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Silence and Beyond

Tiqqun

1999

A man that wants to take a fortress by assault can't do it merely with words, but must dedicate all his forces to the task. Thus must we accomplish our task of silence.

— Jakob Frank, *Words of the Lord*

PEOPLE write a lot about these times, and PEOPLE talk even more. And it seems that the more PEOPLE write and talk the less they want to be understood. Their reasons for that are pretty sparse, yet there certainly are reasons. There have to be. What's clear is that the majority of them are hardly avowable. As for those that are, in the end they always give in to the need to make themselves heard, and then are met with laughter. The only exception to this rule is Critical Metaphysics in the broad sense, in the sense that we, like so many others, *submit* to it; in the one sense that is appropriate, in sum, to the enormity of its object. It even mixes the fiercest severity in with its demand to be heard; you have to use a kind of imperious tone when you're dealing with overthrowing an order that's based on and perpetuates the suffering of human beings. It is strictly to the extent that they contribute to defining an *effective* practical critique for the new conditions, modalities and

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possibilities at hand that the conscious fractions of the Imaginary Party can exercise their most insolent right to humanity's attention. Capitalism produces the *conditions* for its transcendence, not that transcendence itself. The latter depends, rather, on the activity of a few people who, having adjusted their eyes to discerning the true geography of the times beyond domination's glaring illusions, concentrate their forces at the right moment on the most vulnerable point in the whole. Among those we encounter, we appreciate nothing more than such cold resolution to ruining this world.

Put the surrounding cretinism to the test with a bit of dialectics; you'll most likely hear some insolent praise for the incredible plasticity of capitalism, which was able to use the defeat of contestation itself as the basis for its latest modernization. When their approach to the subject immediately shows a kind of reconciliatory fury, a fury of "Logical ruses," you can clearly see what the real object of people's fascination is. Even contestation proves daily how incapable it has been of supporting itself on that modernization's uninterrupted avalanche of defeats. Over the course of the last twenty years, the mechanical renewal of inoperative methods and poorly clarified aims in successive social agitation campaigns has everywhere won out over "critical-practical activity." It has in many cases even ended up able to make a simple avant-avant-garde variant of social work out of it. *People* have even condescended to grant a name of its own to this special sector of general production, whose participants are so scantily remunerated: the "new social movements." But this expression is more than just a reference to the spongy Monsieur Touraine; there's actually a particularly cruel irony in it, since it designates something so totally old, and the qualifier "movement" in the phrase is applied to a kind of agitation that has no real meaning or direction. It wasn't humanly possible to see the degree to which the monstrous effect of commodity subsumption has extinguished all the negativity in social critique until Toni Negri, with an enthusiasm that wasn't even fake, described the militant of the future as an "inflationist biopo-

plates, kettles, mortars and chairs. These rejoicings went on until the village was completely destroyed." The imbecile then concludes – oh bitter irony – "Admirable Tijar, the future belongs to you!"

We must work to make *that* future come about, and aim for a *world-wide realization of Tijar*. We would be quite upset if one of these universal High Mass events that the Spectacle is so fond of, like the year 2000 for instance, did not one day turn disastrous. So many people gathered in the streets can only herald the storming of new Bastilles. Not a stone upon a stone must be left of this enemy world.

where I have set foot *everything* will be destroyed. I came to this world only to destroy and annihilate, but what I will build will last eternally.” Another heretic said likewise, a century later: “no matter what you want to undertake, you have to begin by destroying everything.” Whether *Tiqqun* will bring life or death depends for each person on how much of his illusions he has been able to lose: “it is to the extent that clear consciousness wins out that the objects effectively destroyed will not destroy mankind itself.” (Bataille). It is certain that those who have not been able to throw off their reifications, those who persist in putting their whole being into things, are doomed to the same annihilation they are. Whoever has never experienced one of those hours of joyous or melancholic negativity cannot tell how close to destruction the infinite is. What we’re saying here is in no way reverie; events such as these can be found scattered throughout history, but since the world was still not unified in a substantial totality, they remained mere *local curiosities*. The laughable Ortega y Gasset tells, in his *The Revolt of the Masses*, how such a *catastrophe* came about in Tijar, a village near Almería, when Charles III was crowned the king, on September 13th, 1759, as follows: “The proclamation was made at the town’s Central Square. Soon afterwards, drink was ordered for the whole enormous crowd, which consumed 250 gallons of wine and 13 gallons of brandy, and the pernicious vapors warmed their spirits in so fine a manner that the crowd spilled over towards the Town Granary all yelling ‘viva’ repeatedly, went inside, and threw all the wheat that was in there and all the Treasury’s 900 silver coins out the windows. Then they proceeded over to the City Hall, and made them throw all the tobacco and money out of the doors of the Tax Collector’s office. They did the same in the shops, to spice up the festivities, scattering all the edible and liquid goods that were inside. The ecclesiastical State contributed in a lively manner as well; then, with great cries, the women were called upon to throw out everything they had in their houses, which they did with the most total selflessness because there was nothing left: bread, wheat, flour, barley,

litical entrepreneur.” Nowhere among domination’s enemies has any evaluation been made of the reforms it has put in motion with its vast range of metamorphoses. The fact that our tyrannical enemy no longer draws its power from its ability to shut people up, but from its aptitude to make them talk – i.e., from the fact that it has moved its center of gravity from its mastery of the world itself to its seizure of the world’s mode of disclosure – requires that a few tactical adjustments be made. Because, indeed, that’s precisely how, little by little, it has deprived the opposition forces of their sense of direction. Let all those who thought they could change the world without even going so far as to interpret it – all those who have refused to see that they are operating in radically new conditions – deign to see things for a moment from our perspective: they’ll realize that in the final analysis they are merely serving what they think they’re challenging. Look at the few hysterical groupuscles working to maintain the low-intensity social guerrilla war that buzzes stubbornly around the various issues, like the “illegal immigration” issue or the “anti-National Front” struggle. That shows well enough how the negation of the Spectacle, inverted into the spectacle of negation, can act as the basis for a collective *catharsis* procedure without which the present state of things could not survive itself. By triggering *within and against* itself its Scourge of denomination, domination has made even its pseudo-contestation into the spearhead of its *ideal* self-improvement. To such an extent that there’s no real difference anymore between these two camps that, at bottom, want the same world; it’s just that one of them has the means to make it and the other just dreams of doing so. There’s no place for moralizing in this matter, just lessons to be drawn, the first of which is perhaps that the Spectacle only recognizes as a truly existent opposition the opposition that *is willing to speak*; that is, to speak *its language*, and hence to subscribe to the alienation of the Common. In all discussions, the *listener* imposes the terms, not the talker. Thus the real hostility, the metaphysical hostility, which allows neither the language nor the moment it will express itself to

be controlled, and which moreover prefers silence to any speech, has been pushed back into the shadows of what does not appear and hence does not exist. By means of this offensive in the form of a retreat, organized capitalism has derailed all the forces of effective critique, drowning it out in its resounding chatter and adapting to it with the language of flattery, not without first having deprived it of any real point at which it could apply itself. Everything that prolonged the classical workers' movement within it had to succumb to these new conditions, where now the true is no longer limited by the false, but rather by the insignificant. Quite quickly, it ceased to exist in fact as practical contestation beyond an unanimous parrotlike repetition on the one hand ("let's all chant together now!") and the a mute autism of direct action cut off from all substantial life on the other. Once the latter part had been liquidated – perhaps the past tense verb "exterminated" would be more appropriate in certain cases, like in the case of Italy for example, where the savagery of the repression had something really exemplary about it – the former abandoned itself to its natural inclination: repetition to mask its aphasia and aphasia to mask its repetition. By deteriorating into a pitiful practicalism of resentment, practice has just as consciously discredited itself as theory has by taking refuge in the-oreticism and literature. After that nothing remained to oppose the restoration process that since the 70s has swept away everything that was consciously hostile to commodity society. With time, the Spectacle has managed to circumscribe the possible by what is permitted to be said keeping it in terms that it alone now has the authority to define. In spite of a formidable primitive accumulation of frustration, suffering, and anxiety among the population, over the course of all this time critique has *never really manifested itself*. It has remained *voiceless* in the face of the advancing disaster. It has even had to allow the enemy to impudently play on its own failures. This was how the Spectacle was able to turn the progressive crumbling of Nation-States and the universal discredit of systems of political representation into the farce we see today, which every

it in practice which it is preparing to crush, all the while proclaiming itself to be open to "dialogue" between three carloads' worth of riot cops. And it is precisely because there is no dialogue except among equals that the *complete* liquidation of the world of closed discourse, the spectacular infrastructure, and all the relays of alienated Publicity is the necessary prerequisite for even the possibility of true discussion being reestablished. Before that happens it's all just empty chatter. Also, contrary to what a certain Jacques Luzzi wrote in issue 11 of the magazine *Agone*, it's only when mankind will be free from the grip of things that they will really be able to communicate, and not just by "communicating" their intent to free themselves from that grip.

Here, though only partially, we have hit upon an enormous truth which we doubt will be recognized as reasonable before it becomes brutally real: *we cannot transcend nihilism without realizing it, nor realize it without transcending it*. Crossing the line means the *general destruction of things as such*, or in other words the annihilation of nothingness. In effect, at the moment when society's socialization attains completion, each existing being fades away into what he *represents* in the totality that he can then come to occupy a place in materially, with his whole being absorbed by what he's participating in. Hence there is nothing that must not be destroyed, no one that can be guaranteed pardon, inasmuch as they are part of a real order, a Common, that was designed only to separate us. In the Sabbatean tradition, the moment of the general destruction of *things* was given the name *Tiqqun*. In that instant, each thing is repaired and removed from the long chain of suffering it underwent in this world. "All the subsistence existence and toil that permitted me to get there were suddenly destroyed, they emptied out infinitely like a river into the ocean of that one infinitesimal moment." (Bataille, *Theory of Religion*) But the "perfect silent ones" that carry universal ruin within them also know the paths that lead beyond it. Jakob Frank, the absolute heretic, handled this truth in his usual abrupt style: "Everywhere Adam went, a city was built; but every-

Party: “today, as ever, those that do not fear death are infinitely superior to the greatest of temporal powers. Hence they must ceaselessly spread fear.” (Jünger, *Crossing the Line*). In the glassy eyes of the Spectacle, this renaissance, this new influx of Being presents itself as a fall back into barbarism, and it is true that we are indeed dealing with a return of the elementary forces. It is also true that all this is operating in the context of a universal cybernetic alienation, the mode of expression proper to such a context is the most unintelligible brutality. But this violence is distinct from all other criminal manifestations, because it is in its essence a *moral violence*. And it is precisely to the extent that it is moral that it is also *mute and calm*. “Truth and justice demand calm, but only the violent attain them.” (Bataille, *Literature and Evil*)— there was no shortage of old roadies of abjection surprised about how even a guy that was witness to all the political violence 1970s and worked for the good cause, for *Manifesto* newspaper, even, got beat up by the “antagonists”; and concluding from that in one sitting that it was just some banal “apolitical violence.” Clearly certain lives would be hardly predisposed towards getting an understanding of what a *hyperpolitical violence* might mean. That once again it is possible to designate with certainty who the real *scum* and their accomplices are shows clearly enough just how far beyond nihilism we have come. When Lynch law reappears among men who will not deign to listen to anyone but the bishop of Ivrea, then we know that the *gravity of history* is making its bloody return. The time is gone when a Sorel could observe that “the old ferocity has been replaced by trickery,” even if there are still “plenty of sociologists around who think serious progress (was) being made.” That remark was in regards to the deformation that the very concept of “violence” has undergone over the last decades, which presently designates in a generic manner anything that pulls Bloom out of his passivity, starting with history itself. As a general thesis, insofar as the arbitrariness of domination is more and more threatened by the arbitrariness of freedom, it will have to label as “violence” everything that opposes

day adds a new episode to its endless infamy. It has gotten *everyone* to permit it to exercise its symbolic violence, and it has gotten *each person* to submit to enduring it as something simultaneously natural and chimerical. Sure, there are a few local eruptions from time to time that disturb this tired mimodrama, but domination is so sure of itself in its course that it can even allow itself to look with scorn at those tactless few who, by forcing it to repress them too visibly, require it to echo what everyone already knows: that the rule of law rests on a permanent state of exception, and that at present it rests on that alone. In this context of mute social war, where, like “in any transitional period, the riff-raff found in all societies rises to the surface, not only having no aims but without even the slightest ideas, expressing only its disquiet and its impatience” (Dostoevski, *The Possessed*), all “social struggles” are ridiculous.

From the chaos of 1986 to the “unemployed workers’ movement,” for those that experienced them from within, not a single one of them wasn’t emptied of all substance and removed from all contact with reality by a sub- policelike para-trotskyist activism that repeatedly “let itself be carried away by the trend it intended or pretended to oppose: bourgeois instrumentalism, which fetishizes means because its own form of practice cannot tolerate any reflection upon its ends.” (Adorno, *Critical Models*). *And yet*, somewhere within the total wreck and ruin of institutions and their contestation, there is still something powerful, new, and intact: an existential hostility to domination.

Beyond the carnage, suicides and miscellaneous irregularities, beyond all these *strange gestures* that provide us with so much encouraging news of commodity civilization’s decomposition, and consequently of the deaf advancement of the Imaginary Party, we place a high importance on the form of the manifestations of negativity that invent a new *active grammar* of contestation. Among those manifestations, there was in recent months one that was particularly *touching* for us: the “Turin Antagonists.” The events we’re referring to here lasted a whole week, in which Turin was

plunged into a terror of a nature totally different from that of the planned, profitable, gray Terror typically running rife through the metropolises of separation.

It all started Friday March 27th, 1998, the day after the evening when Edoardo Massari, a 34 year old anarchist, hanged himself in his cell in Turin prison, where he had been duly incarcerated on the 5th of March along with his fiancée and another comrade. They were presumed to have been guilty – which after all is irrelevant, when you’re dealing with anarchists – of a number of attacks on the construction sites of the Italian TGV [high speed train], all acts of eco-terrorism which made the mistake of seriously irritating a certain number of business and mafia lobbies whose interests were deeply tied in with this grandiose project, a project which, as everyone so obviously knows, is of the utmost necessity. This “suicide” should have quietly gone to take its place in the long list of State murders; *people* would prefer to leave the establishment of such a list to the scrupulous care of next century’s historians, but we already know that Italy will be able to proudly claim an honorable number of outstanding contributions to it. Unfortunately, said Massari belonged to the little community of Turin social centers, and their reaction wasn’t exactly as expected in domination’s simulation models. Thus, the next day, the citizen-consumers were presented with quite the motive for complaint: a *silent and hostile* procession of many hundreds of anarchists-with-knives-clenched-in-their-teeth and other autonomists-with-iron-rods, who showed up to upset the colorful frolicking of a laughter-filled Saturday afternoon festival of consumerism, insisting all too seriously on striding through the downtown area carrying a banner saying “murderers,” and getting up on the roofs of some public buses to read out a communiqué seeming to insinuate that every Bloom within earshot was an accomplice to that murder, and even promising that “within one hour (from then), life in this city of death isn’t going to be the same anymore, and it’s their fault.” Besides the animosity-filled invective they addressed to the innocent, terrorized passers-

more than a few weeks, and new ones constantly need to be found which are already surrounded by skepticism at their birth. No one can believe their own or anyone else’s lies anymore, even if that is the best kept and at the same time the most shared secret of all. Ageless enjoyments shed their millenarian attraction, and what not long ago was the object of universal longing now inspires no more than weary scorn. To recover a speck of the dust of past pleasures, forces and effects must now be unleashed that no one had ever thought to devote to such mediocre ends before. Consumption’s own inevitability pushes it to ever more extreme forms, in no way distinct from crime anymore besides in the name *people* give it. And at the same time, a landscape of catastrophes is unrelentingly forming in which even participating at all in the final metamorphoses of nihilism has ended up losing its charm. The old feeling of security is crumbling everywhere. Blooms live in a state of terror that nothing can match, except perhaps the monstrous hodgepodge of metropolises where asphyxiation, pollution, and embittered promiscuity seem to be the only things that give them any feeling of safety. When we look at them separately, we see that Bloom’s trembling has attained to such heights that it has put him in a general state of paralysis and incredulity that forever excludes him from any *contact* with the world. Even when there is nothing anymore in the zones still held in the grip of the empire of nihilism that is not driven by a secret desire for self-destruction, we see the army of those that have crossed the line and are applying nihilism to nihilism itself appear here and there, detachment after detachment. They still retain, from their prior state, the feeling that they are living as if they were already dead; but from this state of indifference concerning the raw fact of being alive, they draw the formula for the greatest possible sovereignty, a freedom which is incapable of trembling in the face of *anything* anymore, because they know that their lives are no more than the meaning they *collectively* give to them. Domination fears nothing more than these purely metaphysical creatures, these maquis of the Imaginary

the terrible glory of having brought the unspeakable to the very heart of politics. Between the two parties that they provoked the immediate crystallization of *by their simple presence*, between the Imaginary Party and the Spectacle, *nothing* can be resolved with words, *nothing* can comprise a subject for any kind of discussion, and there is only a *total, existential hostility*. In every sense, the existence of the one is the absolute negation of the existence of the other. These are two camps between which there is not so much a difference of opinion as a difference of *substance*; what happened in Turin made that obvious fact *perceptible*. The one is the anomic heap of monads that “have no windows through which anything at all can enter or exit” (Leibniz); the nothingness accumulated of humanity, meaning, and metaphysics; the desert of nihilism and pure indifference where “the idea of death has lost all presence and all plastic force” (Benjamin, *The Narrator*). The other is the *community* in mourning, the community *of* mourning, for which the act of dying is “the most public act of individual life, and a highly exemplary one” – only animals fail to accompany their own in death – which experiences the loss of one of its constituents as the loss of *a whole world* and where each takes “the death of others upon himself as the only death that concerns (him)... that puts (him) outside of himself and is the only separation that can open him up, in all his impossibility, to the Openness of a community” (Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*). The one falls short of nihilism, and the other already stands beyond it. Between the two there is *the line*. And that line is the unspeakable, which imposes silence. *The greatest possible demands don't allow themselves to be formulated*.

The years pass, and we see the Spectacle burden itself with a growing quantity of strange and brutal displays whose meanings it proves incapable of aligning, and for which it cannot find a name suitable to satisfy its spirit of classification. This is a sure sign that this world is little by little in the process of crossing the line.

And it's not the only sign, either. Hence, the latest bewitchments of the commodity fail more and more to maintain themselves for

by, they even gave a hiding to a cameraman from *Rai TV*, and to a photographer and columnist from *Repubblica* newspaper, taking even the *instruments of their labor* from them, which they methodically reduced to their primitive state of scattered electronic components. Not content with having thus reminded a finally pacified Italy of the darkest hours of its years of lead and urban guerrilla warfare, which everyone was doing their best to forget, in Brossio on Thursday April 2nd they *lynched* the journalist who had ratted Massari out, grabbing him while he was on his way to go listen to what was to be a heavily biased sermon by the bishop of Ivrea comparing Massari to the Penitent Thief from the gospel of Luke. On that day they really did go beyond the limits of the reasonable, *indifferently* attacking both right wing and extreme left journalists, and all the representatives of the media without distinction as to party, even taking to pieces one of their cars. But the high point was really the April 4 manifestation where seven thousand of these “antagonists,” without scruples and out of nowhere, went for another march. With the same, evil silence about them as at first, but now with an extreme tension, they went calmly and wordlessly smashing windows, cars, and cameras, smudging up the walls with inane stuff like “We're gonna burn you, McDonald's,” attacking the Palace of Justice with paving stones and spreading fear among the honest citizens. The sociologist Marco Revelli can claim all he wants that “the city should *communicate* with them, consider them as a *resource* and not as enemies» (*La Repubblica*, 30 March), but how can you talk to people who don't say a word, and take recourse to violence and terrorism? People who as minister Piero Fassino commented quite justly, “detest this society but don't even propose to change it”? The majority of the media and the Blooms basically reacted to these new manifestations of “disorderly youth” like this. Deputy Furio Colombo faithfully summarizes the atrocious amazement the good people fell into: “It's my city, and I saw what happened here, and I just can't explain it. There was this procession of strangers, young people we'd never seen before and no

one had ever talked to, going around the city streets, and it was plain that they were dangerous... The march was totally silent, but it had these unexplainably threatening physical signs about it;... words that passers by didn't always understand the meaning of, but it felt hostile. Anyone who saw them up close would have said they were 'young people,' but they certainly weren't 'our' youths. They came down here but they weren't from here. It felt like they'd come from far away. How far? You can't measure that kind of distance in kilometers. It was like an inner distance, something that you can only feel... My own city; it was impeccably clean, freshly painted, and then it was terrorized, with this march by these unknown invaders... » (*Repubblica*, April 2nd).

Men's moral values can doubtless be seen in the way they react to news about acts like this. Exploding with their slave's resentment, they certainly won't be able to make even an imperceptibly small sign of intelligence. For our part, this was one of those joys that come up from such a depth that you don't just hear it, you understand it from *within you*, as if it were something that had happened in your body. We, the others, the critical metaphysicians, intend to found on the basis of that psychopathology a method of analysis that, while radicalizing the meaning of certain manifestations and *by removing them from their temporal element*, strips nude the truth of our times. It is only insofar as they too undergo such a broadening of vision that people will be able to recognize that with what happened that week, a Veil of Maya was pierced in the world of the Spectacle, or that with "antagonists" like this we are entering the time of *wordless revolts*, the time of illogical revolts, which must in turn be massacred. The enemy has let himself be *seen*, he has shown himself and has been recognized as such. Now this society *knows* that it is flanked by men who, although they are certainly doing *something*, are doing nothing to participate in it, and who, rather, are *collectively* questioning its right to exist. The Spectacle, at that moment, was brutally forced to face up to the defeat of its pacification campaign. It was torn from its façade of neutrality by

heard and seen, they managed to *render visibility to visibility as visibility*, or, in Heidegger's terms, to "render speech to speech as speech." They forced the dictatorship of presence, which claims: "that which is, you are not," to admit that *that's reality itself* as it is really lived. Thus they forced visibility to *come out at its very limits*; they ruined its illusion of neutrality. The Spectacle was forced to recognize an exteriority, even a kind of transcendence, perhaps; *people* overheard it make the fatal confession, "the inexpressible certainly exists. It *shows* itself." (Wittgenstein). It simultaneously became *visibly* what it was essentially: a *party* to the unfolding of the social war. By imposing silence upon it, by shutting up its inexhaustible babbling with their fists, the "antagonists" rendered it questionable, and *that's its downfall*. From the moment the alienation of the Common is projected as such into the very heart of the Common itself, its days are numbered. – The press can squawk and complain that a few of its henchmen got beat up and cry foul about freedom of expression being sacrosanct all it likes, but no one's listening, since there's no doubt in anyone's mind anymore that that freedom long ago became merely the tyrant's freedom, and that expression merely that of its baseness. -

But the parable of Turin also contains other good news, like the defeat of domination right where it had concentrated all its forces: in keeping *all* the important issues in suspended animation. And of course it has to have had a confused intuition about this possibility; otherwise it would not have donned the ingenuous and diabolical trappings of an ever more frenetic proliferation of cultural commodities and distractions it has over the last decades. In fact, it appears that the neutralization of social contradictions has no other effect but to push them little by little onto a higher plane where they become radicalized into metaphysical frenzies. But then there are no more important issues left: those who have found the answer to the question of life recognize themselves in this, since for them the question has disappeared. These "antagonists" are just the tip of the iceberg of immeasurable violence; to them belongs

every day until it sparks off the Judgment. As nihilism becomes more and more the norm, the symbols of emptiness spread much more terror than those of power do." Silence on its own, however, can only become a war-machine by becoming *conscious* silence. All its effectiveness is suspended until it recognizes itself as a *critical-metaphysical sabotage device* directed against the triumph of positivity and the defeat of Being by its forgetting. "In order to be able to be quieted, Dasein (being-there) must have something to say; it must have a veritable and rich openness to itself. Then the silence it had kept bursts out, and quiets the impersonal voice of the 'people say,'" said the old swine [Heidegger] in his jargon.

The silence of infinite rage has a frightful power that has still not even begun to appear, and in the coming years we would be foolish not to hope to give a few good examples. For the case at hand, this power so shocked the Spectacle that it made that philosopher-for-Young-Girls, Umberto Galimberti, immediately begin to blather on about "this squatters' silence," and greatly bemoan the "collapse of communication" – as if communication had ever really existed in the framework of the modern world; and as if such silence was not disturbing to it precisely and only because it acknowledges the former's nothingness – and to pompously predict the poverty of the era and the indigence of "politics" – as if politics, as a separate moment, had ever been anything but another kind of poverty. Sociologists and elected officials also came out to call, suicidally, for "dialogue" with these "new barbarians." What these rotting corpses had gotten an inkling of, with the keen instinct of someone who knows he'd have everything to lose were alienation to come to an end, was that in their very silence, these "antagonists" hit upon something that in the right hands would be able to blow the whole worm-eaten social organization to bits: *the unspeakable*. Because by *manifesting their silence*, they brought out into Publicity not just some thing or other, but a pure potential speech, a statement liberated from the said, and more original than it is, i.e., the unspeakable itself: the fact that language is. By making the nothingness

the very people that it thought it had definitively entombed in its profusion of conditioning, and for whom it had even prepared a whole prison so full of privileges that people even dream of being confined in it forever: "youth." And it discovered, on its familiar map of cities arranged according to its plans where it had even been able to accommodate "self-managed social centers" and other "liberated zones" for "rebellious individualities," an interdependent chaos of ruins, spread over with innumerable enclaves where people aren't just content to live with it, but also *conspire* against it. It had thought that it would be enough to hide negativity in order to suffocate it, but all that did was free it from mimetic behavior control and make it take to the shadows where free forms of existence can blossom. But the most disturbing aspect of these new people of the abyss – since that's how they were depicted – was that the critique they were carrying out was above all the *affirmation* of an *ethos* that is foreign to the Spectacle, that is, a heretical relationship to lived experience. It appeared that in this section of territory it thought it had gotten squared away, there were recesses where relations were not mediated by it; that in other words its monopoly on the production of meaning was not just being contested but had even been *locally and temporarily* removed. And it's clear that those who – and this is a rare event in these "autonomous zones" – succeed in *tying together* a critique of commodity society and an effective experimentation with free sociality are an immeasurable danger for the Spectacle, because they are the partial realization *here and now* of a *concrete and offensive utopia*. When a few individuals remove themselves from the corset of codes and reified behaviors prescribed by the tyranny of servitude, domination starts to talk of genius, madness, or criminal deviance, which all boil down to the same thing. But let that kind of phenomenon present itself in the form of a whole community, and domination is brutally without recourse and has to fight the battle according to the non-rules of absolute hostility, where the enemy is always non-human. And this procedure will in this case be more painful than otherwise, be-

cause it's their own children they'll have to exclude from humanity – because they wouldn't let themselves be *sold* on the market. And so, in Italy, where the conditions for it are the least propitious of anywhere, the Imaginary Party *manifested itself* as such. It was an event not without import, because in light of it, all the traditional forms of contestation appear somehow provincial and polite.

Those who are simply happy because such a state of war gives them faith once more in the possibility of new epic sagas of struggle are not going beyond a superficial comprehension of what happened there. Because these Turin “antagonists” gave rise to much more than damages, lynchings, and frightened people: they laid open the way for *crossing the line*, the way towards the exit from nihilism. At the same time, they also forged the weapons that lead beyond it. We recognize the passage over the line in the fact that a protest like all the rest, like *people* are so used to seeing, was suddenly changed by the introduction of new factors. And so the silence of the antagonists was no longer the traditional aphasia of the leftist protestors, nor that of Bloom, but something qualitatively new. The remarkable and mute tension that they gave rise to throughout the course of their marches must be essentially understood as the confrontation between two types of silence that are radically different from one another. On the one hand, there is the natural, negative, and to put it plainly, animal silence of the solitary crowd of Blooms who never really express anything of their own at all, anything that the Spectacle has not already said; the silence of the inorganic mass of consumers on their knees, who are not supposed to speak, but just respond when they're *spoken to*; the silence of the bleating flock of those who think they can peacefully go back to being simply the representatives of the most intelligent of animal species since there are no real *human beings* to denounce their degeneration. And on the other, there is strategic silence, the full, positive silence of the “antagonists,” deployed as a tactical device so as to manifest the existence of negativity, so they could erupt into visibility without allowing themselves to

be frozen into any petrifying spectacular positivity. (Perhaps we should clarify here that for them there was a *vital need* to appear out in the open: the need to break the encirclement that domination had subjected them to, which was threatening them with the same fate that Massari had, the same fate suffered by those who Nanni Balestrini calls *the invisibles*: the discreet physical elimination, in unanimous indifference, of those whose existence Publicity never recognized.) Perhaps we sound like we're saying that the “antagonists,” after some mature deliberation by an omniscient general staff, *chose* that silence. But nothing could be more false: they were cornered into it by the objective modalities of domination. And it is precisely because these modalities have generalized themselves throughout the whole of all industrialized societies that the way silence took on a new character in their hands and became an offensive tool/weapon deserves our attention. All reality's mode of disclosure and Publicity, all mankind's linguistic essence, have been radically alienated into an autonomous sphere which holds a monopoly on the production of meaning, i.e., the Spectacle. And in such conditions, when anything is explained or shown it is by that simple fact immediately exposed to being metabolized by said Spectacle, as long as that serves its ends. The “antagonists” are the first – and it hardly matters whether they're consciously aware of this or not – to draw the *practical* consequences from this situation. By refusing to take any recourse to any of the codes, to any of the accepted signifiers or meanings, which are all managed and controlled by the occupier, and *by manifesting that refusal*, they established *in acts* that wherever the Spectacle reigns, silence is the *necessary* form in which true contestation - the Imaginary Party - must appear. They brought into existence what lucid minds, like Jünger in his *Crossing the Line*, had already observed: “the tyrants of today,” he wrote, “no longer fear speechifiers. Maybe they used to in the good old days of the absolutist State. Silence is much more terrible – the silence of millions of men, and also the silence of the dead, which the drums cannot drown out and which gets deeper