

HOSTIS

A Journal Of Incivility

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A Short Introduction to the Politics of Cruelty

Hostis is a negation. It emerges devoid of ethics, lacking any sense of democracy, and without a care for pre-figuring anything. Fed up with the search for a social solution to the present crisis, it aspires to be attacked wildly and painted as utterly black without a single virtue. In thought, *Hostis* is the construction of incommensurability that figures politics in formal asymmetry to the powers that be. In action, *Hostis* is an exercise in partisanship – speaking in a tongue made only for those that it wants to listen. This partisanship is neither the work of fascists, who look for fights to give their limp lives temporary jolts of excitement, nor martyrs, who take hopeless stands to live the righteousness of loss. *Hostis* is the struggle to be dangerous in a time when antagonism is dissipated. This is all because *Hostis* is the enemy.¹

¹ *Hostis* was what Rome called enemies of the state, though it also means ‘stranger.’ The term is inspired by the barbarian, who is

I. Beyond Social Ethics

Religion played midwife to anarchism. We do not fault them for this, but we are amused at how quickly anarchists ‘keep it in the family’ of faith. All modern radicalism has the same root: the anabaptists. Such dignified roots are hard to disown, as many of the original anabaptists were anti-authoritarians who rejected the rule of law on earth and fought for a collective way of life anchored by the shared resources of the commons. The grand importance of this revolt is not simply their criticism of authority or their appeals to collective life, but their apocalyptic millennialism. In short, the pre-history of anarchism begins with utopia – the complete upheaval where the rotten world is wholesale turned into paradise.

Do not misunderstand; we too are utopians. What disturbs us are the utopias spoken about in the company of friends. Those more concerned with history than us can trace this

not understood by Imperial powers because they do not speak a recognized language and break civic norms through uncontrolled acts of violence. For more, see Crisso and Odoteo’s “Barbarian: The Disordered Insurgence,” an amazing 2003 Italian insurrectionist critique of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*, Michel Foucault’s Collège de France lecture “Society Must Be Defended” pages 194-208, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s two nomadology plateaus in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

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thread through time, detailing how each overturning corresponds with the historical content of its era – why More’s utopia put an end to religious strife through common property, why Fourier’s oceans turned to lemonade, and why Le Guin rewilded Northern California. Our concerns are tied to two images of utopia peddled by contemporary anarchists: those confused souls who imagine that they can ‘be good’ (ethics), and the many confused attempts to create islands of good in an otherwise fallen world (prefiguration).

The first: do-gooders. We do not want to be better than our enemies. They are good, and that is why we hate them. They go to church, pay their taxes, and play well with others. They care about the environment, they oppose intolerance. The problem with do-gooders is that they try to be better than their enemies. So busy being ‘for good things and against bad things’ that they lack vision. Strategy is utterly lost on them.

Our readers are no doubt familiar with Nietzsche’s critique of morality, but there is little harm in briefly rehearsing the argument. His genealogy of morals goes like this: in the deep mythological past, the strong prevailed. These ‘masters’ of the world glorified themselves, and so they pronounce that

which extolled their power to be ‘good’ and denigrated their weaker foes by calling ‘bad’ anything associated with their feebleness. In a stroke of genius, a weaker but far more cunning people toppled their oppressors by inciting a ‘transvaluation of values’ that labeled their own meekness as ‘good’ and denounced the power of their captors as ‘evil.’ While that singular event was genius, the people who came after them stupidly believed this ‘slave morality’ to be more than a clever trick. These fools committed themselves to a pathetic ‘ascetic ideal’ of false modesty whereby the joys of this life are given up in exchange for a richer afterlife.²

No matter how far anarchists – the great opponents of the church, state, and capital – think that they have distanced themselves from their original foes, Nietzsche is surely laughing at them today.³ Consider the holy habits of those punks who sleep on the floor and dress in all-black hairshirts. No anarchist is starving themselves to death in a symbolic expression of their hunger for God, yet there are plenty of St

² There is no use bothering with a morals/ethics distinction. Far too much ink has been spilled in attempts to draw distinctions without a difference. We have the least distaste for Tiqqun’s ‘ethics of civil war’ but still find it too unpalatable to waste any effort discussing.

³ Perhaps the only group worth even engaging in our context, even if we are critical.

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Catherine of Siena's among us who take their special diet to be a purity strike against the-powers-that-be. To these people, we say: we could care less about how you have 'dedicated your life'! Save any talk about personal commitments for those who believe in an afterlife.

Ethics is an impediment to us. For Christians, the reward for leading an ethical life is spiritual. For non-believers, the only compensation is psychological – the knowledge that 'goodness is its own reward.' This is the self-righteousness that fuels the principled stances, empty proclamations, and futile deeds that makes one's life into a million acts of insignificant personal resistance. It is the voice that tells you that dignified defeat is worse than playing dirty. We say: rid yourself of these illusions. The earth does not smile any more on those who refuse to shop at Wal-Mart, call themselves anti-capitalist, or eat organic. We are incensed by anyone who thinks that they can 'be good,' 'do good,' or even 'be part of the solution.'

At the core of ethics is the concept of virtue. We are convinced by those anti-racist theorists who have shown how any concept of virtue is inseparable from a certain notion of whiteness. Hidden within this whiteness is a caesura that

splits the good from the bad. We know exactly what good stands in for here – good means nonthreatening. Virtuous subjects are afforded the presumption of goodness, while others must fight for it, to justify it, to beat back the skepticism. This is why straightness has no coming out stories, why whiteness claims no common history, and why children simply 'make mistakes.' But do not worry!, liberalism says. While some are born with the presumption of good on their side, we are told, everyone has a kernel of evil deep within. Be careful, be prudent, be smart! Each person decides their own fate, the story continues, for everyone is simply a collection of their past choices: their jobs, their friends, their search history. The absurd thing is that liberalism actually believes its own tale. It has charts that plot everyone with a statistician's accuracy. Innocence is awarded to the best, dangerousness to the worst. People respond to this strategic terrain through a variety of tactics. The two most common are based in the fight for recognition, each taking a side of the grand fissure, both born of a common cause and thus twins, hopelessly dependent on the other. There is the politics of safety, which protects innocence by associating risk with privilege. There is the politics of abjection, which revels in dangerousness only as much as it has already been marginalized (the dumb "existence is

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resistance” platitude). The dirty little secret is that governments long ago found forms of management that secure virtuous outcomes even with non-virtuous subjects.⁴

The alternative to personal ethics is outlined in Bernadette Corporation’s film *Get Rid of Yourself*. Ethics, on the one hand, demands a unified, consistent, principled set of habits that constrains one’s activities to what is good. This is why the politics of abjection can be the most reactionary, as it simply parrots the world in relief. A life without ethical commitments, on the other hand, allows one to be free to do whatever. The immoralist’s freedom does not come from the transgressive deviant’s ‘being not as one is supposed to be,’ but the freedom of someone who has gotten rid of themselves and therefore becomes indifferent to being any particular way at all. Only then is one free to take on multiple identities, free to advocate contradictory positions, and free to speak in as many voices as necessary. There are certainly risks involved, and we have nasty names for those who use this freedom poorly: opportunists, cheats, and traitors. What one does with such freedom, however, is not ethical; it is political.

⁴ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality*, 2nd edition, 190-191.

When it comes down to it, the point is not to be better than our enemies but to eliminate them. And such a task is completed on the field of politics, not ethics.

The second: prefiguration. We are not pacifists. And while not all practitioners of prefigurative politics would call themselves pacifists, prefiguration is inherently pacific – it pursues social solutions to political problems.

The first proponents of prefiguration affirmed society against the state. There was something provocative about ‘the social’ in the concept’s early days at the tale end of the 18th century. Rationalists and free thinkers dreamed of socially-engineered alternatives to the strife of aristocratic war, plebeian food riots, and rampant exploitation. While anachronistic, it is still fun to read the utopian socialist fantasies of William Godwin, Henri de Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier. With the second-half of the 19th century, however, the new ‘social sciences’ invented techniques for charting, measuring, and managing the social – these now ubiquitous techniques were made to survey population groups for various behavior and risks, and led to voluntary social programs (insurance, compensation, education, training, and assistance) for peacefully creating

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‘more moral’ and ‘more effective’ patterns of social behavior without the need for much direct intervention.⁵

The problem with the social is not that it fails at its intended goals. There is no use in disputing the advances in education, science, or medicine brought by scientific planning of the social – they work. We instead take issue with the means through which the social brings social peace. As French historian Michel Foucault points out, the social was invented simultaneously with the science of the police and publicity, or as they are known today, Biopower and The Spectacle. The former ensuring that everything is found and kept in its proper place, and the latter making certain that everything which is good appears and everything which appears is good. The historical effects is that within the span of a few decades, the governmentalized techniques of the social were integrated into contemporary life and began passively making other means of existence either unlivable or invisible.

⁵ Jacques Donzelot, a student of Michel Foucault, claims that the techniques invented in France at that time were used to resolve labor conflicts. The key, he argues, was that the state wanted to compensate workers without also granting them any political power. See Donzelot, *L'invention du social: essai sur le déclin des passions politiques.*]

Today, the social is nothing but a de-centered category that holds the population to blame for the faults of government.⁶

Prefiguration fails to question the social. This is because prefigurative politics is: the act of reinventing the social. Socialist radicals come in a number of flavors. There are dual-power anarchists, who believe in building parallel social institutions that somehow run ‘better’ (though they rarely do, or only for a select few). There are humanist anarchists, who believe that when most styles of governance are decentralized, they then bring out human nature’s inherent goodness. There are even pre-figurative socialists (“democratic socialists” or “reformists”) who believe that many equally-allocated public resources can be administered by the capitalist state.⁷ Ultimately, the social functions for

⁶ Recognizing the victim-blaming function of the social is not new. Anarchist nihilism as a long, storied history of rejecting the influence of the social. For a good overview, see Aragorn!’s 2013 essay collection *Boom: Introductory Writings on Nihilism.*

⁷ Interestingly, many liberal anarchists are not pre-figurative. Though they would bristle at the label, most anarchists today owe their theory of power to the liberal tradition. Such anarchism is concerned with the legitimacy of power, which begins with a possessive individualism that expands through the principle of non-coercion (‘your freedom ends where mine begins’) and contractual exchange (voluntary agreement). Liberal anarchists are in essence anti-corporate libertarians, as they hold that either individuals cannot accede power to institutions (*corporatio*), or if they can, such

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prefigurative politics just as it did for utopian socialists and now the capitalist present – the social is the means to an ideal state of social peace.

Let us be clear, we are not calling for social war. Everywhere, the social is pacification. Even social war thinks of itself as (good) society against the (bad) state. This is just as true of an ‘anti-politics’ that pits the social against politics. Look to John Holloway or Raúl Zibechi, who focus on indigenous resistance to the imperialism of capital and the state. Both argue that the threat is always ‘the outside,’ which comes in the form of either an external actor or a logic that attempts to ‘abstract’ the power of the social. Holloway argues that when the state is an objective fetish that robs the social of its dynamic power (*Change the World*, 15-9, 59, 94), while Zibechi says that indigenous self-management provides “social machinery that prevents the concentration of power or, similarly, prevents the emergence of a separate power from that of the community gathered in assembly” (*Dispersing Power*, 16). Such a perspective is deeply conservative in nature, and they lack a revolutionary horizon – they reject

consent must be democratically determined. This is why we should be suspicious of liberals, even the anarchist ones, for they come dangerously close to the neoliberalism of Margaret Thatcher’, who herself declared that “there is no society.”

whatever are dangers imposed from without only by intensifying the internal consistency of a (family-based) community from within, thickening into a social shell that prevents relations of externality. Without going into much detail, this is the largest drawback to already existing utopian socialist experiments – the same autonomy that allows a group to detach from imperialistic domination also becomes cloistered, stuck in place and lacking the renewal provided by increased circulation.

Civil war is the alternative to the social. Against the social and socialism, we pit the common and communism. Our ‘alternative institutions’ are war machines and not organs of a new society. The goal cannot be to form a clique or to build the milieu. Insurrectionary communism intensifies truly *common conditions* for revolt – it extends what is already being expropriated, amplifies frustrations shared by everyone, and communicates in a form recognized by all. We fight for sleep, for every minute in bed is a moment wrested from capital. We deepen the hostility, for anger is what keeps people burning hot with fury during the cold protracted war waged by our faceless enemies. We spread images of insubordination, for such scenes remind everyone of the persistence of defiance in these cynical times. If we build

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infrastructure at all, it is conflict infrastructure. Most of the time, we take our cues from pirates, who would never strike out alone like Thoreau to invent something from scratch. They commandeer full-formed tools of society and refashion them into weapons. The other thing we have learned from pirates is that duration is a liability; abandon anything that becomes too costly to maintain – a project, a struggle, an identity – there are a million other places to intensify the conflict. But even in our life behind enemy lines, we agree with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who insist that war is only a secondary byproduct of the war machine; producing new connections is its primary function (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 416-423). We like how Tiqqun elaborates on this difficulty. If one focuses too much of living, they descend into the insulated narcissism of the milieu. If one focuses too much on struggling, they harden into an army, which only leads down the path of annihilation. The politics of civil war, then, is how exactly one builds the coincidence between living and struggling. Though most know it by its reworking, Call: to live communism and spread anarchy.

II. The Politics of Cruelty

The politics that seduces us is not ethical, it is cruel. Few emotions burn like cruelty. Those motivated by cruelty are neither fair nor impartial. Their actions speak with an intensity that does not desire permission, let alone seek it. While social anarchism sings lullabies of altruism, there are those who play with the hot flames of cruelty. We are drawn to the strength of Frantz Fanon's wretched of the earth, who find their voice only through the force of their actions, the sting of women of color's feminist rage, which establishes its own economy of violence for those who do not have others committing violence on their behalf, the spirit of Italy's lapsed movement of autonomy, which fueled radicals who carved out spaces of freedom by going on the attack ("Il Diritto all'Odio" – *The Right to Hatred*), the assaults of Antonin Artaud's dizzying *Theatre of Cruelty*, which defames the false virtues of audience through closeness with the underlying physicality of thought, and the necessity of Gilles Deleuze's ontological cruelty, which returns difference through a change so painful that it breaks through the backdrop of indifference.

Interested in cutting through the noisy clutter of modern society, The Red Army Faction invited their enemies to

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“attack wildly” and paint them “as utterly black and without a single virtue” (*Urban Guerrilla Concept*). This wonderfully illustrates *Hostis* because our struggle is similarly one of asymmetry. This is also why we do not agree with the Maoist conclusion that the RAF draws; for them, “we must draw a clear line between us and our enemy.” We have little patience for such manufactured decisiveness, an axiomatic decisionism of ‘the two’ that is best left to rot with the petrified corpse of Lenin. Our enemy no longer confronts us a subject, but as a general environment of hostility that seeks to neutralize us (*Introduction to Civil War*, §66). Such diffuse conflict is no doubt disorientating, but it does not prevent a return of certainty. Yet any reorientation at the level of the subject – friend, enemy, innocent, dangerous, or otherwise – will be a false one. More appropriate for us is then the politics of difference, which usually gets coded according to categories of identity. But this requires first peeling back the liberal synthesis that dominates the politics of difference. Only then do we find that each perforation is a point of leverage.⁸ The question arises: what cruelties make our differences into a million cutting edges?

⁸ Tiqqun myopically claims that predicates/qualities are only possible points of control. While true, it seems obvious that the opposite is also the case. Others just as short-sighted repeat the claim, such as the Institute for Experimental Freedom who use it as

Masochism. Cruelty materializes out of the world itself. Spiders are never taught how to spin a web or suck an ant dry. It is merely how they live. Meaning is not some human thing that we invented to make sense of the dumb universe, nor is it given from on high from some divine all-knowing authority. Thought bubbles up, escaping through cracks. We breathe it in like gas, sip on it like wine, or let it pass right through us like some hard, undigestible meal – and to our hazard. For thought is what allows us to override our programming, biological and social. There are those sadists who think of themselves as warriors of truth. Their names annoyingly find their way into many conversations, “Christopher Hitchens said that...” “Did you hear what Richard Dawkins did the other day...?”. Their sadism shows them to be nothing but narcissists who pleasure themselves by condescending to others. The sadist’s economy of cruelty is self-serving, as it works through a zero-sum game that builds up the sadist by tearing down their foes.

Opposite the sadist, there is another important figure in the sadistic’s zero-sum economy of cruelty: the martyr. The martyr is someone who sacrifice themselves. So common is

a fundamental precept for *Between Predicates, War*. While we can blame Badiou’s influence for Tiqqun’s aseptic definition of the Common, IEF’s is far less clear.

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the martyr today, that nearly everyone already understands how they live. It is the logic of our enemies, and it is clear who seeks refuge in the logic of sacrifice: fascists and activists. Fascists ritualistically feed on the flesh of broken bodies and drink spilled blood to gain eternal life. Activist ritualistically transubstantiate their creature comforts by gifting them to the cause. Such death and discomfort is slavish. Reeking of the worst theology, the martyr's sacrifice follows from thinking stunted by a restricted economy of representation. In their limited imagination, they imagine lives to be scarce commodities, and that these lives can be exchanged for something in return. Think 'nice guy' sexual entitlement, murderous 'service' to the state. Also think anarchists' vouching for other's great acts, do-archists' sweat equity, privilege theorists' measured valuation of bodies. "Those who deserve the greatest are those who have given the most (of themselves)."

Masochistic thought operates through an economy of terror. Such thought feeds neither the sadist nor the martyr. It does not build up one side while tearing down the other. Thought here is not a weapon to be used against horror, as in reason triumphing evil. The masochistic creates an economy of pleasure whereby thought disputes through disruption,

troubling and upsetting all parties involved. "Extreme horror alone keeps reason awake," Blanchot reminds us, arguing that "the logic of sacrifice" is a sham, for it holds onto the hope that "the only awakening is an awakening to horror, in which the moment of truth shines through," but without any real effect (Blanchot, *Une pensée finis*, 70-71).

The cruelty of masochism is the result of a paradoxical interpersonal scene that occurs only when there is enough intimacy to wound but too much distance for understanding. As a formula: intimacy + distance = masochism. Desire is the key to understanding such a queer combination of forces. We think of cruelty as only a tool of the sadist. But here we approach you as masochists, through and through. To understand our position, first cast aside what Freud told you about S&M. His own sadistic voice hides masochism by telling us that it is the subservient half to a whole. What a lie. There is nothing complementary about the writings of Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. The first is a bureaucrat's meticulous obsession delivered through his bored cataloging of the laws of obscenity, while the other performs a mythical displacement of sex that remains suggestive in description while artfully evading any obscenity. So yes, sadism is the pleasure of control. But masochism? It is

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not the pleasure of being ground into dirt, no. Masochism bargains in coldness. There is a dialectical cleverness to its coldness, however. (Masochism is not disinterest.) The masochistic scene begins with attraction – it excites, it provokes, and it builds anticipation – but only to withhold, to frustrate, and to drive mad. The seduction of masochism creates belief, but only as it can continue stringing someone along.

This is not a simple call to transgression. Our enemies have wised up and few include virtuosity in their marketing campaigns. They realize that everyone wants to feel at least a little transgressive these days. The recession of saintly figures does mean that morality tales have disappeared. Virtuousness now appears in negative; wickedness is paraded in front of audiences for them to ‘make their own decision.’ It hardly works, though, as postmodernism took the piss out of disruption – little is truly shocking anymore. Frat boys love either American Psycho or Fight Club, depending on their mood. There are plenty of stockbrokers that read Bukowski and defense analysts who refuse to miss ‘Girls’ on Sunday nights. This confirms a suspicion many have had about the radical potential of cultural politics obsessed with its own

marginality: rather than condemning badness, today’s depictions of transgression end up making it mundane.

Imagine the outrage in 1917 to seeing Duchamp’s urinal for the first time! We are reminded of Antonin Artaud’s “theater of cruelty.” Artaud believed that theater is the most inspired when it connects with our most basic instincts. Instead of a theater of cognition that shocks you think, the theater of cruelty shocks you to feel. Yet the point of the theater of cruelty is not the shock – it uses sensation as a medium that speaks directly to our various capacities as human animals. This is what separates the theater of cruelty from confessional fiction that peddles in the banality of transgression. The theater of cruelty taps into connections that exist at a level that precedes thought, identity, or representation – mutual hunger, not concern for the other – and seeks to rob us of the words *that we have already found* (Artaud, *Selected Writings*, 35). This is how Artaud’s theater breaks through the habits of mind that prevent real thought, but without priding itself on ethical commitments, principled stands, or statements belief. Such masochist cruelty provokes because it robs us of the convenient comforts we use to put off the painfully difficult, disorienting process of creative thought.

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Our call to sensation is not to titillate or entertain. Postmodernism has so thoroughly colonized pleasure that the 60's slogan 'just do what feels good' now plays more to the interests of Levi's Jeans than anyone else. We instead speak of desire, which reflects the realities of that very primal urge to act against our own best interest. Pleasure is just a feeling; desire sets it all in motion. The jolt of power that comes from slinging a racist insult is pleasure. The delirious notions that center society, such as our ideas of racial hierarchy or financialized capitalism, are the workings of desire. Rationality is an obvious response, but axioms are not terribly effective at combatting desire. Try skipping the bill through the assertion that no monetary mass 'exists' anywhere. Artaud's theater shows us how to proceed *by way of delirium*. It cuts into desire, rearranging investments and builds a new will to power. Strategically, we are interested in the cruel desires of masochism. Instead the usual focus on deviants, who rub their exceptional filthiness in the face of prudes, we approach desire as communists speaking to what is truly common among the masses. Our point of access not that grandma's hidden kink or our neighbors subtle racism. We follow the theater of cruelty's search for things so basic that they exceed our best attempts to contain them (limited

by a sexual identity, divided by racialized categories). Cruelty instead feeds on our shared appetites, collective frustrations, and mutual fascinations. There is nothing further from the politics of policies, programs, and planned futures. Its image of change does not involve activist campaigns, mass movements, or political campaigns. The theater of cruelty is played out as "an insurrection without an immediately recognizable enemy" (Gorelick, "Life in Excess"). Its politics of sensation spreads at the level of our passions – privately simmering in the cold hatred of isolation, erupting on the streets in the hot flash of riots, and fought in all the moments between the everyday and the spectacular.

Civil War. We reject the whole idea of 'the law' that Derrida so famously problematizes.⁹ He shows how the law is a text like all others – a set of fictions whose authority comes from nowhere in particular and is justified through empty absolutes. Moreover, acts executed in the name of law are arbitrary and random, for the only defense for the violence of their actions is sovereignty. There is nothing that differentiates the law from any other act of force, except that the law claims to hold the exclusive right to commit violence.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Force of Law, the Mythical Foundation of Authority.*

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To cede authority to any law, then, is to cede any potential for *insurrection*.

What insurrection promises is civil war, as in the indefinite suspension of the social. If there are no rules in war, then there are no identities left to affirm in civil war. There is nothing to praise in the unjustness of war, except that it lays bare the starkness of how social categories promise peace but only deliver war. Behind every claim to an identity is a history of suffering, colonialism, violence, and exploitation that renders meaningless the statements of ‘proudly’ claiming ‘our’ identity. We should not pride ourselves on the victories of our enemies, but rather pride ourselves in finally coming to terms with the freedom to have been done with any identity whatsoever. This line of thought, taken up by Dylan Rodriguez and his work on Filipino American identity, leads to only one conclusion: “there really cannot exist a Filipino or ‘Filipino-American’ subject, or collective identity...”¹⁰ The challenge of civil war is to retain all of this statement’s polemical force and extended it to all identities. In the present society, there cannot really exist any identity category, except in recognizing how it only produces the

¹⁰ Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition*, 2.

opposite of the desired, stable, identity it promises; every identity merely tells the story of war – wars past and wars to come – and the asymmetrical power formations that have brought bodies to their present collective moment.

Instead of appealing to the absence of divine authority, as the law does, the force of insurrection comes from a long history of distrusting such authority. It is through cruelty that feminists rightly say that we can tell our stories of becoming politicized through emotions.¹¹ Politics is nothing but the anger we feel at the degradation and exploitation of the global south for the benefit of the select few in the global north, the shame we feel passing beggars on the street, and the love we feel for those people who have proven to us that what is most necessary. This is our chance for taking the politics of struggle beyond a strategy of one-ups-man-ship over privileged individuals. Shared affects are the basis for an alternative, and they signal our absolute refusal to buy into the game.

If there is any doubt on the different structures of feeling that separate us from the law, look at the incredible discrepancy

¹¹ Mary Eagleton and Sara Ahmed, “Feminist Futures,” in *A Concise Companion to Political Theory*.

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between the recent protests in Ferguson, Missouri (civil war) and the inanity of the student ‘riots’ in Keene, New Hampshire (social unrest). In the former case, people of color mobilized against the state and police brutality after the police shot and killed an innocent black youth. In the latter, white college students were educated in the insubordination appropriate to their career-climbing futures, upset by their frustrated entitlement to pumpkins. Unlike the people of Ferguson, the students in Keene were motivated by the mutual confidence of coddled children, protesting a state that they think should always be working to their advantage. Keene is thus the ideal image of ‘social’ unrest – the forms of contestation are over a state understood as nothing but the shared means for private appropriation. This is why insurrection is directed away from pumpkin patches and toward the organization of power, as it was done in Ferguson. Only then do we catch sight of refusal’s true meaning: civil war.

Remember these images of civil war (Ferguson) and social unrest (Keene), for the Spectacle always operates by reversing this relationship. Through the eyes of the Spectacle, the people of Ferguson represent social unrest, yet we see a multitude who refuse to be properly socialized into

their present conditions. Through the ears of the Spectacle, the students of Keene represent civil war, yet all we hear about ‘civil war’ is a temporary suspension of ‘good manners,’ and ‘orderly conduct.’ So in the face of corporate news reports, we say we are thankful for our failure to be commensurate with society. We relish any deepening of this incommensurability, with the desire to see it reach the threshold where insurrection exceeds social unrest and becomes civil war.

Partisanship. Partisanship can be contrasted with citizenship. Citizens are those who contribute, knowingly or not, to the wellbeing of the (social) state. They do not do this alone, as biopolitical governance is happy to offer loans to homeowners, educational opportunities, job training, and other things to irrigate the channels. Even unruly citizens help iron out the kinks of liberal institutions looking to ‘deal with their diversity problems’ and often end up leading the corporations charge for ‘disruptive innovation’ that rakes in profits. Those who participate in ‘civil disobedience’ are then the best citizens, and are no better than those so-called ‘white hat hackers’ who preemptively find vulnerabilities before they can become a problem. Civil disobedience draws on the power of good citizens rising above bad laws, implying of

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course, that citizens will publicly flaunt their own best behavior until they get the good laws that such good people deserve. Partisans, in contrast, are those who covertly fight a civil war. To be clear, we do not mean partisan politicians who are skill supporters of a cause. We mean the armed groups of history, such as the Soviet Partisans who fought a guerrilla war against the Nazis. Like their struggle, we must draw power from a surrounding milieu occupied by our enemies. While not criminal in principle, we act criminal in effect, acting in the furtive secrecy necessary to pull off sophisticated plots. This is a conspiracy, and we must learn how to act as smart, capable, and free conspirators. (That is the only version of freedom we can bear muttering: at large.) Making matters more complicated, the line between citizen and partisan zigzags through every one of us. Citizens follow the rules of the road while partisans drain the state's capacity to rule – yet even partisans drive of the correct side of the street on their way to blow up a bank. The fantasy of always living one's life as a partisan is a false one. The political question is how best to weave each rhythm into an eccentric counterpoint whose crescendoing moments of intensity are expended by the partisan and not the citizen.

Fanonian decolonial partisanship among the most intense example of partisanship. In 1963, Frantz Fanon addresses the colonial question in *The Wretched of the Earth* by saying that the time for thinking is over and the time for action is now. One could understand the distinction as a dull call for urgency, but that is far from the truth. The claim that he is making is far stronger; it is a response to the question of rhetoric that Spivak will make so many years later, “can the subaltern speak?” Fanon has been largely drowned out by humanist chatter that says that the subaltern should talk of ‘our shared humanity.’ Yet a unanimously denigrated people have little to gain from the language of universality. Kwamé Ture (at the time Stockley Carmichael, Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), revealed how humanism leads to tactical error, arguing that “Dr. King’s policy was that nonviolence would achieve the gains for black people in the United States. His major assumption was that if you are nonviolent, if you suffer, your opponent will see your suffering and will be moved to change his heart. That’s very good. He only made one fallacious assumption: In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none.”¹² The failure of

¹² Speech in Stockholm, available in audio-visual format in *The Black Power Mixtape*, Olsson 2011.

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humanism should be obvious – because empires are built on reason, tearing down an empire requires a confrontation with reason itself. Such a confrontation should not be performed head-on. Disputing colonial reason reveals its hollowness, as its contradictory voice is a resonance chamber that contains no fixed propositional content. Fanon recognizes the fruitlessness of fighting for legitimacy in a courthouse where one has no standing. He understands that the power of the colonial subject resides instead in its status as an object of desire. Colonial powers are both in love with but fearful of the native, which causes anxiety, paranoia, and obsession. “We must keep our eye on them! They cannot be trusted! Do not trust their sly, duplicitous mutterings!” Fulfilling his end of the seduction, Fanon gives a definitive answer to Spivak’s question: the partisan should not speak their mind but rather voice their fury through action.

Jackie Wang’s recent article “Against Privilege” outlines the consequences of Fanonian partisanship. She masterfully lists numerous examples of violence against people of color that never gained the notoriety of the Trayvon Martin case. The cause, she says, is that the appearance of innocence has become a precondition for public sympathy. This is why Trayvon Martin was presented as ‘just a kid,’ and we would

add, why everyone emphasized Michael Brown’s ‘potential as a college student.’ Wang’s diagnosis is fairly non-controversial, as there are many humanist feminists who use it when arguing for simply expanding the frame of grievable bodies (“count more than the American deaths in the War on Terror,” they say). Wang flips the script, however, arguing that the cult of innocence has led to a politics of safety. ‘Privilege analysis,’ her target, appears obsessed with safely ‘securing’ the vulnerability of at-risk populations. Wang shows that time and again, how privilege theory is mobilized: people of color as patronized as unable to participate in actions because of the differential risks entailed (likelihood to be targeted by the police, ability to make bail, etc.), and instead either the objects of charity or subjects capable only of retreat. Wang correctly asserts that the fact of those power differentials is accurate, but the politics of safety only draws conservative conclusions. This is because more privileged actors may have ‘less to lose,’ but they also have less to gain – they engage in radical politics out of choice, either on a whim or out of a misplaced sense of guilt, and can back out at any time without much consequence. Against the politics of safety that encourages only protection or retreat, Wang proposes a militancy of the most vulnerable where “it is precisely the risk that makes militant action more

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urgent – liberation can only be won by risking one’s life” (10). Militancy underwritten by risk, she explains, fights with tools forged from riskiness. In principle, the same swelling of emotions that hardens into colonial “kernel of despair” becomes an essential resource for action when its direction is reversed (*Wretched of the Earth*, 293). This is the cruel capacity of partisanship, and it is exhibited when those most familiar with the territory transform their enemy’s base of operations into a source of hostility.

Revenge. We find revenge underrated and underutilized. Revenge is as easy as it is familiar. It follows a comforting, geometric logic. It avoids the silly question of justice that seems to abstract to us to hold any value. Rather, its object is the real cause of suffering. Within intimate quarters, we may hold open the possibility for forgiveness (whatever that may be). But in approaching our enemies through the dilemma of “to punish or forgive,” there must be a different solution. Our enemies can never be forgiven. Instead, we say to punish and forget. Continue until you “destroy what destroys you.”¹³

¹³ A 1969 song, “Macht kaputt, was euch kaputt macht,” written by Rio Reiser and Norbert Krause for the play *Rita und Paul*, and later recorded in 1970s by Reiser’s band Sharam.

The most satisfying form of revenge is depicted in Lars von Trier’s *Antichrist*. In it, we are shown how gender transmutes into the dark forces of nature. She is lightning. She is thunder. She is a swarm of locusts that descends like a plague on mankind.¹⁴ The heroine does not disavow her gender but allows it to consume her, and she dissolves in it, only to emerge uncompromising hostile, operating at the edge of consciousness. By the time that “chaos reigns,” subjectivity is left behind as a mere afterthought. It shows how subjectivity is a disposable accident – a mistaken focus caused by arrogance. More importantly, her transformation demonstrates how points of trauma either sediment into a fragile self or are turned inside-out with terrifying force. Liberal feminists, most of them men, dismissed the film as misogynist tripe. What a convenient way to ignore a very real path to women’s empowerment. Von Trier himself provides this excuse, as he famously plays out his anger with his second-wave mom through his films. We hear that he is sadistic to women actors, and his misogyny is not hard to

¹⁴ Do not take mistake this as essentialism, as we do not mean to imply that there is some natural quality to women that allows them to channel nature. This is not some half-baked ecofeminism. We take Judith Butler’s “Critically Queer” as a point of departure to simply note how ‘women’ can mutate into the cruel power of a milieu through “a compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms” (17).

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spot. The fate of women is central to his narratives, and one could read Antichrist as the nightmare of a misogynist. We will not argue with this interpretation but just flip it on its head: Antichrist is our holy ideal. Her ordainment by nature, “Satan’s church,” is not a credentialization but an increase in capacity.¹⁵ She gives up her trembling fear for a pornographic combination of lust and desperation. The depravity of her sexuality is overshadowed only by the vengeful punishment she dishes out. Our heroine claws out of her paralyzing trauma by injuring her husband, mutilating and manipulating his impotent ‘caring’ liberalism for her own pleasure.

Afamiliar example for us is the vengeance of queers that ‘bash back.’ Explored with ferocity in *Queer Ultraviolence*, it is clear that queers do not always need ‘protection’ from the violence of society. Queer vengeance turns demands for submission into the fire that fuels criminal intimacies. *Are Christian protesters blocking the park where a Pride stage is being set up? Form a crew and roll on them hard. Did it not save the stage? So what! The newfound taste of power will awaken new appetites. The*

¹⁵ Earlier in this piece, we criticized theology. This should go without being said, but our claims here are wordplay and not a support of Satanism or any other theism, no matter how debauched.

party will go on... It is easy to see why Bash Back! burned out. It is hard to live a life always consumed with white-hot rage. Do not be mistaken: we are not preaching moderation. We are concerned with something much more mundane, which is how to avoid ending up like Valerie Solanas, dying broke and alone. Bash Back!, for all its talk of criminality, merely détourned the old game of identity-based visibility politics. For evidence, consider that the majority of writing collected in their anthology are communiques meant to publicize their actions. (We promise not to say anything about Details magazine.) Though a little too close to civil disobedience for comfort, Bash Back! remains an important experiment in politics worthy of repetition in new ways, in new contexts.

III. In Defense of Cruelty

This volume offers five striking cases of cruelty. The first is L.A. Onda’s maximalist defense of the slogan, ‘we want everything,’ entitled “Nice Shit for Everybody.” The audacity of the piece is its brilliance. They cruelly take leftists to task for using a theological narrative that builds a false equivalence between atonement and political success. We will not apologize for our desires, they declare, and subsequently pose the revolutionary demand for a system that can actually sate them. Such a thirst for communism has

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nothing to do with respect for the motherland, the glorification of work, and definitely not forced rationing. Restraint must be purged from our political vocabulary! There is nothing fearful about indulgence. Nothing has made reading Marx's *Capital Volume II*, in part a sloppy treatise on consumption, so delicious.

The next contribution is a rigorous challenge to idealizations of anarchist life. In this piece, "An Enduring Passion for Criminality," Tom Nomad and Gallus Stanig Mag draw a clear line between anarchists who want to *feel criminal* and those who *commit crimes*. The difference, they show, is that self-styled criminals simply flaunt an appearance to be recognized by others while actual crimes dismantles material deployments of the state. The key to the separation between the narcissism of publicly opposing the law, an ethical practice they lay at the feet of Kant, and the strategic necessity for concrete acts that diminish the forces of our enemies. The lesson to be taken from this piece is clear: we need fewer criminals and more crimes.

Hostis is also pleased to publish a number of creative pieces. The first is a paean to Ulrike Meinhof, "¿Ulrike?" In this pair of poems, Daniel Gutiérrez explores the self-inflicted cruelty

of Meinhof's alleged suicide in Stammheim Prison. Incredible suspicion surrounds the event, and the Red Army Faction insists that the Stammheim suicides were murders. Key physical evidence was destroyed before independent autopsies, that evidence that did remain contradicted the state's case, and the state-appointed doctors who performed the government autopsy had already been accused of misconduct – not the least of which, a forensic surgeon for the autopsy was a former Nazi and even kept death masks of numerous Red Army Faction members as mementos. Gutiérrez goes beyond the controversy to ponder the difficult consequences of 'what if?'

What follows is "There is a Third Thing," an interview with the capo of a Brazilian prison gang translated from Portuguese by Pepe Rojo. In it, we hear the words of Marcos "Marcola" Camacho, leader of the criminal organization Primer Comando de la Capital (PCC, Capital's First Commando). Perhaps simply bluster, but Marcola boldly claims that the terror of prison is nothing compared to the terrifying power of a fully functioning criminal organization. Beyond the bravado, he gives a wide-ranging strategic assessment of Brazil. His most provocative suggestion is that there is a now underclass "raise in the mud," "educated in the streets," and

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“armed with “satellites, cellular phones, internet, modern weaponry.” He names them the subjects of ‘post-poverty’ and claims that will inherit the earth.

The issue ends with a poem by Cassandra Troyan, “Interlude III.” The poem is a portrait of the beautiful devastation wreaked by sexuality. In it, we are given a subterranean view of cruelty as a wild, destructive force. Stark statements propel the poem, signaling a series of punctual moments that shatter idealized notions of the body. The corporeal scene yawns with mouth and taste imagery, spilling its guts. To us, the poem demonstrates the deepness of queer sexuality. We see how gestures sprung from the body in fragments can overpower the heady thoughts born from men’s jailhouse of reason. At its most heinous, it is at its very best.

These five pieces are only a small snapshot of cruelty. We can already see beyond it – to a building cold war between those who actively frustrate the rule of law, and the forces of repression that extend the social order. Even in our small survey, our intention is to make something incredibly clear. We want little truck with self-sacrifice, social protest, collective process, and democratic equality. Rather, the way

forward burns hot with the cold desires of masochism, civil war, partisanship, and revenge.

Nice Shit for Everybody

L.A. ONDA

We hereby reject any form of self-imposed austerity. We posit that we want nice shit for everybody and that is not only feasible but *desirable*. We will not put forth graphs announcing how much work (or not) will require such a project but will state that such a project is part of our *desire for communism*. We hereby reject all forms of feigned punk slobbiness, neo-hippie shabby chic, or pajamas in the outdoors. We see the stores of the bourgeois parts of town (& the newly-gentrified ones too) and say that we want that shit *and even more*. Capitalism is that which stands in the way of us having the shit we want with its hoarding of commodities only to sell them to highest bidder.

We've been told to live with less and less by not only Green Capital, but by the Church, by our liberal "friends," and even by fellow comrades. Fuck that shit. Nah; if we're going to be putting our shit out on the line it's definitely not going to be so that I can live *simply*.

Is this commodity-fetishism? Yes, of the *worst kind*. Mainly, it is the kind that does not want to maintain capitalist social relations but one that seeks to destroy them. We've been living without and we want to remedy this situation. Do we also want to live with the deepest, most sensual set of social relations: YES. But why must we choose between the two? The destruction of capitalism, *for communism*, will leave us with so much time to cultivate ourselves, our tastes, our desires. Pre-capitalist peoples did not dress themselves in tunics of ash gray or shave their heads *en masse*. It is capitalism which has made our self-fashioning so impoverished; though glimmers of *indulgent* self-fashioning sometimes does grace the streets; sadly only to be homogenized, recuperated and sold back to an indiscriminate consumer.

It is capitalism which has accustomed us to bland food & drink, or tricked us into paying top dollar at the co-op. It is

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capitalism which has us moving our IKEA furniture from apartment to apartment. We imagine all the home furnishings to be plundered. Capitalism in its poverty of ideas, by way of colonialism, plunges itself into our indigenous cultures and sells us back what it took from us. We still remember that we used to build structures that still stand while cheap buildings kill so many now in disasters. We still remember that European colonialism spread its tentacles across the world because it was without and we lived in such wealth (after it had plundered its own).

“I want to shed myself of my *first world privilege* and not live confined by how capitalism wants me to.” If only it were so simple. We’ve actually read this sentence (though its intent we’ve seen many, many times). This is *pure reactionary thought*. To run and do the opposite just because capitalism displays certain social features does not make one an anticapitalist. It makes you a *petit-bourgeois bohemian*. We all want to not pay rent, or pay for food, or have to work so many hours of our lives but *there is no outside of capitalism*. Asceticism is not revolutionary. Even those nodes of autonomy scattered around the globe, like among the *Zapatistas*, or Marinaleda, Spain still have to contend with the fact that Capital has them surrounded. But we will not squat our way to a

revolution. Squatting, dumpster-diving, train-hopping, stealing from work, work slowdowns are not acts of revolt but of *resistance*. Thus we understand that the nice shit will not come until capitalism is done with, because little acts of appropriation will not really *get the goods* as we see fit.

This is no mere provocation – it is part of our intent. Communism, for us, is not as we were taught in schools: the general immiseration of everyone. Rather, as Marx so eloquently put forth in 1845, “the real movement that abolishes the present state of things.” The *present state of things* is poverty, hunger, work, racialized social death, gendered violence, the unmitigated murder of transgender people, the free movement of goods but *not* people and the general *immiseration of everyday life*.

Further, a critique of consumerism (& likewise Capital) that only asks us to *consume less* misses the trees for the forest. Capital would have us consume less only to appease our consumer guilt. Let us not be fooled, Capital necessitates eternal growth and this growth is done on terms that will destroy us regardless of how much (or little) we buy. Capital has made a sin of our desires because they inevitably know that it cannot satisfy. To each according to their need, and to

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each according to their desire. We contend with capitalist logic and aim for the unreasonable because capitalist logic would have us cut ourselves from our ludic, indulgent dreams.

An Enduring Passion for Criminality

Tom Nomad and Gallus Stanig Mag

“Revolutionaries always pay their parking tickets”

-William Haver

Introductions

Anarchist discussions of illegalism become confused when it is defined in relief; “if the law is a criminal imposition by the ruling class, criminals are truly revolutionary regardless of their actions” they say. Such a definition leads to idiotic floundering to find a place in the revolutionary milieu for notorious criminals. Yet even the most dedicatedly nihilist anarchist would balk at seeing the perpetrator of the Montreal Massacre, a misogynist with an utterly incompatible vision of the future, as a comrade or as being of the same class or category. Rehabilitating certain anarchist propaganda of the deed causes further problems, as it relies on the stale moralism of accepting certain crimes (theft, forgery, counterfeiting, fraud) while decrying others (acts of

brutality, property destruction and murder). An illegalist declaring of alliances merely creates a false dualism between the “good” criminal, who identifies sites of oppression that they lash out at, versus the “confused” or “bad” criminal, whom works against the interests of their class or others. It is through this prism that we discuss the infamous Bonnot Gang and Russian Nihilists, groups that engaged in “campaigns” of robbery and assassination, and are celebrated for their refusal of respectability in order to wage war on the state.

Celebrations of criminality are not new to the anarchist project. Also age-old is its adversary: “moderate” voices that dismiss the long history of violent (and often criminal) resistance. General historical accounts of Anarchism, an exemplar of which is *Black Flame*, choose to focus on more conventional (largely union-based) attempts to seize power from the capitalist class. This often leaves anarchists with a simplistic dichotomy between “adventurists” and a “true” anarchism that organizes working-class interests to seize power over the economic sphere through something like a union. This simplistic dichotomy ignores the ways in which the working class has often been quite enamored with criminal resistance (cf. E. P. Thompson’s *Making of the English*

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Working Class, or even James C. Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*). Numerous histories of working class revolt demonstrate the centrality of criminal resistance and not simply as an adventurist game played by disaffected bourgeoisie. Criminality has been equally as important in anarchist history. The most notable examples are Strinerite Individualists, the "Bonnot Gang" and Russian Nihilists, such as Sergey Nechayev. Rather than defanging such movements by presenting them in palatable terms, something to which these revolutionaries themselves would object; the purpose of this paper is to explain the dynamics of a certain posture within and toward action.

We would like to address the arguments constructed by those with which we find affinity. Addressing only those involves a choice not to discuss the absurdity of a discourse on responsibility. This is because we have no interest in engaging the problems of anarcho-moralism or prefigurative concepts of strategy that substitute performance for actual engagement. We leave these issues to platformists and organizations, such as Deep Green Resistance. This discussion is instead among those with which we do find points of convergence: those who operate within a tradition whose acts are primarily illegal. For this tradition, illegality is

not a means to a political end, an inconvenient byproduct of being radical, or a risk to be faced when being confrontational. Illegalists live criminality as a way of life.

There is a certain symbolic element introduced to conversations of illegalism that is, for lack of a better term, activisty. Activism misrecognizes the actions of illegalists as a symbolic protest against law. Illegalism in this portrayal exists only as a reaction to law itself, as a codified structure, and thus misses the material dynamics of the operation of law. The generic concept of law is without fixed content and only becoming meaningful through codification and police logistics. Resisting the hollow content of the state is for those who define all existence conceptually; those who live by nothing but a conceptual form of political positivism. These positivists dream of living on the limits of existence, but in fact only practice a form of ethical absolutism; their basic injunction is that law must always already be violated with every breath and with every beat of the heart otherwise illegalism becomes reduced to nothing but an intention to break the law. In this form, illegalism offers nothing more than a strongly-worded critique that everybody knows but no one reads; limiting illegalism to this obliterates everything interesting and useful about criminality. To begin to grasp

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the dangerous core of illegalism once again, the volatility contained within this tradition, requires us to re-evaluate the dynamics of the actions taken by those identified with this tradition.

Materialist Illegalism

The Bonnot Gang is perhaps the penultimate example of the criminal tendency within Individualist (specifically Strinerite) Anarchism, both because of their historical notability and their successes. These are interrelated facts of the gang, however, as the Bonnot Gang would not be notable were it not for their innovations in the field of bank robbery, which naturally lead to their successes. Firstly, the Bonnot Gang utilized getaway vehicles when the police were still primarily moving about on foot, giving them the ability to spirit themselves away from the scene of the crime and then disappear (from the eyes of the police at least) into the anarchist underground of the time. The Gang also initiated a conceptual shift in policing with regards to their utilization of firepower; the Bonnot Gang like many individualist anarchists of their time carried about and used the readily available Browning High Power 9mm pistol, a weapon that had a significantly higher rate of fire and magazine capacity than the revolvers used by the French police. Because of

these factors, and the rather daring robberies that it allowed them to pull off before their eventual trial and execution (for the members who did not die in shoot outs with the police) the Bonnot Gang also struck a chord with their contemporaries becoming notable historical figures. For the bourgeois who condemned them, and whose condemnations lead to much of their notoriety outside of the anarchist milieu, the Bonnot Gang represented a complete breakdown of the social order, working class youth armed with high quality weapons robbing banks and breaking into the houses of the rich to make off with their property. The anarchist milieu, on the other hand, was split over whether the Bonnot gang was a pure expression of individualist anarchism or simply a pointless lashing out, regardless of how legitimate the targets were.

One of the problems of the fairly histrionic response to the gang, whether supportive or derisive, is that the Bonnot Gang itself has become a semi-mythical group, often confusingly viewed as Nietzschean Ubermenchen rather than human beings. The Bonnot Gang “were not at all extraordinary people or anarchist supermen,” Richard Parry notes in *The Bonnot Gang* that we should neither gloss over

their exploits nor “glamorize or make heroes” of them.¹⁶ What is extraordinary about the Gang is not that they were criminals, as plenty of working class people engaged in bank robbery, and plenty of anarchists have been involved in criminal activities, such as forging bank notes or assassinating class enemies. Thus, while some groups simply declared themselves a ‘street gang with an analysis,’¹⁷ the Bonnot gang truly was one, if only because of their decision to act on a readily available milieu. What is glossed over in many hagiographies of the Bonnot Gang is their actions were in line with much of the Strinerite thinking at the time; for example, *Pere Peinard*, an anarchist paper with wide working class readership: “incited to theft, counterfeiting, the repudiation of taxes and rents, killing and arson. It counseled the immediate assassination of deputies, senators, judges, priests and army officers.”¹⁸ In essence, there was widespread intellectual approval for the actions of the Bonnot Gang and others within the Strinerite tradition – and it was expressed in widely-read argument in a proletarian paper!¹⁹ Truly remarkable is the milieu in which the Bonnot

Gang acted, for it reflects a generalized rejection of authority; rebuffing policemen and union stewards alike.

Despite the power of this milieu and the commendable bravery of the Bonnot Gang, many histories of illegalism fall into the ideological trap of separating ‘real’ criminals from political ones. Parry, for instance, argues that the accomplishments of the Bonnot Gang “took precedence over that of a banker,” whose crimes should be duly condemned because he had “embezzled no less than one million francs – two hundred times as much as the illegalists had gotten away with.”²⁰ Although such sideline adjudication is far from rare, it is unsavory. However, a larger problem rears its head in the tendency to read the actions of the Bonnot Gang as symbolic (albeit more effective) protest. To clarify, what we are talking about is the tendency to see the Bonnot Gang robbing both banks and wealthy industrialists as an expression of protest against either banks or industrialists. While the Gang was certainly not in favor of the exploitation of the working class by either of these institutions, it was not their intent to be criminals as a form of social banditry, to borrow Habsbawms term, that acted as symbolic protest

¹⁶ Parry, 6

¹⁷ A slogan of Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers.

¹⁸ Parry, 13-14

¹⁹ Their individualist arguments are not even particularly noteworthy, one can find similar argumentation offered on almost

any insurrectionists bookshelf, even if it is presented in a slightly more contemporary argot.

²⁰ Parry, 83

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against the current order, but rather they were criminals to fulfill their individualist desires (food, good clothing, and a good life) which for them *was* a form of resistance, even if only through Strinerite logic. Part of the mythologizing the Bonnot Gang as social bandits is the tendency to read revolutionary impulses into any person getting a leg up on the bosses. As Woody Guthrie adroitly notes, there are plenty of folk songs about bandits and outlaws, yet no working class person has ever penned a song about the greatness of their banker, landlord, or boss. It is, however tempting, unfair to view the actions of the Bonnot Gang as symbolic (although that certainly is the way in which they resonate) rather than tactical. That is, the Gang accomplished their robberies because they were engaged in planning and chose to strike where the money is (banks and wealthy industrialists) it is a corollary to this that they were symbolically humiliating the bosses. In fact, one of the reasons opinions within the Individualist Anarchist movement of the time were so divided on the Bonnot Gang was their decision to shoot a bank courier who would not hand over his package of money as he was certainly a member of the working class, even if the Bonnot Gang rightly termed him an exceptionally stupid one. In this sense, the crimes of the Bonnot Gang were tactical ones (even if

their aim was simply self-gratification, a revolutionary act by their own credo) rather than symbolic.

Contrary to the tactical selfishness of the Bonnot Gang, the Russian Nihilists spectacular (and therefore inherently if not intentionally symbolic) campaign of terror was a tactical one completely obsessed with the eradication of the Tsarist state. Before going into the particularities of the Russian Nihilists it is worth noting that this is partially because Russian Nihilism, as espoused by Sergei Nechayev is a paradoxically selfless ideology. That is, according to Nechayev the “revolutionary is a doomed man” with “no personal interests, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property, and no name” because “everything in him is wholly absorbed in the single thought and the single passion for revolution.”²¹ Because of the suicidal nature of many attacks and the secretiveness of those that were capable of carrying out multiple attacks, Russian Nihilism does not give us individual figures like the Bonnot Gang. However, the Russian Nihilists pursued their campaign of high profile killings of representatives of the Tsarist state (whether high or low ranking) with a single minded devotion that bordered on

²¹ Nechayev, *The Revolutionary Catechism*; he was also an ardent supporter of bomb-making, stating that 1 chemist was worth 12 poets

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fanaticism. While the havoc spread by the Nihilists from roughly 1894 to 1917 was indeed spectacular (and thus as a corollary symbolic) especially given the explosive end they visited on a number of state functionaries this was immaterial to their actual aim to completely eradicate the Tsarist regime (although the symbolic nature of their violence was certainly helpful in spreading unrest and terror).

It is worth, at least noting, that there was no formal organization of Russian Nihilism and almost every revolutionary organization to some extent engaged in expropriation and assassination; however, as a tendency Russian Nihilism is an enduring expression of a particular set of principles exacerbated by the situation in Russia in the pre-revolutionary period. Specifically, the Tsarist state was in crisis on almost every front (including military strikes, workers barricades, peasants killing landowners and non-Russian ethno-nationalists attempting to cede from the Russian state) it was exceptionally difficult for the state to administer order. Furthering this crisis was the near ubiquitous nature of bomb making materials; making the task of preventing terrorist “outrages” a Sisyphean task. The prevalence of bombs as an assassins tool was so common that the Russian lexicon began to reflect it, for example the adage

that “luck is like a bomb- it can strike one man today, another tomorrow” or the joke that the Minister of Finance had “decided to replace gold currency with dynamite, since dynamite is streaming into Russia while gold is streaming out.”²² The scale of violence against state functionaries was almost unimaginable, in 1905 alone, 3,611 government officials of all ranks were killed it is probably without irony that one official remarked “one is surprised they have not yet killed all of us” given the near daily assassinations.²³ One of the reasons that violence became so effective, however, is directly traceable to the avowed amorality of figureheads like Neychev, specifically assassins no longer solely targeted high profile and particularly odious members of the regime; rather all public officials were considered acceptable targets as were their families. In one case a socialist group assassinated a police informant’s father so they could kill him, their actual target, at his father’s funeral. This amplification of violence by widening the range of acceptable targets combined with readily available bomb making materials and the chaos throughout Russia as a whole allowed terrorism to become “both the catalyst for and the result of Russia’s internal crisis. On the one hand individual

²² Geifman, 16

²³ Geifman, 39

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assassination attacks and expropriations played a primary role in undermining the political and economic stability of the tsarist regime, inhibiting its efforts to wage an effective anti-revolutionary war... On the other, terrorism was allowed to assume enormous proportions only as a consequence of a whole complex of revolutionary events in Russia.”²⁴ The Nihilists, as a tendency rather than a uniform movement, were able to practice their ideology only because of the conditions in Russia, however their wanton attacks on government officials (including acts as small scale as walking about with sulfuric acid and throwing it into the face of the first policeman they encountered and as large scale as grenade attacks on highly ranked government Ministers) helped exacerbate the conditions which allowed them to practice their ideology in the first place.

Underlying these spectacular attacks was a consistent tactical ideology. While Russian Nihilists never exerted the charismatic historiography of criminals such as the Bonnot Gang, Anna Geifman’s *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia 1894-1917* can scarcely contain its distaste for the architects of these attacks, they were criminals whose choice of crimes (assassination, maiming, extortion, expropriation)

²⁴ Geifman, 20

was consistently aimed at destabilizing the Tsarist Regime and although there was a strong symbolism to dynamite obliterating a state functionary their intention was not notoriety or the symbolic nature of such an action. Thus, while their actions are (historically) unceremoniously shoved over the dividing line into “bad” criminal behavior (especially given their almost pathological concern for bystanders) what should be evaluated is the efficacy with which they carried out their task.

Criminality As Hostility

There is a distinction between crime and criminality. This distinction is does not appear in the frame that takes actions in violation of the law as its fundamental distinction. To frame the totality of the illegalist tradition in this light is to view illegalism from the perspective of its other; beginning with what others will determine, from some removed administrative point of view, to be illegal, to be criminal, to be in violation. The common reading of illegalism in the contemporary insurrectionist/nihilist milieu oddly combines this notion of the illegal with two others: an isolating individualism that follows from a concept of the individual as a site of inscription for all possible dynamics and meaning; and a strange ethical politics based in the injunction to

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always already take illegal actions. Illegalism here becomes discussed as an odd form of political Kantianism as framed through a concept of egoism wherein the actions of an isolated individualist is inscribed with an administrative connotation that is attached to an ethical injunction. That individuals actions take on value to the degree that they become distinct from the actions of others but also, in an inversion of Kant's ethical imperative, to the degree that the individual exists in violation of this conceptual outside of the law. In individualism's fight to eliminate conceptual spectres (to borrow a term from Stirner), the ethical injunction to act illegally reinscribes legality, as the individualist self as the monistic agent is defined first through their closeness to conceptual statism and only secondarily finds value according to the distance they are able to create from it.

The consequence of an ethical opposition to the concept of the state, is radical monism. Locking power and resistance together, it is a complete rejection of the outside of desire. This speculative criminality is thus ironically thoughtless, forever damned to a futurity beyond immediate desire, always looking over their shoulder to act in relation to an enemy. As such, desire is falsely understood as operating completely within the framework of the self. The ethical

injunction to always already act illegally thus forms an obtuse illegalism unaware of strategy, the materiality of the state, and the function of the police. Just as in Kantianism, the actions of this blundering illegalism are isolated from their dynamics, for they are expressed conceptually and deemed relevant to the degree that their conceptual definition is expressed through the medium of immediate action²⁵. The obliviousness of this illegalism is its fundamental ignorance to the strategic elements of illegalist action: the use of the car in robberies, safe houses, evasion techniques, and the casing of sites. Obscuring the strategic elements of the action, abstract illegalism cannot think its only criminality; for them, criminality is the deft trick of "getting away with it" unique to moments of spontaneous genius, exceptional circumstances, or incredibly luck.

We distinguish between criminal and criminality: criminal is a defined subject (in the sense that one *is* a criminal, one who breaks the law), an isolated self inscribed as a subject through the transcendent concept of law; criminality is material action in an of itself, the act of breaking of laws and the material antagonism toward law. While the criminal is a subjectivity, criminality is a hostility. Illegalism as subjectivity

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limits itself to performing illegal actions, committing crimes, and discussing their importance as ethical. Illegalism as hostility begins with the dynamics of the action in order to develop an antagonism toward policing, one that differentiates between friends and enemies in a material sense. But how is illegalist hostility a form of criminality, rather than merely as the committing of crimes? Hostility does not perform conceptual rejection, even through the polemical exercise of activism with guns or the loud rejection of law through a politics of complaint. Hostility is *built not declared*, it is constructed against the actual material threat posed by the logistics of policing. The law parades as a concept to give the false impression of an all-pervasive power that can be resisted everywhere through even the most mundane acts of minor resistance. Materialist illegalism sees through such a bluff; the actions of the illegalists posit that there are gaps in law's coverage and that the logistics of policing were vulnerable. Whereas subjectivity's reward is public recognition of a declared opposition to the law, hostility expands its subversive power through the shared exploitation of its gaps and absences. Stated diagrammatically: criminal, subjectivity, opposition, recognition; criminality, hostility, exploitation, subversion.

In addition to subverting the law, illegalist hostility is also a direct attack on the functioning of capital. Such an attack does not reject the means of production, although theft does reject the concept of production as possession, but through direct raids on the content of capital. As such, the illegalist tradition opens to a fundamentally different perspective: illegalism not as rejection-based response to law but as a hostility toward the function of law. As a result, illegalism undermines policing in a direct, material, strategic, and necessarily insurgent form of the act. Hostility does not treat law as an emperor without clothes; it need not be denuded, delegitimized, or publicly flogged. The illegalist tradition of hostility does not even posit of the possibility of banditry the valorization of transgression, or the fetishizing of the illegal act. The history of hostility is the successive development of a structure of action that amplifies the crisis in policing itself, by causing ruptures in logistics on a material level. The materialist core of illegalism is not a declaration of the illegal or the fusion of act concept against law. The revolutionary promise of illegalism is that it takes an absolute material hostility toward the logistics of law, policing, as its point of departure. Illegalism should then be understood as a degree – the degree to which criminality manifests through a hostility toward the operation of law. Seen from such a

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perspective, illegalism is not a reaction to law as a conceptual universality or even the existence of the theory of law. In other words, illegalism becomes dematerialized when taken as an ethical injunction, whose anemic existence is the pathetic life of a conceptual paradox: imposing moral law in the attempt to combat the concept of law. The enduring passion of illegalism thrives as a form of insurgency, as a terms that marks the space of active hostility toward the operation of the logistics of policing. This hostility grows in particular moments, within particular dynamics, and as such, generates an illegalism that can only be understood strategically – as a strategy through which immediate and material hostility manifests, with a criminality of the tendency toward direct confrontation with policing, and without an ethical injunction against any possible actions.

What occurs in the form of the actions of the Bonnot Gang and the Russian Nihilists is not a process in which actions are were not taken due to their illegality. Rather, something much more important is functioning in this process, they dispute the legitimacy of law as a conceptual framework. These illegalists launched a material attack on the operationality of law as such. They took aim at the structure

and function of policing as a logistics. Rather than following an ethical injunction whereby one is compelled to take actions defined through the sovereignty of the state, even if those actions are intended to be contrary to the law.²⁶ Rather, illegalism becomes an important guidepost for the concept of anarchist insurgency – to the degree that we recognize a movement of exceeding the very question of the law, the inscription of the meaning of law onto the action. This was not a conceptual rejection of law through the taking of actions that can be retroactively declared illegal, it was a forceful attack on the State's structure of decision and material operation of decisions. They understood *the fundamental distinction between crime and criminality*. Criminality is a material intent, a posture of actions that exists in an absolute materially hostility to law, as an attempt to destroy the actual materiality of operations of law and the functionality of the police. It is in this sense that all

²⁶ Schmitt, 17-35; For Schmitt the problem of sovereignty is in how the concept of the decision is obscured in the liberal tradition, a tradition that attempts to reduce the state to the conceptual edifice of law, and then claim, in a purely Kantian sense, that law functions universally. Schmitt argues, here that the law is meaningless outside of the moment in which law takes place, in the arbitrariness of the decision imparted by the judge or the cop, a decision that means nothing without a material logistics of force, a logistics of force that exists prior to, and potentially in the absence of law.

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insurgency is a move into criminality, but not necessarily a move into the criminal; it is not the case that it is always the time to break the law must always be broken, or that breaking the law is always the most effective action in all cases.

This is not the lesson that we would derive if we pay attention to the contemporary narrative of illegalism, one steeped in romanticism and the concept of banditry, as well as the valorization of heroes and heroines. If we are to take this contemporary reading to heart we begin to step into a conceptual universe piled thick with a form of ethics, an ethical injunction to take actions that become important to the degree that they are inscribed with the outside content of law, of being contrary to law. But, this is a meaningless reading, a reading that not only reduces illegalism to crime, stripping this crime from its dangerous intent, but inserts the action into a symbolic terrain of engagement with a symbolic enemy, the state as legal construct, the bank as abstract institution. This is a pointless reading. It is only in coming to terms with the dangerous core of the illegalist tradition, the necessary connection between insurgency and criminality, the attack launched on the operability of sovereignty, the creation of a crisis within the functioning of the state,

hostility to the police, that the illegalist tradition can prove useful to us now. Insurgency always requires an embrace of criminality, a direct material conflict with the operational capacity of the state, and likely requires crime to be engaged in, but crime that has, on its horizon, a sense of amplifying conflict within a material terrain of engagement with the very logistics that determines the act to be illegal. Illegalism, when understood in this way points to a conclusion that many, largely the more naïve among us, specifically many within the “movement building” and “dual-power” tendencies, have been loathe to accept, that criminality lies at the core of the insurgent project, not as an inscription of meaning for our actions, but as an intent, a posture toward action itself, an absolute, total, material hostility toward governmentality itself.

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¿Ulrike?

Daniel Gutiérrez

“Laçan defines madness as being spoken by language rather than by speaking it. The destruction of language as communication renders the initial solidarity... to deafness... the word of authority swamps that of the individual, dislodging his most personal interests.” -Stephen Boldy

“Hace ya tiempo que nos acabaron las ganas de hablar.” - Juan Rulfo

Dado el caso
que uno se
suicide
 en la prisión,
 visto que
las condiciones dentro de ésta
son inhumanas
y
fueron creadas para
causar ansia,
aislamiento,

y
soledad,
¿Dónde recae la culpa?

¿En el prisionero,
agotado y
 sin ninguna
salida,
incapaz
de *imaginar*,

 mucho
 menos
 vivir

otro momento
que del infierno
donde se encuentra?
¿En los guardias,
a quienes
los pagan para torturar,
 negar
y
 aislar
los sujetos

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de la prisión?
¿En los diseñadores
y
los arquitectos
que
imaginaron
cada
una
de
las paredes
castigadoras?
O
¿en el gobierno
que dio los fondos
y creó las leyes
bajo las cuales
se encuentran
los ocupantes
de la institución?
O
¿en
la
clase
que

le
dio poder
al gobierno
y
creó
la ideología
bajo
cual
todos
estamos
sujetos?
O ¿tú?
O ¿yo?
O ¿nosotros?
Estas preguntas abarcan varios temas. Entre ellos, la
sociedad en general, la voluntad y
la
revolución.

¿ULRIKE?

If it is the case
that one commits
suicide
 in prison,
 given
the conditions within the prison
are inhumane
and
were created to
cause anxiety,
isolation,
and solitude,
where does the blame lie?

In the prisoner,
exhausted and
 without
any exit,
incapable
of imagining,

 much
 less

living
another moment
in the hell
in which they find themselves?
In the guards,
who
are paid to torture,
 deny,
and
 isolate
the subjects
of the prison?
In the designers
and
the architects
that
imagined
each
 and
 every
 punishing
 wall?
Or
in the government

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that gave the funds
and made the laws
under which the prisoner
finds themself
occupant

of the institution?

Or

in
the
class
that
gave
the
government
power
and
created
the
ideology
under
which,
all

of us are
subjects?

Or you?

Or I?

Or us?

These questions touch upon various topics. Among them,
society in general, free will, and
revolution.

“What is significant is not only the idea that a prisoner would have been murdered by the government in a prison cell, but the fact that so many citizens were willing to entertain the idea that this could be true. Most people accepted the conclusion of the two autopsies - that Meinhof had killed herself - but nevertheless argued that while the state had not de facto murdered Meinhof, it had done so through negligence and by subjecting Meinhof to inhumane conditions during imprisonment .”
-Karin Bauer, Everybody Talks About the Weather... We Don't, The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof

THERE IS A THIRD THING

Taken from O Globo

Translated by Pepe Rojo

Brazilian capo speaks like a prophet; everything he said is both actual and unsettling.

Marcos Camacho, better known by his nickname Marcola, is the leader of a criminal organization in São Paulo, Brazil, called Primer Comando de la Capital (PCC, Capital's First Commando).

Marcola's answers allow us to get a glimpse at what could be the future of common delinquency in Latin America.

O Globo: Are you part of PRIMER COMANDO DE LA CAPITAL (PCC)?

Marcola: Even more than that, I am a sign of these times. I was poor and invisible. You never glanced at me during decades, while it seemed easy to solve the problem of poverty.

The diagnosis was obvious: rural migration, income disparity, few slums, discrete peripheries; but the solution never appeared... What did they do? Nothing. Did the federal government ever set aside a budget for us? We were only news when landslides wiped out a slum, or in romantic song about the "beauty of the mountains at dawn"...

Now we are rich with the drug multinationals. And you are dying with fear. We are the late beginning of your social conscience. You see? I am cultured. I read Dante Alighieri in prison.

O Globo: But the solution would be....

Marcola: Solution? There's no solution, brother. The very idea of a "solution" is already a mistake. Have you seen the size of the 560 *villas miseria* (slums) in Río? Have you overseen the outskirts of São Paulo by helicopter? Solution: How? It could only happen through millions of dollars spent in an organized manner, with a high level government, an immense political will, economic growth, a revolution on education, general urbanization, and it would have to happen under the leadership of an "benevolent dictatorship" that could jump over our secular bureaucratic paralysis, that could pass over the Legislative conspiracy. Or do you think that the bloodsuckers are not going to act? If they are

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neglected they will rob even the PCC. And the judiciary that prevents punishment. There would have to be a radical reform of the penal system of the country, they would need intelligence and communication between provincial, state and federal police forces (we even make “conference calls” between inmates...) And all that would cost billions of dollars and would entail a deep psychosocial change in the political structure of the country. What I mean is: it’s impossible. There is no solution.

O Globo: Aren’t you afraid of dying?

Marcola: You are the ones afraid of dying, not me. Better said: here in jail, you can’t come over and kill me, but I can easily have you killed outside. We are human bombs. In the slums, there are a hundred thousand human bombs. We are right in the middle of the unsolvable. You are between evil and good, and in the middle, there’s the frontier of death, the only frontier. We are already a new “species,” different insects, different from you. For you, death is this Christian drama, a heart attack in bed. Death for us is daily bread thrown over a mass grave.

Weren’t you intellectuals talking about class struggle? About being a martyr? A hero? And then, we arrived! Ha, ha... I

read a lot; I’ve read 3,000 books, and I read Dante, but my soldiers are strange anomalies of the twisted development of this country.

No more *proletariat*, or unhappy people, or oppressed. There is a third thing growing out there, raised in the mud, educated through sheer illiteracy, getting their own diplomas on the street, like a monstrous Alien hidden under the crevasses of the city. A new language has already sprung. Do you not listen to our recordings “with permission” from the courts? That’s it. It is our other language.

You’re standing right before a kind of post-poverty. Post-poverty generates a new murderous culture, helped by technology, satellites, cellular phones, internet, modern weaponry. It’s all that shit with chips, megabytes. My subordinates are a mutation of the social species. They are the mushrooms of a big dirty mistake.

O Globo: What changed in the outskirts?

Marcola: Money. Now we have it. Do you think someone like Beria Mar, who has 40 million dollars, isn’t in charge? With 40 million, jail becomes a hotel, a desk... What police

A THIRD THING

force is going to burn down that gold mine? You get me, right? We are a modern corporation, wealthy. If an official hesitates, he is fired and “placed in the microwave.”

You are the broken state, dominated by the incompetent. We have flexible management methods. You are slow, bureaucratic. We fight on our own soil. You fight in a strange land. We are not afraid of death. You are dying of fear. We are well armed. You only have .38s. We are on the attack. You are on the defense. You have the mania of humanism. We are cruel, merciless. You turned us into crime superstars. We regard you as clowns. We are helped by the population of the slums, either out of fear or love. You are hated. You are regional, provincial. Our weapons and products come from outside, we are “global.” We never forget you, you are our “clients.” You quickly forget us, as soon as your fright of us passes.

O Globo: But, what should we do?

Marcola: I’ll give you a hint. Go after the “dust barons” (coke lords)! There’s congressmen, senators, businessmen, there’s ex-presidents in the midst of the coke and the weapons. But, who is going to do that? The army? With what money?

There is no money for recruits. I am reading *On War* by Clausewitz. There’s no prospect of success. We are devouring ants, hidden in the corners. We even have anti-tank missiles. If you do something wrong, we’ll send some Stingers by. To destroy us... only an atomic bomb in the *villas*. Can you imagine? Radioactive Ipanema?

O Globo: But, couldn’t there be a solution?

Marcola: You will only get somewhere if you stop defending “normalcy.” There is no more normal. You need to reflect on your own incompetence. And to be quite frank, your morality. We are at the center of the unsolvable. The difference is we live here, and you have no way out. Only shit. And we are already working inside it. Understand me, brother, there’s no solution. And you know why? Because you can’t even comprehend how widespread the problem is. As the divine Dante wrote: “Abandon all hope. We are all in Hell.”

Interlude III
Cassandra Troyan

why can't we shake
these skin leashes
dragging
they cling behind.
Keep traipsing around
until they rip free or tangle indefinitely.
Release only by proverbial crack
and a beak sliver shrieks through.

*Look how we are born crucified resurrected all the same. This is our
flesh now we made it so*

cum to blood sweat ash.

WE INITIATE THE DEATHLIGHT

When draft of a shadow arrives, make no motion as it snuffs
itself out.

Dissipates to vanish into ourselves
relies on eventually there must be drought:
pools will drink themselves lapping
up the dredges slurps of silt.

Until our gums crack
peel to expose hardboiled jaws
twigbone fingers compose woven nests
cradling the last dusty sweetness
of each other's bodies.

And now, there is nothing more.

INTERLUDE III

I don't know the means for and/or which a day makes itself
anymore.

Lost track on all the shuffled cluttered paths
my lady's train seeps so red.
Crinkled feet leaving tracks
though no one is swift enough to follow
to duplicate
to make counterfeit prints.

I've finished throwing bones to the jackals of fate
any traveled sinews meshed to the path
becomes the path.
Irreversible weight of this self-loaded task.
Hooves disappear tatter in sand
gulping up blood.
Will she ever feel swollen
under this hammer of heat?
Bloat in my belly

though her ribs still apparent.

Barometer of sunken flesh
wraps organ cage.

There will always linger a quiver as we repeat the affair
again, and again. Rise up on our throne of blood call it
CORPSE MOUNTAIN built from what intangibles
uncertain.

Survival defeats boredom as the curious eye seeks lifeblood
the desire to see ourselves in a distant floating apparition.

Such a stolid proposition
of where can those hunting
no longer be prey.
Perhaps our wrath
twists its back
sinks talons into our flank.
Maybe that is what pools

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the fluid behind our lips
sweet self-infliction.

We mix it
overflow pours down our chests
collects in canyons of flesh.

Snatched in the shimmering
caught myself seeing me
peered through to underwater umbrage
rumbles distant pleasure
in a mossy swamp depth.

Then suddenly, I collapse into
focused longing.
Her water flesh clings as
rolling sheets of glass
encases trunk of thigh
then a wrapping fabric pulls

tight when I first lifted
her onto my lap
pulled up her hair. Lips to a
flickering neck, contracting
stream of bones pass
underneath.

A slithering behemoth of want
was born that night.

Initial desire floods back
multiplied in flashing frames
retroactive passion pours mammoth waves
crests peak above our heads.
Brine brimming in cavities
lathered gag of sea
paints its salt
to greedy lips
tide replacing breath.

INTERLUDE III

So close to the end
yet the body calls upon ancient tastes
instinct of appetite heightened
with the tongue of death swabbing
our throats
clears the way to opportunity,
caught between a pulse or murmur.

LOOK HOW ALIVE WE ARE WHEN ALMOST DEAD

Tinge of a filthy taste whets mouths insatiable:

"I must have it, I accept through all terms"

she bleats, all of her cranked open
to sea, sky, with conjoined hips.

Spread onto the trails of now and those strewn with bodies
torn by fever. We've cut an ugly wicked path, savoring our

promise to make still more until stuffed up to gullets, choking
victories of demise.

The liquids of life mingling, +/-
conjoin opposing ends
as all of us spurting forth
the final entrails sputter
dry to roll over in such
luscious sludge
deflated essence squeezed
to leave us as sacks
of skin side by side.

so empty and so full.