the energy that would go to organizing the projects that might fill it. Rebels would do best to not attain a physical space until such a space is long overdue, in the meantime trying to win the occasional use of already existing spaces such a sympathetic restaurant or a room at the public library.

When the potential community of struggle is truly large, initiatives and projects will come and go organically, and if the different rebels are intelligent in their struggle, if their sense of history is deep, these different projects will find a natural balance that will sustain them through the hard times and multiply their strength in the fortuitous times. Nonetheless, its natural dynamics will cause the rebellious community to be dispersed. Its constituents will have the feeling that they do not live in a city, but in a tiny village that happens to be right next to a hundred other tiny villages. Projects that need more than ten people will fail to materialize. Organizers will count themselves lucky if just twenty come to an important event. Those with an eye towards the whole space will have to propose some form of coordination based not on unity but on fragmentation. The fragmentation of the rebellious community is an advantage, but only if it can meet its need for coordination. Encouraging the dispersed fragments to speak, they will improve the balance struck between all the different projects and initiatives, and allow the work of one part to replenish the

strength of the whole, eventually taking on the complex rhythm of an enduring, many headed organism.

## Making History

The original nihilists are frightening, not for their bombs, but for their labcoats. Bazarov attacked the religion of the aristocracy by dissecting a frog in front of the stupefied eyes of the serfs. His new religion was that the entire world was his raw material.

Dissecting history was just the way to kill it. Now we must dance and chant to bring history back to life. This is the reason for continuing old rituals of protest. To remind us where we have come from. Because, the current setback in middle class identity notwithstanding, we are not truly proletarians. We were something else before that: then they called us peasants, or slaves, or savages. And these earlier labels prove we are older still. So many of us are like settlers who build our house on an old Indian graveyard. The house is cursed, it keeps falling apart, and we have to spend all our time keeping it together. Only those who rip up the foundation discover that the bones are of our own ancestors.

By reminding us of all that we have lost, our history tells us what we need to destroy and what we need to regain. By beginning our historical memory with the Industrial Revolution or the Paris Commune, we will fight for the poisoned dream of the worker or the citizen, and should we ever win, become our own worst enemy. By renouncing history altogether as the provenance of intellectuals, irrelevant to the streets, we may never refer further back than the struggles of the '60s, or the antiglobalization movement. But how could a person understand themselves if they only come to life in the last decades, when industrial civilization, the Spectacle, democracy, and rational man are already universal, undisputed facts? Such a person is completely lost.

Our roots go much deeper.

For those of us without elders, books may be necessary to recover our histories, but history cannot live on paper. It must live in the streets, in the earth, and be constantly nourished. Like any other living being, history dies without nourishment.

How can we hope to carry around a thousand years of history in our tiny little heads? We must take these stories out of the archives, out of our skulls, and plant them in the world around us, in the change of the seasons, in the places where they occurred. By making use of this larger mind, we can remember much more.

Every year we should celebrate the battles—victories and defeats— that our struggle has passed through along the way, and we should remember the people who have inspired us, on the day they were born, the day they died, or some other fitting date. When friends from another place come to visit, we should take them to all the spots in the land we belong to where episodes of our struggle unfolded.

Recovering lost memories and stealing our histories back from the hands of the specialists is in part an act of imagination. But by romanticizing the past we deny ourselves the possibility of learning from it. We must also remember our past mistakes and weaknesses. For this reason, archaeology is a useful tool for gaining a non-romanticized vision of our past, even though the specialists always try to sow the field of study with their own religion. We should never be afraid of being questioned, of throwing down sacred cows. It is only the stance of permanent dissection that kills history.

If we make our history expansive, it can also include anyone else who chooses to identify themselves within it. We should not be the only ones to know our history. Our neighbors should know that we celebrate it as well. Everyone around us should know that we are not a part of the coerced state community, that we are outside of democratic pluralism, we are other, and the history of our struggle affects them as well. That it is a choice, whether they view that history from the inside or the outside.

With every neighborhood history tour, every May Day protest march, every commemorative talk about the Shinmin Commune or the collectivizations of Aragon, every memorial for Tupac Kutari or Mauricio Morales or whosoever has inspired us the most, every vengeful sabotage to preserve the memory of la Patagonia Rebelde or Giuseppe Pinelli, we must remind society of the fault lines that still exist.

Tradition is a powerful force, as the dates of May 1, November 17, or March 29 can attest in different countries. But we must not let the significance of these dates disappear under the ritual of the holiday. Certain days we need to celebrate every year, rhythmically, but other memorials and celebrations should be selected from the memories of a community's historians to speak to the ongoing conflicts we face. In a year of heavy repression, we might remember Sacco and Vanzetti. In the doldrums after an intense period of struggle, we can commemorate Louise Michel and the long work of spreading our history after a major defeat. In the throes of a victory that opens the way to intensifying the struggle, we can celebrate all the clergy and nobility who were killed in the Peasants' Rebellion, or the death of the soldiers at the Battle of Little Big-horn.

Through study, conversation, protests, memorials, anniversaries, celebrations, sabotages, theater, music, and propaganda, we must remind ourselves and everyone around us that who we are is essentially in conflict with the Machine, always has been, and always will be; that we have been struggling for thousands of years, and we carry in our hearts the seed of an old and new world that will grow again.

## The Stormcloud on the Plain

In *Pensiero e Volonta* in 1925, Malatesta asked and then answered, in his characteristic style, the following question:

*Must organization be secret or public? In general terms the answer is obviously that one must carry out in public what is convenient that everybody should know[...] one must always aim to act in the full light of day, and struggle to win our freedoms, bearing in mind that the best way to obtain a freedom is to take it.*

Writing more ambiguously, Práxedes G. Guerrero intoned:

*In the depths of the mists beings take form  
and begin the palpitations of life.  
In the furrow's belly the seed germinates.  
The darkness of the cloud is the fertility  
of the fields; the darkness of the rebel is  
the liberty of the people.*

Between these two metaphors of sunlight we find the guiding weathervane for our offensive against the Machine. The question of the attack is not the calculation of an accumulation of forces,

it is not an ascending ladder of tactics, it is not a contest between violence and peacefulness. It is a creative tension between opacity and lucidity.

Opacity is a rejection of legibility, of transparency to State agents and the constant translation into Machine-language that so many rebels constantly perform. In practical terms, opacity is a practice that obstructs the State's ability to surveil and predict our actions, or even understand on what plane those actions are occurring. Simultaneously, opacity is an affirmation of the creative potential of rebellion that manifests for its own reasons. As such, each rebellion is the beginning of a new language, a new project of communication that the Machine will find illegible.

Which brings it into the realm of lucidity. All attacks contain a symbolic dimension, and this symbolism resonates most powerfully between the attack and its environment when it is understood as an attempt to communicate with society outside of the State's earshot and against the Machine's comprehension, as the colonized speak their native language both to communicate above the heads of their overseers and to foster a common identity against those overseers.

The old heroic mode of struggle, which sees our attacks as a war on society, a vengeful rain of blows with which we assail the State from a lonesome and fearless posture, must be abandoned. At its heart, it is spectacular. It is a unidimensional negation that, as such, can only hope to communicate with the Machine itself, no different than the democrats with their petitions except in the vituperativeness of its denunciation. This can be seen in the very communiqués that follow such actions, pathetically addressed to the institution that has been attacked with a bravado that means nothing.

The alienation of the occidental mode of struggle may be summed up in its benign phrase of theoretical beginning—their germen—“point of departure.” We have been uprooted, evacuated, vacated to such an extent, what is most important now is to come back. Enough political lines. The geometry of our struggle for liberation must become circular. The dead must come back to the living. History must light the way for the future. Destruction must be followed by rejuvenation, struggle by reflection, opacity by visibility and strategic clarity by new periods of murkiness, in which the old ideas do not speak as confidently.

Clandestinity must return to the streets. For it to become a trajectory, a point of departure, it will lead us away from ourselves and diminish. Until we have internalized this circularity, we must be as pedagogical as Mr. Miyagi. Many clever commentators have spoken of “political jiu-jitsu,” whether to justify a sophistic pacifism or a Machiavellian pragmatism, but we do not mean this as a facile metaphor. The very geometry of our understanding of ourselves and the world must change.

State repression makes clandestinity necessary. It is vital for a struggle to enjoy offensive capabilities that are opaque to the Machine, to organize, prepare, and execute attacks without the police learning of them in advance or finding out afterwards who carried them out and how. But every moment we are forced to operate in clandestinity, we must look for ways to bring our actions into the light. This is because anarchist attacks will not destroy the Machine.

We do not carry out attacks to win a war against the State. In some future where a great part of society shares the anarchist dream, such a formulation might make sense. For now, the attack has four purposes.

We attack to come back to life: to inhabit our bodies again, to re-establish the connection between our desires or feelings and our actions, to act on our rage, to regain our dignity, to give

hope and pride to the collective body we form a small part of, and to warm the hearts of repressed comrades.

We attack to gain visibility: to create signals of disorder and negations of the social peace, to belie the omnipotence of the State, to let all the other people know that anarchists exist and to signal our targets.

We attack to constitute a force: to highlight social lines of conflict and to galvanize those conflicts, to foster a capacity for destruction within a social resistance and a capacity for the self-defense of any creative manifestations of that resistance, to win the ability to obstruct and derail the plans of the Machine and advance or defend our own plans.

Finally, we attack to develop a practice of sabotage: so that when a social rupture occurs, the awakening of the social body that is the only hope for the destruction of the Machine, we will have the knowledge and experience to enter into a higher intensity warfare and sabotage the infrastructure on which the Machine depends.

It will be noticed that these four reasons do not retain any connection between the attack and direct action. Direct action must be forever removed from the activist toolbox of tactics for accomplishing things, and returned to a terrain of strategizing for unmediated engagement with social problems.

Sometimes it will be possible to achieve a short-term gain through a campaign of attacks even when we aren't strong enough to constitute a force. A dozen determined people can successfully prevent the installation of surveillance cameras on a citywide level. An even smaller group might stop a specific development project if the developer is not extremely wealthy or powerful. But if the prize is great enough, the repression will be fierce, and a community of resistance that lacks substantial social support will not survive its determined use of sabotage, as has been the case with anarchist scene in Belarus in recent years. We must never foreswear the possibility of immediate victory that sabotage lends us, even when this possibility is also suicidal. We must, however, cure ourselves of the habit of thinking in terms of short-term gains, and instead give our immediate struggles a sense of history. Until now our heroic defeats have kept this struggle alive. Suicidal maneuvers should by no means be disavowed, but it is better to know what we are about than to trap ourselves in a tragic cycle that we fail to understand.

The four reasons for the attack are adapted to a struggle that has lasted and will last for centuries, a struggle that is long-sighted but not self-denying, patient yet immediate.

The first reason for the attack is the most urgent and the most dangerous. Without the capability to destroy, we can entertain no other question as anarchists. In a place where the Machine has achieved a pacification of society and the community of rebels, there can be no strategic choices. Attack, destruction, material negation, rioting, and sabotage must be present possibilities if the insurgents are to be able to choose wisely how, when, and whether to use them.

A community of rebels with no history loses the capacity to attack if they do not entertain it as a possibility in any given moment. Such a community is always on the cusp of pacification, no matter how aggressive. They will, accordingly, often attack in a suicidal, self-defeating way. With no past, after all, they have no future. On the other hand, a community of rebels that is indivisible from its history of struggle may pass ten years—as long as it is not an entire generation—without realizing any strong attacks. As long as the moment is not opportune, they will focus on other motions in the struggle, but they retain the capacity to attack within their memory and their imaginary.

By grafting this capacity into our history, we may use it with patience. The successfully repressed earth liberationists illustrated, with the tragedy of their lacking fortitude, that those who attack out of desperation will neither withstand the pressures of time and hopelessness, nor the threat of imprisonment. We can overcome the insurmountable fear of loss only by accepting that we have already lost, and that we fight to avenge our ghosts. There is no other way to confront such a powerful enemy than to understand that our survival does not rest upon defeats or victories within our own personal drama, but in the passing on of an Idea that will bloom irrepressibly when the weather is ripe, though for all we know it may only ever germinate in the world of the imaginary.

For the egoists, victory is immediate and inalienable. But within their heroic mode of struggle, the egoists fall prey to the delusion of power borne of vengeance. We regain our dignity and come back to life by avenging ourselves on the Machine, but by clutching to vengeance as a guiding principle we forget that the Machine is currently able to call us and raise us on our vengeance, and it will exact that vengeance against the collective body, to which even the egoists belong. And there is no more firing squad and last words, no more heroic death awaiting those who stubbornly go head to head with the State. Only an interminably obscure crushing of the spirit, not only of the brave individual but also of all those who look to her for inspiration.

When the attacks are seen as an individual duty, the task of every anarchist, we are all converted into militants or hypocrites. When all the aspects of our struggle are equally valued, the one who is not cut out for being a warrior need not boast or front a tough image. The partisans struggled as a community, and everyone had a role depending on their abilities. We must do the same. The acts of destruction must come from the collective body and go back to it. They should be formulated to restore the dignity of the whole body, not just that of the individual perpetrator or the brand name of the spectacular clandestine cell they belong to. They should be celebrated by the whole community, bringing everyone back to life.

Once we have regained the capacity to attack, we must plant it in our history and our imaginary, for safe keeping during those times when to use it in the real world would be self-defeating, and we must share it throughout the collective body so that it may be enjoyed by all without riding as an obligation on a desperate few.

The capacity to attack, however, is a complex set of skills that is present or absent in degrees, constituted by many particular abilities. It is easier to smash a police car than to fight the police on the streets, easier to sabotage surveillance cameras than a highway, easier to burn a bank than to expropriate a supermarket, to glue a lock than to occupy a building.

The more difficult actions tend to open up more possibilities. For this reason we need to increase our capacities of attack. But the greatest error is the notion of an accumulation of forces or the parallel idea of a ladder of tactics that must be gradually scaled.

In the model of specialized guerrillas, who with their mediatic minds seek to assassinate heads of state or bomb important buildings, increasing the capacity of attack becomes primarily a technical question. Foregoing this model, we see that it is primarily a social question, as the more difficult actions that interest us require greater social support, in terms of the number of supporters but above all in the level of their commitment and the quality of their thinking.

By understanding the attack as a social question, we realize that we are primarily attacking not the concrete target but the symbolic relation behind it.

“Cell phone antennas on a residential building: it’s an outrage,” the insurgent said to us that warm day in March. “We could go up there tonight and break them, but it would be much more *powerful* if we could convince the residents to do it with us.”

To the citizen, the more illegal or violent an action, the more frightening or repulsive. It is due to this cowardice that we hate citizenship. But the many bodies citizenship holds captive must return to the collective. This contradiction can be overcome with two simultaneous motions.

On the one hand, we must search for the point of conflict. What is the level of illegality that provokes just the right amount of condemnation, so that people are ruffled but conversation is still possible? Commit this outrage in public, in the light of day, in a demonstration, when people are watching, but do not reject their opprobrium. Engage with it. The blow of the monkeywrench is less important than the argument that follows. For every person who smashes, there should be at least two more who defend the action, with words at first, and with their bodies if the perpetrators misjudged the level of controversy and need to make a getaway. People are more likely to consider the legitimacy of an outrage if they see it has some social approval. They will support an attack if the target is alien to them, and it becomes alien either through their own growing awareness of the Machine or through the disgust their peers direct at it. Every attack and its justification must also underscore a question of identity, illuminating an inclusive us at war with a well defined them.

Return to this point of conflict again and again, slowing raising the level of conflictivity, until people have been convinced and they come to support what they once rejected, and even better, to see as their own what once was foreign, to begin to consider themselves collectively as part of the struggle.

The second motion takes place in the dark, in a moment that is entirely ours and does not depend on the opinions or acceptance of others. From a space of clandestinity, we may carry out whatever attacks we deem necessary, as long as we are directing our attacks against the symbolic relations that stand behind the concrete targets, and doing so from a place of patience and discrimination.

The more visible and frequent these attacks—whether carried out in the daytime by masked bandits or designed to leave a smoking signature for all the neighbors to see the next morning—the more they become accepted as a part of normality. As long as they do not violate people’s deepest sense of goodness (and the spontaneous riot reveals that the masses’ loyalty to property is really only skin deep), actions that constitute an undeniable part of what already is will hold a privileged position in any ethical debate over that which might be. Hypothetically, nearly everyone is a pacifist. Pragmatically, hardly anyone.

Once these more forceful forms of attack become a familiar part of normality, even if unpopular, the time is ripe to reintroduce them to the crowd, whether in a protest, a riot, or another moment of manifestation. In this way, clandestinity serves as the fertile furrow for the gestation of an Idea, the dark stormcloud that unleashes its rain on the open plain where the things themselves will take root.

The insurrectionary idea of generalization is not accomplished through the writing of poetic communiques, but through a constant motion of returning.

## Appearances and Appearing

Once we reject the politics of the mass and the aspirations of the mass organization, we see the need to distinguish between a mass and a crowd. The former is the product of mass society, the democratic army; the latter is self-organizing, prone to disruption, violence, and innovation, an atavistic throwback to the rabble and mob maligned by the architects of democracy.

In moving beyond the affinity group and reaching out to the crowd, we do not think in terms of organizational recruitment and discipline, but in terms of visibility and presence.

Society has changed. The mass itself has been atomized by television and its heirs. Undefined, unregulated groups of people need to reconstitute themselves. If they are not mobilized for the needs of the Machine, they will not be a mass, but will birth themselves as a crowd. We may help in this unpromised nativity or read the stars to be present at the moment of birth, but it is not something we can cause ourselves.

Perhaps the most clever, the most intuitive to the needs of society, may play some trick to seduce the crowds into being born, whether by playing with flashmobs or putting an announcement in Adbusters. Such a ploy involves flirting with populism, and it is still most likely to fail, but as the constitution of crowds becomes increasingly unlikely and increasingly urgent, there are few gimmicks we can turn our noses at, simply for the fact of being gimmicks. It is the pretension of these democratic activists, some of them even calling themselves anarchists, to reconstitute the public masses missing since the halcyon days of democracy, that is most repulsive. The challenge thrown down by our predecessors, that of creating situations, has gone largely unanswered. Given the spontaneity, the importance, and the unlikeliness of the crowd, this may be one of the most strategic areas for exploration. Precisely because we cannot cause a crowd, but only suggest it, and once it is born we cannot lead it, the crowd will disappoint those of us who are looking for something to lead.

Because it is self-constituting, those who attempt to recruit it into an organizational structure can at most tame it into a mass. But the crowd cannot be romanticized, cannot be trusted beyond the immediate activity through which it has taken shape. We have much to learn from the crowd, but just as we cannot lead it, we also cannot follow it: it is blind. Our communication with the crowd must take the form of dancing.

To communicate with society, which will give birth to crowds with a growing frequency as it approaches its own ultimate rebirth, we must achieve and then intensify our visibility. To be visible is to enter the consciousness of the others, and therefore to corrupt the reality the Machine has produced for them. They must know that rebellion exists, and then we must sculpt the meaning of this fact.

At the local level, people will become aware of our existence as we change the landscape with graffiti, posters, protests, events, physical spaces such as bookstores or social centers, and attacks. Each of these forms of visibility communicates to certain people and is mute to others. Each form communicates either the positive or negative visions of anarchy. We need all of these forms to converge on a balance between the positive and negative. Where we are weaker, less able to survive repression, it is better to have an appearance stacked towards our positive visions. Where there is greater potential for open social conflict, it is advantageous to emphasize what we negate. But always, what we propose and what we negate must go hand in hand, whatever the specific balance.

As we appear, we need to be sensitive to what will be said about us in the media-dominated public discourse, and pre-empt it. Simultaneously, we must intuit the subterranean impulses that are never uttered publicly. The anarchist bookstore shows us to be thinkers and discredits the calumny that we are confused or mindless. The practice of anarchist graffiti will confirm for some that we are hoodlums, but it will communicate directly to those people who still read the writing on the wall. By refusing either box the media will produce for us, that of the harmless intellectuals and do-gooders and that of the mindless vandals, by laying claim to the best of both these figures, we defeat any easy generalizations.

In general, our attacks will not be popular, but they will make our existence undeniable. In an alienated society, it is much better to be taken seriously than to be accepted. Beyond this, our attacks can move in two directions. They can express a hidden, popular rage by targeting that which many people already hate. Classically, this has meant the banks and the police, though a greater social intuition could lead to the discovery of new targets. Traffic cameras, in a few localities, proved a fruitful choice. It is this populist form of attack that has the possibility of being generalized in a social rupture.

The second direction is to illuminate targets for attack or forms of oppression that have gone ignored. This expands the meaning of anarchy, drawing attention to such crucial phenomena as patriarchy and ecocide. But it risks converting these phenomena into issues which fall into specialized domains. The practices of the ELF and ALF were generally blind to the necessity of social conflict, and converted the environment into one more of a list of issues that need to be dealt with. Even though these were not actual groups, though they doubtlessly constituted a specialized focus for many practitioners, they isolated their targets in advance within an environmentalist or animal liberation framework, rather than a more broadly social one. For all that the occasional communique might have referred to other oppressions and other “isms” that the perpetrators were concerned about, these are called into existence as a list of single issues, a broad liberal program that has taken on extreme tactics.

The Dutch anticapitalist group RARA were more conscious of the possible ramifications of their attacks. By bombing targets associated with the new European immigration regime, at a time (the early ‘90s) when very few people realized the central role that borders and immigration would have in the new capitalism of a unified Europe, they hoped to provoke a conversation and direct people’s attention to an important, underestimated facet of the social war. As they acknowledged, the attacks alone had no hope of accomplishing anything else, in the absence of a broader movement or multiform actions against their target, as had existed during their successful sabotage campaign against Shell Oil in earlier years.

Attacks of the pedagogical type must always refer back to the social war, not only in their communiques but above all in their formulation and execution. A repetitive line of attack, isolated from ongoing social conflicts, is self-defeating. The exception to this rule are attacks on the Machine’s visual production. Sabotaging sexist advertising or electoral propaganda, to name two examples, has an educational, discursive effect which is amplified the more it is repeated, because these attacks directly intervene in a one way conversation the Machine is attempting to conduct with its public.

When references to these attacks (in the form of posters, plays, songs, images, and so forth) are proudly made within less conflictive anarchist spaces, such as concerts, picnics, or protests, they increase their communicative power, become normalized, and also lend a defiant tone that prevents the co-optation or pacification of otherwise harmless events. By adopting an illegalist

aesthetic and championing the practice of sabotage, a social center or protest is more likely to get shut down, but it is good to spread out the consequences of repression over the whole of the anarchist space rather than allowing the State to concentrate it against the clandestine acts. Doing so gives all rebels a chance to internalize an anti-repressive practice, reveals the political character of repression, gives more people an opportunity to witness and oppose the repression and therefore also to sympathize with the attacks.

This is another reason to avoid spectacularization or a hierarchy of tactics. Attacks must be designed to be visible to neighbors and passersby more than to the media. Under this lens, the smashing of the bank on the corner appears as a much more powerful attack than a letter-bombing campaign. The more dangerous attacks should not be valued over the easier attacks, nor the attacks over the creative activities, as all are necessary. If we create a hierarchy of tactics, the attacks can be taken out of our hands and directed, whether by the media, who for their greater resources and limited scope will become the primary disseminators of what we ourselves consider to be the most important activity (those most dramatic attacks); by specialized groups that are likely to be vanguardist or self-promoting; or by attacks secretly organized by state agents, which have wreaked a greater toll on anarchist struggles throughout history than most insurrectionaries are willing to admit.

Visibility on the local level is advantageous to us because we have a greater possibility to influence the meaning of that visibility. On the national or international level, the media and specific governments will enjoy an almost exclusive right to determine the content of our visibility, balanced to a minimal degree by the contributions of anarchist academics or public figures who will more often than not say things we find to be a betrayal of the struggle. However, the audience may question how the media characterize us internationally if they live in an area where the anarchists are highly visible.

In the beginning, the media prefer to grant anarchists no visibility whatsoever. They will change this policy—at least at the national or international level—only when we make our existence undeniable and they are forced to array us within the dominant narrative. Usually, we have only accomplished this through some spectacular disruption. In North America, the media have been forced to acknowledge the existence of the anarchists in direct conjunction with the disruptions of Seattle in ‘99, the Twin Cities in ‘08, Oakland and Pittsburgh in ‘09, Vancouver and Toronto in ‘10, and the Occupy Movement of 2011. The force of these disruptions have even required the media to abandon the original stereotype of a disorderly mob in favor of the police profile of “sophisticated” and “determined” troublemakers. They even exaggerate our strength, blaming us for disorders we had little to do with, like the Vancouver hockey riots of 2011.

Even though the media disseminate harmful images of us, this process is a result and accomplishment of our growing strength. As long as we cannot be portrayed as something totally alien to society, as the Islamic terrorists or the immigrant anarchists of the ‘10s and ‘20s were, by admitting that we are strong the media cause people to take an interest in us and to take us seriously. When those people encounter our propaganda, if we make it available and make it effectively, they will discover that the media stereotype is inaccurate. Perhaps more importantly, our disruptions interrupt the narrative of social peace and help people realize that things are not functioning well, a fact whose concomitant is a vital step in the creation of a rebel imaginary: that things must change.

Once anarchists have corrupted people’s idea of what is normal by etching our existence across the façade of reality, we create a counter-narrative that make new conversations possible for the

first time. As these conversations permeate the crowds, the social movements, and the ongoing struggles, we begin to constitute a force, which is to move from visibility to presence.

At the point of visibility, we are reappearing, like the outlines of a ghost. Once we have achieved a social presence, we have been reborn, we have found our collective body again, and this suggests the possibility that society is not far behind.

To have a presence in social conflict is to influence the terms of the debate, to suggest new imaginaries, to put into practice new strategies and new methods that others might adopt as well, to be able to change the course of a movement so that it develops a more radical understanding of itself and constitutes a greater threat to the Machine. It is also to lend a specific practice that increases a movement's capacity for destruction and for surviving the resulting repression.

In the UK, anarchists exercised a certain presence in the student riots of 2010, with many young people following, then joining, then independently reproducing the black bloc, regaining some of the strength the Idea enjoyed in the earlier poll tax, anti-roads, and illegal rave phenomena. Until the riots of 2010, the anarchist dream had become isolated and disconnected as social conflict largely crystallized into an abstract, issue-based antiglobalization movement.

In the plaza occupation movement of Spain, most cities stifled themselves in democratic hypocrisy, and the so-called revolution served only to exhaust and disillusion popular rage. But in Barcelona and Madrid, it was an anarchist presence that radicalized the movement and encouraged the generalization of anti-capitalist analyses, self-organization in neighborhood assemblies, an antagonism towards police and a partial abandonment of pacifism and legalism. In the Occupy movement of the US, anarchists crossed the threshold from visibility to presence in the cities where the occupations took on a more conflictual character.

In Chile, contrary to the image and despite a high technical capability to attack, the anarchists do not exercise a decisive influence on events. They are visible, and beyond this some of them are well situated within urban zones of conflict where a self-sustaining conflictuality has taken root, largely independent of them, where society is not entirely dormant.

In Egypt, anarchists and other antiauthoritarians constituted a force by disseminating methods for self-defense in protests and for reconnecting the country's internet. More importantly, they helped shift the focus of struggle away from opposition to a specific regime to critique of the very conditions of living. Factory occupations and continued protest allowed the struggle to stay in the streets and keep fighting for true revolution after the changing of the guard.

Once anarchists constitute an influential force within social conflicts, the force of their attacks is magnified. This is because more people are paying attention, thus the symbolic power of attacking the Machine increases, as do the possibilities for other people to repeat these attacks. The possibility of repetition, in turn, is magnified when attacks are designed and communicated in a way that makes them reproducible. Insurrectionary anarchists have long been aware of the value of reproducibility, but less aware of falling into the inherent Machine-logic of reproduction.

The stronger approach is not to be found in increasing the quantity of attacks or even creating a generalized hysteria in which a type of attack is repeated ad infinitum, in a sort of dancing sickness that decreases the symbolic value of the attack through its practical overproduction. Rather, the point is to encourage more people to cross the threshold into illegality and antagonism, and to illuminate a new way forward, to galvanize a social conflict into becoming combative upon seeing the weakness and viciousness of the Machine.

In other words, the potential inherent to having a presence in a social movement is wasted if we continue to attack in the same way that is necessary to achieve mere visibility. At the moment

we find we hold an influential position within a conflictive social phenomenon, we need to link our attacks to well elaborated anarchist strategies and visions, and carry out attacks that, at their most daring, draw the battle lines, and at their most inclusive, encourage every one to sympathize, to see these attacks as their own.

In a struggle against the privatization of education, this approach might include the large scale diffusion of manifestos for the collectivization of education, the permanent occupation and self-organization of schools, and their delinking from the needs of the economy—not only in the fatuous insurrectionary poetry that is so gratifying to us and a few others like us but also in the form of serious proposals. The sabotage of companies involved in privatization, the occupation of buildings, attacks on the agents of order, and evictions of deans or principals, whether by mob or firebomb depending on the available capabilities, constitute another possible line of action.

However, we do not achieve presence in a social phenomenon in a uniform way. The greatest potential that this presence can offer us is the most often neglected. Where society is strong, gaining presence also gains us popular support and protection from isolation. Where society is weak, the conflictive phenomena themselves will be isolated.

If we do not make a specific attempt to appear in the lives of others and to resuscitate society, to build the ground we must stand on, our intensification of the struggle will leave us isolated. Only a populist could believe that it is vanguardist to try to intensify a struggle or to run ahead of the crowd. In these actions we are either looking for accomplices or ditching potential followers. Despite its lack of vanguardism, this attitude is still arrogant. The struggle is not our play thing, and it will abandon us if we treat it as an abstract that must live up to our idealized expectations. The truth is, we need the others, we grow and learn from their presence, and we cannot predict how they nor how we will grow over time. The anarchists who participated in the occupations of 2011 changed their practices and attitudes considerably throughout the experience. For many of us, even the way we measure the intensity of a struggle changed for good. How arrogant to think our role is to intensify the struggle and not the other way around.

Therefore, when we discover that we have achieved a presence in ongoing social struggles, perhaps the more important activity is to expand the ground these struggles inhabit, to bring them to everyone's front door, and to intervene in more aspects of daily life, from education to transportation to food to healthcare to leisure and beyond. In an alienated society, invitations and accessibility are not enough to significantly broaden a struggle, but even if we accomplish nothing in our attempted expansion, we will temper our expectations and save ourselves from confusing a movement of thousands with a society of millions.

With this experience in hand, we can choose to carry out bolder attacks within this movement with a more accurate idea of our relative strength or isolation. By being an influential part of social movements, and also appearing in the lives of those who so far choose not to take up the struggle, we will have found a stronger ground to stand on.

Where the social struggle itself is healthy, the State and the media will find themselves unable to isolate us, and when they arrest us, even our neighbors will come out in solidarity. This can be identified as the first step to remembering who we are.

In the meantime, our greatest enemy, the culprit for this final disappearance of society, must be fingered and hunted down. The common factor in the disappearance of solidarity, the vacating of the streets, even in the most combative of regions, is the introduction of television and its portable heirs.

If we ever needed our version of the witchhunt or the bookburning, if we ever should debase ourselves in a rabid fury whose sole object is to hunt down and lynch some demonized foe, the object must be these very devices, for all they have stolen from us.

At the very least, let us give the banks a brief respite, in order to discover how to bring our vengeance against these trojan horses of entertainment, that currently protect themselves by nesting at the center of every atomized private sphere.

## **Conflictivity and a Well Balanced Struggle**

To be strong, insurgents must develop a social intuition and a sensitivity towards social conflicts as they exist and to fault lines that have potential to rupture. This approach is antithetical and even antagonistic towards the activist method based on a list of issues and their attendant campaigns, because to divide people's rage into issues is to further the alienation of capitalism and to bring preconceived formula of oppression to social complexities; antithetical to the repetitive leftist obsessions, because the self-serving motivations behind their partial critiques of corporations, warfare, justice, and democracy are plain to everyone but themselves; and even to classical anticapitalism, because not everyone understands themselves as part of the working class, nor should they, given that the globalization of the working class has been part and parcel of colonialism and the expansion of Capital itself.

We can develop a social intuition by learning to be ambiguous about our own lived experiences, by keeping one foot in capitalist normality, by talking regularly and profoundly with people who share no affinity with us, by sucking the poison of daily life rather than trying to shelter ourselves from it in a shortsighted attempt to live the revolution.

It is vital to live the revolution, but we must understand that it is a revolution of all of us, the revolution of an entire social animal, and not the revolution of an elect few who learn to live perfectly. Some of us will need to be great like our crime, in the words of Novatore, here and now, and in fact the social animal is not healthy without these criminal egoists who despise it. An anarchist revolution cannot be won by a disciplined mass marching in rank towards the horizon, ready to shoot down those it denounces as adventurists, provocateurs, and uncontrollables.

Living the revolution raises the question of infrastructure. And infrastructure creates the problematic of conservatism.

Printing presses, websites, daycare, free schools, community gardens, farms, libraries, bookstores, bars, restaurants, theaters, bakeries, social centers, seed banks, houses, welding and carpentry workshops, bike shops, shooting ranges, free stores, stitching circles, clinics, massage parlors, herbalists, food coops, concert venues. We need it all.

Some of these we can operate as legal businesses, others as informal operations that exist in squats or under the radar, and others we can co-opt, finding an existing bar or daycare whose owners are friendly and sympathetic to our aim and willing to change the character of their project in exchange for the kind of participation we bring. Though often undervalued, this latter method has constituted one of the most stable means of creating an anarchist space from Athens to Phoenix. It does not allow for total control over the project (which isn't necessarily conducive to learning useful skills anyway) but it also spares us the full responsibilities and costs and affords us new allies.

Some infrastructure is conflictive, such as printing presses and squatted spaces, other infrastructure is supportive, such as daycare and clinics, while others, like social centers, are both. All infrastructure represents a fixed project that requires a great deal of commitment and resources vulnerable to loss. The fixed nature of infrastructure guides us into a defensive posture, which should immediately set off alarm bells in the insurgent's head. A long-standing strategy of the democratic State is to use the double leverage of repression and media to pressure projects of supportive infrastructure to abandon their antagonism and denounce the conflictive projects and illegal practices undertaken elsewhere in the anarchist space.

The only way to evade this trap is to embrace loss and understand that the true value of anarchist infrastructure is not in its physical existence but in the skills and relations it cultivates. An infrastructural project that disowns combat and the necessity of attacking the Machine is dead already.

All supportive infrastructure projects should adopt a combative aesthetic insofar as it is practical. This does not mean that a free school must cover its walls in graffiti and black bloc posters, but that it should remember past and present struggles on the formulation of its surface as well as in the content of its activity. In any case, Clifford Harper posters and lessons about May Day are much nicer and more effective than the autonomous/squatter veneer which is designed principally to convince the insiders of their own toughness.

Those who dedicate themselves to supportive infrastructure must see themselves as part of the same struggle as the combative ones, and they must understand their purpose as being at least partially to aid the combatants. This is only possible if the combative ones understand their attacks as a form of gardening to prepare the soil for the seeds which the supportive ones carry. The one sees to it that the struggle survives into future generations. The other sees to it that the struggle lives now. Both of them, together, defend the struggle from democratic pacification.

By refusing to disown the illegal struggle, those who carry out infrastructural projects, even if they are run in a legal manner, risk losing those projects to State initiatives. Without a doubt, bookstores and farms that are conciliatory towards the authorities will enjoy a better survival rate. But we are not struggling in order to win ourselves a thousand bookstores or a million farms. If the conflict escalates to civil war, we will surely lose most of what we have now, and under capitalism things are built so poorly that whatever remains will all have to be rebuilt.

Anything that does not attack capitalism joins it, and a conciliatory attitude will convert our liberatory projects into mere businesses. We will lose by winning, as anarchists have so many times before due to a failure to understand who they are, what is theirs, and what is not.

Infrastructure is most important for the capacities it builds in us. If we lose our first social center, the second one is easier to set up. Unlike the infrastructure itself, these experiences are mobile. And while a building does not foster a relationship with the world, skills do. It is the skills that capitalism has stolen from us—the ability to feed and clothe and heal ourselves—that constitute a living connection with a world of relationships. Once these connections are removed, the world disappears. The transition from gardens to supermarkets, herb foraging to pharmacies, does not only take the land and hide it from us, it diminishes us as people, makes us smaller and weaker. This is not a simple question of access to land, but of living in and through a relation with the land that is made possible by specific skills and traditions of knowledge. These skills are not tools an individual takes with him, for they become impossible in altered contexts. They constitute a trust between beings and a continuity with the past.

This, and only this, is the world. Not a foundation beneath our feet, but a mutuality and a font that exists between individualizable elements. It is the full Nothing that is lost when Science extracts and collects every individual atom, and it is the one thing that cannot exist in any machine, because every machine is a recomposition of the muted, dispirited elements that have been alienated from nature.

## **Hurdling the Enclosures**

It is vital for the rebels of today to understand the enclosures of the commons that began over 500 years ago. Rather than an act of primitive accumulation or a blind, profit-motivated process, the enclosure is first and foremost a strategy of counterinsurgency. All counterinsurgency, in fact, is fundamentally enclosure. By remembering ourselves only as individuals in the Western sense, it becomes impossible to understand this, because the first enclosures did not rob us of contact with other human beings, in which case they bear no resemblance to subsequent offensives by the Machine that have also constituted enclosures.

After they appropriated the natural commons and broke our relation with the land, through mechanization they broke our relations with the rural community and the rhythms of life. The third great enclosure was the reengineering of urban space to break our relation with the streets that had become our home, and then to commercialize the public sphere so that, rootless, we could be swept off those streets even at a physical level; the latter part of this process is still incomplete even in some Western countries, while the proliferation of slums, the self-organized growing out of control of many of the world's people, threatens to roll back the first part of this process. The fourth enclosure, which began when the mass production of moving images merged with an affective economy, is the expropriation of the imaginary from our imagination. The imaginary had already been colonized, of course, but only in the form of isolated outposts, as it is a terrain that can never be fully mapped. The solution, for the engineers of social control, is to substitute a manufactured imaginary as a new annex of reality, in the hope that with our imagination atrophied and replaced by production, we will forget how to access the true imaginary, which they can never conquer or control.

Though all of these enclosures run according to a logic that demands completion, they are all current, and once completed, they will begin again at zero, albeit more rapidly, anywhere an atavistic pocket opens up.

Alienation, in other words, is not only a function of Capital but a proactive strategy of the State to maintain control. Counterinsurgency seeks to alienate us from an opaque terrain where we can hide and regenerate, a smooth terrain where we can move immeasurably, or a terrain with high friction where we cannot be pursued. Then, only once we have been placed in striated or flattened space, once we have had the ground pulled out from under us, as it were, can we be isolated and controlled, cell to cell, block to block, under the omnipresent eye of the prison society.

Rising up and surviving repression, therefore, become questions of recognizing and hurdling the enclosures.

Firstly, we are isolated by the labels of democratic pluralism, which permits any identity as long as it is alienated, recognizes free speech at the expense of free action, and brutally represses any that attempt to cross those boundaries and infringe on the normality of other groups. As

long as we are anarchists in a democratic sense, our anarchy is a simple matter of taste, and our ideas only noteworthy to those who belong to our identity group. Within this pluralism, we are permitted to expand our demographic with some form of marketing or evangelism; we are not permitted to pose the difficult questions of anarchy to the entire society at a material level.

It is exactly this that we must do to hurdle the first enclosure we will encounter from our starting point. If anarchists and other rebels will be few and if we do not want to form either a Blanquist vanguard or a prosyletizing religion, this underscores even more the importance of communication. Because the spreading of anarchist ideas is important. Because amidst the poetry of an insurrection, people still ask themselves “What next?” and if they can think of nothing new, they will return to what they have always known.

To wax pragmatic for a moment: if anarchists will never be more than one out of every thousand, how many pamphlets and flyers do we have to hand out before most people have had direct contact with anarchist ideas? Otherwise, their only contact will be through the media, as we become a social force, and in this format we will always be explained away. We are not interested in winning converts but in resurrecting a suppressed conversation that with the revolt will become the multivocal babble of society. We are not writing the script, simply speaking our mind and hoping to provoke some unpredictable response. What matters is not that people agree with us but that people start speaking about social problems and that this conversation comes to mirror the new flows of activity that end in society doing for itself. In the end, the anarchist fear of recruiting is misplaced. Unless we have a union or a party, even with the most didactic of pamphlets we have no structure to recruit people into. The greatest danger is that we will be obnoxious.

As the social conversation intensifies, the people closer to us in our concentric universes will not only have a familiarity with anarchist ideas, but with anarchists as well, and in some cases this communication will ferment into relationships that have the possibility of becoming solidaristic. In the State’s eyes, these other people will have become infected. They can no longer disappear the insurgents because we will have appeared in the lives of others. They would have to cast a much wider net, and the wider the net, the more of the Machine’s resources are endangered, and the greater the possibility that a commune is declared.

Over the years anarchists have developed many tools to undertake this communication. Newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, books, soapboxes, radio, websites. But too often, these are deployed with the liberal idea of spreading information rather than engaging in an expansive conversation, or they are muddled by a confusion of communication within the enclosure and communication beyond it.

It’s not that anarchists should develop an honest way of speaking within our circles and a populist way for talking to those so-called average people. Quite the contrary, if we cannot have high expectations for other people, there is little use in communicating with them. The question of jargon should never be answered by dumbing down what we say. It’s perfectly common that people who speak a local dialect will switch to the national idiom when they encounter someone from a different region. This is a matter of speaking multiple languages, of increasing one’s communicative prowess rather than hobbling together some esperanto of mediocrity. The trick, in avoiding jargon, is to find an equally nuanced way to signify what closed groups have always used code words to communicate.

What’s necessary, beyond the problem of language, is to recognize that enclosures exist, also on a semiological and aesthetic level, and to successfully communicate with people on the other

side of the fence that democracy has placed around us requires special effort and a strategic consideration.

Unfortunately, the notion of social war that tragically has predominated—that of we versus society—leads rebels to circle the wagons and communicate with blatant hostility to those in the world beyond. A large part of anarchist propaganda, at least the propaganda that has gone beyond leftist recruitment drives and watered down populism, is addressed to a “you” who is excoriated for their hypocrisy, cowardice, complicity with oppression or direct participation in it. It’s a sorry spectacle indeed when, while appearing more radical, these rebels waste their propaganda efforts in a pitiful attempt to communicate with the enemy rather than reaching out to potential accomplices and sympathizers. Propaganda that shames and ostracizes collaborators and snitches is a powerful tool, but the implicit assumption that all passersby who will read one’s posters or stickers are potential enemies is both self-isolating and futile. The propaganda of rebels, on the contrary, should assume the possibility of sympathy and therefore seek to begin a conversation or to create a more expansive “we”.

In the first place, it is necessary that well developed, challenging ideas be circulated through society at large to reinvigorate the popular conversation that has been silenced by the media. As a result of the spread of anarchist ideas, more people will consider themselves anarchists, and this can increase our possibilities of struggle, but there must at all times be a qualitative difference between evangelism and propaganda. When a problem affects all of us, it is natural that we should want to share our perspective on it and to influence people, but only a rebel who wants to be a new ruler would not want people to make up their own minds. A herd of followers who consider themselves anarchist will not make a revolution. The fact that the CNT, in 1936, achieved the dimensions of a majority did not prevent a small clique of representatives from wedding it to Stalinism.

Often, when we spread anarchist ideas, we put more effort into the formulation of the idea than in its distribution beyond the fence, when the latter is the more difficult activity under a democracy. The free circulation of liberal ideas is self-regulating. Anarchist ideas must be tied to an interruption. The flyers distributed to bystanders at a protest, the itinerant pirate radio that interrupts a commercial broadcast, the provocative pamphlet left in a bar or in someone’s mailbox: these are all ways to start a conversation with people from whom we would normally be segregated in the normal flows of democracy. They function all the better if they also serve as invitations to conflictive spaces, or to the books, websites, or debate clubs where anyone who is interested can find anarchist ideas developed in greater depth. These interventions also need to be infiltrated into the spaces that are generally beyond our reach. Every kiosk, bar, community center, doctor’s office, or library that can be convinced to put a copy of an anarchist newspaper or magazine on display is a breach of an enclosure and a corruption of normality.

For all the accessibility of the internet, it is an alienated medium that almost does us as much harm as good. Without a doubt it has proven its usefulness, but we cannot let it replace older forms of communication that give our ideas a face. For the most part, only anarchists come to a talk at an anarchist social center. If it is a talk of concern to anarchists, this is not a problem. But if it is an attempt to communicate with others, we must take it out into the streets. The soapbox, the public debate, in whatever form that is effective in a particular place, must return to the anarchist arsenal. In the occupied squares and parks of Spain and North America, many rebels are learning how the act of discussing and arguing with strangers fills up a space they had forgotten was empty.

In the past, speeches often fired up crowds and provoked riots. An internet article has never accomplished this.

Which is not to say that the latter is not important. Information does not spark action, but it can strengthen it, or affect how it is perceived by others. The old mode of propaganda as counterinformation does not need to be abandoned, but it does need to be subordinated to the model of propaganda as interruption.

A newspaper, once a common anarchist tool, makes little sense today. A website can make the same information available with much less effort. There are few places in the world today where the anarchists have the resources to put out a daily paper, and there are fewer and fewer people who even read daily papers. A weekly is a more practical format for printed news—feasible in terms of resources without being hopelessly outdated by the time it goes to print—and there was a case of strong anarchist participation in a progressive weekly that was quite effective for some time in one particular city, but the anarchists got pushed out once the editors came up short of funds and found less radical friends with more money.

Because today we are infinitely more outgunned than a hundred years ago, when it comes to propaganda we need to focus on discursive interventions that serve as weapons. The best format for this mission is not the periodical, but the monograph. As adbusting and detournement steal a particular logo or formulation so that in the future it invokes a subversive meaning, we can distribute flyers, pamphlets, or newspapers that take on a certain topic (the Occupy movement, home foreclosures, immigration) and present an analysis that is intended to be generalized, immunizing someone from the formulaic manipulations that the media use to control opinions.

These interventions should strive to be understandable but never to be populist. They must make the shocking and extreme arguments that others disavow, to argue for the Idea in no uncertain terms and thus to stretch the limits of acceptable opinion, to change people's reference points for debate, and to show that, unlike the politicians everyone by now knows how to sniff out, we speak our minds.

A periodical can rarely serve for propaganda because nowadays our interactions with others are never periodical, but exceptional. We must strive to make these exceptions the rule, but in the meantime our propaganda must also recognize the exceptional character of these encounters.

The periodical, therefore, returns to its place as an organ of communication among rebels and insurgents, people who will be a part of the same conversation from one month to the next. The confusion of propaganda with reflection has for a long time enabled a self-referential propaganda and a superficial reflection. Our periodicals need to clarify that distinction by entertaining nuanced, profound conversations among those who consider themselves part of the struggle. Because of the poor quality writing and thinking encouraged by the internet, this format demands a slowing down and an emphasis on aesthetic as well as discursive quality, such that the periodicity can be annual or semiannual. In the last years, the most effective anarchist projects for spreading information and analysis among people already taking part in the struggle have been quarterly to annual magazines, such as *Abolishing the Borders from Below* or *Rolling Thunder*.

Within the format of the periodical, there is room for an exceptional propaganda project that simultaneously communicates to rebels and to those beyond the enclosure of political isolation: the local paper or magazine. By bringing a radical perspective to bear on local happenings, such a project teaches rebels to shift from a subcultural frame of reference to a geographic one, and it intervenes in public discourse at a scale in which rebels can actually make a difference, sharing new analyses that are accessible to other people, despite their strange imaginaries and novel

language, because they refer directly to events and problems that already exist in people's daily consciousness. Seattle's *Tides of Flame* or Catalonia's *Pesol Negre* are examples of such a project. Where no possible locale exists, where a geographic frame of reference is even more abstract and unreal than a virtual one, the project may be modified to base itself within a subculture, spreading a radical analysis in reference to the happenings of a particular scene, such as *Last Hours* in the UK.

It would be easy, in any discussion of propaganda, to dismiss the media, because they are the adversary and as any radical knows they must be destroyed for freedom to flourish. However, democratic government is not perfectly unified. Institutionalizing elite conflicts is one of the sacrifices the Machine made to win the collaboration of all powerful actors.

It can be necessary for rebels to exploit conflicts between governing mechanisms in order to survive repression or sow disorder. Few are the anarchists, no matter how pure their stance against collaboration with the media, who have not made use of even indirect media pressure against the institutions of policing and punishment to get a comrade out of jail or mitigate the charges.

And how many North American anarchists have not at least once in their lives sung the praises of Glenn Beck? His outbursts represent a specific reactionary strategy, but only a defeatist would say that this strategic element automatically converts the anarchist bogeyman into his tool. It would not be the first time that the reactionaries go too far and pick a strategy that ultimately destabilizes the State. If the reactionaries had not been in power in Russia, there would have been no revolution in 1917.

It is conceivable, on specific occasions, that anarchists could make use of the media to counter the machinations of the police and prisons—institutions that operate on a different logic than the media or the banks—or to create a destabilizing sense of disorder. Such a strategy will backfire, however, if it does not arise from an overall rejection of the media. In the long-run, collaboration with the media will always hurt us, by spectacularizing rebellion, fostering dependence on the media when we should be developing our own capacities for social communication, and creating figureheads who will be used to exercise leverage against us. The common practice must be a rejection of the media that is only suspended on carefully considered occasions that create conflict among ruling institutions. The media should never be relied on to communicate for us.

In the end, the Spectacle will go on without us. By giving it too much importance, we fall into the world of shadows, the abstract public where opinions are mass-produced.

The need to spread ideas, to interrupt public debates and initiate popular debates, is indispensable. But by far the more potent way of hurdling the enclosures is the form of communication that creates new relationships. The former responds only to our isolation. The latter goes deeper, and pushes back our alienation.

Through random conversations and chance encounters that we must go out of our way to seek, we will begin to appear in the lives of others. Neighbors, coworkers, extended family members, people with shared tastes in music or literature; any possible link can overcome the permanent estrangement of a dormant society.

Many of these people we will not like. Even in utopia we won't all be friends. The greatest task is to show these people who we are, and to learn who they are, rather than to choose the protection of polite masks or to hide in the silence of anonymity.

Eventually, you will discover people you actually like, even though a world of difference separates you. Then comes a great test: do we value the idea of the gift enough to put it in practice,

or is it only talk? When these new relationships take on a material character, with the non-commodified exchange of gifts or sharing of skills— whether this is a coworker fixing your car or you baking cookies for the grandma across the street—you will have initiated the reappearance of the community.

All of these people who know you and know that the struggle is a part of you, even if they do not share that struggle, are an obstacle to your enclosure, a connection that raises the costs of repression, and a contradiction to the mediatic distortions of the struggle. Our presence in social conflicts will be magnified if we have also learned how to foster our presence in a community that, to start with, does not yet exist. The relationships formed in this latter kind of presence teach us when it may be necessary to slow down, and they allow us to survive repression.

In Tarnac, it was the neighborly support of old folks that defeated the apparatus of anti-terrorism.

Cases of repression also illustrate the importance of solidarity across borders. By creating global networks based on personal relationships, we extend the roots that help us weather storms of repression, we can call on more distant aid, we can overcome the provincialism that often blocks the spread of solidarity and revolt, and we avail ourselves of myriad stories of rebellion, each one an experiment to learn from. In the end, national borders constitute an enclosure against global consciousness among those who must be ruled. To hurdle this greatest enclosure, it becomes necessary to speak multiple languages, to travel not through individualized vacations but with a solidaristic projectuality, to collectivize our travels so that those who may not cross borders can travel vicariously, and to refer in our local struggles to the struggles of people who live far away.

## **Emma Goldman's Piano**

As Alexander Berkman languished in a Pennsylvania prison, Emma Goldman and crew found a comrade to play the piano in a house they had acquired across the street, to cover the sounds of excavation as they dug a tunnel in the hopes of freeing him.

The generations of rebellion have oft been visited by a familiar figure, an equation of attrition, in which increasing activity is met with increasing repression, after which the remaining activity is diverted to support prisoners, leading to a diminishing of the struggle, and in the worse cases, a generational fracture in which rebellion is extinguished and born anew, with all its fire but none of the wisdom it had previously attained. A curious feature of this figure is that it is based on only two elements: the insurgents and the State.

In any war of attrition, the State will always win. Not because it is more powerful, but because by formulating the contest in this manichean way, insurgents abandon the source of power, society itself, to the clutches of the Machine.

The bilateral volley of attrition must be replaced with a circle of subversion, whereby the prisoners are always brought back to society. In any prison, there must be hope for escape, or the struggle is dead. Where we lack the capacities to carry out a prison break on a corporeal level, we must find a way to bring whatever part of the prisoner back to the world as is possible. Where we have lost the guerilla capacity to effect the prison break, we have simply accepted the reality of a prison society, as though the world were purely physical.

Rebels who are captured by the justice system must determine to continue their struggle wherever they find the most favorable terrain, either by becoming monks and scholars who send their meditations back to the larger world, or as agitators and organizers who resuscitate the society that lies dormant within prison walls, through reading groups, gang truces, strikes, or whatever other tactics suggest themselves.

Rebels who remain on the outside bear the responsibility for keeping the lines of communication open and helping prisoners compose a larger material community around them. The more people who can assume a specific commitment to a prisoner and become a part of that prisoner's family, as it were, the more alive the prisoner will remain and the more present they will be outside of the prison walls.

Support for prisoners and those going through a trial becomes specialized far too often, given that the specialization of these activities also constitutes their management within a repressive enclosure. It is not enough, either, that those who might become the specialists of support simply wish for this responsibility to be generalized and shared. Anyone who finds himself wondering about the well being of a specific prisoner faces the choice of helping that prisoner build her community by contacting anyone who might have a reason to offer support and inviting people to take on concrete roles and commitments. Someone has a reason to offer support if they consider themselves to be part of the same struggle as the prisoner, or if they consider themselves to be related in some way to her, whether as a family member, friend, acquaintance, or neighbor. Support can take the form of a commitment to letter writing, the transcribing and emailing of letters (for open letters and general announcements), the maintenance of websites, the contribution or raising of funds, periodic commissary donations, street propaganda in memory of the prisoner, the mailing of books, care for family members, pets, or other dependents of the prisoner, taking over of activities to which the prisoner had previously dedicated herself, and so on.

Those rebels who are most likely to become the specialists of support are best advised to intentionally extend and generalize these activities with the greatest possible enthusiasm, and subsequently to aid in the coordination between the different tasks and to facilitate communication within the prisoner's community. If a solidaristic rebel finds himself responsible for more than a couple of the tasks enumerated above, in all likelihood the antirepressive campaign of preventing the isolation of the prisoner has failed, even if the minimum goal of preventing that prisoner's spirit from being crushed has succeeded.

Nearly every Basque village is covered in posters with the faces of their prisoners. The concept of "our" prisoners is a powerful one that must be generalized. If anarchists have the choice between generalizing the practice of broken windows and generalizing the practice of claiming prisoners as our own rather than relinquishing them heart and soul to the machinations of justice, why have they so often chosen the weaker attack?

A scant few anarchist projects have aided a sort of generalization that has gone in the opposite direction, aiding the creation of communes within the prisons themselves by sending kites of various kinds—books, letters, and cellphones. Some of the earliest signs of the growing wave of rebellion in the United States manifested in the form of prison hungerstrikes and in at least a couple cases the new prisoner solidarity, whether internal or with the outside, was enabled by groups of anarchists sending books and letters, creating the possibility for reading groups on the inside and publicity for prisoner protests on the outside.

These successes, it seems, can all be found within a narrow spectrum of the broader abandonment of the classical distinction between political and common prisoners. On the one extreme

is the depoliticization of prisoner support work, whereby all prisoners are placed within a socio-economic matrix that excuses their criminality, rejects the concentration of support on a few prisoners with whom we share affinity as a mark of privilege, and demands of the prisoner support activist an unbiased and directionless support for all prisoners who should request it. In a word, charity, but the kind of charity that disempowers not only the recipients but the donors as well, denying them agency, affinity, and preference.

On the other hand is a politicization of all prisoners in which criminality, far from excused, is romanticized. In this way, the morality of justice is abolished, but the messier half of the truth the justice system manages is conveniently ignored. This approach has allowed rebels to find comrades who are sincere in their struggle but ended up behind bars for less principled reasons and therefore would have been dismissed by the classical framework of prisoner support. But it also communicates a naïve hope that is ripe for manipulation. Just as the jailhouse preacher seeks souls, the anti-prison insurrectionary seeks comrades of a sort she can immediately understand, as fellow revolutionary subjects of the undifferentiated sort insurrectionism has always espoused. The opportunists and parasites who thrive in a prison, as in all institutions, will quickly recognize and play to this hope, adopting revolutionary rhetoric and credentials in order to win the uniquely fierce kind of support that anarchists offer. Appropriately, it is these charlatan comrades who have most often destroyed the support projects that have offered them solidarity, especially when they were released into the care of their earnest supporters.

The few projects that have succeeded have recognized their own revolutionary desires. They have acknowledged their self-interested determination to support prisoners who are in struggle, particularly those whose struggle bears some affinity to their own, but they do not demand the unity or even the mutual intelligibility of these struggles. Thus, they will send not just any old book but specifically radical books, making clear their own analysis but providing access to a wider range of analysis that is not ideologically determined but does meet minimum standards (against racist or anti-Semitic texts, for example). In this way, they aid prisoners in an unguided process of self-education while maintaining an open invitation to those with whom they discover a deeper affinity. In the meantime, any struggle that arises within the prisons and makes use of the resources those external supporters have made available is entrusted entirely to the prisoners themselves. If this struggle chooses to connect with wider struggles, of which those on the outside form a part, all the better, but this unification cannot be pressured or rigged.

Breaking the isolation of prisoners and aiding their struggles raises the costs of repression and neutralizes some of its effects. There are also ways to counter and preempt repression that should not be overlooked.

“Security culture” should always be understood as a strategic race against enclosure rather than a technical elaboration of rules of behavior, because the latter is a practice based on the imperative of keeping people out of prison. In individual cases, this is perfectly sensible. In the big picture, perfectly absurd. Wherever there is effective struggle, the State will make arrests, whether or not they can find the people responsible for specific crimes. The proposition of keeping people out of prison is, in the long run, conservative and idiotic.

Notwithstanding, by perfecting techniques of security, we force the State to fall back on collective rather than individualized forms of punishment. If they cannot find the specific criminals responsible for an attack, they must attack the community of struggle and arrest scapegoats singled out for clearly political reasons, which belies the narrative of democratic peace, destroys

the discourse of criminality and the alibi of the justice system, and reveals the fundamentally collective nature of all struggle.

Partisan movements, urban guerrilla groups, and Native land struggles have all produced technical manuals focused on counter-surveillance that rebels and insurgents today can make use of to obstruct State efforts to gather intelligence. The urban guerrillas in particular communicate a mythology of clandestinity which requires the reader to separate the technical knowledge from the strategic. The real trick is not to professionalize these techniques but to generalize them among a larger community. A broadly shared suspicion of communications technology, academics, journalists, and police, in the hands of an entire community, will be far more effective at blocking State intelligence-gathering than a sophisticated array of counter-surveillance techniques in the hands of one affinity group; but the one need not and should not exclude the other.

As far as the problem of infiltration is concerned, it has been suggested that more damage has been done by the quest to out infiltrators than by infiltrators themselves. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that police infiltrators should be welcomed into a group and simply relegated to washing the dishes and other harmless tasks.

It is true that snitch-jacketing is a dangerous and ever present police ploy. And we also hold to the axiom that “you don’t need to be a cop to do a cop’s work.” Furthermore, some of us live in countries where it is highly illegal to out an undercover, in which case we must push them out of our groups without fully explaining the reason, and the information about their identity must be published clandestinely.

However, the idea that undercovers, infiltrators, and informants are only a danger insofar as they become aware of illegal activity is categorically misleading. Cops and snitches systematically sabotage our work—including our legal activities—and gather benign information on personal habits and relationships that can be useful in causing infighting, establishing psychological profiles, facilitating the spread of credible rumors or false information, and identifying suspects.

Counter-infiltration needs to become a constant activity. Firstly, this activity must be carried out with a full consciousness of the danger represented by false accusations and an awareness of the ways by which a legitimate comrade can be jacketed as a cop or a snitch. Any methodical approach, and above all the publication of any method, for discovering cops and snitches will serve as a guide for the police to avoid the discovery of their own agents and to snitch-jacket those who cannot be turned.

For that reason, it is appropriate here to sketch only a few lines. The longer you know someone, the lower the possibility that they are working for the State, but length of involvement is no absolute guarantee. Long-term infiltrators are less common than short-term infiltrators, but they exist, as do those comrades who flip after so many years of defeat and disappointment.

The struggles that are hardest to infiltrate or recruit informants from are those based in real and healthy communities, in which people are connected through multigenerational bonds of familiarity. The more transient and individualistic a struggle, the weaker. Those who build a culture of struggle based on a punk ethic of youthful rebellion (as though rebellion should have an age), in which friends do not even know each other’s families or places of origin, are preparing the field to the police’s favor. Furthermore, a culture of struggle in which inclusion is based on the same principles as popularity in a subculture also invite infiltration. Too many times, the most suspicious of people were kept in the fold because they bought the drinks and knew how to work the gossip mills.

Except where the evidence is undeniable, individuals should be pushed away on the basis of being damaging to the struggle, rather than on the basis of a direct accusation of being cops. If someone spreads rumors, sabotages their commitments, uses addictive drugs, proves to be an expert in emotional manipulation, brags about illegal actions or pushes others to do so, this should be enough to confront them and if necessary exclude them, without the justification of any grandiose accusation that may end up doing more harm.

Whereas bonds of sympathy should be extended as widely as possible and revoked only where a person has proven themselves undeserving, bonds of intimate trust must be granted only where earned.

## **A Beautiful Chaos**

Any consideration of organization must begin with the recognition that organizations as such do not exist. Beyond a narrative device in group mythology, such as the anecdotal “anarchist federation” that is nothing more than a gathering of individual anarchists wishing to avail some representational status, organization is the formalized patterning of connectivity within the collective whole. There is no tension between the individual and the collective, only different models by which the individual relates with the collective, and different models by which collectives incorporate individuals. These models create a tension in the individual at the level of her socialization (in terms of education, identity, and the process by which the commons are socialized), and in the collective at the level of its connectivity.

Those who conflate the end of an organization with the end of the collective will never be able to come to terms with the question of organization. Relations between individuals never cease. They merely change their intensity and their mythic or ritual mediation. In other words, the collective always exists as a chaotic network. Being chaotic, it is both creative and entropic, which means that above all it is shifting.

Whereas the Machine tries to deny and forestall this truth, anarchists must embrace it.

State organization is a coercive patterning which can be described as constitutional rather than shifting. The collective retains its chaotic, shifting nature, but the institutional structures of the State seek to suppress this nature and impose a disciplined, orderly movement. For all its in-built mechanisms of change and adaptation, the State requires a legitimized inheritance of power that cannot allow its center of gravity to shift in response to a tilting planet. As such, it must seek to harness and exploit the creative energies of the chaos, while expending an augmenting sum of resources to stave off entropy: this is the process of edification.

For those who rebel, organizing cannot become a matter of edification. On the contrary, it must consciously become the articulation of a libertarian relation between individual and collective, and the sharing of patterns of connectivity that at the smaller scale enable effective action and evaluation, and at the larger scale begin to resurrect the commune. Along the way, specific organizations will serve as models, often existing more in the imaginary than in their concrete practice. Some of these organizations will serve us best with a short lifespan, others will serve us best by lasting longer, but they must never be mistaken for the collective.

As the model of a libertarian relation between individual and collective, the organization must shun monopoly above all else. That organization which pretends to control access to the collective is a tyrant. Contrary to Machine-logic, organizations must be overlapping and redundant,

not streamlined and unitary. The quest to remove friction or conflict between different organizations, to bequeath them jurisdiction, as it were, is the quest for social control. Only through the free elaboration of conflicts can a society be healthy. If individuals participate in multiple organizational spaces and the same social problem may be dealt with by one or another organization, the less likely these conflicts are to lead to social fractures. Where there is high connectivity—when people enjoy extensive, overlapping relationships so that everyone, in a matter of speaking, is kin to everyone else—society does not fall into internecine warfare, but it does unite against invaders who would damage that connectivity.

As Tacitus wrote, referring to warfare between the free German tribes from the perspective of an expanding Roman empire, “fortune can bestow on us no better gift than discord among our foes.” The Mapuche, on the other hand, tell how the Spaniards were baffled by their fragmentation. After defeating one band of warriors, there was no rest for the would-be conquistadors, because another group of communities would send forth another band. Invading Wallmapu was like going into a field of tall grass. They could only trample what was immediately underfoot; everywhere else the grass sprang up again, surrounding them. Libertarian organization, therefore, must allow us to identify and fight common enemies, without tricking us into uniting as one army that can easily be understood and destroyed by that enemy.

At the small scale, effective patterns of connectivity nurture and confirm trust while rooting out people undeserving of it, bring together people with complementary resources and skills necessary to the task at hand, provide material support and emotional care in the face of the consequences of struggle and life under capitalism, facilitate honest and critical communication that will not cover up errors for the sake of sparing feelings, and maintain connections with the greater collective to avoid isolation, continuously absorb knowledge, and connect with new accomplices.

In sum, what we are looking for comes closer to the connectivity in a band of warriors or network of midwives than to friendship as we currently understand it.

Since most of us can only entertain the former as a hazy ideal, we can start practically by demanding more of friendship and demystifying the affinity group. For insurgents, friendship is a demanding, caring, dangerous, and protective relationship. It distinguishes itself jealously from the self-serving friendship of the clique, just as those who have seen combat sneer at the peace of civilians. Insurgent friends have each other’s backs and tend each other’s wounds, but they do not cover each other’s mistakes. They do not insist on a false equality but encourage everyone to rise to their talents and find their complementary, interconnected niches. Those who betray friendship are shunned. Those who see friendship as popularity have no idea what war is.

Friendship and affinity need not overlap, although with true friends affinity is multiplied a thousandfold. Affinity, meanwhile, does not exist in groups, but in networks. It changes over time, it is not necessarily bilateral, and the same two individuals will have shifting degrees of affinity in different situations and different projects. When individuals imagine an affinity group, they map an intractably subjective experience into an objective schema: to represent the affinity group they will draw a circle, made up of different points standing for the individuals who constitute it. This is a falsification.

If affinity must be mapped, and it is best not to, it would be a wide open space scattered with points that move over time like stars across the sky or plankton in the sea. One of these points is you. If you were to abandon the disembodied map view and return to your own perspective, turning 360 degrees you would see all the other points nearest to you and from them imagine a circle.

But the most important element in the construction of this circle— yourself—would be invisible to you. Thus, returning to the objective view which unfortunately governs ideas of strategy and projectuality, you would dishonestly draw a circle when what you should be drawing is a circle with a point in the middle.

The affinity group is egoistically tailored to your unique experience of affinity. Recognizing this, you would see that the other points, the other individuals with whom you have constructed this circle, will themselves be at the center of other circles which include some of the same people as your circle, and some others who are more distant from you and therefore not a part of your circle.

When affinity is crystallized into a specific group that is expected to meet periodically and survive through time, there will nearly always be one or two people who feel the most affinity for the group, while the others feel to a greater or lesser extent peripheral or hesitant, because the group is not constituted by their own subjective circle of affinity. Accordingly, they will share more affinity with some individuals who are not a part of the group than with those members of the group at the opposite end of the circle; they will balance their loyalties between the projects of the group and other projects they can only undertake with affines who are not a part of the group, whereas the group's most central members will seek to deploy the affinity group for all their desired projects. Over time, these diverging experiences of the same group will stress and warp a structure that is supposedly natural and self-mending.

Sometimes, people can grow and learn a great deal by choosing to crystallize affinity, to elaborate and temper it week after week. But the more they try to preserve the group as a stable structure, intended to outlast time and lend itself to any kind of activity or project, the more they will be battling against entropy.

In other words, the affinity group is a sometimes convenient lie. The many insurgents who have forgotten this fall into the same trap as they criticize in formal organizations. The informal group too may come to belong more to some than to others, or become an end in itself, or a drain on energy as it demands ever more maintenance, or a sort of enclosure that facilitates repression.

Once we realize that organizations as such do not exist but are only distinct patternings on a shifting, inalienable, chaotic whole, we entirely surpass the opposition of formality and informality. Every antiauthoritarian society that has entered our knowledge has had formal as well as informal spaces. The authoritarian project advanced not by creating formal spaces but by legitimizing the former and disappearing the latter. We should not deny ourselves the experiment of a society of total informality, but neither should we predicate the idea of anarchy on what may well be an impossibility and a philosophical misunderstanding.

Formal and informal patternings of the collectivity are primarily questions of ritual and comfort. An organization designed to ritualize its motions and define its members' roles presents no threat to their freedom as long as that group does not hold a monopoly as the intermediary to any necessity. If it is not a union one must join in order to work, or an assembly one must participate in to be permitted to live in a certain neighborhood; as long as there are also alternative, overlapping, and redundant organizations that exist to fulfill the same need; and as long as the informal space of communication and decision-making that always exists beneath and at the margins remains inalienable and untrammelled, the specific ritual hoops that one must jump through to satisfy an organization's formality represent nothing more than a game that everyone has agreed to play.

Democratic thinking would lead us to inoculate formality through the mechanism of participation. As long as everyone can participate equally in formulating the rituals and processes of the organization, the democrat supposes, that formality cannot become oppressive. This is a trap. If a circular affinity group does not belong equally to all its members, the compartmentalized, formal organization is even less equal in its distribution. No formal process will ever be equally accessible to everyone, according to their differing talents and comforts. Notwithstanding, by demanding universal participation, the democratic method acquires universal legitimacy, and with this in hand, it quickly sets about steamrolling any challenges or discontent, silencing and infantilizing the informal space at the margins, and generalizing the authoritarian project. Since “the people” already includes everyone, who can oppose it?

The key to freedom is not the viability of participation, but the viability of negation, of opting out. As such, one should feel far more threatened by a directly democratic open assembly that seeks to decide on all social questions, than by a workplace assembly or regional federation of particular groups that has decided to cut down on meeting time through delegation or other formalities. As long as the latter never pretends to be a totalizing organ for social organization, but rather sees itself as simply one tool among many they can appoint a king or a grand poobah or make all decisions with the throw of a dice. If the members can leave without losing access to the greater collectivity, they are free.

In fact, the more tools, the more organizational forms, the broader a range of people who can find their ideal niche within society. When these niches are not subordinated to a legitimating hierarchy but enjoy a legitimacy that is in its essence endogenous, freedom reigns. Freedom is not a fragile, pure state that is polluted or cancelled out by certain organizational forms. On the contrary, freedom is robust, it grows stronger through experience and conflict. As long as people are allowed to freely undergo fusion and fission in their associations, to link and to break, rather than being bound against entropy to a perfected organizational scheme, they will intensify freedom as a practice, and the supposed tension between individual and collective will encounter a solution-in-motion. In this dynamic, unrestrained practice, many of the problematics anarchism has posed will encounter unique and diverging answers.

In the meantime, by addressing the problem of organization not as a matter to be solved by a dogmatic list of prescriptions and proscriptions (affinity groups yes, federations no), but as a question of panceentric practice, rebels will multiply the chances of encounter with those who are seeking accomplices that they may also rebel. The anti-authoritarian aspersion of recruiting is admirable. The struggle is not to be sugar-coated, and by only allowing the most determined to find us, we erect a useful filter in the path of potential accomplices. But this practice only recognizes one model of participation in a struggle, and blinds rebels to the validity of the timid and to the usefulness of having allies on the sidelines.

It also conflates rebellion with the loner’s rejection of society. Although it is true that in recent memory, struggles have been waged by mavericks and iconoclasts, it is equally true that the so-far insurmountable isolation of these same struggles is inseparable from their contempt for what they see as the herd.

When we are not recruiting for one big organization, in which new members are infantilized and then progressively reeducated as they climb the institutional ladder, we do ourselves no harm by occasionally making it easy for others to take their first steps with us.

Would we reproduce the errors of a typical socialist party by helping organize an anarchist youth club or summer camp, if the content of that space were not programmed but organized

by participants? If we agree that we are not interested only in finding other militants, is there a danger in allowing others to feel like they are one of us without having passed a trial by fire? If we reject recruiting, must we also reject the creation of infrastructure projects or organizations that make it easy for new people to join us? Perhaps the warrior or combatant needs to be recognized as only one kind of rebel among many.

A pure, unnuanced refusal of recruiting demands that we do not give any importance to the question of whether we are greater or fewer, and all the strategic potentials that question indicates. Such a refusal must therefore jettison strategy and set the individual on an unswerving course of strict dedication to the expression of his own needs and desires, regardless of the effects on this individual's standing in society. Such a coherent egoism doubtlessly constitutes a total war against authority, but it also presupposes an individual whose needs can be met within his own person and not within the web of relationships to other individuals. The idea of the union of egos, the collective of individuals, spares the uncompromising rebel from the worst disadvantages of solitude and allows her to enjoy the fulfillment of certain collective needs. But this idea still assumes that the *Eigentum*, the "own" or the property of the ego is mobile and exclusively dispensable by the ego itself, as though relations were not tendrils, roots, and climatic systems demonstrating simultaneity across an expansive space, but simply a briefcase full of cash the ego carries around, free to deposit in this bank or the other.

Seeking to inspire others to rebel, and to expand the body of potential accomplices, is above all a recognition that to destroy the Machine and foster the commune, we need all of us. The recruiter sees the recruit instrumentally, as a resource to augment his own power, or religiously, as a convert who has attained validity by ascribing to the same subjectivity. The insurgent sees the new accomplice as another part of herself, a small body growing into an awakening giant; she also sees the new accomplice as an autonomous other, with whom she may as likely quarrel as converse. In times of peace, the many heads of this giant do not think with one mind, but in war they all clench their deadly attentions around their oppressor and attack from all sides.

As this body of rebels and insurgents grows, just as the hydra it will encounter the question of coordination. Those who still follow the Machine-logic will attempt to obviate the conflicts created by fragmentation through permanent organization aspiring towards unity. But the fragmentation of the hydra is its strength. Conflict is the health of society; war and peace its death.

Among anarchists in the past one hundred years, the most common motive for fomenting large scale organization—most typically, a federation—is an attempt to shore up and mask the weakness of the constituent groups. Only when there is a true ecosystem of rebel cells, affinity groups, projects, infrastructure, and organizations, each with its own existence, strength, and identity, can we breach the question of coordination. We will know we have reached that point when the age-old fear of the federation suffocating its members becomes absurd because those member groups each enjoy a distinct and undeniable trajectory.

However, once this is the case, those groups, even though their individual participants recognize the need for coordination across the whole body of rebels, will be jealous of their autonomy and more used to disputing than to cooperating. They will have created a strong tradition of struggle that erects even stronger barriers to its own intensification. To keep from digging this ditch, now, while coordination is still impractical, we need to include within our imaginary and our history examples of rebel coordination in which the lower, quotidian levels of activity never became less important than the higher, federated levels; in which many bands or tribes or mili-

tias could come together for the same purpose without ever surrendering their autonomy to the process of homogenization constituted by the creation of an army.

Additionally, we must begin to conduct rituals of mock coordination in order to inaugurate now a healthy pattern of fusion and fission, of coming together and going our separate ways again, rhythmically, seasonally. While we do not yet have the power, as individual groups, to coordinate an attack against the Machine, we can still join together—in bookfairs or festivals—once a year or every few months to see us in our entirety, to initiate collective conversations that later evolve into coordination, and to inculcate in us the temporary, periodic nature of such coordination.

Besides the encounter, there is also the pole. An assembly that attracts like elements, the pole does not pretend to become a delineated organization. It is rather a rallying point for rebels in a common struggle or shared social moment to elaborate their affinity and difference. It does not seek to make decisions but to hold debates, and its debates do not aim for resolution or consensus but for the benefit of all the individuals who develop and challenge their ideas. The pole strengthens the strategy and projectuality of a diverse body of rebels who share a basic antiauthoritarian affinity but each maintain their own projects and initiatives. In moments of social upheaval, the possibility and necessity of coordinated action can become clear to all the participants of the pole, but specific actions will be organized in a separate space, to allow for greater security and to avoid a fracture into majority and minority, those who will participate in the action and those who will not. By organizing as a pole rather than as a binding or executive assembly, communities of rebels have overcome the chronic problems of dispersal and failed organization that had plagued their cities for time immemorial.

As the struggle intensifies, we will need not only to coordinate our attacks and responses but to create more frequent spaces of coordination, perhaps even to crystallize this coordination as a federation or other organization. All the better that we begin now to place the lowest levels of organization at the center of our universe and recognize the highest levels as the most distant.

## **Allies, Enemies, and the Left**

It remains clear, to anyone who wishes to pay attention, that the function and purpose of the political left is to recuperate revolution, to preserve the Machine-logic in all the gestures of rebellion, and to train would-be insurgents in the fine art of self-betrayal. Formal institutions such as unions and political parties once played the predominant role; now the skills of recuperation have been decentralized through the media, NGOs, and the methodology of activism.

It is less clear, but equally true, that the Left is an indispensable part of struggles against the Machine. This is because the Left represents a contradiction that the Machine has thus far successfully managed. The Left does not represent a detail of the grand architecture drafted by the Machine's engineers. It is in fact self-creating, the deformed birth of a half rebellion that never dared plumb its own depths, that shirked total emancipation. It is the slave's dream become flesh.

The Machine, in its adolescence, crushed rebellions without mercy and without thought of recuperation or compromise. In its maturity, it has played the timidity and failure of subsequent revolutions to its fullest advantage. The Left does not belong to the Machine, but it always comes when called. It is a space of permissiveness the Machine has come to tolerate in order to let off steam, steam which may be put to the profit of new turbines. But for all the comfort and gain

the arrangement may entail, the Machine is spurred in this endeavor by fragility and not by omnipotence.

The countries which host a strong Left, and in which the insurgents understand the true function of the Left, are also home to the strongest struggles. The countries in which Left dictatorships have co-opted and then suffocated social movements, leaving behind only apathy, which is to say, the countries where there is no oppositional Left, are the countries where insurgents are most isolated and adrift.

The key to the tricky question of our engagement with the Left comes down to a factor hardly ever mentioned in politics or in struggle: sincerity.

The Left is so useful to the Machine because it is a political space which brings together authentic rebels and well meaning organizers with opportunists and careerists, and then privileges the latter over the former. The Left works for the Machine when it functions as a space of integration. It works for the rebellion when it functions as a space of contradiction. Those anarchists who dismiss the Left wholesale collaborate in its mechanical function: they allow a conflictive amalgamation to remain integrated.

The fact that anarchist values have repeatedly generalized through the space of the Left, most recently in the form of open assemblies and the rejection of political parties, obliging the resident politicians to laboriously twist the new rhetoric to their advantage and learn a whole new set of tricks, shows that the Left is not a homogeneous space, and it is more conflictive than mechanical. While a great many conspiracies and swindles take place within the Left, the Left as a whole is not the realization of a conspiracy or swindle designed with foresight to neutralize rebellion. It is a conflictive space the Machine has learned to permit where it can battle rebellion without interrupting the narrative of social peace.

Because the institutions of the Left have followed their own logic of collaboration to a point where since the end of World War II their obsolescence has been guaranteed, new social conflicts increasingly spring up in the opaque zone beyond the boundaries of the Left, while those conflicts that do crop up in the domesticated zone are increasingly exceeding it, often with little warning.

The obsolescence of the Left also changes the meaning of the Right. While the Right has traditionally been a coalition between the old guard and the mercenary classes—who have always preferred the privileged wages paid out for the Machine's dirty work to the warm bonds of solidarity—is increasingly becoming a vague resting point for would-be rebels who cannot stomach the hypocrisy of the Left.

For approaching both of these groups, old formulae are no longer valid. The test of sincerity is the most important tool for sounding out alliances and for fracturing the coalitions that function to neutralize rebellion, both with the well meaning rank-and-file of the Left, and with the disaffected exiles who find some haven amidst the confused rhetoric of the populist Right.

By radically challenging hypocrisy and attaching revolutionary proposals to the revolutionary rhetoric of these new spaces of protest, whether these be the ilk of Occupy Wall Street or the Tea Party Movement, anarchists can sabotage the attempts of populists and careerists to ride social angst into power. They can also separate the seed from the chaff and encounter others who truly believe in the ideas of revolution, freedom, and solidarity. By acting as the critical minority within these spaces, saying what no one else will say, and combining a sincere idealism with a dedication to practice, anarchists can reorient entire social movements against the pressures of pragmatism, collaboration, and betrayal, and we can discover alliances that multiply our own possibilities.

The practice of intervening in social movements often goes hand in hand with an instrumental view of these movements, in which anarchists seek to counter the leaders of the Left and unleash the destructive potential of the masses, destabilizing the State and paving the way for our revolutionary strikes. Distinct from the idea of achieving a presence in these movements, which is a more participatory proposition, the idea of interventionism, in the spirit of Venomous Butterfly, treats their diverse constituents as a quantity of blind force to be channeled in this or that direction.

The arrogance is not in having confidence in one's own ideas and in acting on those ideas even in the face of conflict; it is in treating everyone else like so many sheep.

While the eruptions of 2011 validated the idea of critical participation in social movements, the most remarkable aspect for anarchist theory passed without comment. Nearly all those anarchists who participated in the new movements changed their practice considerably while old divisions blurred and died. This growth, this learning, is a direct result of meeting face to face with other elements of society, which was singularly possible for those who were not convinced they would meet only sheep in these new movements. The extent to which their practice matured demonstrates the creative nature of the social body: those who went out into the streets, the parks and plazas learned through their interactions with strangers. Although sometimes we are the most daring or the most aware of our history, in rising up we do not give everyone else the answers. The great transformations we experience show that we do not yet have them. But the ruptures we have caused through our daring and confidence also prove that humility should never mean surrendering legitimacy to the majority.

We have to let our participation in social conflicts change us. If we only ever trust those with the same goals as us, we will not have the opportunity to learn from difference. Most people formulate their goals on the basis of what they consider possible. For this reason, people of such different character are mixed together in the Left. The grassroots politician and the would-be rebel share the same moderate goals, although one desires power and knows how to get it and the other desires freedom and does not know where it can be found. Likewise, in social conflicts that take place in realms of criminality rather than political contestation, there are those for whom crime is a form of rebellion, and those for whom it is a ladder to power. Once again, the critical distinction is sincerity.

Our participation in all these mixed spaces must be formulated to challenge the narrow range of given choices and thus find the ones who sincerely want more than what reality has to offer.

This practice means the subversion of institutions on the Left. Traditional coalition politics, in which we create an illusory closeness with a desirable demographic by cozying up to the organization that mobilizes that demographic, require the perpetuation of the function of the Left. We cannot honor the fiction of these organizations as a unified body.

This also means not dismissing them wholesale. Even though their leadership may be recuperators, the organizations signify a community of resistance to sincere members of the rank-and-file.

What remains is to see through these organizations as though they do not exist and find the individuals who inspire us or evoke our confidence. All of those who uphold the rule of solidarity and do not completely subordinate their imagination and desire for freedom to the demands of pragmatism are worth working with.

In the experience of the anti-globalization movement, in the years when the narrative of social peace still reigned, many rebels lost themselves in the shadows of opportunistic organizations, signing on as footsoldiers for the leadership of other communities, and some comrades perma-

nently disappeared into the non-profit labyrinth. Others, however, found accomplices, and they successfully spread antiauthoritarian practices well beyond their own circles, disadvantaging the Left in the future disorders that lay unseen around the corner.

Although it is true that the Left has played as important a function in the mechanisms of social control as the repressive forces, these two hands of the State are by no means equal or similar, and treating them equally in a fit of abstraction is self-defeating. Although it is true that politicians and the self-electing members of the mercenary class (cops, jail guards, snitches, military officers) are our enemy and must be treated with all the violence, scorn, contempt, and moral disgust we find it consistent with our particular vision of freedom to mobilize, we must never forget that the enemy, in its purest state, is simply a manner of viewing the world.

As such, there is no contradiction in participating in certain ways with the Left, because the Left currently contains many people who have a place in the world we are fighting for. The errors of unity are already writ large in our history. The fact that “antifascism” was a ploy by the Communist Party to eliminate opponents is no argument to abandon the front (the front as a line of battle, rather than the unified front as an organization). It is merely a cautionary tale about what kind of relationship to build with the Left. As long as we breathe, we have a place in the conflicts of our society, and should never surrender them to the monopoly of the loyal opposition, no matter how mediated these conflicts might appear at the outset. But at the same time, we must never surrender ourselves to the populism and homogenization the Left will demand of us. Both those who do not show up and those who come as followers and allies have been duped by the marginalization imposed on the rebel. But this conflict is ours too. We also feel these needs, even if a life of combat and dreaming has enabled us to see them differently. The trick is being there and being ourselves.

## **The New Communes**

When we specify what acts spread and nourish the commune, we will have discovered the most essential revolutionary tasks. Finally, our long flirtation with martyrdom will come to an end, we will forgive ourselves for losing paradise, and we will outgrow the self-destructive tendencies that have masqueraded as struggle. The commune, as it always has, will welcome us home.

Everywhere that people come together in recognition of who they are, which is to say where they came from, however nascent that understanding, the commune is waiting to be reborn. With a simple sense of history and due consideration for the importance of care, a general assembly traipsing along the path to recuperation can be transformed into the next commune. Hannah Arendt wrote of the commune that arose in the improvised space of proletarian women’s laundry groups. Alexander Berkman intuited the commune that lurked in the bowels of prison. Even the factories or the transatlantic merchant ships before them were on occasion won over by the struggle and turned into communes.

The dispossessed found a new commune waiting in the urban streets that had been built to confine them. When the enemy took control of the streets, the commune flitted up to perpetuate itself in conversations held across balconies and in stairwells. The utopian totalitarianism of architecture was not enough. Some neighborhoods remained free until they brought in heroin or television.

The commune is robust. It is forgiving of our mistakes, and it always comes back. And though we need to fight for it, and fight fiercely, in sowing it we will discover that its health is more surely nourished by those tasks that are trivialized as “feminine” in the binary division of the classical practice, and forgotten entirely in the one-sided equality of the democratic practice.

Within the commune, cooking for each other, caring for each other, listening, supporting, taking care of children and elderly, passing on stories, observing, mending hurt feelings and restoring connections after conflicts are all revolutionary acts. Seeing to the body of the struggle and tending its wounds and weaknesses is absolutely vital to carrying on day after day, year after year, generation after generation. Actions of support do not constitute support for the struggle; they constitute the struggle itself.

We will also discover the necessity of reskilling if we are to build the commune beyond a flat potentiality. The commune exists as a conversation. With our current capacities—philosophical and practical—we can only conceive of a conversation in a liberal sense, a talking about ideas that quickly exhausts its subject. So many attempted communes have been abandoned as people prefer to return to the stultifying but nonetheless practiced existence under the Machine as opposed to the mere reflection of existence in the two-dimensional commune.

Rather than a conversation about ideas, we need to comprehend the possibility of a conversation through the world, in which nouns are beings, verbs are abilities, and the minutes are recorded in four dimensions. This conversation will be articulated with the skills of feeding, fixing, healing, building, and caring in ways that are adequate to our desired community and our current resources. The commune is a hungry vessel that craves to be stretched and filled. Once we set foot in it, it is not enough to stand about with our ideas like Enlightenment individuals. We must remember the largeness of our bodies and come all the way inside, thicken the commune with all the material companions of our bodies’ many motions, so that eating, sleeping, breathing, working, playing, loving, fucking, shitting may all be done within the expanding space of the commune, the world returning.

The commune is the yin to the insurrection’s yang. They are both unrestrained meetings of bodies, but though one is often born from the other, they constitute themselves in formidably different ways.

The commune is simple and strenuous in its demands. It does not require complex strategizing or drawn-out analysis, only a clear feeling for its nature. It is everywhere in waiting, and it demands that we surpass ourselves.

At the time of this writing it remains to be seen whether the Oakland commune will live up to its name, or if it will only be a drawn out encounter born of a shared antagonism. The struggle against the police and the spontaneous emergence of a crowd in the wave of the Occupy movement created the rupture from which this seed could sprout. Whether it grows to the point it can send out new seeds depends on a couple questions. Whether its participants can care for each other beyond being united by a simple hatred of the cops; and whether they can find the point where their histories diverged, rediscovering their sameness without denying their intense particularities. Failing this, they will only be strangers in a convenient alliance.

The commune of Val di Susa shows greater promise. Already referring back to a transborder, antinational, montanard identity, they have the materials at hand to understand their struggle as a continuing war against colonization, rather than as a democratic campaign against an inconvenient development project. Across the valley, a society reborn has shown its potential for care, among themselves and with the outsiders who come in support. Theirs is not the intransigence

of a subculture but the rebellion of a collective body, an ecology of resistance with a niche for everyone who feels the call of solidarity.

## **Riot to Insurrection to Revolution**

The attack spreads itself precisely where it opens fissures in reality. Only in the abyss do we find ourselves. Reality is a brilliant defensive arrangement, precisely for this reason: none of the visible structures of the Machine are singularly powerful enough anymore, on their own, to warrant giving them battle. The political system is trash, everyone knows it, but it's such a small part of life, why bother? My boss is a pig, true, but so were my parents. As long as reality is allowed to be a seamless fabric and uninterrupted narrative, people will not realize that it is not the same as the world. It is futile to attack the world: the one thing you can never abolish is the ground you stand on. But the totality of the Machine—its reality, and its apparatuses—is a far cry being everything. It is simply a virulent contraption scratching its way across the face of the planet. Not realizing this, those with the temperament of politicians will attack some structure of the Machine, and those with the temperament of lunatics will attack the world.

But fissures and interruptions show that reality is a product. And it is when people not only take notice, but act from within these abysses that a rupture occurs. But which people, and how many? Those of us who are already rebels move from fissure to interruption; we carry the abyss with us, and one of the few things capable of demoralizing us is the sad realization that we do not constitute ruptures.

A rupture occurs when enough people act from within the abyss or in such a way that society notices. We cannot specify any liminal threshold that must be crossed because society currently has no perceptive capacities: it is half dead, in need of resuscitation. There is no sure science for resuscitating someone from a coma. There are only methods and spells, and we do what we can.

When something works, it always takes us by surprise. The eyes blink open, the giant body suddenly stirs, and we cannot help but move with it. This is the rupture: when society suddenly realizes it is still alive, and we suddenly realize what was lacking. Only the abrupt sound of the breath of society reveals the rumbling of the Machine for what it truly is. But when the poor patient stirs, the Machine, in paramedic garb, rushes to the scene of the rupture, cries out "Make way! Give him air!" and over the opened mouth slips the oxygen mask. The patient is quarantined. A diagnosis will be forthcoming.

As the patient is carted away, we mutter with suspicion. What was described to us as emergency we are sure felt like a first instance of vitality.

The ruptures will be managed in this way until we can hold onto our suspicion and learn how to weave a history that keeps the suspicion warm. We are all individual cells of that giant, but osmosis has been prohibited to us. It is exactly this prohibited sharing we must relearn in order to build our own history and overcome the amnesia that washes the same suspicions away night after night. And after the seventh consecutive rupture we can remember, we will, finally, gather as an angry crowd around the gasping victim, whom we will allow no air but that which comes from our own lungs. We will resuscitate this giant with the cry: "No Doctors!" The paramedic will be denied access to its patient. We will become such irrational monsters we will set fire to the ambulance. The Machine will come back in the form of a soldier and then, finally, we will be in the world. It will be a fight to the death, which we will only win if in all the ruptures and

moments in between we have developed the capacities and acquired the weapons we need, if we have grown strong lungs to breathe such life into society that even many of the engineers and soldiers remember, in that moment of strange quaking, who they are, and what ground they stand on.

That quaking is our only promised land. In the meantime, we have a mere idea of ruptures, a fleeting experience of riots, and the dream that these should bloom into insurrections. But this dream, if it does not smother us in impatience, trains us in waiting.

Riots do not happen on their own. They result when one brave person, and then another, in a climate of generalized angst, find the courage to do the right thing; or they unfold when a group of people prepare themselves for violence and outrage in a propitious circumstance such as a major protest, and either do not succeed in making a plan or through daring and agility exceed their plans. What it hangs upon is courage, a sense of timing, and the social intuition to know when the magical sound of shattering glass or the enchanting shadows of firelight will not be met with slack-jawed disbelief but with a collective unleashing of savagery that spreads through the streets. Riots do not wait upon material conditions. They also break out at the height of prosperity, feeding on the ever present desire for wildness that the misery of a paycheck cannot allay. Nonetheless, in a society with a collective sense of crisis, opportunities for riots and sympathy in their aftermath will abound.

The riot presents an opportunity to practice fighting, to seek revenge, to heal from years of submission, to interrupt the narrative of social peace and give greater force to our arguments, and to extend the archipelago of rebellion across a sea of defeat. But riots do not an insurrection make. It is crucial to know how to defeat the police in the streets, and while this capacity also serves to increase our social presence, it does not allow us to put down any lasting roots. Those communes founded by a riotous horde are stronger, but the horde that chooses to provoke riots will one day have to choose to found communes and to recognize those that are already growing in the shadows. Learning how to do this will prove harder than attacking a group of riot police.

The riot that is not seen as an opportunity to make the connections that could give birth to a commune will only serve as a catharsis, a permissive holiday that regenerates people's patience for more years of servitude and the increase in repression that will surely come if the State thinks it can get away with it.

The first day after the riot is the most important.

Those who recklessly push for more, who do not exhaust themselves in one day but seek to cast the sparks that could start new fires, may allow the riot to metamorphize into an insurrection. Many insurrections start from a riot, and some of these riots have started from the protest or outrage committed by a single person. But all insurrections constitute a rupture, a shockwave that spreads on its own, generalizing through society and defying any artifice that seeks to contain or extend it.

Contrary to what many have written, though an insurrection does meld all those who enter its furnace, it does not surpass identity; in fact pre-existing identities—not political beliefs or courage or material poverty—are generally what determine whether people feel called on to run into that furnace, or to look on in astonishment. For this reason, despite all the poetry and encouragements of insurrectionists, insurrections do not leap national boundaries. Those who considered themselves French did not join the immigrant insurgents of the banlieue, excepting a small number acting out a conscious political project (some of whom were mugged by the insurgents, and others of whom were accepted). In the Greek insurrection, people who thought of themselves

as living beings in struggle against authority saw the protagonists as one melded group; people who saw themselves as Greeks saw them as students, anarchists, and immigrants acting separately. The insurrections that jumped state borders from Tunisia to Syria filled precisely that vessel that gave its name to the revolt, the Arab world. The nation, understood separately from the nationalist projects of European states, is simply the largest imaginary community a person can envision based on their history and their ability to communicate with the world around them. An insurrection, it should be obvious, occurs within the imaginary community of its participants.

Knowledge of rebellion, particularly its images, among the population of a neighboring country will destabilize the political authority that seeks to manage them, but that population will not rise up without an independent spark. The eros effect does not surpass local realities or strong identities.

We could speak here in terms of frictions of distance. The insurrection is as fluid and unrestrained as a great wave, but it does not break on smooth terrain. All sorts of inevitable identities and natural limits to empathy act as barrier reefs or sea dikes to slow or stop the wave. On the one hand, immigration and globalized information create empathic links that subvert these barriers; on the other hand, nationalism, citizenship, and the media mobilize to neutralize the subversions. Radicals and organizers must counteract these measures by proliferating a culture of internationalism and solidarity and promoting decentralized and self-organized media that can spread images and news of revolt across the planet in the face of the selective censorship now in place, in which images of violence are almost strictly associated with insecurity, and rarely with popular challenges to authority.

Throughout an insurrection, those who take the initiative can spread new tools of struggle, such as the Coca-Cola gas masks handmade in Egypt, or the molotov cocktails that anarchists in Greece had already ensured would be a present part of the popular imaginary, as unpopular as the image they created might previously have been.

Those who take the initiative can also popularize new targets for attack, beyond the banks that will be targeted by members of the ex-middle class, the schools that will be targeted by youth, the social service buildings that will be targeted by immigrants, the police stations that will be targeted by the marginalized.

It is at this moment that the fourth reason for the attack, the practice of sabotage, will make itself felt. If insurgents have not already thought about the limits an insurrection will face, and how to make the leap from disrupting the social peace to cracking the foundations of authority, they will be left, after a few blissful days or weeks, with the sad question: "what do we do once we've burned everything?"

Stronger than the police as a force for reestablishing order is the television. Television can be sabotaged, but not by novices. This counterrevolutionary stalwart, however, is being quickly replaced by video narrative channeled through the internet, a medium that requires very different forms of sabotage. Electricity, ports, and long distance communication infrastructure are also vulnerable as well as crucial to State functioning. Every act of sabotage must be guided by the question: will this break down State supply lines and chains of command and bring people out into the streets without damaging our own mobility or ability to communicate?

Within the chaos of an insurrection, there is also the question of acts of revenge against owners and rulers. Beyond simple payback, such outrages lend force to the creation of new social relationships. This latter concern is unavoidable. The dead end that insurrections nearly always create can be overcome if the rest of society already has some familiarity with other visions of

the world, and if within the space of the insurrection insurgents announce and launch concrete proposals for the organization of a society free of the Machine.

If the fires of an insurrection go calm, insurgents must double their efforts to spread their visions and proposals with everyone else, while people still retain the memory of an affective rupture with reality. Even though most insurrections do not grow into revolutions, the only insurrection that fails is the one that insurgents do not follow up on to improve the reach and meaning of their struggle.

Those who live through riots and insurrections must know what to expect afterwards. There will be a new ground that favors conversations about new worlds and the negation of the present system, but this ground will be steadily poisoned by realism in the weeks that follow. There will be repression, and new opportunities to prevent the isolation that effective repression requires and fosters. There will be great happiness and newfound strength, but in equal measure the exhaustion of catharsis and the depression wrought by the return of normality. Inevitably, rebels in the aftermath will have to pick up the pieces of what they had been building, but more than a setback this is an opportunity to create new shapes of rebellion. If they are not passive or arrogant, insurgents will defeat the primary thrust of repression, which is to isolate, but they cannot prevent the State from waging a war of exhaustion.

How will we take the streets again to counteract our isolation? And how will we prevent all our energy and resources from being swallowed up by the justice system in the inevitable court cases? To answer in broad strokes, rebels must move from ruptures to relationships. Once we have pushed the rupture as far as it will go and normality returns, we must find ways to renew our spirits collectively, with as many new accomplices as possible, raising funds in ways that do not feel like work, supporting prisoners and challenging repression in ways that continue the struggle, that return to the streets, and that celebrate rebellion.

If seeds are planted in the aftermath of a rupture, the rupture will concentrate rather than dissipate the forces of the struggle. That insurrection which does grow beyond the ability of the police and media to contain it will require the democratic state to call in the military, at which point power has been forced to reveal its hand and can be challenged directly.

Riots can be provoked. Insurrections appear, creatures of sheer magic. But revolution must be decided. It is always an act of will, though the choice only falls to us when the giant is awakening.

The contingencies of a revolution cannot be charted in advance, but its first barrier is already visible from here: the conservatism that has always been stirred in those who are best positioned to declare a revolution. So used to being a minority, trained by long years of struggle to defend small gains, the most radical of insurgents will tremble under the sudden responsibility. They may decide it is not the right moment, and willfully miss the opportunity to shoot the moon. They may denounce as authoritarian the responsibility afforded by a rupture and the social influence they have gained through struggle, and decide that the most rebellious thing is to do nothing. Or they may confuse revolution with a coup d'état, words that have gone hand in hand too often in our confused history. Fearing the chaos and unpredictability that will follow the consummation of our total negation of authority, they will prefer instead to seize the instruments of power and guide society towards the correct solution.

What is required of us is to recognize when the Machine might be weaker than us; to destroy it definitively, razing all the prisons, government buildings, banks, and highways; to collectivize or communalize all the land and factories according to the needs and traditions of those with the most legitimate claim to their use, beginning the long, locally centered process of abolishing

the relations of production and the factory form itself while organizing to meet our needs; and ritually erasing the memory of power by running all the privileged engineers of the dead Machine through the gauntlet of humiliation and retribution, whether by grazing goats on the lawns of mansions, throwing prison guards down wells, putting cops and millionaires in a public stockade for one permissive month before the institution of punishment is abolished, forcing politicians and scientists to clean up nuclear waste sites, or sitting back, with a mixture of humor and sadness, to watch the revenge killings perpetrated by those too scarred by Authority to listen to reason and show mercy to the bureaucrats, pigs, bosses, snitches, and rulers who tormented them as long as they thought they could get away with it.

Our history shows us that within the space of the revolution, we will have to deal with the question of charismatic figures. Buenaventura Durruti, Masaniello, Boudicca, Thomas Muntzer, Nestor Makhno, Mikhail Gerdzhikov, Kim Jwa-Jin, Spartacus, Thasunke Witko, Anne Hutchinson, Louise Michel, Tupac Kutari, Nanny the Maroon, Lautaro, Hong Xiuquan, Práxedes Guerrero, Gerrard Winstanley, Nat Turner, Ali ibn Muhammad, Geronimo: our familiarity with these names cannot be reduced to the conventions of an authoritarian historiography. More than a few arose as war leaders or prophets from the bosom of horizontal societies, and their peers were the first to choose to follow them. Others were anarchists who lived and died for the dream of freedom. To explain away their fame as nothing more than a product of their psychological desire for the spotlight is to ignore their accomplishments and reduce their comrades to passive lackeys.

While we remain in the darkness of social peace, it is easy enough to dismiss the idea of leaders. But those rebels who live through a situation of revolution, of open war, either lose the initiative or suddenly find a justification for following someone whose specific talents are suited to war, at a time of urgency when the fact of charisma cannot be hidden and legitimized by the comforting mandate of an assembly or a vote. Either we rethink the question of charisma as we understand it at all moments of our struggle, or we are forced to accept a separation of ends and means in the supposedly special situation of revolutionary warfare, a dangerous proposal that seems bound to produce the same logic of exception that has led to unending revolutionary dictatorship.

We will have to answer this question before we get to that point or it will defeat us. For now, in pretending that we have no leaders, we begrudgingly tolerate the charisma of an organizer (after all, we don't want to do all that tedious work); we either fall prey to the romantic charisma of an insurgent or immediately malign it; we pounce on the charisma of a writer or theorist as evidence of demagoguery; and we bask in the charisma of an artist or musician. Without any sense of hypocrisy, we mistrust the bravado of the first and enable the antics of the last, even though anarchist musicians have sold us out at least as often as anarchist organizers.

The Friends of Durruti, to take one example, were by no means sycophants, nor were they followers in the derogatory sense of the term. Many of them had a proven capacity for taking the initiative and leading a charge—either political or military. In the milieu of the CNT in Catalunya, they were among the only anarchists who adopted a stance in favor of social revolution after 1936. But without a doubt, they were not as effective as Durruti, neither in battle nor in debate. And though they treated him as a hero, he was first and foremost their friend. After his death, they used his spirit and the sentiments it inspired to stave off the Communist counter-revolution and criticize the complicity of the CNT leadership. In a word, they collectivized his charisma.

Both the mediocre bureaucrats who excelled, for a while, in the new government, and the mediocre militants who criticized the CNT leadership without plotting any revolutionary projectuality to surpass it, failed to realize the ideal of rebellion to the extent that the Friends of Durruti

did. The former two recognized an institutional leadership, passive opposition to it notwithstanding. The latter recognized the politically incorrect fact of charisma. Which were more democratic, and which were more antiauthoritarian?

Equality is the lie of the mediocre. But individuality is the lie of the timid. Charisma, like everything else, belongs to all of us. When it flows back into the collective struggle, it is precious to us, whether we admit it or not. The danger lies not in charisma, but in valuing some talents over others, in institutionalizing leadership, recognizing only one form of it, or protecting leaders from the desertion of their followers.

We must bring the same harmonization between our ideals now and our ideals in the moment of revolution not only to the question of charisma but to all the questions of our struggle. It is not a matter of bringing means and ends into agreement but of preventing the alienation of means and ends from the first instance to the last.

The great movement of the Machine is categorization, separation, taxonomy, and ultimately, taxidermy. In every aspect of our struggle and our lives, which are one, we must encourage the delirious meeting of past, present, and future; word and body; opacity and lucidity; creation and destruction; love and rage; care and attack; imagination and perception; memory and projection; desire and action. This is not the perfect indistinction or the subjectivities- beyond-identity of the philosophers lost in abstraction, still stumbling over their responses to the Machine's rusted modernity. It is the revitalization of the body of the world. The past will once again flow into the present, desires will spring into action, the world will organically beat out its rhythms of creation and destruction, darkness and light. We will not lose these things in each other, or pretend to forget to distinguish them, but we will take them off the museum wall, let them mingle and play as they must. Categorization is not the naming of things. It is the transformation of names into prison ships.

Our practice now will be our practice in a time of revolution as well. Though reality switches suddenly from a narrative of peace to one of war, though the icon of democracy shifts from the shield to the spear and the Machine roars in diesel fury, though we live horrors and triumphs such as we have never seen before, we must remember who we are and why we fight. Winning a revolution has never meant destroying the Machine before. It has rarely even altered the given categories. This is why we must become now who we must be when the Machine is forced to fight us as equals.

In our reanimated imaginaries, freed from our skulls and loosed upon the terrain, the problems of revolution will find their solutions. Our history will whisper to us, our desires will guide us, our projection will create new worlds. We will not lose, because we will not understand freedom in terms of a definitive victory, nor survival within the margins of our own lives. We may well destroy the Machine, which would inaugurate an unpredictable "after" of celebration and mourning, but one way or another the world will move on, with or without this great burden that oppresses it so. Either way our lives will be quests for freedom and happiness, either way memories and dreams will live through us and the world will nourish us to the extent we allow it, either way the growth of our bodies will be a joyous conflict.

*Then as now, we will always be here,  
at the center of the world in revolt.*

*"Battles against Rome have been lost and won before; but hope was never abandoned, since we were always here in reserve. [...] Out of sight of subject shores, we kept even our eyes free from the*

*defilement of tyranny. We, the most distant dwellers on earth, the last of the free, have been shielded till today by our very remoteness and by the obscurity in which it has shrouded our name. Now, the farthest bounds of Britain lie open to our enemies; and what men know nothing about they always assume to be a valuable prize. But there are no more nations beyond us; nothing is there but waves and rocks, and the Romans, more deadly still than these – for in them is an arrogance which no submission or good behaviour can escape. Pillagers of the world, they have exhausted the land by their indiscriminate plunder, and now they ransack the sea. A rich enemy excites their cupidity; a poor one, their lust for power. East and West alike have failed to satisfy them. They are the only people on earth to whose covetousness both riches and poverty alike are equally tempting. To robbery, butchery, and rapine, they give the lying name of ‘government’; they create a desolation and call it peace. [...] On, then, into action; and as you go, think of those that went before you and of those that shall come after.”*

–Calgacus, A Caledonian war leader, in a speech to the 30,000 warriors gathered for battle against the invading Roman centurions and auxiliaries at Mount Graupius, AD 84.

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