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Editors

Editorial

In last month's editorial for the February issue of *e-flux journal*, we proposed that the communication networks that now saturate our working and private lives have forced us to become cosmopolitan creatures. Our relations to place and time have been shredded to pieces, and we, as those proud pieces, circle the earth like satellites clustering in various locations simultaneously. Aliens to our homes and neighborhoods, we develop terrible posture slouching over screens while simultaneously soaring through the stratosphere at light speed, dazzling our way through galaxies, spotlights, and stars just to cover our measly rent.

This might sound like a condition restricted to information workers, but actually these same shredded proletarian data streams are the ones beaming local soap operas across the globe to cities and immigrant neighborhoods with enough satellite dishes on their rooftops to be a NASA installation on the eve of an alien invasion. But the aliens have already arrived, and they are us. And they do not come from space. In the era of humanism, the cosmic polis was something to strive toward, to capture by going to space. But now we have been there and back, and, *Solaris*-style, space turns out to be a massive mirror.

Now that we are fully stratospheric, it would seem that we are simply stuck with this mirror, if it weren't for the ghost of humanism that still nags at us with the dream of something truly other that would play against our limits, not just reflect what we look like to each other. Some kind of remnant of humanism still haunts our conception of art, like a corpse we don't know whether to bury or venerate. It sits in our throat, and when it makes us cough we think it's from smoking or the pollution, because it's probably that too. Because it still seems to promise forms of life other than those that have been completely overtaken by an economic calculus that stops at satellite broadcasts and the rapture of information.

But if we cosmopolitans now come from space, the old earthbound humanism won't work anymore. We are much more than that.

—Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

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Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige

On the Lebanese Rocket Society

It begins with an image we discover in a book.[1] The image is of a stamp with a rocket on it. The rocket bears the colors of the Lebanese flag—an image we don't recognize, we don't understand. It does not belong to our imaginary.

What does it show—a weapon, a missile, a rocket for space exploration? Is it serious or just a fantasy? Did the Lebanese really dream of participating in the conquest of space? It's hard to believe and rather surreal. We ask our parents, our friends ... No one remembers anything, no one knows what we're talking about.

It is 2009 and we begin our research. A web search for "Lebanese rocket" yields only images of war, specifically Hezbollah missiles targeting Israel and Israeli missiles targeting Lebanon. When we search for "rocket" or "conquest of space," we find many images, but no trace of our Lebanese rocket. But we do find some useful information.

The adventure began in the early 1960s, when a group of students from Haigazian University in Beirut, led by their mathematics professor Manoug Manougian, designed and launched rockets into the Lebanese sky. They produced the first rocket in the region. While the United States was preparing to send its first Apollo rocket into space, while the USSR was on the verge of launching the first manned spaceflight, Manougian and his students began their research on rocket propulsion. A crazy challenge for a tiny country!

We go through the daily newspapers from that period. At first, we find very few details about Manougian's rocket research, except for the dates on which his rockets were launched. More than ten rockets were launched, each one more powerful than the last; their range increased from 12 kilometers to 450 and even 600 kilometers, reaching the stratosphere. The state and the army helped with logistics and financing and provided the scientists with a permanent launching base in Dbayeh. The Lebanese Rocket Society was born. A stamp—the very one we had seen—was issued to celebrate the event on the occasion of independence day in 1964.

It was a scientific project, not a military one. Manoug and his students wanted to be part of the scientific research going on at the time, when the great powers were vying for the conquest of space. The period from 1960 to 1967 (when the Lebanese space project came to an end) was considered by many to be a time of revolutions, with the possible alternative offered by the pan-Arabism of Egyptian President Abdel Nasser, before the Arab defeat in the 1967 war. Lebanon was just emerging from a civil conflict between Nasserists and pro-Western groups, which in 1958 had led to the landing of 15,000 Marines to support the latter. When elected President, General Fouad Chehab needed to bring society together under a strong and centralized state, which made the space project convenient for the political interests of the time. This made

Stamp issued by the Lebanese Post Office in 1964.

for two opposing strategies: On the one hand, the state could use the project as a symbol for its army, which hoped to weaponize the project. On the other hand, the scientists from Haigazian University, mainly Armenians who came to Lebanon from all over the Arab world (Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and so on—Manougian himself was born and grew up in Jerusalem) were convinced that only through research and education could peace be built.

Strangely, this project has totally disappeared from individual and collective memory. No one really remembers it. There is no trace of it in our imaginary. This absence surprised us. It was like a secret, a hidden, forgotten story. As artists who have built a great part of our work on stories buried or otherwise kept secret, we were interested in this type of narrative and the way it resisted the dominant imaginary.

With this, we began doing in-depth research and making a film on the Lebanese Rocket Society.

1. The Unrealized Imaginary

The representations of the rockets do not call on any imaginary of our past. Is this gap in our imaginary due to an absence of images of the rockets?

In Beirut, we find an album of photos by Edouard Tamérian that the members of the Lebanese Rocket Society offered to President Chehab. At Haigazian University, where the project was born, we find a few images, and then we find a few more at the Arab Image Foundation. There are about ten altogether. They were taken by photographers Assad Jradi and Harry Koundakjian. Both photographers lost their negatives during the Lebanese Civil War. Jradi lost his in 1982; when Israel invaded Lebanon, his brothers got scared and burned the negatives. Koundakjian lost his when a bomb fell on the Associated Press offices where he kept his images.

When we meet Assad Jradi, he tells us something we find quite interesting: during the civil war, all the photos he took were out of focus. He didn't understand it, he still doesn't understand it: he couldn't capture clear images—the outlines, the features were all blurred. This immediately reminds us of a text by writer and artist Jalal Toufic, who asserts that during a war, the images taken are necessarily out of focus. The photographer is subject to imminent danger, has little time to focus, and his compositions are erratic. His images are nearly always blurred by the speed of war. After the war, the fuzziness still present in the images is due to the withdrawal of what is photographed, which is no longer there to be seen. Toufic argues that, because of this withdrawal, part of the referent cannot be precisely located, whether in matters of framing, of focusing, or both.

This is also what we have focused on in our own research: referents that cannot be located.

We begin to work on the film, using as a starting point the absence of images. But very soon the situation changes. We end up finding images of the Lebanese rockets in Tampa, Florida, with Manoug Manougian, the professor who started the project before leaving Lebanon, never to return to the region again. From the smallest to the largest

Group portrait taken before the launch of Cedar 3, 1962. Image from the Lebanese Rocket Society Archive, ©DR.

rocket—from Cedar 1 to Cedar 8—Manoug kept all the films and photo archives! He saved everything for over fifty years.

Even when we see these images, we do not completely recognize them. The history of that period was written without them, maybe because most of the witnesses—those who participated in the project—left Lebanon and are scattered all over the world.

This may also be a consequence of the Lebanese Civil Wars, which took with them memories of the past. Or even before that, it may be a consequence of the June 1967 War between the Israeli and Arab armies. When the space program was halted definitively and suddenly sometime after the 1967 war, it was the end of a certain idea of the Pan-Arab project that was supposed to unite the region and inspire people to shape their own destiny. The end of this project shattered an alternative vision, a progressive and modernist utopia that promised to transform our region and the world. Such is the phantasm that we have inherited from the '60s, and even if we refuse any kind of nostalgia or idealized link to it, it keeps haunting us. Our research on the space project is in a way a reflection on those years and those mythologies that changed after the war of '67.

But maybe what has changed the most is the image of ourselves, of our dreams. We just can't imagine ourselves having undertaken a project like the Lebanese Rocket Society. But while that imaginary has withdrawn, perhaps telling the story could enable the photographs and documents to somehow bring it back. It is what we attempt to do in the first part of our film. And as the narrative unfolds, we ask ourselves: How were we able to totally forget this story?

2. Different Reconstitutions

It is not the first time we have faced oblivion and invisibility. They were what first prodded us to make images in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil Wars. Artists of our generation have often investigated the writing of history and the difficulty of sharing it.

For certain cultures, permanency stems from the act of redoing, destroying, and reconstructing. But in a country

that has preferred amnesia, what does it mean to save traces, archives? If we need history, how can it be written without our being mesmerized by memory, whether individual or collective? How to think about history, about its manipulation, its rewriting, its function, while trying to understand which representation of ourselves we choose, or which we allow to be chosen for us?

What is left of the space project today? No commemorative stone or monument relates the adventure of the rockets. Facing this absence, how can this story be told in the present? What would it mean today to think about this forgotten story and reconstitute part of it? What does it mean to reproduce the gestures of the past today?

Issues of reconstitution and reenactment can be said to go way back in our lives, before even our practice and research. In 1922, Joana's paternal grandfather and his family were thrown out of the city of Izmir by the Turkish army. They took refuge in Lebanon, having lost everything, including the contents of a safe holding the dowry of Stephanie, the mother of her grandfather. At first they lived in real misery, and her grandfather furiously tried to recover the family estate and the contents of the safe. When negotiations with the Turkish government proved successful and the safe was finally opened, there turned out to be a big hole in the back. Its contents had been stolen.

Joana's grandfather then rented a safe in a Lebanese bank and began, with great determination, to reconstitute his mother's dowry. It took his whole life: from the two silk handkerchiefs, to the drachmas and rubles, to the diamond ring and bonds. Nevermind if some of the currencies had lost their value, everything had to be exactly as it was before. This is the original instance of reconstitution Joana observed, and it gave her much food for thought.

In 1999, while shooting a film on the Khiam detention camp, those questions of reconstitution arose in a very practical manner: The camp of Khiam, located in the area occupied by Israel and the army of South Lebanon, was a camp about which much was heard but no image was ever seen. There was a kind of impossibility of representation. We met and filmed six detainees who had been recently freed. Through their testimony, the film is a kind of narrative experimentation, an exploration of the way the image, through speech, can be built progressively on the principles of evocation; this work echoes a long reflection on latency that we have been carrying out.

In the film Sonia, Afif, Soha, Rajae, Kifah, and Neeman, who spent about ten years in detention, recall the camp and narrate how they managed to survive, and to resist, through the creation and the clandestine production of a needle, a pencil, a string of beads, a chess game, and a sculpture. Faced with a total lack of elementary and necessary objects, the detainees developed and exchanged astonishing artistic production techniques. When we met them, most of them wanted to demonstrate how they made these objects. They wanted to reproduce their gestures in front of the camera, to recreate the objects for us. We had very long discussions on the subject: the gestures they had made, in spite of fear and torture, arose in the camp from their rage, their will to survive, to disobey, to preserve their humanity. Spending hours rubbing olive stones against the wall and getting bloody fingers trying to pierce them—how can one reproduce that?

Objects from the film Khiam: (left) engraved stone; (right) string of beads made of olive stones.

Very soon, their gestures appeared, in our eyes and in theirs, as fake, out of context, just the opposite of what they were trying to convey to us. Reconstitution seemed impossible. Only speech could really evoke all this, underline its strength. When the camp was dismantled in May 2000, it was possible, at last, to go to Khiam. The camp was later turned into a museum. However, during the war of 2006, it was totally destroyed by the Israeli army. Faced with ruins, there was a debate about rebuilding the camp as it had been. But is it possible to reconstitute a detention camp? What would that mean? And if it's not possible to reconstitute the camp, how to keep a trace of it?

In 2007, we again filmed the six detainees we had met in 1999. We asked them to react to the destruction of the camp and also to its possible reconstitution. They shared with us their reflections about memory, history, reconstitution, and imagination. They seemed to us somehow defeated. With the liberation of South Lebanon and the dismantling of the camp, the "winners" of the moment had no real consideration for them. The history of the camp was being rewritten without them. In the film, many of the former detainees mention the Ansar camp, which was much larger than Khiam, and which was also demolished. Today, on the site of the Ansar camp there is a restaurant, an amusement park, a swimming pool, and even a zoo.

The former detainees mention this camp as if they feared that Khiam would someday also be forgotten. It is a question of the trace, of the monument, of reconstitution. But how does one proceed? Can we rely on our memories,

our perception? How can transmission occur? How to ensure the transmission of testimonies when faced with the impossibility of reconstitution and the danger of disappearance?

When, in 2001, Jalal Toufic asked us to comment on our work for a special edition of the magazine *Al Adab*, we simulated an interview with Pierre Ménard, a fictitious character create by Jorge Luis Borges. In Borges' short story "Pierre Ménard, Author of Don Quixote," Ménard wants to rewrite identically the famous novel by Cervantes, but without merely copying it. Rather, he wants to place himself in the same writing conditions as Cervantes in order to find the original process which gave birth to the novel. Borges describes this whimsical and surreal work as philosophical proof of the superior, nearly overwhelming power of the historic and social context that surrounds a literary work.

In the interview, Pierre Ménard criticized us for burning, in our project *Wonder Beirut*, postcards of the '60s. The burning was meant to imitate the destruction of the real buildings depicted in the postcards by bombings and street battles. Pierre Ménard said:

> We had spoken about them and I had keenly advised you to do a literal version of the literal version, a literal photograph of the literal photograph. To photograph anew these postcards, yes, I do agree! But why burn them? You could have stopped just before that.

> I have here two images, one taken by the photographer in 1969, the other of this same postcard, dated 1998. Even if the photographs, as you say, are basically identical, the picture from 1998 is infinitely richer and subtler than the original photograph from 1969. It is amazing.
>
> By simply photographing these images you invented a new path, that of deliberate anachronism and wrong techniques.
>
> To simply reproduce them in 1998 would have been a revelation. To burn them is an understatement that weakens the strength and the power of the work.

In Pierre Ménard's opinion, redoing a gesture is never redoing it. It is doing it for the first time. It is like ecmnesia, the emergence of old memories, of the past relived as a contemporary experience. It is like dejà vu, this false temporal recognition due to a confusion between the present situation and a similar but not identical one in the past.

3. A Trace of a Trace: The Reconstitution of the Rocket Cedar 4

Faced with the absence of any record of the adventure of the Lebanese rockets, we feel the desire to rethink it in the present. While we are working on the film, we have the idea of redoing these gestures in the form of various art installations.

The first one consists in producing and offering to Haigazian University, where the project began, a scale reproduction of the Cedar 4 rocket, eight meters long and weighing a ton. The rocket is built in a factory in Dbayeh, mounted on a truck, and then transported through the streets of Beirut to Haigazian University. In doing this, we try to combat a narrowing of significations and of our territory. Those rockets were first devised in a Protestant university, directed by a reverend dean who considered this research a gesture of peace through education. Nowadays, the same object is synonymous with war and perceived only as a missile—knowing of course that missiles and weapons are a major political topic in Lebanon. Doing this is also an affirmation that this is not a weapon but the result of the research of a group of dreamers and scientists. And it's here, on the campus of the university, on this territory, that it will be recognized for what it is: an artistic and scientific project.

(Left) Transport of A Reconstitution in Lebanon; (Right) Installation of A Reconstitution at the Haigazian University, Lebanon.

Furthermore, making a sculpture as a tribute to the project and those dreamers means giving a materiality to that absent imaginary. It also means questioning the possibility of a "monument" (with all its connotations) to science, insofar as our society has very few unifying elements, little shared history, and many community or sectarian monuments erected by micro-powers. It also means overcoming the nostalgia for what used to be, the regret over what could not be achieved. We attempt to tell the story, to extend the gesture of the Lebanese Rocket Society into the present, to activate the chain of transmission. It means somehow respecting the archives when narrating this story, and at the same time eluding

Assad Jradi's attempt at photographing the Lebanese Rocket Society's rocket launch.

their excessive authority, as well as the charm of the photographic process. It is essential to avoid fetishizing the image. What is at stake is not conformity to an original. The gesture does not refer to the past. The gesture recalls it, but happens in the present, reaching for the possibility of conquering a new imaginary. To question this process, we tried to restage, to relaunch the rocket itself.

We remembered a discussion we had with the photographer Assad Jradi. Looking at one of his images, Assad believed that he had screwed up the photo and he was furious: he photographed only the trace of a rocket, a spoiled, unusable photo. We disagreed and said that we loved the photo, which we considered highly artistic. He looked dubious. There lies the difference between the document, its producer, and its use: to us, the image was artistic, while to Assad, it was rubbish. This gap expresses the transfer of the very stakes of the image. In our view, this image was a trace, the trace of a trace. It gave us the idea to replay what had been played.

Once again we requested the authorizations—about ten of them—to parade the rocket through town, but instead of moving the entire rocket, we transported, six months later, its cardboard outline in two pieces. We no longer feared being arrested or bombed, or causing an accident or a drama. We went along the same route, with the same convoy, to block the streets and attempt a photographic experience.

With the help of two other photographers with a digital cameras, and with our own argentic camera, we were to photograph the rocket passing through the frame during the time exposure of the photo, which meant that the photo depended on the speed of the convoy, the distance traveled, and the distance at which we stood from the moving convoy. Such an experience can only be carried out through repetition; various tests had to be conducted, many attempts for each image, starting all over again, blocking the streets, the highway, sending the convoy through once more until we found the right speed both for the truck and the camera shutter.

Since the outline of the rocket was white, the streaks behind it were ghostly, like the trace of a trace. This led to the *Restaged* series, a photographic reenactment of the event of transporting the rocket. These gestures of rebuilding the rocket and restaging its passage through the city differ from a traditional reenactment. In a traditional reenactment, you do again something that has

already been done. Usually, the purpose is to relive important moments in history, to bring back to life and transmit a historic heritage. Reenactment of this sort has a pedagogic and an illustrative aspect, as seen in common practices of recalling and recording social history. Usually it is based on communication strategies. An established power would like to make it known that a certain event occurred, and resorts to theatrical form. What we are talking about is different. The notion of reenactment we are working with is not a representation or an investigation of a past event in order to better understand it. It is not a repetition or an illustration. Rather, it is an experience: it consists in introducing an element from the past into today's reality and seeing what happens.

into the possibility of starting something new, of inventing himself in uncertainty. Arendt begins her article by quoting René Char: "No testament ever preceded our heritage." This aphorism testifies to the abyss created after the Second World War. Arendt describes a situation that is "at odds with tradition." Work, or more precisely action, should not attempt to link both. It is not a question of reviving a tradition or inventing a replacement to fill the breach between the past and the future. This very breach is at the heart of our vision of reenactment, facing a rupture which at the same time questions the relation between two worlds, between a past and a future.

The point, therefore, is to invoke a story to be able to reconfigure, to reinvent ourselves, and at the same time to

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Restaged n°3, 2011. Part IV of the Lebanese Rocket Society project.

4. Between Reenactment and Reenaction: On Ruptures, Past, Present, and Science Fiction

In the preface to *The Crisis of Culture*, Hannah Arendt defines the notion of breach as the moment of rupture in which man, caught between past and future, is compelled to project himself into an uncertain future, and therefore

experiment, to perform in the present, in doubt and uncertainty. Rather than reenactment, we should call it "reenaction," like an experiment, a restaging, a restart. In our work as filmmakers, we assemble the elements and let things happen, hoping something unusual will arise. Reenaction is doing something that has already occurred, but for the first time, such as repeating a gesture that did

not originally registered in the collective consciousness. The traditional definition of reenactment—"do once more in the present what occurred in the past"—could be replaced by "do for the first time something that already occurred." This brings us back to Pierre Ménard.

What is required is not to communicate but to experiment, to discover, to search without knowing the ultimate result. The possibility of failure always exists. Above all it is a matter of experience but also of negotiating with reality, within reality, aiming at creating new situations, new contexts, new meanings. Such an experiment is a sort of resistance to existing powers, a strategy of opposition and contestation.

What is performed in the Lebanese Rocket Society is the gesture of dreamers, the will to push against limits, to consider that science and art are the place of this possibility. In such a case, the rocket appears no longer as an object of war but refers to a scientific and artistic project. Such an action should not be a collective one that could be seen as an instrument of patriotism or nationalism. It is a personal and singular experience, an individual effort, a singularity which attempts to reconfigure and link itself to history. It does not stem from a place of power or of knowledge, from a place of certainties, but rather from a place of doubts in the face of the unknown and the future. It is also a recognition of filiation, a tribute.

This is what we try to get at in the installation *The Golden Record.* Starting in 1962, the Lebanese Rocket Society began installing in the heads of the Cedar rockets a radio transmitter, which broadcast the message "Long live Lebanon." This reminded us of the American space exploration missions, such as Voyager 1 and 2, which carried on board a gold-plated copper disk as well as a cell and a needle to read it. Engraved on the disk were sounds selected to draw a portrait of the diversity of life, history, and culture on earth, a message of peace and liberty, a "bottle thrown into the sea of interstellar space".

We wondered how we could represent that period of the '60s through sound. This led to the creation of "The Golden Record of the Lebanese Rocket Society," a soundtrack created from sound archives of the '60s, based on the memories of the various members of the Lebanese Rocket Society. It is a portrait and a sound representation of Beirut and the world in the '60s. "The Golden Record" is at the heart of the animated film that ends our documentary on the Lebanese Rocket Society. The uchronia we developed with Ghassan Halwani imagines a Lebanon in 2025 where the space project did not cease in 1967. Strangely, in the Arab world there are very few science fiction works that imagine the future, not only in cinema but also in literature.

These various tributes to dreamers are individual attempts to, as Hannah Arendt says it, move in this breach between past and future. Like a game of reference and historical crossings ... That is maybe where history, past, present, but also science fiction and anticipation, can be questioned, where we can project ourselves into a future, even an uncertain one.

Video still from The Golden Record. Part III of the Lebanese Rocket Society project.

The National Museum of Space, Beirut, 2025. A drawing by Ghassan Halwani for the film The Lebanese Rocket Society, The Strange Tale of The Lebanese Space Race.

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Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige have collaborated for fifteen years as filmmakers and artists. They have focused on images, representations, and the history of their home country, Lebanon, questioning the region's imaginaries. Together, they have directed documentaries such as *Khiam 2000–2007* (2008) and *El Film el Mafkoud* (The Lost Film) (2003) and feature films such as *Al Bayt el Zaher* (1999) and *A Perfect Day* (2005). Their last feature film, *Je Veux Voir* (I Want to See), starring Catherine Deneuve and *Rabih Mroue*, premiered at the Cannes film festival in 2008. The French critics Guild chose it as Best Film Singulier for 2008. Their artworks have been shown in museums, biennials, and art centers around the world, in solo or collective exhibitions and are part of important public and private collections, such as Musee d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; FNAC France; the Guggenheim, New York; the Centre Georges Pompidou, France; V & A London, the Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE. They received the 2012 Abraaj Capital Art Prize for their work A Letter Can Always Reach Its Destination. In 2012 they released their feature documentary *The Lebanese Rocket Society: The Strange Tale of the Lebanese Space Race* and presented a series of artistic installations around this '60 space project.

1
The book was *Vehicles*, edited by Akram Zaatari and published by the Arab Image Foundation and Mind The Gap.

Franco “Bifo” Berardi

Pasolini in Tottenham

I don’t know if Pasolini ever visited the United Kingdom. Maybe yes, maybe no. I don’t really care. I would like to talk about Pasolini in Tottenham. I want to question the sensibility of the poet of the mid-twentieth-century Roman *borgate* from the point of view of a violent rebellion of lumpenproletarians that took place in the English suburbs in August 2011.

The visions and predictions that we find in his writings and films are good starting points for a discussion about what happened in the streets of Tottenham and Peckham, and also about what is going to happen in the coming months and years all over Europe, in the insurrection that has already started and that will continue to rage everywhere in the Old Continent—a continent that is turning into a region of violence and misery thanks to neoliberal politics, financial dictatorship, and the ignorance and dogmatism of the European ruling class.

Meeting Pasolini

I met Pasolini in 1965, or maybe 1966, when as a schoolboy I went to see *The Gospel According to Matthew* with Professor Corrado Festi, a blind man who taught philosophy in the high school where I studied. Professor Festi was a libertarian communist who brought a student or two to the movies with him because he needed someone to explain what we were seeing, so that he himself could see.

I met Pasolini again in the year 1968, after the Valle Giulia riots, when for the first time the students did not run away, but instead reacted against the violence of the police. In Valle Giulia, Pasolini wrote a poem—a bad poem, I believe: rancorous and sour, without light or irony.

But it was interesting nonetheless. The poem’s title was *Il PCI ai giovani!* (The Italian Communist Party to the young!), but it came to be widely known by the title *Vi odio cari studenti* (I hate you dear students) only because the magazine *L’Espresso* printed the poem with this alternate title. In the poem, Pasolini accuses the students of being the power-hungry offspring of rich parents who fight against their parents in order to wrest power from their hands. Simultaneously, he declares his love for the policemen, who are young sons of farmers and workers. Old populist rhetoric, I must say. *Paccottiglia* (junk), as we say in Italian.

Then I met Pasolini for the third and final time at the house of a mutual friend, Laura Betti, one night in 1973. I greeted that unsmiling harsh man without much sympathy. In those years, he was publishing “Letters to Gennariello” in the pages of *Il Corriere della sera,* and the portrait he was drawing of the young Neapolitan proletarian seemed fake to me.[1] I was dealing with young proletarians from Naples and other Southern Italian cities, and their sensibilities seemed very different from Pasolini’s

Gennariello. The young southerners I met in the Northern Italian factories were no less old-fashioned and instinctive than Pasolini's Gennariello, but they were much sharper and more sophisticated. They were the migrant workers assembled in the factories of Milan and Turin, the driving force behind the new wave of autonomous struggles against capitalist exploitation and industrial work. They resembled the young Fiat worker described by Balestrini in his novel *Vogliamo tutto* (We want everything), published some years before.

Gennariello came out of an old populist mythology that didn't speak to me in the least.

to his works that use images, Pasolini is a visionary, almost a prophet, and he is able to see much further than anybody else. Although a bad poet and an old-fashioned ideologue whose knowledge of Marxist philosophy was quite poor, Pasolini was a man of extraordinary vision.

In my opinion, he did not understand the meaning of the student movement of '68. Many of the students who took to the streets in that year, in Italy and France and elsewhere, were probably the offspring of bourgeois parents. Many were born to professionals and petit bourgeois, but others came from working-class families, although access to universities was still limited for the children of workers back then. But sociological

Author unknown, Italy circa 1971.

Words and Visions

When we look at Pasolini's work, when we read his novels and his poems and his countless interviews and articles, and when we watch his movies and documentaries, we sometimes feel we are getting lost in a labyrinth of paradoxes. I have tried to make sense of his paradoxical judgments and opinions, of his idiosyncrasies, passions, and aversions. The general conclusion that I have reached is this: when he writes, when he speaks, when he ideologizes, Pasolini is essentially a reactionary and a conformist disguised as a provocateur. But when it comes

considerations such as these do not really get to the heart of the matter.

The meaning of the upheaval that shook the world in the year 1968 can only be grasped by looking at the long-term recomposition of labor that took place during that period, transforming the technological structure of the production process. That movement marked the initial emergence of cognitive work, which in the following decades became the main engine of production. The alliance between students and industrial workers was not a rhetorical

exhibition of solidarity, but a sign of the increasing productivity and interdependence of industrial labor, the application of new technologies, and the prospect of liberating social time from the slavery of labor.

Pasolini was totally wrong in his appraisal of the student movement because he missed the crucial point: the social origin of students was not the important thing as much as the new role that cognitive work was destined to play in the transformation of capitalist production and in the political composition of the working class.

with *Lotta Continua*, Pasolini made a movie entitled *12 Dicembre*. It is not hard to understand Pasolini's attraction to *Lotta Continua*. "The priority of these young militants is passion and sentiment," he said. And a certain degree of theoretical inaccuracy—what we call "*pressapochismo*" (carelessness)—helped. *Lotta Continua* was not a political organization, but a climate of mind, a feeling which sometimes verged on populism. A broad feeling of love for the people, the destitute, and the dispossessed was the common ground of *Lotta Continua* and Pasolini.

In the "Letters to Gennariello," this love for the poor

Film still from Porcile (Pigsty), 1969. Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Gennariello Fake and True

After 1968, Pasolini's approach to the movement changed: he was pushed by the very force of events to acknowledge the proletarian character of the movement, and he drew close to *Lotta Continua* (Continuous Struggle), a leftist organization that mixed Marxism, Maoism, and anarchism with a generous helping of Christian radicalism. Together

melded with a mythology about the supposed authenticity of the young, pre-modern Neapolitan young man the writer wanted to protect from the contamination of consumerism and modern coarseness. But this mythology was empty and fake: the true Gennariellos in those years were not so naive and unsophisticated as Pasolini liked to imagine. In 1973, young workers from Southern Italy

occupied the Fiat factory in Turin, and in 1977 they launched a general insurrection that reached its peak in Rome and Bologna in the spring of that year.

Having been killed in November 1975, Pasolini did not see the explosion of 1977. So we cannot say if he would have recognized in the insurgents of Rome and Bologna the brothers of his Gennariello. I don't think so. Rather, I think Pasolini would have joined the Stalinists of the Italian Communist Party (who after '89 converted to neoliberalism, but in '77 still worshipped the supreme authority of the State) in condemning the delirium and madness of Mao-Dadaists and *Indiani Metropolitani*.[2] Who knows?

Fascism Belongs to the Future

I think that Pasolini's statements about the meaning of '68 are wrong. He totally misunderstood the historical process encompassing the student upheaval. But on some crucial points, Pasolini was able to see (and I mean *to see*) things that we missed completely.

The main mistake of the Italian student movement, and the mistake of the intellectual groups that were the progressive soul of that movement—my personal mistake and the mistake of *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power), the group I was part of—was exactly in our thinking that fascism belonged to the past. We thought that the enemy of students and workers was the neo-capitalist, social-democratic bourgeoisie. Fascists still existed, of course, but they were considered throwbacks from the dark past of Mussolini, isolated criminals who the ruling class could use at its convenience to scare the popular movement, to divert the attention of the workers from the struggle against capitalist exploitation.

This is why the movement launched self-defeating campaigns of *antifascismo militante* (militant antifascism) that only managed to fall into the trap of violence—hammering at some black-clad idiots and being hammered by them. We were dead wrong, because fascism is not something that belongs to the past. Fascism belongs to the future. This is what Pasolini clearly saw, although he was unable to explain it in plain theoretical words. Pasolini rightly linked fascism to sexual humiliation, consumerism, ignorance, rage, and ugliness. All of these have been on the rise during the years of neoliberal dictatorship. Ugliness is everywhere—in cities ravaged by speculation, in bodies wasted by exploitation and loneliness, in ubiquitous advertising billboards and television screens.

It is not easy to say what fascism means, but I humbly propose that fascism is a pathology of identity—a pathology hitting those who are too weak to accept the idea that identity is ever-changing and multifarious, and too frightened by their own uncertainty and ambivalence. Pasolini was able to predict the spread of this ambivalence, this fear, this frailty, and to foresee the epidemic rage that was destined to emerge from this.

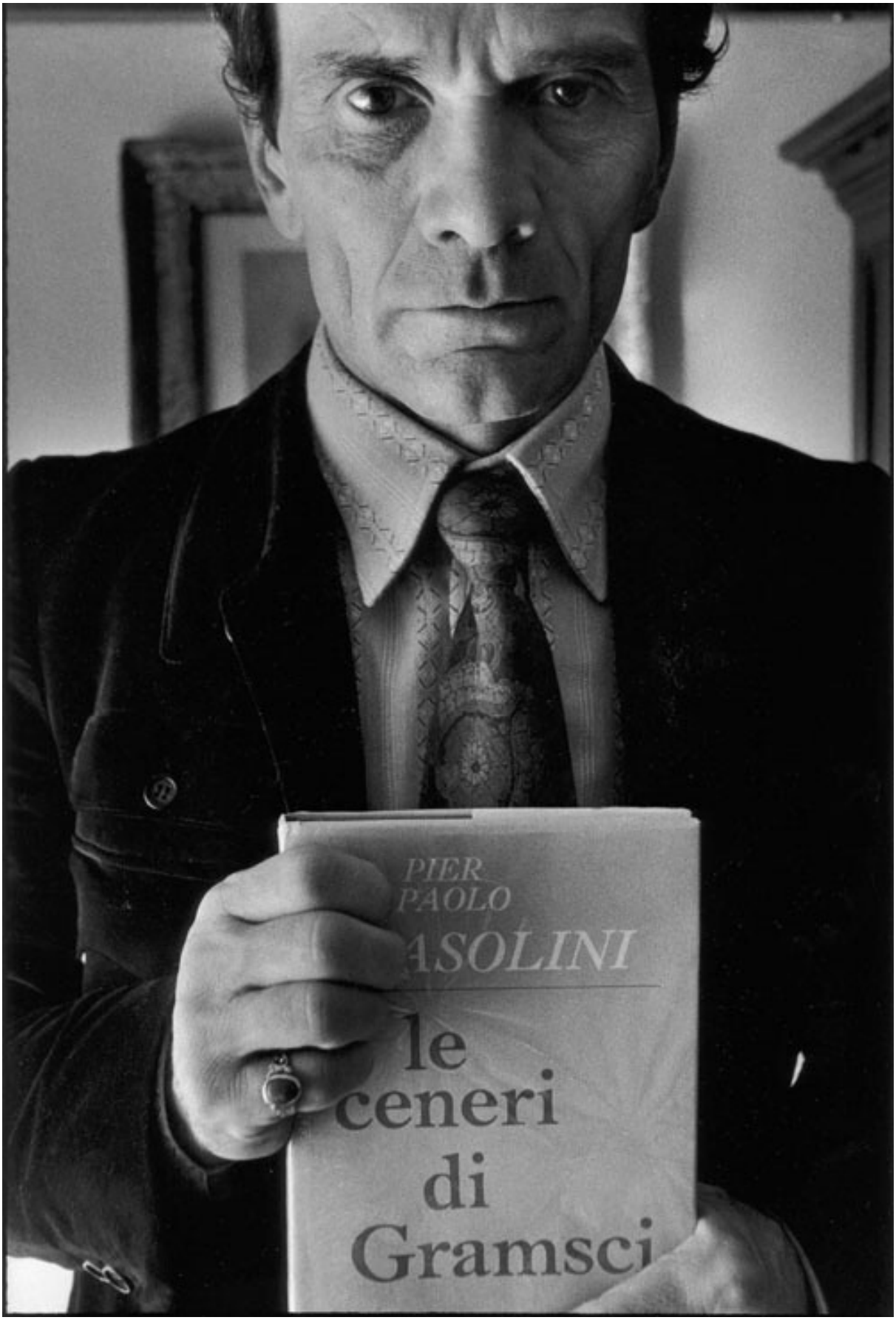
Power's Worshippers

Pasolini saw better than I and my fellow students and workers in the autonomous movement the personal destiny of the '68ers. Let's go back to coarse poem titled *Il PCI ai giovani!*, where he expresses his contempt for the students of the movement and his love for the poor young policemen. He says that those young people, those students, were only fighting for power, were only aiming at taking power from the hands of their parents.

It's foolish to believe that this accusation applies to the entirety of the movement. But a large part of the social body that we called "the movement" has shown that Pasolini was right on this point. I'm thinking particularly of those people who were part of the pro-Soviet Communist Party, and also those who were part of the many Stalinist-Maoist parties. Many of the intellectuals and militants who were followers of the Leninist Faith (the faith in power) have since converted to the Neoliberal Faith. Richard Pearl and Massimo D'Alema, André Glucksmann and Giuliano Ferrara, William Kristol and Vladimir Putin—all of them have this in common. In their youth, they accepted and justified the concentration camps of Joseph Stalin, the crimes and lies and oppression of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. All of them accepted and hailed the proletarian dictatorship as a step towards the bright future of socialism.

They were Maoists and Stalinists and Trotskyites—in other words, Leninists. And all of them subsequently turned into neoliberal worshippers of capitalist competition and capitalist growth, accepting and justifying the crimes and lies of neoliberal rule. Why is this? Why did the same intellectuals who in '68 waved the red book of Mao go on to publish, ten or fifteen years later, articles railing against egalitarianism and extolling the glories of capitalist democracy and infinite growth? The answer lies, of course, in their miserable personal biographies—as Pasolini rightly perceived. But biographical facts are not enough to understand their betrayal, because their betrayal is not only an act of moral baseness (which it certainly is). It is also an act of intellectual cohesion.

There is a rationale to their baseness. All the names I've listed above are names of arrogant climbers with unimpressive intellects, but their common denominator is this: all of them believed in the Dialectical Creed. Therefore, they were convinced that the working class was destined to win. In the dreams of young Stalinists and Trotskyites and Maoists, the working class was destined to win and exert power through violence, dictatorship, and



Pier Paolo Pasolini holding his 1957 book of poems, Le ceneri di Gramsci, date unknown. Photo: Sandro Becchetti.

Pier Paolo Pasolini, Il Fiore delle Mille e una notte (Arabian Nights), 1973-74.

terror. When these intellectuals realized that things were not going according to plan, they did not discard the Dialectical Creed: Reason will be Real, and Reality will be Rational. They quite simply changed sides. For someone who believes that History is dialectical, the winner is always right. His mind always follows the same paradigm, and he always trusts in the same dogma: Only Power Is Real. This is the philosophical principle of the Leninist intellectuals. This is their moral North Star.

Pasolini in Tottenham

But they are wrong. What is called "reality" refers not only to what exists, but also to the realm of the possible. What exists as imagination, what exists as a tendency in the concatenation of social intelligence, is real—although the existing power of capitalism is acting to block the possible from emerging. What is possible may be killed, repressed, or forced back, but it is real.

Being arrogant simpletons, these second-rate intellectuals named Glucksmann and Ferrara and Pearl and D'Alema could not really perceive the depth of the social and cultural transformation that they attempted to govern by shifting from the side of the workers to the side of capital. They could not imagine the unpredictability of the process they simplistically reduced to a problem of winners and losers. They supported the criminal turn in the history of human evolution implemented by Thatcher and Reagan. They supported violence, financial dictatorship, and terror, and they named it "democracy." But history is not finished, and now capitalism is in agony. Representative democracy is a bedtime story that masks the reality of financial dictatorship and war.

Now I want to go with Pasolini to Tottenham. A young man, Mark Duggan, was killed in Tottenham by police on August 4. After his death, thousands of young workers and unemployed people and students took to the streets in the suburbs of London, Birmingham, and Manchester and attacked banks and shops, stealing goods from supermarkets, setting houses ablaze, and attacking police. The British Prime Minister, quickly called back from his holiday in Tuscany, declared: they are common criminals.

I have tried to look at the four nights of rage from Pasolini's

Film still from Pier Paolo Pasolini, Teorema, 1968.

point of view. Fascist consumerism or lumpen desacralization of consumerist rituals? Personally, I despise the priggish journalists and hypocritical intellectuals who screamed in Murdoch's newspapers that the riots were not political events, but coarse acts of consumerist violence. During the last thirty years or so, media, advertising, and neoliberal ideologists have obsessively repeated a message to young people: life is

competition, and the field of competition is consumption. The more gadgets you have, the better your life will be, even if you have to endure exploitation and humiliation every day. Now, all of a sudden, the kids have been told that they have to pay the debt accumulated by the financial class. Social spending has to be cut and there will be no jobs for young people. No wonder that people who have been promised lots of gadgets in exchange for their lives want those gadgets at any cost.

Often in Pasolini's novels and movies, the young male body is an object of worship and contempt. Beyond its sexual undertones, this ambivalence has a political and cultural meaning: the beautiful and the criminal are joined in the same person. Think of the title character from Pasolini's film *Accattone*, simultaneously innocent and sordid.

Many say that the London rioters are just looters—consumerist and violent. They forget that these young people have been shaped by an ugly human landscape produced through thirty years of competition and consumerism. Empathy has become frail, solidarity has been ridiculed and destroyed. The rioters of London have been cultivated by Murdoch's popular magazines and TV garbage.

We should not worship this rebellion and we should not condemn it. We should be able to accept and understand its historical meaning: capitalism is morally and economically bankrupt. From within the much-needed insurrection of the precarious generation we should be able to create a new consciousness, a new self-perception based on solidarity, on the refusal of exploitation, on frugality, and on a culture of sharing: sharing production in the web-based world and sharing consumption in the city.

Film still from Pier Paolo Pasolini, I racconti di Canterbury (The Canturbury Tales), 1972.

European Insurrection

Leftist intellectuals may despise consumerism and ersatz culture, but in my view this is not a time for moralizing. It is a time to imagine a possible social recomposition of the precarious body and the general intellect. Cognitive labor and precariousness are not separate realities. Cognitive workers are unemployed, and precarious workers are often highly educated young people whose intellectual skills are ominously underused. Cognitarians and lumpens intermingle in daily life, and sometimes they decide to go looting together.

Looting is not good, particularly when it involves the life and belongings of common people. But from looting we must move towards the liberation of the general intellect. I don't think that all the young people who took to the streets of England on those August nights were motivated by political solidarity. I believe they were motivated by many different feelings: rage, in some cases egoistic consumerist craving, but also, in many cases, by a desire for togetherness. Insurrections are never the effect of a well-conceived project, of well-mannered intentions. Generally, insurrections start from a mix of different impulses. What matters is the ability of a minority (call them the political avant-garde, call them organic intellectuals, maybe call them schizoanalysts) to find concepts, and words, and gestures that give different people a common vision and a common understanding of the real and the possible.

In the coming months, we won't need a political party. Rather, we'll need a bunch of curators for the European insurrection. We don't have to provoke the insurrection, as the insurrection is being provoked by the European Central Bank and by the cowardice and ignorance of the European ruling class. Instead, we have to introduce into the unavoidable insurrection some perception of the potency of collective intelligence, and we have to connect this perception to a desire for sociality. The general intellect is looking for the erotic and social body that it lost in the process of virtualization. Similarly, precarious life is looking for a collective intelligence that is fragmented and dispersed.

In trying to imagine Pasolini on the stage of the present European insurrection, I think that he would quote Matthew's Gospel:

> Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life,
> what you shall eat or what you shall drink,
> nor about your body, what you shall put on.
> Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap
> nor gather into barns,
> and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
> Are you not of more value than they?
> And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit

> to his span of life?
> And why are you anxious about clothing?
> Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin;
> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?
>
> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?"
> For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

I am an atheist and I do not believe that any almighty Father is in the sky. But I know the infinite potency of the general intellect, when it is governed by solidarity and affection, to be a desire free of greed. We can rely on collective intelligence: it is our Father who is on earth. It is our autonomy from any subjection—to capitalism, to the state, and to God.

X

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1
Shortly before his murder in 1975, Pasolini published a series of letters addressed to an imaginary student named Gennariello, a young boy from Naples, in the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della sera* .

2
The Indiani Metropolitani (Metropolitan Indians) were the so-called creative wing of the Italian students movement who often dressed up like Native Americans.

James T. Hong

From Guilt to Sickness, Part II: The Bite of a Dog into a Stone

Continued from " From Guilt to Sickness, Part I: Looking for Plague in All the Right Places"

November 18, 2012: Unity is Strength

Today we will commemorate the seventieth anniversary of a biological weapons attack on Chongshan, a village near the city of Yiwu. I am not as rested as I would like to be, since I know this will be a long day of carrying heavy equipment.

The night before, my roommate, Professor J., excitedly showed me video clips of what he called the real "qi gong." Nobody was "qi gonging" anybody in the face or head, so I quickly lost interest. Since the Professor is a Maoist, I asked him about the Great Famine and the millions of Chinese who died as a result of Mao's policies. He admitted that mistakes were made and that many people died, but he said a lot of what I had read or heard was hyperbole or anti-Mao, anti-China propaganda. He assured me that the numbers must be a lot lower than tens of millions. He also acknowledged the stupidity of the Cultural Revolution and the serious social problems China still faces. As a professor of sociology who makes about 7000 RMB/$1100 USD per month, it is his job to analyze ongoing social problems in China. He said he harbored neither hate nor love for the United States, but he loathed US interference in Chinese affairs. For him, China must solve its own problems and is perfectly capable of doing so without American meddling. He put it quite simply: China doesn't want to be pushed around or bullied by the US.

I find this a strange song to sing in the company of the Japanese. But the lyrics would make great motivational posters.

His Chinese cigarettes made him cough most of the night, so he took some kind of pills to suppress it. He gave me some, but since the bottle they came in had no label, I had no idea what they were. I refused to swallow them. Still, I thought the pills might also quell the gag reflex I get from cheap Chinese cigarettes.

Located in an old Confucian temple, the Yiwu/Chongshan Biological Warfare Museum will host the commemoration. Survivors, victims, representatives, and journalists will all be in attendance. The Japanese will be the most important guests.

We drive through the mist of a cold Sunday morning and arrive at a bustling farmer's market in front of the temple. Villagers crowd the street and numerous stalls line the

edge of the narrow road. Slowly and with liberal use of the horn, the driver brings us to the temple without a scratch on the car or any pedestrian.

Cameras ready, the commemoration begins. I see a lot of familiar but older faces. W.X. speaks in Mandarin—the Yiwu/Chongshan dialect—and Japanese. She introduces the speakers, who take turns summarizing what still needs to be done about Japanese biological warfare in China. Some of the survivors strain to get a better view. Some seem bored. Conversations can be heard in the back, and occasionally a rooster disturbs the solemnity. This is an ad hoc event, not a governmental affair, so it's a bit chaotic. There are no Westerners present except for me. I enjoy their absence.

After the speeches, we prepare to march to nearby Linshangsi Temple, which was seized by the Japanese and converted into an improvised vivisection laboratory. Members of Unit 731 and Unit 1644 kidnapped villagers and farmers, infected them with various toxins, and then vivisected them alive in the temple, or sometimes outside.[1]

Not knowing anything about the history of the area, one would be hard-pressed to guess that this was the site of a Japanese germ weapons attack. It looks like a typical Chinese village, with dirt roads, brick houses, wandering chickens and geese, hanging clothes, and numerous Chinese peasant families. But seventy years ago, hundreds of villagers were killed by plague and many others by Japanese gunshots, bayonet thrusts, and burning. As described by an Agence France Press reporter,

> At its peak that terrible November, the plague here was killing twenty Chinese a day, all of them civilians. Their screams sundered the night from behind shuttered windows and bolted doors, and some of the most delirious victims ran or crawled down the narrow alleyways to gulp putrid water from open sewers in vain attempts to vanquish the septic fire that was consuming them. They died excruciating deaths.[2]

Carrying wreaths, the hundred or so of us walk the dirt road, past the new highway, and toward the Linshangsi Temple on a nearby hill. It's on this march that I capture perhaps the best shots of the whole expedition. From the point of view afforded by the lower part of the temple, the slow, wreath-bearing procession against a backdrop of a modern Chinese highway bridge reminds me of the first foggy shots from Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God.* I am confident this shot will bookend anything I produce about this trip.

After paying their respects to the victims, the mourners break into a patriotic Chinese song from the time of the

Procession to Linshangsi Temple, Chongshan, Zhejiang Province.

Japanese invasion called "Unity is Strength":

团结就是力量， Unity is Strength,

团结就是力量， Unity is Strength,

这力量是铁， This strength is iron,

这力量是钢， This force is steel,

比铁还硬， Harder than iron,

比钢还强， Stronger than steel,

向着法西斯帝开火, Open fire on the fascist emperor,

让一切不民主的制度死亡！ Let all undemocratic systems die!

向着太阳， Toward the sun,

向着自由， Toward freedom,

向着新中国, Toward the new China,

发出万丈光芒！ Shine with boundless radiance!

After a quick lunch cooked by temple staff, the biological warfare representatives from different provinces and cities confer about the future prospects of the movement. They report on new investigations (which are few), government assistance (which is nonexistent), and promotion (of which there is little, if any). W.X. is frustrated that the other representatives, out of fear of government authorities, won't support her bid to start an official NGO. However, the very definition of an NGO seems antithetical to the existence and power of the Chinese Communist Party. Even though a few environmental and health-related NGOs are allowed to function in China, most never receive official permission from the authorities and must establish themselves in other countries or territories, such as Hong Kong. The Chinese authorities had already quashed W.X.'s bid to start an NGO for biological warfare victims. The

government doesn't support her, and her fellow biological weapons representatives won't either. I tell her to try in Hong Kong, the US, or even Taiwan, but she is adamant that an NGO for Chinese victims of Japanese biological warfare must be based in China.

with sincerity, but, as the older survivor chimes in, they must also pay reparations. How much? No answer. It just cannot be minuscule. Too little would constitute another insult.

They lead me to a memorial wall for local victims. I

Chongshan plague survivors

The conference is far too crowded, and I leave to survey the grounds. I encounter two elderly plague survivors and set up my camera for an interview. The younger survivor, at only seventy-four, watched three of his family members die, and he can still picture the festering facial blisters on one of the victims. The older survivor was fourteen when the Japanese attacked in 1942. When a lymph gland near his groin painfully swelled, his mother used a needle to burst the bubo. His memory is clear and his voice is strong as he points to his crotch and describes the puncturing, oozing, and subsequent cleansing with distilled liquor. They both still remember the Japanese plane spraying the area with germs, and they both clearly recall the Japanese soldiers in Imperial Army uniforms. Although I had already met them years before, they don't remember me. I ask them if they still hate the Japanese. Of course they do. I remind them that five Japanese are sitting in the conference room next door. They know, but distinctions must be made. They state it in the most trivial way: "Some Japanese are bad, and some are good." I ask them if they can ever forgive the Japanese. They don't answer. The younger man responds that the Japanese must apologize

recognize many of the faces. I interviewed some of them a few years ago. I've eaten with some of them. A few are in my previous documentary, *Lessons of the Blood*. Many have died in the interim. There's no past tense with death—once you're dead, you're always dead in the present. It's a chilling experience to see these pictures and be reminded of the faces and voices of the victims. I appreciated their indomitable will to live. I realize I will never see some of these people again. I think that whatever it is I am doing, it's pointless. I can't really help them. I'm not an activist.

November 19, 2012: No Forgiveness

The next morning we take a public bus to the city of Quzhou for a visit to the local biological warfare museum. I'm surprised that some Westerners have signed the guestbook, as a germ warfare site isn't usually a local tourist attraction (though it is in Harbin/Pingfan, the

Chongshan wall of biological warfare victims

former headquarters of Unit 731). Moreover, Quzhou isn't exactly a top-notch vacation spot, or at least it wasn't in my memories of the place.

A Unit 731 plane carrying a mixture of infected wheat, millet, and fleas first sprayed Quzhou in 1940, which lead to an outbreak of plague. The epidemic was contained but recurred in 1941. Allegedly, around 50,000 people died from the plague and other Unit 731 contagions during the first six-year period after the initial 1940 attack.[3] The plague was still killing people after the war officially ended.

Touring the old part of Quzhou near the museum, we find that many of the local temples are being renovated. At least some of the city's new wealth has gone to renewal and repair instead of creative destruction.

The museum has big plans. The director, a victim himself, shows us the planning guide for the revamped museum. It's filled with impressive computer mockups of interactive video exhibits, adjustable track lighting, and meticulous museum displays. The current displays are showing their age. I find my signature occupying a part of a pitiable vitrine because I was one of the very few foreigners to take an interest in the place.

Before we finish our Quzhou tour and say our goodbyes to the Chinese professors and most of the Japanese faction, I finally get a chance to sit down and interview S.K., the Japanese documentary producer.

Me: Why are you interested in Japanese biological warfare?
S.K.: Because biological warfare is a national secret.
Me: Why this secret? Why not others?
S.K.: Because this is a unique, large-scale secret.
Me: Do you feel guilty about what the Japanese military did?
S.K.: Yes.
Me: How about your parents?
S.K.: My father was stationed in Mudanjiang (known in Japanese as "Botankuo") in Manchuria. He must have felt some guilt, because he didn't talk much about the war. But I remember very clearly, when I was still very young, he talked about hiding in the grass from the Russians. There was little cover, and he wanted to hide. I felt that he must have done something wrong—something wrong that

made him want to hide.
Me: Do you think the Chinese victims can forgive the Japanese for biological warfare?
S.K.: No.
Me: Do you want to be forgiven?
S.K.: I don't expect any forgiveness from the victims. They might show some understanding, but I expect no forgiveness.
Me: Why doesn't the Japanese government apologize about germ warfare and just be done with the problem?
S.K.: There are two issues. First, Japan is close to the United States. Second, an apology would hurt Japanese pride.
Me: That's all? That's it?
S.K.: Because the crimes were so cruel, so inhumane, were the Japanese to apologize, it would hurt the Japanese tribe, the Japanese race.
Me: How come Germany can apologize and get some respect for their apologies while Japan cannot?
S.K.: The Germans could not hide what they did. Japan, with the United States, hid biological warfare, and since they have hidden it for so long, the Japanese government still sees the issue as something that will always be hidden.

In Karl Jaspers's terminology, S.K. feels political, moral, and metaphysical guilt. He also suspects that his father shared some kind of criminal guilt, which then he, as his son and not simply as a Japanese, inherited. Pride functions as a fundamental obstacle to any sort of atonement, and S.K.'s response implies that Japan is still essentially a shame-based culture. Even a Japanese right-wing-funded, cinematic rehabilitation of Hideki Tojo, who was executed for war crimes in 1948, is entitled *Pride*.[4]

For the time being, the Japanese and US governments remain politically and metaphysically guilty of conspiring to cover up Unit 731's atrocities and of protecting and rewarding the perpetrators. However, the US has at least declassified thousands of documents relating to Japanese biological war crimes, and many of these documents implicate the US governmental authorities of the time.[5] Despite the absence of any official indictment, conviction, or admission of guilt, the US can take some pride in its release of the documents.

We head to the nearby city of Jinhua, which was also barraged with biological weapons, primarily bubonic plague, in 1942. N.S., the independent Japanese researcher, is interested in finding more corroborating wartime Chinese documents and interviewing surviving witnesses. He is in his late sixties and has a heart problem, but he seems to have no trouble keeping up. His own obsessive research in Japan unearthed a number of valuable documents, which assisted W.X.'s failed lawsuit against the Japanese government. During the war, his father was drafted into the Japanese Imperial Army and served with the Signal Corps in China. Guilt has also fueled his decades-long interest and relentless fixation on Japanese biological warfare.

In Jinhua, W.X. buys me a shitload of fresh fruit. It's good stuff, but there is no way I can eat it all in a week. She tells me that I should give some to the Changde visitors, a group of survivors/representatives from Hunan Province, which lies east of Zhejiang. They had a long train ride from Changde, and the group is excited to see Jinhua for the first time.

An important shipping and railway point, Changde was first attacked by Unit 731 in 1941. In one of a series of field tests, a Unit 731 plane dropped and sprayed bacteria-covered foodstuffs, plague-infected fleas, and other test vectors, like strips of paper, onto the city. Soon the plague and other diseases spread to surrounding villages as well.

In 1943, Changde was the site of a major military battle between Chinese and invading Japanese troops numbering in the tens of thousands. After losing the city, the Chinese were able to surround the invaders, cut off their supply lines, and force them to withdraw. During the retreat, Unit 731 agents disseminated plague and mistakenly infected many of their own soldiers. The 1943 Battle of Changde is considered a decisive Chinese victory against the Imperial Japanese Army.

One of the members of the Changde group is my roommate, and I'm waiting around in our room to give him and his companions the extra fruit. They arrive around 1 a.m., boisterous and energized by their wanderings around the unfamiliar city. I assume that they are at least modestly drunk, but it turns out that none of them drinks alcohol, and they turn on the TV and invite me for tea. While chatting they spill cigarette ashes, sunflower seed shells, and fruit remains all over the floor, which is now sticky and grimy. The bathroom has a good bit of urine and spittle around the toilet. Thinking about the hotel staff, I feel some moral guilt, so I try to clean up a bit.

My roommate is an elderly plague survivor in his eighties—in all respects a friendly fellow—but his intermittent snoring is much louder than my clock's alarm. Finding it unbearable, I stuff tissues into my ears and even throw my pillow at him. Again feeling a bit of moral guilt, this time at attempting to disturb an old man's sleep—a plague victim no less—I go downstairs to the lobby and try to get another room. My passport has already been used for one room, so I am out of luck. I return with a large beer, down it in a minute, and hope for two hours of sleep at best. The long days and little rest are starting to add up.

Our group at the Quzhou Biological Warfare Museum. Can you spot the Japanese?

November 20, 2012: Never Forget

Early in the morning we go to Jinhua city hall, a typically imposing Communist Party building. Security requires that all visitors swipe their Chinese identity cards, so W.X. tells one of the guards that she's swiping my card and the Japanese researcher's card for us. As foreigners, N.S. and I don't have Chinese identity cards.

I'm rather excited to be in a place where I am not supposed to be, but the city hall ends up being rather dreary, like any other bureaucratic edifice. W.X. has brought us here to find some officials who might be able to help us with the investigation. For her years of tireless efforts at documenting biological warfare victims and for representing the survivors during the failed 1997 Japanese court case, W.X. has become a minor celebrity in China, or at least in the province. Some local government officials sympathize with her mission and understand the plight of the victims. Not every government official is an evil corrupt asshole.

After the meeting, one of W.X.'s newly rich, distant relatives takes us to a swanky restaurant for an early lunch. It seems that every person who shares her surname in this province is a relative of hers. He treats us to a variety of local Jinhua delicacies. One of these is a large bone broken in half and presented with a straw. The relative urges N.S. and me, the two foreigners, to try it. I ask him why he doesn't, but he just replies that he can't. It's definitely interesting, and I've never eaten bone marrow in such a fashion, so I'm tempted. Everyone at the table stares at me while I consider my next course of action. N.S. doesn't touch his bone. Unable to resist the social pressure and my own curiosity, I insert the straw and suck. I will remember that taste forever, because it proved to be my undoing.

With N.S.'s rigorous research and local maps, we can pinpoint the exact locations around Jinhua of the plague

outbreaks that occurred seventy years ago. W.X.'s relative chauffeurs us to one of the villages on the outskirts of the city. Many of the rural villages in Zhejiang Province look quite similar. Newer, more modern dwellings are constantly under construction, and expensive cars dot the main thoroughfares. We park near a community center swarming with senior citizens, and, as it happens, flies. With a lot of old people around, we should be able to find someone who can detail the wartime plague outbreaks.

I had been to more than a few rural Chinese villages, and I knew what to expect, but the filth in this particular village was shocking. Spit stains, dog shit, and garbage littered the ground, while the open air reeked of a trash bin. Since these villages probably don't receive many newcomers, our crew, which now included some Jinhua reporters, attracted all the attention. A crowd of perhaps every local resident soon surrounded us, making filming and interviewing difficult, especially with all the chatter. Even the stray dogs were curious to sniff us.

write down a few names, get some birthdates, and prepare for another village. We don't have a lot of time today, and the testimonies we hear in this village simply aren't detailed enough for our current investigation. W.X. will send some students here for further research.

An old woman wanders into our group and interrupts a few of my shots. She seems angry and disappointed that we don't spend more time interviewing her. I feel a twinge of guilt. Maybe she needs some kind of help. Maybe she needs money. Maybe she no longer has any living relatives, and nobody talks to her.

We arrive at another village and interview an octogenarian who remembers the Japanese clearly. He describes the Japanese planes mowing down fleeing villagers, and the beatings inflicted upon himself and others after being enslaved by Japanese troops. Sniffling and staring at N.S., now the lone Japanese in the room, he recalls five Chinese laborers bound to poles in front of the local school. They had begged the old man, then a twelve-year-old boy, to

The locals go and fetch the oldest residents. We ask them specific questions, as we usually do during these investigations, and some of them show us their wounds and scars, which N.S. guesses are from plague. As I understand it, bubonic plague doesn't usually leave visible scars, and these wounds don't look specific. Moreover, none of them were as severe as the cutaneous anthrax and glanders wounds that I had seen in other parts of Zhejiang, especially around Jiangshan and Quzhou. We

untie them, but he was simply too afraid. The victims were ultimately bayoneted to death as an example to the rest of the villagers. He doesn't remember any of their names. They might be lost to history. He also doesn't remember seeing any Japanese in white lab coats, and he can't recall anything about the epidemics. Facing our cameras, the old man tried to stifle his metaphysical guilt.

Seemingly unhappy old woman

We tour the village and visit a building the Japanese established as an improvised comfort station qua brothel. Zhejiang's wealth has been slow in changing this village, so many of the buildings are preserved remarkably well here. At this point, I start feeling a little queasy, but I just write it off as fatigue.

In the hills close to the village, and near a few nondescript factories, some private Japanese companies erected a monument to Sino-Japanese friendship in the 1990s. Now neglected and overgrown with thorny weeds, the monument's broken stone steps lead from the dirt road to a small temple topped by a sculpture of a peace dove. Neighboring obelisks dot the hill, and an inscription on one of them outlines the high costs of the monument's construction. Seemingly out of place, the perfect setting for a horror film, the Shihua Shimen Sino-Japanese Friendship Park (金華石門中日友好林園) serves as a failed Japanese attempt at atonement, precisely because it isn't. There is no apology, no litany of Japanese atrocities and abuses, and no list of the victims. The monument's capitalist intentions are too visible and reek of insincerity. In the end, the park's state of disrepair mirrors the current state of Sino-Japanese friendship.

The officials whom we met earlier at city hall treat us to a friendly dinner. I'm definitely feeling sick now, so all I want to drink is orange juice. A number of people at the table tell me not to drink cold beverages. I respond that heating the orange juice will kill the vitamin C. I eat very little and quietly listen to the officials and W.X. reminisce about being "sent down" and the subsequent scarcities suffered under the Cultural Revolution. They lament that young people nowadays waste too much food and have little interest in Chinese history.

W.X. scolds me as I continue to sip my cold orange juice. Her relative argues that cold drinks are bad for anyone, Chinese or Western. I start shivering. I want their nostalgic conversation to end as quickly as possible. I think I must be getting the flu.

Back at the hotel I begin a punishing marathon of vomiting interrupted by diarrhea and the latter interrupted by the former. Fluids pour out of every orifice, including my eyes. I can't even remember the last time I vomited—six years ago? I will never forget the taste of that bone marrow.

November 21, 2012

Once the intermissions between my expulsions last at least thirty minutes or so, I can finally lie in bed. During one particularly grueling episode of retching, I hear a knock at the door. I try to ignore it, but a voice comes through: "It's the police, we are here to check your ID." I wipe the fluids off my face, check the peephole, and, clad only in boxer

Shihua Shimen Sino-Japanese Friendship Park.

shorts, open the door. I tell them I am puking. They say that it's OK. I guess this is nothing new to them. I leave the door open and return to the toilet. After three minutes or so, the urge to expel subsides. I fetch my passport and present it to the closest Public Security Bureau officer. He opens it, confers with the other officers, and gives it back to me. They leave. I go back to bed to rest for another half an hour. Japanese biological warfare means nothing to me right now.

November 22, 2012

My memories are willfully murky. I remember W.X. and some students. Lots of medicines and antibiotics. I remember the feeling of the antibiotics surging through my blood vessels, especially in my arms.

November 23, 2012: The Wanderer and His Shadow

I get enough strength to wander around the neighborhood, again reminded of Zižek's anonymous Chinese cities. I don't know anybody around here. None of this is familiar to me. No one casts a shadow; everyone looks the same. I can't see any differences, because they simply don't matter, or I can't understand them. I am unconcerned, unabsorbed. My sickened state destroys any principle of charity, and my whole demeanor detunes. On the inside, centered in my bowels, I become the ugly American. Why do a lot of Chinese think the West is better? Because it is.

N.S. wants to spend his last few days exploring Shanghai, so we head to the train station. Even though I haven't eaten anything in two days, my guts are still unstable, and I'm terrified of releasing a liquefied shadow of shit into my pants. I let loose in the filthy train station's squat toilet once and then twice. I hardly have the strength to hold myself up while squatting, but the fear of falling into a pool of filth gives me just enough will to squat. Stashing tissues in my various pockets proves to be a triumph in planning. Waiting for the train, I can only observe the mingling of the rich and the poor. I stare at the people who spit on the floor. I occasionally block people trying to cut in line.

On the train I spot the first Caucasians I've seen in days. It's not any kind of welcoming sight, just unexpected—two incredibly ugly Russians, probably businessmen. They have every Apple product available: two iPads, a MacBook Pro, a MacBook Air, iPhones, and more. They watch a Harrison Ford movie with headphones. Unfortunately, the elderly Chinese couple behind me isn't so courteous. They blast a soap opera about classical Chinese opera singers. It is unbearable. I need to know exactly where the bathroom is, and how long it will take me to get there. This is my deliberative being-in-the-world as homesickness.

My undoing

第2表　ドブネズミ，エヂプトクマネズミ，クロクマネズミの体重別によるP感染実験

実験回数ならびに年月日	鼠の種類 / 体重	ドブネズミ 供試数	死亡数	%	エヂプトクマネズミ 供試数	死亡数	%	クロクマネズミ 供試数	死亡数	%	摘要
第1実験 (昭17. 10 ～ 昭17. 12)	40～ 60	5	4	80.0	23	19	82.6	14	12	85.7	当実験地域は金華で，昭和16年夏季より昭和17年春季にかけてペスト流行があり死亡者481名(?)を出したところである実験室は冬季の気温低下のため保温保濕意の如くならずドラム缶を利用し，薪，撒水により辛うじて温度12～16°C，濕度65～75%に保持せしめるを得たのである
	61～ 80	17	12	70.6	28	22	78.5	19	12	63.2	
	81～100	27	23	85.2	67	63	94.0	21	18	85.7	
	100～150	16	11	68.8	31	23	74.2	9	7	77.8	
	151～200	14	9	64.3	27	22	81.5	21	15	71.4	
	201～250	20	12	60.0	19	10	52.6	11	6	54.6	
	計	99	71		195	159		95	70		
第2実験 (昭17. 10 ～ 昭18. 1)	40～ 60	2	2	100.0	17	14	82.4	9	6	66.7	当実験地区は義烏であるが第1実験地域金華と同時季にペストの流行があつた．本実験を実施した時期に於て義烏より約4 Km. 距つた松山部落にペスト小流行があり，著者は当地に位置しペスト防疫に任した．死亡者82名を出した．当時の溫濕度は 20～13°C, 70%前後である．
	61～ 80	11	8	72.7	73	63	93.2	16	14	87.5	
	81～100	18	18	100.0	44	43	97.7	24	24	100.0	
	100～150	25	21	84.0	15	12	80.0	31	30	96.8	
	151～200	27	21	77.8	18	16	83.9	20	15	75.0	
	201～250	17	11	64.7	24	18	75.0	19	12	63.2	
	計	100	81		191	171		119	101		
第3実験 (昭18. 3 ～ 昭20. 3)	40～ 60	231	217	93.2	238	212	89.1	126	111	88.1	供試鼠頭数は2カ年間連日南京周辺地域に於て1週間毎に捕鼠場所を変えて蒐集したもので2カ年を通じ3月～5月，9月～10月に捕獲数が多かつた．溫濕度の維持は流遊蒸気にて行い 11月～2月は 20～25°C, 70～60% 3月～4月は 22～27°C, 70～85% 5月～8月は 25～30°C, 80～90% 9月～10月は 20～27°C, 70～85% etc である．
	61～ 80	429	399	93.0	277	243	87.7	441	408	91.9	
	81～100	587	518	88.3	293	290	99.0	481	458	95.2	
	100～150	289	267	94.3	271	234	86.4	227	205	90.3	
	151～200	282	251	89.0	201	183	91.0	192	166	86.5	
	201～250	162	121	74.7	157	118	75.2	148	112	75.7	
	計	1970	1773		1417	1280		1618	1460		

させる端緒となるから，鼠族の駆除に当つてP流行病学的見地より此等について充分愼重を期さなければならない．

註

1) 近喰：医学と生物学，第13巻，第5号，昭23. 11. 10参照．

2) 近喰：医学と生物学，第14巻，第2号，昭24. 2. 10. を参照されたい．

(受付：24年10月3日)

Japanese research of Unit 731 attacks in Zhejiang

X

All images courtesy of the author.

James T. Hong is an Asian American filmmaker and artist whose works tend to focus on philosophical topics and figures, controversial race and class issues, and historical conflicts in Asia. His films and videos include *Behold the Asian: How One Becomes What One Is*, *Condor: A Film from California*, *Suprematist Kapital*, and *The Denazification of MH* about Martin Heidegger. Hong produced the award-winning documentary *731: Two Versions of Hell* about Japan's Unit 731 in 2007, which was followed by *Lessons of the Blood* in 2010. His 2012 film *The Turner Film Diaries* is based on the infamous, racist American novel, The Turner Diaries.

1
Daniel Barenblatt, *A Plague upon Humanity: The Hidden History of Japan's Biological Warfare Program* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), 161–62.

2
Quoted in Sheldon Harris, *Factories of Death : Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932–1945, and the American Cover-Up* (New York: Routledge, 2002) , 103.

3
Harris, *Factories of Death*, 102.

4
Pride: Moment of Destiny (プライド 運命の瞬間) , directed by Shunya Ito (Tokyo: Toei Co., Ltd., 1998).

5
The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Interagency Working Group (IWG), Washington, D.C. See http://www.archives.gov/iwg/japanese-war-crimes/ .

Marina Vishmidt

“Mimesis of the Hardened and Alienated”: Social Practice as Business Model

> We have invented ourselves, so to speak, the social contradictions that made our freedom necessary. Where invented doesn’t mean made up but found and translated the facts that reveal their dormant political dimension.
> —Claire Fontaine, “Human Strike Within the Field of Libidinal Economy”

The title “Mimesis of the Hardened and Alienated” comes from a phrase used in an essay by Theodor Adorno called “Situation,” published in his book *Aesthetic Theory*. In this essay Adorno writes, “Only by immersing its autonomy in society's *imagerie* can art surmount the heteronomous market. Art is modern art through mimesis of the hardened and alienated; only thereby, and not by the refusal of a mute reality, does art become eloquent; this is why art no longer tolerates the innocuous.”[1] We can make some extrapolations here, which may not necessarily be Adorno's own. One is that part of modern art's very being consisted of emulating that which was alien to it. That is, its autonomy was based upon a relation of troubled proximity—whether of rejection or mimesis—to the banal social, economic, material facts from which it operated at a remove. A degree of “near distance” was necessary to provide it with new resources drawn from “alienated reality,” which it would process into increasingly less formal and independent articulations as the transition to the “contemporary” made its impact felt.

This kind of mimesis, as we can observe in the history of art since the decline of its “modern” moment—a decline which was well under way by the time Adorno wrote the above in the 1960s—not only gradually takes over art's formal imperatives, but also ends up incorporating the social character of the artist and the productive relations which sustain her. This, arguably, signals the shift from modern to contemporary art, to a situation in which art is no longer a separate domain strategically distancing itself from or connecting to an “alienated reality” at will, but a specialized niche within that reality—art that is contemporary with its time, a time which is strictly harnessed to the temporal rhythms of the market, or more broadly, to capital accumulation.[2]

Another extrapolation would be that the intolerance of the innocuous that Adorno imputes to art can otherwise be coded as a constant modernizing and revolutionizing of the techniques, social relations, and formal ambitions of art. This tendency can perhaps be said to follow the “dialectic of Enlightenment”—art constantly strives to overcome its inherited limits, but the metaphysics of art stay in place and prevent it from fully doing so. Following through on this modernizing logic might also entail art

Objects found resembling sculpture

FIND AT GREENWICH

from our art correspondent

Last year the British Steel Corporation made Garth Evans, the sculptor, their new link man with that world of experimental structure we know as art. In his examination of the corporation's diverse establishments he came across some steel constructions hidden away in their recesses that

(the other pieces) 'appear by comparison as if they might be fragments of a larger total, and their extendability is a feature which contributes to their more open and spontaneous air'.

Fibres b
in N Irel

The west German
group Farbwerke Ho
announce later today
expansion of its poly
made fibre plant at
in Northern Ireland.

The news will be g
official announcemer
opening ceremony for
ing plant, which bega
tion only a few mont

Hoechst's attack on
market with its Trevir
fibre has gone so
company planners bel

British Steel Corporation ad for Artist Placement Group, 1968-73. The work represented is Garth Evans' Objects found resembling sculpture, welding practice pieces by British Steel apprentices. Photo: Garth Evans.

doing away with itself in a moment of enlightenment-cum-immolation.

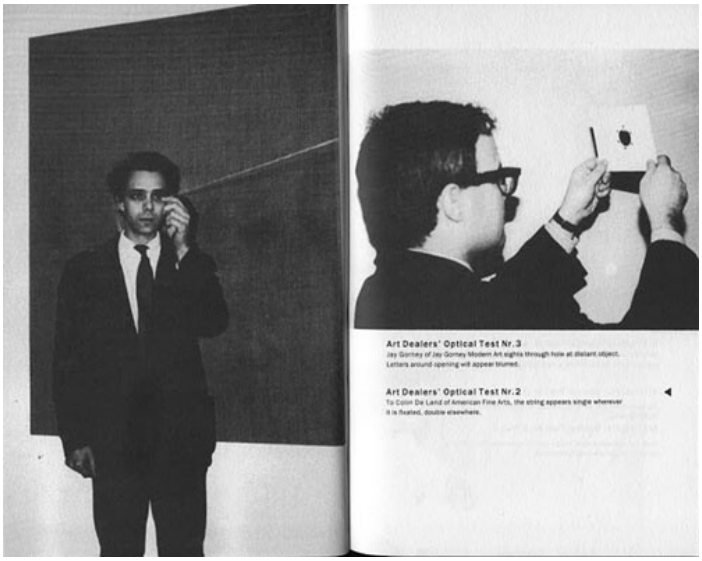
Like all narratives of modernization, the one of art cannot help but also evoke the narrative of economic growth, the liberation theology of capital. Capital, too, is always striving to overcome its boundaries and turn the new terrain it has won into the basis for a new round of accumulation.[3] More specifically, we can allude to the process of "disruptive innovation"—or to take its classical Schumpeterian variant, "creative destruction"—as a rubric that encompasses and binds processes of critical valorization internal to art and the processes of capital valorization in which it is enmeshed, however differently these "disruptions" are articulated in these two domains.[4] As emphasized by Rosa Luxemburg, capital expands by absorbing into itself non- or pre-capitalist forms of life and modes of the reproduction of life in an ongoing vector of "primitive accumulation." Art, as described by Adorno above, similarly expands its reach and its relevance by absorbing and re-presenting in its own domain that which was not previously deemed an instance of art.

And just as in the vortices of capital, this occurs as a "disruptive innovation," putting into question or rendering obsolete the previous modes of signification and value, forcing new languages of critique and ushering historical narratives into view which can "account" for this new paradigm. And, parenthetically, art also acts as a form of "disruptive innovation" *within* the economy, with culture-led regeneration tasked with redeveloping whole areas, displacing and replacing the populations that inhabit them with those more geared to the specialized subjectivities—and the high-value forms of consumption that come with them—than the previous residential and commercial patterns.

However, if these ideological affinities can be mapped and developed further, the analogy between "disruptive innovation" in art and in business is of only limited interest so long as it stays at the level of analogy, without allowing us to discern a common logic structurally grounded in the economic mechanisms that drive capitalist society.

We can start to delineate some of the features of such a logic with the proposition that "the mimesis of the hardened and alienated" as it comes to us today does not simply, as I have already indicated, give art new resources for its own formal, or even social, innovation. It also allows it to stop *being art*, or to stop being *only* art, and allows it to start playing a much more direct role as a channel of empowerment, governance, and even accumulation—if only of "social capital"—for specific communities and in specific contexts.[5] No longer is art a component in larger market-led and top-down social engineering plans, adding value and creative cachet to speculative property development, however threadbare and transparent this procedure has become.

Today it is art, and the art institution in particular that



Catalog page featuring David Robbins's works Art Dealers Optical test #2: To Colin de Land of American Fine Arts, the string appears single whenever it is fixated double elsewhere and Art Dealers Optical test #3: Jay Gorney of Jay Gorney Modern Art sights through hole at a distant object. Letters around opening will appear blurred, both works from 1987.

provides the "added value" to activities that function only partially and strategically as art. It is now the practice of the hardened and alienated in the social field, with the mimesis of art. This resource-based approach, distinguished by a pragmatism that appears subversive at first glance, ends up buttressing the boundaries it treats so casually, because it lives and dies with the capital those boundaries are still capable of yielding. That is, the institution of art must remain in place, but so must the institution of business and the community—the community of capital.

[figure splitpage 2013_03_change-2006WEB1.jpg Claire Fontaine, *Change,* 2006. Courtesy of Galerie Neu.

Here I would like to confine myself to charting the "entrepreneur" as a policy and a life-form that not only indexes this pragmatism in the field of art production, but also in the world of activism, particularly online activism and many US-based progressive NGOs. Besides embodying a logic between art and activism in some exemplary art practices of the present moment, the entrepreneur can also appear as a logical culmination of the "disruptive innovation" that economic logics must represent in the field of art, if art is to remain relevant to the exigencies of the contemporary and to simultaneously not be defined by them.

What comes to mind when we try to reflect upon entrepreneurialism in the field of culture? For instance, we can think of a sort of entrepreneurialism-from-below that

some still fondly remember as one of the better aspects of Thatcher's legacy in the UK, producing a great deal of idiosyncratic and insurgent self-organized culture such as post-punk record labels. These emerged once the field of cultural production was re-drawn by both the DIY imperative and the ideology of small ownership, and they were touted as the best way to secure material and ideological independence from the state and the social compacts that state cultural funding was meant to secure.

One could also recall the "culturepreneurs" of the 1990s and early 2000s.[6] When it comes to charting the fortunes of this figure in periods of crisis like the present, one is reminded of World Bank policy documents extolling the bootstrapping virtues of street sellers and "micro-entrepreneurs" who need only a small boost of micro-credit from the bigger entrepreneurs to flourish in the vibrant informal economy of the "emerging markets." As the work of Silvia Federici on the destructive impact of micro-credit in Indian, African, and South American subsistence economies, or even the recent campaigning around "payday loans" in the UK, should have taught us, unregulated micro-economies (serving "populations" which are not deemed worthy of regulation, since they have proven themselves unresponsive to market incentives those regulations are there to promote) breed large parasites.[7] The greater the degree of need, the more likely it is that entities capitalizing on that need will—like the layers of sub-contractors in informal economies or deregulated large economies—spring up, further eroding the solidarity required to organize effectively against exploitation and poverty.

Only right-wing zealots would deny that capital invariably tends toward monopoly, which contributes to limiting access to resources for those who do not start from an established resource base, driving the much-eulogized small producers, innovators, and so forth out of business, returning them to the pools of dependent waged labor or unemployment from whence they came. Here we can also think of Albert-László Barabási and his theory of the emergence of power-nodes in scale-free networks.[8] The law basically stipulates that those who have resources will attract more, while those who don't will have to transfer whatever they have to those with the resources, in a network-theory confirmation of the biblical adage.[9]

However, maybe a bit laterally, I would also like to think about the dispositions, subjectivities, and sensibilities—in other words, the aesthetics—that are produced in the encounter of art with the "disruptive influence" of business. The cell-form of art is the entrepreneurial artist who reproduces the institution simply by reproducing herself as an artist. She is thus mimetic of the "automatic subject" of value, which is self-reproducing as a social form once the presuppositions (for capital, private property and wage labor; for art, the institution of art) are in place.

Claire Fontaine have discussed this in terms of the "ready-made artist," the natural consequence of a century's assimilation of the readymade "artwork" into the institution of art and the predictable slow diffusion of art as a quantum which can take place in, and add value within, any social situation, guaranteed by the art institution in the person of the artist.[10] This instills an ethical and affective homogeneity that obtains between the subject and object of art, and, in times of the intensified rule of abstract value over production in general and art's markets in particular, between art and capital. This contributes to an evening out of the ideological edges between economic and political positions, as a general agreement is reached that capital is simply what we all are and should strive to maximize. Parenthetically, this can be compared to the non-politics of inclusion, where systemic variables cannot be questioned or changed, but more and more people can be upgraded to "participate" in the system, and political activism is nothing but an evening out of the playing field to improve the prospects of success for those temporarily "excluded."[11]

It may be objected that more radical perspectives have made an impact on mainstream policy and public opinion since the crisis struck, especially with the emergence of Occupy, 15M, and the uprisings in the Arab countries bordering the Mediterranean. However, as commentators have noted, pragmatism rather than ideological contestation is the lifeblood of (at least) the Western movements, and the bedrock of pragmatism is inclusion, albeit with one important caveat: there can be no demands.[12]

But how does all this relate to the figure of the entrepreneur as a contemporary art strategy? Perhaps it has something to do with the diffuse activism sketched out above, centered on doing good in the here and now, within a horizon where there can only be addition, only accumulation, never disruption. This kind of pragmatic standpoint thus plays a paradoxically disruptive role in art, if not in society, since art is constituted by the fiction of uselessness, formal rigor, and indexicality rather than direct involvement. Counter-tendencies would of course include all "social practices" that in the past several decades have been variously adumbrated as relational, interventionist, or engaged.

However, isn't it the case that the practices viewed as most subversive at the time—in counterpoint to, for example, the institutionally fêted Tiravanija or Deller (to take two otherwise extremely divergent practices)—were the overtly entrepreneurial ones? Because they occupied both the community-facing and business-minded ends of the relational spectrum, such practices were deemed to be seriously engaged with the legacy of the art and economics nexus that had been so variously explored since the Artist Placement Group, to take only one of the best known and most opaque exemplars.

Here, I principally have in mind the "shovel-ready" social aesthetics of the collective SUPERFLEX as an illustration of how entrepreneurialism and autonomy conjoin in a resolutely post-critical and results-oriented agenda, which is often indistinguishable from a mainstream development NGO, whether it directs its efforts at Amazonian farmers or residents of inner-city Copenhagen. SUPERFLEX have consistently maintained an emphasis on the "entrepreneurial" as the conceptual basis of their practice.[13] This can be viewed as a "capacity-building" maneuver: what they are enabled to do through the agency of the art would not be accessible to a regular business, while the structures and rhetoric of business give them a certain currency in fields outside of, but to no small extent within, art.

Other examples of the "entrepreneurial" as an identification and a logic of production in current and recent art could be cited, albeit not within the confines of this essay's length. Andy Warhol would of course be the "arche-fossil" here; although artists have behaved entrepreneurially from the beginning, he was perhaps the first to thematize it as a production logic on a massive scale. All such artists opt for the optimizing, expansive possibilities afforded by embracing business as a principle of the production of art, rather than a hostile Other to art. In SUPERFLEX's case, this is then joined with charitable or community-minded infrastructure projects that easily slot into a "social design" typology, driven by the same logic of optimization as the business side of things.

But even if such non-conflictual activist outlooks are not new in the realm of contemporary art, and indeed presuppose the overtly "social practices" sketched out earlier, SUPERFLEX's focus on the entrepreneur is somewhat special. Yet celebrating the entrepreneur can be done even more dramatically. Witness the "insurgent business" practice of Theaster Gates, a Chicago-based artist who has received a lot of attention precisely for his projects that seek to "add value" to communities through entrepreneurial artist-led redevelopment. These projects simultaneously seek to add "social credit" to the art world by giving it a chance to contribute to "community development."

[figure partialpage
2013_03_Gates-Soul-MFG-19-300WEB.jpg Installation view of Theaster Gate's "Soul Manufacturing Corporation" at Locust Projects, Miami,
2012.]

Gates has forged both a lucrative and critically significant career by mobilizing interest and investment in derelict historically African-American areas of Chicago. He does this through a complex and performative practice involving object-making, advocacy, and the physical rehabilitation of built spaces. This amounts to a sort of benign artist- *run* (rather than art- *led*) gentrification, empowering the artist himself as well as the community in question.

A recent exhibition at the White Cube in London titled "My Labor is My Protest" presented his work for a UK audience. In the exhibition one finds an articulation of labor as a positive and transformative practice, organizing groups of friends, supporters, and local people to fix up old decaying houses and turning them, not into residential units like Edgar Arceneaux or other US-based artists have done, but into cultural or community centers, archives, and libraries, thus installing "cultural capital" in run-down areas of Chicago. It should be noted that Gates's work very much departs from the history of racial segregation and zoned disinvestment in the city, but is far less interested in questions of class, or—in a typical mode for mainstream US discourse—elides questions of class with those of race and especially of racialized culture.

Some of the material produced in the renovation process will later find its way to the art market or the exhibition circuit, as Gates uses it to craft discrete autonomous art objects. Recently in Documenta 13 in Kassel, an aging townhouse due to be demolished and converted into a hotel was taken over by Gates and his team for the duration of the exhibition. It was inhabited by Documenta interns, who administered a program of regular activities in the house. The renovation process the house underwent—or rather the documentation of this process—became the artwork on display. Large rooms hosted film and video installations of glossily produced soul and gospel musical performances by the extended milieu of Gates's associates.

Gates's entrepreneurial outlook—promoting the virtues of labor in social change, preferably the labor of others, while he interfaces with real estate developers, art institutions, and NGOs—is resolutely and unapologetically "post-political."[14] This evokes the precepts of "human capital," with the reversal entailed by the notion of the capitalist as a worker and the worker as the owner of "human capital," which both appropriates and cancels the political subjectivity of work as alienation. This then leads to a monadic notion of experience based on this corporate and consumer personhood, meaning change can only be construed on personal and self-maximizing grounds, bearing out the truth of "human capital" ideology (which, like all ideologies, creates the grounds for its own legitimation).

Remembering Foucault, however, we would also need to decipher the link between notions of creativity in reconstituting workers as infinitely self-enhancing assets or "human capital."[15] While this can only be touched on here, creativity as a complex of overt and implicit presuppositions about the relation between labor and value does not just generalize the "creativity" of capital in relation to labor. It also marks the point where management intervenes in labor, where management is internalized. The mobilization of the entrepreneur is

guided by creativity both as a productive norm at work and a way to transcend the constraints of labor, while of course not escaping the demands of value.

Creativity thus marks the joint between self-management and self-exploitation, autonomy and heteronomy. The capacity of creativity to be easily internalized as a workplace norm renders it the form of governmentality that obtains specifically in the workplace, even as the entrepreneur can principally operate anywhere, most visibly in the cultural field and as a labor template for the no-longer-autonomous artist. Creativity thus functions as a springboard for capitalist populism, assuring every exploited worker and discontented artist that their interests are no different from those of capital. These interests signally coincide in the performance of labor that is inventive, fulfilling, and that would be a joyful experience whether or not there was money involved.

[figure 2013_03_ShoeShineStandHer001WEB.jpg
Theaster Gates, *Shoe Shine with Old Growth Pedestal (Him) and Shoe Shine with Old Growth Pedestal (Her)*, 2012. Reclaimmed wood and iron.]

Given this set of coordinates, which to me seem to be implicitly and manifestly at play in Gates's project, he would not to be interested in some of the structural conditions that both make the project possible and give it an affect of politicization. One of these would be the role of the very businesses he invites to support these projects—such as property developers—in the decay and depression his projects are intended to address. Eliding this enables him to uphold a donor-friendly message of inspirational community action and social capital-building through culture. What is powerfully suggestive about his activities is that they so perfectly integrate the logic of culture-led regeneration while at the same time translating this logic into the terms of autonomous art, thereby neutralizing the critical perspectives that have developed around these processes. And this is the aspect of his work that exemplifies the current dogma that frames crisis as an "opportunity" for positive community action, as the state withdraws from social reproduction only to better perform its duties of service to an increasingly narrow fraction of capital accumulation—while at the same time disavowing this set of ideological coordinates by developing a convincing and affective grammar of historically-freighted cultural symbolism and empowerment for its protagonists.

The notion of "empowerment" has long played an ambivalent role—as a progressive rhetoric with often conservative and co-opting results—in minority communities in the West in the neoliberal era, that is to say, in the aftermath of the era of social movements and wide social contestation. "Empowerment," analogously to the idea of "inclusion" I examined earlier, is the accepted terminology for a process of social mobility that is usually individualized and has a pragmatist orientation in taking extant power relations as its ultimate horizon, as the parameters in which a social actor hopes to improve her position.

However crudely this might resound, we can only understand the function of empowerment as a political technology if we juxtapose it with "revolution" as a way to name the horizon of social change. When applied to collectives, "empowerment" denotes a non-antagonistic mode of advancing through power structures that are flexible enough to accommodate the claims of the thus-far marginalized. It implies a system that is in a position to grant "power" to those claims or the people making them, rather than a system structurally hostile to equality or an "equal" distribution of power. Empowerment thus redounds to the credit of injustice, showing that there is actually enough justice in the system to recognize the claims of the dispossessed (*How did they get that way? It doesn't matter*), so the system must be ultimately good, open to change.

In the case of Theaster Gates, it means that such emblems of structural violence as housing privatization, unemployment, and racialized domination turn into resources for a cultural project that exposes them to the light, only to push them into the background as irrelevant in the face of the real, positive change partially bankrolled by the market and non-profit entities responsible for those very same ills. This project, however, guards itself from charges of instrumentality or exploitation through its recourse to artistic speculation, that is, a parallel as well as an implicated practice of autonomous art that then renders the social a *contingent* aspect of its mythopoiesis.

This is a notable tendency, not only in Gates's work, but in a large swathe of current art that takes the social as its material and that circulates at the most visible levels of the global exhibition circuit. Another example is Tino Seghal. In his work, this tendency can be described as a kind of optical illusion that presents two dimensions at once, but which cannot be perceived simultaneously. Either you, as a viewer, agree to the social contract of the work—which involves focusing on the immediate, direct experience of orchestrated sociality in Seghal's case, or a processual and temporal theatre of community in Gates—or you try to understand the conditions of possibility of these performances, including working conditions, the performers' agency, power relations in this ensemble of social mimesis, and so forth. Each perspective cancels out the other, rendering any critical approach off limits, or even redundant, because the distance demanded by critique breaks the social contract of frictionless exchange on which this work is predicated (just like in the service industries that it emulates).

The work places itself beyond critique, by its participants or its viewers, because it does not base its criteria on anything but the language and parameters of

"autonomous art," while at the same time using only social relations—such as the economy and layers of institutional mediation in Gates's case—as its "material" and territory of action. With Gates, there is a valorization of the "entrepreneur" as a broker of capital generated within and outside the community for the purposes of improving the prospects and situation of that community and also turning it into a sort of authored artwork that can circulate through the channels of legitimacy and resources afforded by the art world. Both sites—the community and the art institution—merge in a pragmatic and charismatic tableau of empowerment.

Like the original theorist of "human capital" theory, the Chicago economist Gary Becker, Gates asserts that social change is driven by business, by entrepreneurial initiative, and that a successful enterprise is the best form of resistance to any crisis.[16] As a recent review put it, "Against dismissing the sublation of civil rights into consumer rights, 'My Labor Is My Protest' proposes business as a mode of collaborative critique. A political space where people make things, invest narrative in those things, and sell those things."[17] So this brings us back to the idea of business as an activity that fosters autonomy, that disrupts established relationships of passivity and dependence.

We can note how easy it is to fuse collaborative critique with the exploitation necessary for making and selling things. Given the current social and economic decline in many part of the world, with escalating concrete misery and stagnation a reality even in the "rich countries," it is not surprising that activism and business pair up in a utopian vision of social desire that is, at bottom, a vision of money brokering intimate and meaningful exchanges that can have actual "empowering" effects. This is a seductive vision with great social resonance at the moment, echoing the gospel of financial abstraction "out-cooperated" by small-scale enterprise, alternative economic models, and networks of trust.[18] We thus seem to be living through a moment of semantically frictionless yet socially devastating fusion between the social and capital. This is something we should definitely figure out how to disrupt.

Cover page from Gordon Matta Clark's Food restaurant recipe book.

X

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1
Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* , trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London and New York: Continuum,1997), 21.

2
The art historian and critic Kerstin Stakemeier makes some acute observations on this shift in my dialogue with her in "The Value of Autonomy: A conversation between Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt about the reproduction of art," *Texte zur Kunst* 88 (December 2012): 102–117.

3
Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* , trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 270, 334, 408–410. The footnote on p. 334 establishes the Hegelian provenance of this idea.

4
Of course, Schumpeter didn't believe capitalism relied on exploitation; he was at pains to disprove "Marxian doctrine" with his more scientific deductions that capital accumulation in fact relies on the "supernormal" intelligence and acuity of entrepreneurs. See "Introduction" in Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 16. The notion of "creative destruction" is developed mainly in this text.

5
For a review of a recent book-length critique of the dubious term by Ben Fine, which glosses the arguments of the book as well as its limitations and the types of political agency it does not investigate, see Emma Dowling, "Tales of 'Much of a muchness': Adventures in the land of social capital," *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* Vol. 12, No. 4: 480–485.

6
Anthony Davies and Simon Ford, "Culture Clubs," *Mute* Vol.1, No. 18 (September 2000), see http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/culture-clubs ; and "Art Futures," *Art Monthly* 223 (February 1999).

7
Silvia Federici, lecture at launch of her book *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 12 November 2012, Goldsmiths, University of London. *The Guardian*'s ongoing coverage of the spread of payday loans and attendant controversies includes Hilary Osborne, "University of London bans payday loans on campus," 28 February 2013; Osborne, "Problem payday loan debts rise by almost 300%," and Nicholas Watt and Patrick Wintour, "Payday loan firms face cap after government U-turn," 28 November 2012.

8
Albert-László Barabási and Eric Bonabeau, "Scale-Free Networks," *Scientific American* 288 (May 2003): 60–9.

9
"The Parable of the Sower" in Matthew 13:12 in the New International Version: "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

10
Claire Fontaine, "Ready-Made Artist and Human Strike: A few Clarifications," see http://www.clairefontaine.ws/pdf/readymade_eng.pdf .

11
Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London & New York: Verso, 2002).

12
The "movement of the squares" in Europe and North America (15M/Indignados/Real Democracia Ya! in Spain, Syntagma in Greece, Occupy in the US) had a strong antipathy to political polarization of any kind, and declared themselves, at the highest level of generality, simply in opposition to the present (which is not a bad starting point). Of course, there were many conflicts within the movement, including splits over property destruction in the Oakland Commune and the presence of gender/sexual violence and racism inside the camps. Particularly for the latter point, see the Communiqué from bmorewomentrans at https://sites.google.com/site/bmorewomentrans/communique . Here, the question of the "human strike" can still emerge as an antagonism within a show of unity, whether it is arrived at by consensus or party politics.

13
I have written about this at greater length elsewhere in Marina Vishmidt, "Sales Targets: Superflex Face the Economy," *Kaleidoscope* 10 (2011).

14
In this sense, it is very much of a piece with the most recent Documenta, which offered a soi-disant ecological thematic whose only theoretical commitment seemed to be to the power of the bourgeois art institution to map and index every natural and cultural phenomenon taking place anywhere in the globe any time in human history—a good diagram of the artistic "primitive accumulation" I discuss in this essay, and here clearly traceable to the "real" primitive accumulation that delivers these far-flung events into the curatorial lap like so much festive neocolonial confetti. (Although with ontological equality between humans and non-humans assumed, the questions of power that are framed through the category of colonialism are no longer possible.)

15
Jason Read, "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity," *Foucault Studies* 6 (February 2009): 25–36; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979* , trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Marina Vishmidt, "Speculation as a Mode of Production in Art and Capital" (Queen Mary, University of London, 2013).

16
Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education* , 3rd Edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); Hesse McGraw, "Theaster Gates: Radical Reform with Everyday Tools," *Afterall* 30 (Summer 2012).

17
Gil Leung, "Theaster Gates's 'My Labor Is My Protest,'" art-agenda.com, 26 October 2012, see http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/theaster-gatess-my-labor-is-my-protest/ .

18
The e-flux platform has been a salient vector in this milieu. Given its different but co-present modalities of business, artwork, social aggregator, publishing platform, video distribution service, and exhibition space—all of which take as their object the "social capital" of the art world—it is the Time/Bank project that would seem to be most interested in branding and valorizing the already irregular and quixotic forms of exchange that drive the art world (in distinction, say, from the announcement service, which seems to subsidize some of the less lucrative aspects of e-flux activity). This is not a reflection on Time/Bank's insufficient radicalism; no local-exchange or time-money system has any capacity *whatsoever* to shift the capital-labor relation nor its basis in the form of abstract value. The most it can do is prop up de-monetized or hyper-exploited sections of the population or regions, which can sometimes be a significant precursor to any social or political antagonism that then would have systemic implications. This may be said to apply when the state intervenes to ban alternative or parallel currencies which prove "too successful," as in the episode of the "Wörgl experiment" with *freigeld* in 1933.

Anton Vidokle

Art without Market, Art without Education: Political Economy of Art

> "Perhaps contemporary art is an art to survive our contemporaneity as an artist."
>
> —Boris Groys

Since the early days of modernism, artists have faced a peculiar dilemma with regard to the economy surrounding their work. By breaking from older artistic formations such as medieval artisan guilds, bohemian artists of the nineteenth century distanced themselves from the vulgar sphere of day-to-day commerce in favor of an idealized conception of art and authorship. While on the one hand this allowed for a certain rejection of normative bourgeois life, it also required that artists entrust their livelihoods to middlemen—to private agents or state organizations. One result was that some of the most influential modernist artists, from Paul Gauguin to Mondrian and Rodchenko, died in abject poverty, not because their work was unpopular but because the economy produced by the circulation and distribution of their work was entirely controlled by others, whether under capitalist or communist regimes.[1] While a concern with labor and fair compensation in the arts, exemplified by such recent initiatives as W.A.G.E. or earlier efforts such as the Art Workers Coalition, has been an important part of artistic discourse, so far it has focused primarily on public critique as a means to shame and reform institutions into developing a more fair system of compensation for "content providers."[2] It seems to me that we need to move beyond the critique of art institutions if we want to improve the relationship between artists and the economy surrounding their work.

Here I am not particularly interested in the power relations between artists and the art market, a cyclical conversation that seems to dominate much of art writing today. Historically, art and artists have existed both with and without a market. Important art was produced in socialist countries for most of the twentieth century, in the absence of an art market. Much of art production today occurs in places without a market for art, or in countries where a capitalist market system is not the dominant form of social and cultural organization. Art can clearly exist without a market, but artists fundamentally rely upon a certain economy in order to live and make art in the first place. Furthermore, it's important to note that "economy" and "market" are not synonymous terms: a market is just one facet of the economic sphere, coexisting with many other forms of exchange, from barter, debt, and favors to a gift economy.

The term "political economy" is more or less synonymous

with “economy” in our contemporary lexicon: both designate the distribution of goods and services under a certain political regime—be it capitalist, feudal, or communist—along with all the regulations, laws, and conventions governing such distribution. According to Aristotle, however, “economy” is the way to arrange things within a household (“ *oikos*” means “house”), and “politics” is the way to arrange things *between* households—between “ *polites*” or citizens, within the polis. So political economy combines both things. At some point in the late nineteenth century, the adjective “political” was dropped in English-language writing, and we ended up with simply “economy.” In one of the first studies of the economy of art—a book called *Political Economy of Art* published in 1857—the critic John Ruskin laments the confusion regarding the interpretation of the word “economy,” emphasizing that economy does not automatically imply money, frugality, or expenditures, but rather taking care of a household and managing labor. This would later becomes an important point in Hannah Arendt's analysis of work and labor in the *Human Condition.*[3]

Ruskin’s book is based on two lectures he gave on July 10 and 13, 1857, in Manchester—a city whose labor conditions had been central to the work of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx just a few years earlier (a fact of which Ruskin claimed to have no knowledge, citing only some writings of John Adams he had read long before). The lectures and the book look at the value of artistic work through a framework of education, collecting, patronage, accessibility to the public, and artistic genius. Ruskin argues for a childlike, innocent position for the artist, who should not get involved in the business of art. Ruskin believes that it is the patron (be it the state or a private collector) who is the patriarchal head of the household of art and whose responsibility it is to find and train artistic geniuses, to tell them what to do. Ruskin wants the prices for art to be low, preferably pegged to the actual time spent by an artist on the production of a specific work. In other words, Ruskin wants art production to be a form of wage labor.

In 1878, the painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler took Ruskin to court for libel. Ruskin had written a rather positive review of an exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery—a privately owned space exhibiting works that had been rejected by the Royal Academy. Ruskin singled out Whistler’s *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, accusing the artist of charging too high a price for what Ruskin thought was a hastily made painting:

William Powhida, Untitled, 2012. Graphite on paper.

> For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of willful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.[4]

Whistler was outraged and sued Ruskin for a thousand pounds and the costs of the trial. The trial became a public spectacle, the first of its kind. It also became a public seminar on art. Whistler's case was based on his argument that a painting is about nothing but itself; Ruskin's case was based on his belief that art should have moral value. The court heard arguments about the duties of art critics and the role of labor in art. Ruskin was too ill to attend the trial and was represented by lawyers who asked Whistler how long it had taken him to make the painting. Whistler replied that it was completed in a day or two.

> Lawyer: The labor of two days, is that for which you asked two hundred guineas?
> Whistler: No, I ask it for the knowledge I have gained in the work of a lifetime.[5]

Whistler won the case but received only a symbolic settlement: a quarter of a penny. Ruskin's friends covered his legal expenses; Whistler went bankrupt covering his own.

Ruskin did not single-handedly invent positions and notions popularized through his book and lectures on the economy of art; rather, he articulated existing Victorian attitudes regarding the role of artists and culture, which themselves reflected the British and Dutch art systems of the time, emphasizing a certain element of commerce in art. A somewhat different system of cultural organization existed in France, where in 1648 a royal decree established a government-funded Art Academy. The Academy removed painting and sculpture from the control of artistic guilds, which emphasized craft, and instead created a centralized institution that treated visual art more like the liberal arts, such as literature. While poets

James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Nocturne in Black and Gold (The Falling Rocket), circa 1875. Oil on panel. Detroit Institute of Art.

and writers like Baudelaire were often compensated per line of text for publishing their work (Baudelaire's rate apparently was 0.15 francs per line), as far as I know, no one in France proposed subjecting them to wage labor.

simultaneously the workplace of the first self-proclaimed Business Artist. Warhol's artistic position is very interesting insofar as it combined stances that were thought to be diametrically opposed: he was at once a dandy, a bohemian, but also someone who did not

Early modernist poets like Baudelaire were extremely influential in shaping the attitudes of artists towards commerce and business. Implicit in the way of life of "bohemian" artists and writers in the Latin Quarter was a rejection of bourgeois professional and commercial pursuits, as was a rejection of industrialization and emergent capitalism. Baudelaire was actually rather critical of the bohemians, being very much a radical dandy, an aristocrat who despised the squalor of bohemian life. Nevertheless, he spent much of his life in this milieu and immortalized it in his work: "In murky corners of old cities where everything—horror too—is magical, I study, servile to my moods, the odd and charming refuse of humanity."[6] Despite the marginality and political insignificance of bohemia, its cultural impact was absolutely enormous. It remains ever-present, a specter that reappears in various times and places.

Andy Warhol's Factory is fascinating in this respect: both a murky, magical corner for misfits and eccentrics, and

disguise his interest in business and commerce. His interest in business did not only extend to sale of his artwork; he also pursued the publication of a commercial magazine, film production, a television show—what amounted to his own media industry. To my mind, Warhol's position was much more honest and productive than that of artists who pretend that the artist can or should stay innocent by delegating (or appearing to delegate) business-related activity to gallerists or other agents, and who maintain that this is the only condition in which critical or culturally significant art can be produced. By turning his art into a kind of a business, Warhol managed to achieve independence, though not independence from the art market.

But since his time, Warhol's economic independence seems to have been misunderstood. The independence that came from his bridging of the bohemian sphere and the sphere of day-to-day commerce has been converted

A hundred of Andy Warhol's 610 Time Capsules shelved. Courtesy of The Andy Warhol Museum.

into a vast proliferation of so-called artistic practices that treat art as a profession. But art is not a profession. What does being professional actually mean under the current conditions of de-skilling in art? We should probably be less concerned with being full-time, art-school-trained, professional artists, writers, or curators—less concerned with measuring our artistic worth in these ways. Since most of us are not expected to perfect any specific techniques or master any craft—unlike athletes or classical musicians, for example—and given that we are no longer tied to working in specific mediums, perhaps it's fine to be a part-time artist? After all, what is the expertise of a contemporary artist? Perhaps a certain type of passionate hobbyism, a committed amateurism, is okay: after all, we still live in a reality largely shaped by talented amateurs of the nineteenth century, like Thomas Edison and so many others.[7] I think it's perfectly acceptable to work in some other capacity in the arts, or in an entirely different field, and also to make art: sometimes this situation actually produces much more significant work than the "professional art" we see at art fairs and biennials. Ilya Kabakov supported himself for decades by being a children's book illustrator. Marcel Duchamp worked as a librarian and later sold Brancusi's work to make a living, while refusing to be dependent on sales of his own work.

It interesting to note that this emphasis on professionalization emerged simultaneously with the disappearance of bohemia, which is usually described as a shared creative space that allowed for fluid communication between poets, artists, dancers, writers, musicians, and so forth. The notion of bohemia as something to aspire to went out the window a few decades ago; it vanished at the same time as the visual art sphere was becoming more segregated from other fields of art. "Bohemian" has become a primarily derogatory term that seems to imply a kind of uncommitted, naive dilettantism, but within the history of art it has a greater significance. According to T.J. Clark, bohemia refers to a movement by a group of artists, writers, and poets who apparently renounced the normative bourgeois society, a move that, unlike the gestures of the avant-garde, was not a calculated temporary tactic intended only so that one could return to the salon of art in a more advantageous position, but a more permanent departure.[8] The bohemian artist would absolutely reject the notion of professionalism in the arts—this was something for lawyers, accountants, and bankers, not artists.[9]

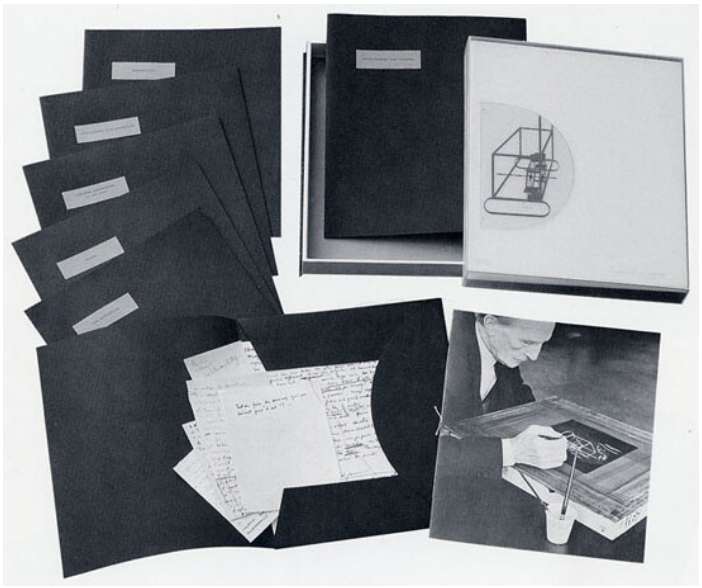


Image from catalog Marcel Duchamp Graphics, Kyoto Shoin, 1991.

These days it's becoming more and more difficult to imagine the production of significant art without a training system that educates future producers of art, its administrators and, to some extent, its consumers. However, until only a few decades ago, many if not most artists, curators, and critics, never attended masters programs or studied curatorship and critical writing in specialized training programs. The field of art is becoming professionalized in a very, very narrow way. There's still the old problem that professionalization is really about a division of labor, and a division of labor produces alienation.[10] It's a contradiction that a lot of people go into the arts because they want to be a little less alienated from what they do in life, even as what is increasingly imposed on artists, curators, writers—and it comes both from the market and public sector—is the professionalization and precarization of their activity.

The problem of professionalization is connected to the proliferation of MFA programs, which have become a prerequisite for young people entering the arts. In a sense, universities and academies have created a perfect

economic feedback loop that perpetuates their own existence: most artists depend on having a teaching position. This is because, as Walid Raad recently pointed out, the *average* life-span of financial success in the art market (in places where there is such a thing)—a period during which a successful artist's work is in active demand by collectors—is a mere four years.[11] How do you support yourself when your work does not sell anymore? You teach—and to qualify for a teaching position, you need an MFA degree. This means that most artists who aspire to a life-long practice have little choice but to enroll in MFA programs and often pay astronomical fees and go into debt in order to have a chance of teaching in the future or selling their work in the lucrative art market. But unlike other fields, such as law or medicine, where graduates can reasonably expect a job upon graduation, there are no guarantees that an artist with an MFA degree will find a teaching job. With recent shifts in hiring policies at most universities—towards part-time, untenured, adjunct labor—very few artists ever get a tenured, secure position. To me, this resembles a kind of pyramid scheme or institutional blackmail in which money is extracted using false promises, with the benefits going to very few—primarily the institutions themselves.[12]

I attended graduate school in the '90s. I did all of the coursework and the final exhibition, wrote the dissertation and submitted it. I thought I was all done, but then suddenly I found out that in order to get the degree itself, I needed to package my dissertation and photographs in a very specific type of a black plastic folder, which could only be purchased at one stationery store located in Manhattan near Canal Street. The secretary at the art department told me that the Chairman kept the folders in a closet in his office, and that the folders had to conform exactly to the dimensions of the closet's irregular shelves. No other folders would be accepted. I was idealistic and thought that the Master of Fine Arts degree had something to do with the acquisition of knowledge … but it came down to a surreal formalism. I never got the folder or the degree!

It seems to me that MFA programs have become a tool of indoctrination that has had an unprecedented homogenizing effect on artistic practices worldwide, an effect that is now being replicated with curatorial and critical writing programs. At the center of the problem is the black plastic folder: at the school I attended, the folder itself became the goal of the program—both the framing and the ultimate content of graduate studies in art. A folder, identical to hundreds of other folders arranged on a shelf, became a tool to valuate and legitimize artistic practice through a forced standardization. My school was not very different from how most museums, art centers, and galleries operate today, whereby systemic and logistical needs often demand legibility according to predefined terms. In the process, the folder replaces art itself.

The market of art is not merely a bunch of dealers and cigar-smoking connoisseurs trading exquisite objects for money behind closed doors. Rather, it is a vast and complex international industry of overlapping institutions which jointly produce artworks' economic value and support a wide range of activities and occupations including training, research, development, production, display, documentation, criticism, marketing, promotion, financing, historicizing, publishing, and so forth. The standardization of art greatly simplifies all of these transactions. For a few years now I have experienced a certain sense of déjà vu while walking through art fairs or biennials, a feeling that many other people have also commented on: that we have already seen all these works that are supposedly brand new. We are experiencing the impact of contemporary art as a globally traded commodity that is produced, displayed, and circulated by an industry of specially trained professionals. The folder that replaces the art has undergone only a slight modification: into an investment portfolio.

This is not a new observation: I think Marcel Duchamp already fully understood this danger a hundred year ago. There are, of course, so many aspects of his work that could be mentioned in this essay, from his *Standard Stoppages* to his peculiar refusal to make a living by selling his artworks. In a way, one can understand much of Duchamp's work as a repeated act of offering the folder back to the art establishment: whether in the shape of a valise, a box, a collection of notes and photographs, a literal folder, or even an elaborate *gesamkunstwerk* like his *Etant donné,* containing all the indexical references to his work. However, the folders he provided contained a bomb: they were capable of bringing down the shelf they were stored on.

Today it would be rather futile to try to reconstitute bohemia—the free-flowing, organic creative space—because it never really existed within the constellation of institutions of art, the art market, and the art academy. If Warhol's Factory was an entry into art that enabled a group of people of very different backgrounds to enter a certain kind of productive modality (both within and in spite of the surrounding economy), it was a space of free play that no longer exists. Instead, what we have now are MFA programs: a standardization not even of bohemia, but only its promise. Just to be clear: I am not advocating that artists should remain innocent, childlike amateurs; a certain mobilized dissidence wielded by young people engaging in specialized study in art structures can amount to something quite powerful. What I mean is that if one is really looking to produce a different kind of art, it is necessary to step through the standardization and professionalization it promises, and discover a way to access whatever may be on the other side—even if what one finds does not resemble art as we currently understand it.

This supposes that, somewhere close to the center of

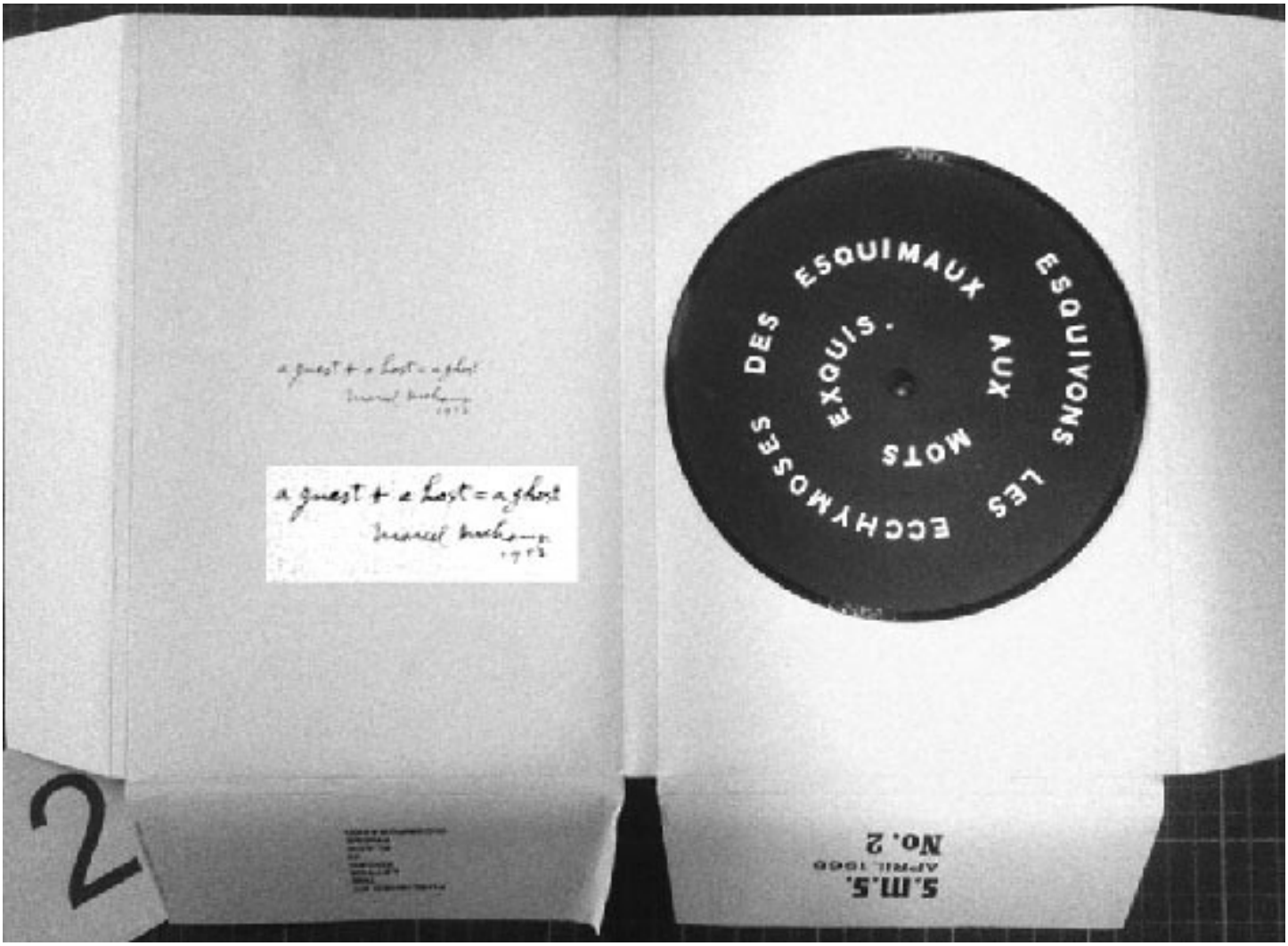


Image from the catalog Marcel Duchamp Graphics, Kyoto Shoin, 1991.Marcel Duchamp Graphics, Kyoto Shoin, 1991.

what we all know art to be, there is a kind of open, undefined quality. And this is something I feel to be increasingly difficult to develop and maintain both in art and other areas of life, when there are so many pressures in the market-driven economy to divide labor, to professionalize. As artists, curators, and writers, we are increasingly forced to market ourselves by developing a consistent product, a concise presentation, a statement that can be communicated in thirty seconds or less—and oftentimes this alone passes for professionalism. For emerging artists and curators there is an ever-increasing number of well-intentioned programs that essentially indoctrinate them into becoming content providers for an art system whose values and welfare are wholly defined by its own logic of supply and demand.

Being a professional should not be the only acceptable way for us to maintain our households, particularly when most interesting artists are perfectly capable of functioning in at least two or three fields that are, unlike art, respected by society in terms of compensation and general usefulness. I feel that we have cornered ourselves by denying the full range of possibilities for developing our economies. In fact, the economic dimension of art is more often wholly suppressed under the specter of bohemia, condemning artists to a precarious and often alienating place in the day-to-day relations that hold other parts of society together. While artists like Warhol took some pleasure in operating a frontier economy that produced value and new economic protocols—much in the way a government might manage an economy—this is not the concern of most other artists, who would prefer to have a more straightforward connection to society without at the same time having their work regarded as mere craft. Unless hard-pressed by circumstances, we still think that the proper thing to do is to wait for a sponsor or a patron to solve our household problems and to legitimize our work. In fact, we don't need their legitimacy. We are perfectly capable of being our own sponsors, which in most cases we already are when we do other kinds of work to support our art-work. This is something that should not be disavowed, but acknowledged openly. We

Natascha Sadr Haghighian, What I Do For A Living/What I Really Do?, 2007. Binders with vynil letters.

must find the terms for articulating what kind of economy artists really want. This can be quite complicated, since not addressing this question implicitly reinforces the simplistic myth of the artist as an isolated and alienated genius. Without a captivating alternative, artists will always defer to this myth out of habit, in spite of how complex and interesting their real household economy may be. I suspect that if affirmed fully and radically, this condition could lead to a fluid, liberated state close to what Marx envisioned for humanity—the messianic promise at the heart of communism.[13] After all, we are never one thing at all times.

X

Anton Vidokle is an editor of *e-flux journal.*

1
Gauguin died in a charity clinic on Tahiti, apparently due to poor treatment. He was broke and could not afford a proper hospital. While his work was selling relatively well in Paris, his dealer was not sending Gauguin's share of the money. Rodchenko's pension was stripped away after he was expelled from the artists' union in the USSR. Mondrian died in poverty of pneumonia.

2
For the website of Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), see http://www.wageforwork.com/ .

3
This point regarding Arendt is also discussed in my essay "Art without Work?", *e-flux journal* 29 (November 2011). See http://pdf.e-flux-systems.com/journal/art-without-work/ .

4
Quoted in James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890). See http://web.archive.org/web/20130423004518/https://www.neiu.edu/~wbsieger/Art313/313Read/313JMW-Ruskin.pdf .

5
Ibid.

6
Charles Baudelaire, "The Little Old Women," in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, trans. Richard Howard (New Hampshire: David R. Godine, 1982): 94.

7
This was recently pointed out to me by Shuddhabratha Sengupta.

8
T.J. Clark, *The Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999): chapter 1.

9
Martha Rosler suggests that such attitudes toward professionalism were common among artists throughout the '60s and '70s as well.

10
Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* . See http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm .

11
This was part of Walid Raad's lecture performance at documenta (13). He got the figures from Artist Pension Trust.

12
What I am describing here is the dominant US and UK art school model, but there are other problems, and also other potentials, with nation-state type academies or pure neoliberal non-degree commercial "schools," like the ones tacked on to museums and art spaces.

13
"... in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic." Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (1845): chapter 1. See http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm .

Marina Gržinić

A Refugee Protest Camp in Vienna And the European Union's Processes of Racialization, Seclusion, and Discrimination

> We ourselves, the refugees, make the demonstration, and we are the ones who want it. It is our fight. We thank everybody for their help, but we don't allow anybody to use us. This is a self-organized struggle of and by refugees, one that needs your support, your presence on the street on Saturday."
>
> —From a speech by refugee Salaheddine Najah during a protest song contest at the Rabenhof Theatre, Vienna, February 12, 2013

Since November 2012, refugees have been protesting in Austria.[1] At the center of this protest lies the formation of the Refugee Protest Camp in Vienna, which started with a ten-hour march of approximately a hundred refugees and their supporters. The march, which took place on November 24, 2012, started at the refugee reception center in Traiskirchen and ended at the Vienna city center—a distance of around twenty kilometers. The march resulted in the erection of the Refugee Protest Camp, which included tents, a kitchen, and activities in Sigmund Freud Park, in front of the Votive Church in the center of Vienna. This camp was cleared by police on December 28, 2012. After negotiating with personnel from the Votive Church, the refugees entered the church itself. They decided to "camp" in the freezing cold church building (while at the same time being monitored and controlled by Caritas, a Catholic Church charity relief organization). As nothing was offered to them by that point—no answer from the authorities regarding their demands—a group of refugees went on a hunger strike.

The Refugee Protest Camp in Vienna was supported by multiple NGOs and many activists and students, including a number from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. The hunger strike ended after a month (in January 2013) and the archbishop himself promised the refugees that they could remain in the church and would not be expelled by police.

On February 1, 2013, after a break of ten days, the refugees in the Votive Church announced the resumption of their hunger strike, since the government had made no effort to meet their demands to find a solution regarding their legal status. On February 5, one of the hunger strikers was deported to Hungary. Presumably, he will be expelled from the European Union, or worse, deported back to Pakistan. On February 16, around 2,500 people in Vienna and other EU cities marched in solidarity with the refugees, a day after the refugees decided to stop their hunger strike for a second time in order to consider their next move. In the beginning of March 2013, the protesting

refugees agreed to move the Refugee Protest Camp Vienna into a former monastery that was offered to them by the Austrian cardinal Schönborn. In the monastery they are offered legal counsel and legal representation—a "safe space" for continuing their struggle to change the asylum system.

At the present moment, the historic self-organized movement of refugees in Vienna and throughout Europe is constantly changing, as the refugees are hostages of the European "sovereign" states and the fortress of EU policies. What is becoming clear is, to use Achille Mbembe words, that Europe's "good conscience ... has wanted to be responsible for nothing, guilty of nothing."[2] The international human rights regime that was developed in Western Europe after World War II and that has spread globally has reached a dead end. It must be rethought and radically changed—politically, economically, and ideologically—to keep refugees from being left at the mercy of a regime of imprisonment, exclusion, marginalization, and death.

Refugees in Vienna, November, 2012. Photo: Andreas Edler

The intention of this text is to open up a discussion about solutions and to rethink the frame within which the self-organized movement of refugees takes place. The fact is that the movement and the demands put forward by the refugees are of historic importance. For the first time, refugees have self-organized themselves and have started a public discussion on the subject of asylum and human rights. This has resulted in the formation of a political platform with demands to change the situation of refugees in Austria and in the EU as a whole.

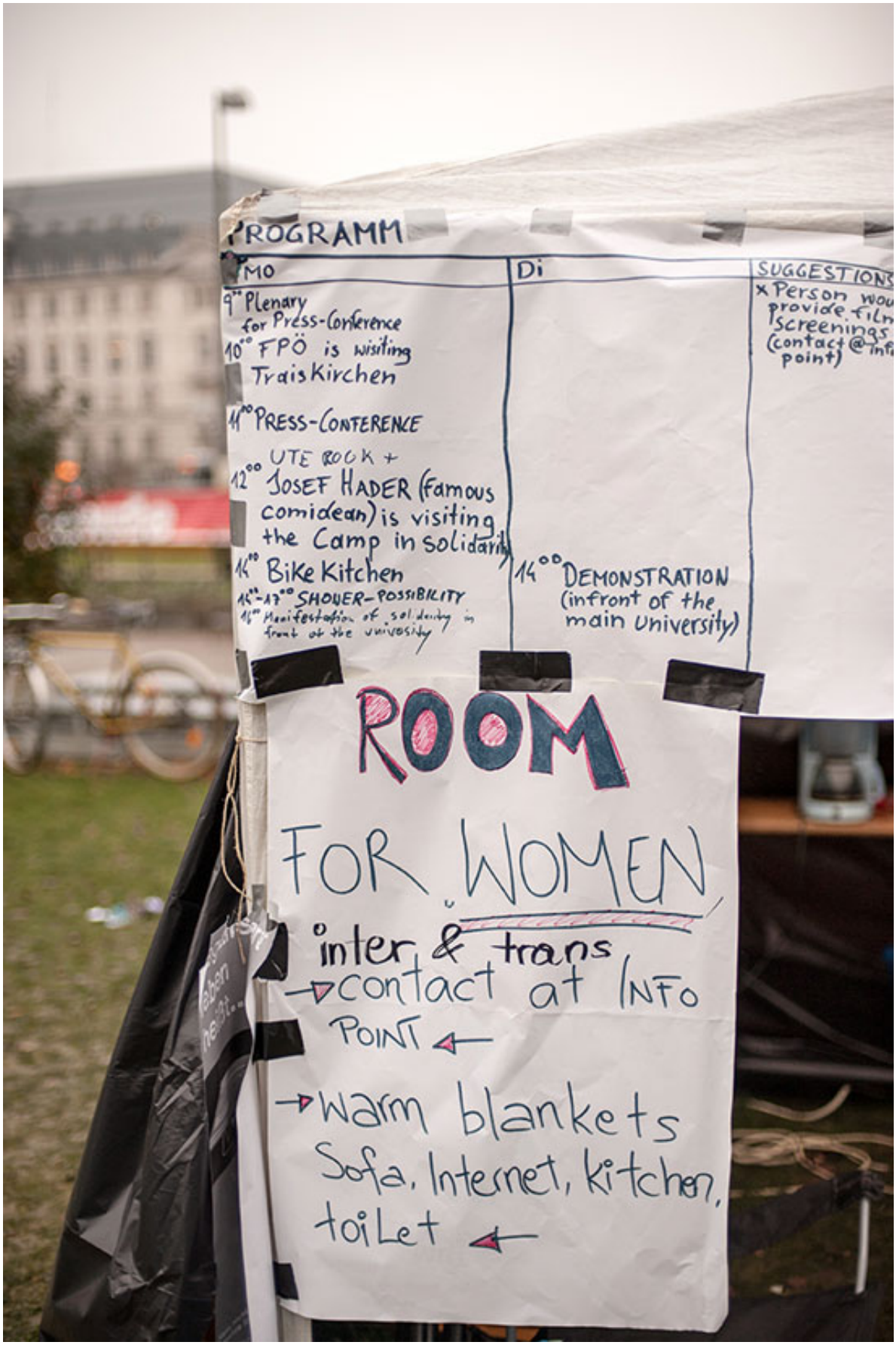
In March 2012, *in Würzburg, Germany*, refugees started a struggle to obtain the most elementary human rights.[3] Since May 2012, refugee strikes have occurred in Denmark, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, France, the Netherlands, and Austria. The protests in Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria formed, in effect, a platform of united forces. A Refugee Congress is planned for March 2013 in Munich, Germany, where participants will discuss future actions, organizational bodies, and a list of political demands that will aim to change the awful conditions for refugees and asylum seekers in the EU and Europe.

The demands of the refugees of the Refugee Protest Camp in Vienna are twofold. One part regards better living conditions, from adequate food to a decent social life. (The refugees are completely isolated in refugee centers that prevent them from having a social life, from participating in the wider social and political life of Austria). They want the chance to learn German and to have professional translators who will accurately translate their demands when they are caught in the limbo of state bureaucracy and are interrogated by the repressive state apparatus. The other part of their demands is the most important: the right to stay and the right to work. They want to exercise self-sufficiency and not be the object of charity from the state or any NGO.

For at least a decade, the refugees have been caught in a situation of systematic abandonment. Their living conditions in the EU have gradually deteriorated. This process was neglected by the nation-states in the "former" Western European countries. For a long time the refugees have been systematically forced into a situation of impoverishment, deprivation, and seclusion. They have been the victims of a process of racial discrimination that has diminished and depoliticized the concept and the status of human rights.

The refugees decided themselves to break out of such a situation. They started not only by making demands, but also by performing and acting out political equality in the space of the EU's pre-established political, social, and economic inequality. The EU survives on a constant reproduction of inequality, which is the axiom of neoliberal global capitalism. The refugees broke the predetermined space of politics in which only predetermined actors—let's say citizens—have visibility and are taken seriously when asking for democratic rights. But the struggles and demands of the refugees—who, in the parlance of Jacques Rancière, belong to the "part-of-no-part" in the present global capitalist political reality—imposed themselves in a way that forced the people of Europe to regard them as equal.[4] In so doing, they re-politicized and rearticulated the space of Europe, imposing the axiom of equality in a space of political, social, and economic inequality.

The refugees did not ask for "some" rights that would only



Poster in refugee protest camp, November, 2012. Photo: Andreas Edler.

allow them to enter and maybe participate in the space of politics and the social. They were not captive to an old modernist idea of politics, waiting for their place in the political arena, for a place reserved only for those already considered to belong to the political space—for example, nation-state citizens with their form of good life (a "good" life that deteriorates for them too in times of crisis).

Instead, the refugees appropriated the space that was seen as inaccessible to them. They thereby changed the coordinates of the established and safeguarded notion of in/equality. They actually subverted the whole space of traditional politics. Their self-empowered action came as a surprise, and it opened up the possibility of demanding changes to the laws of EU nation-states. Moreover, their actions will force the NGOs and activists that support them to reorganize themselves and their struggle.

This political platform emerged forcefully when the refugees symbolically rejected the Ute Bock Prize for Moral Courage, which was given to them in January 2013 in Vienna. On the one hand, the refugees thanked the organizers of the Ute Bock Prize for awarding it to them, but on the other hand, they asserted that they did not need charity, but political and economic (human) rights—namely, to stay and to work!

Hence, the refugees repoliticized the space of the political not by simply asking to be included, but by appropriating the space. They showed that both politics and the "human" in "human rights" are outcomes of a process of reconfiguration and repoliticization, as described by Rancière. They opened up the possibility for equality in a situation of tightly controlled and constantly reproduced inequality.

The actions of the refugees show that there are not two types of human beings, citizens and non-citizens. Either we are all citizens or we are all non-citizens! This conclusion came to the fore in a public talk by one of the refugees from the Refugee Protest Camp in Vienna. He implored the Austrian public: "You are citizens that support our demands. Therefore, why don't you demand that your political representatives—who you, as citizens, have elected—change this unbearable situation?!" The response was complete silence.

The refugees' demands pose a set of questions and problems that target not only the biopolitical regimes of the "former" Western European countries of the EU, but the whole Western concept of human rights as it was developed after WWII. Until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, human rights and asylum politics were predominantly used to reproduce the division between Eastern and Western Europe. The East was presented as a totalitarian realm, while the West was a place of democracy and respect for human rights. Human rights policy has been one of the main shields used by democratic capitalist regimes in the West to deflect discussions regarding the fascist reality of Western Europe after WWII.

The question of human rights started to visibly disintegrate after the fall of the Berlin Wall. After 1989, the emergence of global capitalism caused refugee and asylum policy in Europe to deteriorate. It is said that the employment restrictions imposed in the EU today are meant to protect the citizens of the EU, especially in Western Europe, so their living standards do not decline. We are well-aware that wages have remained stagnant for a decade. Protests in the public spaces of European democracy are frequently suppressed by police and military forces (authorized by laws that originated in colonial times, as is the case in France).[5] In the biopolitics of the West, citizens are strongly differentiated in terms of class, gender, and race—differentiations, discriminations, and exploitations that multiply globally. This is not just a question of "diversity," as it is constantly presented to the public. On the contrary, the former proletariat has changed into a *precariat*, and increasingly sees itself as "the *wretched* of the earth." The perspective of the world seen from the side of the colonized, as formulated in Frantz *Fanon*'s famous work written during the Algerian anti-colonial struggle of the 1960s, shows that EU biopolitics are constantly reproduced by and through necropolitics.

The second big change in the status of refugee rights happened after 9/11. The individual capitalist states asserted their own laws, and in so doing infringed upon international law and universal human rights. Anthony Burke wrote about this in a text published in 2002 in the first issue of the Australian journal *e-borderlands*. He stated that what had opened before us was "a world where terror is met with terror, where security is premised on insecurity, where the politics of fear and the inevitability of conflict—not freedom or justice—seem the only things enduring." The outcome was, as elaborated by Burke, that normalized patterns of violence and coercion—in the form of domestic security, surveillance, and the "deterring" of asylum seekers—took center stage in global capitalism. Suvendrini Perera, in her text "What is a Camp…?" published in the same issue, also questions the fluid and problematic categorizations that animated post-9/11 security politics.[6] She talks of the war on terror as a "category of confusions and bizarre doublings."

As Achille Mbembe has written in reference to the dispossession of life in Africa, "global capitalism cannot expand without what we should call massive *racial subsidies* or *discounts."* As Mbembe points out, "[capitalism] needs to work through and across different scales of race as it attempts to mark people either as disposable or as waste. It needs to produce, order, segment, and racialize surplus or superfluous populations to strategic effect."[7]

Let's look into a genealogy of this process of producing massive racial subsidies, and the brutal *racialization* of

the social, political, cultural, and economic space of the European Union after 1989.[8] After the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was deemed obsolete to speak of any type of East/West division. But gradually the "outside" binary was transformed into an internal process of divisions, fragmentations, classifications, and discrimination based on race, class, and gender. Before, we had two regimes—socialism and capitalism—with myriad constellations between them; today we have one system that produces a steady fragmentation of many key historical concepts. If previously there was talk about life and death, today we have a differentiation within each category itself. The major break happened in the 1990s when Giorgio Agamben made a conceptual distinction within the category of life: a distinction between "form-of-life" and "bare life." (This break coincided with the post-Cold War "disappearing" of borders.) Agamben neglected to extend his analysis to death. This only happened in the work of Achille Mbembe when he coined the term "necropolitics" in 2003.

Through this process, the capitalist Christian project of dispossession does not allow any "identity" to acquire a position from which to denote capitalism as such. These identities are pitted against each other, without understanding that they are a product of the processes of racialization, presented in the capitalist system as a kind of identity politics. The promise of liberation by capital is therefore a paradoxical and cynical measure in which liberation is presented as an infinity of fragmentations. At work here is the process of capitalism's racialization, a control axis on which endlessly differential forms of capitalist expansion are being conceived.

Structural racism is the core logic of global capitalism. Racialization is its internal administrative, judicial, and economic procedure, which regulates the space of financial capitalism as well as the system of representation, theory, and discursivity. Racism is not just an identity politics but something internal to the whole agenda of the transformation of the nation-state under global capitalism. It is possible to argue that in the

February 21, 2013. Photo: Daniel Hrncir.

The list of capitalism's victims is divided from within. Some victims have a higher status, while others are unimportant.

passage from nation-state to war-state, which is the

contemporary form of the old imperial nation-states of the past, we bump into a specific formation: the racial-state. All EU states are racial-states, as demonstrated by the way they have managed refugee and asylum politics.

This is to say that what supports the process of identity politics is not simply a multicultural project of differentiation in society, but a process of racialization that is actually at the core of contemporary global capitalist societies. The identity politics that we have defined as the product of a process of multiculturalization in contemporary capitalist societies is in fact a process of racialization.

racialization are hidden in global capitalism, which asks us not to talk about racism. Contemporary capitalism denies racism, claiming that it belongs to the era of colonialism, before the global world we live in today. Or more precisely, talking about racism is prohibited as a normative demand, while racialization still remains the main logic of differentiation in the social, political, and economic spaces of global capitalism.

Racialization is not just a process of producing tropes—it is not only about a process of capital's narrativization of its, so to speak, immanent levels of dispossessions; racialization is a process inherent to capital itself, or more precisely, to its white framework. The process of the

Refugees camped inside Votive church, Austria. Copyright: Bwag/Wikicommons.

At the same time, homogeneous control structures stay in the hands of those who have "defined" the purposes of capitalist public space, i.e., first-world capitalist centers of colonialism. They have created the pretense that the homogeneous center allows unprecedented liberty for heterogeneous difference, as long as these differentiations do not become political!

On the other hand, structural racism and processes of

internal racialization of capital functions as a "molding of the snake," which manifests itself as a transition from cognitive to financial capital, where molding is not cultural but racial. Maybe the next stage in molding will be—or already is—a transition to "human capital" that appropriates the spectrum of meanings associated with the word "humanity." This would allow capitalism to represent its antagonists as the ultimate anti-humanists.

As Achille Mbembe has noted,

> What distinguishes our age from previous ages, the breach over which there is apparently no going back, the absolute split of our times that breaks up the spirit and splits it into many, is again contingent, dispersed, and powerless existence: existence that is contingent, dispersed, and powerless but reveals itself in the guise of arbitrariness and the absolute power to give death anytime, anywhere, by any means, and for any reason.[9]

The notion of powerless existence in the context of racialization and representation, theory and discursitvity, should not be treated in binary terms that would imply the existence of a relation of dichotomy between the (powerless) subjugated and the (death bringing) subjugator. The "guise of arbitrariness" should be seen as the capacity for hegemonic power to give death at any time, while the powerless existence should not be seen as an *a priori* position, but as a property that has marked the closing of the distance between the subjugator and the subjugated, neutralizing antagonism between the paradigmatic protagonists in the cosmology of power. It is precisely this *arbitrariness* that is employed in the processes of (out)sourcing, deporting, and devising that are part of a refugee center's procedures when granting or rejecting papers to stay, work, or live. In a way, arbitrariness makes a coherent connection between racialization and the system that sustains it.

It is also important to expose the fact that the process of racialization at work in the refugee and asylum centers, and in the whole system of refugee policy in Europe, allows for a brutally perverse structure of racialization. Racialization provides a kind of "internal clock" or a "set of guidelines" used by capitalist white racist ideology, that can be seen as well as the embodiment of a prohibition organized on the basis of "smashing of all prohibitions," but only when presented as the regime's ability to posit itself "antagonistically" toward its own racist ideology. For instance, political parties in power in the EU claim that they would like to do something about the situation, that is not at all "a case" of discriminatory policy, but simply an effect of laws and regulations that unfortunately take time to be changed.

This arbitrariness, as Achille Mbembe argues, "accomplishes its own work and validates itself through its own sovereignty, and thereby permits power to be exercised as a right to kill."[10] Therefore, arbitrariness does not function as a mask for the absence of some profound "possibility." Nor is it a "new form" of capitalism based on mandatory transgression. Rather, arbitrariness is a symptom of an ideology based on utter emptiness—or more precisely, based on an emptiness that is being filled by transgression. The capitalist necropolitical horizon (the one that produces a pure abandonment of life and at the same time the activation of the war machine) takes racism as "legitimizing" terrain for it's processes of discrimination and dispossession, presenting racism and racialization as a sort of "benign" modernist (we could almost say atavistic) process of infinite narrations. These narrations are presented as a pure irregularity (and not a systematic process), hence, as an "erratic" framework that fosters struggles for the prominence of identity, culture, and race within the hierarchies of exploitation.

Press conference at Votive church, February 5, 2013. Photo: Daniel Hrncir.

X

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1
See http://refugeecampvienna.noblogs.org/ .

2
Achille Mbembe, *Sortir de la grande nuit. Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée* (We must get out of the great night: Essay on decolonized Africa) (Paris: Découverte, 2010), 171.

3
This began when refugees pitched a small tent in Würzburg. It has since grown into a huge movement that has spread all over Europe. See http://refugeecongress.wordpress.com/english/ .

4
Jacques Rancière, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol. 103, No. 2/3, (2004) 297–310.

5
In her text "French Suburbia 2005: The Return of the Political Unrecognized," Rada Iveković writes: "When the (French) government reactivated the law about the state of emergency (in 2005), passed during the Algerian war in 1955, the French learned that colonial legislation had never been abrogated in the first place." Rada Iveković, "French Suburbia 2005," in *New Feminism: Worlds of Feminism, Queer and networking Conditions* , ed. M. Gržinić and R. Reitsamer, Vienna: Löcker, 2008.

6
Suvendrini Perera, "What is a Camp…?", *e-borderlands* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2002). See http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol1no1_2002/perera_camp.html .

7
Achille Mbembe, "Theory from the Antipodes: Notes on Jean & John Comaroffs' TFS," in *Theorizing the Contemporary* (2012).

8
See my research conducted with Sefik Tatlić: Marina Gržinić and Sefik Tatlić, "Global Capitalism's Racializations," 2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20131208052322/http://bijenaleumetnosti.rs/2012/download/De-Artikulacija2.pdf . In the following, I will reuse parts of this research.

9
Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 13.

10
Ibid.