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The Palimpsest

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Nietzsche was so sane it drove him mad – Charles Fourier was so mad he attained a kind of perfect sanity.

Nietzsche exalted the overhuman as individual (“radical aristocratism”) – his society of freespirits would indeed consist of a “union of self-owning ones”. Fourier exalted the Passional Series – for him the individual failed to exist except in Harmonial Association. Polar opposites, these views – how is it then that I see them as complementary, mutually illuminative, and both entirely feasible?

One answer would be “dialectics”. Even more accurately – “taoist dialectics”, not so much a waltz as a shimmy – subtle, snaky and fractal. Another answer would be “surrealism” – like a bicycle made out of hearts and thunderbolts. “Ideology” is NOT an answer – that zombie jamboree, that triumphalism of spooks on parade. “Theory” cannot be identified with ideology nor even with ideology-in-process, because theory has set itself adrift from all categories – because theory is nothing if not situation(al)ist – because theory has not abandoned desire to “History”.

So theory drifts like one of Ibn Khaldun’s nomads, while ideology remains rigid and stays put to build cities and moral im-

peratives; theory may be violent, but ideology is cruel. “Civilization” cannot exist without ideology (the calendar is probably the first ideology) because civilization emerges from the concretization of abstract categories rather than from “natural” or “organic” impulses. Thus paradoxically ideology has no object but itself. Ideology justifies all and any blood-atonement or cannibalism – it sacrifices the organic precisely in order to attain the inorganic – the “goal” of History – which in fact turns out to be ... ideology. Theory by contrast refuses to abandon desire and thereby attains to genuine objectivity, a movement outside itself, which is organic and “material” and cognitively opposed to civilization’s false altruism and alienation. (On this, Fourier and Nietzsche quite agree.)

Finally however I would propose what I call the palimpsestic theory of theory.

A palimpsest is a manuscript that has been re-used by writing over the original writing, often at right angles to it, and sometimes more than once. Frequently it’s impossible to say which layer was first inscribed; and in any case any “development” (except in orthography) from layer to layer would be sheer accident. The connections between layers are not sequential in time but juxtapositional in space. Letters of layer B might blot out letters in layer A, or vice versa, or might leave blank areas with no markings at all, but one cannot say that layer A “developed” into layer B (we’re not even sure which came first). And yet the juxtapositions may not be purely “random” or “meaningless”. One possible connection might lie in the realm of surrealist bibliomancy, or “synchronicities” (and as the oldtime Cabalists said, the blank spaces between letters may “mean” more than the letters themselves). Even “development” can provide a possible model for reading – diachronicities can be hypothesized, a “history” can be composed for the manuscript, layers can be dated as in archeological digs. So long as we don’t worship “development” we can still use it as one possible structure for our theorizing.

The difference between a manuscript palimpsest and a theory-palimpsest is that the latter remains unfixed. It can be re-written – re-inscribed – with each new layer of accretion. And all the layers are transparent, translucent, except where clusters of inscription block the cabalistic light – (sort of like a stack of animation gels). All the layers are “present” on the surface of the palimpsest – but their development (including dialectical development) has become “invisible” and perhaps “meaningless”.

It would appear impossible to excuse this palimpsestic theory of theory from the charge of a subjective and magpie-like appropriationism – a bit of critique here, a utopian proposal there – but our excuse would have to consist of the claim that we’re not looking for delicious ironies, but for bursts of light. If you’re thirsting for PoMo Deconstruction or smirking hyper-conformism, go back to school, get a job – we’ve got other fish to fry.

Thus we construct an epistemological system – a way of learning and knowing based on the juxtaposition of theoretical elements rather than their ideological development; in a sense, an a-historical system. We also avoid other forms of linearity, such as logical sequence and logical exclusion. If we admit history into this scheme we can use it as simply one more form of juxtaposition, without fetishizing it as an absolute – the same holds true for logic, etc.

This ludic approach to theory should not be confused with “moral relativism” (the devaluation of values), from which it is rescued by our “subjective teleology”. That is, we (and not “history”) are searching for purposes, goals, objects-of-desire (the revaluation of values). The playful nature of this action arises from the deployment of imagination (or the “Creative Imagination” as H. Corbin and the sufis call it) – and also from the visionary discipline of “paranoia criticism” (S. Dali), the subjective revaluation of aesthetic categories. “The personal is the political.”

Juxtaposition, superimposition, and complex patterning thus produce a malleable unity (like the hidden monism of polytheism, rather than the hidden dualism of monotheism) – paradoxology as epistemic method – somewhat akin to ‘pataphysics or the “anarcho-dada epistemology” of Feyerabend (Against Method). “Badges? We don’t need no stinking badges!”

Here I’d like to “read into the record” so to speak the entire theoretico-historic debate about “Art” as a separate category (a museum of fetishes), and as a source for the reproduction of misery and alienation by the exclusion of non-“artists” from the pleasure of creativity (or “attractive labor”, as Fourier called it). I want to mention the situationist proposal for the “suppression and realization of Art”, i.e., its revolutionary suppression as a category, and its realization on the level of “everyday life” (that is to say, of life rather than the spectacle). This proposal in turn is based on the assumption that Art finally failed to function as an “avantgarde” (read: “vanguard”) somewhere around the time the Surrealists entered the Communist Party – and simultaneously, the gallery/museum “Artworld” of commodity fetishism – thus embracing spurious ideology and elitism in one spectacular flop. At this point, the remnants of the avantgarde began a process of attempted withdrawal from ideology and commodification (more or less carrying on from Berlin dada) as Lettrism, Situationism, No-Art, Fluxus, mail art, neoism, etc – in which the emphasis shifted from vanguardism to a radical decentering of the creative impulse, away from the galleries and museums and enclaves of boho privilege – toward the disappearance of “Art” and the re-appearance of the creative in the social. Of course, museums are now buying up these “movements” as well, as if to prove that anything (even “anti-Art”) can be commodified. Each of these post-avantgarde movements has at some point fallen prey to confusion or temptation and tried to behave like one of the classic avant-gardes,

their creations. The point is an insane generosity, a donation larger than any commodity-transaction can recuperate, a free gift over and beyond all computation. The artwork becomes a virus of excess, an instigation to utopian desire – a soteriological device. Nothing makes better sense than the attempts of the ArtWorld to demolish itself. The purpose however is not to destroy the space of creativity but to open it up – not to depopulate it but to invite “everyone” inside. We don’t want to leave; we want (finally) to arrive. To declare the Jubilee.

doesn't involve crude physical destruction. Simply this: – Every artwork can be made in the most transparent possible way according to the (ever-unfolding) principles of utopian poetics and the hieroglyphic science. Each artwork would be a consciously-devised “seduction machine” or magical engine meant to awaken true desires, anger at the repression of those desires, belief in the non-impossibility of those desires. Some artworks would consist of settings for the realization of desire, others would evoke and articulate the object/subject of desire, others would shroud everything in mystery, still others would render themselves completely translucent. The artwork should shift attention away from itself as the privileged icon or fetish or desirable thing, and instead focus attention on liberatory energies. The works of certain “earth-artists” for example, which transmute landscape (with the simplest and most painstaking gestures) into utopian settings or erotic dreamscapes; the works of certain “installation-artists” whose micro-realities concern memory, desire, play, all the reverberations of Bachelard’s “imagination” and his “psychoanalysis of space” – art of this sort can be shown or documented within the Artworld context, in galleries or museums, even though its purpose and effect would be to dissolve those structures and “leak out” into everyday life, where it would leave a trace of the marvelous, and a thirst for more.

Similar strategies could be evolved for other artforms – printed books, music, or even the festival as collective creation. In every case I believe that the most effective work can be done outside the institutions of aesthetic discourse, and even as attacks on those institutions. However, we should take advantage of our access to Artworld and its privileges to use it as a launching pad for an assault on its own exclusivity, its professionalist elitism, its irrelevance, its ennui – and its power.

The specific tactics of this insurrectionary strategy remain in the hands of individual artists and the vertu or power of

and each has failed, as surrealism failed, to liberate the artwork from its role as commodity.

Consequently the Artworld has eaten and interiorized art-theory which should – if taken seriously – cause it to self-destruct. Galleries thrive (or at least survive) on a nihilism which can only be contained by irony, and which would otherwise corrode and melt down the very walls of the museums. This essay, for example, will be printed in the catalog of a gallery exhibition, thus perpetrating the irony of calling for the suppression and realization of art from within the very structure that perpetuates the alienation of the non-artist and the fetishization of the artwork. Well, fuck irony. One can only hope that each compromise will be the last.

Those who fail to see this situation as a malaise will read no further – theory has enough to do without explaining its own nausea – ad nauseam.

The 20th century fascination with the “primitive” and the “naive” serves as a measure, first, of the exhaustion of “Art History”; and second, of the utopian desire for an art which would not be a separate category but congruent with life. No irony. Art as serious play. Artists have mimicked the forms of the primitive and naive without realizing that the whole production of these forms depends on the structural absence of alienation in the social (as in “tribal art”) or individual artist. It is this lack of a split, of doubleness, in the art of Africa, of Java, or the lunatic asylum, that moved such sensitive souls as Klee to envy.

In a society without “malaise” (at least, in tragic proportions) one might expect to see that “the artist is not a special kind of person, but each person is a special kind of artist.” Coomaraswamy was thinking of Indonesia when he coined this slogan, and I myself was told in Java that “Everyone must be an artist” – a kind of mystical version of the suppression-and-realization theory. It's not precisely “specialization” (of labor or of cognition) that causes the nausea, by this reading,

but rather separation – fetishization, alienation. As each person is a special kind of artist, some artists will specialize in the grand integrative powers of creativity – telling the central stories of the tribe so to speak – the creation of value and “meaning” – which can be called the “bardic function”. In certain tribes this function is spread out among many individuals, but is always associated with a concentration of mana. In high “barbarian” cultures (such as the Celts) the function is institutionalized to some degree – the bard is the “acknowledged legislator” of a society of artists. The Bardic function focalizes and integrates.

If we sought for a symbolic moment at which the “break” occurred and the malaise began to set in, we might choose the passage in Plato’s Republic where poets are banned from Utopia as “liars” – as if the Law itself (as abstract category) were the only possible integrative function, excluding the nomadic imagination as opposition, as anti-Truth, as social chaos. The rational grid is now imposed on the organicity of life – all good is seen in natura naturata and “being”, while all becoming (natura naturans) is now associated with “evil”.

In the Renaissance the artist again begins to express “self” at the expense of the integrative function. This moment marks the opening of the “Romantic” trajectory, the artist’s disappearance from the Social, the artwork’s disappearance from life. The artist as promethean ego, the artwork as “fine” (i.e. useless) – these measure the gap that has opened between an aesthetic elite, and the masses doomed to sterility and kitsch. And yet there seems to be something noble and courageous about this process, which is reflected in the bohemian freedom of the artist, and also in the artist’s critique of civilization and its cruel dullness – for the artist will now become the “unacknowledged legislator”, the prophet without honor – the romantic hero, inspired and doomed by one and the same divine insight. The artist yearns once again to fulfill the bardic function, to create aesthetic meaning for and with the tribe. In anger at being re-

Is the work of art “saved”? It would be better to ask if the work of art possesses a soteriological dimension or function. Is the artwork salvific? Can it redeem me? And how can it do so unless it is liberated from alienation in a festal economy? Art was born free and everywhere finds itself in chains – obviously the “revolutionary task” of the artist consists not so much in making art but in liberating the artwork. In fact, it appears that if we desire to work for suppression-and-realization we must (paradoxically?) revive that most dangerously romantic view of the artist as rebel, as creator-destroyer – as occultist revolutionary. If creative life (including value-creation) can be called “freedom”, then the artist is a prophet (vates or bard/seer) of this freedom – just as Blake believed. By means of the hieroglyphic science the artist embeds, codes, englobes, educts, expresses, beckons. The work of art as seduction asks to be superseded and seduced in turn by the brilliance of each and all – it demands reciprocity . Not life as ART (which would be an intolerable form of dandyism) – but art as Life.

In the end, can anything be done about all this within the context of the gallery, the museum, the economy of the commodity? Is there a way to avoid or subvert the process of recuperation? Possibly. First, because the gallery-world has been so devalued (largely because it grows ever more boring) and hence becomes desperate to try anything. Second, because the artwork, despite everything, retains a touch of magic.

If we artists are forced (by penury for example) to work within the gallery-world, we can still ask ourselves how best to “advance the struggle” and make real spiritual agitprop for the cause of creative chaos. NOT through ever-more-arcaic elitism, obviously. NOT by crude Socialist Realism and overtly “political” art. NOT by ever-more-morbid deathkult “transgression” and hip armageddonism. NOT by ironic hyperconformity.

There may exist many possible strategies for “boring from within” the Artworld – but I can think of only one that

conceptualization of “surplus” and “scarcity” there prevails an apprehension of the “excessive” generosity of nature and society, which must be expended (or “expressed” as Nietzsche put it) in cultural production, aesthetic exchange, or – especially – in the festival.

In the context of the Gift economy, the festival is the focussing power of the social – the nexus of exchange – actually a kind of “government”. As the Gift economy gives way to a money economy however, the festival begins to take on a “dark” aspect. It becomes the periodic saturnalia or turning-upside-down of the social order, a permitted burst of excess which will purge the people of their natural resentment against alienation and hierarchy, a disorder which paradoxically restores order.

But as the money economy gives way to the commodity economy, the festival undergoes yet another shift of meaning. By preserving the Gift within the total matrix of a system which is hostile to the Gift, the festival in its saturnalian mode has become a genuine focus of opposition to the economic consensus. This opposition remains largely unconscious, and the spectacle can recuperate most of its energies (think of Christmas!) – but the spontaneous festival remains a real source of utopian energy nevertheless. The “Be-In”, the gathering, and the Rave, have all appeared to modern authority as dangerous nodes of total disorder precisely because they attempt to remove the energy of the Gift from the economy of the commodity. The post-surrealist post-Situationist art movements that have carried on the project of suppression-and-realization have all developed festival theories. Jacques Attali’s *Noise*, which explores suppression-and-realization in terms of music (he calls it “the stage of composition”) is based on an analysis of a painting by Breughel of a festival. Indeed, the festival is an inescapable component of any theory which offers to restore the Gift to the center of the creative project.

fused this role, the artist spirals out of control into ever greater alienation – then into open rebellion – and finally into silence. The romantic trajectory is played out.

The Renaissance also witnesses the first modern attempt to recreate the integral (“the order of intimacy”) through the combined power of art and magic – which are in fact seen as naturally related by the deep structure of both – which is essentially linguistic. The unifying element is “action-at-a-distance”, and the synthesis of all its ramifications is the Emblem Book which combines, according to a hieroglyphic science, the image, the word, and sometimes even music (as in M. Maier’s *Atlanta Fugiens*), to bring about “moral” (i.e. spiritual) changes in the reader AND in the real world. The goal of the Renaissance Hermeticist/artist was utopian – as in the paradise scenes of Hieronymous Bosch or the landscapes of the *Hypnerotomachia* – and in this ambition can be seen the desire to reanimate the bardic function, to give meaning to the experience of the “tribe”, to influence the consensual reality-paradigm, to change the world by art. Ultimate romantic project of Gauguin, Rimbaud, Wagner, Artaud, the Surrealists – the artist as wizard-prophet of revolutionary desire.

For all its failures, and all its sleazy accommodations with the Artworld of commodity capitalism, this magical tradition is our heritage, and in some crude way we still “believe” in it. Even to believe in the “suppression” of art is still to believe that art is important and effectual, at least by its disappearance. Moreover, the “freedom” of the artist would seem well worth protecting – and sharing – if only it were freedom for something and not just freedom from something. Despite the poverty, loneliness, and feelings of futility, we’re only out here on the margin by and large because we like it, and because risk is good for our art. In these matters we are still Romantics.

Nevertheless we are forced to admit that this magical-revolutionary project has failed – once too often. Commodity fetishism is a negative feedback loop – and as for the the

hieroglyphic science, it has fallen into the hands of advertisers, spin-doctors, the “creative managers” of the post-spectacular “discourse” (or “simulacrum” as Baudrillard calls it), the real but hidden legislators of our all-too-virtual reality. The proposal for the suppression and realization of art is the culminating statement of the romantic-hermetic tradition of opposition, the last possible “development” in a dialectical progression that leads to our present impasse or blockage. If we look at “Art History” from this diachronic perspective we seem to find ourselves in a cul-de-sac, caught in an impossible paradox whereby the “purpose” of art must be to destroy art, so that “everyone” may be an artist. For us – as artists – this constitutes a dead end. What can we do? History has betrayed us.

What happens however if we abandon the diachronic perspective? What if we superimpose all the “stages of development” in a palimpsest which can only be read as a synchronicity? What if we treat them as theories, all visible on a single surface, potentially related not in time but in space?

Again, we should insist that our palimpsestic survey is not to be confused with some ironic PoMo vacation cruise through a watery graveyard of aesthetic categories. We’re looking for values – or for the imaginal power to create values (by knowing our “true desires”, as the occultists say), and our search is not cool and detached but passionate by definition – not frivolous but serious – not sober but playful – for, to the bards, nothing is as serious as our intoxication with the ludic act of creativity.

So we take the whole development discussed above and accordion it into a “manuscript” where every theory is written over every other theory. Like augurs studying clouds or the eleven kinds of lightning, like wizards with an obsidian mirror for the scrying of angelic alphabets, we now study “Art History” as if it had no history, as if all possibilities were eternally present and infinitely fluid. Seeming contradictions

In order to attempt an answer to these question I’d prefer to drop the problem or “plight” of Art and the artist, and concentrate instead on the plight of the artwork. After all, what can we say about the predicament of the artist, who (despite all “tragedy”) is still the only free spirit in the world of commodities, the only one who knows how to pay attention, the only one blessed with obsession, and the only practitioner of attractive labor? [Note: of course I’m defining “artist” here as anyone freespirted and obsessive and able to pay attention, whether or not they are involved in “the arts” or belong to the boho counterculture, etc., etc.] Compared with this good fortune, the real tragedy seems to involve not the artist but the work of art. The artwork is alienated as commodity both from the producer and from the consumer. Either it is removed from “everyday life” as a unique fetish, or else it is robbed of its “aura” through reproduction. In the economy of simulacra, the image is cut loose and floats free of all referents – hence all images can be “recuperated”, even (or especially) the most “transgressive” or subversive images, as commodities in themselves, items with price but no value. The gallery is the terminal and the museum is the terminus of this process of alienation. The museum represents the final fixation of price and price as the meaning of the image. Forget the question of “saving” the artist; is it possible to “save” the work of art?

In order to “justify” and “redeem” the artwork it would be necessary to remove it from the economy of the commodity. The only other economy capable of sustaining the artwork would be the “economy of the gift”, of reciprocity. This concept was systematized by the anthropologist M. Mauss in his masterpiece *The Gift*, and exercised great influence on thinkers diverse as Bataille and Levi Strauss. It was exemplified in the potlach ceremonies of the Northwest coastal Amer-indian societies, but it can be hypothesized as a universal. Before the emergence of “money” and “contract”, all human society is based on the Gift, and the return of the Gift. Before the

ativity which in fact constitutes both the means and the goal of the utopian project. In Fourier, however, we find the truly divine notion that this aesthetic realization will manifest as collective action – that society will re-constitute itself as a work of art. Each individual, with powers now augmented by Harmonial Association with the appropriate Passional Series, will become “a special kind of artist”. Having realized their “true desires”, all their desire becomes productive in a world given over to veritable orgies of creativity, eroticism, “gastrosophy”, and aesthetic brilliance. Just as shamanism is “democratized” in certain tribes where everyone is a visionary, Fourier elevates every member of the Phalanx to the status of a “great artist”. Naturally some will be greater (i.e. more passionate) than others, but none will be excluded – the “utopian minimum” guarantees creative power. Nietzsche speaks of “the will to Power as Art”; Fourier made it the principle of an anarchist utopia in which the sole organizing force is desire.

There appear, on the face of our palimpsest, two apparently contradictory images: – first, that of the artist as “bard”, and as romantic rebel in a world that has denied the bardic function; and second, that of the suppression-and-realization-of-art, in which “artist” disappears as a privileged category in order to reappear (like Joyce’s “Here Comes Everybody”) in a shamanic democratization of Art.

Would it be possible to intuit – based on our anti-diachronic palimpsestic theorizing – that this paradox may be merely apparent, a false dichotomy? Or that, even if it’s a real paradox, we can construct a paradoxicalism capable of reconciling opposites on a “higher level” (coincidentia oppositorum)? Or that, like Alice, we can entertain several (or even six) conflicting contradictory notions “before breakfast”? Can we “save” ART from the imputation of failure, and the artist from the stain of elitism and vanguardism, while at the same time upholding the “revolution of everyday life” and the utopia of desire?

merely hide occult harmonies, “correspondences” – all and any juxtapositions may prove fortuitous. “Palimpsestomancy.”

Assuming that the theories we discussed diachronically are now arranged synchronically upon the page of our palimpsest, let’s try a trial reading and look for unexpected but revealing coincidences. Fourier’s theory of attractive labor, for example, could be superimposed on Hesiod’s cosmology, wherein the first three principles of becoming are Chaos, Eros, and Earth. Now desire can be seen as the force which draws the pure spontaneity of Imagination into the forms of Nature, or the “material bodily principle” – desire as organizing principle of creativity – desire as the only possible source of the social.

“Action at a distance”, the mainstay of the Hermetic paradigm, was supposed to be banished from the mechanistic philosophy which prevailed and conquered science in the 17th century; but it kept sneaking back into the discourse, first as an “explanation” for gravity (“attraction”), and now in a hundred places – the four forces in quantum physics, the influence of the “strange attractor” on disorganized matter, etc. Although magic failed to “work” for the Renaissance Hermeticists in the same measurable and predictable way that the experimental method, for instance, worked for Bacon and Newton, nevertheless the hieroglyphic science can be revived as an epistemological tool in our study of certain non-quantifiable (or ambiguous) phenomena such as language and other semantic codes which – quite literally – influence us “at a distance”. The Hermeticists believed in ray-like emanations which could transfer the “moral power” of an image (its influence boosted by the appropriate colors, smells, sounds, words, astral fluids, etc.) to human consciousness “at a distance.” Sight, or reflection, and sound, or inflection, create polyvalent memes, bits and clusters of “meaning”, in the observer/listener’s “soul”. By a process of “mutability” wherein everything symbolizes both itself and its opposite simultaneously, the hieroglyphic scientist weaves spells in

a dark forest of ambiguity which is precisely the realm of the artist – and in fact alchemists were known as “artists” of the “spagyric Art”. Just as the alchemist changes the world (of metals), so does the maker of an Emblembook or a public monument (such as an obelisk) change the world of cognition and of “moral” interpretation by the deployment of images and symbols. Leaving aside the question of “emanations”, we arrive at an occult theory of art which was passed on (via Blake, for instance) to the Romantics and to us.

Now, as Italo Calvino points out somewhere, all art is “political” – invariably and inescapably – since every artwork reflects the artist’s assumptions about the “proper sort” of cognition, the “proper” relation of individual consciousness to group consciousness (aesthetic theory), etc., etc. In a sense all art is Utopian to the extent that it makes a statement (however vague) about the way things should be. The artist however may refuse to admit or even become conscious of this “political” dimension – in which case, certain distortions may occur. Those artists who have abandoned the hermetic/romantic idea of “moral influence” frequently reveal their political unconscious to the savvy semiotician or dialectician. “Pure entertainment” turns out to be freighted with an ec-toplasm of sheer reaction, and “pure art” is frequently even worse. By contrast, this artistic unconscious can inadvertently reveal what W. Benjamin called the “Utopian trace” – a sort of Gnostic fragment of desire embedded in every human production, no matter how reproduced it may be. Advertising, for example, makes use of the Utopian trace to sell the image of a reproduction which promises (on the unconscious level) to change one’s world, to make one’s life better. Of course the commodity cannot deliver this change – otherwise your desire would be satisfied and you would stop spending money on cheap imitations of desire. Tantalus can smell the meat and see the wine, but never taste – he is the perfect “consumer”

therefore, who pays (eternally) for pure image. In this sense advertising is the most Hermetic of all modern arts.

The Utopian Trace can also be analyzed in another “damned” art-form, pornography – which acts directly to bring unconsciousness to conscious cognition in the (measurable!) form of erotic arousal. It is Desire which draws out (“educates”) this appearance of the utopian trace (however distorted) and organizes chaos toward action around a vision of “the way things ought to be”. Masturbation is an epiphenomenon – the real effect of pornography is to inspire seduction (as in Dante, where the lovers sin after reading Arthurian romances in the garden together). Right-wing bigots are correct when they accuse erotic arts of influencing and even changing the world, and leftish liberals are wrong when they imply that porn should be allowed because it’s “harmless” – because it’s “only” art. Pornography is agitprop for the body politic, and inasmuch as it is “perverse” it agitates and propagandizes for a revolutionary liberation of desire – which explains exactly why certain kinds of porn are outlawed and censored in every “democracy” of the world today. Since most commercial porn is produced on an unconscious and reactionary level, its proposed “revolution” is ambiguous indeed; but there’s no theoretical reason why erotica cannot be used according to the hieroglyphic science for directly utopian ends.

This brings us to the question of a utopian poetics. Nietzsche and Fourier would have agreed that art is not merely the reflection of reality but rather a new reality that seeks to impose itself in the world of thought and action by “occult” means, through “dionysan” powers and hermetic “correspondences” (hence their shared fascination with opera as the “complete artwork” and the ideal means of propagating their “philosophy”). Our “crazy” synthesis of Nietzsche and Fourier will reveal them both as neighbors of the Renaissance Hermeticists, who also pursued utopian political programs through action on the level of aesthetic perception, and through the very pleasure of cre-