

SUPER INTO ON TO IT



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I AM FOR A STUDY

Study is not education. Teaching is not study. Study is not study, yet study is not not study, necessarily. Study is not performing, not a room where some guy smokes, it's not credits or evaluation. Study is not knowing, not an activity in the light. Study is rather not knowing, of staying in the dark maintaining oneself in the vague, the unpackageable, and yet refuse negotiation, let's keep up the passion.

I am for a study that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a school, university, institute or academy. I am for a study that grows up not knowing it is studying at all, a study given the chance of having a starting point of zero.

I am for a study that embroils itself with the everyday crap and still comes out on top.

I am for a study that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent, or whatever is necessary.

I am for a study that takes its form from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself.

I am for a study that vanishes, turning up in a white cap painting signs or hallways.

I am for a study that comes out of a chimney like black hair and scatters in the sky.

I am for a study that spills out of an old man's purse when he is bounced off a passing fender.

I am for a study out of a doggy's mouth, falling five stories from the roof.

I am for the a study that a kid licks, after peeling away the wrapper.

I am for a study that joggles like everyone's knees, when the bus traverses an excavation.

I am for a study that is smoked, like a cigarette, that smells, like a pair of shoes.

I am for a study that flaps like a flag, or helps blow noses, like a handkerchief.

I am for a study that is put on and taken off, like pants, which develops holes, like socks, which is eaten, or abandoned with great contempt, like a piece of shit.

I am for a study covered with bandages. I am for a study that limps and rolls and runs and jumps. I am for a study that comes in a can or washes up on the shore.

I am for a study that coils and grunts like a wrestler. I am for a study that sheds hair.

I am for a study you can sit on. I am for a study you can pick your nose with or stub your toes on.

I am for a study from a pocket, from deep channels of the ear, from the -edge of a knife, from the corners of the mouth, stuck in the eye or worn on the wrist.

I am for a study under the skirts, and the a study of pinching cockroaches.

I am for the a study of conversation between the sidewalk and a blind mans metal stick.

I am for the a study that grows in a pot, that comes down out of the skies at night, like lightning, that hides in the clouds and growls. I am for a study that is flipped on and off with a switch.

I am for a study that unfolds like a map, that you can squeeze, like your sweety's arm, or kiss, like a pet dog. Which expands and squeaks, like an accordion, which you can spill your dinner on, like an old tablecloth.

I am for a study that you can hammer with, stitch with, sew with, paste with, file with.

I am for a study that tells you the time of day, or where such and such a street is.

I am for a study that helps old ladies across the street.

I am for the study of the washing machine. I am for the study of a government check. I am for the study of last wars raincoat.

I am for the study that comes up in fogs from sewer-holes in winter. I am for the study that splits when you step on a

frozen puddle. I am for the worms' study inside the apple. I am for the study of sweat that develops between crossed legs.

I am for the study of neck-hair and caked tea-cups, for the study between the tines of restaurant forks, for the odor of boiling dishwasher.

I am for the study of sailing on Sunday, and the study of red and white gasoline pumps.

I am for the study of bright blue factory columns and blinking biscuit signs.

I am for the study of cheap plaster and enamel. I am for the study of worn marble and smashed slate. I am for the study of rolling cobblestones and sliding sand. I am for the study of slag and black coal. I am for the study of dead birds.

I am for the study of scratchings in the asphalt, daubing at the walls. I am for the study of bending and kicking metal and breaking glass, and pulling at things to make them fall down.

I am for the study of punching and skinned knees and sat-on bananas. I am for the study of kids' smells. I am for the study of mama-babble.

I am for a study of bar-babble, tooth-picking, beer-drinking, egg-salting, in-suiting. I am for a study that falls off a barstool.

I am for a study of underwear and a study of taxicabs. I am for a study of ice-cream cones dropped on concrete. I am for the majestic a study of dogturds, rising like cathedrals.

I am for the blinking study, lighting up the night. I am for studies failing, splashing, wiggling, jumping, going on and off.

I am for a study of fat truck-tires and black eyes.

I am for Kool-study, 7-UP study, Pepsi-study, Sunshine study, 39 cents study, 15 cents study, Vatronol study, Dro-bomb study, Varn study, Menthol study, L&M study, Exlax study, Venida study, Heaven Hill study, Pamryl study, San-o-med study, Rx study, 9.99 study, Now study, New study, How study, Fire sale study, Last Chance study, Only study, Diamond study, Tomorrow study, Franks study, Ducks study, Toys'R'Us study.

I am for the study of bread wet by rain. I am for the rats' dance between floors. I am for the study of flies walking on a slick pear in the electric light.

I am for the study of soggy onions and firm green shoots. I am for study of clicking among the nuts when the roaches come and go. I am for the brown sad study of rotting apples.

I am for the study of meowls and clatter of cats and for the study of their dumb electric eyes.

I am for the white study of refrigerators and their muscular openings and closings.

I am for the study of rust and mold. I am for the study of hearts, funeral hearts or sweetheart hearts, full of nougat. I am for the study of worn meathooks and singing barrels of red, white, blue and yellow meat

I am for the study of things lost or thrown away, coming home from school. I am for the study of cock-and-ball trees and flying cows and tile noise of rectangles and squares. I am for the study of crayons and weak grey pencil-lead, and grainy wash and sticky oil paint, and the study of windshield wipers and the study of the finger on a cold window, on dusty steel or in the bubbles on the sides of a bathtub.

I am for the study of teddy-bears and guns and decapitated rabbits, exploded umbrellas, raped beds, chairs with their brown bones broken, burning trees, firecracker ends, chicken bones, pigeon bones and boxes with men sleeping in them.

I am for the study of slightly rotten funeral flowers, hung bloody rabbits and wrinkly yellow chickens, bass drums & tambourines, and plastic phonographs.

I am for the study of abandoned boxes, tied like pharaohs. I am for ail study of watertanks and speeding clouds and flapping shades.

I am for U.S. Government Inspected study, Grade A study, Regular Price study, Yellow Ripe study, Extra Fancy study, Ready-to-eat study, Best-for-less study, Ready-to cook study, Fully cleaned study, Spend Less study, Eat Better study, Ham study, pork study, chicken study, tomato study, banana study, apple study, turkey study, cake study, cookie study.

CINÉMA À TERMINAL 2F

PRISONERS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

Editor Marcus Doverud



The Swedish electro pop group The Knife has aged or at least matured. Previously, they were fucking with the pop world by sending Guerilla Girls and video beckoning older ladies to Grammy award shows instead of showing up themselves, but now they will not even show at the Pop scene. This means that a middle-aged man like me, raised on Dylan, Springsteen and Ligeti, Mahler and Reich can approach The Knife without knowing much about them and still feel welcome: This is musical and political radicalism traveling at the speed of sound!

The distorted voices estrange any singer songwriter, rock or poptradition, while the groups soundscapes makes the world so cold and hostile as can be in revolt, in the light of desperate negative dialectics.

But what do The Knife tell us? What do they want? The days when I listen through the new album *Shaking the Habitual* I lie ill in cold sweat, and what I hear is a song from captivity. In the bottom corner of one of the large text booklets, which also consists of a comic strip by Life Strömquist she quote Michel Foucault, the philosopher who mapped the network of repression that society planted in our bodies and who described the *Le grand renferment*.

But what the duo Karin and Olof Dreijer are primarily trapped in is themselves: "Ready to lose a privilege, an Ongoing habit," says the last song.

Maybe that is Olof Palme quoted, when he in a speech traced the roots of racism to fear of losing a privilege, a first right.

For it is the privileged middle class who sings, and the group now talks about the horror of realizing it.

In a video released with another song from the new album, *Full of Fire*, Olof and Karin play a yuppie couple with a child who is visited by the RUT-woman to clean their apartment.

A nightmarish image of a middle class captive in their own tax privileges are emerging. Their daughter picks among wine glasses the maid busted. In the curious eyes of the baby flickers utopia.

The Dreijer siblings are trapped in the former West, in themselves, in their gender, in their class, and the album is a song straight out of this captivity. Is that why a reviewer like Fredrik Strage, although intrigued by the album, reacted somewhat annoyed at the message? Cultural middle class are upset of its own attempts to rid themselves of their privileges? Liberals giving me a nerve itch, cry the liberal's reflection.

The open lyrics of doing otherwise make the listener able to practically choose what to focus on, as with the issue of climate change:

Under the iceberg
There's a tomb
Working the way up
Picking a hole in the cocoon

In an eerie twilight song, yes; a gostsonata, á la Haga Castle pops up and even the famous coffee girls of monarchy.

Strawberry, melon, a cherry on top
Butter, popcorn that i can pop
Coffee with girls and a racing team
The Haga Castle evening cream

In the mind of a middle-aged socialist the nursery rime with strawberries, melon and cherry leads me to Mayakovsky's "Pineapple, hazel grouse, eat and enjoy Freeman soon your fairy tale will end..."

"Old dreams waiting to be realized" is a nineteen minutes long composition; What are the dreams that crouches in the desolate landscape singing about? I do not know. It is as if two giant containers where unloaded, one with the sign Nina Björk, the other with Karl Marx (they are both mentioned in the booklet). I listen over the passage again the same afternoon as the news of Thatcher's death came and among the scraping sounds of a huge hangar where everything is stored, I listen for her metallic voice.

The album gives the impression of slowly wanting to curl out of that foucauldian impasse - leaving everything post-structuralist theory - and into something else: Suddenly it is January 2012 in one of the lyrics. In another falling the euro devalue. In a third are right-wingers are dabbling the rewriting of history. And Liv Strömquists comic strips seems to be there to point to a realpolitik.

The Knife has made an album about middle class yearning for liberation from their own privileges. Sometimes the phrase it in awe:

You have the most beautiful way
to place one foot in front of the other
And the one foot is yours and the other mine

Göran Greider

First published in Aftonbladet, 11 April 2013.

Did you always believe that anyone can heal anyone else but never knew how to do it?

try
FAKE THERAPY

Ask Valentina when you see her around or email her at valedesideri@gmail.com

Editorial

WE WILL NOT GIVE UP

Everything tells us to, our intellect [if we have one], consciousness, our feelings and emotions even our Montreal fluffy affect department [oh, no not that one - it tells us to be always more than one, holy fuck as we didn't have enough of one us?] all of them tells us to, tells us to give up and to comply to the general order. We should follow tendencies of correct behavior and resign, invest properly and agree to be part of markets, to strategies of survival, measurement and compatibility. But we can't give up. We can't and we write out of despair. We are makers of things, actions, art you name it and we are in tears.

We will not and cannot support consciousness but must fight it to bitterest of bitter ends. "Give up and swallow the little suffering that it implies", but no we cannot, we rather live with the increased pain whatever getting out of consciousness will cost me. To be alive is not alright, we must fight the desire to consider that life is okay. Consciousness and life, a good, and okay life, that is what we need to fight. We fight, wave our arms wildly to become existence and non-life.

Certainly, we exist in markets, we perform strategies and negotiate diplomatically yet just because we do, do we necessarily need to subordinate ourself to these. Even if we will come out vanquished our job is to refuse, not refuse as a protest against anything, no this is a refusal to ourself and the petty desires we can already have, have and enjoy.

For a week Super Into On To It gathers up at PAF to consider study from an as far fetched position as possible, no not possible we are gonna go, as the King had it, TCB in a flash or worse all the way. We'll conspire, fuck it up, dismiss and by the holy chebang not make it out alive. Our job is to betray all sides including ourselves and from there on not even take responsibility of our actions. Follow us for a week and you will be way much poor person. Give it up for Super Into On To It.

We not in favor emancipation, we are against it, because emancipation is already from something, my refusal is worse we must emancipate ourself from emancipation as a form of struggle, an aimless struggle towards an annihilation of ourself as ourself. Emancipation is connected with gratification, the struggle we need to engage in must not offer any from of gratification, no affordance and certainly no opportunities for investment. Anything that we can conclude works is not enough, only that that doesn't work is acceptable and worth further investigation. Whatever works is always already inscribed and possible [spit on Woody Allen]. It is not enough to set up problems for ourself or the world. To problems we can have there are already more or less relevant solutions. What we must do is to force ourself to invent problems to which there are absolutely no solutions. We must not solve problems, we must resolve ourself in favor of new problems. We already have the answers, we know what is wrong, but neither to identify what is wrong nor accept my answers is sufficient. I must keep watch, keep awake. I must take all threats seriously, but must not give in, don't be seduced by them, identify with their surprising yet conventional monstrosity, we must not resign in front of false sense of guilt and justice they invite. We must refute our desires to protest, our hopes for some revolt, as they confirm our idealist light leftist subjectivity and already responds to an already producible future, already some kind of prescriptive capacity, to forms of emancipation. Fuck that, it is only the simple formation of a projectable future. We must stop ourself, cut our own limbs that bring me towards hope. We must annihilate our petty belief in the future and with a complete lack of expectation engage in future, future as absolute non-differentiated becoming, future not as the actualization of tendencies already in existence but in avenir a break with any form of perspective. The future is already engaged in perspective, in formation, whereas avenir is future understood as horizon, future as indivisible and continuous alien. We don't care if such an aimless struggle or keeping watch implies an argument vis-à-vis a great outdoors, immanence or plain of consistency. This is not a matter of analysis in favor of a philosophically consistent subject, no we are and must by necessity be against such a subject, both the philosophical and the consistency part, avenir is rather and also precisely their contingent destruction or putrefaction.

It might appear childish and idealistic but there is no political, studyist or artistic practice that we can respect that does not understand avenir as its in-one-identity of the last instance. Liberty's rigor is way more difficult than liberty itself. We will not give up, never. It is our promise, our only promise. We will never, never give up.



EUROPE'S AGONY

HOW TO HEAL ASTHMA

Our one and only Franco Bifo reflects on breathing issues and brings on a awesome critique of Europe, to flies in one blow in a way that only a dear friend of Guattari can. Bifo leaves nobody standing not even himself. Go for gold and do it now.

The form is swallowing the content.

Capital as a form is no more able to hold together the entropic force of global society, but so far the agony of capitalism is not coinciding with the emergence of autonomous forms of society. Biopolitical innervations of capital in the collective mind and the body are producing in fact a spasm paralyzing the process of subjectivation.

The black hole of financial abstraction is swallowing and destroying the product of two centuries of development and civilization, and is aggressing its content: the productive potency of the general intellect. The social civilization, created during the Modern age is invested and corroded by the metastases of the financial cancer.

How can the content get free from the form? This is the question that we should answer, while, as you can see, the building of civilization is crumbling.

The first act of the European tragedy

In 2012 the first act of the European tragedy has closed: the constitutionalization of the Fiscal Compact in eleven countries of the Eurozone is the final cancelation of the last remnants of democracy. The process of impoverishment of European society is steadily underway, and the dismantlement of the educational system creates the condition of spreading ignorance and barbarianism. Civil structures are falling apart. In Greece those who have no more a job lose the right to healthcare. People are dying for maladies that could be healed before the Euro did spread as a plague.

Precarious work and recomposition: the main problem

Traditional forms of movement's action have exposed their inefficacy so the revolt has weakened after the wave of 2010-2011. Depression has taken the place of action. Precarious generation seems to bend to the prospect of a cultural and economic impoverishment, and seems unable to get rid of the cultural expectations that make people dependant on the media and finance. Precarious work seems unable to build a common ground of action on the European scale. So late has the movement grasped the European character of the capitalist restructuration, that resistance has only happened at the national level. The isolation of Greek people who during the last years have been fighting desperately in the absence of any widespread solidarity is the bitter sign of this delay.

The second act of the tragedy: from bankanization to balkanization.

In Spain, where the movement has been more persistent than elsewhere, the Catalan independentism is now reproping the dynamics of European desolidarization. One million people have marched in September under the flags of independent Catalonia, and in October a nationalist crowd has filled the streets. This is opening the second act of the European tragedy, and is redesigning the context. The new dangerous phase steps from the submission of European society to the interests of the bank system (bankanization) to the multiplication of nationalist and ethnic conflicts leading to civil war on a continental scale: balkanization.

Civil war will have different forms: in Greece a wide part of the police and the army are linked to the Nazis party, and anti-European nationalism will trigger the rightwing answer against the growth of Syriza. In Spain independentism and nationalism will clash. What will happen in Hungary and Romania we can imagine, and also what will happen in Belgium, while the anti German hatred is growing everywhere. In Athens groups of young people have burned German flags with a swastika.

In Italy mafia war and new Northern secessionism are nourished by growing unemployment. And Berlusconi, far from defeated, can play his most devilish game, provoking the breakdown of the Italian market credibility, and disrupting the frail balance upon which the Euro is teetering.

Competition and loneliness

The front of labor is broken in Europe, and the division

between North and South is concerning also the Unions, unable to express e common stance, and subjugated by national identity made of Southern resentment and Northern deception.

The process of privatization of social resources and the dismantlement of the rights of labor are underway, and what counts more is the effect that the finazist aggression is producing on subjectivity. Precarization has atomized work, transforming labor into de-personalized fragments of time, isolated in their loneliness. Now the finazist attack is transforming this depressed fragmentation into rabid aggressiveness leaning toward identitarian or suicidal forms.

Recomposition solidarity active withdrawal

The movement that expressed itself in 2010-11 without coordination on the national basis has been unable to stop the financial offensive, because the pacific protest has no effect on the monetarist dogma. Democracy has been cancelled by financial organizations that do not answer to the Parliament. The social movement cannot stop the offensive because financial abstraction is out of the reach of political action. Strikes and demonstrations, even armed resistance cannot have an effect upon dynamics that are totally disembodied. Only the organized force of society in the form of withdrawal can defuse the financial attack. The only possibility of survival for social life is mass insolvency and the creation of communitarian forms of exchange. Community currencies are proliferating, and will spread when social disaster will become deeper. But in order such a process to become strong and steady, solidarity is needed up to a level that European society is possessing no more.

We should not deny mental suffering, on the contrary we should start from it

If we want to restart a process of autonomous subjectivation we should start from psychic suffering. Only starting from the reconstitution of the psychic and social force of desire a process of mass insolvency can start, and a process of institutionalization of the sphere of the commons can follow. If we don't develop this process of social recomposition and reactivation of solidarity, the issue of the constitutionalization of common wealth will be based on denial and will result into a rhetorical exercise.

How to heal asthma

When I had my first respiratory crises I understood that asthma has features similar to panic. The alveolus contracts and the lungs do not receive oxygen enough, so you start desperately to draw air but this is emphasizing your sense of asphyxiation, because hyper-ventilation triggers anxiety. Then my sister told me: "relax, you should understand that you don't need so much oxygen. Just a little bit of breathing will be enough." Since then I had no more respiratory crises.

General reduction of work time

A new frame of interpretation of the process of social recomposition must be based on the reinvention of the anthropological and existential horizon, for the orientation of social movement in the next years of misery and violence. In the XXth Century the process of subjectivation was based on a prospect of economic expansion, and social desire was modeled on expectations of acquisition property and ever increasing consumption.

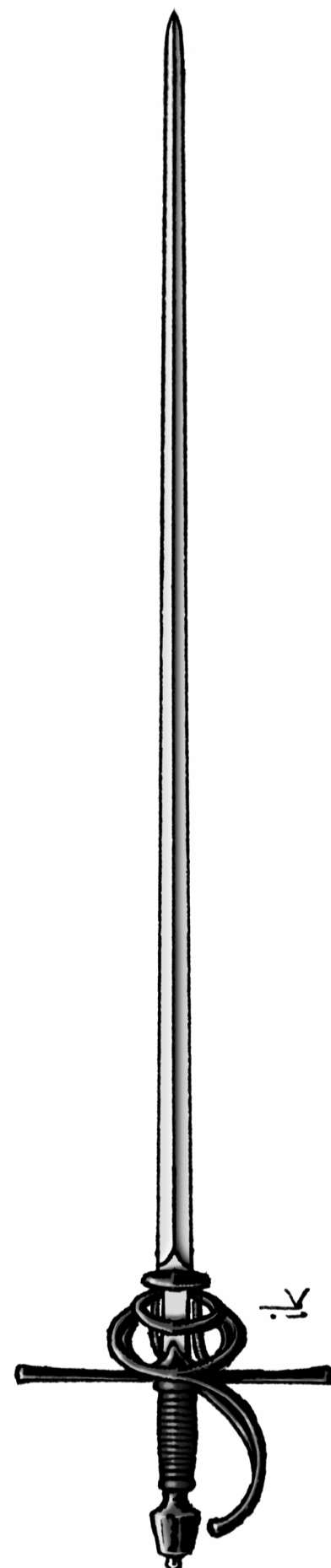
Today while reducing demand and destroying productive forces, the monetarist dogma is promising growth, but growth will not come. Economic expansion is over, and Un-growth is not a moral or political choice that we can accept or refuse.

In Europe Un-growth is a given, a consequence of the redistribution of the world division of labor, of the exhaustion of the physical resources, and of the strategic defeat of the workers movement. We must emancipate life-time from work, and redistribute the time of necessary work. Less work hours means also less unemployment.

The reduction of work time is the only strategy that makes possible to transform Un-growth into a process of enrichment of the quality of life and of collective pleasure.

In the process of de-evolution, social autonomy presupposes a redefinition of cultural expectations: the relation between work and consumption and the very concept of richness have to be rethought, and cultural expectations have to get rid of the identification of richness and acquisition.

We must emancipate social desire from that expectation: not possess but sharing, not competition but solidarity, not having but enjoying.



AFTER CREDIT, WINTER – THE PROGRESSIVE ART INSTITUTION AND THE CRISIS

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen dives deep into the ups downs and diagonals of art history offering a different morphology to the our current predicament, crisis. But what does contemporary art perform trapped in financialization and a situation where creativity has become high currency.

The global economy is collapsing and it seems as if we are heading towards a finale of the present financial regime. Whether it is really a 'terminal crisis' in Giovanni Arrighi's sense – the end of a cycle of accumulation – remains to be seen but the accelerated pace of the crisis from the mortgage default rate tilting sharply upward in 2006 to the financial crash in 2008 and onwards inevitably points in that direction¹.

This might turn out to be the end of the American empire Arrighi prophesized already in 1994 in his acclaimed *The Long Twentieth Century* where he showed how capitalism has had four systemic cycles of accumulation since the fourteenth century each with its own imperial leader – a Genoese cycle, from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth century, a Dutch cycle, from the late sixteenth through most of the eighteenth century, a British cycle from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, and a US cycle, which began in the late nineteenth century – ruling for about 100 years or a little more going through three phases before collapsing and making space for the next cycle. According to Arrighi each systemic cycle is characterized by the same phases, from an initial one of financial expansion, through a phase of material expansion, followed by another financial expansion. The upward trajectory of each hegemon is based on the expansion of production and trade. At a point in each cycle, however, a crisis occurs as a result of the over-accumulation of capital. As Arrighi describes it, financial expansion announces the Autumn of a particular hegemonic system, and precedes a shift to a new hegemon. Arrighi is thus able to show how the financial expansion of the last decades of the twentieth century was not a new phenomenon but a recurrent historical tendency of capitalism.

With the so-called financial crisis it seems as if Autumn is being replaced by winter². Whether this crisis is really the end of a cycle of accumulation no one knows but all the financial expansions that have taken place since the early 1970's are fundamentally unsustainable as they have been drawing more capital into speculation than can be managed and now the bubbles have begun bursting signaling a possible end of a regime of accumulation. Terminal crisis.... time will tell. But we already have a pretty good first impression of the next phase of the end as austerity takes on the characteristics of a global political regime in which governments all over the world in an even more visible and brutal manner than for the last 35 years of neoliberal rule impose austerity in the form of lower wages, lay-offs of public workers, pass legislation weakening organized labour and make cuts in programs benefiting working people³.

Here we are now. Crisis and breakdown. It is an open question what will happen and what the next cycle of accumulation will look like, it will take some time and the disproportions of the current cycle will most likely have to be resolved by crisis, shakeout and probably also a major war, not unlike the last transition from British hegemony to American. But an exit from the capitalist system altogether and the destruction of value is also becoming a possibility. This is the revolutionary perspective that is being advanced by parts of the revolting masses in North Africa and the Middle East and picked up by the young protesters in Spain, Greece, America and elsewhere. A critique of the capitalist money economy and the present neoliberal world order and its extreme inequality locally as well as globally.

Moving from these large-scale global historical events, the political economic phantasmatic level of world history, to a consideration of developments in contemporary art and in particular the workings of so-called progressive art institutions in Western Europe and the US is not straightforward.

There is a question of scale here. Nonetheless it is interesting to consider a couple of recent events in light of the current conjuncture of crash, crisis and austerity, events where art institutions traditionally considered part of the more politically inclined margin of the art world showed themselves to be firmly on the side of the ruling powers. I am thinking of the exhibition *Abstract Possible* at Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm where Maria Lind collaborated with the auction house Bukowskis, which is owned by Swedish oil and gas exploration company Lundin Petroleum responsible for killings and village burnings in Sudan and I am thinking of the eviction of a group of occupy activists from Artists Space in New York. In both instances we have an allegedly progressive institution revealing previously invisible elite class alliances. It seems as if institutional surfaces are beginning to crack as we enter a period of intense crisis. In the Winter things are stripped bare as the leaves fall and the temperature drops.

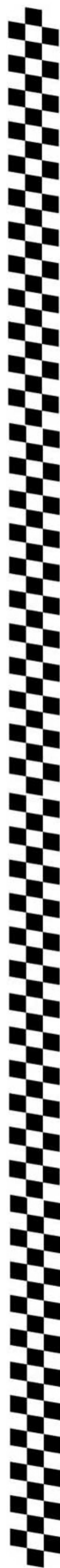
Although the booming art market is very much central to the story of contemporary art in the decades since 1989, the 1990's and 00's was also a period where not only institutional critique and different kinds of relational and participatory art but also representations of anti-capitalist politics were exhibited in art institutions around the world. In tension with the escalating use of contemporary art as a haven for newly accumulated capital and a resource for regional or national development, art institutions mounted exhibitions focusing on ongoing political conflicts or, more often, presented historical political art (feeding the historicist impulse visible in much new art). In Europe we had biennials like Catherine David's *Documenta X* in 1997 with a heavy dose of late '60's institutional critique coupled with Marxist theory, Okwui Enwezor's post-colonial *Documenta 11* in 2002 and the Brechtian *11th Istanbul Biennial* in 2009 organised by WHW [Why How and For Whom?], and large historical exhibitions like *Forms of Resistance* at Van Abbe Museum in Holland in 2007 curated by Will Bradley and Charles Esche encompassing art from the Paris Commune to Marco Scotini's *Disobedience Archive*. In the US we had exhibitions like Nato Thompson's *The Interventionist: Art in the Social Sphere* in 2004 with the likes of the *Yes Men* at MASS MoCA and Chris Gilbert's notorious *Now-Time Venezuela: Media along the Bolivarian Process* at Berkeley Art Museum in 2006 which ended in Gilbert's resignation and exile in Venezuela⁴.

So, while contemporary art was in many respects "a propagandist of neoliberal values", as Julian Stallabrass phrased it in his *Art Incorporated* showing how contemporary art became tied to post-Fordist speculation with bling, boom and bust, it was also a place where curators and artists were able to show political actualities not necessarily visible elsewhere⁵. The absence of a critical political public sphere made the art institution a place where it was possible to represent pressing political issues. Although the alter-globalisation movement and other anti-systemic movements tried to oppose the neoliberal dogma, neoliberalism became a kind of second nature after 1989, acting as the most successful ideology in world history, as Perry Anderson wrote with slight hyperbole in 2000⁶. At a time when neoliberal ideology managed to present itself as the only game in town, effectively turning any reference to alternatives into a slide towards totalitarianism, the representation of oppositional politics in the art institution was a welcome gesture. It was possible to discuss a wide range of topics in contemporary art excluded from the mass media such as the rise of right wing populism in Europe, communism and neoliberal re-colonization.

The art institutional representation was a positive antidote to the intellectual blackmail of the 1990's and 2000's with the rhetoric of 'the end of history' and 'a clash of civilizations' but it was of course itself limited by the structural difficulty in connecting the inside representation to an outside political context where it could acquire a broader radical perspective. In retrospect the absence of opposition to neoliberalism almost looks as the condition of possibility of 'political' art in the '90's and '00's.

The contradictions of contemporary political art are of course structural by nature as the historical avant-garde movements and their contemporary critics like Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse already showed in the 1920's and 1930's when the avant-garde tried to transcend the institution of art and set art free outside the institutional confines of modern art. Marcuse's Weberian-Marxist analysis from 'The Affirmative Character of Culture' (1937) in large part still holds true as a description of the double character of art. As Marcuse argues, on the one hand art creates images of another world and possesses a subversive potential thanks to its autonomy. Art is an expression of humanity's preoccupation with its own future happiness, and in that sense it transcends society at a symbolic level. It is a kind of sanctuary where a number of fundamental needs that are suppressed in capitalist society are met virtually. The victims of the rationalization of bourgeois society are given a voice and awakened to life in art, which in this way functions as a repository for marginalized experiences and excluded modes of expression. But art is at the same time socially affirmative, it is a relative legitimization of the society in which it exists. The freedom and autonomy of art is moderated by that very freedom being enclosed in the institution of art, 'an independent realm of value [...] compatible with the bad present, despite and within which it can afford happiness⁷. Art thus stabilizes the very condition it criticizes, Marcuse writes. It is a place of hibernation for the anarchistic imagination that is rapidly being eradicated by the accelerated rationalization process of capitalist modernity; but this imagination is also prevented from having any broad social impact, precisely because it is confined to the sphere of art, because of art's autonomy. Marcuse terms this contradiction the dual nature of art, the fact that it is relatively autonomous and both protests against capitalist society and its alienating abstractions, and confirms that society by being a safety valve whereby society can blow off surplus energy and let marginalized desire come to expression as pointless luxury goods with no risk of real change.

The fates of the avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde and institutional critique all confirm Marcuse's analysis and stresses art's complex autonomy which is both challenged and confirmed by the inclusion of politics in contemporary art. The management of cultural trends and 'subversive' art is one way of maintaining social balance, Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Adorno and Guy Debord all stressed that. Since the late 1950's art institutions have been reflective about this double character of art and have allowed or even welcomed political criticism of themselves in order to keep alive the anti-autonomous or heteronomous side of art, reproducing the distinctness of art as a place of criticality in capitalist society. This development has intensified since the days of pop and conceptual art, making the representation of politics in art a necessary supplement to contemporary art's neoliberal turn where art was one way of defibrillating a slowing economy and entertaining the unproductive FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate) population. As Brian Holmes wrote in 2004 in 'Liar's Poker: The Representation of Politics / The Politics of Representation': 'The institutional 'house' now seeks its interest in a complex game,



which alone can reconcile the economic nexus it provides with the cultural capital it seeks among the more radical factions of the artistic field⁸.

In the 1990's and 2000's several European art institutions were thus open to some kind of politicisation where curators were allowed to critically rework the institution and open it up, not only to more process oriented art projects but also to political concerns. Rooseum in Malmö, directed by Charles Esche, and München Kunstverein led by Maria Lind were among the well known examples of this trend dubbed 'new institutionalism'. Now the art institution was supposed to actively support criticality and deploy institutional critique at the level of institutional administration and programming not just mount exhibitions by political artists. The curator herself now had a 'subversive' agenda working together with artists enabling structural change of the institution. The exhibition was no longer the privileged medium. Seminars, publications and different kind of archives became new important formats whereby the audience according to the discourse of new institutionalism was transformed from an individual contemplative spectator into an active participant. Curators like Esche and Lind thus worked as in-house curators striving to enable critique and transform the institution into an open and socially inclusive arena for the presentation of oppositional political representations of various kinds. In the words of Brian Holmes, some art professionals were apparently 'playing a transformative game' trying to produce alternative ways of evaluating art and using it to progressive ends⁹. In a longer historical perspective this move is to be understood as part of a general move away from direct critique considered to be too totalistic and romantic and unable to challenge the object of critique and towards a loosely Deleuzian-inspired idea of radical pragmatism where you work within institutions making 'modest proposals' instead of rejecting them as was the case in for instance the Situationists' critique of the society of the spectacle in the 1960's¹⁰. A rhetoric of the temporary or open-endedness characterized the discourse of new institutionalism where direct confrontation was replaced with implicit critique.

A few years into the crisis – as Arrighi writes the crisis actually began already in the early 1970 as the postwar boom exhausted itself – it seems fair to say that the discourse of new institutionalism was really just one more example of depoliticization in art where art institutions were temporarily transformed into social centres and discussion platforms but nothing really changed. New institutionalism was the art world equivalent to the new managerial discourse analyzed by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello that promoted attitudes once associated with the artistic personality such as autonomy, spontaneity, openness to others and rhizomatic capacity¹¹. Art institutions followed corporate management and adopted rhetorics of social responsibility and sensitivity to differences, internalizing the neo-liberal creativity hype and getting everybody to work more for less or for free, consolidating elite power. What took place was a deconstructing and hollowing out passed off as critique and politicization. The modest proposals were not a threat to anyone and took place as yet another attempt to maintain social balance through the management of 'radical' art.

The case of Abstract Possible at Tensta Konsthall is an interesting one. The collaboration with Bukowskis, the largest auction house in Sweden owned by the Lundin family who direct the oil company by the same name, a company complicit in civil war in Sudan and under investigation for humanitarian crimes against international law, sheds a revealing light on the position of so-called progressive institutions as we move in to the winter of finance capital¹². That contemporary art has long served as an investment op-

portunity for the super-rich and a place for money laundry is old news but the direct entanglement of a kunsthalle in Sweden of all places with the weapon-dollar-petrodollar coalition is pretty remarkable¹³.

The exhibition at Tensta itself is a straightforward group exhibition with works by more than 20 artists. The exhibition focuses on formal abstraction ranging from Barrada's close-ups of bus doors with abstract shapes communicating bus routes to illiterates to Matias Faldbakken's sloppily installed overprinted silk screens of the computer game 'Battlefield' developed by Swedish company EA Digital Illusions. All the works in the show somehow mimic the abstract visual language of modernism but rarely with the radical negativity its historical precedents were characterized by. At Tensta most works come off as symptoms of the lingering historicist academism in contemporary art where modernist forms and shapes are reworked and commented upon in an almost nostalgic way that only confirms the distance between the original radical gestures and the present empty and weak restaging of modernist abstraction as fascinating forms popular on the art market. The show continues at the auction house Bukowskis in downtown Stockholm where art works by the same artists exhibiting at Tensta are for sale at set prices framed by the contribution of Goldin + Senneby who have made a report about the collecting opportunities of each of the works on sale. The report itself is on offer for 120,000 Swedish Krona and its contents available only to the buyer. The implicit criticism of new institutionalism seems, in this instance, to have fused completely with the perspective of the neoliberal art system. Rather than exposing and highlighting the economic structure of contemporary art it is a blank confirmation of the system as there is no attempt whatsoever to point in alternative directions. We are thus left with a pure affirmation of the existing system, its art market and the owner's bloody petroleum politics. The process, through which cultural values are produced, circulated and accumulated, and for and by whom this happens, is left unchallenged. It seems as if the repressive tolerance of the '90's and early '00's is no longer an option, forcing artists to move closer to the ruling powers or abandon art, or at least forsake institutional success.

The eviction of Occupy Wall Street protesters by security personal from Artists Space in New York in October 2011 and the eviction of graffiti artists from the São Paulo Biennale's Oscar Niemeyer's pavilion by the police in 2008 are other cases to consider when trying to come to terms with the development of the cultural institution in the present conjuncture of crisis and ideological breakdown.

As we move into a global economic crisis, fractures and lines of conflict that have been concealed for some time are becoming visible and it seems fair to say that a genuine anti-systemic break was never on the agenda for the new institutionalists and much of what passed as political art in the 1990's and '00's in the institution. It was never an alternative to the ruling order and should in retrospect be understood as neoliberalism with a human face. Now the masks have fallen and the difference between cultural neoliberalisation and new institutionalism is difficult to locate. As Anthony Davies writes, they are not alternatives but 'coexistent forms of neoliberalism, evolving at uneven rates and in different phases perhaps but all moving in the same direction', and now finally in a situation of breakdown they seem to be merging¹⁴.

The masks have come off and the intricate link between the cultural institution and elite power has been revealed for everybody to see. We are seeing signs of an ideological breakdown where 'progressive' institutions find themselves in a new situation where it is difficult to continue the cha-

rade of new institutionalism's repressive tolerance. In this situation we are confronted with a number of urgent questions. One has to do with the present past and the different 'politicisations' of art that took place during the 1990's and '00's. In retrospect it seems as if much of what presented itself as progressive and radical in the 1990's and '00's was just a supplement to the neoliberalization of art. The ruling class continued amassing wealth while art exhibitions were turned into parties or discussions about post-colonialism and economic inequality. This forces us to ask whether playing a transformative game within the institution is still a viable option? What to do then? Although an exit from the institution looks increasingly desirable as the institution reveals its class character it is perhaps not altogether wise, as we will need all available sources of criticality in the fight to come. But considering the ability to manage radical art and divert it in order to maintain social equilibrium – Marcuse's affirmative character of art – it seems reasonable to say that only art sited at the very margin of the art system can help build a passage beyond capitalism. In the coming insurrection the safe interior of the art world will perhaps become too compromised. Being financed by and collaborating with Lundin was not a problem for Tensta and Lind. As Lind explained during a debate about the exhibition where an accompanying anthology, Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios, financed by the auction at Bukowskis was launched: 'The project is not about taking a position, this is what the world looks like.' This is what complicit criticism amounts to these days. Apparently all we are left with is identification with the existing system. Jacques Rancière calls this logic, 'the police' – there is what there is¹⁴. Luckily this logic is being contested more and more places all over the world from Athens to Cairo to Oakland Los Indignados in Madrid to Unknown Artists in New York. Winter is here.

1. Arrighi: *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London & New York: Verso, 1994). A new edition with a new afterword came out in 2009.

2. The notion that financial expansion announces the autumn of a particular hegemonic system and cycle of accumulation was originally developed by Braudel in *The Perspective of the World: Civilization and Capitalism Fifteenth to Eighteenth Century* [Civilisation Matérielle, Économie et-Capitalisme, XV-XVIII: Le temps du monde, 1979], trans. Sian Reynolds (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1992). Arrighi picks up the notion and puts it to use in *The Long Twentieth Century*.

3. Cf. Steven Colatrella: "In Our Hands is Placed a Power: A Worldwide Strike Wave, Austerity and the Political Crisis of Global Governance", in *Wildcat*, no. 90, 2011, Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..

4. There's no doubt that the institutional scene in Western Europe and the US are almost incomparable when it comes to the question of political art. In the US political art never acquired the 'popularity' it did in Europe (as the resignation of Gilbert also shows). This was due to the much bigger impact 'the war on terror' had in the US effecting both base and superstructure in a much more visible way.

5. Julian Stallabrass: *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.72.

6. Perry Anderson: "Renewals", in *New Left Review: New Series*, no. 1, 2000, p.14.

7. Herbert Marcuse: "The Affirmative Character of Culture" ["Über den affirmativen Charakter der Kultur", 1937], trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (London: Mayfly Books, 2009), p. 87.

8. Brian Holmes: "Liar's Poker: Representation of Politics / Politics of Representation", in *Springerlin*, no. 1, 2003, Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..

9. *Ibid.*

10. Charles Esche: *Modest Proposals* (Istanbul: Baglam, 2005). For a critique of this move towards 'modest proposals', see Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen: "Scattered (Western Marxist-Style) Remarks about Contemporary Art, Its Contradictions and Difficulties", in *Third Text*, nr. 109, 2011, pp. 199-210

11. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello: *The New Spirit of Capitalism* [Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme, 1999], trans. Gregory Elliot (London & New York: Verso, 2005).

12. Cf. Kerstin Lundell: *Affärer i blod och olja. Lundin Petroleum i Afrika* (Stockholm. Ordfront, 2010).

13. Anthony Davies: "Take Me I'm Yours: Neoliberalising the Cultural Institution", in *Mute*, vol. 2, no. 5, 2007, p. 107.

14. Jacques Rancière: *Disagreement* [La mésentente, 1995], trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

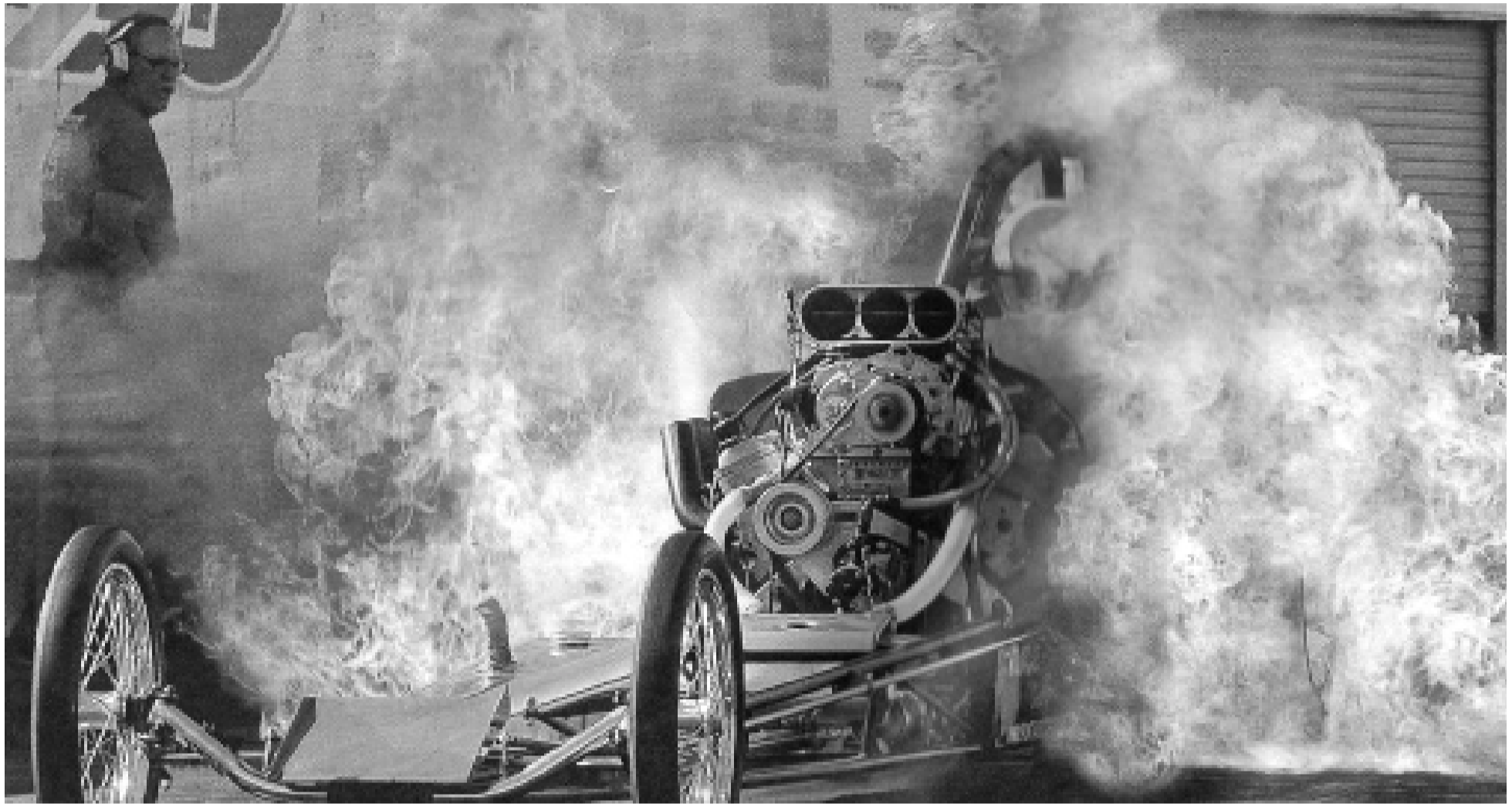


BACARDÍ®

TOGETHER

THE POLITICAL SUBJECT, NEITHER HERE NOR NOW

Bring out the axe. Sharpen your knives. Start up the chainsaw. Load you bazooka. Call Jessica Simpson. Prof. Julian Reid brings on his combat suit and writes us down the road and out of our contemporary state of mind. Julian Reid doesn't shy away, a fresh breeze until let it die.



Liberalism, I believe, has moved way beyond the security imperative, so foundational to its historical origins, as the promise of security which once legitimated it has been disintegrated by a catastrophic imaginary that promotes what I call in my forthcoming book, *Resilient Life*, insecurity by design. This way of understanding liberalism, as a regime founded on promises and images, does not mean I am in denial of the reality of the catastrophic nature of the world we now inhabit and which liberal regimes themselves are responsible for. But it would be wrong to think we can distinguish between the realities of a world that liberalism has created and the imaginaries through which we, who seek a way out of it, are forced to make sense of it. Liberalism itself is a product of its own imaginary and we are now inhabiting its nightmarish effects, being ourselves, the good liberal subjects that we are. The catastrophic nature of the world we now find ourselves exposed and vulnerable to is of our own creation. It is a world which exists every bit as much in our heads as much as our heads are in this world, drowning in its images of impending disaster, species extinction, financial crises, and catastrophe effects. The image and reality of catastrophe are interfused in our heads and what we have learnt to call 'the world' is the manifestation of that interfusion.

Politics, in contrast, is an art of worldly transformation, and transformation demands, first of all and fundamentally, a subject capable of conceiving the possibility of worldly transformation. A subject that sees the intolerability of the world as it is presently imagined and demands the seemingly impossible; the creation of a new one. A subject which affirms and follows the paths opened up to it by the visions of other worlds which the play of images creates for it. A subject which affirms the reality of the existence of different worlds, their antagonisms, as well as tangibility and reachability, so to say. It's diminishment owes everything, not to the realities of a world which demand an evacuation of the political, but to the overwrought influence of liberalism over our own self-understandings of the limits of this world, its planetary boundaries, the weight of finitude, and

the dangers which liberalism believes, and has preached for some time, that the imagination poses to a species equipped more than any other to transcend each and every boundary, each and every limit, and lose all sense of its own finitude and that of the world itself; the human.

In this sense a diagnosis of the contemporary degradations of political subjectivity has to remain an argument with the legacies of Immanuel Kant. The Kantian Enlightenment gave license to human beings to speculate on the possibility of other worlds but always with the insistence that this world, as it is supposedly known, is the only world that can be. The possibility of another world is thinkable only within this world we inhabit, Kant said, and thus the possible has to always be subordinated to the actual. The corollary of the possibility of us conceiving another world is the impossibility of us moving beyond this world; the world, as it is known and said to be. In that sense it was and still is a powerful and demeaning discourse on limits, one which forces us to accept our sense of the limits of this world as an imperious necessity without which we cannot think or act or indeed, imagine. Its influence goes some way to explaining why the world we live in has become so depoliticized, so absent of any sense of tangible alternatives, and crucially, subjects capable of creating and establishing them. When one reads back through the history of liberal thought what's striking is the extent to which this project of constituting a subject of limits required a wholesale pathologization of the human imagination. Kant was a very sober man, for a reason. He feared the intoxicating powers of drink, its abilities to incite the imagination, the wildness of what we see and feel, the freedom from care it gives us, and sense of increased vital force which leads us to follow the trajectories it opens up for us. We all know, or should know, the experience of intoxication, and the ways in which it enables us to see the world differently, as well as act and speak differently, on account of the images it induces us. Stuff happens, collectively and individually, under the influence of drink. That observation may sound trite, but it's not that different from the ways in which subjects are seized in states

of madness. And politics today requires a subject that is able to become not just a little more, but a lot more, drunk on itself, delirious with the sense of its own capabilities, free from the care that attends states of sobriety, sanity, and good mental and physical health. Of course we all know drunks who are bores, who use drink as a path to sadness and cretinuity, who induce sadness in us by their slobbering presence. There has to be an art to these practices of the subject and we have to be able to discern the differences between the subjective states we encounter in ourselves and each other under their influence. And that is politics too, obviously. There's no easy way of deciding beforehand. That's what makes politics worthwhile, the risk of getting it all badly wrong, of becoming a botched piece of work, but the equal possibility of pulling something off worth acclaiming, of saying something worth saying, doing something which might be proclaimed an event, and an opening to new worlds worth living in.

The war on the imagination Kant and his cronies inaugurated was, of course, also an attempt to govern truth, practices of truth telling, and human relations to truth. It is not, of course, that the Enlightenment forbids us to tell truth, but that it sought to govern its production, and to subject it to a new regime of biopolitical power relations. For truth to be truth, Kant said, it had to be allied not simply to the world, but to the life of the world; or better understood, a world which itself is finite and living, requiring care and protection, vulnerable to the destructive potential of the maps and trajectories human beings impose on it on account of the power of their visions of what it can become. Today it is apparent that the name we give to that Kantian conception of the world as a living being is the biosphere. Biospheric life is the vulnerable guide of the Kantian subject of liberal modernity. As living beings, so the story goes, our time cannot be indifferently dispersed and scattered. We have not just a path to follow, but a movement by which we might learn to follow life along that path, by accepting the reality that we owe our life, its sustenance and survival, finitely, to the world on which our paths are inscribed. Sustainable





Development is the name we give, today, to the Kantian conception of truth. The discourse on worldliness, and the prescription of the limits of the human imagination, is underwritten by a claim as to the infinite debt of all finite beings to the biosphere. The truths we can tell of this world and those to come have to be said in recognition of our debt and responsibility to it in all its finitude, vulnerability and limits. Now it seems to me that this original investment of Kant and others in biospheric life is what accounts for the fundamental antinomy between political and liberal subjectivity. An antinomy which continues to shape the antagonism between neoliberalism, the subject it calls into being globally today, and the erstwhile political subject of a modernity I am trying to recover the lost signs of. Because the telling of political truth demands an affirmation of the conflict between worlds, a breaking through, without due care for what the implications will be for the world we inhabit and believe we somehow possess. A violence unto life which dispossesses the world we inhabit of the life which preserves it. A severing of the life-support systems which make the world we know possible. Because political truth cannot be told simply out of care for life. That idea is the great conceit of liberal modernity, and has been manifestly proven wrong by the long history of war and violence done unto life supposedly out of care for life. I have written on that paradox extensively. We need an entirely different way of apprehending the relations between truth, life and death if we are to recover the politics of subjectivity. Because political truths are told by subjects that risk life, their own, that of others, and the world itself, in telling the truths which they do. They respect not the truth of biological life which Kant insists on, its being a phenomena of finitude and vulnerability, but the life of truth. For truth has life only in so far as it outlives us while being spoken by us. Its vitality has to outstrip us for it to be worth telling. Fundamentally the Kantian enlightenment understands none of these categories and their relations; life, world, death, politics, truth. Not only does it not understand them but it is responsible for the installation of a world in which their miscomprehension continues to reverberate powerfully. Neoliberalism is the manifestation of the power of that miscomprehension. So, more fundamentally still, the war against neoliberalism has to remain, in essence, a war against the legacies of the Kantian Enlightenment. Obviously that declaration is not an incitement to 'forget Kant'. Kant is not understood or read well enough. But we need other textual resources. It's pointless sticking with the canon.

Revalorizing the imagination, and stressing its importance for the equipping of a subject capable of transcending the limits of the catastrophic imaginary, does not mean, either, that I am somehow in ignorance of the importance of the exercise of political reason for the manifestation of resistance to neoliberalism, now and in the future. It would be daft of course to want to wish away reason and the forms of knowledge it provides, or even to think that one could dispense with it, should one want to. It is reason that tells you when you are being fucked over, it is reason that tells you the life you are living is limited, the laws you are subject to are unjust, the disciplines you are made to conform to silly, the power relations you are captured within suffocating, and so on. The conditions of suffering out of which political subjects emerge are not imaginary, they are real, material, known, and felt. Kant did not invent reason. It does not belong to 'the Enlightenment'. It is an archaic instrument of human struggle and intelligence, honoured and celebrated in Western literature, poetry, thought and art, going back at least to Homer. It is also a discourse unto itself; a multiplicity and practice, constantly reinvented and redeployed to serve different purposes and signify different forms of intelligence at different times, as well as in different ways at the same time. Kant effectively degraded

Reason, limiting it, trying to draw boundaries around it, deploying it discursively to signify the limited, finite nature of the human, and in process limiting and degrading human understandings of the potentiality of progress and politics. We have to reappropriate it, once more. It would be an insult to those who most suffer the catastrophic nature of the world we now inhabit to suggest that they have to exercise their imagination to experience the cold blooded anger and hate out of which political subjectivity emerges. You know when you are being shafted because Reason speaks to you and tells you that 'this is how it is here'. But when it comes to the question of 'what is to be done?' about your suffering, the limitations of your form of life, Reason will do little for you. Of course it will try to help you if you ask it, carefully calculating for you the particular ways and means by which you might proceed out of your conditions of injustice and subjection on the basis of what it knows and can tell you of this world, but on that basis it will only ever lead you back, one way or another, to this world, and forms of life conditional to this world. That is the story of Reason which Homer's *Odyssey* told us more than two thousand years ago. If you want to be Odysseus, go round in circles, and back to the wife and kids, then Reason is your very best friend. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the reasonable subject always knows where he is going and he always gets there because he ends up going nowhere in particular but here. He clings to the life that he possesses, and the world he inhabits, being very successful in navigating the twists and turns of this world, forever adapting his form of life to the challenges and obstacles the world throws at it, but when it comes to the question of giving you access to another life, and another world, he cannot help you. That requires the taking of a subjective path and the transformative powers of the imagination. Reason imagines nothing. It cannot create and thus it cannot transform. And, of course, Reason also knows that. It is Reason which tells you that these are its limits. It is not made for opening up new worlds, but enabling us to survive present ones. That is all it is tasked with and intended for. So don't ask it to do or perform that which it is not crafted for, even if it will try to help, should you ask it. There are plenty of problems in the course of life for which Reason is perfectly adequate. But collective political transformation is not one of them. For that we need to turn to the imagination. Reason itself tells us thus. It says, "I am Reason, ask me to help you, and I will do my best, because I am reasonable, but know that in being reasonable, I am also limited, and know that there is another power, different to myself, defined indeed by everything which I am not, and which you should ask, if the transformation of the limits of this world is your problem. Its name is the imagination". That turn, from Reason to Imagination, is itself founded upon rational knowledge of the limits of reason, and thus it is a product of the evolution of reason, its maturity, capacity to disincorporate itself, and abdicate responsibility for political subjectivity and action. We owe it to reason and its own self-deprecation to follow the path of Imagination.

There is a further utility to Reason which I want to highlight here. What fascinates and disturbs me, when I look today at so-called radical political thought, is not just the poverty, but the inadequacy of its imaginaries, the emptiness of the visions of what new forms of political subjectivity and ways of being together it provides for us, and thus the weakness of new fronts being opened up, in conditions of struggle. These are strategic mistakes being made today by the Left, which can only lead people suffering at the brunt end of neoliberal governance, down dead ends. The inadequacy of those visions is also something which we can only recognise through the deployment of Reason. We can see, through the deployment of a higher more savvy form of political reason, the extent to which our imaginations remain

governed, complicit with dominant liberal epistemologies of power. Influential discourses of vulnerability, resilience and adaptivity cannot provide for a form of political subjectivity capable of going to war, meaningfully, with the neoliberal subject. And yet it is precisely these discourses, these ways of imagining what the human is fundamentally, and can become, that are fuelling the so-called imagination of counter-liberal thought. Mere talk of the imagination, imaginaries, and visions is cheap. We have to deploy the coldness of reason to sort out the good from the bad prophets, and govern, ourselves, the circulation of cliché in the dream life of the subject, such that the imagination can be quality controlled. Every idiot dreams and imagines; the question is which image works, such that it is capable of de-cretinization, the destruction of cliché, and the production of new worlds and new forms of life. And that is a strategic-poetic problematic for which Reason is indispensable; we have to know back to front, and inside-out, the subject against which we are struggling, such that we do not merely recuperate it. Poetry does not emerge free forming, it is itself a craft. Thus there has to be a kind of constant frenetic audit, and analysis even, of the function of the imagination. We have to know ourselves back to front and inside-out. The risk is that we place a blind faith in what goes by the name of imagination but which is all too reasonable in its conformity with dominant and disempowering images of the human. The hyper-rationality of paranoia, fear of the bad prophet, is necessary, if we are to imagine well.

But this is not to say that the problem of politics today is simply a question of constructing, philosophically, an alternative image of the human, replete with political potentiality, in the practical reality of its absence. The liberal image of the human, degraded and incapable of action and meaning creation, is the real chimera. Liberal regimes are putting so much effort into imagining the necessity and possibility of the resilient subject, equipped only ever to adapt to a world outside its control, because in reality the real world is a human one, replete with politics, creativity, action, imagination, and transformative potential. Liberalism imagines the possibility of a world where humans are stripped of their imaginations, and led to live merely resilient, adaptive lives. But the reality is that life is not led that way, anywhere, by anyone. Odysseus, as he himself said, is 'no-one' and 'nothing'. He does not exist and cannot be found, anywhere. We are living out the final scenes of the liberal nightmare. It's obvious that its images are imploding and that the idea of the liberal subject is dying. One would have to believe political philosophers to think otherwise. Think practically, pay attention to the realities of the world we live in, the struggles which are building, the new forms of human life and politics that are erupting, and we can see the conceit on which the image of the human still sheltered in the liberal academy rests. It may be that, as Deleuze once argued, 'believing in this world, this life' is the most difficult task facing philosophers and political thinkers today. But the reality is that this world and this life imagined for us by liberal philosophers and political thinkers is already, if not yet finished, then so nearly finished. Our task, the political task of our times, is to finish with it, and make it die.



RECALCITRANCE

Excerpt from an emailed conversation between Valeria Graziano and Olav Westphalen.

Looking at the etymology of recalcitrance: 1823, from Fr. *recalcitrant*, lit. “kicking back” (17c.-18c.), pp. of *recalcitrare* “to kick back,” from re- “back” + L. *calcitrare* “to kick,” from *calx* (gen. *calcis*) “heel.” Used from 1797 as a French word in English. Verb *recalcitrare* “to kick out” is attested from 1620s; sense of “resist obstinately” is from 1759.

This made me think of the horse or the mule whose only option is to kick back towards his conductor, often missing the target. Hence, perhaps recalcitrance can be imagined as containing more potential than a ‘lazy practice’ or a practice of ‘passive aggressive resistance’. The kick could miss the target and result in an ineffective or even counterproductive action, but the act in itself is very energetic and full of potential! So recalcitrance could be imagined as an affective motor of different forms of refusal, an impulse that can take on different strategies (resistance, revolt, insurrection, passive-aggression, etc.). It seems to address an instinctive act of refusal (although I am not sure about ‘instincts’ in mankind...), a *conatus*, an affect that comes out from our animal condition, before the refusal passes from being emotion to becoming a position that has its own morals or ethics. So, one thing that sounds interesting to me is to reflect a bit more around recalcitrance as a particular state of the body, bundle of emotions, positions that can result in a kick in the air or a kick that smashes through the fence! Now, this take begs questions regarding the target of the kick and the nature of the relationship between the horse and the conductor.

I have been toying with the idea of recalcitrance being a kick inwards, but more about that in a sec. I have not been in London these days, but followed what has been happening there with fascination. It strikes me how the UK seem to be a place where often conflict takes the form of a revolt (or insurrection in Bifo’s terminology), and this can happen so quickly and forcefully, much more so than the speed and intensity of other forms of conflict, such as organised protests, strikes or occupations (such as the recent Spanish *acampadas* that we witnessed in Madrid, or the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US). I read various commentaries to what has been happening, and a lot of them involved some sort of rhetorical appeal to the distinction revolution/revolt, understandably. The issue is often that the insurgents are not easily talked about in terms of self-possessed, rational subjects, aware of the implications of their own actions. I read the word ‘politicization’ a number of times. This debate makes sense, but I suspect speaks more about the imaginary of those who write and organize politics rather than of the imaginary of the larger group of those affected by Politics. For me, to make use of the idea of ‘politicization’ is increasingly suspicious. It seems to imply that the subject capable of political action is a subject who is individual, in the sense that he knows and possesses himself, is rational, knowledgeable – in a word, modern. Much feminism and postcolonial theory has been warning about the implications of this imagined subject of politics for a long time, but perhaps the point has not been processed by a large part of critical thinkers and doers.

I went back to the idea of recalcitrance to think through this. If we understand this term, as you suggest, to describe those forms of conflict that are “passive-aggressive, mean-spirited and lazy”, involving an “obstinate, stubborn aspect or an impulsive, explosive aspect” as they “go along with inferiority, powerlessness, whether real or imagined”, then recalcitrance can be read as a useful cousin of revolt.

Revolt is the reaction to the form of power that Foucault described as discipline. Discipline shapes forms of life through giving orders through hierarchical chains, establishing norms and procedures, delivering punishments. What revolt wants then is to break the machineries, interrupt the flows (logistical, communicational) and fight back or flee from punishment. Recalcitrance on the other hand is the reaction to the form of power that Foucault describes as government. Government shapes forms of life through the management and pre-formatting of the possibilities of freedom. Government does not say ‘you must’ but ‘you may’. It offers opportunities for desire and individuation, but the price to pay is to conform to certain given pre-requisites and characteristics. And if you don’t comply, it does not punish you, but it simply excludes you. And the point is that you are always going to be somewhat excluded, somehow not fit enough for gaining entrance into the VIP-Lounge. Even if you get in there, you may be asked to leave the party at any minute. What recalcitrance wants then is to subtract itself from these pre-formatted paths of freedom that always

come with a set of appropriate manners to the occasion. And this is a dangerous game, as much as the gesture of revolt. Revolt could lead to physical harm and imprisonment, while recalcitrance may lead to rejection, depression and exclusion. The danger is to implode rather than explode, to fail to reconfigure oneself successfully and become an outsider (in the un-cool way), to be denied access to sociability. Often the attempts to refuse self-management are talked about as if they were a preparatory phase for some bigger, more valuable gesture. Let me give you an example. In a recent article Alberto Toscano quoted a passage by Furio Jesi: “Until a moment before the clash [...] the potential rebel lives in his house or his refuge, often with his relatives; and as much as that residence and that environment may be provisional, precarious, conditioned by the imminent revolt, until the revolt begins they are the site of an individual battle, more or less solitary. [...] You can love a city, you can recognize its houses and its streets in your most remote and secret memories; but only in the hour of revolt is the city really felt like an *haut-lieu* [a high place] and at the same time your own city: your own because it belongs to you but at the same time also to others; your own because it is a battlefield you and the collectivity have chosen; your own, because it is a circumscribed space in which historical time is suspended and in which every act has its own value, in its immediate consequences.”

The point of the passage is to single out the merits of revolt against the limits of the solitary individual battle of a frustrated singularity sitting at home, brooding over the misery of her condition. However, the mental image of recalcitrance as culminating, or being redeemed by, revolt is truly a still from a linear time flow that should lead to a linear revolution. And maybe in this respect the looters in the UK have come up with a compelling political practice that configures revolution more like a swarm that short-circuits all the rituals of a collectivized collectivity (the assembly, the vote...) to get what it wants and sabotage the cogs of the metropolis.

To focus on recalcitrance can make sense precisely because not to practice it is not an option, but this does not dispense with the ethics of keeping our hands stretched out looking for other tools. If the moment of recalcitrance stops expressing an impulse towards autonomy it begins to condense into sappy lamentation or contempt.

It would be a ‘normalizing wish’ if we were looking for ways to put it to work, or in other words to make it ‘make sense’. However, I take recalcitrance to be a predicament or a state, and not a substantial attribute or a personal characteristic, and so I’d still like to ask questions about the conditions that compose its occurrence. What are you recalcitrating about? With whom? When and where? How? And what happened next? You know, the classic questions. If we don’t ask these, and we stop at acknowledging that ‘deep down we did not want to do it but we had to do it anyway’ – it may become hard to move ourselves, our thinking and our acting, away from self-verification mode. So, if the impulse is to act anti-social, what is the anti- about? If it ends up being about the ‘people’ part, including ourselves in the group, then yes, suicide or homicide become the extreme options of your range set. But if the anti- is about the forces and conditions that shape a specific social ambience that is annoying you, then something else needs to happen, some things of a different quality. Of course, in the moment of recalcitrance you cannot know yet which option your sentiment will follow, you’re just fed up, angry, sad, and frustrated by your own ambivalence...

This makes me think about the figure of Bartleby, Melville’s scrivener discussed, by Agamben and Deleuze among many others, as an allegory of the refusal of power that is also a refusal of the normative terms for confrontation against that power. Perhaps the famous sentence ‘I would prefer not to’ evokes recalcitrance in a peculiar way, as it introduces it as a problem of predilection and not as a matter of the will (‘I don’t want to’), of morality (‘I must’) or capacity (‘I can’). With predilection, a whole new room for desire is carved out from opposition, but this would take us yet in a different direction. Returning to art practices and performing within the academic setting instead, it seems that you’re suggesting that recalcitrance expresses a specific mode of researching for new practices and lines of arguments (which I guess many teachers and researchers have to do anyhow as part of their job), not simply for the sake of the new, but as a reaction to specific requirements and predicaments, would this be a way of thinking of it?

Among many other things, what both the ‘creative industries’ moment in policy making and the Bologna process brought to the art academy is the idea that creativity is a value inasmuch as it can be valorised. This of course at times may have felt as a healthy challenge to the pretence of autonomy of the arts that transfixed much of the art academy’s pedagogy for a long time. However this has been a false challenge from the start, because in fact management appeals to the social accountability of the arts when the social is equated with profitability, and it resuscitates an investment into romantic autonomy when it invests in the uniqueness of the cultural object. This does not mean that art academies are left with only a cynical perspective in front of them; but to the contrary, that recalcitrance may be cultivated as something that these institutions have in common with the students they try to educate.

On another note, funny coincidence, I am reading a book on Spinoza and I bumped into another animal metaphor coming from the Stoics, who used the image of a dog attached to a cart to illustrate the relation between necessity and freedom. In some cases the dog will be willing to follow the cart, in others it will be against doing it, but in the end it will have to go along because it will be compelled to do so. The Stoics describe the cart as our needs and the dog as man’s freedom – the ideal condition for happiness then would be when the direction of the cart and that of the dog coincide. However, even if the end result will be the same (the dog will have to follow), the way in which it will do so will look and feel very different. The resistant dog expresses the unwillingness, it shows it as a vital capacity, what Spinoza discussed in terms of imagination, which is the basic awareness of the body to other bodies and to the world. The dog can imagine that its condition could be different, that it could be also not going along with the cart. Perhaps also we recalcitrance when we perceive that life could be different?

As I mentioned before, I think that recalcitrance is directed towards the handed-down aspects of all these notions when they become instruments of government. And the difficulty of finding viable strategies of resistance concerns the fact that all of the terms on the list also express what artists and many others actually value.

OUR FRENCH EDITOR

Saint Huitre

Den natten var snart utvisades av solen
små kaniner fladdrande tyst i skogen
Jag läste ditt avskedsbrev kvar på mattan
morgonljuset raderar ditt minne snart

Mina ögon drucknade i horisonten
På vägen hör jag en hund skälla
Den avlägsen dal reser sig tuppen
Jag ryser, det gör mig att skratta

Hela dagen Jag vill dansa
Jag känner mig som en dröm
I naturen bladverk i gångarna
Vinterträdgården i min barndom

Jag upptäcker något sin andel av roliga
Bo i åtnjutande av varje ögonblick.
Inte en sekund att förlora Jag vill växa!

HOROSCOPES QUOTIDIENS

Jules Herrmann

One for all for one
Where the wind forgets you will remember.
Lower your guard, swim

