Editorial

The "Atoms for Peace" exhibition traveled to Tokyo in 1955 and on to Hiroshima in 1956. The items on display covered topics like isotopic testing on the tread of bicycle tires and factory products, atomic power's applications to the petroleum industry, and radiation's effectiveness in removing facial moles. 2.6 million people visited the exhibition between stops in eleven Japanese cities. When the show was installed at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, its attendance numbers exceeded the annual attendance of the memorial museum itself. The previous year, that same memorial museum also hosted the First World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs.

The United States' "Atoms for Peace" exhibit was a touring campaign, allegedly supported by the CIA and the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, one of Japan's largest national newspapers. Its landing in Tokyo and Hiroshima aimed to rebrand nuclear energy. US President Eisenhower, who delivered a UN speech of the same name in 1953, delivered a message for the exhibition's 1955 opening in Tokyo: "The exhibit stands as a symbol of our countries' mutual determination that the great power of the atom shall be dedicated to the arts of peace." Especially on its second stop in Hiroshima, the expo's audience consisted of survivors of the atoms detonated over the same city to deathly devastating effect less than a decade before, in 1945.

Thinking about this half-century-old case of spin and circulation from the perspective of 2019 resonates not in content, but somewhat in context, with conversations around the current Whitney Biennial. This year, there are calls by artists both inside and outside the exhibition and institution for the resignation of Warren Kanders, vice chair of the Whitney board. This visible figure is also an executive at the Safariland corporation, whose weapons and teargas products enact state violence on the bodies of refugees, protestors, and victims of police brutality.

In this issue of *e-flux journal*— number 100—Liam Gillick takes up Duchamp's provocation that artworks should be considered in terms of twenty-year time spans. For Gillick, the twenty-year scale reveals points of change more effectively than decades: "Twenty years is enough time to understand the development of a new technology through to its application. Twenty years is enough time for new educational models to take effect—both negatively and positively. Twenty years is still enough time to wonder whether a set of ideas within the art context retains any relevance or needs reconsideration."

This year there is a macabre offering on display at the Venice Biennale, placed in the Arsenale without a label or identifying information. A boat in which 800 migrants died trying to reach Europe was floated back and moved to Venice at enormous expense. Since the Biennale opened, the ship has been presented as a hybrid of a monument (to what?) and a Duchampian readymade. Now, the festival's curator spins the narrative, claiming the boat is not art. "It's not art," he declares, "but it's an artist who

initiated this presentation ... taking something real from the world, something associated with tragic death and is putting in the context of an artworld to ask questions."

In 1960, Luis Camnitzer, as part of a generation of rebellious students working to change the curriculum of the art school in Uruguay, was assigned the task of informing an art history professor and poet at the school that the students no longer needed their services. The young Camnitzer approached the professor and poet to explain the students' position: "We feel that you reduce art to only two topics: love and death." Puzzled, the professor and poet replied: "But, is there anything else?" Camnitzer still grapples with this exchange and all its implications, as he details in his essay in this issue, "Where is the Genie?"

Koichiro Osaka's text for this issue begins at the Sunshine 60 skyscraper in Tokyo. According to myth and a historical reading, the skyscraper is named for the sixty Japanese war criminals executed in 1948 in what was then Sugamo Prison. In 1978, the former prison became the tallest skyscraper in Asia. As Osaka explains, Sunshine 60 may be the largest war monument ever built. The building serves at once as a haunted gravesite and reassurance of the ongoing sunshine of fascism and capitalism.

Also in this issue, Françoise Vergès describes a daily ritual in multiple urban centers where thousands of black and brown women invisibly "open" the city. Vergès describes how middle-aged, often immigrant women who do the dirty work—the cleaning work—without being seen, so that younger, generally paler neoliberal bodies can perform visible work in those same spaces. Vergès details the hours in the morning when maintenance workers, exhausted, return from their twilight-hour work on public transportation, while the working bodies of the business world begin their pre-work routines and commutes.

In an essay exploring "What Lenin Teaches Us About Witchcraft," Oxana Timofeeva outlines a vision of camaraderie: one that transcends the borders of humanity and places theories of the comrade (such as Jodi Dean's from this journal, among others) in a long line of sorcery and witchcraft—a line from which Lenin himself may have descended. Timofeeva writes that comradeship is not easy. "Along with sorcery," she says, comradeship "can evoke forces that an individual cannot control." She relays Goethe's 1797 poem "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" to illustrate how these forces can be destructive. With the master sorcerer away, the apprentice casts a magic spell. The process goes awry, wreaking a level of havoc. But the apprentice, panicking, has neither skill nor power to stop it alone. Timofeeva explains that "Georges Bataille links this figure of the sorcerer's apprentice to art: 'The sorcerer's apprentice, first of all, does not encounter demands that are any different from those he would encounter on the difficult road of art.'"

Concluding issue #100, Franco "Bifo" Berardi writes that

"The contemporary subconscious is marked by two powerful gravitational pulls: extinction and immortality, which feed into each other." Berardi admits that the answer to the question of exactly what extinction he is talking about is not clear to him. At the end of the essay, he asks: "Is crime the inducer of Chaos, or the generator of Order?"

Berardi speaks to an even larger current condition, one of climate change, near incomprehensible inequalities that mark wealth distribution of our current time, and the panicking predators thereof and therein.

"Is there a way out from this end?" Bifo asks in a coda to the essay. "Yes, of course: it is you, the unpredictable."

—Editors

X

The whole problem consists in anticipating the anticipations of others, in *singularizing oneself by imitating everyone before everyone else does*, in guessing the "equilibria" that will emerge from cyberpsychodramas played out on a global scale.[1]

In July 1998 I produced an exhibition at the Villa Arson in Nice with a deliberately unspeakable title: "Post Discussion Revision Zone #1–#4. Big Conference Centre 22nd Floor Wall Design." The exhibition comprised the removal of all the temporary walls from the main exhibition space of the Villa and the execution of a large geometric spiral wall painting in orange and brown on two walls. At each corner of the room hung a "discussion platform": a 240 cm × 240 cm framework of anodized aluminum with transparent orange and light blue Plexiglas. People walking into this large space—four hundred square meters— gravitated towards the "discussion platforms" and tended to spontaneously gather under them, surrounded by the deliberately a-profound graphic resembling the Ancient Greek meander motif. Visitors tended not to look at the work or necessarily talk to each other. They were perfectly alone-together in a zone preordained for some kind of enforced exchange.

The entire structure of the exhibition in Nice was intended as a soft-warning on the question of who controls the center ground of social and political life in a postrevolutionary program of developed postmodern consensus. It was one of many mise-en-scènes realized in exhibitions and collaborative projects between 1995 and 2000 that I initially referred to as "What If? Scenarios" in exhibition titles and associated texts. The term was a self-conscious parody of the new applied postmodernism of rebranding and future speculation as business model. The earliest exhibition structures were in advance of the publication of a book provisionally titled *Discussion Island/Big Conference Centre*. The book took the form of a speculative fiction set in the near future where three characters negotiate endless rebranding, conciliation, compromise, and discursive subjectivity, all taking place in highly designed non-places of pseudo exchange. At the outset, the draft of the book suffered the same problems as a great deal of speculative fiction in that it had no convincing location for action; rather, the characters were stuck describing their conditions to each other, in the manner of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* or B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two*. The exhibition structures—such as the one at the Villa Arson—were developed in order to provide a concrete series of settings for the book. The mise-en-scènes furnished an aesthetic prior to analysis and detailed action—something that could be described and acted upon with an awareness of a certain cinematic aspect where the setting itself can drive a narrative. This deliberate switching of cause and effect, point of reference and analysis, was intended to find an aesthetic

Liam Gillick

We Lived and Thought Like Pigs: Gilles Châtelet's Devastating Prescience

Nightclub Le Palace, Paris, 1979. Portrayed in the picture are Loulou de la Falaise, Caroline Loeb, Thadée Klossowski de Rola, and Mounia. Photo: Philippe Morillon.

frame for a state of affairs increasingly subject to rapid inversions of value and meaning. This was a period of rapid rebranding—new Ancient Greek–sounding names appearing within ambient ambivalent spaces of exchange as a replacement for more difficult and directly contestable activities or scandals: Altria, Aga, Areva, Avaya, Aviva, Capitalia, Centrica, Consignia, and Dexia were joined by Acambis, Acordis, Altadis, Aventis, Elementis, Enodis, and Invensys. By 2001, Arthur Anderson Accounting had become Accenture and Philip Morris had rebranded itself as Altria—all in an attempt to reflect the potential of new global markets and unforeseen opportunities, carried by new names that could be associated with visual affects spinning free from concrete associations.

The first line of *Discussion Island/Big Conference Centre* set the scene—a new space of conference centers, rebranding, and aesthetic misdirection masking trauma and pain: "However hard you try it's always tomorrow. And now it's here again. Across the other side of town, trauma had overwhelmed personal exchange. Something self-willed and determined had cut through the dusk. Pain in a building. We all called it The Big Conference Centre."[2]

My nineties-era depiction of a world of endlessly mediated exchanges did not propose an origin or a series of didactic or documentary paper trails. It only pointed forwards. I needed new tools to understand the location of a starting point. Standard postmodern accounts of contemporary art seemed insufficient to cope with the ravages of the Thatcher and Reagan period during the 1980s and 1990s—to a young person, the writing seemed too formalist and overly obsessed with signs, signifiers, irony, and allegory, a bit like a Homeopathic Emergency Room trying to cope with the mass arrival of victims of a bus that had been driven off a cliff. There was a widening gap between the traditional art exhibition as a form and its newly emerging critical double: the product of curator(s) working alongside the artist to investigate the possibility of a new form of exhibition that questioned all aspects of display, mediation, experience, and communication. A sequence of projections, situations, and "films in real time" were produced by a number of artists at this time in an attempt to realize the near-future aesthetic conditions—Philippe Parreno and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster were certainly convinced of this new cinematic affect in the early 1990s. This was an effort to aid and offer structural support to collapsing models of

resistance and collectivity that were being outmaneuvered, picked off, and co-opted by the accelerated rebranding and blurring of corporate and public life following a period of rapid capitulation. It was not an attempt to replace more urgent direct action or political urgency but to make a contribution by taking apart the aesthetic framework of the new neoliberal consensus. Was there any way to deal with the semiotic calamities of the years since 1968 other than via self-conscious reference to the various failures of applied modernism and their imminent co-option? One option was to at least unveil the deceit at the heart of the new belief in "transparency."

Looking back at that period from the present, it would have been useful to know the writings of Gilles Châtelet at the time. He only appeared to me recently in a footnote on page 225 of the book *30 Years after Les Immatériaux: Art, Science, and Theory* edited by Yuk Hui and Andreas Broeckmann. There it was: "See -G.- Châtelet,- *To Live and Think Like Pigs: The Incitement of Envy and Boredom in Market Democracies*,- trans. -R. -Mackay- (Falmouth -and- New- York: Urbanomic- and -Sequence -Press,- 2014)." What the hell was this book with such a great title? And how had I missed it? It would prove—in part—to offer some of the essayistic and fantastical accounting of the period between 1968 and 1998 that I had been missing and that had not been effectively accounted for in earlier attempts to shoehorn the new self-conscious postmodern art practices into their various allegorical and ironic frames.

To Live and Think Like Pigs was published in French by Gallimard in 1998[3] but did not appear in English until 2014. The first chapter of the book is set in 1979, twenty years before its publication; now we are twenty years on from the point it was first published in French. These twenty-year jumps offer distinct periods, in terms of technology, the social, and the constitution of shifting mainstream political constellations. The twenty-year step offers indicators and markers of the social and its bounds that identify points of change more effectively than thinking in terms of decades. Twenty years is enough time to understand the development of a new technology through to its application. Twenty years is enough time for new educational models to take effect—both negatively and positively. Twenty years is still enough time to wonder whether a set of ideas within the art context retains any relevance or needs reconsideration. Twenty years was also the basis of earlier avant-garde promises and speculations. Duchamp believed that an artwork should only have a twenty-year life span.[4] In the same interview where Duchamp says this, however, he asserts that language in the form of literature lasts longer since it takes longer to mutate; this statement is clearly open to contestation as we become more conscious of linguistic power structures, yet the provocation and its implications about art and its value over time remain under-quoted, and they have certainly resonated with me. It is maybe the
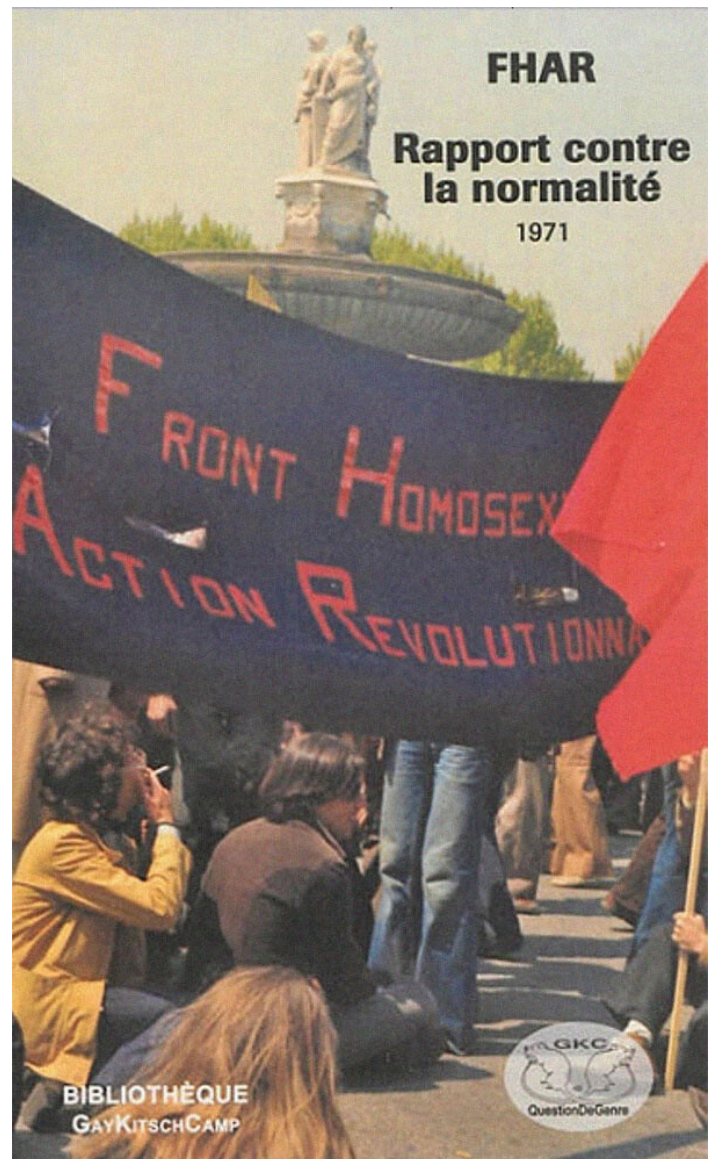
Cover of the book Rapport contre la normalité, 1971: le Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire rassemble les pièces de son dossier d'accusation: simple révolte ou début d'une révolution? Le Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire rassemble les pièces de son dossier d'accusation (2013), a book based on the original 1971 report by FHAR (Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire).

reason why my entire project at the time circled around a yet-to-be-written book that would be exchanged cheaply and easily under the guise of a novel.

To Live and Think Like Pigs is an account of two dominant ideas from the 1990s that have now, two and three decades later, become markers of crypto-freedom in the hands of global data boys and have led to tragic inequalities of movement. It is a book against the way chaos theory, nomadism, and anemic underdeveloped concepts of difference were used throughout the 1990s as an enlightening model—and against poorly deployed

mathematics-as-theory in general. *To Live and Think Like Pigs* is an account against a nomadism that appeared as a liberatory metaphor at the end of the twentieth century, yet in the twenty-first has become a dominant model of the cultural class in permanent motion, and a concomitant growing underclass penned in and restrained. It is a book against the "rational" individual as human data unit. It is against the political "market." It is against the self-policing of all aspects in life. It predicts the envy culture of "rhinoceros psychologies and reservoirs of the imaginary for the pack leaders of mass individualism" (89). And roundly mocks them. And in so doing, also roundly mocks our 2019.

A late chapter is titled "The Fordism of Hate and the Resentment Industry." What a perfect heading for the diminished social fabric of our time. The creation of a permanent underclass. The transfer of resources and capital from poor to rich. The isolation and abuse of those who do not conform to standard models, and most importantly the acceleration of technological surveillance under a voluntary code of data submission and self-policing:

> The Gardeners of the Creative had basically sought to play Nietzsche against Hegel, and often against Marx. But they had chosen the wrong target: it is neither Hegel's owl nor Marx's mole, nor Nietzsche's camel that surprises us at the turn in the road: it is Malthus, peddler of the most nefarious conservatisms, always smiling and affable, who stands watching the suckers haggling over the libertarian gimcrackery of nomadism and chaotizing (24).

Let it be understood, first of all, that I have nothing against the pig …

Thus begins Châtelet's preface (1). The book itself opens in a nightclub. It is a Sunday night in November 1979 and "no one" who claimed to be anyone "wanted to miss The Night of Red and Gold" (11). A specific set of characters who appear to be all male and all in control of some aspect of their lives have come together. The Four Tuxedos and The Cyber-Wolves are key players among a "pool of beautiful, available, and arrogant suburban hounds" (14). All of these well-dressed hounds and wolves are hosted by nightclub "master of ceremonies" Fabrice and his "truculent collaborator," the Red Glutton (13). Fabrice is our witness and the one who can see what is taking place while not gauging the full import of the moment. Even so: "He could sense how unstable was the cocktail of Money, Talent and the Press—as finely poised as the physicist's famous critical point where gaseous, liquid, and solid states coexist" (18).

The opening scenario at the club's Night of Red and Gold

in '79 points us towards our current conditions of exchange. It is a place of display and anxiety where tensions are overwritten by a collective signaling of potential and progress masked by new lifestyle allegiances. As Gilles Châtelet said in a 1998 interview:

> It's a book about the fabrication of individuals who operate a soft censorship of themselves; on the construction of what I call yoghurt-makers, of which Singapore is the typical example. In them, humanity is reduced to a bubble of rights, not going beyond strict biological functions of the yum-yum-fart type … as well as the vroom-vroom and beep-beep of cybernetics and the suburbs (the function of communication).[5]

Typical of the book itself, this quotation needs reading a few times for the vitriol to settle. Is Châtelet condemning the new City States of Globalization? Absolutely. Is he questioning the emergence of a new virtue-signaling isolated to the privileged and a-profound? From our perspective, there might be troubling implications here, but I do not believe he is going against real change and difference but rather a new constellation of eco-consciousness driven by the what would become the mature internet. It's a snobby quote but an important one to indicate a new nationalistic form of development—the artisanal and the local powered by devices making claims for freedom that will not be able to fight off the self-censorship that will ensue. Châtelet's book is raw, sharp, and unchained to the point where we are eventually dragged through a towering spiral of argument that slashes wildly at the emergent "realism" of the late postmodern consensus: "Pathetic young snobs trying to keep afloat in what already could only be called post-leftism! … with their 'let's not kid ourselves,' their 'it really resonates with me,' and above all their 'in my opinion, personally" (17).

… that "singular beast" with the subtle snout, certainly more refined than we are in matters of touch and smell …

I want to focus on the nightclub. The subtitle of the book is *The Incitement of Envy and Boredom in Market Democracies*. This is the site where the emerging class of super-self-conscious agents of narcissism are first introduced to each other in advance of their ultimate collective dividualization and envy-laden accommodation within the neoliberal "counterreformation." By taking us clubbing, just ten years after the uprisings of 1968, Châtelet locates the conditions of envy and boredom in a pre-digital zone where people still come together yet are already rehearsing their roles as "Gardeners of the Creative." The high-class Tuxedos are confronted by the pioneers of a forthcoming digital age. The coworking spaces and digitally shared envy-loathing of our present are pre-formed yet still surrounded by a protective bubble

of excessive and hedonistic expectation.

The club is the setting—it is not the cause. It is the place that is open to identifiable proto-groupings—not only the Tuxedos and the Cyber-Wolves, but the whole mix typically found in a nightclub, from suburbanites to bankers, and opportunists who congeal in a lush swarm that pounds its way through the night. This is a particularly French nightclub of the 1970s, emerging in parallel to those in New York but with an interclass tradition of its own—even if a certain group of international celebrities attended both, from Warhol to Jerry Hall and Serge Gainsbourg, alongside a combination of the faded aristocracy, political operatives, suburban party people, and the emerging new entrepreneurs of the self. In the words of Fabrice: "Anyone who had not known the end of the 70s would not have known the sweetness of life, the thrill of this seesaw where History teeters between an old regime and the roar of a Revolution" (15).

The role of the club here is doubled and complex. It is the site of initial recognition across the crowd of the twinned drivers of the hyper-malaise to come—the Tuxedos and the Cyber-Wolves, the jaded pseudo-bourgeoisie and the energized proto-digitalists. At the same time it is still peopled by a mass of hedonistic potential that is driving and plenishing the master of ceremonies Fabrice, for he is still excited by this blending on the nightclub floor: "Shouldn't a Prince of the Night be capable of making age groups, generations and social categories bear fruit by interbreeding them and seminating them with *looks*?" (15).

But let it be understood also that I hate the gluttony of the "formal urban middle class" of the postindustrial era.

First demonstration of the Marche nationale pour les droits et les libertés des homosexuels et des lesbiennes (Paris, April 4, 1981) by the Comité d'urgence anti-répression homosexuelle (CUARH). Photo: Claude Truong-Ngoc/Wikimedia Commons CC-by-SA-3.0

Starting in 1969 Châtelet was an activist in the Front Homosexuel d'Action Revolutionnaire (FHAR) . A

revolutionary movement founded in 1968, FHAR offered new forms of resistance to the dominant culture—including to the heteronormativity of the traditional and revolutionary leadership on the left. In his essay "The Spirit of May '68 and the Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement in France," Michael Sibalis relays an anecdote demonstrating the French Communist Party's pathologizing of homophobia:

> Jacques Duclos, Secretary of the French Communist Party, once upbraided FHAR militants: "You pederasts—where do you get the nerve to come and question us? Go get treatment. The French Communist Party is healthy!" Trade Unionists, Socialists, Communists, Maoists, or Trotskyists all looked askance at the Gay liberationists from the FHAR who joined their annual May Day march in 1971.[6]

FHAR members found political urgency by scandalizing both the bourgeoisie and the North African Arab areas of Paris—turning up in high-class places such as Café Flore as often as they appeared at the cafeterias of the banlieue, dressed in "bathing suits and tottering on high heels with hair on our legs."[7] By the mid-seventies Châtelet was drawn towards the explosion of new gay clubs in Paris, starting along the Rue Sainte-Anne.[8] This means that *To Live and Think Like Pigs* is part autobiography—or more precisely, it draws upon Châtelet's own observations of the nightclub as a location for ideological promiscuity and display. The tone of the opening chapter implies frustration, cynicism, and wonder in equal measure. It is quite possible that Châtelet would have known or encountered precise examples of his Tuxedos and Cyber-Wolves on his nights out. At the same time, he appears to be suggesting his own role as an implicated player in the nightclub as incubator of a new heterogeneity capable of being lured into a collective malaise of the future digital world of envy and boredom.

While the remainder of the book focuses on the broad erosion of revolutionary potential and the suffocating effects of neoliberalism, the decision to situate the opening chapter in a club is significant and written from this self-lacerating experience. Mohammad Salemy asserts in his "Intro to Châtelet" that "alongside his life as a scientist and an intellectual, Châtelet lived another as an unchaste party animal and, according to friends, was a fixture at La Palace, Paris' response to New York's Studio 54 and the allegorical setting of the book's first chapter."[9]

The nightclub is filled with "young *condottieri* of fashion, predators and headhunters … unforgiving to puppets who dare invoke any social hierarchy whatsoever" (11, 13). Anyone can be a citizen of the night. Among the crowd, Fabrice can spot The Tuxedos, "those who can hold aloft three generations of elegant parasitism" (12). But from the

A greek model of the Minitel computer, date unknown. Photo: Bernard Marti/CC BY-SA 4.0

moment we first encounter the Tuxedos it is clear that something has changed and they no longer retain their class privilege and clear status. Although we meet them without any backstory or context, Châtelet makes it plain that they are becoming aware of their performative role, through which "finally they could adopt the modest, defeated tone of celebrities who, yielding to the crowd, had agreed to remove their disguises" (16).

On a couch opposite the Tuxedos sit the Cyber-Wolves. Fabrice and the Red Glutton stand aside and comment on their mocking exchanges. This is the meeting of those threatened by the new constitution of the night—with its dangerous mix of classes and identities, and those who see opportunity in an incipient emergence of individual desire and the banality of contemporary politics at the expense of combative revolutionary potential: "The

neoliberal Counter-Reformation ... would furnish the classic services of the reactionary option, delivering a social alchemy to forge a political force out of everything that a middle class invariably ends up exuding—fear, envy, and conformity" (19).

The Cyber-Wolves are the embryonic new-tech power class—they are a deluded group of preening arrogant nerds easily crushed by the Tuxedos in a last-gasp battle of class expression: "The Cyber Wolves, a quartet of young pedants prey to every trend ... Like so many other suckers, the great goofballs of the cyber-pack thought of themselves as princes of networks and tipping points" (16–17). The evangelists for new technology. Those who promised a connected world to come where technology would contribute to the end of history and difference. Technological "amplification" would provide a universal

market of the self and networks would allow the financial market to regulate itself.

It is at this point that Châtelet embarks on his turbulent narrative that boils over the rest of the book—each chapter addressing a different aspect of the implications he has laid out in the club, punctuated with turns of phrase, twisted points of reference, and wild ideas that startle the unwary reader who is more accustomed to a smooth flow and an uninterrupted thesis explication. For Châtelet, it is clear which way the initial nightclub exchanges are heading. The Cyber-Wolves and the Tuxedos along with Fabrice have been sucked into the eye of a coming storm. Partly thanks to the boredom and weariness of the former revolutionary thinkers, they are roundly losing their resistance and are about to be launched into the 1980s, with its effective and traumatic application of a counterrevolution of devastating power. "The reality check would come soon enough!" writes Châtelet. "It took less than three years to dissipate the charm and to assure the triumph of the 80s, with their nauseating ennui, greed and stupidity, the years of neoliberal 'conservative revolutions,' the cynical years of Reagan and Thatcher" (18).

Three key philosophical aspects from the time are opened up and gutted by Châtelet's acid prose: difference, nomadism, and the attempt to "play Nietzsche against Hegel and … Marx" (24). For Châtelet, it is the anti-dialectical aspect of these three applications that render them so vulnerable to being co-opted, marketized, and manipulated. Torn out of a critical context, these constructions enter into an effective interplay with applied individualistic political theory and are subject to increasing market-based super-subjective misdirection. The book from this point on is a poison-pen letter to Châtelet's contemporary intellectuals and mathematicians. It is a confession of having been witness to the birth of the conditions that directed consumption towards the self.

To Live and Think Like Pigs is about the marketization of every gesture, made possible by the accommodations that were made between increasingly cynical class actors at every level and the Ayn Randish pseudo-ethical nerd culture. Under the banner of personal liberty, this culture would come to feed on the individual as a source of data, maintained by envy and incited by boredom. Following our night in the club, an irreversible change has taken place. The capitulation to "rational expectations" is complete: "Now would come the era of the market's Invisible Hand, which dons no kid gloves in order to starve and crush silently" (19).

While a surprising success in France, Châtelet's book was unavailable in English and has been somewhat overlooked. If we had been more aware of it outside of the Francophone context, then the anger and complexity of Châtelet's devastating account of the origins of our condition would have prepared us with frightening clarity

and precision for what was to come. My own account missed the narcissism, nationalism, and collapse that has become a perverse conclusion of the neoliberal counterreformation begun by Milton Friedman et al., enacted by Thatcher–Reagan, and now conclusively pantomimed by Trump and the hysterically fabulist global strongmen of 2019 and their all-too-real and shocking new forms of nationalism. There would also have been fewer bad group shows about nomadism and chaos theory. A nightclub standoff between a weary aspirant consumer class and a group of Cyber-Wolves would have been a good astringent.

At the end of *Discussion Island/Big Conference Centre* —a book of rather meandering mise-en-scènes—a man suddenly jumps out of the Big Conference Centre window, landing on top of a Toyota. It is unclear whether the person has fallen, jumped, or been pushed. What I do know is that it seemed crucial to include this scene to indicate what I could not account for in the text. I may have been thinking of Deleuze or Debord, both of whom had recently taken their lives. Gilles Châtelet committed suicide in June 1999 while suffering from AIDS, one year after the publication of his powerful and moving plea for everything to be better and different and unbound from the predations of envy and boredom.[10] I was not thinking of him.

Châtelet

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1
Gilles Châtelet, *To Live and Think Like Pigs: The Incitement of Envy and Boredom in Market Democracies* , trans. Robin Mackay (Urbanomic and Sequence Press, 2014), 133. Italics in original. All subsequent page references to this book will appear in parentheses in the body of the text.

2
Liam Gillick, *Discussion Island/Big Conference Centre* (Derry and Ludwigsburg: Orchard Gallery and Kunstverein, 1998).

3
Gilles Châtelet, *Vivre et Penser Comme des Porcs: De l'Incitation à l'Envie et à l'Ennui dans les Démocraties-Marchés* (Gallimard, 1999).

4
"There is life in a work of art which is short ... even shorter than man's lifetime. I call it twenty years. After twenty years an impressionist painting has ceased to be an impressionist painting because the material, the colour, the paint, has darkened so much, that it's no more what the man did when he painted it. Alright. That's one way of looking at it. So I applied this rule to all art—art works—and they after twenty years are finished, their life is over." Duchamp interviewed by Richard Hamilton in London, 1959. *Audio Arts*, vol. 2 (1974).

5
See https://www.urbanomic.com /document/gilles-chatelet-mental -ecology/ .

6
Michael Sibalis, "The Spirit of May '68 and the Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement in France," in *Gender and Sexuality in 1968: Transformative Politics in the Cultural Imagination* , eds. L. Frazier and Deborah Cohen (Springer, 2009), 245.

7
Quoted in Sibalis, "The Spirit of May '68," 245.

8
Sibalis, "The Spirit of May '68," 245.

9
Mohammad Salemy, "Intro to Châtelet," *Third Rail Quarterly*, no. 4 (Spring 2015) http://thirdrailqua rterly.org/mohammad-salemy-intr o-to-chatelet/ .

10
"He was particularly affected by the death of Gilles Deleuze. Wondering how not to give the suicide of the latter the sense of an ultimate and courageous revolt of life against the spirit of resignation and 'laissez-faire.' AIDS sufferer, Gilles Châtelet probably had the feeling of facing the same challenge. He was 44 years old." Marc Ragon, "Mort du Philosophe Gilles Châtelet," *Libération* , June 19, 1999. Translated by the author.

Luis Camnitzer
Where is the Genie?

I like to use Aladdin's lamp as a simile for what happens in the art world. Artists make their work as they would make lamps: in the hope that the genie is inside. Sometimes they even believe that they can control the presence of the genie. Museums then display the art-equivalents of the lamp, betting, not just hoping, that the genie is in there and will stay there for the foreseeable future. The genie is intangible while the lamps are not, so attention tends to focus on the technical execution of the lamp, hence the emphasis on crafts and finish, or, after Duchamp, on how well they were intellectually framed as objects capable of containing the genie. The genie is in the lamp because museums say so, and the canon is the measuring stick with which they validate their statement.

I was part of a generation of rebellious students that worked toward changing the curricular structure of the art school in Uruguay, reform we unexpectedly succeeded in implementing in 1960. Until then the school had only one art history teacher—a poet—who, year after year, kept repeating his knowledge of Greek and Roman art. For unknown reasons I was the emissary designated to inform him that we didn't want to keep him in our new plan of studies. Surprised, he asked me: "How come?" Trying to soften the situation I blurted out: "We feel that you reduce art to only two topics: love and death," which was in fact what he did. Puzzled, he looked at me and asked: "But, is there anything else?"

Nearly six decades later I am still embarrassed about the exchange, for two reasons. The first is that I realize the callousness of a young militant student is not a good aid for communication. Today I would at least have asked him to go out with me and have a cup of coffee together before broaching the subject. The other is that it was a very stupid conversation intellectually. As a subtext, we were discussing what motivates the canon and from where it might derive its judgments. Yet, neither of us had ever thought about what the canon itself is or might be. He had brought the whole topic down to a generality so vague that his course had become useless. And we, the students, felt that his vagueness was even more faulty because it didn't accommodate the contributions of either modernism or the life conditions under which we operated and were supposed to produce. In this we were as schematic as he was and, discrepancies aside, we still agreed with him that it was OK to have one single canon ruling the art of the whole world. Had we discussed politics, we would have shared a staunch anti-imperialism. We just didn't carry our anti-imperialism consistently into cultural activities.

Looking back, I also have to acknowledge that he wasn't completely wrong. Love and death do inform the canon. But they are not all that inform it, and neither do love and death help determine quality. Love and death are words and concepts general enough to help create part of what we may call a "pre-canon" platform that conditions content and may direct empathy. Many canons emerge from it, some for rituals, some for folklore, and some for

what we may inelegantly call "educated art." Rituals and folklore are allowed to take their own directions, but educated art is supposed to be more general, shared and bought by the whole world to the point of achieving one single globalized market.

The task of art schools and art museums is not only to feed into this picture, but also to ensure that the public believes both the declaration about where the genie lives and the canonical values that are served by the declaration of its habitat. This creates a self-sustaining aesthetic that is difficult to challenge and overturn. If the artist challenges too much, the work escapes the operating definition of art and isn't recognized as such. The limits within which a challenge can be successful are therefore very narrow. The artist in the Western art tradition has to show a hint of rupture strong enough to show originality, and weak enough not to preclude acceptance. The word "originality" in capitalist art hints at the presence of the genie, but in fact refers to the work's

potential for commercial branding. No matter what, the genie continues to be intangible. We therefore focus on manufacturing lamps in the hope that they will be successful in generating consensus about the genie's presence within them. This consensus, however, is elusive and many people confuse the presence of the genie with the elaboration of the lamps.

All these points, however unclear, touch on values, on ways of knowing, on the image and representation of whole societies. And while a majority of the creators of consumer-spectacles and super-productions would accept that their purpose is to enrich the free time of the public, a majority of visual artists would not. They would claim that they are involved in profound explorations aimed at the transformation of society and that they work for its benefit. They probably would rather have themselves compared to scientists than to entertainers.

I would agree with that: I don't believe that art is

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entertainment. However, art's spectatorship is generally treated as a leisure activity connected with "free time." In an interview in *La Nación* in Buenos Aires, the billionaire Eduardo Constantini, who owns the Museum of Latin American Art in Buenos Aires (MALBA), discusses the coordination of his museum with the "free time agenda" model posed by the Centre Pompidou, Paris and the Tate Modern, London. He explained that the temporary exhibition plans for his museum include curatorial proposals for "blockbuster level exhibitions like Yayoi Kusama, and also others that are for thinking, like the work of Voluspa Jarpa."[1] Jarpa is a Chilean artist who works with documents related to dictatorships and security agencies, topics that are particularly hot in the recent history of the Southern Cone countries.

The "free time" activities organized by museums are not just timely sources of income. They have generated a whole slew of economic categories and theories around cultural or creative industries. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Latin America has coined a trendy new term, the "Orange Economy," to describe the cultural and creative industries and their impact on national economies. The categorization is so broad that one could take any exclusion from it as an insult. According to the IDB, culture and creativity is an "economy" because, following John Howkins' concept of

the "creative economy," it "allows that ideas may be transformed into cultural goods and services with their value determined by the intellectual property it contains." And this economy is orange "because the color has often been associated with culture, creativity and identity."[2] From a macro-level perspective on creative activities, it is pointed out that in 2011 this Orange Economy produced 4.3 trillion dollars worldwide, two and a half times global military expenditure.[3] This approach to thinking about art might appear to underscore its social significance. In fact, however, the emphasis on art's fiscal impact makes it more difficult to conceive of art as an agent of cultural transformation. A variable market landscape takes the place of the traditional cultural geography.

When the visual arts are subjected to economic analysis, the attention shifts to measurable elements including the profits generated by museums through revenue from the tickets, souvenirs, and restaurants, and the out-of-house profits generated by tourists who come to the city to see art. As a consequence, institutional success is measured by circulation and the income it produces. Inevitably this becomes, more than strategy, part of an institution's ideology and self-image. In the same interview, Constantini also commented (though without nostalgia): "Museums are not any more what they used to be, they are arguments to place cities as a tourist destination, like Bilbao, and they add value." Meanwhile, few artists are able to live off their production, and museum workers earn less than university personnel, which, at least in the US, is already below the salary of police and garbage collectors. Artwork, then, is consumed mostly as entertainment, and both artists and museums are driven to present spectacles instead of fulfilling their true tasks.

None of this is new, of course, but it raises the question of what the true tasks of the artist and museum might be. The answers depend on who is asked and how schematic we want to be when asking. Within my simplified construction, the task of museums is twofold: to accumulate artifacts for future reference for as long as posterity might last, and to present what is presumed to be good. "Good," however, is something imponderable. A curator from a prestigious museum once explained to me in a meeting that the function in his profession was to

present "good art." Asked how "good" was determined, he answered: "We do our best." As love and death are not very helpful for this process, "good" becomes an exercise in mixing a validated past with a prediction of the future, and working hard to make this prediction come true. This mixture forces a certain immutability of values and stabilizes the canon, making the task a very conservative one.

In late 2016, the Whitney Museum opened an exhibition of the work of Carmen Herrera (*Carmen Herrera: Lines of Sight*). Since the late 1940s Herrera has been working in a vein of abstraction made famous in the US by Ellsworth Kelly. Her exhibition at the Whitney was her first in a major US museum. Herrera is Cuban and, after a stint in Paris, she lived in the U.S. starting the mid-1950s. At the time of the show's opening she was 101 years old. On the first occasion that her work appeared at the Whitney, earlier the same year, it was placed side-by-side with a work by Kelly. In a review in *The New York Times*, critic Roberta Smith pointed out: "It's indicative of what the Whitney Museum is trying to do ...: to pry open the canon and make space for marginalized artists."[4] One way of looking at this is that the Whitney was granting a passport into the walled fortress to an immigrant whose work was deserving of recognition because of its affinity with that of a canonical artist already well established within the fortress. In this way, the exhibitions and statements of museums cast an aura of unity over diverse discourses. In the process, the function of art as an agent of cultural transformation in a particular social context is submerged: the application of canonical values to work emerging from different circumstances suggests, instead, that art is a unified casserole serving dish with controlled ingredients.

Traditionally, artists have been identified as "craftspeople plus," that is, as fabricators of objects with a certain "extra" quality that can't be clearly identified. Elusive and immaterial, that "plus" is what we are all desperately trying to capture. In doing so, we oscillate between a search for the self, the enlargement of our ego-footprint, survival (both in life and in posterity), the promotion of cultural change, or any mixture of the above. Ultimately, however, it's an effort to come close to, or to impersonate Aladdin's "genie."

The declaration that the genie is in the lamp makes the lamp that much more important. This is reflected by the accepted fact that a perfect replica of the lamp cannot house the genie. Even if no one is able to tell the difference, it is only the original that has value. Paradoxically, the status of being "the original" depends on neither genie nor lamp. It depends on certificates, provenances, and signatures. While restorers may retouch anything on a painting, the original signature may not be touched. We focus, in varying proportions, on craft and virtuosity in execution, and on documentation. Perhaps it's in an effort to escape from these physical, obscurantist, and conceptual constraints that we introduce issues

already explored in other disciplines like history, sociology, and philosophy. It's not clear, however, whether in doing so we are introducing new meanings or operating redundantly.

These conundrums may have contributed to the drive to dematerialize the work of art during the 1960s, and to movements today such as social practice. During the sixties, much of the search for the genie remained within the confines of the actual work of art. The genie was confused with some version of soul. The idea was that the soul was ultimately inaccessible because it was trapped in the material, and dematerialization would help us get to it.

It turns out that dematerialization didn't solve the problem. The soul still remained out of reach because there was a conceptual skin enveloping it. However, the push to dematerialize helped by perforating the bubble of the canon enough to let information theory seep into it, forcing us to face the issue of communication.

The canon had to accept that a work of art's communicative aspects might be more important than the quality of its technical finish and, more crucially, that the genie, hypothetical or real and still undefined, was not to be found in the lamp. This raised at least three questions: "What if there is no soul?" or alternatively, "What if the genie does exist, but somewhere else?" and if so "Where would that be?" If the genie is not in the lamp, a few conclusions follow. The first is that the lamp loses any authoritative control of meaning. The second is that the meaning in the lamp must therefore be understood as the product of interaction with external agencies: on the one hand, the institutions serving the integrity and continuation of the canon; on the other, anonymous actors interacting with the lamp. This last conclusion raises the possibility that agency exists throughout the social fabric, that there is a genie in all of us. If so, the lamp's function in the world goes well beyond satisfying taste, indoctrinating consumers, and expanding commerce. It extends to serving as a point of departure for the genii in everyone, a stimulus to raising awareness in society and starting new processes.

In this way, we arrive at a much clearer understanding of the pedagogical relation between art and public, and can begin to appreciate the role of the museum as a pedagogical institution. When art institutions see themselves chiefly as guardians of canonical values, and evaluate their work by reference to criteria of consumption, they are missing the opportunity to do something even more important and powerful: to release untapped creative energy in the public. Instead of serving as a Bureau of Standards, the museum would make decisions based on pedagogical considerations and on what shape education should take. It was the Bureau of Standard's pressure that allowed Mel Bochner, in 2011, to accuse the Museum of Modern Art in New York of being an international terrorist organization.[5]

We should ask ourselves what the Utopia is that we are working for. Is it the Utopia of global consumption? The Utopia of a global market needs objects and/or situations that are more or less unified within a global common denominator. While the idea of globalization implies a geographic capaciousness and inclusiveness, in fact, global common denominators in art reflect the taste and consumption habits of a very small segment of the human race, more or the less the members of the affluent, educated middle-classes who believe in the European-US canon. Local tacit understandings that inform cultures that deviated from the hegemonic canon are relegated to subsidiary status as vernacular. The underlying idea is that art is an international borderless language, and that the direction in all cultures is towards the embrace of this language. In the process, local knowledge undergoes a process of impoverishment and the glue that holds communities together is weakened.

There are other utopias available, ones that strive to improve the world through individual development and the building of communities. Here, the artist defines the pedagogical/communication activity into which the work will fit. Even though crafts may be used to this effect, the activity is primarily about knowledge and not about production of commodities. As early as in the eighteenth century, A. G. Baumgarten wrote in the prolegomena to his *Theoretic Aesthetics*:

> The use of aesthetics as art education, one that complements natural aesthetics, consists among other things in: 1. providing the sciences, that rely mostly on rational recognition, with proper materials; 2. fitting to everybody's comprehension whatever is recognized in science; 3. improving recognition beyond the clearly recognizable.[6]

Reading this today, we see that Baumgarten's statements might have even broader implications than he could have foreseen. His first two points may have referred to the use of art as illustration. But, what is more interesting about his comments is their perception of limitations in scientific thinking. Baumgarten was preoccupied with beauty as a filter that helped put order into cognition. However, he was also wary of dismissing confusion, which for him was a kind of petri dish of ideas necessary to achieve any form of order. From this perspective, objects resulting from the production of art are not much more than an aid for communication.

Today much of the art made escapes traditional disciplinary confines both in terms of craft and cognition. It ventures instead into political activism, community service, sociological research, and other forms of good citizenship. These activities prove that an artist doesn't have to be a nineteenth-century romantic eccentric, but

may be a good a citizen. In terms of cognition, however, these activities often produce redundancy. There is no exploration of the unknown. Cognition rarely transcends ingenuity and is not expanded. If art is defined as a form of cognition, the questions posed to the public move away from the usual "Do you get it?," "Do you like it?," or "Are you becoming aware?" The real task becomes something other than having the public "get it," "like it," or have their "awareness raised." The questions become "what will you do with it?" and "how will you carry it further on your own?" That makes us all—artists and museum people—facilitators for what ultimately will be a real social and political development.

The choice between art as production and art as acquisition of knowledge therefore leads to very different sorts of commitment. It's much easier to promote a canon when art is classed as production; that's why this approach is so favored by those engaged in the construction of a global market. In this view, it's assumed that the public should move toward the art object to become more sophisticated. The field of "art appreciation" helps in this task. It expands the consumer base and promotes the stability of the canon. From this point of view, to move art towards the audience is considered a negative activity since it leads to conventionality.

This is part of a bigger picture, one that encompasses pedagogy. In traditional education, old knowledge is imparted rather than new knowledge created. This approach to education is considered essential to the national economy and has the effect of conflating training with education. In a basic sense, it's seen as useful to the

market and essential to the maintenance of a stable society. In a more refined view, it's seen as important to the nurture of a meritocracy. The educational process is developed on the basis of a social canon that's been internalized as the default setting for thinking about teaching and learning. It's based on three assumptions: 1. that time is owned by the employer and not the employee; 2. that work (at least for most) is focused on survival; and 3. that leisure time is used for consumption. In a general sense, activities related to formal education aim to increase the prestige and competitiveness of the country. Every country being, of course, much greater than all other countries.

Typical of all this is the educational push for STEM, the acronym for the subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. As far as I know there has been no attempt by museums to formulate a concerted response to a future shaped by STEM. There is a tepid movement encouraging STEAM, integrating an A for art. But there is no STEMMING AGAINST STEM movement.

It seems silly and grandiloquent enough to design education for the greatness of a country, and to make official declarations typical now in the US, like this: "With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy."[7] Or, the British equivalent: "For our prosperity to continue, the government believes we need high levels of skills in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), and citizens that value them."[8]

But this is only the surface of the problem. The STEM ideologues feel that promoting interdisciplinarity and creativity within the science-oriented curriculum is an obvious and persuasive answer to all possible objections. Though, it in fact subtly imposes boundaries on the possibility for speculation and fantasy, enclosing exploration within a tight rational and functional frame of reference. The underlying message is that it's good to be creative as long it's not art. Creativity is good if applied to disciplines that are rational and have a useful application. The new rage is for children's programs that encourage play with robotic toys and the writing of basic algorithms for them. It's true that this may be the new literacy and will prepare them for the world they are likely to encounter, turning them more quickly into adults. But it's unlikely to prepare them to critique the direction of the world they encounter or to think about things using metrics other than efficiency, expedience, and "success." The other new rage seems to be coloring books for adults. Oddly, they infantilize without giving the freedom that children still possess. So adults are not being prepared to change the world, either.

If we choose to deal with art as the pursuit of knowledge instead of objects, the discussion of a canon becomes much more complicated. There is first the role of

knowledge: is knowledge a field to be mastered or is it a platform from which to explore what we don't know? Even in the first and more conservative interpretation, different people perceive differently, know different things, invoke different references, and have different tacit understandings. All these differences are projected onto the art object and succeed or fail in direct communication. Schools and museums tend to conceive of the challenge as one of bringing light into the corners of "lesser knowledge," patronizingly filling the gaps of "public ignorance."

The notion of lesser knowledge belongs to disciplinary thinking, according to which there are quantities of knowledge stored within specialized cubicles. But if we accept knowledge as a configuration that gives some order to our perception of the universe, then we are left with an array of "different," rather than "lesser" knowledge systems. One may want to bridge rather than reaffirm these differences, and the canon is one of the tools for that. However, the canon is a "politically incorrect" tool, to say the least. Its interests are neither clearly defined nor what they claim to be; at the least, they don't serve what and who they should serve. When applied to artistic speculation, any closed knowledge system is a confining tool. Creativity in a closed system stops at ingenuity and can't go any further. Creativity needs an open system to produce art. To function at its best, pedagogical institutions have to work with open systems of knowledge, or try to open them, so as to unleash autodidactic processes in the viewer. This requires an open and flexible process for defining the canon. Thus, any presentation of a canon should include the possibilities of challenging the canon, so that it can be adjusted by the people rather than imposed upon them.

In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Ai Wei Wei, who studied in a very restrictive academic environment in China, commented on his life as a student.[9] He was thrilled when friends brought him some Western art books. He loved those on Impressionism, but when he saw one about Jasper Johns he tossed it into the garbage. Both he and the interviewer refer to the story as a travesty instead of seeing in it a conflict of canons. The references needed to appreciate Johns were excessively European-US canon-specific and escaped Wei Wei's education. On the other hand, given its superficial appeal to taste and more digestible fare, Impressionist works seemed to be less "canon-provincial."

If I were given to tossing books into the trashcan, I wouldn't be beyond getting rid of some Chinese master like Wu Guanzhong. Looking for a parallel to Jasper Johns I picked him from Google after typing: "Chinese painting master 1950." When I saw some of the images I was tempted to class his work as irredeemable kitsch.[10] But the only thing I would be stating with my dismissal is that this Chinese master doesn't fit the standards of my canon. This is the same as saying that I can't project onto that

work anything that might be interesting to me. Meanwhile, from the Chinese canon's point of view, my action is one of ignorance, or of lesser knowledge.

Love and death are topics broad enough to be universal. However, the mechanics generated by both, and the poetics that glorify them, go from universality all the way down to the very concrete and local. That is why, ultimately, any universal language slowly subdivides into dialects. Within this, to have an opinion about which language—and what in language—is good and what is bad, or what transcends functionality to enter sublimity, becomes very difficult. If I have to refer to a canon it's because the ability to judge is placed beyond me. I will have to enter an authoritarian structure and consult a specialist in the canon: a cultural gatekeeper who tells me what-is-what. We are back to being taught instead of learning. And the gatekeeper either lives in a hegemonic center or is influenced by somebody living there. Is it the gatekeeper then, overextending the job description, who tries to be Aladdin's genie in disguise?

Our motivation in this meeting is, in one way or another, to help the common good worldwide. And yet, although we probably would like this to be a universal discussion, we are only making local chatter. This locality pertains to Western, middle-class, post-Enlightenment culture. Typically, here, we also believe in the sanctity of data. Oddly, this includes an admixture of superstition: we respect icons presumed to house the genie. And, to top it all off, we add the belief that quantitative thinking is rational and rules the universe, its power external to us.

Opposing this we have the belief that knowledge constantly expands. We act on the assumption that the universe is ultimately entirely knowable, even though we sense this isn't a real possibility. We emphasize the accumulation of data as links in a chain of expanding knowledge, even though we are aware that the expansion of knowledge depends more on adjusting our patterning and making leaps in connection than in simply gathering information. Data, as with any form of consumable unit, is nothing more than a vehicle. When put at the center of teaching and learning, it supports an authoritative transfer of information which in turn stifles imagination.

Baumgarten—perhaps because he lived in a simpler world—was able to divide truth into just three parts: general concepts, things that really exist in our world, and things that can only be imagined in a different world. The first, which he calls aesthetic/dogmatic, consists of generalities that may be represented artistically. The second category is aesthetic/historical. The third, and more important for our purposes here, is the "poetic way of thinking, even if it doesn't take the form of poems."[11] That's where *we* are the real genie.

In this classification system for truth, the parts we may call the abstract and the real are not only those with direct functional applications, but are also the easier ones to handle. Maybe that is why education has focused so much on them and has neglected the poetic aspect. The poetic part is precisely the one that allows us to escape closed knowledge systems and open up new ones. This has implications for cognition, but also has political implications insofar as it affects imagination. Following Baumgarten, one might say that the poetic and the political cannot be kept neatly apart. This would seem to have important implications for education.

In Mexico City, there are two museums placed about 50 meters from one another. One is the Museo Jumex. It's a sophisticated exhibition space designed by David Chipperfield in the traditional discrete functionalist style, focused on mainstream contemporary art. The other is Carlos Slim's Museo Soumaya, designed by his son-in-law Fernando Romero. It's built in the style of a Frank Gehry toilet and dedicated to second-rate and sentimental classics. Both museums believe in the existence of a universal canon. Within that belief, specialists generally laud Jumex for its good taste and put down Slim's for its bad taste. I have to confess that my subjective taste clearly

inclines towards Jumex, since I'm a product of my class and education. But my personal taste in respect of the two museums' versions of taste is irrelevant. The difference between them shows an ignored and badly conducted class struggle.

Slim is a populist while Jumex is elitist. Paradoxically, Slim's museum deals with an extremely closed knowledge system, only informed by conventional taste. Jumex, in its effort to be refined and cutting-edge, accepts experimentation and, with it, the opening up of the system. Slim's museum tries to freeze the canon and protect it from challenge. Jumex welcomes changes as long they pass through the filter of the gatekeepers and may be classed as art.

The rift raises many questions in regard to the canon: Is the canon constructed for an open or a closed system of knowledge? Where does the canon start? Who owns it and why? And: Who is served by it? It would seem that to pose these—often political—questions is the first task for any institution that wishes to have a consistent program. It doesn't matter whether it wants to serve the government, its patrons, the community, or strike a balance among them.

Typing in the word "Leonardo" on my computer and the same day in the different versions of Google for Spain, France, U.S., Italy, and Brazil, only Spain listed Leonardo da Vinci before Leonardo di Caprio. If a museum today would dare to exhibit works of high art side-by-side with popular art or even kitsch, the majority of the public would probably favor the latter. Meaning that they would vote for Slim's museum over the Jumex. The easy reaction is to see this as indicating "lesser knowledge" amongst the public which should be corrected by the provision of more information. The more difficult reaction, however, is to aim to stimulate the autodidactic mechanisms that enable members of the public to explore their own creative potential. Some museums try to do that, but most do not.

Most museums still base their educational activities on "art appreciation." Though the process really starts with the hang of the collection, it's a mission usually defined as separate from curatorial work and post-facto mixed in with other public relations activities. You learn to look "at" what is presented, and because it's being presented you automatically know that it's important. More progressive art educators, while taking the importance of the artwork as a given, encourage looking "through" it. The hope then is to discover the universe—or some kind of universe—that might encompass other disciplines and therefore go beyond art. People are led to discuss what they see and what they think about what they see. This sounds persuasive, although the viewer only sees, thinks, and learns what the art piece allows them to. They are led to believe that the shape of the light at the end of the tunnel represents the outside. They don't realize that what they see is nothing more than the outline of the exit.

If instead of "at" or "through" we go "around" the work of art, we encounter far more interesting questions that allow us to put the genie back where it belongs. Among these questions are:

1. What are the conditions that generated the work, or, why does the work exist?
2. Who is the work serving?
3. What is the problem it's solving?
4. Is the problem well solved or could it be solved in better ways, either in art-related media or using other disciplines?
5. Is the piece indispensable, and if so, why and for whom?
6. Is it addressed to me or to somebody else?

And finally, what may sound like the typical Western capitalist question:

7. What's in it for me?

The answer to this last question should not be "the betterment of my taste and increased respect for the canon." It should instead be: "my personal creative development." Thinking this way about art allows the genie to transfer their power to us. It helps us understand that there is more to contend with than love and death. We would be led to change not only the way museums relate to people, but also the way education is pursued. The genie may even help us iron out some of the minor issues pertaining to communal communication and some larger issues related to social and political inequality. I don't really know that art is able to solve all of our problems, but trying to believe so helps us to maintain our sanity.

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This essay is an advance excerpt from Luis Camnitzer, *One Number Is Worth One Word*, forthcoming from *e-flux journal* and Sternberg Press. The text is an edited version of a keynote speech for a conference exploring "The Idea of the Global Museum," held at the Museum für Gegenwart at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, December 2016.

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1
Alicia Arteaga, "Eduardo Constantini: 'Malba fue una manera de involucrarme socialmente,'" *La Nación*, September 11, 2016.

2
Felipe Buitrago and Iván Duque, *The Orange Economy* , Inter-American Development Bank, Washington D.C., 2013, 42.

3
Buitrago and Duque, *The Orange Economy* , 16.

4
Roberta Smith, "A 101 Year-Old Artist Finally Gets Her Due," *The New York Times,* September 16, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/ 2016/09/16/arts/design/a-101-y ear-old-artist-finally-gets-her-due- at-the-whitney.html

5
At a dinner organized by MoMA to discuss museum policies with invited artists, including myself, 2011.

6
A.G. Baumgarten, *Theoretische Aesthetik* , trans. from Latin by Hans Rudolf Schweizer (Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983), 3, first published in 1750/58. Translation from German by the author.

7
See http://www.corestandards.or g/ .

8
See https://www.gov.uk/govern ment/publications/2010-to-2015- government-policy-public-underst anding-of-science-and-engineerin g/2010-to-2015-government-polic y-public-understanding-of-scienc e-and-engineering .

9
Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ai Wei Wei Speaks* (Penguin, 2011).

10
Wu Guanzhong was eulogized in *The New York Times* by William Grimes, see: William Grimes, "Wu Guanzhong, Leading Chinese Painter, Dies at 90," *New York Times* , June 29, 2010, https://ww w.nytimes.com/2010/06/30/arts /design/30wu.html .

11
Baumgarten, 153, 155.

Koichiro Osaka

The Imperial Ghost in the Neoliberal Machine (Figuring the CIA)

The Sunshine 60 building, built in 1978, is a 60-story, mixed-use skyscraper located in Ikebukuro, Toshima, Tokyo. At the time of its construction, it was the tallest in Asia. Photo: Kakidai/CC BY-SA 3.0

Sunshine 60—a soaring sixty-story mega complex in the entertainment district of Ikebukuro, Tokyo—was the tallest skyscraper in Asia at the time of its completion in 1978.

From the day its doors opened, businesspeople began complaining about peculiar visions and sounds. Shoppers reported fleeting apparitions or disembodied faces wafting down the hallways and into secluded areas such as dressing rooms or bathrooms. People traded tales of sudden, unexplained gusts of chilled air, and instances of feeling pushed or trapped in physical encounters with invisible entities. Visitors heard unintelligible whispers in their ears. Store clerks grew accustomed to hearing haunting moans, the closing of iron gates, or the groan of hangman's ropes. At the start of their mornings, they would find items disorganized on the shelves or objects toppled from where they'd been placed the night before.

Locals knew about the Sugamo Prison, which had

originally stood on the site. Until the end of World War II, the former edifice was a penitentiary that detained and executed inmates charged with "ideological" offenses: from communist intellectuals and political agitators, to leaders of occult or religious sects. As the war came to an end in 1945, the prison was seized by the Allied forces—flipping the coin to the other side. The detention center was transformed into a jail for top military and government officials including Hideki Tojo, wartime Prime Minister and general of the Imperial Japanese Army.

A dark shadow lurks in the foundations of the bright, lively shopping mall at Sunshine 60. The reverberating voices of happy children and families on vacation dissipate into the vacuum of history, created by the ghost of an ill-fated epoch. Although it was built to reflect pride in a successful economy (with the best technology the late 1970s could offer), the mall's structure ironically mirrors the violent totalitarianism of its carceral past. Previous machinations of mass control remain corporeally present in the form of this building, and are merely camouflaged in alternative modes of manipulation   while they continue to shift and coerce under new terms of power. Consumerism's salute to imperialism!

Suspected war criminals were detained at Sugamo Prison until the end of 1948. Sixty Japanese men were sentenced to death, all of whom were executed behind the iron door of the gallows cell No. 13.[1]

An urban myth portends that the number 60 in the building's name alludes to this very fact: that, in effect, this gigantic monolith serves as a gravestone commemorating the souls of executed officials whose ashes never returned home. Sunshine 60 then, with its cheerful name also evoking a resurgence of the rising sun, is arguably the largest war monument ever built—a sixty-story prayer for the remembrance and continuation of Japanese imperialism. The building embodies silent rage and exemplifies a desire for vengeance. At the same time, its structure deceptively reinforces the ethnic identity and fascistic machinery that constitute a new capitalist state.

Sugamo University

For those who survived sentencing and execution, living at Sugamo Prison was perhaps not as dreadful as one might imagine. Some inmates who lived to see 1949 referred to their experience of this period as attending "Sugamo University," because of the courses offered in a variety of subjects including English, accounting, auto mechanics, law, art, and poetry. According to a history of "Art and Exchange at Sugamo Prison" from 1945–52, the prison's cultural atmosphere radically altered between January '49 and June 1950. At that point, "activities that were frowned upon earlier—such as making drawings and circulating poems—started to be encouraged and sanctioned, and an
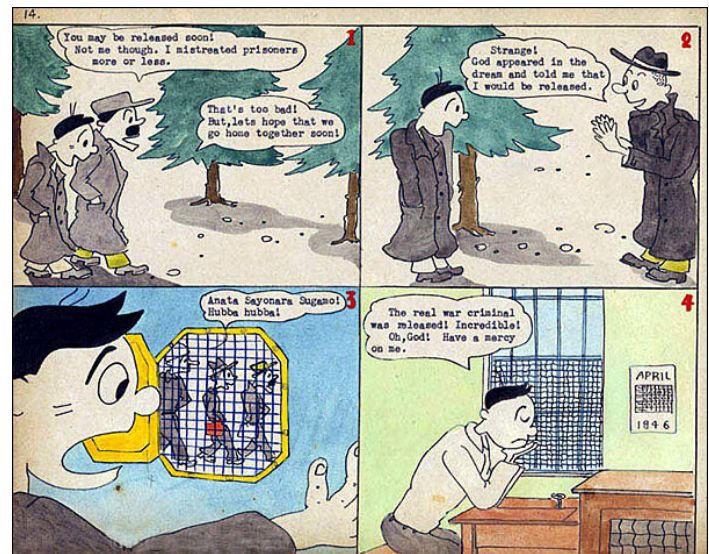
Cartoon by Fujiki Fumio from his manga sketchbook, 1948-49. Collection Fujiki Fumio, 2004.

art shop, poetry group, and prisoner newspaper were established."[2] Japanese meals were prepared using vegetables grown within the compound. On occasion, former Prime Minister Tojo served food to all the other Class A war criminals. During and immediately after WWII, prisoners at Sugamo performed hard labor and underwent regular rectal exams. After the executions of 1948, conditions lightened to a degree so dramatic that remaining prisoners enjoyed their "accommodations."

The majority of prisoners stayed at Sugamo for two years and eight months—from April 29, 1946, the birthday of Emperor Hirohito, when the indictment for the Tokyo Tribunal was presented, until December 23, 1948, succeeding Emperor Akihito's birthday. Seven of the executions took place on that date. But not all criminals were executed. In fact, nineteen Class A prisoners walked free the following day. Their cases were never brought to prosecution, and were simply dropped without trial.

As the Cold War intensified and the Chinese Communist Party rose as a dominant power, US policy toward Japan changed drastically. The United States government altered its tactics: first, they pledged to demilitarize and democratize the country, then shifted gears to turn Japan into an anti-communist stronghold in Asia. This constituted a shift from New Deal idealism to Cold War realism. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was established in 1947, and its agents quickly began covert operations around the world. The three-year incarceration of war criminals at Sugamo Prison during the Tokyo Tribunal (the Nuremberg Tribunals took less than a year by comparison) helped both the prisoners and the US to negotiate future plans, and to become acquainted with one another. During these three years, the CIA secretly assessed potential "strong men" who could take the lead

in a postwar, anti-communist, pro-American Japan.

Though initially considered a dubious choice given his opportunistic character, the CIA nonetheless deemed Nobusuke Kishi one of the best candidates for these so-called "strong men." During the war, Kishi was the Minister of Industry and Commerce under the Tojo administration, running a Japanese puppet state in Manchuria, Northeast China. A CIA file on Kishi, declassified in 2005, notes: "Strongly anti-Communist, Kishi has been a leading champion of the present regime on Taiwan, although he has also come to recognize the necessity of improved relations between Japan and China."[3] But this is somewhat of understatement. The file reveals only the least of the problems.

For Kishi, Manchuria was a field for necropolitical experimentation.[4] He tested his own economic model in the region and on the backs of forced Chinese and Korean laborers, borrowing from the labor efficiency of Taylorism, the German policy of industrial cartels, and Soviet-style, state-sponsored industrial development. Under Kishi's watch, an enormous amount of opium flooded the region from poppy plantations in Mongolia and Manchuria itself, and was also smuggled in from Persia. According to the study *Chimera: A Portrait of Manchukuo* (1993) by Shinichi Muromachi, even Kishi's subordinates later testified that Manchuria was akin to a piece of "giant machinery, producing secret funds for the Kanto Army … mainly through the opium trade."[5] Kishi's opium profits provided a seemingly infinite source of funds for the army's strategic development, and fueled aggressive invasions and atrocities across the region.[6]

Yoshio Kodama, another contender for the "strong man" position, was deeply involved in drug trafficking operations in Shanghai. A war profiteer, smuggler, and underground crime boss, he was already notorious at age eighteen for being a radical ultranationalist. He had been arrested for presenting a petition to Emperor Hirohito, and then imprisoned for a suspected assassination plot (the League of Blood Incident, 1932). During the war, he established a purchasing agency for the Japanese Navy Air Force which sold heroin from Japan in exchange for tungsten, radium, and other strategic materials for weapons manufacturing. In effect, Kodama monopolized the weapons market through his acquaintances in the military government. The CIA file on Kodama notes:

> This agency, later named the Kodama Kikan (Kodama Organ), involved considerable black market procurement as well as alleged intelligence responsibilities, and reportedly enabled [*sic*] Kodama to amass a huge personal fortune through wartime trade with both the Nationalists and the Communists.[7]

His "fortune" was worth roughly $175 million.[8]

All of this was made possible for Kodama through the assistance of Ryoichi Sasakawa, a "philanthropist" for war efforts, and founder of the Patriotic Masses Party (*Kokusui-taishu-to*)—an organization involved in several political assassinations during the 1930s. At that time Kodama was a young member of the Party's General Staff. Sasakawa once flew a squadron bomber to meet Benito Mussolini in Rome, where he proclaimed himself the "perfect fascist and dictator."[9] Already a popular figure appearing in nationwide broadcasts, Sasakawa cheered on the home front masses, and visited prisons in Manchuria to encourage them. After Kodama was prosecuted for propagating the war and hostility against the US, he stayed at Sugamo until the Class A charges were dropped in 1948.

Matsutaro Shoriki, code name "Podam," is confirmed to have been a CIA agent, as evidenced by a 474-page CIA file of his activities (also declassified in 2005). As the head of the political police during the war, and later a member of the Upper House of Parliament and chief of the Information Department of the Interior Ministry, he was responsible for hunting down and crushing communists, socialists, labor unions, and so forth, and for developing ideological warfare and propaganda. In 1936, he assisted in efforts to merge the news agencies into one governmental bureau, which controlled the production of state propaganda and the dissemination of censored foreign news. The CIA file on Shoriki notes:

> According to OSS report, Shoriki became notorious for his activities when chief of the secretariat of the Metropolitan Police, Tokyo, by his ruthless treatment of political thought causes and by ordering raids on universities and colleges. He was the first senior police official to institute such raids on educational institutions.[10]

This file initially evaluates his character as follows: "subject known to be reliable, but shrewd; limited use by CIA as cutout." But later Shoriki formed a close partnership with the Agency, pouring all the resources and powers he acquired through government positions into his new role after the war, and propagating American policies with ambition and greed for his new business.[11] Shoriki stayed at Sugamo for less than two years, and was released in 1947.

Sponsored by the CIA, Kishi went to work building a conservative hegemony in Japanese politics. He ascended to the position of Prime Minister (1957–60)—followed by his brother (1964–72) and his grandson (2006–2007, 2012–present)—and remained in power behind the scenes until his death in 1987. Kodama became the

nation's number one power broker, Yakuza boss, and fixer, dealing chiefly with underground business and politics. Sasakawa established legalized gambling and motor-boat racing, and became "the world's richest fascist," [1] known for his philanthropic empire (via the Sasakawa Foundation, for one example). The state propaganda officer Shoriki transformed into a media mogul, launching Japan's first private TV network and popular baseball team. *Yomiuri* newspaper—the main mouthpiece for the military dictatorship during the war—gained the nation's highest readership while openly distributing nationalistic and pro-American agendas. Together, they laid the foundation of a new, "democratic" Japan.

These four figures had one firm belief in common. They were all imperialists, and effectively anti-communists, who were immensely loyal to the Emperor. Some believe that they were double agents working to advance both American interests and their imperialist fantasies. Kishi, Kodama, Sasakawa, and Shoriki lived in the same cell before their mysterious release. Their fraternity was formed in the close quarters of Sugamo Prison and continued for the rest of their lives.

There is a reason why Japan has remained conservative to this day.

It was designed to be so.

But by whom?

Abandoned nationalist campaign cars worn out after decades of intense use. In the foreground, a first generation model of Toyota's coaster (1969-82).

The CIA in Japan

"We ran Japan during the occupation, and we ran it in a different way in these years after the occupation," said the CIA's Horace Feldman, who served as station chief in Tokyo. "General (Douglas) MacArthur had his ways. We had ours."[12]

Since the 1950s, the CIA's clandestine operations have transformed economic policies, sovereign histories, principles of democracy, and global perceptions, irrevocably altering the world's cultural and political landscape. But what's worse in Japan's case is that the CIA's involvement largely undermined the country's international accountability to war responsibilities, the claims to some of which have been dropped entirely through negotiations with the US. MacArthur's seven-year occupation provided ample resources for the new CIA agents, who further infiltrated the minds of existing political players, working hand-in-hand to fulfill their agenda. High-profile politicians and businessmen implemented anti-communist policies in Japan, and built a strategic network through cold cash, where briberies were the chosen form of contracts.

After his release in 1948, Kishi immediately resumed his political activities. He became the secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) upon its formation in 1955, and set about laying the foundations of the LDP's policies, which have been passed down through his grandson's cabinet today: pro-American in diplomatic relations, while promoting free trade and constitutional reform. Anti-communism was Kishi's firm ideological belief, and he worked with US diplomats to promote the strategic importance of funding for their nationalist agendas—to prevent the spread of communism in Asia.

Kishi became Prime Minister in 1957, only eight years after his release from Sugamo Prison. His most controversial act was the passing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. This was met with a storm of public protests, with more than 100,000 young people taking to the streets each day. The police cracked down on the student demonstrators, making it the most violent protest in Japanese modern history. The main point of contention was that the treaty continued to allow US military bases on Japanese soil, in addition to allowing further concessions to the US government. The students' anger was directed toward Kishi himself, for his fascistic and repressive manners of thought control, which reminded them of the recent war period. According to Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*:

> President (Dwight D.) Eisenhower himself decided that Japanese political support for the security and American financial support for Kishi were one and the same. He authorized a series of CIA payoffs to key members of the LDP. Politicians unwitting of the CIA's role were told that the money came from the titans of corporate America.[13]

The Japanese government was preparing to host

Eisenhower, and Kishi surmised that police forces alone could not pacify the public during the Presidential visit. Consequently, he organized the "Welcome-Ike Executive Committee" and asked Kodama—the nation's number-one gang fixer—to mobilize Yakuza and right-wing groups and seize the opposition jointly with police forces. This "reverse course" to democratization—bringing war criminals back to official state power, seeing them vent their ideological egos and violently oppress young liberals—is something to be remembered, and also had the effect of making later anti-government movements almost unfathomable.

At the time, nationalist campaigns were organized with the official and financial backing of the CIA-led government. The modern revamp and a new fashion were made at this period. Today, products of the CIA's investment can still be found in Tokyo's streets: a procession of black painted vans with the Imperial crest of the chrysanthemum, or the Rising Sun, broadcast military marches, and so on. This fabrication of the return of modern nationalism in Japan is ironic, because the nationalists were acting "for their country," but without knowing that they are essentially hired by the CIA to crush communists, on behalf of the US.

Kishi was perhaps the most reactionary of all prime ministers in postwar Japan, taking full advantage of this tumultuous and confused period. In the short term of only three years, he tried to revise the Police Duties Execution Act to maximize the power of the police authorities, to restore Empire Day to the calendar, to instill "moral" lessons and the mandatory singing of the national anthem in the school—all template parameters for nationalist politicians. Kishi backed up numerous organizations of right-wing causes including Korea's Unification Church, the Asian People's Anti-Communist League, the Moral Re-Armament Movement, and served as an adviser for the association of war veterans (*Nihon Goyu Renmei*) and of the national fascists (*Sokoku-boei Doshi-kai*).

Politics and media were two sides of the same coin. While the LDP contracted with Dentsu (Japan's largest advertising and public relations agency) for their media campaigns, Shoriki, at the age of sixty-two, embarked on a new plan: establishing the first private TV company and nationwide communication network in Japan. Senator Karl Mundt of South Dakota, a key proponent of "Voice of America," identified television broadcasting in Japan as an important weapon of psychological warfare in the battle against communism, particularly after the breakout of Korean War in 1950. The US subsequently agreed to cooperate under the project codename KMCASHIER.[14] Upon his dramatic debut as a TV licensing contender, Shoriki established Nippon TV in 1952.

With the support of the CIA, Shoriki geared his new TV venture toward favorable treatment and support for nuclear energy through an orchestrated campaign across his media empire. In 1955, the touring exhibition *Atoms*

for Peace was installed in Tokyo, enlisting Japanese artists to re-contextualizing information on "benign" atomic applications in business, cosmetics, industry and medicine to suit the local culture, and consequently "to play down or conceal the original source of this material."[15] The exhibition travelled to Hiroshima in 1956. Tessa Morris-Suzuki adds in her essay, "The CIA and the Japanese media: a cautionary tale," that "the exhibition was just one of a litany of clandestine connections between Japan's leading media magnate and the CIA."[16] Shoriki's TV company also broadcasted Walt Disney's educational video *Our Friend the Atom* (1957) to Japanese households in an effort to change perception about the use of nuclear energy and to erase the public sentiment against the atomic bombs used to devastating effect in Japan itself, as well as subsequent US nuclear weapons testing at the Bikini Islands.

Known as the "father of nuclear energy," Shoriki was also the first chairman of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, which codified Japan's intention to utilize atomic energy for the improvement of living standards and social welfare. In 1957, he joined the first Kishi cabinet as chairman of the National Public Safety Commission, and around the same time, the Japanese government entered into a contract to purchase twenty nuclear reactors from the US. After observing the successful public compliance with the nuclear policy,[17] the Shoriki-LDP-CIA faction made a political decision which eventually led to the installation of fifty-nine nuclear power plants across the nation. This corrupted relationship within the faction illustrates the root cause of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi Accident, in which the state and Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (TEPCO) were held liable for negligence of maintenance.

The CIA and the Pentagon provided funds to the LDP, amounting to millions of dollars. This effectively allowed for an unhindered cash flow for at least fifteen years from the 1950s to the early '70s under four American presidents—Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon—and helped consolidate the one-party rule known as the "1955 System." In this extended period until 1993, the LDP was the overwhelmingly dominant political party in Japan, where Kishi remained influential behind the scenes throughout his life. The now-infamous "Lockheed scandal," a global political controversy in connection with the 1976 sale of F-104 fighter planes and L-1011 TriStar airliners, reveals only the tip of the iceberg.

Lurking in the background was Kodama, who began to pour part of his fortune into the careers of Japan's most conservative politicians. Through this financial funneling he became a key member of a CIA operation that helped bring the ultra-conservative set to power. Kodama's inconspicuous presence was interlinked and intertwined in the lives of these more public personalities; he quietly provided muscle and advanced illegal tactics to further usurp power for the ultranationalists under his protection.
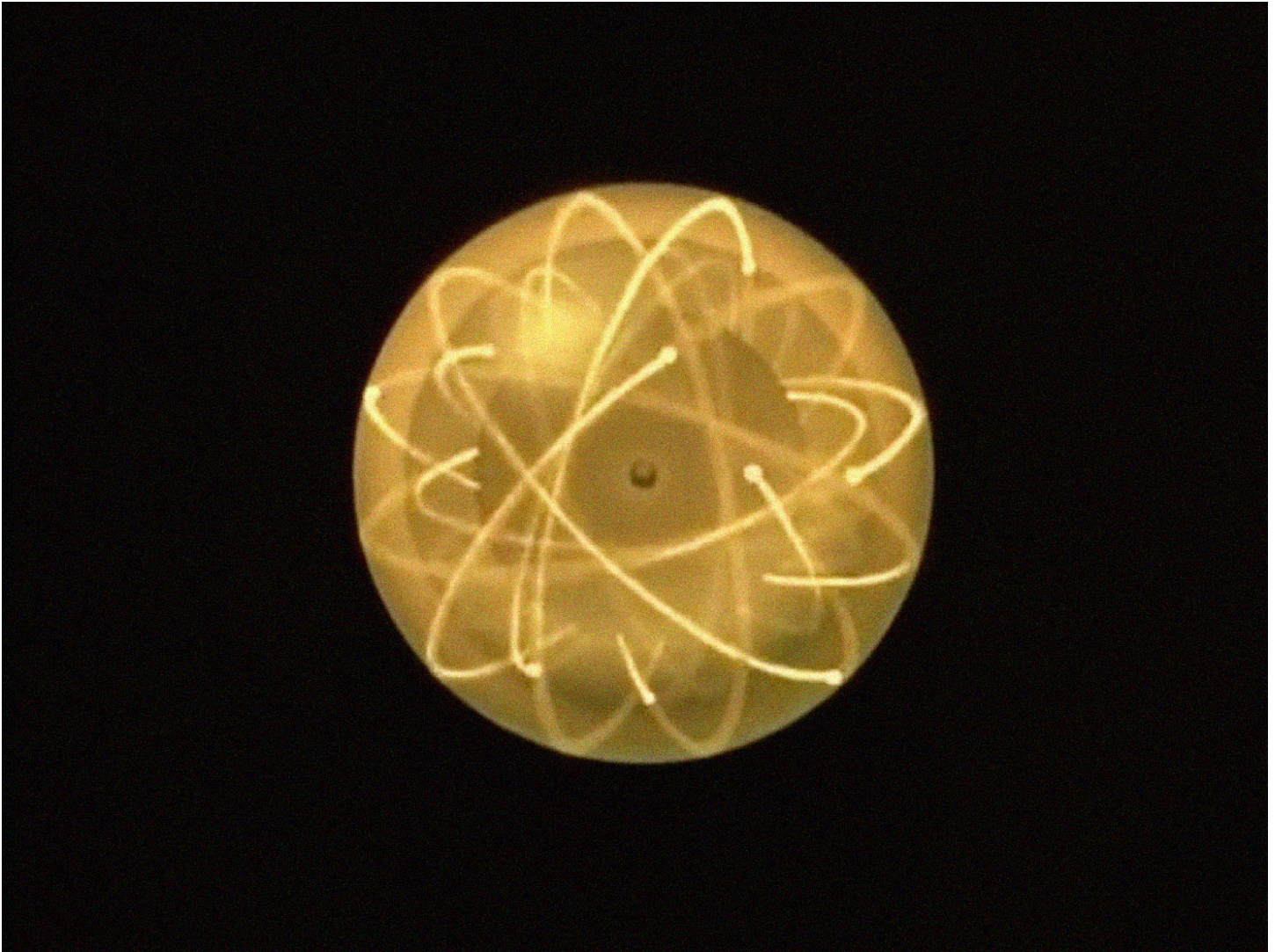
Still from Walt Disney's educational video, Our Friend the Atom (1957).

The Moral Turn

Imperialists had little problem joining the US camp and claiming themselves anti-communist; their concern was the emotional barriers and obstacles in international diplomacy due to resentment toward Japanese war crimes. The Moral Re-Armament movement (MRA) became a magnet for these war criminals, including Kishi and Sasagawa. Initially a Christian evangelical reform movement promoting public confession and repentance, MRA shifted its focus from a spiritual movement to a socio-political one, promoting "industrial harmony" as a rapprochement between capital and labor. These ideas materialized in economic and ethical agendas, and worked favorably for the benefit of the former Sugamo inmates.

Philanthropist Sasakawa was a key figure in the Japanese MRA. Before the war, he personally met Mussolini to echo Frank Buchman's program "to promote plans for a Japan-US-Britain-Nazi Germany alliance against the Soviet Union" (MRA had affinity with German Nazis).[18] Sakawa's friendship with German economist and President of the Reichsbank Hjalmar Schacht was seen as a consummate advantage, given the latter's experience in fascist economic planning and Germany's economic recovery from hyperinflation.

MRA was known for its ancillary role in the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952, precursor to the EU, and developed increasing influence in Africa and Asia that needed facilitation for independence through the reconciliation of conflicting groups. As soon as he was released from prison, Kishi joined the movement and established himself with the main CIA-controlled power brokers, quickly forming a Japanese faction of this right-wing cult. Through MRA, Kishi spent time with Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman, and deepened his relationships with other political leaders to align with the Wall Street-centered economic operation. The MRA's musical, *The Vanishing Island* (1955), which

toured to Taiwan and Manila, also paved the way for Kishi's visits to promote "reconciliation."[19]

MRA was an anti-communist initiative that proved immensely effective amongst business leaders. The red purge in the Japanese corporate sector was already taking place during the US occupation from 1949 to 1951, as a series of arbitrary layoffs for a variety of accusations levied to unilaterally label people "Red"—including Japanese Communist Party members, socialists, and labor union activists. The executive ordinance by Yoshida Shigeru in 1949, then Japanese Prime Minister, stipulates the disbandment of "undemocratic" organizations. As a result of this, "in the 'corporate restructuring' at Toshiba in July 1949, some 4,581 workers, including 202 Communist Party members, were laid off."[20]

Konosuke Matsushita, Founder of Panasonic, was also introduced to MRA in order to "protect" his company from the communist menace. Decades later, in the 1980s, the graduate school he established, the Matsushita Institute of Government and Management, became a breeding ground for neoliberal thinkers and pro-American conservatives with fanatic market fundamentalism. They suppressed communist unionists in different ways: by advocating for Yuaikai, an organization with Christian leanings meant to benefit workers' welfare. The Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) was also formed as a counter structure to the communist unions. This movement endorsed the ethos of "industrial harmony" through labor efficiency. The Prime Minister at the time was an ardent member of MRA too, and along with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, instilled a neoliberal ideology and policy model. In corporate culture, MRA promoted self-empowerment programs based on utilitarian philosophies and enhanced business ethics, fostering a consensus for Corporate Social Responsibility.

Japan's MRA is located at the headquarters of the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), and the secretariat of the Trilateral Commission, which represented the Rockefellers' interests. John D. Rockefeller III, known for his philanthropic efforts for the Asian Cultural Council, the Japan Society, and so on, went along on several diplomatic trips to Japan in the late 1950s. On such occasions, Rockefeller was invited to Kishi's home and negotiated with Japanese business leaders from a close position. With the active support from the US State Department, the CIA began to formulate a host of Rockefeller-initiated operations in Japan, committed to a policy of austerity and limited trade. The MRA-JCIE functioned as a central platform for the CIA's programs, facilitating exchange programs for elite politicians and businesspeople to conduct operations in the name of "civil diplomacy."

The Rockefellers were deeply involved in this picture. If there is any reason why they open an intervention into Japan, it was their commitment to experimenting with a

zero-growth austerity plan. These commitments were spelled out in the Limits to Growth and Eugenicist programs of the Club of Rome, which were both modeled after Schacht's economic programs for Nazi Germany.[21] David Rockefeller, who penned a senior thesis entitled *Destitution through Fabian Eyes* (1936), was embedded in the center of this plan.

The Black Monolith

According to the corporate profile of Sunshine City, Inc., the estate development following the withdrawal of the nationally-owned property (formerly Tokyo Detention Center) operated primarily to regenerate Ikebukuro as Tokyo's designated suburban center. The project has, according to the Sunshine City corporation, transformed the area into "a bright and vibrant city, and the Sunshine 60 Street has been buzzing with its full commercial function."[22] The complex is held up as the first example of the Private Sector Initiative—the expansion of market principles in the field of social infrastructure—a large scale development, which anticipated a pivotal shift to the neoliberal economy. Sunshine City houses numerous corporate offices and restaurants, an observation deck—as well as a VR observation deck—children's facilities, amusement parks, an aquarium, a planetarium, a theater, and convention halls. It also hosts a Cultural Center, and an Ancient Orient Museum.

The main stakeholder is Mitsubishi Estate, the real estate company that purchased the Rockefeller Center in New York in 1989, and a spin-off of the century-old Mitsubishi Group historically born out of military demand, with close guidance by the government. The list includes Mitsubishi-UFJ Bank, Credit Saison and its business partner Mizuho Bank, and Toshiba.[23]

The mediator of the development project was Seiji Tsutsumi, businessman, poet, and former head of the Saison Group retail chain. Tsutsumi facilitated talks for relocating the detention center, and recruited project members and investors at corporate levels. After relocation was confirmed, he received a phone call from Kodama that he wished to visit the site before demolishing the prison. Kodama appeared with a large bouquet and a bunch of thick incense sticks. Walking around the site, he placed the bouquet where Tojo ended his life, lit the incense and held his palms together for a long time.[24]

Sugamo prisoners were imperialists to the core. They were reluctant to be of service to the CIA simply for the purposes of propaganda, and intended to use the CIA for their own real-world projects or imperialist fantasies.

Kishi pursued a tightly-controlled economic model, which effectively resonated with David Rockefeller's Wall Street-centered initiative, cabled to Chase Manhattan

From the press release "The 50th Anniversary of Sunshine City Inc. Special Campaign: Free Entry to Observation Deck for Children Under 12," Sunshine City, Inc., September 30, 2016.

headquarters. Sasakawa followed the Rockefeller's strategies of building a philanthropic empire. Shoriki's nationalist and profit-seeking propaganda was technically used for the CIA's pro-American campaign. But as long as it served a function for both ends, it didn't matter if his true intention was for their country, his own profit, or for the emperor.

Neoliberalism shares characteristics with the wildest dreams of imperialists and reactionary spiritual movements: a constant push for labor efficiency, cultish ethics, covert, intrusive media tactics deployed for total governance—all accomplished on the premise of a systematic lie. All of this is akin—politically, economically, socially and unfortunately also individually—to fascism. Friedrich Hayek wrote *The Road to Serfdom* from 1940 to '43. If this text is a conceptual precursor to neoliberalism, then it was indeed invented during the last days of fascism.

When a warrant was issued for Kishi's arrest as an alleged war criminal, an old teacher from his local province sent him a *tanka* poem:

> To grieve is the loss, not of life but of honor:
> Your name that lasts for eternity.[25]

This message translates to a directive: kill yourself. Kishi's reply:

> To inherit is the story, not of honor but of
> Righteousness in the act of war.[26]

So he lived on. And instead of a story, he devised yet another economic model to leave behind. And it is just as fraudulent as his story of war.

In a 2004 history of the building, one year before the CIA documents on Sugamo's ex-prisoners were declassified, another kind of story was relayed: "A well-established neighborhood myth associated with this building claims that every year, on the anniversary of the Class A executions, a ghost in military uniform is seen on the 60th floor."

Aside from the imperial ghosts in the neoliberal machine, there is just one rock on site to commemorate the prison. Its engraving reads: "pray for eternal peace."

Sunshine 60—this monolithic, divisive, monument to

27

neoliberal posturing—is still erect and in place today.

X

With assistance from Marika Constantino, this text was written on the occasion of the exhibition "The Imperial Ghost in the Neoliberal Machine (Figuring the CIA)," on view at e-flux in New York through June 8, 2019. The author pays tribute to artist Akira Takayama whose practice references Sunshine 60.

Koichiro Osaka is a curator, writer, producer, and the founding director of Asakusa, a forty-square-meter exhibition venue committed to advancing curatorial collaboration and practices.

Marika Constantino is an artist, writer, researcher, and curator based in the Philippines.

1
The gallows, or cell No. 13, were located away from the prison itself, in what is now a public park adjacent to Sunshine 60. A total of sixty criminals were executed (fifty-three Class B and C criminals and seven Class A criminals). All were hung at cell No. 13, except for one who was shot at a United States Army base outside Tokyo. For the list of fifty-three executed criminals, see John L. Ginn, *Sugamo Prison, Tokyo: An Account of the Trial and Sentencing of Japanese War Criminals in 1948, by a U.S. Participant* (McFarland & Company, 1992), 192–93.

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" *Nanikaete kono-miikusano tadashisa-wo / raise-mademo katari-nokosan* ." Translated by author.

the difference between you and me
is as I bent
over strangers' toilet bowls,
the face that glared back at me
in those sedentary waters
was not my own, but my mother's
brown head floating in a pool
of crystalline whiteness

she taught me how to clean
to get down on my hands and knees
and scrub, not beg
she taught me how to clean,
not live in this body

my reflection has always been
once removed.

—Cherrie Moraga, "Half-Breed"[1]

Françoise Vergès

Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender

Race, Gender, and Exhaustion as a Condition of Existence

Every day, in every urban center of the world, thousands of black and brown women, invisible, are "opening" the city. They clean the spaces necessary for neo-patriarchy, and neoliberal and finance capitalism to function. They are doing dangerous work: they inhale toxic chemical products and push or carry heavy loads. They have usually travelled long hours in the early morning or late at night, and their work is underpaid and considered to be unskilled. They are usually in their forties or fifties. A second group, which shares with the first an intersection of class, race, and gender, go to middle class homes to cook, clean, and take care of children and the elderly, so that those who employ them can go to work in the places that the former group of women have cleaned. Meanwhile, in the same early hours of the morning, in the same big metropoles of the world, we can see women and men running through the streets, rushing to the nearest gym or yoga center. They follow the mandate to maintain healthy and clean bodies of late capitalism; they usually follow their run or workout with a shower, an avocado toast, and a detox drink before heading to their clean offices. Meanwhile, women of color try to find a seat for their exhausted bodies as they return on public transit from cleaning those gyms, banks, insurance offices, newspaper offices, investment companies, or restaurants and preparing meeting rooms for business breakfasts. They doze off as soon as they sit, their fatigue visible to those who care to see it. The working body that is made visible is the concern of an ever growing industry dedicated to the cleanliness and healthiness of body and mind, the better to serve racial capitalism. The other working body is made invisible even though it performs a necessary function for the first: to clean spaces in which the "clean" ones

circulate, work, eat, sleep, have sex, and perform parenting. But the cleaners' invisibility is required and naturalized. This has been happening for at least five hundred years, but I want to argue that looking at invisible/visible racialized cleaning/caring labor today, which is driven by the needs of finance capital and new forms of middle class living, brings together multiple intersecting issues that go beyond the division of chores within a couple or the calculation of what domestic labor adds to general growth. What I want to explore here is the dialectical relation between the white male performing body and the racialized female exhausted body; between the visibility of the final product of the cleaning/caring and the invisibility, along with the feminization and racialization (both going hand in hand), of the workers who do this cleaning/caring; between the growing industry of cleaning/caring and conceptions of clean/dirty, the gentrification of cities, and racialized environmental politics. To do so, I will discuss cleaning/caring through a different framework than that of labor (i.e., housework or domestic work).

Without the work of women of color, which is necessary but must remain invisible—literally and in valuative terms—neoliberal and patriarchal capitalism would not function. Upper class, white, neoliberal, and even liberal people must enter these spaces without having to acknowledge, to think of, to imagine, the work of cleaning/caring. It is a global situation and it is primarily white women who act as supervisors and regulators of this labor done by black and migrant/refugee women.

The contradiction and dialectic between the neoliberal bourgeoisie and these exhausted bodies illustrate the connections between neoliberalism, race, and heteropatriarchy. It also uncovers new borders that have been drawn between cleanliness and dirtiness in an age in which concerns are growing for clean air, clean water, clean houses, clean bodies, clean minds, and green spaces. The growing concern for a healthy/powerful body and mind is built on the New Age ideology of the 1970s, which appropriated Eastern and indigenous conceptions and practices, or esoteric Western ones. It has developed into a major and lucrative market, offering meditation and herbal teas, yoga and exotic whole grains, gyms and massages for every age, founded on class privilege and that very cultural appropriation. Its aim is personal efficiency and a maximization of physical and mental power. It has even fed a desire to outlive human constraints, and led to research programs for life extension, antiaging, and "solving the death problem," financed by the theocracy of Silicon Valley.[2] The owner of the performing body (white and male) is expected to demonstrate his willingness to spend long hours at the gym and in the office, to work late at night and during the weekend, this capacity being the sign of his success, of his adherence to the dominant order, his exhaustion the proof of his triumph over the basic needs of mere mortals. He performs neoliberal masculinity in a proudly under-rested body perpetually speeding through many tasks. The owner of the invisible body is female and a person of color. Her exhaustion is the consequence of the historical logic of extractivism that built primitive accumulation and capital—extracting labor from racialized bodies. Women who clean, whether they live in Maputo, Rio de Janeiro, Riyadh, Kuala Lumpur, Rabat, or Paris, speak of the very little time they sleep (three to four hours), of the long hours devoted to their commutes, and of the work they have to do once they return home. Women who perform caring/cleaning jobs all talk about being *exhausted*. The *economy of exhaustion* has a long history in the modern world: it started with colonial slavery, mining human

KEEPING YOUR **WORK AREA** CLEAN IS PART OF YOUR JOB ASSIGNMENT
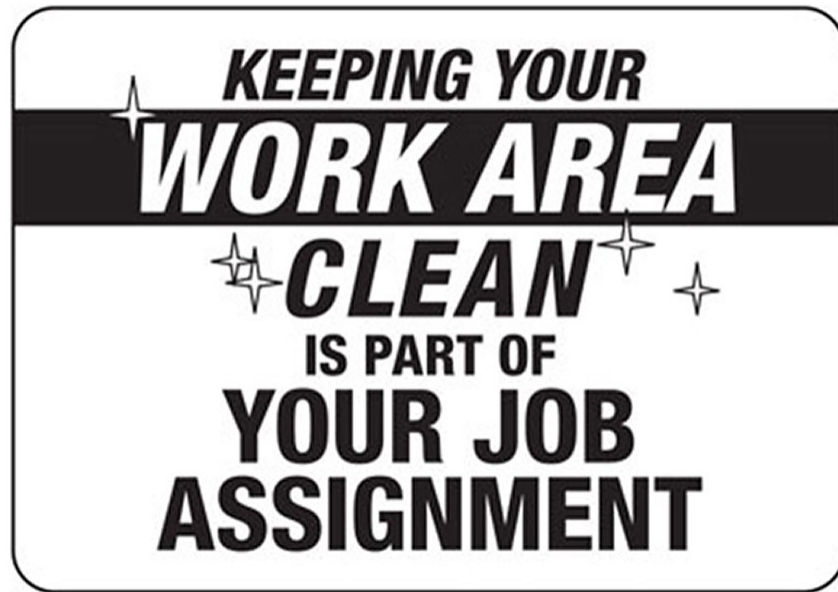
energy to death; the Industrial Revolution adopted this logic, exhausting the bodies of white workers and children until they finally obtained a reduction of work hours and hard physical labor thanks to the exhaustion of racialized bodies in the colonies. Liberal and neoliberal countries still rest on mining to exhaustion the bodies of migrants and people of color (processes of racialization also occur in the countries of the Global South—Filipinas and Indonesian women cleaning/caring are racialized in Southeast Asia, as are Thai and Malagasy women in Beirut; one even hears wealthy Africans in Dakar speak of their "African" domestics).[3]

The performing male neoliberal body has another kind of "phantom" body that enables his limitless performance. Even when a married white woman does her own housework and takes care of her own kids, the work of women of color must not be overlooked: they clean the spaces where white mothers do their shopping, buy their groceries, go the gym, drop off their children at daycare. This racial and gendered construction rests on a long history of the exploitation of black women in particular, of their bodies and souls. To be clear, I do not mean to make a rigid distinction between cleaning and caring. Cleaning is about caring, and caring about cleaning: black women who care for children and the elderly, and clean their bodies also take care of the environment by cleaning human waste and rubbish. The bodies of black women have long been commodified, made into capital; their exploitation is inseparable from primitive accumulation, from social reproduction (as so many black feminists have shown), and from the new need for a clean world in which the neoliberal economy can function.

Who Cleans the World?

Though it is always problematic to speak of "a" group of women, to lump together so many different situations—residing in the home you clean, or cleaning public spaces for an agency; being undocumented or a citizen, or a migrant whose passport is confiscated; being married, living alone, or in a collective; being in a queer, lesbian, or heterosexual relationship; speaking the language of the society in which you work or not; being aware of your rights or not—I will, for the purposes of my argument, speak of black and brown women who clean and care as *a* group, in order to explore links between cleanliness and dirtiness in the age of neoliberalism and the so-called Anthropocene.

In this symbolic and material economy, black and brown women's lives are made precarious and vulnerable, but their fabricated superfluity goes hand in hand with their necessary existence and presence. They are allowed into private homes and workplaces. But other members of superfluous communities—such as the families and neighbors of these workers—must stay behind the gates, unless they are willing to risk being killed by state police violence and other forms of the militarization of green and public spaces for the sake of the wealthy. For these workers, the special permit to enter is based both on the need for their work and on their invisibility. Women of color enter the gates of the city, of its controlled buildings, but they must do it as *phantoms*. Racialized women may circulate in the city, but only as an erased presence.

In their essay "Bio(necro)polis: Marx, Surplus Populations, and the Spatial Dialectics of *Re* production and 'Race,'" Michael McIntyre and Heidi J. Nast introduce the notions of "bio(necro)polis" and "necro(bio)polis" to emphasize the geographical fluidity of accumulation and racialized

difference.[4] They study how surplus populations "are the effect of racially striated regimes of biological reproduction," arguing "that the workings of capitalism must be understood in terms of the linked contradictions of reproduction and race."[5] They go on to write that

racial marking of lands and bodies continues to be a way of rendering certain bodies superfluous. Canalized, criminalized, ostracized, stigmatized, the necropolis—that spatiality through which the necropolitan is defined or constituted—becomes a reserve of multifarious material proportions: of negative symbolic potential and death's liminal pleasures; a reserve of labor (as noted in chapter 25 of *Capital*); a nature reserve open for appropriation; a reserve of potentially fecund land for settlers; and a reserve of waste land for colonialism's human and environmental detritus.

They add: "Members of the surplus laboring population working long hours for low wages are resented for undercutting white workers' wages."[6] In the racial marking of the city, black women's lives are superfluous *and* necessary, but their presence in the cleaning/caring industry has not in fact fueled resentment for taking white workers' jobs or undercutting their wages. Indeed, the racial/gendered element of this workforce has not produced the kind of white resentment that we have observed in other industries. There is no nationalist, racist, anti-migrant movement built on the argument that "women of color are stealing white women's jobs." If the Islamophobic feminism that we witness in Europe has mobilized against veiled women in public spaces and daycare centers, it has not protested against veiled

women who clean these public spaces or offices, hotel rooms, restaurants, and gyms. At the same time, there exists no protest movement *in support of* impoverished women who work cleaning/caring jobs—none. On the contrary, black women in particular have had to fight to get domestic work recognized *as work* by governments and unions. The fight is far from over.[7]

Feminist Theories of Cleaning/Caring

At the risk of being blunt, I will summarize certain feminist responses to housework: a demand for better sharing of this burden and for wages; the theory that showed how female domestic workers facilitate white and middle class women's entry into the paid labor market in increasingly larger proportions; the Marxist feminist theory of reproductive labor and capital; the exploitation of migrant women doing the work caring/cleaning ; the critique by feminists of color worldwide of a white feminism that framed white women's liberation in terms of "freedom from housework" and pushed for removing legal and social barriers to women entering wage labor, thus cementing the racial divide.

The racialization of domestic work inaugurated by colonial slavery has been extended throughout the world in recent decades. In Europe, domestic work was traditionally done by young white women, and European literature abounds with the figure of the abused, raped, naive, or cunning domestic. At the beginning of the twentieth century in France, this figure was caricatured in the comic strip *Bécassine*; the title character was a stereotyped young Breton housemaid, stupid and slow, in contrast to the more refined women of Paris.[8] In the 1960s, cleaning/caring became racialized in France and other European countries as governments organized the

migration of women of color from their former colonies (this type of work had long been racialized in the colonies themselves). As European women were entering paid jobs, societies were becoming wealthier, and domestic work looked more and more disconnected from the image of the modern woman promoted by these societies.

In the 1970s, as white feminists denounced the boredom and invisibility of unpaid housework, the movement to recruit racialized women for cleaning/caring accelerated. White feminists were not unified in their response to this shift in the organization of social reproduction. Some asked for greater sharing of domestic tasks between women and men, ignoring the racial dimension of housework. Adam Smith's remark that "menial tasks and services … generally perish in the instant of their performance and seldom leave any trace or value behind them" weighed on the question of the place and role of cleaning/caring.[9] Being modern meant abandoning tasks that were associated with a backwards femininity and fighting for "valued" work positions. The "invisible hand" of black women would do the unvalued jobs. Marxist feminists offered a trenchant critique, as Rada Katsarova summarizes, identifying "social reproduction as a field of productive, generative activity. For them, patriarchal relationships and the subordination of women in the home appeared as a precondition to capitalist exploitation."[10] Marxist and socialist feminists demonstrated the central role that social reproduction played in capitalism. Yet, it was the pioneering work of black feminists, first articulated in Claudia Jones's seminal 1949 essay "To End the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman," which was deeply revolutionary, that showed the triple oppression of working class black women. Jones demonstrated that black women had never been confined

to the "domestic" sphere alone. Hazel Carby, Angela Davis, and so many others followed suit, challenging various dominant white/heteronormative feminisms that criticized the subjugation of domestic (white) women while ignoring how race and colonialism have been implicated in these histories.[11] Black women understood very well what was at stake, and the first union of

domestic workers in the world was created in the United States by black women.[12] This critique is still very much relevant today; when some women are freed from cleaning/caring work, other women—primarily women of color—will have to do the job.[13]

Today, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO), women are still responsible for 75 percent of all unpaid domestic work, spending up to three hours more per day doing such work than men; this calculation includes fetching water, caring for children and the elderly, and doing housework.[14] According to the United Nations, unpaid care and domestic work is worth 10 to 39 percent of a given country's gross domestic products. The ILO says that there are at least 67 million domestic workers worldwide, 80 percent of whom are women of color. Everywhere, domestic work is situated at the lower end of the care economy. It is also a booming industry, generating annual revenues of around $75 million and growing about 6.2 percent per year, with the Asia-Pacific region experiencing the fastest growth. Though commercial cleaning is currently the largest cleaning service market, residential cleaning is expected to grow rapidly. Leading companies in the industry, aware of the negative image of the exploited cleaning worker, insist on legal protections for workers and promote their health and safety. ABM Industries, a leading "facility solutions"

company based in the US, declares on its website that "our ThinkSafe culture is about our employees. It is a 'state of mind' and a feeling that should become a part of every workday."[15] The cleaning industry has also adopted surveillance technology that enables the extensive tracking of cleaning staff, with workers complaining about being constantly tagged and followed.

The neoliberal euphemism "service providers" is often used to describe cleaning/caring workers. But these workers have cut through this vocabulary, laying bare the violence hidden behind such expressions. For her book *The New Maids: Transnational Women and the Care Economy*, Helma Lutz interviewed both cleaners and employers to demonstrate why this expression has been useful for women who employ women of color:

> Employers like to see their domestic workers as service providers; it is largely a form of exculpatory rhetoric which conveniently diverts the debate away from relations of power and dependence, since the (academically) educated upper-middle-class clients will usually know that they are not party to a legally safeguarded service-provider contract.[16]

Cleaning/caring female workers of color are politicizing their field, showing how and why they are performing indispensable work. They push us to go further in our analysis of that work. Their struggle for better pay and the right to unionize and be protected from abuse is now global.[17] Women of color are showing what a decolonial feminism can be, one that brings together many intersecting issues: migration, the chemical industry, the economy of exhaustion, visibility/invisibility, race, gender, class, capitalism, and violence against women.

Capitalism Is Waste

The word "waste" usually refers to rubbish, but it is important also to consider the phrase "laying waste." Slavery, colonialism, and capitalism have laid waste to lands and people. Instead of answering human needs, slavery, colonialism, and capitalism have constructed desires for things that we do not need while obstructing access to what we do need (clean water, clean air, clean food, clean cities). As defined by geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore, capitalism is a global regime of vulnerability to death. The slave trade on which capitalism was built produced humans as waste and destroyed the cultural/natural world of indigenous peoples and of the continents colonized by European powers. The slave trade had a long-term effect on the African continent, its population, and its landscape, bringing filth, desolation, and death. The slave ship was a space of filth, feces, blood, and flesh rotted by the shackles of slavery. It was

said that if peoples in the colonies noticed a foul stench drifting onto shore, they knew when a slave ship was coming. Race became a code for designing people and landscapes that could be wasted.

Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans were made disposable. The flesh and bones of their dead bodies mixed with the earth on plantations and in silver and gold mines. They were the humus of capitalism. Black women's wombs were made into capital and their children transformed into currency. Primitive accumulation rested on the privatization of the commons and the production of wasted lands and people (particularly people of color). In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire wrote about Nazism as the "boomerang effect" of slavery and colonialism. The daily barbarisms inflicted on people of color in the colonies had turned the colonizers into violent, immoral savages, and that violence was now being inflicted on white people back on home. We can similarly say that what imperialism and capitalism have inflicted upon the Global South and minorities in the Global North is today affecting the West; what had been externalized—all the waste of capitalism—is coming back. Neoliberal capitalism's necessary destruction knows no borders. The idea that the wealthy can take refuge in fortified enclaves is another illusion bred by the deep sense of *natural* innocence instilled in Europeans, along with their belief in white supremacy.

Waste, as Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams have argued, "is a sign of capitalism's success."[18] In 1966, economist Joseph Phillips demonstrated that in the US, the economic surplus—the portion of things produced that serve no socially useful purpose—averaged over half of gross national product. In 2015, advertising, packaging for brand promotion, and e-commerce orders led to the production of 35 million tons of cardboard. In 2016, a thousand ships were dragged onto beaches in the Global South, cut into pieces, and sold for scrap metal (the world's biggest ship scrapyard is on India's western coast, at Alang).[19] But rather than putting an end to an economy that needs to produce waste, experts and policy makers discuss whether it makes "economic sense to properly manage waste." The World Bank and similar institutions include the geopolitics of race and waste in their computer models, but as aggravating elements rather than as inherent structural features.

According to the World Bank, 11 million tons of solid waste are produced every day in the world. In 2016, the world's cities generated 2.01 billion tons of solid waste. By 2050, annual waste generation is expected to increase by 70 percent from 2016 levels, to 3.4 billion tons. Although they only account for 16 percent of the world's population, high-income countries collectively generate more than a third (34 percent) of the world's waste. East Asia and the Pacific region are responsible for generating close to a quarter (23 percent) of all waste. By 2050, waste generation in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to more than

triple from current levels, while South Asia will more than double its waste stream. It is not clear if this data takes into account the huge amount of waste generated by imperialism, including what armies left behind, and the countries and bodies that have been *wasted*. Moreover, region-specific data masks the fact that waste circulates (air and water do not know borders). In other words, waste generated by Western imperialism or produced for the comfort and consumption of privileged white people ends up being dumped on racialized people, either at home in impoverished racialized neighborhoods, or in the countries of the Global South.

"The racialization of the world," Nikhil Pal Singh has written, "has helped to create and re-create 'caesuras' in human populations at both the national and global scales that have been crucial to the political management of populations." He adds:

> We need to recognize the technology of race as something more than skin color or biophysical essence, but precisely as those historic repertoires and cultural, spatial, and signifying systems that stigmatize and depreciate one form of humanity for the purposes of another's health, development, safety, profit, and pleasure.[20]

Wilson Gilmore has called this "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[21] Racialization is created by white supremacy to make its world clean while destroying other worlds. White supremacy creates a clean/dirty divide that posits a clean/civilized Europe against a dirty/uncivilized world, even though archives testify to the fact that non-European peoples were aghast at the uncleanliness of whites, at their disregard for personal hygiene. Europeans were often in awe of the cleanliness of cities they entered but then destroyed, and of the peoples they subsequently massacred. By the nineteenth century, building on ideologies of race developed under slavery and colonization, Europeans drew a strong contrast between, on the one hand, a clean Europe and clean European bodies, and on the other, dirty indigenous dwellings, bodies, and sexuality.

In the current reworking of the geopolitics of cleanliness/dirtiness *,* the *invisibility* of the cleaning jobs of women of color creates the *visibility* of clean homes and public spaces. Furthermore, representations of cleanliness/dirtiness in the world construct a racial spatialization. Let us reflect on the accumulation of images of filth and garbage in the Global South and how this fills the Western public with horror: " *Why are these countries so dirty? Can't they clean their streets? How can humans work in these filthy places? Don't they see*

that it's bad for their health? Look at the children!" Warnings about hygiene and health when traveling to "these" countries add to the construction of a clean world vs. an unclean world populated by unclean peoples. Images of mountains of garbage, of *dirty* streets, *dirty* rivers, *dirty* beaches, *dirty* neighborhoods, of plastic covering fields, of people—women, children, men—searching through garbage or pushing carts filled with refuse, of children swimming in polluted water, all this in the Global South—such images contribute to the creation of a naturalized division between dirty and clean. Added to this proliferation of images are reports on efforts by government agencies and NGOs to teach hygiene to "these" people, and reports on the alarming levels of plastic and pollution in "these" countries. But the root causes of all this remain hidden: the legacies of colonialism, of colonial urbanization and the racial restructuring of the landscape; structural adjustment programs that require governments to reduce public expenses; the externalization of polluting industries. The feeling that cleaning "that" world is an impossible task is slowly ingrained. What becomes a pressing issue is how to keep externalized pollution from reaching "clean" areas.

The dominant discourse about cleaning the world has chosen to ignore the fact that neoliberalism overproduces waste and that disposing of this waste is racialized. This discourse has in recent years promoted the notions of "green capitalism" and "sustainable disaster." The latter concerns environmental catastrophe and its management, and there is a growing body of academic, governmental, and corporate literature on the subject.[22] But this literature rarely addresses who will do the work of post-disaster cleanup.

As international institutions, foundations, and governments discuss what to do with waste, a "green" cleaning industry has emerged, with its own experts, engineers, and technicians. In the word of World Bank urban development specialists Sameh Wahba and Silpa Kaza:

> It makes economic sense to properly manage waste. Uncollected waste and poorly disposed waste have significant health and environmental impacts. The cost of addressing these impacts is many times higher than the cost of developing and operating simple, adequate waste management systems. Solutions exist and we can help countries get there.[23]

The geopolitics of clean/dirty draws a line between areas of dirtiness—characterized by disease, "unsustainable" birth rates, violence against women, crime, and gangs—and areas of cleanliness, which are heavily policed and where children can safely play, women can walk freely at night, and streets are occasionally closed to

traffic to allow shopping, dining, and other leisure activities. The clean/dirty division is connected to the militarization and gentrification of cities, with poor people of color blamed for their innate dirtiness and driven out of their neighborhoods in order to make the city "clean."

Decolonizing Cleaning/Caring and the Politics of Solidarity

Neoliberal and "green" solutions remain blind and deaf to the political history of waste, to the laying-waste perpetrated by racism, and to the role of black and brown women. There are many points to be made here, but I will just focus on the question of time. In her fascinating essay "We Have Always Been Post-Anthropocene: The Anthropocene Counter-Factual," Claire Colebrook writes that the Anthropocene concerns two clashing temporalities: one that opens humans to the scale of geological time, and another that draws them back to the scale of human agency and human historical forces.[24] But are these the only temporalities we can think of? If we look beyond the temporalities imposed on indigenous and racialized communities—who have their own conceptions of time—what do we see? Let me try to trace some other temporalities: The time needed to clean the world, to repair what has been broken by slavery and colonialism, which is itself being broken by the ravages of capitalism—so much damage, so many wounds, so many ruins (what Colebrook calls the geological impact of humans—but as we know, not all humans have an equal geological impact). The time taken by women of color to care for their own families, to clean and cook for their own families, and then to commute to the homes of middle class families and clean their houses, care for their world. The time taken for the production of capitalist goods, and the temporality that this production imposes on the bodies of women of color (working long hours in polluted factories, barely eating, having no time to go to bathroom or take care of themselves during menstruation). The time

to bring the waste produced by the Global North to the Global South. The fact that none of this work is ever really finished because somewhere, something is being broken, damaged, wounded.

The time for decolonial caring/cleaning (for reparation), for caring and cleaning what has been laid to waste in the past, clashes with the accelerated time of neoliberalism.

As we try to clean/repair the wounds of the past, we must also clean/repair the wounds that are being inflicted today, but whose consequences are either spatialized elsewhere (Puerto Rico, Haiti, Mozambique) or imposed on communities that relegated to the dirty enclaves of the Global North (Louisiana, working class neighborhoods of color). As we repair the past we must simultaneously repairing the current damage that increases the vulnerability to death of millions of people in the Global South. The past is our present, and it within this mixed temporality that futurity can be imagined. The long history of laying waste is racialized, as Kathryn Yussoff has remarked in her book *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*:

> If the Anthropocene proclaims a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities, it does so in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernization and capitalism.[25]

Let me conclude with an example that shows how cleaning/caring can be an emancipatory practice when it is concerned with building solidarity and protecting each other from manufactured vulnerability rather than with cleaning up waste. When I was in Chennai in March 2018,

I saw an exhibition titled "Labour: Workers of the World …
Relax!" curated by a young Dalit named C. P. Krishnapriya.
Writing about the exhibition, Krishnapriya explained that
"labour itself had to be looked at critically, beyond what
was in the Western anthropological representation of
colonial photo archives and in the valorized
post-independence representation." The show was "a call
for collective responsibility," she stated. Among the pieces
being shown, I was keenly interested in a series of works
on women who clean the Chennai railway station. Hanging
next to these works were three sheets of paper on which a
young Dalit man had written:

> that older woman that you speak about, who cleans
> human faeces, i write taking her to be one of my
> family, my grandfather.
>
> cleaning faeces is not an ordinary thing. for this, you
> require medical studies, like MBBS;
>
> with bare hands, my grandfather cleans human
> faeces, that he did, to such an extent, that it is soaked
> in the lines of his hand, soaked like blood in blood.
>
> in the night, with the same hands, he would feed my
> father, with the same hands, he himself would eat.
> With all this, getting habituated to it, because of that,
> my father also had no hesitation in cleaning faeces,
> my father also did the faeces cleaning …
>
> in my view, more than honoring that women [who
> clean faeces], i think we should show that, like
> everyone else, she is equal;
>
> 1. woman should stop cleaning faeces, everyone
> should clean their own faeces themselves
>
> 2. or else, we all should join with the women and clean
> human faeces. like that, through doing this way, that
> women can be one of us, as equal, not only by saying it
> by words of mouth but by feeling it.

X

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1
Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (South End Press, 1983) *.*

2
See Harry Fortuna, "Seeking Eternal Life, Silicon Valley Is Solving for Death," *Quartz*, November 8, 2017 https://qz.com /1123164/seeking-eternal-life-sili con-valley-is-solving-for-death/ ; Adam Gabbat," Is Silicon Valley's Quest for Immortality a Fate Worse than Death?" *The Guardian* , February 23, 2019 http s://www.theguardian.com/techn ology/2019/feb/22/silicon-valley- immortality-blood-infusion-gene-t herapy ; Joanna Zylinska, *The End of Man: A Feminist Counterapocalypse* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

3
I acknowledge that men of color are doing the dirty job of cleaning as well—digital waste, ships, nuclear facilities, factories, warehouses—but women of color are the backbone of this work.

4
Michael McIntyre and Heidi J. Nast, "Bio(necro)polis: Marx, Surplus Populations, and the Spatial Dialectics of *Re*production and 'Race,'" *Antipode* 43, no. 5 (2011): 1464–88.

5
McIntyre and Nast, "Bio(necro)polis," 1468.

6
McIntyre and Nast, "Bio(necro)polis," 1471.

7
See the inspiring struggle of home care workers in New York City https://aintiawomancampaig n.wordpress.com/ . See also the struggle of "anganwadi" workers in India (an anganwadi is a rural child care center). They perform essential cleaning/caring but are not paid wages, only an "honorarium": "At the anganwadis, children are served meals and taught songs, the alphabet and basic hygiene. In deprived regions, these meals are a lifeline for malnourished children. Besides, they provide meals to 9 lakh pregnant and lactating women and have programs for 3–4 lakh adolescent girls ... The government order states that it is necessary 'in the public interest' to prohibit strikes in the essential services provided by anganwadi workers, their helpers and the women who run

mini-anganwadis. It points out that these workers are engaged in addressing health, nutrition, early learning and development needs of young children as well as pregnant and lactating women" ht tps://timesofindia.indiatimes.com /city/mumbai/state-bans-strikes- by-anganwadi-workers-invokes-e ssential-services-maintenance-ac t/articleshow/63343113.cms .

8
"Bécassine" was a name derived from the French word for a bird, but was also a way to describe someone who is easily fooled.

9
Quoted in Hanna Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2019), 103.

10
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11
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Daniel R. Quiles

Railways Are the Future: ABTE Against Neoliberalism

The Edmondson railway ticket was invented in 1836, and entered general use on the British railways in the 1840s. Thomas Edmondson, a cabinetmaker and inventor, patented a machine that could produce a thousand serial-numbered tickets at a time, each 57 by 30.5 by .79 millimeters, from a larger sheet of cardboard. Edmondson's machine placed the human hand at one remove from the cutting of the ticket, standardizing an emblem of modernized, accelerated movement. Countries linked to British industry in the latter half of the nineteenth century adopted his system. Argentina used Edmondson tickets, along with their patented production machines, from the 1870s until 1995, at which time they were made obsolete by paper tickets.

As historian Sarah Lloyd has observed, the ticket both predates and anticipates modernity. "Crucial," she writes, "was the ticket's potential to flow, to encapsulate and then release information, access, possession, or chance." In eighteenth-century Britain, the handmade paper, metal, or bone ticket was ubiquitous in government services, church outreach, and entertainment; it was an object that "intensified and shaped social interactions."[1] For Lloyd, owing to their three-dimensional material presence, "they stood in for people and things; they materialized knowledge and experience; they pattered behavior and convention."[2] Early modern tickets also had a close relationship to money, functioning as IOUs since the "seaman's ticket" that allowed the British military to defer wages during wartime. Distinctively thick and durable, Edmondson tickets became collectors' items as countries retired them from service in the 1980s and 1990s.

ABTE (Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson), Custom Edmondson Railway Tickets, 1998-2013. Courtesy of Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson.

In 1998, artist Patricio Larrambebere founded Agrupación

ABTE (Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson), Alegre, 2013. Intervention in an Argentinian railway track, November 23-24, 2013. Courtesy of Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson.

Boletos Tipo Edmondson (ABTE) with Javier Martínez Jacques, then a sociology student, as a self-described "quasi-fictional society" dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of Edmondson tickets and the material culture of the Argentinean railways more generally.[3] Larrambebere remained ABTE's most consistent member as others joined (Ezequiel Semo in 2003 and Javier Barrio, Martín Guerrero, Aldo Petrella, Gachi Rosati, and Alan Semo in 2012). In its initial period of activity between 1998 and 2005, ABTE united a network of Edmondson enthusiasts, exhibiting various ticket collections as installation art. The group was also able to rescue several antiquated ticket-printing machines from demolition.[4] These were refurbished and reconfigured to produce new tickets with ABTE's unique designs. In addition, the collective carried out interventions in train stations, such as their *Cortes Pictóricos* (Pictorial Cuts, 2002). The "cuts" consisted of the partial repainting and restoration of signs and walls of stations in and along former commuter rails of Buenos Aires (and more recently its provinces). Repainting only sections of these stations, with careful attention to the original paint colors and graphic design, had a striking effect: it revealed the degree to which the rest of the station was in disrepair. These actions drew inspiration

from the Situationist International's strategy of détournement: the "rerouting" of found elements in the urban environment, including transportation infrastructure, toward revolutionary ends. As the SI described it in 1958, détournement is "a method which reveals the wearing out and loss of importance of the old cultural spheres."[5] ABTE's project, however, might be described as "rétournement": the restoration, however partial, of places that have "worn out and lost importance." This provisional "return" of neglected equipment or sites to their previous condition does not insure their return to wider use, but it does restore and insist upon their visibility.

The aging and obsolescence of Argentina's railway patrimony in the 1990s was neither an inevitable nor a neutral process. It was the direct result of the privatization of the nationalized rail corporation Ferrocarriles Argentinos (FA), initiated in 1991 by Carlos Saúl Menem, president between 1989 and 1999. Initiated in response to Menem's drastic transformations of Argentina's economy and transportation system, ABTE's conservation of the disappearing material culture of the railways was equal parts archival work and protest. Its use of outmoded

printing and transportation technologies was not a symptom of scarcity in a Latin American country, but a reminder of a functional, state-run transportation infrastructure that was also a source of employment for thousands. ABTE aimed to activate the potential of railway patrimony for the present and the future, modeling confrontations with the past that intertwine research, collective action, and social advocacy.

This essay situates ABTE's formation in economic and art-historical contexts, while also posing the question of what lessons could be drawn today from the group's activities. ABTE received a retrospective at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires in 2013, yet has rarely been addressed in the international field, despite the recent explosion of interest in Latin American modern and contemporary art, on the one hand, and the "global contemporary," on the other.[6] In reflecting on the group's relative invisibility outside of Argentina, I hope to point to blind spots in our existing platforms and narratives for Latin American contemporary art, particularly when it comes to local frames of reference. Indeed, it is in the thoroughly local case that we might find parallels to other ravages of the neoliberal turn that David Harvey, among others, dates between 1978 and 1980.[7] In this light, ABTE's declaration that "railways are the future" is not triumphalist. Rather, it sounds a warning for other professions and geographical contexts, from laborers in increasingly postindustrial societies to the intellectual precariat.
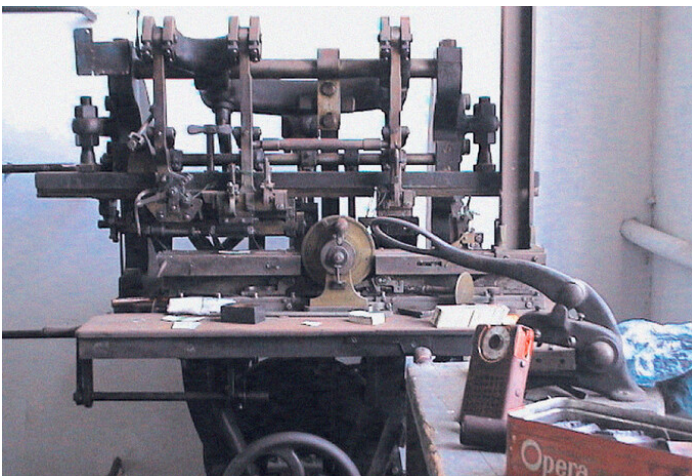
Antique Edmondson ticket-printing machine, reclaimed prior to demolition by ABTE (Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson). Courtesy of Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson.

A Casualty of Crisis

Argentina was the world's first developing economy to privatize its train services. The country's railroads originally began as an national investment in 1855.

Beginning in 1870, England invested in and gradually acquired them—as was the case with many railways throughout South America.[8] By 1914, Argentina's rail system was the tenth largest in the world, with a dense network of branches connecting Buenos Aires, a federalized capital from 1880, with the provinces. Between 1946 and 1948, President Juan Domingo Perón nationalized all six of the original train lines. His reclamation of this massive network for the country's exclusive profit was one of his major achievements, and remained a symbol of Peronism's alliance with the working class.[9] In 1990, before privatization, Ferrocarriles Argentinos boasted thirty thousand kilometers of rail tracks. It was the largest railroad in Latin America, and the sixth largest worldwide, with assets totaling $8 billion ($16 billion adjusted for 2019), making it one of the largest corporations in the country. It was "vertically integrated, with in-house units for construction, maintenance, operations, marketing, and real estate, as well as horizontally integrated, offering freight transport, intercity passenger transport, and suburban passenger transport in BA (i.e. commuter rail service)," according to a 1997 *World Development* report.[10] FA also had a powerful union that could, and periodically did, bring the country to a halt with strike actions.

Menem entered office in the midst of a hyperinflation crisis resulting from the reckless financial policies of the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Process of National Reorganization), the economic and repressive measures put in place by the dictatorship that ruled Argentina between 1976 and 1983. Under the junta, President Jorge Rafael Videla worked with his economy minister, José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, a follower of Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics, to radically open the Argentinean economy to investment, while exploding national debt through Wall Street and International Monetary Fund loans. With the *tablita cambiaria* (currency exchange board) in 1978, Martínez de Hoz overvalued the peso at the expense of the country's national debt—a predecessor of Menem's 1990 "pegging" of the peso to the dollar. The temporarily strong currency became known as *plata dulce* (sweet money), due to its purchasing power abroad.[11] In February 1981, an unavoidable devaluation sent the peso plummeting, Martínez de Hoz into retirement, and Argentina into the ranks of Latin American countries trapped in what has since become known as the "lost decade" of IMF-mandated austerity measures.[12] In December 1983, the country transitioned to democracy with an external debt of $46 billion, nearly 80 percent of its GDP.[13] President Raúl Alfonsín attempted to ameliorate this damage during his five years in power through a range of short-term strategies; for example, he initially suspended payments to the IMF so that funds could be directed toward public services. Inflation rates continued to increase, however, and by early 1985, with the rate at 626 percent, the country was held in violation of IMF austerity targets, meaning that it could receive no further loans. Economy minister Bernardo Grinspun was fired,

and his successor Juan Vital Sourrouille initiated a currency shift from the peso to the "austral" on June 15, 1985. From its introduction, the austral rapidly decreased in value until 1989, when a thousand-austral bill was worth seventy dollars; the currency was retired from circulation on December 31, 1991.[14] In 1988, Alfonsín lowered wage increases to 4 percent after salaries had already diminished by 42.7 percent during the first five post-dictatorship years. The Confederación General del Trabajo, the country's oldest and largest union, organized a series of strikes in response.

Menem, a Peronist, took over on July 8, 1989 with consumer prices having risen 3610 percent from the past year.[15] He passed the Ley de Reforma del Estado (Law to Reform the State Sector) on August 17, 1989. This law paved the way for the privatization of myriad government-owned services over the course of the 1990s, including mail, telecommunications, oil, gas, electricity, water, airlines, and the railways.[16] He also pardoned thirty-nine key figures of the dictatorship, including military presidents Videla, Leopoldo Galtieri, and Roberto Viola. According to Vicente Palermo, Menemismo's shift to "policies one can classify as productivist rather than distributionary" spelled "the end of Peronism as a populist movement" (although this association was arguably restored during the Kirchner era).[17] Economists had designated Ferrocarriles Argentinos an SOE, or major "state-owned enterprise," which left it particularly vulnerable to privatization.[18] By 1993, FA was a decimated version of its former self, with 1 percent of its previous employees. Because of the destructive effects on both railway workers and the railways themselves, Juan Carlos Cena describes the privatization process as " *el ferrocidio* "—a kind of assassination.[19] FA employees who lost their jobs received one month's salary for each year of service, with no maximum. The average worker had spent twenty years in service, and cost the government approximately $10,000 per worker—sums paid out, unprecedentedly, by the World Bank. Menem divided the vast railway network into sectors, to be managed separately by different companies, drastically reducing service outside metropolitan centers.

The Argentinean economy began a precipitous decline in 1998, shrinking 28 percent by 2002 due to the peso's inevitable devaluation. In November 2001, in advance of the IMF suspending its next loan, there was a run on banks, leading to the "corralito" of December 2, which froze all bank accounts for twelve months and allowed only minute weekly withdrawals. Between December 19 and 21, 2001, a broad section of the public took to the streets to protest. Menem's successor, Fernando de la Rúa, promptly resigned, fleeing the Casa Rosada in a helicopter; some thirty-nine people were ultimately killed by police and security forces. The historic depression technically lasted until 2002, but its aftereffects are still felt today in continuing economic instability.[20]

Patricio Larrambebere, La Paternal (FCGSM), 1996. Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

From Representation to Intervention

Patricio Larrambebere began collecting vintage Edmondson tickets in 1993, while still working as a representational painter. His cityscapes of working-class neighborhoods and rail yards in Buenos Aires Province often featured portraits of friends in the foreground, as in *Ciro y Miki en Remedios de Escalada* (1993). María Guillermina Fressoli regards this dimension of personal recollection as a continuing thread throughout Larrambebere's work that sometimes conflicts with that of collective memory.[21] In 1996, he abandoned the figure in favor of visual imagery of rail yards and stations, their platforms, and signage. His line became more precise, recalling Charles Sheeler's Precisionism as well as the austere graphic novels of Chris Ware in the late 1980s and 1990s. In a series of paintings of signage from different rail stations, Larrambebere selected examples from all six of the different original lines nationalized by Perón: *Liniers (FCDFS)* (1996) corresponds to the Domingo Faustino Sarmiento line, which was almost completely halted after privatization. *La Paternal (FCGSM)* (1996) was of the General José de San Martín line, which went from Retiro Station to points west. In the painting, a line of multicolored, ambiguous protrusions peek over the wall, where FA's logo is visible on a railcar. They suggest picket signs, a protest hidden from view. *Doctor Antonio Saenz*

(FCGB) (1997) is of Ferrocarril General Belgrano, the most extensive rail network in Argentina, which at one time connected Tucumán to Córdoba and extended all the way to Bolivia. The station sign for *Victoria (FCGBM)* (1997), on the General Bartolomé Mitre line, hovers ambiguously, both a believable detail of an actual site and an ironic invocation of the spurious "victory" of privatization. An advertisement below the platform promises "freedom of economic action and unlimited rides when you obtain an *abono*," the multi-ride passes that replaced Edmondsons. To its right, a fragment of another advertisement reads "Menos que Cero," a reference to a Buenos Aires rock band for which Larrambebere once designed a record cover. The group's name derives from the 1977 Elvis Costello song "Less Than Zero," a condemnation of British fascist Oswald Mosley's attempt to whitewash his past in a 1975 television interview.

In its layered references and cool observations of changes in the urban and social fabric, Larrambebere's early work reaches back further still, to the socially conscious beginnings of painterly modernism—Courbet, Manet, and Pissarro. There had been a tradition of Argentinian artists using representation as a form of political commentary. In the early 1960s, Grupo Nueva Figuración broke with the previous generation's abstraction movements (from the concrete art of Arte Concreto-Invención and Grupo Madí to the informalist experiments of Arte Nuevo) by reintroducing the figure in collage and assemblage works that made reference to class stratification and political instability. In this period, the Peronist Party was kept off the ballot and the military overthrew two democratically elected presidents, in 1962 and 1966.[22] During the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976–83) a number of artists who practiced conceptualism in the late 1960s turned to neo-surrealist or hyperrealist painting to obliquely address state repression.[23] Fressoli argues that Larrambebere's paintings collapse the history of the Argentinean railways onto its present, producing a "tension" that amounts to a contemporary manifestation of "history painting."[24] In the 2000s, Larrambebere would similarly derive paintings from archives of visual and material culture related to Pan American World Airways, the Malvinas (Falklands) War, and Guyana, in addition to further railway paintings.[25]

Larrambebere's concerns as an artist informed those of ABTE as a whole, and remain inextricable from those of the group. As first conceived with Martínez Jacques, the "society" of two reported on its activities and Edmondson collections in "Bolezines" that would fold to the dimensions of a single ticket. One of the artists' inspirations was the 1968 album *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society*, which similarly harks to then-disappearing modes of London life.[26] Early interventions included *24 Reflexiones sobre Nuestro Presente Ferroviario* (Twenty-Four Thoughts on our

Contemporary Railways, 1999–2000), a series of stickers that adapted the font and graphics of Trenes de Buenos Aires, the private company that had acquired the Buenos Aires commuter rail. The stickers were affixed, guerrilla-style, to walls and objects in various stations. Their messages alternated between direct protests such as "La cultura no es eficiencia" (Culture is not efficiency) and wry witticisms, as in a sticker left on a long-dead station clock: "Los trenes andan a horario ... y el reloj del anden?" (The trains run on time ... and what does the clock run on?). A series of videos detailed the group's actions as well as archival footage, from 1995, of the ticket-making machines used to produce some of the final Edmondsons in circulation. For *Máquinas Expendedoras Humanas de Boletos* (Human Ambulant Ticketing Machines), a project in two versions, the artists distributed Edmondson tickets in cyborg *lucha libre* masks on June 22, 2001, which was designated "Booking Clerk's Day" (the anniversary of Edmondson's death). The booking clerk was a particular focus of ABTE's early interventions, given that at many of the different railway lines, this job—the human point of contact with the customer, the arbiter of who could enter the station and travel the line, and, of course, the distributor of tickets—was the only one that had not been significantly reduced. The Human Ambulant Ticketing Machine was a worker transformed into the machine designed to replace them, insisting on the recirculation of outmoded tickets. These interventions at stations were accompanied by gallery-based installations, as in the earliest, *Ferrocarriles Argentinos*, at the Museo Nacional Ferroviario in 1998, and *Sede Temporario* (Temporary Headquarters) for ABTE at Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires in 2002, the walls of which were constructed out of the larger sheets used to cut tickets. Other artists, including Eduardo Molinari, participated in organizing the many tickets on hand, both originals and ABTE's new designs, into new configurations. Molinari had recently initiated his analogous *Archivo Caminante* (Walking Archive) project (2001–present), which combined meticulous research in national archives with photographs and objects sourced from walks around Buenos Aires.[27]

One of the first of ABTE's restorations in 2001 consisted in repainting the decrepit Coghlan Station in its original yellow, in honor of its 110th anniversary. A performance complete with a sandwich man informed the public about the site's history. New nameplates were added to the station to replace those removed in 1998 amidst the transfer to private ownership—the artists called this a "typographical action." When, in 2005, Néstor Kirchner formed Unidad de Gestión Operativa Ferroviaria de Emergencia (UGOFE) to temporarily renationalize some of the worst-run railway lines, ABTE critiqued this half-measure by repainting several station signs only halfway, for the series *los nomencladores mita y mita de UGOFE* (the half-and-half UGOFE nameboards), some of which produced wordplays (for example, Caseros into CasEROS). Here, painting was displaced from the canvas to the physical features of the stations themselves—from

representation to a kind of signaling device. It also shifted registers to a more quotidian sort of "painting," that of refurbishment and maintenance—in other words, painting as labor (albeit unpaid in this case). Both Larrambebere and ABTE's projects insisted on a place for painting in Argentinean contemporary art, but for ABTE the practice palpably shifted from the labor-of-art to art-as-labor. In the latter, this identification might be romantic or problematic were it not for the fact that it is better described as a haunting, a ghost-labor in the place of absent workers. This component of ABTE's activities became more explicit when Ezequiel Semo joined in 2003 and the group expanded its research and incorporation of historical uniforms for interventions.

For the retrospective at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Larrambebere summed up the group's aim as the restoration of visibility to that which had been lost in the privatization of not only a material culture but specific modes of artisanal labor:

> What was it that drew ABTE to the street, or, more precisely, the territory of the railways? It was a reaction to the shameless Tupac-Amaru-ization and subsequent concessioning of Ferrocarriles Argentinos in the mid-nineties ... It began to appear in geography, facilities, in the state of the cars, in the stations: the absence of those who worked, and embodied, the railroad ... We were losing all that had been ours. And in this desire to cling to that experience, we began to internalize the labor of those who now lacked their previously essential roles for the railways: the artisans ...To restore the presence of the artisanal, taking up its tools and crafts, was a form of action amidst the degradation of our quotidian landscape.[28]

Postcrisis: Nostalgia and Collectivity

Larrambebere emerged as an artist when one of the centers of the Argentinean art world was the Galería del Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, directed by Jorge Gumier Maier between 1989 and 1996.[29] Some members of "Grupo Rojas," such as Fabián Burgos and Graciela Hasper, returned to geometric abstraction, one of the early signature styles of Argentinean modernism in the late 1940s, but without the Marxist utopianism of their forbears. Others, such as Marcelo Pombo, embraced a ludic approach to the ready-made: garbage, antique objects, and the cheap new consumer goods that flooded the country after Menem's pegging of the peso to the dollar were collaged on canvases or assembled into sculptures.[30] Larrambebere's interest in trains and overtly working-class imagery might be seen, on the one hand, as an outright rejection of

ABTE (Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson), Mercedes, 2013. Railway intervention, January 6, 2013. Courtesy of Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson.

Grupo Rojas's signature irreverence (using an epithet with homophobic undertones, some critics dubbed the group "Arte Light"). Yet a closer look at Rojas artists such as Sebastián Gordín reveals a respectful fascination with the past that parallels Larrambebere and ABTE. Gordín's *Siete Cinemas* (1995) depict since-demolished buildings from the Odeón film theater chain in miniature. The Buenos Aires version hosted Argentina's first film screening in 1896, and was demolished in 1991 to make room for a parking lot.[31] For Grupo Rojas, the debasement of new commodities and the lost glamour of the old added up to the same message—that a world was being lost amidst neoliberal transformation—at the heart of Larrambebere and ABTE's work.

ABTE preceded and dovetailed with a larger set of artistic responses that art historian Andrea Giunta has designated *poscrisis*: "a period of recuperation with respect to the violence of the most frigid moment between late 2001 and all [of 2002]."[32] These practices emphasized collective action, either in parallel or as direct assistance with other modes of political activism in Argentina during this period. "The studio setting was replaced by the

street," Giunta argues, "and for a time it seemed like the individual artist disappeared, immersed in so many groups. This produced, in a certain mode, a 'collectivization' of artistic practice."[33] Among many other examples, Taller Popular de Serigrafía (Diego Posadas, Mariela Scafati, and Magdalena Jitrik) helped to print T-shirts and posters for street-based protests and the occupation of factories. In 2003, the Eloisa Cartonera project (Javier Barilaro, Washington Cucurto, and Fernanda Laguna) was initiated in the working-class neighborhood of La Boca; the project drew on existing networks of cardboard trash collection to begin a publishing house that sold pirated copies of various books, yielding a newfound business opportunity for some of Buenos Aires's poorest citizens. Demands for economic transparency dovetailed with continued efforts to fully open the books on the Proceso and prosecute its military architects; groups such as H.I.J.O.S. (formed 1995) and Grupo de Arte Callejero supported street actions to promote awareness of the disappeared and sites of forgotten state violence in the 1970s. Under Néstor Kirchner, these efforts bore fruit, with Menem's pardons being lifted in in 2006 and Videla returning to prison, where he later died, in 2007. Grupo Etcétera (formed 1998, various members) carried out street-based "Escraches," in which they mocked former military officers and Menem-era bureaucrats alike. With *Operación BANG!* (2005), the group renamed itself Fundación de la Internacional Errorista, mocking Bush-era "errors" in counterterrorism policy with a fake "invasion" of the beach at Mar del Plata on the occasion of the US president's visit for the Summit of the Americas. Police mistook the performance for a real "insurgent" attack.

In their collective formations, postcrisis practices in Argentina paralleled larger changes in social movements towards self-organization, and *horizontalidad*, or horizontality. Marina Sirtin defines horizontality as "a form of direct decision making that rejects hierarchy and works as an ongoing process."[34] Horizontalism and self-organization imply modes of production that no longer depend on the government for help—although some such groups received funding from Néstor and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's successive administrations.[35] ABTE adapted two horizontalist characteristics: leaderless organization and the performance of extra-governmental services. Yet ABTE's labor was artistic precisely insofar as it was no longer necessary, existing in the breach between past and present. The group sidestepped a neoliberal reading of horizontalism as proof of the "resilience" of groups left to subsist without government support, which ironically justifies further reduction of state services.[36] It also refuses any reading of "social practice" as proof that contemporary art might supplement development or services that a state could provide.

In 2012, a reconstituted and expanded version of ABTE began to refurbish increasingly remote, abandoned

stations in the provinces of Buenos Aires, taking entire days and sharing *asados* at the sites. One station, Vagues, was converted into a "Center for Railway Interpretation," with works donated by the artists—a museum for trains that will never arrive. As Javier Barrio's recollection of the group's 2012 repair of the Dr. Domingo Cabred station attests, these field trips could be perceptually disorienting:

> When I went with ABTE to restore the sign to the Cabred station I had a paranormal experience. The eight-hour work day in which the poster was painted became a distorted trip. The chromatic contrast of the fresh paint against the deteriorated and twisted poster produced a strange sensation, as if we were making up a dead person ... These days a hundred kilometers from the city were an act of will against this slow erasure that had lasted about forty years. The painting, whose slow evaporation by the action of the sun had faded the letters, the frame and the background of the poster, was restored within a period of eight hours. Sitting down to observe this process is almost a lysergic experience.[37]

ABTE's post-2012 projects were not undertaken to protest a particular crisis or regime. Rather, they model history-work as a way of life—a mode of labor outside of late capital—lingering on in its destructive wake.
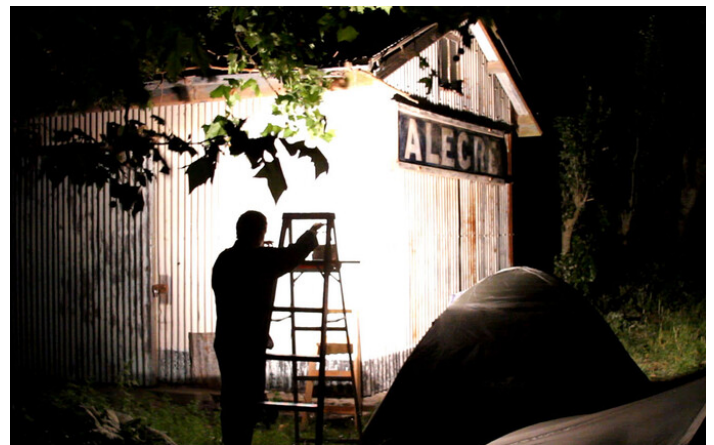
ABTE (Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson), Alegre, 2013. Intervention in an Argentinian railway track, November 23-24, 2013. Courtesy of Agrupación Boletos Tipo Edmondson.

Value and Memory

By way of conclusion, we can return to the Edmondson train tickets, the initial material foundation of ABTE's work of conservation and production. In the group's

installations, the Edmondson served as an irreducible unit with consistent features, akin to paper money or coins—yet with its value destabilized. Being out of circulation prior to the formation of the group, Edmondson tickets had instead become collectibles, their value ostensibly ranging from worthless to something well exceeding their original cost. By then making their own custom Edmondsons, ABTE added the open-ended exchange value of the artwork to the mix. When these original and newly produced Edmondsons were exhibited in sites where they formerly conferred access and transport, past, present and future were collaged atop one another, as in ABTE's unpaid, unsolicited maintenance work. This is an expanded notion of collage—a "historical avant-garde" technique invoked by the appearance of forbears such as Kurt Schwitters on ABTE's doctored Edmondsons. ABTE's mode of collage, however, recontextualized artifacts as well as artifactual labor, lending them new uses. The tickets—and by extension the recovered ticket-making machines, the vintage uniforms and paraphernalia of railway patrimony, and most of all the fired workers in absentia—served to haunt the dire conditions and stations of 2001 and 2002. ABTE's rétournement fought against both amnesia and any uncritical "return" to the material past. In this sense, ABTE corresponds to Svetlana Boym's notion of "reflective" rather than "restorative" nostalgia: "Reflective nostalgia ... can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another." Restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, involves a kind of denial of the present, and the dead-serious belief that an unproblematic past can be fully recovered. "Any project of exact renovation," Boym writes, "arouses dissatisfaction and suspicion; it flattens history and reduces the past to a façade, to quotations of historic styles. The work of memory resides elsewhere: 'The renovated "old stones" become places for transit between the ghosts of the past and the imperatives of the present.'"[38] Ultimately, ABTE's reclamation of the obsolete unfolded with an eye toward the future. It was the group's hope that heightened consciousness about what had happened to the Argentinean railways might lead to real policy changes, and reinvestment in the legitimate culture of work that FA had once facilitated.

"Los años K," as the Kirchner years (2003–15) are sometimes called, saw significant economic recovery amidst the lingering specter of foreign debt, as well as the partial or full renationalization of many previously privatized services, including Correo Argentino (the postal service) in 2003, Aguas Argentinas (water) in 2006, Aerolineas Argentinas and $30 billion in pension funds in 2008, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales, or YPF (energy) in 2012, and Ferrocarriles Argentinos in 2015.[39] The latter move was precipitated by several tragedies that highlighted the liabilities of private ownership of formerly public services. On October 20, 2010, a student activist, Mariano Ferreyra, was killed by Confederación General del Trabajo–affiliated, Peronist Unión Ferroviaria supporters in

Buenos Aires while protesting with laid-off workers from the Roca Line.[40] On February 23, 2012, fifty-one people were killed and 702 injured when a Sarmiento Line commuter train failed to brake as it entered Once station in Buenos Aires, slamming into the restraint barrier at twenty-six kilometers an hour and obliterating the locomotive and first several coach cars. It was worst rail accident in Argentina in thirty years, one of several between 2011 and 2013.[41] Larrambebere's painting *Once* (2012), based on a pixelated digital photograph of the wreck, commemorates the event at the disturbing remove of online journalism—a markedly different register of representation than his paintings of stations between 1996 and 1997.

In 2014, with Cristina Kirchner taking a stand against "vulture funds," Argentina again defaulted on IMF loan payments—a sign of more trouble to come. Part of a worldwide swing to the right over the last four years, Mauricio Macri became president of Argentina on December 17, 2015. One of his first moves was to devalue the peso, allowing it to fall 30 percent to once again open the country to foreign investment.[42] At the end of 2017, he passed a pension reform that led to mass protests, and their wider privatization is believed to be on the table in the coming elections.[43] All along, inflation has soared and the economy has shrunk as an economic crisis has emerged and deepened. In September 2018, Macri negotiated a new, $57.1 billion loan from the IMF—the largest in its history, making a commitment to a zero deficit for 2019 that guarantees more austerity measures. He has sold government stakes in electricity companies, privatized the country's recreation centers and threatened to reprivatize the airline following one strike action. Rather than discuss the privatization of Ferrocarriles Argentinos outright, he has closed several lines and had the tracks lifted, leaving the land beneath open to potential sale. Unsurprisingly, in this same period, ABTE has lost its access to the Museo Nacional Ferroviario where its para-institutional operations first began.

On February 1 of this year, ABTE performed a new action at a fully functioning Coghlan Station on its 128th anniversary. Signs were repainted and Larrambebere, clad in overalls and a vintage cap, lectured the public via megaphone. "Coghlan, si, colonia no. Viva Coghlan." Given the highly local specificity of ABTE's reference points and histories, the question could be raised whether it is even compatible with any model of the "global contemporary," or need be. That said, the group certainly fits within a more nuanced and internationalized discussion of so-called "social practice," which has in the last twenty years gone by various monikers including "relational aesthetics," "service aesthetics," and "social engagement," among others, and been celebrated as a global phenomenon.[44] But, however much a formation like ABTE could be compared with the likes of Thomas Hirschhorn or Theaster Gates, its significance can only be appreciated in terms that are well researched and appreciated from the

point of view of the local, rather than as an Argentinean entry in a homogenized global trend. In a promising sign, the Pacific Standard Time exhibition "Talking to Action: Art, Pedagogy, and Activism in the Americas" recently examined "dialogically-driven, community-based art making" throughout the region.[45] The show included Eduardo Molinari as well as Iván Puig Domene and Andrés Padilla Domene's *Sonda de Exploración Ferroviaria Tripulada* (Abandoned Railways Exploration Probe, 2010), or *SEFT-1*, a futuristic vehicle built to navigate railways abandoned by privatization in the artists' home country of Mexico. The concept closely recalls a similar vehicle conceived by ABTE, the *Railcar Viable* (2005), "a machine for generating thought and relationship[s]." While playing on the aesthetics of science fiction rather than nostalgia, the echoes of ABTE's poetics and approach are a reminder of the relevance of railways for multiple afterworlds of neoliberalism. While such a practice is unlikely to ever break into the global art market, ABTE succeeded in its original goals of activating the past and insisting on the outmoded, maintaining their visibility and value. It brings to mind a reflection by Eduardo Molinari, in a recent interview about his own work: "What are the memories you'd be interested in preserving? What is valuable to remember in order to pass on to new generations? ... Does the free circulation of these memories exist today?"[46]

X

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1
Sarah Lloyd, "Ticketing the British Eighteenth Century: 'A thing … never heard of before,'" *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 4 (2013): 844. The earliest prototypes of steam-driven locomotives were produced at the end of the eighteenth century, with the British railways—initially as short local rail links run by separate private companies—beginning operations in the 1830s. In 1840, the Act for Regulating Railways placed these private companies under a minimum form of centralized government control, although a bill to nationalize the system in 1844 was not passed, with this only taking place much later, during World War I.

2
Lloyd, "Ticketing the British Eighteenth Century," 860. Lloyd argues that in the nineteenth century, it was precisely the use of tickets for "railways and trams" that "weighted down" their adept fluidity across culture and "social contexts." Edmondson's invention in particular, with its removal of the human hand from the process of ticket production, would seem to support Lloyd's contention that in modernity, a "rage for system" began to win out over a certain informality and heterogeneous use.

3
The idea that ABTE is in part or in whole a "fictional" entity has attended writing on the group from its origins through its 2013 retrospective at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires. Yet this deployment of fiction should not be confused with contemporaneous strategies premised on "games with the truth," as in the "parafictional" practices identified by Carrie Lambert-Beatty. While ABTE was not any sort of officially existing body, it did serve to connect actual ticket collectors and railway enthusiasts, just as its unsanctioned interventions at railway sites nonetheless took the form of material alterations to station infrastructure. See Agustín Diez Fischer, "Viajes Ferroviarios con Boletos de Carton," in *57 × 30,5 mm.: Quince Años de Cultura Ferroviaria ABTE* , exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: MAMBA, 2015), 61; Andrea Giunta, *Poscrisis: Arte Argentino Después del 2001* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2009), 169; and Carrie Lambert, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October*, no. 129 (Summer 2009): 51–84.

4
Valeria González, *En Busca del Sentido Perdido: 10 Proyectos de Arte Argentino, 1998–2008* , exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Papers Editores, 2010), 20–33.

5
Situationist International, "Definitions," in *Situationist International Anthology* , ed. Ken Knabb (Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 51–52.

6
In the United States, institutional interest in modern and contemporary Latin American art has been most recently exemplified by the Getty Foundation's "Pacific Standard Time: LA / LA" initiative, which opened some sixty simultaneous exhibitions in the Fall of 2017, among many other examples. For an eloquent critique of the "pseudomorphism" that frequently attends "global contemporary" exhibitions and paradoxically subsumes non-Western art under Western paradigms, see Kaira M. Cabañas, *Learning From Madness: Brazilian Modernism and Global Contemporary Art* (University of Chicago Press, 2019), 143–46.

7
These years correspond to the implementation of neoliberal shock tactics in nations around the world, but Harvey also points to the key date of 1947, when Friedrich von Hayek created the Mont Pelerin Society in the company of Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and others. See David Harvey, *A Short History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 1 & 20. Harvey's understanding of late capitalism's colonization of public space is also directly relevant to ABTE's railway interventions, particularly his understanding of "relational space," in which "there is no such thing as space or time outside of the processes that define them." See: David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Toward a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (Verso, 2006), 123.

8
See Mario Justo López and Jorge Eduardo Waddell, *Nueva Historia del Ferrocarril en la Argentina: 150 Años de Política Ferroviaria* (Buenos Aires: Lumiere, 2007), 157–76.

9
See Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class,* *1946–1976* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).

10
Ravi Ramamurti, "Testing the Limits of Privatization: Argentinean Railroads," *World Development* , vol. 25, no. 12 (1997): 1976.

11
Even before the military coup, Isabel Perón's rule was compromised by economic shock measures known as the "Rodrigazo" (after then-economy minister Celestino Rodrigo), instituted on June 4, 1975: a 160 percent devaluation of currency for the commercial exchange rate; a 100 percent increase in utility and transportation prices; a 180 percent rise in the price of fuel; and a 45 percent increase in wages (which was insufficient to boost the "real wage" in relationship to the new rate of exchange). The inflation rate climbed to 35 percent per month, leading to a general strike, instability, and fertile terrain for the military coup that followed in March 1976. See David Rock, *Argentina 1516–1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (University of California Press, 1987), 365–66.

12
See Raúl García Heras, "The Return of International Finance and the Martínez de Hoz Plan in Argentina, 1976–1978," *Latin American Research Review* 53, no. 4 (2018): 799–814. Martínez de Hoz was indicted for human rights abuses in 1988 and pardoned by Menem, along with the rest of the junta, in 1990, leaving him free to return to business. Among other endeavors, he joined the board of Banco General de Negocios, which would later help its clients wire some $30 billion out of the country just before the 2001 economic crisis.

13
See William C. Smith, "Democracy, Distributional Conflicts and Macroeconomic Policymaking in Argentina, 1983-89," *Journal of Interamerican Studies & World Affairs* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 1–43.

14
Osvaldo Soriano, "Living with Inflation," trans. Patricia Owen Steiner, in *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Duke University Press, 2002), 483–85.

15
William C. Smith, "State, Market and Neoliberalism in Post-Transition Argentina: The Menem Experiment," *Journal of Interamerican Studies & World Affairs* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 45–83.

16
See Santiago Duhalde, "Neoliberalismo y Nuevo Modelo Sindical: Los Trabajadores Estatales Durante la Primera Presidencia de Carlos Menem," *Espacio Abierto Venezolano de Sociología* 19, no. 3 (July–September 2010): 417–43; and Alfredo Pucciarelli, *Los Años de Menem: La Construcción del Orden Neoliberal* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2011).

17
Vicente Palermo, "The Origins of *Menemismo* ," in *Peronism and Argentina* , ed. James P. Brennan (SR Books, 1998), 141–76.

18
Ramamurti, "Testing the Limits of Privatization," 1973.

19
See Juan Carlos Cena, *El Ferrocidio* (Buenos Aires: La Rosa Blindada, 2003).

20
See Lucio di Matteo, *El Corralito* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2013).

21
María Guillermina Fressoli, "El Recuerdo como un Problema del Espacio Pictórico en los Paisajes de Patricio Larrambebere," *Hallazgos* 13, no. 25 (September 2015): 147–48.

22
Luis Felipe Noé, "Otra Figuración," in *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* , eds. Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea, exh. cat. (Yale University Press, 2004), 481. See also Patrick Frank, *Painting in a State of Exception: New Figuration in Argentina, 1960–1965* (University Press of Florida, 2016).

23
Artists who made such representational turns during the Proceso include Oscar Bony, Margarita Paksa, Pablo Suárez, and Nicolás García Uriburu. Antonio Berni, a representational painter his entire career, nonetheless produced haunting images in this period that belong in this subgenre. I have written

about Bony's painting at this time; see Daniel R. Quiles, "Between Organism and Sky: Oscar Bony, 1965–1976," *Caiana Journal*, no. 4 (July 2014): 1–14. See also Viviana Usubiaga, *Imágenes Inestables: Artes Visuales, Dictadura y Democracia en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2012).

24
Fressoli, "El Recuerdo como un Problema," 137.

25
For further examples of Larrambebere's work, see his website http://www.patriciolarra mbebere.org/trabajos.php?i=5&i mg=205&cat=1 , which also features a section on ABTE. Ezequiel Semo posts frequent updates on recent ABTE interventions, see https://www.fli ckr.com/photos/ezequielsemo . Further information about the MAMBA retrospective is available here https://www.museomodern o.org/en/exposiciones/abte-asoc iacion-de-boletos-tipo-edmondso n-association-edmondson-tickets .

26
Fischer, "Viajes Ferroviarios con Boletos de Carton," 68.

27
See Teresa Riccardi, " *Archivo Caminante* : Constellations and Performativity," *Afterall*, no. 30 (Summer 2012): 76–85.

28
Patricio Larrambebere, "Artes Visuales, Pintura y Ferrocarril. Edmondsonianismo," in *57 × 30,5 mm.* , 106, my translation.

29
See *Recovering Beauty: The 1990s in Buenos Aires* , ed. Ursula Dávila-Villa, exh. cat. (Blanton Museum of Art, 2011). Although her career was established before the heyday of Rojas, Liliana Maresca should also be mentioned in any discussion of 80s/90s art, the readymade, and critique of *menemismo*. See: María Gainza, ed., *Liliana Maresca* , exh. cat. (Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, 2016).

30
See *Pombo*, ed. Inés Katzenstein (Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo editora, 2006).

31
Sebastián Gordín: Un Extraño Efecto en el Cielo , ed. Victoria Noorthoorn, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 2014), 126–29.

32
Giunta, *Poscrisis*, 19, my translation.

33
Giunta, *Poscrisis*, 55, my translation. Giunta also wrote a short review of ABTE's "temporary headquarters" at Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires in 2003; see ibid., 169–71.

34
Marina Sirtin, *Everyday Revolutions: Horizontalism and Autonomy in Argentina* (Zed Books, 2012), 3. "Horizonality," Sirtin writes, "is a social relationship that implies, as its name suggests, a flat plane upon which to communicate, but it is not only this. *Horizontalidad* implies the use of direct democracy and striving for consensus: processes in which attempts are made so that everyone is heard and new relationships are created. *Horizontalidad* is a new way of relating based in affective politics and against all the implications of 'isms.' It is a dynamic social relationship. It is not an ideology or set of principles that must be met so as to create a new society or new idea. It is a break with these sorts of vertical ways of organizing and relating, and a break that is an opening," ibid., 9. See also Sitrin, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (AK Press, 2006).

35
See Justin McGuirk, *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture* (Verso, 2014), 49–66.

36
Here I am thinking of the numerous reports of the "resilience" of the Puerto Rican people in the wake of Hurricane Maria in 2017, which bore, consciously or unconsciously, the implicit suggestion that this was proof that they did not need help from the US government.

37
Javier Barrio, "Lisergia Ferroviaria: Visiones y Ocultamientos en Open Door," in *57 × 30,5 mm.*, 174, my translation.

38
Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001), 76. The quotation is from Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard's *The Practice of Everyday Life* , vol. 2.

39
As Luigi Manzetti notes, Néstor Kirchner had supported privatization under Menem, who was also a Peronist, but renationalization proved enormously popular in the wake of 2001. Luigi Manzetti, "Renationalization Under the Kirchners," Panoramas (Center for Latin American Studies, University of Pittsburgh), November 23, 2016 https://www. panoramas.pitt.edu/news-and-pol itics/renationalization-under-kirc hners .

40
In 2013, José Pedraza, the ex-secretary general of the Unión Ferroviaria, was found guilty of Ferreyra's murder. See "Argentina protests over labour activist killing," *BBC News*, October 22, 2010 https://www.bb c.com/news/world-latin-america- 11603292 ; and "El Cerebro del Crimen de Mariano Ferreyra," *Pagina/12* , December 24, 2018 h ttps://www.pagina12.com.ar/164 200-el-cerebro-del-crimen-de-mar iano-ferreyra .

41
See Charles Newbery and Simon Romero, "Commuter Train Crash Kills Dozens in Argentina," *New York Times* , February 22, 2012 ht tps://www.nytimes.com/2012/02 /23/world/americas/commuter-t rain-crash-kills-dozens-in-argenti na.html ; and "Once Train Crash: Argentine Ex-Ministers Jailed," *BBC News* , December 29, 2015 h ttps://www.bbc.com/news/world -latin-america-35196316 .

42
Despite Macri's imposition of the harshest austerity program since the 2001 crisis, the international press has cast him as an improvement over the Kirchners precisely for his willingness to work with the international financial interests controlling Argentina. This portrayal of Macri is typified by a scandalous recent *New York Times* article that blames Argentina's financial woes on the Kirchners' "populism" and "unbridled spending." The article does not even mention the Menem years or his policies. See Peter S. Goodman, "Argentina's Economic Misery Could Bring Populism Back to the Country," *The New York Times* , May 10, 2019, https:/ /www.nytimes.com/2019/05/10/ business/argentina-economy-ma cri-populism.html .

43
Elizabeth González, "Is Pension Reform on the Ballot in Argentina's Election?" Americas Society / Council of the Americas Bulletin, March 29, 2019 https:// www.as-coa.org/articles/pension -reform-ballot-argentinas-election .

44
Nato Thompson, "Living as Form," in *Living as Form*, exh. cat. (MIT Press, 2011).

45
Talking to Action: Art, Pedagogy, and Activism in the Americas , ed. Bill Kelley, Jr., exh. cat. (Otis College of Art and Design, 2017), 7. For an important precedent of this exhibition, see *Agítese antes de Usar: Desplazamientos Educativos, Sociales y Artísticos en América Latina* , eds. Renata Cervetto and Miguel A. López, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, 2016).

46
"A Conversation Between Eduardo Molinari and Nuria Enguita Mayo," trans. Tamara Stuby, *Afterall* 30 (Summer 2012): 70.

Oh I believe in miracles
Oh I believe in a better world for me and you
—The Ramones

Oxana Timofeeva
What Lenin Teaches Us About Witchcraft

In the 1990s, right after the collapse of the USSR, the Russian tabloid press burst into a huge series of exposés on leaders of the state socialist past. A lot of this attention fell on Lenin—as the founder of the state, he became a privileged target of all sorts of attacks. Historians and journalists competed to reveal unknown, weird, or unpleasant facts of Lenin's biography. This genre is still alive, and seems to replace—or simply invert—an old Communist legacy: everyone who, like me, was born in the Soviet Union, can still recollect a number of stories from Lenin's life. Among them are stories of: Lenin deceiving the police officer who came for a home inspection,[1] Lenin writing secret messages to his comrades from prison,[2] Lenin inviting a stoveman for a cup of tea,[3] Lenin meeting a beautiful red fox in the forest.[4] In these Soviet legends, the leader is always portrayed as positive and gentle, whereas post-Soviet texts represent him as a negative or extremely ambiguous figure. One recent essay of this latter kind suggests that Lenin's ancestors came from Western Europe, more specifically from Germany. A recent article digs further and claims that someone in the line of Lenins, perhaps the leader's great-grandmother, was defamed for using black magic and witchcraft, and was burned at the stake by the Inquisition.[5]

Given the number of people massacred for this "crime" from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, this story might very well be true. My goal, however, is not to investigate the historical veracity of this claim and determine whether Lenin was indeed a descendent of this enigmatic woman. Rather, the very idea that the revolutionary leader could have had an ancestor who was a witch, sorcerer, or magician in intriguing to me: the superpowers which, as a Soviet child, I imagined he had could have been inherited from someone who fell victim to the genocide committed under the banner of Christianity amidst the rise of capitalist modernity.

This coincidence does not seem random. In *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Silvia Federici brilliantly explains capitalism's birth from the spirit of the Inquisition *.* Federici presents the figure of the witch "as the embodiment of a world of female subjects that capitalism had to destroy: the heretic, the healer, the disobedient wife, the woman who dared to live alone, the obeha woman who poisoned the master's food and inspired the slaves to revolt."[6]

Behind the witch hunt, she uncovers a joint effort by the Church and the state to establish mechanisms of
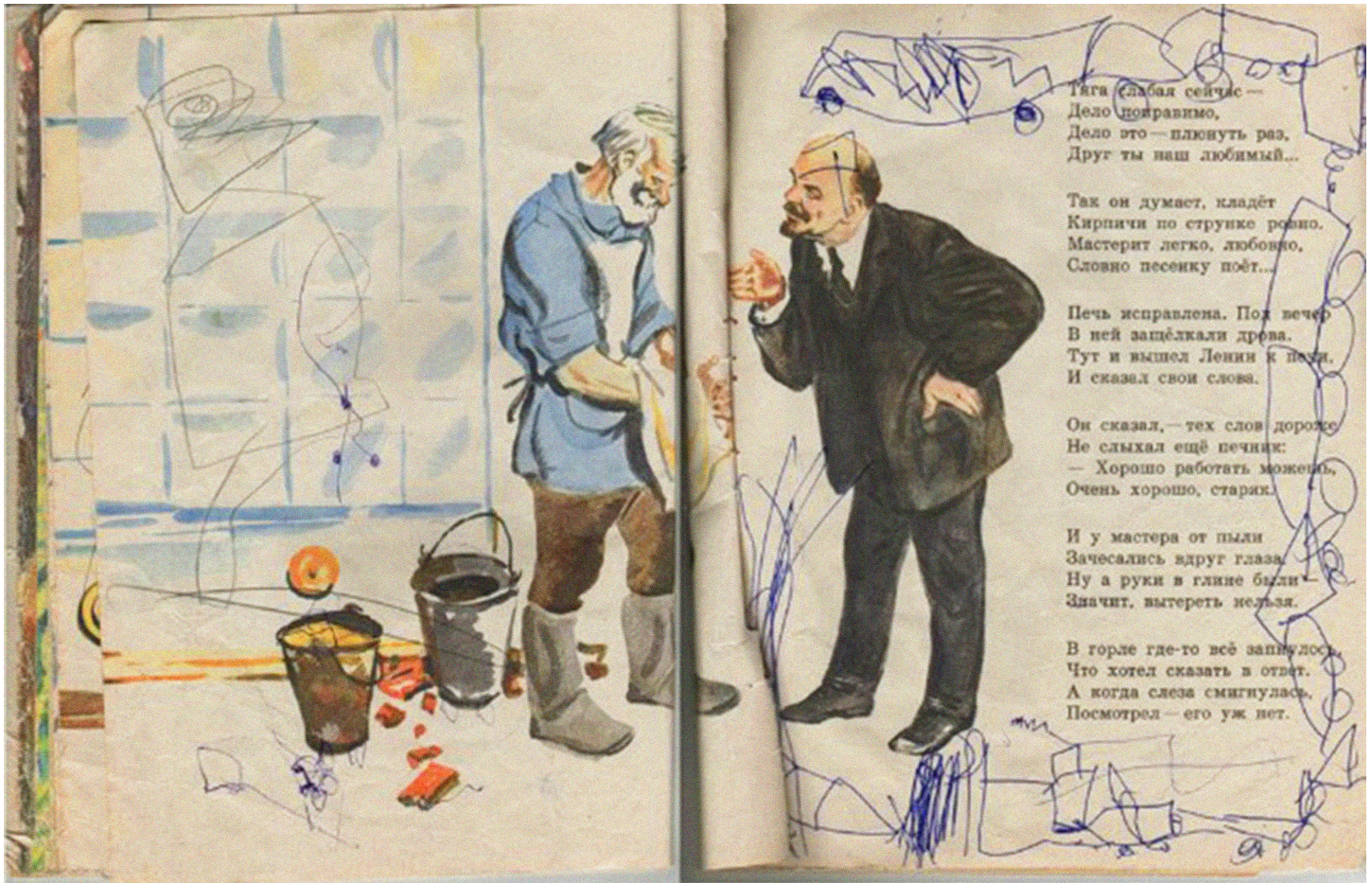
gendered control of bodies that immanently resisted newly instituted regimes of productive and reproductive work.

"No one yet has determined what the *body can do,*" said Spinoza in his 1677 *Ethics*. However, the nascent capitalist system determined what the body *must* do: it must work. According to Federici, in the transition from feudalism to capitalism the multiple powers of the body were transformed into a calculable and controllable work-power. This transformation required the destruction of the conception of the body "as a receptacle of magical powers that had prevailed in the medieval world," in which the lines between Christian religion, magic, and the remains of paganism were still not clear. Precapitalist bodies felt themselves connected to nature and the stars in various ways: the *Malleus Maleficarum* (the *Hammer of Witches*) arrived in 1487 to sever these ties. As Federici puts it: "The body had to die so that labor-power could live."[7] The death of the body meant cutting off any magical potential that did not fit into the scenarios of capitalist development. The "age of reason" chased out magic, queer, female, and animistic lifestyles, just as, in Foucault's analysis, it excluded madness.[8] Foucault showed how madness was targeted by police measures, which criminalized it along with other forms of workless life. Federici adheres to this Foucauldian approach of uncovering the genealogy of power, placing greater emphasis on it than conventional Marxist and feminist analyses. She states that witches do not work either; they are engaged in alternative activities, and this is their main crime against the bourgeois order. As Federici explains,

A variety of practices were designed to appropriate the secrets of nature and bend its powers to the human will. From palmistry to divination, from the use of charms to sympathetic healing, magic opened a vast number of possibilities. There was magic designed to win card games, to play unknown instruments, to become invisible, to win somebody's love, to gain immunity in war, to make children sleep ... Eradicating these practices was a necessary condition for the capitalist rationalization of work, since magic appeared as an illicit form of power and an instrument *to obtain what one wanted without work*, that is, a refusal of work in action ... Equally incompatible with the capitalist work-discipline was the conception of the cosmos that attributed special powers to the individual: the magnetic look, the power to make oneself invisible, to leave one's body, to chain the will of others by magical incantations ... The incompatibility of magic with the capitalist work-discipline and the requirement of social control

is one of the reasons why a campaign of terror was launched against it by the State.[9]

The capitalist conception of the world implies that all the body can do is work, and it is only through work that the needs of that body can be satisfied. "Capitalist ethics, a pitiful parody on Christian ethics, strikes with its anathema the flesh of the laborer; its ideal is to reduce the producer to the smallest number of needs, to suppress his joys and his passions and to condemn him to play the part of a machine turning out work without respite and without thanks," wrote Paul Lafargue.[10]

However, this has not always been the condition of our bodily existence. There was a time when the body was conceived as an intersection of cosmic forces and a part of the natural whole in which everything is related to every other thing. Federici again: "At the basis of magic there was an animistic conception of nature that did not admit to any separation between nature and spirit, and thus imagined a cosmos as a *living organism*, populated by occult forces, where every element was in 'sympathetic' relation with the rest."[11] A miracle might have violated the laws of nature, but it did not violate the whole of magical being and thinking. At a certain point, this became impossible. Under capitalism not only did the economic system change, but also, as Federico Campagna claims in his book *Technic and Magic*, the very composition of the world its metaphysical presuppositions:

> The character of our contemporary existential experience points towards a certain type of ordering of our world, and of ourselves within it. This ordering is superficially social/economic/etc., but in fact derives from a set of fundamental metaphysical axioms. These axioms combine together in an overall system, which is the reality-system of our age. A reality-system shapes the world in a certain way, and endows it with a particular destiny: it is the cosmological form that defines a historical age. At the same time, however, it is also a cosmogonic force: its metaphysical settings and parameters actually create the world.[12]

Campagna differentiates between two great reality-systems or "cosmogonic forces": he calls them "technic" and "magic." From this perspective, one can say that the age of reason—or the age of capitalism, whose advent, according to Federici, coincides with the emergence of witch hunts and the eradication of alterity—is defined by the metaphysical parameters of technic: representation, abstraction, separation, etc. Within these cosmological conditions, miracles are "technically impossible" (they might be possible in an alternative reality-system). The first constitutive principle

of this system is the presence of the "ineffable" dimension of existence, "which cannot be captured by descriptive language, and which escapes all attempts to put it to 'work'—either in the economic series of production, or in those of citizenship, technology, science, social roles and so on."[13] Magic introduces, according to Campagna, a sort of therapy for the pathologies of our existence in the technic reality-system, such as the foreclosure of the future and the general feeling that we are incapable of building an emancipatory project that would fundamentally change the direction of history. A therapeutic injection of magic, suggests Campagna, is key to overcoming this situation.

Nikolay Oleynikov, Oslobodenje: The Burlesque Museum, 2015. Installation views from Konjic Biennial, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would like to respond to this call with my own theory of witchcraft—well, not really a theory, but instead brief notes towards a theory that might then be fleshed out by anyone. These notes are conditioned by my personal experience of being a child who was so scared of the dark that the only way to overcome the horror was to let myself be fully absorbed by this darkness, to identify with it. I'm sure I'm not the only child who has used this tactic to deal with her fear of the dark. When I realized that the source of my fear was not outside of me, but within, I felt ecstatic. I thought I could become a magician if I learned to be more attentive to the darkness that was a part of me.

A child might feel the desire to become a magician when the world, which at first seemed to be so loving and gentle, ceases to comply with her every need, and instead starts to live a life of its own. The child's mother, who just a moment ago was reading her a fairy tale, must now leave for work; left alone in her cradle, the child helplessly waves her hands, trying and failing to call her mother back. At a certain point, it turns out that the desires of the child are not the one and only law for her parents, who sometimes have to obey other laws—laws that are indifferent to the desires of the child. This experience is catastrophic, but at

the same time a necessary and constitutive, rupture between the world and the subject. Starting in our early childhood we gradually realize that when it comes to the world and the subject, things can go terribly wrong. Everyone has their own way of dealing with this existential mess.

I want to propose two paradigmatic strategies that people use to negotiate the competing demands of desire and the law: religion and magic. Religion helps one conform to the world, subordinating desire to a codified law. Magic, by contrast, invites one to make the world conform to one's own desires, subordinating the law to the subject's arbitrary rule. Accordingly, our culture knows at least two types of spiritual practices; these can be illustrated by the two different paths that a child who wants to become a magician might take. In one, the child turns to religion, establishing a relation of exchange with God and expecting the latter to grant her wishes. In the other, the child establishes a relation of exchange with the Devil instead; she gives him her soul, and in return he gives her the ability to become a master magician and grant any wish herself.

The child who becomes a magician is ready to make an inhuman effort to force the world to conform to her desires. She becomes a witch out of injury, resentment, weakness, despair, melancholy, envy, jealousy, loneliness, the irreversibility of death, or poverty. (When I was poor, I wanted to use sorcery to obtain five hundred rubles so that I could buy a sweater.) She also becomes a magician out of boredom, just to avoid being a philistine. The main source of her magic force is her firm belief in herself, which she perhaps acquires at precisely her worst moments of loss and catastrophe. She desperately wants, at any cost, to do what others cannot—awaken the dead, bring a lost loved one back to life, enact revenge, turn back time and redeem a fatal error committed in the past. A person who becomes a magician has learned that something is fundamentally wrong—the world is unjust, and this order of things can, in fact, be changed miraculously. A magician challenges the order of things dictated by God and nature. If the essential injustice of this reality—the domination of the rich over the poor, the strong over the weak, the living over the dead—is a law, she wants to transgress this law and impose her own will in its place.

A witch needs certain skills and superpowers that exceed those of ordinary humans, in order to grant her own wishes or those of others. This requires the witch to interrupt the order of things, transgress the law, and break through the inertia of so-called normal life. Witchcraft starts at the limit of the possible, where the competence of ordinary people ends. It is forbidden because the very fact of being a witch violates natural and social law, which allocates a place and time to everyone and everything. There are cracks and holes in reality that witches plug up with their own bodies. Witches are thus alien. They belong,

in part, to another world in which the law is not applicable. But they also belong intimately to this world, which they try to change or fix; they therefore still depend on the laws which they suspend.

Deleuze and Guattari write that "sorcerers have always held the anomalous position, at the edge of the fields or woods. They haunt the fringes. They are at the borderline of the village, or between villages."[14] But sorcerers not only exist at the border: as anomalous beings, they are the border itself. In other words, the borderline passes through their bodies. In Deleuze and Guattari's framework, this borderline runs between two multiplicities, or two packs. The anomalous individual belongs to neither of these packs, but instead enters into secret alliances: "The important thing is their affinity with alliance, with the pact, which gives them a status opposed to that of filiation. The relation with the anomalous is the one of alliance. The sorcerer has a relation of alliance with the demon as the power of the anomalous."[15]

However, the border between two multiplicities is not the only border where witches can be found. I would like to complement Deleuze and Guattari's schema with three additional kinds of borders, which I first outlined some time ago: 1) the border between something and a similar thing; 2) between something and a different thing; 3) between something and nothing.[16] I am particularly interested in the third border, where we face the ultimate edge of the world. Locating the witch at this border can help us understand how miracles works.


Nikolay Oleynikov, Oslobodenje: The Burlesque Museum, 2015. Installation views from Konjic Biennial, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

If we consider the "real" world as a unity of things (okay, you can call it a multiplicity, but still, within its border it functions as a kind of unity), the witch definitely breaks up this unity in a freaky way, while also being part of it. On the one hand, the witch secures this unity by using her body to fill in the holes in being. On the other hand, she breaks

From a Soviet children's book, illustration by D. Khaikin of Lenin chasing a fox.
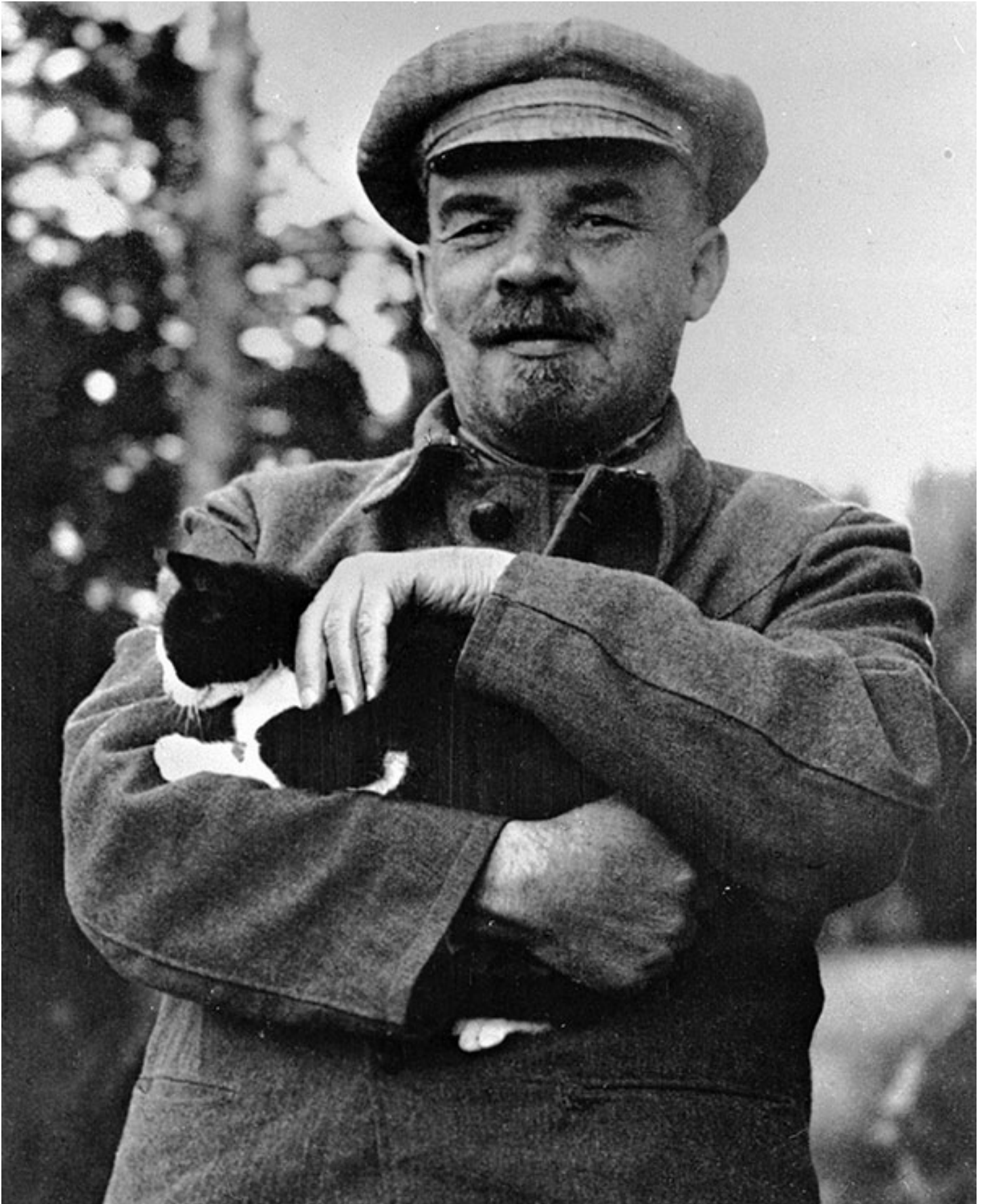
Vladimir Lenin caresses the purrletariat, date unknown. Photo: Maria Ulyanova/Sputnik.

it—behind her back there is either another world, whose agency she represents, or there is nothingness. It is said that witches do not have a back. I think that having no back means precisely that there is nothingness behind the witch. This is why it's so difficult to hunt her. The moment she turns her back to you, she disappears.

As Federici shows, the persecution of witches was an instance of gendered violence on a massive scale. The victims were overwhelmingly women. However, I would like to differentiate between real victims of the Inquisition who were accused of witchcraft, and the witch more generally, or the magician, or the sorcerer—the border figure, whose body is neither male nor female, neither animal nor human, neither young nor old, neither alive nor dead. In my view, this figure is perfectly queer. Think about witches in fairy tales. Baba Yaga, the witch from Russian folklore, is a ferocious old woman who, by all appearances, exists on the border between life and death. It is said that her nose "grows into the roof," which means that the wooden hut where she lives (at the edge of the forest) is as small as a coffin. Witches can transform into birds, frogs, snakes, and so forth—they can be anything, but the "real" world always remains intolerable to them. Between something that is and something that is not—that is, nothing—their bodies bear within them that active part of nonbeing that we call desire. Seeing a naked woman flying on a broom during the night, an ordinary human being might think that a witch's desire is sexual. But it is more than that. A witch's desire is ontological: it must be strong enough to transform something that is not into something that is, nonbeing into being (to trigger rain, to raise the dead). Such a transformation is a miracle.

Let's return to Lenin and his great-grandmother the witch, who inspire me infinitely. Among the many things that Lenin surely inherited from her was his insistence that miracles are possible. It is possible to make something out of nothing—that is, to transform something that is not into something that is, to bring something into being from nonbeing. As noted by Ronald Boer—who, in his study *Lenin, Religion, and Theology*, sees in the notion of the miracle "a crucial dimension of Lenin's approach to revolution"[17]—Lenin used to say that intelligent people do not believe in miracles that happen all of a sudden. At the same time, he developed an alternative conception of the miracle, insisting that people can perform them if they are enthusiastic enough, if they are driven and capable of making a supreme effort.

"Every man and every woman is a star," said Aleister Crowley. In Lenin's sense, every man and every woman is a miracle man and a miracle woman. There is something demonic in this: as Lenin sees it, miracles do not simply happen and they cannot be ascribed to God or to some other supreme being; they are performed by real people themselves. Lenin famously said that "a revolution is a miracle."[18]

In his writings and speeches, Lenin clearly appreciates the miraculous aspect of great human endeavors—such as political struggle and hard work for the sake of socialist revolution. For Lenin, the radical breakthrough that is revolution is a "miracle." In Badiou's terminology, this kind of breakthrough is called an "event." But in Lenin's framework, "miracle" is the better word since it describes something that transpires precisely when that thing seems most impossible. People create miracles in a desperate attempt to overcome the state of impotence they face in a given situation. We never know in advance, we risk everything, and only then, retroactively, can we discern a miraculous dimension to our efforts.

In 1917, Lenin wrote:

> There are no miracles in nature or history, but every abrupt turn in history, and this applies to every revolution, presents such a wealth of content, unfolds such unexpected and specific combinations of forms of struggle and alignment of forces of the contestants, that to the lay mind there is much that must appear miraculous.[19]

A dozen years prior, in 1905, he wrote in his *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*:

> Revolutions are the locomotives of history, said Marx. Revolutions are the festivals of the oppressed and the exploited. At no other time are the masses of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order as at a time of revolution. At such times the people are capable of performing miracles, if judged by the narrow, philistine scale of gradual progress.[20]

According to Boer, "Lenin's overt usage of miracle lays its emphasis on human energy, effort and enthusiasm. Yet it requires stupendous moments for such miracles to occur, moments that evoke almost superhuman effort from those who did know they could do so."[21] I would like highlight Boer's use of the word "superhuman." There is a clearly Nietzschean aspect to Lenin's politics: the human, the all-too-human being, is the subject who overcomes. Desperation can move mountains—we all know this, but we rarely dare. In Boer's interpretation, a key part of Lenin's equating of revolution with miracle is the tension between organization and spontaneity, between the so-called party avant-garde and the spontaneity of the people. Organization and spontaneity are two terms in dialectical opposition, and what appears miraculous is their synthesis. That is where political magic begins, and political technics ends.

We must make a crucial distinction between Lenin's magic and the magic of the lonely child with whom I began. The novelty of Lenin's magic is that miracles are brought about by collectivities of people rather than by individuals. In a materialist sense, the condition of possibility for Lenin's miracle is collectivity itself. The superpowers of the magicians of revolution come from solidarity and comradeship. In my view, this solidarity and comradeship have something in common with witchcraft. Witchcraft transforms and renders impersonal the body of the witch, who is otherwise individualized, scrutinized, and punished by the witch hunt. Solidarity and comradeship, as forms of person-to-person attachment, also do away with individual identity. They are different than friendship and love, where the unique identities of the people involved is fundamental. In solidarity and comradeship, identity vanishes. I love this particular person, but my comrades are treated anonymously and equally regardless of who they are.

Lenin and other so-called professional revolutionaries worked underground. This was called *konspiratsiia*. According to Lars Lih, in Lenin's historical context *konspiratsiia* referred to "the set of rules by which you do not get yourself arrested by the police," or the "fine art of not getting arrested."[22] One should not confuse *konspiratsiia* with "conspiracy." As Lih explains, the logic of *konspiratsiia* is precisely the opposite of conspiracy: "A conspiracy means keeping information and knowledge within the small group, so that it can go and knock off somebody or lead a palace coup. *Konspiratsiia* is the opposite—it is about getting knowledge and ideas out to as many people as possible." Lih paraphrases a passage from *What Is to Be Done?* that describes a concrete example of *konspiratsiia*:

> Although a strike might not be secret to anybody in the town where it happens, people across the country might not know about it, so our task is to get that word out and let everybody know about it. But in order to do that we need people organising professionally in underground conditions in order to get the report, write it up, send it off to Geneva, where the paper is printed, and then smuggle it back into Russia again for distributing. This demands the logic of *konspiratsiia*—empirically worked-out rules for not getting arrested.[23]

Sometimes people forget that "Lenin" was the underground nickname of a person actually named Vladimir Ulianov. Bolsheviks in *konspiratsiia* lived faked social lives under fake names, constantly changing their passports, families, appearances, and even genders. What connected them was that they were all comrades. In her theory of the comrade, Jodi Dean suggests four theses that "articulate a generic political component activated

through divisive fidelity to the emancipatory egalitarian struggle for communism":

> 1. "Comrade" names a relation characterized by sameness, equality, and solidarity. For communists, this sameness, equality, and solidarity is utopian, cutting through the determinations of capitalist society.

> 2. Anyone but not everyone can be a comrade.

> 3. The Individual (as a locus of identity) is the "other" of the comrade.

> 4. The relation between comrades is mediated by fidelity to a truth. Practices of comradeship materialize this fidelity, building its truth into the world.[24]

According to Dean, "a comrade is one of many fighting on the same side." I want to complement Dean's theory by detailing some metamorphic and miraculous moments of comradeship. Comrades are replaceable. This aspect of the masquerade makes politics a theater, but a very special one, similar to Artaud's theater of cruelty; here, ancient masks return, as they present a show, a ritual of direct and instant communication. The mask is more important than the face behind it (if there is one)—it directly communicates affect. We must understand that we live in a society in which individualism is recognized as a supreme value. Everyone is required to have an identity: we are identical in that we all have to be clearly identifiable. Comradeship, in the sense that I am trying to develop here, transgresses this rule: it breaks with identitarian ideology, it is destructive of the individual, autonomous person. In his conception of theater, Artaud attacks classical Western theater—where actors represent characters and so on—and instead advocates a "superior notion of the theater," which he compares to a plague, a contagion:

> The theater like the plague is a crisis which is resolved by death or cure. And the plague is a superior disease because it is a total crisis after which nothing remains except death or an extreme purification. Similarly the theater is a disease because it is the supreme equilibrium which cannot be achieved without destruction. It invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts its energies; and we can see, to conclude, that from the human point of view, the action of theater, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world; it shakes off the asphyxiating inertia of matter which invades even the clearest testimony of the senses; and in revealing to

Nikolay Oleynikov, Oslobodenje: The Burlesque Museum, 2015. Installation views from Konjic Biennial, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

collectivities of men their dark power, their hidden force, it invites them to take, in the face of destiny, a superior and heroic attitude they would never have assumed without it. And the question we must now ask is whether, in this slippery world which is committing suicide without noticing it, there can be found a nucleus of men capable of imposing this superior notion of the theater, men who will restore to all of us the natural and magic equivalent of the dogmas in which we no longer believe.[25]

Similarly, in comradeship, there is no individual, but only a set of appearances that run from one figure to another. The only stable thing between comrades is the essence of their solidarity: the shared cause. The comrade is someone on whose neck you can place your own head, someone to whom you can give one of your own hands if she has none at the decisive moment when the enemy attacks. Friendship and love cannot sustain such disturbing acts of fellowship—they are too innocent, too kind, too human. As we showed above, the emergence of witch hunts coincides historically with the birth of humanism in its classical sense. Comradeship transcends the borders of this humanism, placing it in the same category as sorcery, with its secret alliances, communication with beasts, and of course, breathtaking naked night flights.

Comradeship is not an easy thing: along with sorcery, it can evoke forces that an individual cannot control. These forces can be destructive, as in Goethe's story of a sorcerer's apprentice (1797) who, when his old master leaves, initiates a powerful magical process that he cannot stop because he does not know how. Georges Bataille links this figure of the sorcerer's apprentice to art: "The 'sorcerer's apprentice,' first of all, does not encounter demands that are any different from those he would encounter on the difficult road of art."[26]

Indeed, art is closely linked to both witchcraft and comradeship. Let me refer to the works of my comrade Nikolay Oleynikov, of the group Chto Delat, who paints weird, monstrous collective bodies that shatter the continuity of nature and portray strange interspecies alliances. At his 2015 installation *Oslobodenje: The Burlesque Museum*, held in Tito's bunker in the mountains near Sarajevo, a canvas in a modest wooden frame depicted a big Courbet-like vagina, from which emerged a realistic brown bullhead with a yellow tag in its ear. In another canvas (*Romantic Collection*, 2013), a penis ended in a mad dog's head, which barked while its entire body was being masturbated. In other canvases, a person's face was replaced with an animal's head, with a flower, with something or someone else. "Who are all these characters?" I asked Nikolay. "They are folks," he replied. These motley folks gathered together transgender dancers, bulls, philosophers, horses, cats and dogs, girls, wolves, roses, fingers, spirits and ghosts, vampires, and

other living, dead, and of course undead creatures. Brecht, Lenin, Gramsci, and Hegel rose from their graves and took their places among a utopian group of "folks."[27]

In this impersonal multiplicity, there is no one. What does this "no one" mean? It means a structural impossibility for "one" to be. A comrade is never alone—not in the trivial sense that there is always someone else around, but in the more radical sense that you are always many. You are Legion. This is how you succeed in "the fine art of not getting arrested," persecuted, or burned alive by the inquisitors of your age. When you are many, you turn your back to the police officer and disappear. Comradeship creates a shield against the witch hunters who will try to catch us one by one, but who will never destroy the whole set of alliances that make up the Great Sorcery International. You know what I mean.

X

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1
When the officer approached the bookshelves, Lenin kindly offered him a stool, so that the policemen had to start searching from the top, whereas all illegal books were stored on the bottom shelf. By the time the policemen finally approached the bottom shelf, he was too tired and did not find anything illicit.

2
In order to deceive the guard while writing revolutionary texts from jail, Lenin used milk as ink and bread as an inkwell. When the guard would come in, Lenin would quickly eat the inkwell.

3
For example, see the epic children's poem by Alexander Tvardovsky (1938) and the short story by Mikhail Zoshchenko (1940) with the same title, *Lenin i Pechnik* (Lenin and the Stoveman). The stories are similar: when Lenin is already head of the socialist state, he meets a village stoveman who does not recognize him and is rude to him. After learning that he was in fact Lenin, the man lives in fear; at some point he is brought to Lenin's house to fix the stove. Lenin treats him as a guest and offers him a cup of tea.

4
Lenin ventured into the forest to hunt the fox, but after the beautiful animal looked into Lenin's eyes, he decided not to shoot it.

5
See http://parallelnyj-mir.com/1/mysteries-of-history1/9797-lenin-potomok-vedmy.html .

6
Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Autonomedia, 2009), 11.

7
Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 141.

8
Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* , trans. Jean Khalfa and Jonathan Murphy (Routledge, 2006).

9
Fedrici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 143. Emphasis in original.

10
Paul Lafargue, *The Right To Be Lazy* https://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1883/lazy/preface.htm .

11
Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 141–42. Emphasis in original.

12
Federico Campagna, *Technic and Magic: The Reconstruction of Reality* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 5–6.

13
Campagna, *Technic and Magic*, 10.

14
Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Continuum, 2004), 271.

15
Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* , 271.

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Oxana Timofeeva, "Imagine There's No Void," *Filozofski Vestnik* 34, no. 2 (2013) https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/filozofski-vestnik/issue/view/287 .

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18
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21
Boer, *Lenin, Religion, and Theology* , 139.

22
Lars T. Lih, "Scotching the Myths About Lenin's 'What Is to Be Done,'" *Links*, October 21, 2010 file:///C:/Users/mandr/Downloads/links.org.au/node/1953 .

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Lih, "Scotching the Myths About Lenin's 'What Is to Be Done.'"

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Jodi Dean, "Four Theses on the Comrade," *e-flux journal* no. 86 (November 2017) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/160585/four-theses-on-the-comrade/ .

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Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double* , trans Mary Caroline Richards (Groove Press, 1958), 31–32.

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Georges Bataille, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice, " in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* , trans. Allan Stoekl (University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 223 https://opencuny.org/religionandthesacred21/files/2015/10/Georges-Bataille-The-Sorcerers-Apprentice.pdf .

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Children

On March 15, 2019, in many cities around the world, one million children marched under the banner of "Climate Strike."

Why should we go to school? Why should we prepare for a future that we will not have? We want you to panic. Then what?

This movement is a rebellion against extinction. (Can you rebel against extinction?) *Simultaneously, this is the beginning of a culture of transitoriness and of rage against those who have engendered us.*

Zain, the protagonist of the movie *Capernaum* (2018), directed by the Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki, is a twelve-year-old Syrian boy who lives with five siblings in a refugee camp in the metropolitan chaos of Beirut. Zain was not marching with Greta Thunberg and other youth activists on March 15, 2019; having been summoned by a judge, he demands that his parents be prosecuted for the crime of giving birth to him.

Zain is the perfect symbol of the children's crusade that is mounting everywhere: an immense crowd of innocent victims who want to know why they have been compelled to abandon the blank immortality of eternal Nothingness, why they have been summoned, assembled in this awkward city of violence, in the sad murkiness of precarity and anguish. *Why did you force me out of my space of dispassionate nonbeing into the fog and fury of exhaustion?*

> It is not the world that is sinking, but the jumble of my synaptic circuits. Entropy is expanding down there, blurring vision, clouding meaning, obstructing any path of escape. We are not dealing with the disintegration of the universe, or with the undoing of the social foundation, but rather with the unstoppable degradation of my nervous cells. But reality at the end of the day is but the dynamic projection of countless experiences of mental decay.[1]

Kronos and Cosmos

The relation between Kronos and his son Zeus was troubled, they say. Kronos, the king of the gods in the age of Chaos, swallowed his own sons because he had been told that his destiny was to be overthrown by one of them. The goddess Rhea, however, tricked Kronos by getting him to swallow a rock, and hid Zeus in a cave on the island of Crete. Eventually, Zeus chained up his father Kronos, became the king of the gods and the architect of the

Still from Philippe Parreno's 2017 movie No More Reality Whereabouts.

Universe, and turned Chaos into Cosmos.

Time, the Great Destroyer, must be chained up in order for an eternal order to be imposed on the world.

Order is ceaselessly collapsing into Chaos. Eventually, the mind rebuilds structures and restores mental order, so that Chaos leads to Cosmos. Then Cosmos collapses again. This cycle is well known; this is how our experience unfolds in time.

Time and Structure play their infinite game on two different planes: Time cannot exist in a world ruled by Structure, because Structures are immutable and eternal. But Time is the decomposer of all Structures, and the agent of the extinction of all things.

In the structural universe, temporality does not exist: Kronos is chained.

In the living universe of temporality, Structures are continuously dissolved: Kronos unchained.

The mind is the only place where these two universes coexist: the universe of abstraction and the universe of life.

Digital Mephistopheles

In the realm of matter, and particularly in the realm of biological matter, extinction is the destiny of every entity, both of individual particularities and of collective multiplicities.

However, throughout the course of evolution, the human mind has pursued eternal duration, so as to make immortality possible. The human mind has succeeded in this search for eternity by creating the sphere of abstraction: pure mathematical relation independent from physical matter and therefore preserved from death. The mind, indeed, is the only dimension in which order dwells, and where the immortal can be found: mathematical order.

But we should not forget that the human mind is embodied. This bodily nature implies that the individual mind is subject to the effects of time: decay and extinction. The mind is the source of abstraction (immortality), but also the domain of sensitive duration; organic architecture lives and dies like all perishable material substances.

This is why mathematical reason cannot indefinitely coexist with a sensitive organism. In the long run, the insertion of mathematical entities into the continuum of social life engenders lethal disturbances, nervous breakdowns. Mathematics is the mental dimension in

Istubalz, Prospettive Sovrapposte, 2014.

which extension is replaced by relation, the realm of immateriality in which time is irrelevant.

In order to achieve immortality, Faust struck a deal with Mephistopheles. But Faust didn't realize that the best path to immortality is the mathematization of the world.

Since you want to live forever, says the digital Mephistopheles to the transhumanist Faust, you will be recombined into the immortal abstraction of the automaton.

> Look up here, I'm in heaven
> I've got scars that can't be seen
> I've got drama, can't be stolen
> Everybody knows me now
>
> Look up here, man, I'm in danger
> I've got nothing left to lose
> I'm so high, it makes my brain whirl
> Dropped my cell phone down below
> Ain't that just like me?
>
> —David Bowie, "Lazarus," from the album
> *Blackstar* (2016)

Mathematization

The global cognitive automaton is under construction in the sphere of computation. The process of constructing the automaton is asymptotic, ever-expanding, and never finished. Its genealogy is rooted in the history of the modern mathematization of the world.

Galileo was persuaded that

> philosophy is written in the great book of the universe, which is continuously open in front of our eyes, but cannot be realized it we don't learn the language in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric forms. If we ignore them, we cannot understand a single word of the universe, and we are doomed to vainly wander in a labyrinth of darkness.[2]

Mathematization is not only a methodology for the theoretical formalization of natural phenomena. It is also a process of technical determination; the digitalization of linguistic and physical processes, in the late modern age, has proceeded to insert mathematical functions into the living body of language and social exchange.

The establishment of a conventional standard for measuring space and time, and the ensuing reduction of all entities to commensurability, is the core of modern science. It is also the precondition of capitalism, a social system that is based on the conventional equalization of all produced goods, both material and semiotic.

Since the common measure of value is based on socially necessary labor time, time itself has been reduced to computation. The mechanical computabilization of time was at the core of the Industrial Revolution. The objectivation of time as a computable extension is the foundation of the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of capitalism.

Thanks to the mathematization of the world and to the computabilization of time, the mental sphere emancipates itself from the dimension of perishability. Abstraction is not subject to the rule of death.

> Outside the walls of the Circle all was noise and struggle, failure and filth. But here, all had been perfected. The best people had made the best systems and the best systems had reaped funds, unlimited funds, that made possible this, the best place to work.
>
> —David Eggars, *The Circle*

Abstraction Eternity Extinction

Paradoxically, however, the insertion of abstraction into social life and the cycles of the natural environment is leading to the extinction of concreteness, and of life itself.

The damnation (or salvation?) of death is denied in the realm of abstraction; extinction is not a possibility in the sphere of pure mathematical relations. This is why capitalism is eternal, and (unluckily enough) this is why humankind seems to be doomed.

The eternity of capitalism, in fact, is based on the annihilation of life through the process of abstraction: abstract value has taken the upper hand and has subjugated the concreteness of life, of production, consumption, and language.

Thanks to digital networks, financial capitalism has detached the economy from the sphere of perishable things. The concrete activity of producing useful things has been subsumed, recoded, and finally abolished by the mathematic rule of financial capitalism. The unintended consequence of this is the annihilation of life. The eternal survival of capitalism is enabled by the expansion of death, so that in the end, we dwell inside the corpse of abstraction.

> Never, not for a single day
> do we have pure space before us in which the flowers
> are always unfolding. It's forever world
> and never Nowhere-without-Not:
> the pure and unwatched-over air we breathe,
> *know* infinitely and do not want. As when
> sometimes
> a child gets lost in the silence
> and has to be shaken back.
>
> —Rilke, *The Eighth Elegy*

Dark Zeitgeist

The contemporary subconscious is marked by two powerful gravitational pulls: extinction and immortality, which feed into each other.

The insertion of mathematical exactitude into the living continuum of the vibrational organism has led to the ossifying of biodiversification. The insertion of digital connection into the continuum of bodily conjunction has led to the syntactic ossifying of the creative ambiguousness of sensibility.

The allure of extinction and immortality has polarized the social unconscious. A nihilistic drive emerges in aesthetics and politics: decline, and the fear of extinction, is fuelling ethno-nationalist cultures worldwide, and in particular a wave of aggressive white supremacism. This is the reaction of the white male when he perceives that he will soon be replaced.

But the while male, in his historical domination, has produced the conditions for a larger extinction: climate change, global civil war, and psychotic collapse. These might lead to the real extinction of life on the planet (unlike the imagined extinction of the white supremacists).

At the same time, a frozen immortality emerges in the form of the global cognitive automaton. This immortality results from the unravelling of the semiocapitalist abstraction, and from the insertion of bio-info-techno devices into language and life.

The insertion of inorganic intelligence into the conjunction between organic bodies acts as an extinguisher of life and of living consciousness. Thus, extinction looms on the horizon as the ultimate destiny of history.

> I didn't intend any of this to happen. And it's moving so too fast. The idea of Completion, it's far beyond what I had in mind when I started all this, and it's far beyond what's right. It has to be brought back into some kind of balance ... I was trying to make the web more civil. I was trying to make it more elegant. I got rid of anonymity. I combined a thousand disparate elements into one unified system. But I didn't picture a world where Circle membership was mandatory, where all government and all life was channeled through one network ... There used to be the option of opting out. But now that's over. Completion is the end. We are closing the circle around everyone—it's a totalitarian nightmare.
>
> —Ty Gospodinov in Dave Eggars, *The Circle*

What Extinction Am I Talking About?

The answer to this question is not clear to me.

Does this extinction concern the human race, or the cultural construct that we call "human civilization"?

Social integration is collapsing, but at the same time, the process of civilization has culminated in the self-construction of the automaton, which impassively takes shape in the connective space of digital computation.

Environmental collapse, global civil war, nuclear proliferation, and epidemics of panic and depression are steps towards extinction. But this is not the end of the world, since abstraction has created a world of its own, subsuming social language and prescribing the social forms of interaction.

> Twentieth century medicine aimed to heal the sick. Twenty-first century medicine is increasingly aiming to upgrade the healthy ... In the twentieth century, medicine benefited the masses because the twentieth century was the age of the masses. Twentieth century armies needed millions of healthy soldiers, and economies needed millions of healthy workers.
>
> —Yuval Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*

Expansion and acceleration have been fostered by the cultural erasure of transitoriness. Investing time in economic value has been a way to simulate eternity: private property, accumulation, and the sacrifice of the present on the altar of the future. This cycle of sacrifice, investment, and expansion has been the strength of capitalism.

Now it's over. The physical resources of the planet and the nervous energies of society are on the path to final exhaustion. The collapse of visions of the future has paved the way for reflecting on a previously forbidden subject: extinction.

Trans-humanist utopians, for their part, indulge in fantasies about imminent promises of high-tech immortality.

Both hypocritical tech-cheerfulness and contemporary nihilism are based on a shared vision of the ineluctable: it's too late to stop devastation and climate change, and it's too late to stop the psychotic collapse of the hyper-connected mind.

This helps to explain the nonsensical increase of inequalities that marks the wealth distribution of our time: the predators think that it is impossible to stop the extinction process. In their calculation, all they can do is protect themselves and their families, and this alone may prove enormously expensive. Panic and cynicism prevail in the terminal psychosphere.

Coda

Is there a way out from this end? Yes, of course: it is you, the unpredictable.

In 1983, after three years of full immersion in the laboratory of future sensibilities, I came back to my country and, together with a group of friends I staged "Game Over," a video-electronic poem, in an art-space called the Public Secret.

The Gang of Four was on trial in Beijing: Chang Ching, Chang Chung Chao, Yao Wen Yuan, and Wang Hun Weng symbolized the defeat of our generation.

I spent hours in a Naples cafe playing video games. The first generation of video games came in large metal boxes with screens. I fought little green men in a game called *Space Invaders*.

I was impressed by these early electronic devices, especially because at the end of the game, after inevitable defeat, two words appeared on the screen: Game Over.

Nowadays, these two words no longer pop up on the screen, because players of the new generation are aware of the automaton: they have internalized it.

But sooner or later, you will be overthrown.

Together with the poet Enzo Crosio, I wrote a poem. Based on the poem, my brother then wrote music for a concert with four voices. The Gang of Four are playing video games in front of electronic screens, and they chant:

> The exponential function of electronic speed knocks down one after the other the functions of biological reactivity. Sooner or later you lose. The machine always wins.
>
> Now the trial begins. The conviction is certain. War is declared and it is going to be a war of extermination.

Then Chang Chung Chao, the dogmatic intellectual from Shanghai, yells: "What is a crime? What is a crime? What is a crime?"

Is crime the inducer of Chaos, or the generator of Order?

X

Franco Berardi, aka "Bifo," founder of the famous Radio Alice in Bologna and an important figure in the Italian Autonomia movement, is a writer, media theorist, and social activist.

1
Franco "Bifo" Berardi and
Massimiliano Guareschi, from the
novel *Morte ai Vecchi* (Milan:
Baldini e Castoldi, 2016).
Translated by the author.

2
From *Il Saggiatore* (The Assayer).
Translated by the author.