



Anarchist Ephemera

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Salon Apocalypse/Secret Theater

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A Preface

This collection of fugitive and ephemeral pieces from the last twenty three years or so (ca. 1990 to 2013) needs to be framed by a preface in which I can disagree with myself.

Over the years I've changed my mind, or at least modified my position, on two major themes: technology and Islam.

In the 90s and even into the XXIst century, I feel I was inclined to take an insufficiently negative view of Information Technology and other marvels of the Future we now inhabit. Gradually I've become more and more Luddite—by which I mean a would-be machine-smasher.

“Social media” have achieved the exact opposite of that which the term implies: they've put an end to the Social. This implosion is not to be confused with any so-called End of History. Unfortunately History *goes on* even after the end of a world. This “survival” constitutes the actual slow catastrophe we now experience: life in the air-conditioned ruins of Civilization. That civilization might arouse a twinge of nostalgia even in the most hardened Neo-Primitivist or Green Anarchist, if only in comparison with what has come to replace it. To

paraphrase Gandhi, civilization *might have been a nice idea*—or so it seems now in the midst of the ecstasy of technopathocracy that has overtaken us.

In the absence of the Social I've been driven deeper into two positions I've always sort of adhered to: on the one hand, so-called Individualist Anarchism (Stirner, Nietzsche, Mackay, Tucker, Armand, etc.)—and on the other hand, what I call “Reversionism.” The first appeals even more to me now than ever if only because most other non-authoritarian options, such as Mutual Aid (Proudhon, Kropotkin, Fourier, IWW, Cooperativism, etc.) have all evaporated in the meltdown of the Social. Perhaps “some day” these movements will re-appear, but I see no hopeful signs. One is left to work out one's “existential freedom” by oneself, or at best with a few comrades in a “Union of Self-Owners.” In this respect I feel the Temporary Autonomous Zone to be more important now than ever—since it's virtually the only remaining viable form of organization for what Rimbaud called *liberté libre*.

I believe that OCCUPY WALL STREET, for example, experienced its greatest worth as a TAZ, not as a “social movement.” Despite the elegance with which it formulated its proposals for an authentic life, its value

appeared in the presence-to-each-other of the Occupiers and the celebratory creativity of the actual moment of occupation—not in any “revolutionary” accomplishments. I’m not happy to say this, but I feel it must be said.

Parenthetically, I’m pleased that my own works were among the holdings of the Library in Zucotti Park, and equally pleased that they were among the books destroyed by the NYPD—both are great honors. Nothing lends more lustre to the printed word than to be read by real rebels and burned by real police.

Reversionism is my own term for a phenomenon noticed also by certain anarchist anthropologists like J.C. Scott: namely, that human societies can revert and actually have reverted to “earlier” economic/social forms in order to evade the authoritarian state. For example in the Burmese highlands studied by Scott certain tribes have escaped from agricultural peonage and subjection to “civilized” rulers by disappearing into the forest and *reverting* to horticulture or even hunting-&-gathering. We know (based on earlier work by M. Sahlins and Pierre Clastres) that such economies are inherently related to non-authoritarian polities. This “escapism,” it seems to me, constitutes the very gist of luddite practice. It demonstrates the truth that humans can “turn back the

clock” and rebel against Progress and oppression, and actually succeed in becoming more “primitive” (in J. Zerzan’s term) and more free. Again, I see no signs of such Reversion actually occurring in our tech-intoxicated world of Cognitive Capitalism and “soft” repression—still, the theory exists, as does “revolutionary hope” (even if defined as anarcho-cynicalism, as Bob Black used to say).

In the 90s, although I was already highly doubtful about the Internet, I did not yet understand just how counter-revolutionary a force it would turn out to be. I cut slack for radical communication theory as championed by comrades in such orgs as NetTime and Critical Arts Ensemble. I have to say now I think we were all deluded. I repent of anything nice I might once have said about computers. For a kid who grew up on Science Fiction in the 50s this confession is painful. My current position is summed up in the title of two of my unpublished books: *Hoodoo Metaphysics* and *The Neanderthal Liberation Front*.

As for Islam, I also renounce anything positive I once had to say about its “radical” potential. The heretics and sufis whom I once saw as rebel forces within Islamdom have evaporated or retreated in the face of Islamist

fascism. They have simply failed to *appear*. The Arab Spring and Iranian Green movements have all been crushed. The “moderates” spout wishy-washy lukewarm sub-Capitalist sentimentalisms, while the dissidents are noisily eliminated, whether by leaders or by global-Capitalist forces. In the West we labor under the illusion that the moments of uprising were made possible by “social media” like Twitter and Facebook—this is a lie. What counted, again, was *presence*, not the absence and alienation of mediation. Technology which is designed and dedicated to separation can never achieve union—only its virtual (or “satanic”) parody.

[I'd like to add (in 2016) that the social revolution in Rojava (Kurdish Syria) has amazed and heartened me. I interpret it as a secular/social movement, but it does have a certain Sufi quality as well. Aside from the Zapatistas, it's the only effective non-authoritarian movement in the world today.]

Given these caveats, I still feel that some value remains in these pieces, texts, essays, poems, and fragments collected from various zines and magazines (especially *The Fifth Estate*, America's oldest anarchist publication). I was already developing, even in the 90s, the critique which I now consider relatively coherent (i.e., totally vague and purposefully incoherent). If “critique” smacks too much of an ideological approach, you can substitute

some other term such as “mourning and lamentation.” Or the negation of the negation of the negation.

All plans for “saving the world” ultimately rest on the assumption that humanity must undergo a change of heart. The paradox here is that if this change were to occur, no *plans* would be needed to bring about a “different world.” The change of heart, the *different consciousness*, would be in itself the very shift in direction, the Reversion to human and spiritual values required for “salvation.” Smash the *machinic mind* and there’d be no need to smash the actual machines.

And that would be (as the Living Theatre used to put it) *paradise now*.

plw
Jan. ‘14

pure
critique

Domestication

The hunter/gatherer school of anarcho-anthropology and the anarchist critique of Civilization (e.g. Perlman's *Leviathan*) proposed the domestication of plants and animals as the first step toward separation and ultimately the State.

Sahlins posed the question: why would any sane free hunter/gatherers voluntarily take up the shit-work of the “primitive agriculturalist” (or, by extension, pastoralist)?—the erosion of leisure, the impoverished diet, etc.? Given his premises, this unsolved puzzle hints at coercion and deprivation. With hindsight we see that domestication leads to misery. We assume it began that way.

Charles Fourier boasted that his was the first coherent critique of Civilization. He experienced his big revelation in 1799 and so invites comparison with other early Romantics such as Blake or Novalis. (All were deeply influenced by Hermeticism.)

Fourier believed in an economy with elements of both gathering and agriculture, one that structurally occupies a time and space between them; he called it horticulture. Fourier associates agriculture with primitive agriculturalists such as the Tahitians or pastoralist “barbarians”—all these are to be preferred to Civilization.

But whether for better or worse, Civ. has suppressed them all and nearly erased them. After Civilization, in the era of “Harmony,” only horticulture will satisfy the Passions of Harmonial humanity for magnificent and excessive luxury (a concept that later influences Bataille’s theory of Excess), as well as ecological harmony and natural beauty. (See Fourier’s Theory of the Four Movements.)

Thus, Fourier sees a connection between passion and horticulture.

The same theory appears independently in the work of certain ethno-botanists and “plant historians” in the tradition of the great Carl O. Sauer and the Russian scientist N.Vavilov (crushed by Lysenko and Stalin).

In brief, this theory posits that the origin of horticulture lies in a kind of love affair between certain plants and certain humans in the Mesolithic or early Neolithic.

Most gatherers are transhumants rather than true nomads. As the tribe makes its yearly round and returns to the summer camp, they find that their favorite plants seem to have followed them. Plants that prefer disturbed soil thrive in the campgrounds when their seeds are accidentally dropped and perhaps fertilized with feces and midden mulch. Vavilov

identified two plants that spread from Central Asia in this manner: hemp and the apple tree.

Women gatherers would've been the first to suss out the link between seeds and availability, and the "secret knowledge" would belong to an almost erotic relation between certain plants and certain women. (Some seeds may have been discovered by men., e.g., tobacco in the New World, which is usually cultivated by men.) Thus the origin of the garden as "earthly paradise."

Is it impossible to imagine something similar between hunters and animals? The first domestication of an animal, the dog, was clearly a sort of love affair (probably the work not of men or women but children). The hunter's magical relation with the game is transformed into a symbiosis, a cross-species solidarity or love, as with the Masai for their cattle or the Sami for their reindeer. Plants and animals are all living beings and living beings eat each other—which scarcely rules out the simultaneous and even necessary element of passion. The Rig Veda is interesting on this point.

A great deal of confusion rises out of the unfortunate term "Agricultural Revolution" to describe the early Neolithic. In Fourier's sense of the term, agriculture doesn't appear till the end of the Neolithic and then only in connection

with metallurgy and the emergence of the State. The Neolithic itself is horticultural and pre-pastoral. (True nomadic pastoralism of the “barbarian” type can only exist in relation to civilized agriculture as its antithesis, as Ibn Khaldun first pointed out.)

The political structure of the Neolithic is based on what Kropotkin would’ve called the free peasantry and the village Mir.

Sahlins was perhaps a bit misleading in comparing the “leisure society” of the hunter/gatherers to the work society of slash-&-burn agriculturalists. A great deal of that “work” consists of puttering around in the garden. There exist wonderful accounts—for example, the Dyaks of Borneo, who grow yams and keep pigs, do a bit of the H/G for delicacies and spend most of their time (when not head-hunting) in feasting, making love, and telling long stories. (See *Nine Dyak Nights*.)

This point needs emphasis: horticulture does not put an end to non-authoritarian tribal structures of the Paleolithic type. On the contrary, it successfully prolongs them under the new economic regime. The State does not emerge amongst gardeners.

One major problem for the primitivist wing of non-authoritarian theory has always been the tragic perception

that hunting/gathering no longer appears a viable economy for a crowded globe. It sometimes seems that only a vast eco-catastrophe would make widespread “reversion” possible, and this is an unthinkable thought.

A transition to horticulture however doesn't seem quite so unthinkable. Permaculture, for example, can be seen as a logical extension or updated version of horticulture, entirely suited to non-authoritarian social organization. And agrarian radicalism remains (at least potentially) significant for vast numbers of people involved in agricultural economies. One of the sickest things about the US is its complete corporatization of agriculture, eliminating farms and farmers along with nearly every vestige of agrarianism. Even Europe hasn't reached this stage, much less the rest of the world.

Even if our ultimate goal remains some form of victorious reversion to the primitive, it would seem that a strategic alliance with horticulturists and agrarian radicals might prove advantageous.

March, '04

Critique of the Listener

To speak too much & not be heard—that's sickening enough. But to acquire listeners—that could be worse. Listeners think that to listen suffices—as if their true desire were to hear with someone else's ears, see thru someone else's eyes, feel with someone else's skin...

The text (or the Broadcast) which will change reality:—Rimbaud dreamed of that, & then gave up in disgust. But he entertained too subtle an idea about magic. The crude truth is perhaps that texts can only change reality when they inspire readers to see & act, rather than merely see. Scripture once did this—but Scripture has become an idol. To see thru its eyes would be to possess (in the Voodoo sense) a statue—or corpse.

Seeing, & the literature of seeing, is too easy. Enlightenment is easy. "It's easy to be a sufi," as a Persian shaykh once told me. "What's difficult is to be human." Political enlightenment is even easier than spiritual enlightenment—neither one changes the world, or even the self. Sufism & Situationism—or shamanism & anarchy—the theories I've played with—are just that: theories, visions, ways of seeing. Significantly, the "practice" of Sufism consists in the repetition of words (*dhikr*). This

action itself is a text, & nothing but a text. And the “praxis” of anarchy-situationism amounts to the same: a text, a slogan on a wall. A moment of enlightenment. Well, it’s not totally value-less—but afterwards what will be different?

We might like to purge our radio of anything which lacks at least the chance of precipitating that difference. Just as there exist books which have inspired earth-shaking crimes, we would like to broadcast texts which cause hearers to seize (or at least make a grab for) the happiness God denies us. Exhortations to hijack reality. But even more we would like to purge our lives of everything which obstructs or delays us from setting out—not to sell guns & slaves in Abyssinia—not to be either robbers or cops—not to escape the world or to rule it—but to open ourselves to difference.

I share with the most reactionary moralists the presumption that art can really affect reality in this way, & despise the liberals who say all art should be permitted because—after all—it’s only art. Thus I’ve taken to the practice of those categories of writing & radio most hated by conservatives—pornography & agitprop—in the hope of stirring up trouble for my readers/hearers & myself. But I accuse myself of ineffectualism, even futility. Not enough has changed. Perhaps nothing has changed.

Enlightenment is all we have, & even that we've had to rip from the grasp of corrupt gurus & bumbling suicidal intellectuals. As for our art—what have we accomplished, other than to spill our blood for the ghostworld of fashionable ideas & images?

Writing has taken us to the very edge beyond which writing may be impossible. Any texts which could survive the plunge over this edge—into whatever abyss or Abyssinia lies beyond—would have to be virtually self-created, like the miraculous hidden-treasure Dakini-scrolls of Tibet or the tadpole-script spirit-texts of Taoism—& absolutely incandescent, like the last screamed messages of a witch or heretic burning at the stake (to paraphrase Artaud).

I can sense these texts trembling just beyond the veil.

What if the mood should strike us to renounce both the mere objectivity of art & the mere subjectivity of theory? to risk the abyss? What if no one followed? So much the better, perhaps—we might find our equals amongst the Hyperboreans. What if we went mad? Well—that's the risk. What if we were bored? Ah...

Already some time ago we placed all our bets on the irruption of the marvelous into everyday life—won a few, then lost heavily. Sufism was indeed much much easier. Pawn everything down to the last miserable scrawl? double

our stakes? cheat?

It's as if there were angels in the next room beyond thick walls—arguing? fucking? One can't make out a single word.

Can we retrain ourselves at this late date to become Finders of hidden treasures? And by what technique which has betrayed us? Derangement of the senses, insurrection, piety, poetry? Knowing how is a cheap mountebank's trick. But knowing what might be like divine self-knowledge—it might create ex-nihilo.

Finally, however, it will become necessary to leave this city which hovers immobile on the edge of a sterile twilight, like Hamelin after all the children were lured away. Perhaps other cities exist, occupying the same space & time, but...different. And perhaps there exist jungles where mere enlightenment is outshadowed by the black light of jaguars. I have no idea—& I'm terrified.

Notes on Play

Play sets up temporary arbitrary rules for itself to test the very boundlessness of its freedom.

If not for the emergence of the State, we would now have a science based on the principle of play rather than terror.

At the moment the first Pharaoh enslaves the first fellahin, play becomes childish frivolity and the serious adult appears. Hitherto play itself had been quite serious; archaeologists call it “culture”.

Play assigns meaning to human activity—work erases it.

The hardest hunting & gathering still retains an element of play; the easiest cushiest job already contains the entirety of alienation.

Aristocracy can be defined as the monopolization of play at the expense of others' labor—e.g., hunting becomes the sport of kings & the crime of peasants.

The lords consume other people's play as art.

Somehow the ruler's play is spoiled by the need for violence—their pleasure is tainted, no longer childlike—and this spoilage somehow makes itself felt in their art, which always stinks of fear.

Under Pure Capitalism the rulers' rule is subtly supplanted by the rule of money itself. But money (being originally a form of magic) wants to play. It recreates itself as “play money” unbacked by real wealth & no longer a medium of exchange—it proliferates into new forms (debit cards, free flyer miles, coupons, pure electricity...) in order to re-order the world according to its own rules for play, so that ten or a hundred times more money now exists than can ever be spent on mere things, free money so to speak, ludic and self-involved, sheer monopoly money.

Resistance against the State and its final form (money) can be called play inasmuch as it must be its own reward (at least so far). For the artist this crux becomes tragic at the moment when money, having cast off & floated free of all ideology, realizes it can turn even the most violent

attacks against itself into profitable commodities.

The play impulse can be expropriated by Capital & sold back to those whose childhoods it has stolen. The effects of this deal seem not just stultifying but downright morbid, as if one had to buy back one's heart or one's fingers from the Organ Bank.

Imagination both produces & is produced by play— hence there exists a social imaginaire, a common treasury of play, an economy of imaginations. The individual imagination is buoyed up by this collective metaconsciousness, but swamped by its false double, the totality of mediated imagery, the managed imagination. Children plugged into screens from infancy will suffer play-deficiency, imaginal anemia. This mutilated play is no more than the flip side of the terror of work, terror coated with seductive imagery, like endless video games about killing aliens.

An Army of Jacks to Fight the Power

In fairy tales, humans can possess exterior souls, things magically containing or embodying individual life force—stone, egg, ring, bird or animal, etc. If the thing is destroyed, the human dies. But while the thing persists, the human enjoys a kind of immortality or at least invulnerability.

Money could be seen as such an exteriorized soul. Humans created it, in some sense, in order to hide their souls in things that could be locked away (in tower or cave) and hidden so their bodies could acquire magical invulnerability—wealth, health, the victoriousness of enjoyment, power over enemies—even over fate.

But these exterior souls need not be hidden away—they can be divided almost indefinitely and circulated, exchanged for desire, passed on to heirs like an immortal virus, or, rather like a dead thing that magically contains life and “begets” itself endlessly in usury. It constitutes humanity’s one really totally successful experiment in magic: no one calls the bluff and after 6000 years, it seems almost like Nature. (In fact, an old Chinese cosmogonic text claimed the two basic principles of the universe are Water and Money.)

It's worth noting that in marchen, folk tales, the characters with external souls are often the villains. Clearly, the practice must appear uncanny to any normal society—in which magic (call it collective consciousness in active mode) is channeled through ritual and custom to the life of all—not the aggrandizement of one against all (black magic or witchcraft). In the form of money, the exterior soul, shattered into fragments, so to speak, can be put into circulation but also stolen, monopolized, guarded by dragons, so that some unlucky humans can be stripped of all soul, while others gorge or hoard up soul-bits of ancestors and victims in their ghoulish caves or “banks,” etc.

The beloved in the tales may also have an exterior soul. It falls into the grasp of the evil sorcerer or dragon and must be rescued. In other words, desire, which is alienated in the form of a symbolic object (reified, fetishized), can only be restored to its true fate (love) by re-appropriation from the expropriator, stealing it back from the wizard. The task falls to “Jack,” the third and youngest, sometimes an orphan or disinherited, possibly a fool, a peasant with more heart than any prince, generous, bold, and lucky.

Exactly the same story can be seen acted out in every honest ethnographic report on the introduction of

money into some pre-monetary tribal economy. Even without the usual means of force, terror, oppression, colonialist imperialism or missionary zeal, money alone destroys every normal culture it touches.

Cargo Cults and Ghost Dances

Interestingly, in nearly every case, some sort of messianic movement, Cargo Cult, or Ghost Dance type resistance movement springs up within a generation or two after first alien contact. These cults invariably make appeal to spirits (or even demons when circumstances really begin to deteriorate) for the power to overcome money, to “provide good things” without recourse to the black magic of money, the vampirization of other peoples’ external souls—the malignancy of wealth that is not shared.

This is a major trope in all the tales. Jack gives away part of his last loaf precisely to the power-animal or shaman or old lady with the very gift he’ll need in his quest, but he gives unwittingly, not in expectation of exchange. Jack always stands for what Polanyi and Mauss call the Economy of the Gift.

A great many fairy tales must have originated in “folk memories” of earlier non-hierarchical social structures, embodied in narrative (myth) and ritual, and given focus

during the period when this ancient polity was threatened and finally overcome by later or alien systems—particularly by money, by the coins that always appear in these tales.

Proudhon believed that money had originally been invented by the People as a means to pry loose and force into circulation the hoarded wealth of the “dragon,” the oppressor class. This idea has interesting resonances.

It points to the fact that for “the people,” money in hand represents not oppression but pleasure, gratified desire. Money may be the root of all evil, but given the existence of money, “love of money” is quite natural. Alchemy epitomizes this *jouissance* of money in the fairy-tale concept of transmutation, production of gold without labor as free gift of Nature to her lovers: Jove’s body as shower of golden coins.

As “the people” in person, Jack wins the treasure, but in doing so removes its curse, its dragonish malignancy, because in him the treasure finds its rightful end in happiness (i.e., free distribution, the Gift). Hence, the great feast that ends so many tales and the wedding between peasant lad and princess that levels distinctions and restores external souls to their bodies.

But Proudhon’s notion is contradicted by myth which attributes the invention of coins to a king—not

Croesus of Lydia, who actually did invent coins (7th century BC), but Midas, who choked on magical gold, his externalized soul. Dionysus and Silenus gave him his wish and then saved him by revoking it, allowing him to vomit all the gold into the river Pactolus in Phrygia.

The historical Midas lived in the 8th century BC, and Phrygia is not far from Lydia, where rivers also ran with gold and electrum and coins first appeared as temple tokens. Coins may seem to regain their innocence when they are spent rather than hoarded, but in fact just at this moment they betray us by leaving us and never returning. In the end, all coins end up in the usurer's vault. Money is already debt. It says so on the US \$1 bill, that encyclopedia of Hermetic imagery and secret doctrine of money.

Jack never really wins

Jack's triumph lies not in the "ever after," but only in a moment that is forever remembered and invoked as lost. Obviously Jack never really wins, otherwise we wouldn't call these stories fairy tales and relegate them to the nursery, the savage pre-monetary world of mere childhood. The idea that marchen contain esoteric teachings on economics will probably sound ridiculous, but only to those who've never read them with Polanyi's or Mauss's economic

anthropology in mind.

The old Russian cycle (Jack = Ivan) strikes me as particularly sensitive to this aspect of the material, almost as if socialism had a subconscious pre-echo in the great Russian fairy tale collections of the early 1900s.

Among the uniquely Slavic motifs of this cycle, everyone loves the tales of the Baba Yaga, the little house on great chicken legs that walks and moves wherever the wicked witch desires. The image's power involves implications that Baba Yaga functions not only as the witch's house, but also as external soul. It is both shield and weapon, space and motion, cave and magic carpet. I can't help thinking of it as a symbol of Capital itself, especially in its purely magical end phase in the Global era. The Baba Yaga might be an offshore bank ready to pull up stakes and flee to some freer market or a shoe factory on its way to Mexico.

Speaking of Mexico reminds me of a story about the Mexican Revolution: Around 1910, thousands of North American anarchists, Wobblies, and adventurers crossed the border under false generic names to join Pancho Villa or the Magonistas and thus came to be called the "Army of Smiths."

Given the proliferation and gigantism of Baba Yagas in our times, perhaps what we need is an Army of Jacks.

Letter to Valencia

By a curious coincidence, the Internet began to emerge at approximately the same time as Global Capital, around the end of the 1980s. Of course the Net had a prehistory in the 80s and many utopian predictions were made about it. I made some myself. Expectations were aroused by the unbordered or “chaotic” aspect of the technology, its leveling or many-to-many structure. Apparently the Net was a non-hierarchy, “out of control”—and possibly even a kind of revolution in itself.

Now Global Capital also desires a kind of borderlessness, so that money can flow freely through markets without blockages imposed by States. In fact, the State is now re-theorized as an agency for speeding up the flow by “privatizing” many of its former social and economic roles. Capital reveals more and more clearly its chaotic aspects, its organization around strange attractors and complexity. Capital is “liberated” to follow its own fate—which consists of a kind of fatality, a totalitarianism of pure money. It turns out that hierarchy no longer means what it used to mean. When every human relation is defined by money, ideology loses definition and seems to evaporate. But the phrase “out of control” here describes only an

illusion. Control only “disappears” because of its perfection, its universalization, and its identification as “pure” capital.

The net seems to have followed a parallel trajectory. The State appears baffled by certain uncontrollable aspects of the Net, but Capital feels no such dismay. Capital is already “virtual”—less than 10% is cash, and less than 5% refers to any form of production—i.e. most of it is pure financial capital, not productive capital—a strange happenstance perhaps unforeseen even by Marx. Capital embraces the Net almost at once and “capitalizes” it. In less than 10 years the Net seems transformed from a radical heuristic device to a galactic home-shopping network. A few glitches remain, to be sure. Ecash for example fails to materialize, and fortunes are made in stock speculation on companies with zero profit lines. But in New York the sides of busses bear advertisements for various www.dot.com’s offering incomprehensible “services” purveyed by young models with postmodern attitude problems; the TV screen merges with the computer screen in an ecstasy of sheer vacuity, a seduction empty of content—a culture of video tombstones and talk shows for the Dead.

In the early 1990s I attended a long series of conferences in Europe, nearly all of them devoted primarily to communication theory & specifically to the Net. I was

invited because I'd done some early theorizing and because my texts were already present on the Net in the late 80s. But during these conferences I found myself playing a rather negative role. First, I devoted most of my critique to what I called CyberGnosis, the tendency to make a kind of religion out of the disembodied characteristics of computer tech—as if alienation from the body constituted a kind of transcendence over materiality—a new version of “pie in the sky,” complete with its anorexic priesthood of “legendary hackers” (dressed in black of course).

Second: It's true that there were some examples of radical uses of the Net—the Zapatista communiques, the anti-McDonalds and anti-Scientology campaigns, Radio 92 in Belgrade, and we can now add Seattle. The vague feeling that one is doing something radical by immersing oneself in a new technology cannot be dignified with the title of radical action. In truth the Net seemed to me to get longer and longer on talk and shorter and shorter on action. I began to suspect that the revolutionary “applications” of the Net would never arrive. “Feelings” would occur, of course, and huge emotional resources would be invested in the notion of a “virtual community.” But in the real world of production, power, and corporeality, nothing essential would change. At this point it began to occur to me that the Net is

a perfect mirror of Global Capital. There is a “free market” of information—but not necessarily any freedom for anything that is not information—just as there is a free market for money, no freedom for anything that is not money. Now human beings are not “information” except by way of metaphor. Food is not “information.” Pleasure is not “information.” Life is not “information.” So when the universe is defined as information, a great deal is left out. Likewise when human existence is defined as an information-driven complex of commodity relations (relations amongst dead things), then a great deal of human matter is left out of the pattern. Capital & the Net have this in common: a radical exclusion of the human.

A terminal state has been reached in the speed of delivery of message—the speed of light. No more “progress” can be expected in this field. Refinements, yes, But $E=MC^2$ and that’s final. Similarly one can theorize that a terminal condition of information has been attained through the Net. “All information” is theoretically present & simultaneous & transparent to the gaze of the “user.” Apparently there is no more “hierarchy” of information (“information wants to be free”—just like Global Capital). But if everything is known (as passive event so to speak) why should I pursue knowledge in an active mode? My action of knowing means noth-

ing in a universe where everything is known. Paradoxically it seems knowledge depends on the existence of non-(or anti-) knowledge. Darkness is needed to give meaning to light. When everything is illumined then light itself is a kind of darkness. Universal knowledge is a kind of black (w)hole into which everything vanishes without trace. An infinite gravity.

1995 was “the year of the Net”—that is, its last year of uncertainty, of becoming, of unknown potential. Since then the question of the Net no longer appears to me as an interesting question. I won’t say it has been answered, but merely that I no longer care. What has become interesting for me is what is not on the Net. Of course, in a sense it seems impossible to discover anything without its own website. Total enclosure appears to have occurred—nothing remains of an “Outside,” no resistance to totality, no margin. Under such conditions it would be difficult to say what might be “interesting.” In a world of pure light the only difference would consist of points of darkness, perhaps of deliberate refusal.

Isn’t it curious that no global resistance seems to emerge via global communication in response to Global Capital? There are many individual issues, areas of struggle, and yet no cohesive sense of movement. The remnants of

the Left seem to have accepted the triumph of Capital, and limit their responses to a demand that it show a “human face.” The old evil Right of fundamentalism and ethnic nationalism still struggles against the homogeneity and hegemony of postmodern information driven commodity fetishism—a last-ditch defense of Evil against the nothingness of a world that can no longer define “Good.” But the sense of a “movement of the Social” (or some moral equivalent) seems lacking—indeed, it sounds like a joke in poor taste, a frivolous delusion left over from the 60s.

In any case, goodbye to the Net. If it’s possible that anything authentic of human life will survive the Future into which we have been precipitated, then that something will not take place on the Net. It has become a haunted slum, a suffocating archaeology of buried hope. Perhaps it is something that can be “overcome” (as Nietzsche would say). Dead weight of epistemological crisis, dead weightlessness of virtual ecstasy.

Aesthetics/
Poetic
Terrorism

Ringling Denunciation of Surrealism

[Note: This is a very old text, from my days at Naropa and the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. I no longer feel angry at Surrealism and in fact I cherish it as a living treasure, like Kabuki. But I think some of my critique is still valid, so I haven't dropped this article. I re-dedicate it to Ron Sakolsky and Penelope Rosemont.]

At the Surrealist film show, someone asked Stan Brakhage about the media's use of surrealism (MTV, etc.); he answered that it was a "damn shame." Well, maybe it is & maybe it isn't (does popular kultur ipso facto lack all inspiration?)—but granting that on some level the media's appropriation of Surrealism is a damn shame, are we to believe that there was nothing in surrealism that allowed this theft to occur?

The return of the repressed means the return of the Paleolithic—not a return of the Old Stone Age, but a spiraling around on a new level of the gyre. (After all, 99.9999% of human experience is of hunting/gathering, with agriculture & industry a mere oil slick on the deep well of non-history.) Paleolithic equals pre-Work ("original leisure society"). Post-Work (Zerowork) equals "Psychic Paleolithism."

All projects for the "liberation of desire" (Surrealism)

which remain enmeshed in the matrix of Work can only lead to the commodification of desire. The Neolithic begins with the desire for commodities (agricultural surplus), moves on to the production of desire (industry), & ends with the implosion of desire (advertising). The Surrealist liberation of desire, for all its aesthetic accomplishments, remains no more than a subset of production—hence the wholesaling of Surrealism to the Communist Party & its Work-ist ideology (not to mention attendant misogyny & homophobia). Modern leisure, in turn, is simply a subset of Work (hence its commodification)—so it is no accident that when Surrealism closed up shop, the only customers at the garage sale were ad execs.

Advertising, using Surrealism's colonization of the unconscious to create desire, leads to the final implosion of Surrealism. It's not just a "damn shame & a disgrace," not a simple appropriation. Surrealism was made for advertising, for commodification. Surrealism is in fact a betrayal of desire.

And yet, out of this abyss of meaning, desire still rises, innocent as the new-hatched phoenix. Early Berlin dada (which rejected the return of the art-object) for all its faults provides a better model for dealing with the

implosion of the social than Surrealism could ever do—an anarchist model, or perhaps (in anthro-jargon) a non-authoritarian model, a destruction of all ideology, of all chains of law. As the structure of Work/Leisure crumbles into emptiness, as all forms of control vanish as well, with all its temples & granaries & police, to be replaced by some return of hunting/gathering on the psychic level—a re-nomadization. Everything's imploding & disappearing—the oedipal family, education, even the unconscious itself (as Andrei Codrescu says). Let's not mistake this for Armageddon (let's resist the seduction of apocalypse, the eschatological con)—it's not the world coming to an end—only the empty husks of the social, catching fire & disappearing.

Surrealism must be junked along with all the other beautiful bric-a-brac of agricultural priestcraft & vapid control-systems. No one knows what's coming, what misery, what spirit of wildness, what joy—but the last thing we need on our voyage is another set of commissars—popes of our dreams—daddies. Down with Surrealism...

Salon Apocalypse/Secret Theater

As long as no Stalin breathes down our necks, why not make some art in the service of...an insurrection?

Never mind if it's "impossible." What else can we hope to attain but the "impossible"? Should we wait for someone else to reveal our true desires?

If art has died, or the audience has withered away, then we find ourselves free of two dead weights. Potentially everyone is now some kind of artist—and potentially every audience has regained its innocence, its ability to become the art that it experiences.

Provided we can escape from the museums we carry around inside us, provided we can stop selling ourselves tickets to the galleries in our own skulls, then we can begin to contemplate an art which recreates the goal of the sorcerer: changing the structure of reality by the manipulation of living symbols (in this case, the images we've been "given"—murder, war, famine, and greed).

We might now contemplate aesthetic actions which possess some of the resonance of terrorism aimed at the destruction of abstractions rather than people, at liberation

rather than power, pleasure rather than profit, joy rather than fear. “Poetic Terrorism.”

Our chosen images have the potency of darkness—but all images are masks, and behind these masks lie energies we can turn toward light and pleasure. For example, the man who invented aikido was a samurai who became a pacifist and refused to fight for Japanese imperialism. He became a hermit, lived on a mountain sitting under a tree. One day a former fellow officer came to visit him and accused him of betrayal, cowardice, etc. The hermit said nothing, kept on sitting—and the officer fell into a rage, drew his sword, and struck. Spontaneously the unarmed master disarmed the officer and returned his sword. Again and again the officer tried to kill, using every subtle kata in his repertoire—but out of his empty mind the hermit each time invented a new way to disarm him.

The officer of course became his first disciple. Later, they learned how to dodge bullets.

We might contemplate some form of metadrama meant to capture a taste of this performance, which gave rise to a wholly new art, a totally non-violent way of fighting—war without murder, “the sword of life” rather than death.

A conspiracy of artists, anonymous as any mad bombers, but aimed toward an act of gratuitous generosity rather than violence—at the millennium rather than the apocalypse—or rather, aimed at a present moment of aesthetic shock in the service of realization and liberation.

Art tells gorgeous lies that come true.

Is it possible to create a SECRET THEATER in which both artist and audience have completely disappeared—only to reappear on another plane, where life and art have become the same thing, the pure giving of gifts?

[Note: Another very old text. None of these predictions came true. Too bad.]

Robert Anton Wilson, Author of The Illuminatus Trilogy & Cosmic Trigger Series, Dies at 74

For all we know, Robert Anton Wilson and I were related. On an intuitive basis—i.e., after several rounds of Jameson's and Guinness—we decided we were cousins. Subsequently we came to believe ourselves connected to the Wilsons who play so murky a role in the "Montauk Mysteries" (Aleister Crowley, UFOs and Nazis in Long Island, time travel experiments gone awry, etc.). Our plan to co-edit a family anthology (including Colin, S. Clay, and Anthony Burgess, whose real name was Wilson) never materialized—although we did collaborate in editing Semiotext(e) SE, together with Rudy Rucker.

There's no doubt Bob was some sort of anarchist. His earliest interests and experiences (the School of Living, for example) involved connections with old-time American Philosophical or Individualist Anarchism of the Spooner/Tucker variety; and, in fact, this shared background firmed the basis of our friendship.

When Bob was on the road a lot in the 80s and 90s doing "stand-up philosophy" in cities across the US, he visited New York often and after his lectures he drank

with anarchists, libertarians and ceremonial magicians—his fan base, as it were—although he used to say he could never join the Libertarian Party because he couldn't bring himself to hate poor people enough. He called Libertarians, "Republicans who smoke dope."

Bob was a Futurist and I am a Luddite, but after a long series of letters back and forth we agreed to disagree on the subject of technology, since neither of us wanted to put ideology in the place of camaraderie.

We got too much enjoyment out of our shared interests: the Propaganda Due, Freemasonic Conspiracy, science fiction, "Irish Facts," as Bob called his favorite Celtic paradoxes and tall tales, occult and lost history, pirates, strange science and Fortean phenomena, the Discordian Church (co-founded with anarcho-taoist Kerry Thornley of the "Universal Rent Strike," r.i.p.) in which he appointed me Pope—because all Discordians are Popes. (But Bob was The Pope—also his title in the Church of the SubGenius.) Bob was one of the great pub talkers, probably a lot like Brendan Behan or Dylan Thomas (he somewhat resembled both of them physically).

Liquor and weed for him were bardic fuel.

I'm proud to say I appear—under several guises, alter egos and noms de plume—in one of Bob's last books,

Everything is Under Control (1998), a sort of encyclopedia of his favorite conspiracies. Unlike some of his admirers, Bob never believed in any one conspiracy as more (or less) real than another. He simply took a chaote's delight in humanity's occasional talent for genuine mystery; and for him, Imagination was a form of reality. Was he playing or was he serious? Exactly.

In later years, when he cut down on his grueling dada vaudeville speaking tours and retired to California, we lost touch because Bob decided to colonize the Internet and I decided not to. Our mutual friend Eddie Nix kept us linked with warm greetings back and forth. Eddie sent me print-outs of Bob's most recent web-page, the Guns & Dope Party ("because that way we have a majority")—one of his best stunts or japes.

Founding a political party may not seem a doctrinaire anarchist sort of thing to do, but Bob was first and deepest a post-Nietzschean homo ludens, playful man, perpetrator of the *lusus seriusus*, the "serious joke." In his best writing, the *Illuminatus!* books (starting in 1975, co-created with the late Bob Shea) for example, R.A.W. approached his idol James Joyce in sheer ludic intensity, and his other idol Flann O'Brien in number of laughs per page.

Certainly his works belong to the literature of

anarchy, like say Alfred Jarry's or Oscar Wilde's, if not to the literature of anarchism.

Despite a good deal of suffering in life (his childhood polio and the long sickness of his wife Arlen; the murder of his daughter; and being broke while dying), Bob always appeared cheerful, which is either very good advertising for Neuro-Linguistic Programming (a theory he developed with Tim Leary, but which I never quite understood), or else for the therapeutic virtues of cannabis. For instance, some years back a rumor was spread maliciously on the Internet that Bob was dead. Instead of getting annoyed, he had great fun doing the Reports-of-my-death-have-been-greatly-exaggerated routine.

I see in R.A.W.'s Wikipedia obituary—an otherwise lackluster text—(sent to me by carrier pigeon from *Fifth Estate's* southern HDQ) that Bob was equally amused the second and final time as well, telling his correspondents, “Please pardon my levity, I don't see how to take death seriously. It seems absurd.”

He died five days later.

Tombeau for R.A.W.

Poem & pomology—false etymology
or proto-Indo-European ha-ha?

The small-k kabbalist relishes
a poemogranate from the garden
in Grenada. N.E.Vavilov (later
denounced by Lysenko, dies in Gulag)
discovers Eden somewhere in Kazakhstan
not far from the genetic epicenter of hemp.
Noon blue apples. The Discordian Pope
throws out the first ball of the season
over the fence into the Hesperides
of Tir na Nog the island of
Irish Facts. Turn down gents
your jiggers of Jameson's.

The Alchemy of Luddism

for Diane di Prima

St. John's Eve

(Midsummer) 2006

1.

It's the idea

of code that's cool not the actual

bother of decipherment: the utopia

of not having been in a state of

anticipation or regret. The Dowager Empress

took fresh honeysuckle petals in her green tea—yes

even Civilization had its finer moments

which now seem almost as remote as

the Paleolithic & almost as strange.

2.

Plot Outline for Steam-Punk SciFi Novel

Frankenstein's Monster returns from the North Pole with Alexander Mackenzie Expedition in 1798—sails to England—meets William Blake (Grand Master of Druid Order) who lectures him on Satanic Mills & Newton's

Night etc. Thru Blake's hermetic underground connections, he finds Colonel Despard & joins the Conspiracy in 1802. Urged north to organize the Black Lamp of Nottinghamshire, he undergoes vision of Robin Hood & King Ludd (the Celtic sun god)—takes the name of General Ned Ludd of Sherwood Forest & smashes his first mechanical loom with an Enoch's Hammer. In 1812, he leads the attack on Wm Horsfall's Mill near Huddersfield because he knows the evil Capitalist (a relative of Dr. Frankenstein) has invented the first computer. The raid fails. The Monster assassinates Horsfall—flees to London—meets Byron & Shelley thru their Fund For Luddite Children & tells story of his life to them & Mary Wollstonecraft & her father William Godwin one long night before vanishing into the west, returning to the Canadian North to join the Indians & carry on the struggle against Civilization.

(Sources: Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages to the Frozen & Pacific Oceans* (1801); EP Thompson, *The making of the English Working Class*; Kirkpatrick Sale, *Rebels Against the Future*; Peter Linebaugh & Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*; Mike Jay, *The Unfortunate Col. Despard*; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*)

4●

3.

Noetic Terrorism

The only way to save the avant-garde & move forward beyond the point where aesthetics disintegrates in the desiccation of market subjectivities—however exquisite—is by moving backward. Don't say you can't turn back the clock—you do it every year, dupe of daylight savings time—as if you could add or subtract one hour from light by bureaucratic fiat. The really progressive position is reversion.

4.

InstaSonnet

Finally after all those re-makes I grok
HG Wells War of the Worlds and
how Orson Welles scared the shit
out of half of New Jersey with it—i.e.,
it'd already happened. Huge clanking
death machines were already colonizing
New Jersey & driving the last few
humans underground into
roots of hollow trees (or is that some

other SciFi novel I'm mixing it up with). No wonder they found the whole idea completely plausible on the subconscious level where washing machines for example are as malevolent as they look.

5.

Minifesto

Discarding all irony & misdirection & blurting it out with the humorless clarity & lack of wit of hate-lit or porn:

Why

not an existentialism of mindless jubilation & out-&-out smashing of Obnoxious Machinery? Shouldn't handprinted

fiery flying rolls ignore the niceties of deconstruction & the

fastidious impeccabilities which constitute the last refuge of

the culturally exhausted? Why hide childhood fascination with fanaticism under the cyberbourgeois bushel of an airbrushed & poisonous discourse?

42

6.

Luddism Deluxe

Luddite technology leads not to more misery but less,
not less luxury but more. An immense luxury as Charles
Fourier put it: luddism deluxe.

Utopia conceals/reveals its
pulsating pulchritude behind
the seven veils of a Baltimore stripper
or Kabuli teen bride. Take
one step outside yourself & you're
there reading by the black lamp
of a thousand glowworms quaffing
the dandelion wine of a recrudescant
pubescence, sez this hootchycotchy Isis:
a rosicrucian cocoon with you
as a Nabokov's Blue. Easy as
turning out the light & leaving the room
& looking for the Moon. But somehow
far more difficult even than love.

7.

Young Germany

(review of the book by Walter Laqueur)

The Wandervogel secret is that to wander
in search of the blue flower is
the blue flower. The elsewhere after all
is not so elusive just as blue
altho rare is also common as dirt
& needs no permission to be
unconfined.

Aimless wandering
creates space just as pilgrimage
creates place. Psychogeography
traces the bones of Gog & Magog
in landscape's recumbent limbs or
lineaments of

carefree vagabonds against
a background of industrial waste
setting out to practice survival
of the happiest in defiance of all
bourgeois necrology

but an oblique angle

△△

to anything that can be pinned down
by later historians looking with
perfect hindsight for signs of
inevitable crash & burn.

You had to be there.

And still do.

8.

Minifesto

Only animism prevents the emergence of diffidence;
only idols save us from an idolatry of disenchantment, a
universe haunted by absence of ghosts. We need holy
wells & ice lingams to convince us that consciousness
extends beyond the cartesian skull. In this game, you
might get what you pray for but not what you pay for. A
culture that lives in superstitious dread of nature at least
never suffers the hell of sustainable development.

9.

Other peoples' gardens
have become parts of this

political nostalgia with its
bright erotic undertones of
Pierrots & Columbines in revolt
against pollution of the Moon.
Other peoples' children other peoples' cats
with their electromagnetic auras
other peoples' tomatoes & poppies.

Diane di Prima
Revolutionary Letters
San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2007

Diane di Prima, America's (and probably the world's) leading anarcho-Hermetic poet, has issued a new edition (the fifth) of her famous *Revolutionary Letters*, containing all of the poems from the City Lights versions from 1971 through 1980, plus twentythree new and more recent pieces. This new edition emanates—rather oddly but not inappropriately—from Last Gasp, a publisher mostly known for underground comics.

Although I'm nostalgic as can be about Flower Power and the Sixties Revolution That Failed, I have to admit that not very much great literature arose from the Events of and around 1968. After all, it was a mass uprising, not an elitist Art Movement. The best stuff was largely supplied by our Elders the Beats. In this respect, *Revolutionary Letters* is a major literary work of that era.

We learn from the first poem that Diane's unique blend of anarchism and Hermeticism was adopted or adapted from her beloved grandfather, an Italian worker who admired both Giordano Bruno (the great Renaissance magician and martyr to Free Thought) and Carlo Tresca, Sacco and Vanzetti, and Dante. Up to about Letter #30, the poems breathe an

April air of pure hippy utopianism and unbounded optimism,
which was the mood du jour for all of us.

When you seize Columbia (University),
when you
seize Paris, take
the media, tell the people...

Not if but when. Then comes Letter #30, “To Those
Who Sold the Revolution Summer of ‘68” and the begin-
ning of a tougher and less fizzy attitude—not “revolution-
ary pessimism” because Diane is no quitter—but a darker
mood. In letter 32, she realizes

not western civilization, but civilization
itself
is the disease which is eating us.

Now the hot revolutionary rhetoric of the earliest
poems is tempered more and more by the complexities of
Hermetic thought, but only to grow even angrier and
more intransigent—a call for

a flying leap
to another ‘plane’ or ‘sphere’
& I don’t know into what, don’t ask, only
I know it wont be worse.

(#71)

Making the link between, say, Emma Goldman and Paracelsus, is itself an alchemical operation, and a question already posed by Surrealism, although *Revolutionary Letters* shows little direct influence from the latter. Olson and Duncan and Pound are the models. But the earliest poems were shouted in the street at Digger demos, and the book is dedicated to Dylan (and her grandfather); it is a profoundly American book, turning high erudition into native song, evoking the iconic American Indian, the IWW, the Summer of Love.

Back when there were mimeograph machines, Diane wrote that the best thing to do with one would be to drop it off a five story building on a cop's head. Some of these poems still have that kind of impact: almost a poem as bomb. But more than that (or parallel to it), they also chronicle the political heart of a great poet whose alchemical recipes for revolution attain the timelessness of a Whitman or Ginsberg: the political as personal. Letter #89, "Independence Day 2002" (and thus one of the most recent) reads in its entirety thus:

bald eagle
making a come-back
so am I

Obit: Ivan Illich

Unreconstructed still bitterly
belligerently for peace & love the saving remnant
COME OUT take up your crosses ye
martyrs of ZeroWork.
It was a military defeat
the programme was never implemented
images snarfed & barfed like a Retreat
from Moscow that's dragged on for 40 years.
Repent. The plain of light stretches relentlessly
in all directions: an air-conditioned crucifixion
for Dr Don Ivan Illich of Cuernavaca
the anarcho-Monseigneur who
dreamed in Latin &
never went on TV.

Presentation at Critical Strategies in Art and Media Conference

I've often said that I can't be an optimist, because it's somehow too fatuous, and I can't be a pessimist because it's somehow too stupid, so I come out being an anti-pessimist. In terms of the optimism/pessimism dialectic that seems to be at work here today that's the best I can position myself. But I'd like to start by talking about the dark side.

It seems to me that the global accident has already happened. The one that Virilio has been threatening us with, when he says: When you have a global system then you are going to have a global accident. I think it's already happened, I think it is the internet. The result has been the loss, destruction and disappearance of privacy which I find extremely disturbing. I call it: the rhizomatic panopticon. The internet is now acting as a rhizomatic panopticon, to combine two terms from French theory. In other words: Everyone's spying on everyone. Of course it isn't really like that because the government can spy on you much more efficiently than you can spy on them, but theoretically speaking anyway it's everybody violating each other's privacy and peace and quiet all the time, 24/7.

Ivan Illich used to talk about the paradoxical counterproductivity of monopolistic institutions. A bit of a mouthful that made it hard to understand what he was talking about really. What he means is that when an institution takes over an entire field, when it monopolizes an entire field of human existence then mysteriously it begins to counterproduce what it ostensibly set out to produce. He devoted his whole life to exploring how this happens; how education suddenly flips and makes you stupid, how medicine suddenly flips and makes you sick, how transportation suddenly flips 180 degrees and doesn't get you there. He tried to analyze this one basic idea in all these different institutions and I think if he were with us today he would be able to analyze the internet as a kind of shorthand for the modern technopathocracy in the broad sense of the word. More as a symbol than as the thing itself, but nevertheless it will do, it will suffice for what I have to say: That the internet which is supposed to be a prosthetic brain of humanity that contains all knowledge, all the time completely accessible somehow mysteriously—what a coincidence—flips 180 degrees and produces ignorance. And the way it does this I believe, it is first of all planned that way because it is in the control of capitalism and capitalism wants you to be stupid, it wants you to be ignorant, it wants

you not to know that there are possibilities like the ones we have been hearing about from our friends; it wants everyone to have to buy every single object that it produces because if two people get together and share an object then capitalism has lost that \$19.95 that it could have gotten by selling it to you, personally. So basically capitalism always strives to break everything down into the most atomistic, separated, alienated state where nobody will share, nobody will really communicate. They will think they are communicating: That's what they call interactivity. Interactivity is what I call a "satanic parody of communication." In other words, it appears to be communication, but in fact it's the opposite of communication, it's discommunication. It's falling apart from each other. It's getting more and more into the atomized, "bowling alone" world of Baudrillard's image of the human in the bubble—completely isolated, but with all the modern conveniences at a button's fingertip. No more society, but you can have everything that society wants provided in the form of cheap gadgets or, well, cheap shit, is the way I would put it actually. The result is that it happens so quickly that most of us are unaware or unconscious of it, it's too monstrous to think about, that within the past ten or fifteen years human society itself has virtually disappeared. Francis Fukuyama

actually—horribly enough—was sort of right: History did come to an end in the sense that the historical movement of the social collapsed. In 1989 anarchists and other free-flowing leftists had a few moments of euphoria in which we thought that: well, now that the frigging albatross—the USSR—is no longer hanging around our necks any more, now is the time for liberation ideas, you know... and it turned out not to be that way at all. First of all the Soviet Union—like a huge, sinking concrete ship—just pulled everything else down with it. And so anarchism is now in even a worse position than it was in 1989 because it's been totally forgotten. It's just ignored, except on television where we have 'the sons of anarchy' as I just saw on a billboard here, not more than two or three blocks away; it turns out it is a TV show about a biker group called 'the sons of anarchy'. That's what anarchism has become. It's become something for cable television. It's worse than that. It isn't just the movement of the social that's collapsed, it's the social itself I would argue. Alienation has never been more profound. As I walk around the streets I see everyone plugged into multiple forms of prostheses, not relating to each other as human beings, but relating first of all to the machines that mediate their experience of human being and prevent them from direct experience—of what it

means to be human and alive. And this seems to happen so quickly that very few people think of it as something negative, most people think of it as a kind of apotheosis, perhaps even a kind of utopia, a techno-utopia. It's true that we didn't get that future that we were promised, the one with the personal velocipedes that fly around skyscrapers. We didn't get the future that Walt Disney promised us, but by god we got a future. This is the future, welcome to it, hope you like it so far. Cheap shit. That's the future. More gadgets than you could possibly ever use and they all become obsolete in ten minutes so you need to buy a whole new set of gadgets to do the same thing. And believe me I'm not sneering at you, I'm not telling you that you are stupid. There is nothing you could do about this. If you didn't play this game, you could die of inanition, you could starve to death because they've got it all figured out, you need all this crap in order to make a living. You must have a cell phone. Can you see someone applying for a job in New York and 'Okay, what's your cell phone number'—'I don't have a cell phone'—'Oh really'. You think you're going to get that job? You have to have a computer, because if you say what I always say: "I ain't on the email"—am I going to get that job? Luckily I'm independently poor. I inherited a few scraps from my family, so I actually—as

long as I don't mind being poor—I don't have to work, and therefore as an incredible luxury I don't have to own a computer. I don't have to have a TV, I don't have to have a cell phone, I don't have to have all these other things that are so new that I don't even know what they are called, like Twitters and Facebooks and things.

I opted out ten years ago, I moved to the country and I got rid of all my gadgets, I don't even use radios or record players. I can't get rid of the telephone—I seem to be stuck with that. I can't get rid of electricity. That's it: Electricity and infernal combustion. Those are the things that keep us enslaved. I like to say: thanks to Dr. Frankenstein: electricity, a very mixed blessing to be sure. All the dreams of magic of ancient times are stolen and turned into science and then they have this honeymoon period. Take aviation for example. It starts with the hot air balloon which was invented by magicians, the Montgolfier brothers who were hermeticists. It lasts for several decades at least, this dream of magic—humans can fly at last, how wonderful, how marvelous, how magical. A little while after them Santos Dumont, that Brazilian homosexual dandy, actually invented manned flight, not the Wright brothers—you've been lied to all your lives about that. It was a Brazilian faggot named Santos Dumont who actu-

ally invented manned flight and he thought that flight would bring an end to war because if people could fly in the sky with bombs, then they would never dare to start a war with each other again. That would be the end of war. You can look back and think that this guy was a little bit naïve, but he is not the only scientist who had these thoughts. Monturiol, the man who invented the submarine—a guy from Colombia—he also thought the submarine would put an end to war. Well, Santos Dumont went back to visit Brazil. He saw bombs being thrown out of airplanes. He went back to his hotel, he told the elevator man: ‘I’ve made a big mistake.’ He went up to his room and hanged himself. That’s technology. That’s the future of technology: suicide. And what happened to aviation? Little by little it became sicker and sicker until you got Hiroshima and 9/11. And now aviation is a nightmare. It’s torture. To go on airplanes is like torture. It’s low level torture, but it is torture. It’s not waterboarding yet, but it’s on the way.

Alright, this is what I came here to do today: To be the voice of the negativity. Because I was afraid if we are going to hear more about very wonderful and charming artistic projects using new media and technology that would seem to be and in fact potentially are liberatory, I

would not argue against my comrades on this point. What I would say is however, going back to the original Debord quote that we began with: the essence of that quote is not just that art is dead, but that art is dangerously dead. The corpse stinks. What happens is that we got often to the world of art—I do it myself—thank god, at least it exists as a kind of reservation. I call the Hudson Valley the Art Reservation—where I live now. You can be like an Art Indian up there and everything’s cool. Believe me, I’m very glad of it. But I don’t pretend for a minute that it’s real life. These wonderful artistic projects that we have been hearing about: what relevance do they have in the struggle against capital? Maybe this is a question they’ll answer when they attack me in the afternoon as I suppose they will. Probably you guys too. Nobody seems to want to hear this. And of course everyone always says: ‘Well if that’s the way you feel then what do you suggest we do, what should we do? What is to be done?’ The good old Leninist question always crops up. And I cannot just say that “I don’t care” any more. That wouldn’t be a proper answer. The fact is: I do have an answer. I have many suggestions about what should be done. One could refuse technology, one could gather together in groups and drop out of the technopathocracy as much as possible without trying to be some kind of

crackpot puritan about it. Just do it as best you can. Use money as little as possible. Work as little as possible for anything other than your own projects or to grow your own food. Try to expand the group. It can't be done alone. It has to be done in a group. And by this time people are saying: 'Oh yeah, he is a hippie. He is talking about dropping out.' Right. I am a hippie. And I am talking about dropping out. This is the same old shit you've been hearing for forty years and I'm telling it to you again because frankly I think it's still relevant. I think that the only way you can escape technology is to escape technology. There is no way of escaping technology through technology. You can't escape technology buy buying more crapping gadgets and hooking them up, no matter what creative acts you can perform with them. At least that would be my thesis for today, I'll defend it. It's not that I believe in it 100 percent, but somebody had to say this, so I decided that I'd be the one. Thank you.

New York, 2009

with Konrad Becker, Jim Fleming, Ted Byfield, Steve Kurtz, Claire Pentecost, and Amanda MacDonald Crowley

Divining Violence

for David Joseph Martinez

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself”: one of the most banal and inane remarks of one of the twentieth century’s vilest politicians. Nothing to fear? How about politicians? Every one—with the possible exception of Gandhi—a serial killer. Vastly more guilty than any soldier. Hanging from lampposts with the guts of the last priests would be too good for them. People who idolize politicians or even vote for them risk being accessories to crimes against humanity—accomplices or fools—complicit in state terrorisms of all sorts, from eminent domain to outright massacre. Of course, merely not voting is like Pontius Pilate washing his hands; but then at least one’s hands are clean, if not other organs.

Fear itself constitutes the essence of politics and also of most law. The first and original (French) Terror was launched by a government, not by a clique of “non-state” maniacs. Modern states specialize in law as terror, legislation to legitimize territorial gangsterism, to serve as terroristic imagery, to dishearten the powerless, to extort money for weapons or for “compulsory” education or for

imprisonment of the young, or to benefit the corporations and banks that actually rule—rather than merely reign, like their lackey politicians.

The death of ideology reveals the state itself as fountainhead of all terror. Terror is the politics of the twenty-first century. Are there a few exceptions? States too small or poor (or rich) to pose a real threat to their own citizens or neighbors? In Scandinavia maybe? The South Pacific? Americans are inclined to think there must be greener grass somewhere, and it's nice to dream.

Terror(ism) has a lot in common with magic. Of course real people suffer in terrorist events—but the telos, the ultimate end of terrorism is usually not the actual victims but the image of the victims, which will cause fear in others and force them to act or not act in certain ways. A murdered czar may be more useful here than a dead bystander, but ultimately any death will suffice. In ritual black magic there is also a victim. You may argue that magic doesn't work but that's not the issue. In both terrorism and magic, an image is projected onto a field of (un)consciousness and used to manipulate it to bring about real change in the world. The process itself need never reach anyone's full consciousness (not even the magician's) in order to succeed statistically. As sixteenth-century Italian

occultist Giordano Bruno said, it's easier to ensorcell millions via Image Magic than to make one person fall in love with you. (See Bruno's *De Magia*, which exists in a good translation from Cambridge University Press). I presume this is what poor K.-H. Stockhausen meant by calling 9/11 a great work of art. Or what Baudrillard meant by saying that the Gulf War did not really happen. We live—and die—by the Image.

Like law, terrorism is cheap. Only a few need be imprisoned or killed pour encourager les autres. With really slick Image Magic, even this minor expenditure can be avoided, as the Internet makes so very clear: the “free” democratization of terror as virtual flame wars, libel, and disinformation. Can we speak of an art of terror? Absolutely, why not? Science too. Perhaps... Negative Alchemy, malignant transmutation, gold into shit, consciousness into fear.

Everything, says William Blake, has its Form and its Spectre. Does there also exist a positive terror, a “Poetic Terrorism”? Again, why not? I'm not thinking of the Unabomber here, even though he did blow up some very interesting people. I hypothesize, rather, that art can have the power of a terrorist act, its magical potency—but toward life instead of death. I mean that a really effective poesis should act powerfully on emotion and perception,

causing an aesthetic shock as powerful as terror but aimed at catharsis or even satori, the aha! moment, the breakthrough into transcendence. Liberation from the Image proceeds through the image. The artist critiques the terror of state/corporate power by juxtaposing a counterimage; the poet projects the hieroglyphic beam, explodes the aesthetic bomb, the bomb of flowers (as the old Aztec poets might've said). The result wants to go beyond mere criticism or even detournment, and proposes not only Nietzsche's revaluation but also his "besphinxment," his secular magic or "Profane Illumination" (in Benjamin's phrase).

Most so-called political art invariably falls and fails to reach the level of this necessary magic. It complains and explains, preaches to the choir, becomes another commodity (but a dull one); it changes nothing. Tragic but true. I admit that the term Poetic Terrorism (which I coined in 1984 or '5) can be taken as metaphorical, although I'd also insist that certain acts deemed terroristic by state or media can be truly poetic, in the Russian anarchist Bakunin's sense of destruction-as-creation. I'm thinking of the French farmer José Bové, who drove his tractor through the front window of a McDonald's. If forced to name one example of the kind of Projective Magic we might envision as aesthetic or poetic terrorism,

I'd mention Joseph Beuys, anarcho-hermeticist and, in his own words, "social sculptor"—each one of his works is a magical attempt to change reality rather than reflect it. The New York performance *I Like America and America Likes Me*—in which he spent several days in a room with a live coyote—for instance, uses fear (the *Unheimlich*) to bring about catharsis and a new higher state of consciousness.

Since Beuys's days, however, two factors have arisen to make the alchemical task even harder. First, the "post-historical" death of the avant-garde, the fact that ArtWorld can now commodify even the most virulent attacks on itself as interesting aesthetic objects. Second, the new economic reality—art as a major portion of the U.S. and European GNP—monetization of art through new financial mechanisms (hedge funds and the like). Note: Actual figures seem very difficult to come by. My rough guess is that art, especially if you include media as well as fine arts, must rival prisons, education, and drugs, if not Big Oil or War.

Here is a public secret (I got this term from the anthropologist Michael Taussig): something everyone knows but no one can talk about: the terrorist is the post-postmodern pirate or social bandit, the bold adventurer who rejects the very world that everyone else secretly

longs to reject, the world of rule and order and empty struggle for material gain and power; terrorist as brave rebel ready to die for an ideal and thus already angelic; and in the secretness of our envy (secret even from our conscious selves), we are, as Jean Genet said, “prisoners of love,” drawn to occult violence as if to desirable bodies. Look, for instance, at the anti-Ku Klux Klan propaganda produced by pious antiracist liberal leftists, how they adorn their tracts with almost pornographic photos of virile but weird-looking tattooed bootboy skinheads, as if these were the objects of both their horror and their lust. The same spirit pervades, say, Captain Johnson’s *General History of the Pyrates* (attributed to Daniel Defoe): the rhetoric is shock and disgust, the subtext is admiration and envy. Sometimes, as with “Captain Mission” (the proto-anarchist pirate who may or may not be fictional and who appears also in the work of William Burroughs), the subtext surfaces, and the text itself can no longer disguise “Johnson’s” approval of “Mission’s” antislavery and antihegemonic élan or his experiment in criminal utopian socialism in Madagascar.

Sexual and romantic fantasies (or antisexual antifantasies, the coin’s reverse) inform endless popular media portrayals of terrorists and antiterrorists. For example,

the pure porn style of the Abu Ghraib photos was politely not discussed by most commentators; nevertheless, sadomasochistic desire obviously pervades the whole venture of the War on Terror—on both sides. Surely there's truth in the contention of Charles Fourier (the "Utopian Socialist," 1772-1837) that the cruelty of the torturer (or terrorist, we could add) stems from deflected love, and that in a world where desires are realized for everyone at once (rather than only sometimes and only for the rich and powerful), a great deal of murder and war would be replaced by Fourier's proposed World Congress of Erotic Flagellation, to be held semi-annually in Constantinople. The idea of Voluntary Amorous Servitude, he felt, was necessary to achieve utopia—or "Harmony," as he called it—since many humans (himself included) can only achieve *jouissance* in such service, a paradoxical freedom-in-slavery akin to religious mysticism—another type of Profane Illumination.

"Psychohistory" appeals to the same intuition as would Magical History, if we could posit such a discipline—i.e., one based on the conviction that the surface of events hides psychosexual or hermetic secrets, secrets that can be decoded or teased out somehow by occult means, such as analysis of texts or hieroglyphic critique. Pure Capital

posits no ulterior or hidden motives in human consciousness, other than a “rational” desire to maximize profit, so psycho-anything seems rather retro these days, rather fifteen-minutes-ago. But the public denial of the unconscious simply bestows all that much more private power on those who know it exists and even know some of its rules. Formerly called magicians, like Dr. Dee and Giordano Bruno. Now called spin doctors, perception managers, and propagandists. As Andrei Codrescu says, we don’t need the unconscious anymore—we have advertising.

In this sense terrorism can be seen as an Image Magic of the poor, as opposed to the Image Magic of the rich and powerful, or even of Money and Power in themselves in their “pure” form as the Technopathocratic Corporate Empire, especially its media, including compulsory education as well as the more obvious forms of dis-infotainment, and perceptual coercion through the very design of the made world—its malignant ugliness and inherent authoritarianism. Can we speak of a terrorism of space, as in public architecture or public surveillance? A terrorism of time, as in media coverage of terrorism, which mirrors and repeats the terror image to the point of mass hypnosis, in order to create the psychic hysteria necessary to get away with Big Lies? What about a terrorism of

technology, of murderous machines, inimical to human form and human society? A terrorism of work, an economic and deliberate immiseration of the eternal serf classes—a terrorism of money? A terrorism of the law, which everyone (secretly) knows belongs purely to wealth and power? A terrorism of the police, who were once considered the armed thugs of the ruling class but are now seen as a law of Nature, inevitable as death and taxes.

Do these questions do anything except blur the common definition of terrorism as random symbolic and/or actual violence carried out by some people of whom we do not approve? Perhaps once again we must take refuge in the notion of metaphor, so as to avoid the moral confusion of equating, say, television and random murder. But let's not get involved in quibbles such as: should a pre-millennialist Christian Zionist neoconservative approve or disapprove of the Stern Gang and the bombing of the King David Hotel? History, in the sense of the text written by the winners, will always sort these problems out: losers are terrorists, winners are champions of human rights and the ideals of whatever ideology has in fact prevailed. Interestingly, the "ecoterrorists" in the U.S. have not killed anyone, even inadvertently, and have only destroyed property, but as obvious losers they can be labeled whatever the Corporate State wants to label

them—terrorist being the worst word in the latest dictionary of power. Laws can always be written to define each new discovery of God’s or Nature’s true intention—e.g., that scratching the paint on an SUV with a key for political reasons is tantamount to murder.

The worst that can be said of terrorism from a revolutionary POV is that it doesn’t work, that it is inevitably recuperated (as “terror”) by the real powers of states and police, detoured and used to defeat its own premises. This explains the prevalence of fake terrorism produced by the intelligence organs of many states. (Like paranoiacs, conspiracy theorists sometimes have real enemies.) This inherent failure of terrorism, however, may not have been actual in even the recent past; after all, Ireland, Israel, and the late USSR provide test cases of successful terrorism. But that was Then and this is Now. Welcome to the Future. It appears that global interconnectedness (as discussed by Paul Virilio) has created a complexity so complex that all countermeasures can be instantly turned into commodities—even terrorism. Will you buy terror? Here is a work of art “about terrorism.” Will you pay for it?

What (as they used to say in Russia) Is To Be Done? How to evade the paradox in which every counterproposal is immediately detoured by Capital into a source of profit and therefore of its own power? Is failure the last possible Outside? No stratagems for genuine resistance and even possible victory? Cultivate stoic existentialist dandyism of despair and the acte gratuite? Or hope against hope that somehow one can enter ArtWorld as a “poetic terrorist,” as a virus of true otherness, as a bomb of flowers? In any case, we cannot not make art. Not even Duchamp really stopped; Rimbaud didn’t abandon poetry either, since he wanted life itself to be poetry, and his experiment ended sadly. In the long run, to paraphrase Lord Keynes, they all do.

Meanwhile, however, the possibility remains of play, of love, and of struggle. And it may turn out that the End of History is merely an advertising scheme, highly successful but not forever. And when the illusion finally shatters, we (or someone) will look back on our work and see that it never totally failed.

With thanx & tip-o-the-fez to David Levi Strauss
as well as Daniel Joseph Martinez

Intellectual S/M is the Fascism of the Eighties— The Avant-Garde Eats Shit and Likes It

COMRADES!

Recently some confusion about “Chaos” has plagued the A.O.A. from certain revanchist quarters, forcing us (who despise polemics) at last to indulge in a Plenary Session devoted to denunciations ex cathedra, portentous as hell; our faces burn red with rhetoric, spit flies from our lips, neck veins bulge with pulpit fervor. We must at last descend to flying banners with angry slogans (in 1930s typefaces) declaring what Ontological Anarchy is not.

Remember, only in Classical Physics does Chaos have anything to do with entropy, heat-death, or decay. In our physics (Chaos Theory), Chaos identifies with tao, beyond yin-as-entropy & yang-as-energy, more a principle of continual creation than of any nihil, void in the sense of potentia, not exhaustion. (Chaos as the “sum of all orders.”)

From this alchemy we quintessentialize an aesthetic theory. Chaote art may act terrifying, it may even act grand guignol, but it can never allow itself to be drenched in putrid negativity, thanatosis, schadenfreude (delight in the

misery of others), crooning over Nazi memorabilia & serial murders. Ontological Anarchy collects no snuff films & is bored to tears with dominatrices who spout French philosophy. (“Everything is hopeless & I knew it before you did, asshole, Nyahh!”)

Wilhelm Reich was driven half mad & killed by agents of the Emotional Plague; maybe half his work derived from sheer paranoia (UFO conspiracies, homophobia, even his orgasm theory,) BUT one point we agree wholeheartedly—sexpol, sexual repression breeds death obsession, which leads to bad politics. A great deal of avant-garde Art is saturated with Deadly Orgone Rays (DOR). Ontological Anarchy aims to build aesthetic cloud-busters (OR-guns) to disperse the miasma of cerebral sadomasochism which now passes for slick, hip, new, fashionable. Self-mutilating “performance” artists strike us as banal & stupid—their art makes everyone more unhappy. What kind of two-bit conniving horseshit... what kind of cockroach-brained Art creeps cooked up this apocalypse stew?

Of course the avant-garde seems “smart”—so did Marinetti & the Futurists, so did Pound & Celine. Compared to that kind of intelligence we’d choose real stupidity, bucolic New Age blissed-out inanity—we’d rather be

pinheads than queer for death. But luckily we don't have to scoop out our brains to attain our own queer brand of satori. All the faculties, all the senses belong to us as our property—both heart & head, intellect & spirit, body & soul. Ours is no art of mutilation but of excess, superabundance, amazement.

The purveyors of pointless gloom are the Dead Squads of contemporary aesthetics—& we are the “disappeared ones.” Their make-believe ballroom of occult 3rd-Reich bric-a-brac & child murder attracts the manipulators of the Spectacle—death looks better on TV than life—& we Chaotes, who preach an insurrectionary joy, are edged out towards silence.

Needless to say we reject all censorship by Church & State—but “after the revolution” we would be willing to take individual & personal responsibility for burning all the Dead Squad snuff-art crap & running them out of town on a rail. (Criticism becomes direct action in an anarchist context.) My space has room neither for Jesus & his lords of the flies nor for Chas. Manson & his literary admirers. I want no mundane police—I want no cosmic axe-murderers either; no TV chainsaw massacres, no sensitive post-structuralist novels about necrophilia.

As it happens, the A.O.A. can scarcely hope to sabotage

the suffocating mechanisms of the State & its ghostly circuitry—but we just might happen to find ourselves in a position to do something about lesser manifestations of the DOR plague such as the Corpse-Eaters of the Lower East Side & other Art scum. We support artists who use terrifying material in some “higher cause”—who use loving/sexual material of any kind, however shocking or illegal—who use their anger & disgust & their true desires to lurch toward self-realization & beauty & adventure. “Social Nihilism,” yes—but not the dead nihilism of gnostic self-disgust. Even if it’s violent & abrasive, anyone with a vestigial 3rd eye can see the differences between revolutionary pro-life art & reactionary pro-death art. DOR stinks, & the chaote nose can sniff it out—just as it knows the perfume of spiritual/sexual joy, however buried or masked by other dark scents. Even the Radical Right, for all its horror of flesh & the senses, occasionally comes up with a moment of perception & consciousness-enhancement—but the Dead Squads, for all their tired lip service to fashionable revolutionary abstractions, offer us about as much libertarian energy as the FBI, FDA, or the double-dip Baptists.

We live in a society which advertises its costliest commodities with images of death & mutilation, beaming

them direct to the reptilian back-brain of the millions thru alpha-wave-generating carcinogenic reality-warping devices—while certain images of life (such as our favorite, [CENSORED]) are banned & punished with incredible ferocity. It takes no guts at all to be an Art Sadist, for salacious death lies at the aesthetic center of our Consensus Paradigm. “Leftists” who like to dress up & play Police-&-Victim, people who jerk off to atrocity photos, people who like to think & intellectualize about splatter art & highfalutin hopelessness & groovy ghoulishness & other people’s misery—such “artists” are nothing but police-without-power (a perfect definition for many “revolutionaries” too). We have a black bomb for these aesthetic fascists—it explodes with sperm & firecrackers, raucous weeds & piracy, weird Shiite heresies & bubbling paradise-fountains, complex rhythms, pulsations of life, all shapeless & exquisite.

Wake up! Breathe! Feel the world’s breath against your skin! Seize the day! Breathe! Breathe!

(Thanx to J. Mander’s *Four Arguments for the Abolition of Television*, Adam Exit, & the Moorish Cosmopolitan of Williamsburg.)

[Another ancient piece. People who weren’t around in the 1980s won’t even get it...]

Resolution for the 1990s: Boycott Cop Culture

If one fictional figure can be said to have dominated the popcult of the '80s, it was the Cop. Fuckin' police everywhere you turned, worse than real life. What an incredible bore.

Powerful Cops—protetcting the meek and humble—at the expense of a half dozen or so articles of the Bill of Rights—“Dirty Harry.” Nice human cops, coping with human perversity, coming out sweet'n'sour, you know, gruff and knowing but still soft inside—“Hill Street Blues”—most evil TV show ever. Wiseass black cops scoring witty racist remarks against hick white cops, who nevertheless come to love each other—Eddie Murphy, Class Traitor. For that masochist thrill we got wicked bent cops who threaten to topple our Kozy Konsensus Reality from within like Giger-designed tapeworms, but naturally get blown away just in the nick of time by the Last Honest Cop, Robocop, ideal amalgam of prosthesis and sentimentality.

We've been obsessed with cops since the beginning—but the rozzers of yore played bumbling fools, Keystone

Kops, Car 54 Where Are You, booby-bobbies set up for Fatty Arbuckle or Buster Keaton to squash and deflate. But in the ideal drama of the '80s, the "little man" who once scattered bluebottles by the hundred with that anarchist's bomb, innocently used to light a cigarette—the Tramp, the victim with the sudden power of the pure heart—no longer has a place at the center of narrative. Once "we" were that hobo, that quasi-surrealist chaote hero who wins thru wu-wei over the ludicrous minions of a despised and irrelevant Order. But now "we" are reduced to the status of victims without power, or else criminals. "We" no longer occupy that central role; no longer the heros of our own stories, we've been marginalized and replaced by the Other, the Cop.

Thus the Cop Show has only three characters—victim, criminal and policeperson—but the first two fail to be fully human—only the pig is real. Oddly enough, human society in the '80s (as seen in the other media) sometimes appeared to consist of the same three cliché/archetypes. First the victims, the whining minorities bitching about "rights"—and who pray tell did not belong to a "minority" in the 80s? Shit, even cops complained about their "rights" being abused. Then the criminals: largely nonwhite (despite the obligatory and hallucinatory "integration" of

the media), largely poor (or else obscenely rich, hence even more alien), largely perverse (i.e., the forbidden mirrors of “our” desires). I’ve heard that one out of four households in America is robbed every year, and that every year nearly half a million of us are arrested just for smoking pot. In the face of such statistics (even assuming they’re “damned lies”) one wonders who is NOT either victim or criminal in our police-state-of-consciousness. The fuzz must mediate for all of us, however fuzzy the interface—they’re our only warrior-priests, however profane.

“America’s Most Wanted”—the most successful TV gameshow of the ‘80s—opened up for all of us the role of Amateur Cop, hitherto merely a media fantasy of middle-class resentment and revenge. Naturally the true-life Cop hates no one so much as the vigilante—look what happens to poor and/or nonwhite neighborhood self-protection groups like the Muslims who tried to eliminate crack-dealing in Brooklyn: the cops busted the Muslims, the pushers went free. Real vigilantes threaten the monopoly of enforcement, *lèse majesté* more abominable than incest or murder. But media(ted) vigilantes function perfectly within the CopState; in fact, it would be more accurate to think of them as unpaid (not even a set of matched luggage!) informers: telemetric snitches, electro-stoolies,

ratfinks-for-a-day.

What is it that “America most wants”? Does this phrase refer to criminals—or to crimes, to objects of desire in their real presence, unrepresented, unmediated, literally stolen or appropriated? America most wants...to fuck off work, ditch the spouse, do drugs (because drugs make you feel as good as the people in TV ads appear to be), have sex with nubile jailbait, sodomy, burglary, hell yes. What unmediated pleasures are NOT illegal? Even outdoor barbecues violate smoke ordinances nowadays. The simplest enjoyments turn us against some law; finally pleasure becomes too stress-inducing, and only TV remains—and the pleasure of revenge, vicarious betrayal, the sick thrill of the tattletale. America can’t have what it most wants, so it has “America’s Most Wanted” instead. A nation of schoolyard toadies sucking up to an elite of schoolyard bullies.

Of course the program still suffers from a few strange reality-glitches: for example, the dramatized segments are enacted cinema vérité-style by actors; some viewers are so stupid they believe they’re seeing actual footage of real crimes. Hence the actors are being continually harassed and even arrested, along with (or instead of) the real criminals whose mugshots are flashed after each little documentoid.

How quaint, eh? No one really experiences anything—everyone reduced to the status of ghosts—media images break off and float away from any contact with actual everyday life—PhoneSex—CyberSex. Final transcendence of the body.

The media cops, like televangelical forerunners, prepare us for the advent, final coming, or Rapture of the police state: the “Wars” on sex and drugs: total control totally leached of all content; a map with no coordinates in any known space; far beyond mere Spectacle; sheer ecstasy (“standing-out-side-the-body”); obscene simulacrum; meaningless violent spasms elevated to the last principle of governance. Image of a country consumed by images of self-hatred, war between the schizoid halves of a split personality, Super-Ego vs. The Id Kid, for the heavyweight championship of an abandoned landscape, burnt, polluted, empty, desolate, unreal.

Just as the murder-mystery is always an exercise in sadism, so the cop-fiction always involves the contemplation of control. The image of the inspector or detective measures the image of “our” lack of autonomous substance, our transparency before the gaze of authority. Our perversity, our helplessness. Whether we imagine them as “good” or “evil,” our obsessive invocation of the eidolons of the

Cops reveals the extent to which we have accepted the Manichean worldview they symbolize. Millions of tiny cops swarm everywhere, like the qliphoth, larval hungry ghosts—they fill the screen, as in Keaton's famous two-reeler, overwhelming the foreground, an Antarctic where nothing moves but hordes of sinister blue penguins.

We propose an esoteric hermeneutical exegesis of the Surrealist slogan "Mort aux vaches!" We take it to refer not to the deaths of individual cops ("cows" in the argot of the period)—mere leftist revenge fantasy—petty reverse sadism—but rather to the death of the image of the flic, the inner Control and its myriad reflections in the no-place-place of the media—the "gray room" as Burroughs calls it. Self-censorship, fear of one's own desires, "conscience" as the interiorized voice of consensus-authority. To assassinate these "security forces" would indeed release floods of libidinal energy, but not the violent running-amok predicted by the theory of Law'n'Order. Nietzschean "self-overcoming" provides the principle of organization for the free spirit (as also for anarchist society, at least in theory). In the police-state personality, libidinal energy is dammed and diverted toward self-repression; any threat to Control results in spasms of violence. In the free-spirit personality, energy flows unimpeded and therefore turbulently but

gently—its chaos finds its strange attractor, allowing new spontaneous orders to emerge.

In this sense, then, we call for a boycott of the image of the Cop, and a moratorium on its production in art. In this sense...

MORT AUX VACHES!

Proposals/
P.A.Z.

P.A.Z. : Permanent Autonomous Zones

TAZ-theory tries to concern itself with existing or emerging situations rather than pure utopianism. All over the world people are leaving or “disappearing” themselves from the Grid of Alienation and seeking ways to restore human contact.

An interesting example of this on the level of “urban folk culture” can be found in the proliferation of hobby networks and conferences. Recently I discovered the zines of two such groups, *Crown Jewels of the High Wire* (devoted to the collection of glass electrical insulators) and a journal on cucurbitology (*The Gourd*). A vast amount of creativity goes into these obsessions.

The various periodic gatherings of fellow-maniacs amount to genuine face-to-face (unmediated) festivals of eccentricity. It’s not just the “counterculture” which seeks its TAZs, its nomad encampments and nights of liberation from the Consensus. Self-organized and autonomous groups are springing up amongst every “class” and “subculture.” Vast tracts of the Babylonian Empire are now virtually empty, populated only by the spooks of Mass Media, and a few psychotic policemen.

TAZ-theory realizes that THIS IS HAPPENING—we're not talking about "should" or "will be"—we're talking about an already-existing movement. Our use of various thought-experiments, utopian poetics, paranoia criticism, etc., aims at helping to clarify this complex and still largely undocumented movement, to give it some theoretical focus and self-awareness, and to suggest tactics based on coherent and integral strategies—to act the mid-wife or the panegyrist, not the "vanguard!"

And so we've had to consider the fact that not all existing autonomous zones are "temporary." Some are (at least by intention) more-or-less permanent. Certain cracks in the Babylonian Monolith appear so vacant that whole groups can move into them and settle down. Certain theories, such as "Permaculture," have been developed to deal with this situation and make the most of it. "Villages," "communes," "communities," even "arcologies," and "biospheres" (or other utopian-city forms) are being experimented with and implemented. Even here, however, TAZ theory may offer some useful thought-tools and clarifications.

What about a *poetique* (a "way of making") and a *politique* (a "way of living together") for the "permanent" TAZ (or "PAZ")? What about the actual relation between temporariness and permanence? And how can the PAZ

renew and refresh itself periodically with the “festival” aspect of the TAZ?

The Question of Publicity

Recent events in the US and Europe have shown that self-organized/autonomous groups strike fear into the heart of the state. MOVE in Philadelphia, the Koreshites of Waco, Rainbow Tribes, computer-hackers, squatters, etc., have been targeted for varying intensity-levels of extermination. And yet other autonomous groups go unnoticed, or at least unpersecuted. What makes the difference? One factor may be the malign effect of publicity or mediation. The Media experience a vampiric thirst for the shadow-Passion play of “Terrorism,” Babylon’s public ritual of expiation, scapegoating, and blood-sacrifice. Once any autonomous group allows this particular “gaze” to fall upon it, the shit hits the fan: the Media will try to arrange a mini-armageddon to satisfy its junk-sickness for spectacle and death.

Now, the PAZ makes a fine sitting target for such a Media smart-bomb. Besieged inside its “compound,” the self-organized group can only succumb to some sort of cheap predetermined martyrdom. Presumably this role appeals only to neurotic masochists. In any case, most groups will want to live out their natural span or trajectory

in peace and quiet. A good tactic here might be to avoid publicity from the Mass Media as if it were the plague.

A bit of natural paranoia comes in handy, so long as it doesn't become an end in itself. One must be cunning in order to get away with being bold. A touch of camouflage, a flair for invisibility, a sense of tact as a tactic might be as useful to a PAZ as a TAZ. Humble suggestions: Use only "intimate media" (zines, phonetrees, BBSs, free radio and mini-FM, public-access cable, etc.)—avoid blustering, macho, confrontationist attitudes—you don't need five seconds on Evening News ("Police Raid Cultists") to validate your existence. Our slogan might be: "Get a life, not a lifestyle."

Access

People probably ought to choose the people they live with. "Open-membership" communes invariably end up swamped with freeloaders and sex-starved pathetic creeps. PAZs must choose their own membership mutually—this has nothing to do with "elitism." The PAZ may exercise a temporarily open function such as hosting festivals or giving away free food, etc., but it need not be permanently open to any self-proclaimed sympathizer who wanders by.

Emergence of a Genuinely Alternative Economy

Once again, this is already happening, but it still needs a huge amount of work before it comes into focus. The sub-economies of “lavoro nero,” untaxed transactions, barter, etc., tend to be severely limited and localized. BBSs and other networking systems could be used to link up these regional/marginal economies (“household managements”) into a viable alternative economy of some magnitude. “P.M.” has already outlined something like this in *bolo’bolo*—in fact, a number of possible systems already exist, in theory anyway.

The problem is: how to construct a true alternative economy, i.e., a complete economy, without attracting the IRS and other capitalist running dogs? How can I exchange my skills as, say, a plumber or moonshiner, for the food, books, shelter, and psychoactive plants I want without paying taxes, or even without using State-forged money? How can I live a comfortable (even luxurious) life free of all interactions and transactions with Commodity World? If we took all the energy the leftists put into “demos,” and all the energy the Libertarians put into playing futile little 3rd-party games, and if we redirected all that power into the construction of a real underground economy, we would

already have accomplished “the Revolution” long ago.

The “World” Came to an End in 1972

The hollowed-out effigy of the Absolute State finally toppled in “1989.” The last ideology, Capitalism, is no more than a skin-disease of the Very Late Neolithic. It’s a desiring-machine running on empty. I’m hoping to see it deliquesce in my lifetime, like one of Dali’s mindscapes. And I want to have somewhere to “go” when the shit comes down. Of course the death of Capitalism needn’t entail the Godzilla-like destruction of all human culture; this scenario is merely a terror-image propagated by Capitalism itself. Nevertheless, it stands to reason that the dreaming corpse will spasm violently before rigor mortis sets in—and New York or LA may not be the smartest places to wait out the storm. (And the storm may have already begun.) [On the other hand NYC and LA might not be the worst places to create the New World; one can imagine whole squatted neighborhoods, gangs transformed into Peoples’ Militias, etc.] Now, the gypsy-RV way of life may be one way to deal with the on-going meltdown of Too-Late Capitalism—but as for me, I’d prefer a nice anarchist monastery somewhere—a typical place for “scholars” to sit out the “Dark Ages.” The more we organize this NOW the less hassle we’ll have to face later. I’m not

talking about “survival”—I’m not interested in mere survival. I want to thrive. BACK TO UTOPIA.

Festivals

The PAZ serves a vital function as a node in the TAZ-web, a meeting place for a wide circle of friends and allies who may not actually live full-time on the “farm” or in the “village.” Ancient villages held fairs which brought wealth to the community, provided markets for travelers, and created festal time/space for all participants. Nowadays, the festival is emerging as one of the most important forms for the TAZ itself, but can also provide renewal and fresh energy for the PAZ. I remember reading somewhere that in the Middle Ages there were one hundred and eleven holidays a year; we should take this as our “utopian minimum” and strive to do even better. [Note: the utopian minima proposed by C. Fourier consisted of more food and sex than the average 18th century aristocrat enjoyed.]

The Living Earth

I believe there exist plenty of good selfish reasons for desiring the “organic” (it’s sexier), the “natural” (it tastes better), the “green” (it’s more beautiful), the Wild(er)ness (it’s more exciting). *Communitas* (as P. Goodman called it) and con-

viviality (as I. Illich called it) are more pleasurable than their opposites. The living earth need not exclude the organic city—the small but intense conglomeration of humanity devoted to the arts and slightly decadent joys of a civilization purged of all its gigantism and enforced loneliness—but even those of us who enjoy cities can see immediate and hedonic motives for fighting for the “environment.” We are militant biophiles. Deep Ecology, social ecology, permaculture, appropriate tech., we’re not too picky about ideologies. Let one thousand flowers bloom.

PAZ Typology

A “weird religion” or a rebel art movement can become a kind of non-local PAZ, like a more intense and all-consuming hobby network. The Secret Society (like the Chinese Tong), also provides a model for a PAZ without geographic limits. But the “perfect case scenario” involves a free space that extends into free time. The essence of the PAZ must be the long-drawn-out intensification of the joys—and risks—of the TAZ. And the intensification of the PAZ will be Utopia Now.

—Dreamtime Village 1993

[Note: Hard to believe in such optimism—only 21 years ago!
Most of these ideas now look impossible to me. (2014)]

A Network of Castles

(response to the Tactical Media Manifesto)

Tactical media, then, would be a kind of filth—an organic process—as compared with the ideological cleanliness of strategic media (the “author”).

Do we need a defense of filth, or a theory of filth—as fertility, as pleasure, as relaxation from the rigidities of “Civilization”? Not nostalgia for the mud, but the mud itself? Or would such theorizing simply become another kind of tidying-up process—an erasure of its own theoretical object?

The tactical problem consists of the need (or desire) to stay ahead of representation—not just to escape it, but to attain through mobilization a relative invulnerability from representation. And the problematic aspect of the problem is that all media—even tactical media—deal in representation.

Thus one can follow the trajectory of a given tactical medium, through ever greater representation, towards the fate of being subsumed into some strategy. And the fatal black hole toward which so many of these trajectories vanish is Capital—of course.

Everything is a process of being cleaned up. To preserve its autonomy the tactical medium wants to remain dirty—it can never let itself be surrounded and cleared by strategy, by ideology. It must stay out ahead, drifting before all possible waves, uncertain even of its own trajectory.

By another paradox, this uncertainty itself becomes a “principle.” It comes to occupy the space of a strategy—and thus to define a strategic space. No “authors” need to be implicated. A messy organic process—involving both reason and unreason—not imposed or categorical—emergent. Shape-shifting. Dangerous and plagued by failures. But not aimless or undirected. In effect—strategic.

Media as technologies (“machines”) are perfect mirror-representations of the totality that produces them (or vice-versa). The internet, for example, mirrors not only its military origin but also its affinity with Capital. Like globalism, it breaks through borders—it is a “chaos,” like Capital (which seeks the Strange Attractor of the numisphere, where the numinous and the numismatic are one and eternal). One might even speak of “nomadic” features (“migratory capital”). Like Capital, the Net is drawn toward virtuality, cognitive prosthesis, disembodiment. But (the “vice versa” process) media tend simultaneously toward the production of the totality:—a complex multi-

feedback relation. In one sense, tactical media would then have to engage in the destruction and/or subversion (“substruction”) of this complex—driving a wedge between the machine and the totality. Such action would imply that the totality is far from total, that there will be interruptions along the feedback lines, breaks in “service”—missing zones, and zones of resistance.

Ad-hoc, constantly mutating, determinedly empirical, at this point tactics begin to coalesce into a strategy (“spontaneous ordering”). Because this strategy has no “author” (and is not ideologically driven) each tactical medium—each tactician as medium—will be able to seek direction from it without losing autonomy to it. Thus the complex interplay between tactic and strategy is one of mutual validation or “co-emergence.”

At this point, the metaphor of the castle—introduced by the Manifesto—takes on added luster, or perhaps a baleful gleam. The Nizari Ismailis (the so-called “Assassins”) structured their polity around a network of remote castles, most of which were inaccessible to every medieval military tactic—even prolonged siege, since they were supplied with their own gardens and water. Each high castle typically protected a fertile valley and was therefore self-sufficient—but full communication and even economic activity could take

place within the network thanks to the “porosity” of medieval borders. And thanks to the policy of assassination or threatened assassinations, kings and religious authorities hesitated to interfere. This went on for centuries.

Some years ago I remarked that the Nizari model for utopia had been rendered impossible by modern technologies of war and communication. Perhaps it would be interesting as a thought-experiment to see if this negative judgment still holds true. From a military viewpoint of course it does—the “isolated castle” (or commune or the like) can still be eliminated by the push of a button. But “the military” must have a reason for such action. Since “assassination” is an absurdity (e.g. the Unabomber)—and even “militance” must be re-defined—there may be no immediately apparent reason for the military to suppress a given “autonomous zone.”

The question of communication technology is trivial by comparison, but interesting. The Net as a “military” structure is “accessible to all,” and even as Capital absorbs the Net these tactical areas of indeterminacy persist—the same holds true for all “intimate” or tactical media. Thus the “network of castles” becomes possible—but the real question is whether the castle itself is possible.

Like any institution the castle will exist in part as a representation of itself in media. The Assassin's castles were rooted partly in the imaginaire, in the image that pervaded medieval media (text, word-of-mouth, legend), in the image of mysterious inaccessibility and danger. The Mongols finally destroyed Alamut not by direct assault but by demoralizing it with an even more fearsome image (pyramids of skulls from China to Hungary, etc.). But at its height of power, Alamut could dispense even with assassination, since the image alone sufficed to ward off all military and political attention.

Under the regime of global neo-liberalization or pan-capitalism that triumphed in 1989, the nation-states of the world would have begun to "privatize" all social functions for the collection of taxes and the support of military and police force, and the use of that force in the interests of Capital. The "natural law of the free market," however, clashes with the remnants of social ideology embedded in such structures as the UN, the EU, or even the "old" liberal or conservative regimes of certain states. Politics in such situations becomes a matter of cognitive dissonance.

This is exacerbated by the appearance of "new media" which mirror the global totality but also enhance the cognitive dissonance (negative feedback, "noise") inherent in the

representations of the totality. Capital seems to have a logic of its own—the tendency of money to define all human relations, if you will—but in truth neither capitalists nor politicians can really penetrate this logic or understand its direction—much less control it. Huge conceptual gaps open in the structure of the “totality.” The question remains: are these gaps strategic?

The gaps cut across sedimentary layers of actuality, and the gaps themselves tend to shift position, change shape, open and close. Geography as well as the virtual space of the image, space as well as time constitute the mutating forms of these potential tactical regions. Some will be zones of depletion, in which all power has been shut off (there are rumors of strange tribes around Chernobyl...); others will be accidental autonomous zones which might involve classes, groups (“refugees”) or specific areas. Some will be liberated zones (Chiapas), others will be deliberate seams. Some will be “unseen,” others will enter into representation. In the midst of such fluidity, there must emerge some islands or rocks. Castles will be occupied in the confusion, and later there will be no military advantage in destroying them. The castles will not be defensible, but they will be irrelevant, unassimilable—too “remote” (even in the middle of ancient cities)—apparently pointless. An air of shabby eccentricity might be useful here.

Another reason for Alamut's success was that any king who allowed it to exist could consider the possibility of a secret alliance, whereby money could be used to purchase immunity from the dagger—or perhaps even a contract on some other king—or most interesting of all, access to the secret sciences (astronomy, engineering and hydraulics, political philosophy, medicine, yogic techniques, etc.) of the Nizari observatories and libraries. In modern terms we might say that capitalists and politicians are so confused and ignorant about new media (far more so than the average artist or 14-year-old) that large sums of money are currently being spent on “secret sciences.” Out of the conflict between Capital and State over monopolies of representation, gaps can be produced—and made big enough to contain castles.

All this of course remains on the level of tactics. But the construction of a “network of castles” would constitute not only (in itself) a pleasurable act of autonomy and self-organization, but also a “strategic” structure, or rather an organic and embodied complexity out of which a strategic dimension might well emerge.

Tierra y Libertad, NYC April 1st 1997

[Note: Another prediction that never came true!]

A Hudson Valley Tour

Malden Brick Works

Memory is in the wrist of time
not ticking couterhythms to the blood
not a glass eye to pop
from its socket now before bed.
Some places they censor the Past
neaten it up. Edit it. Arrange
dental work for the deer—
but not here
where terminal barges spill
last loads of broken teeth
into slow fecund ooze.
Nature is not yet entertainment here
but springs up like maggots
from factory bones.

Saugerties Lighthouse

One whiff of black pepper
estuarial Hudson high tide
cake ozone
seawrack distance
put all noses out of joint
or rather render them
numb to that which words alone
cannot sustain as odors

worth weeping or

even dying for.
Nose is mayor
of my head
& cherishes no further
political ambitions.

Rogue Hollow

recalcitrant cacagenic backbush squatters
halfbreed hermits witchladies & basketweavers
86'd from Arcadia banished to Bedlam
for the forest's health. But does the rattler
show gratitude or the crane cast its vote
no they're just there like air & don't care
how much money & power it takes to
comb the woods of human vermin till Earth smiles
gratefully overgrown with gracious nature tenaciously
regaining its sway up the Vernoooykill
where everything slides with dying sighs
back into the embrace of faceless summer
blurring all stone walls & ruined cellars
like faded tattoos on an aging sailor.

Pastoral Letter: A Fragment

Imagine an alternate dimension where
dervishes are roaming around America
sects of Swedenborgian hobos, etc.

You're there camping in the cemetery
long black hair in tangles ghostwhite face

Sion County is remote, rural, and poor, and always has been. Around 1870 a breakaway sect of German Amish-type farmers—the Sabbatarian Anabaptists or the “Seventh Day Dunkers,” moved there from Pennsylvania and settled down in the river valleys of the county’s northeast.

In the mountainous northwest lies the small reservation of a band of Iroquois. The Indians and the Dunkers have always held to distant but amicable relations though nowadays the Protestants tend to disapprove of the bingo and fireworks concessions with which the tribe supplements its income.

In the 1960s a number of hippies invaded Sion County. At first there was some conflict with the locals, but by now the hippies have mellowed and settled down. Some of them joined a small eccentric split-off sub-sect of the Dunkers. Some practice permaculture or alternative

agriculture; a few of their farms are very serious and self-sufficient; others work in “green” construction and trades, including black-smithing and carriage-building, since so many locals use horses rather than cars. And of course some grow hemp.

By the 1980s, the county had begun to rival the emerald Triangle, and the Feds were beginning to sniff around. Something had to be done. A “Combine” was organized among the hemp growers and smugglers, and an interesting political force emerged based on anonymous funders and a small libertarian faction of the local Republican Party. The Combine managed not only to infiltrate the Republicans but also to win control of the county, including the offices of sheriff, district attorney, judge, etc. The Combine also earned the support of the Dunkers by opposing “development” and

[text missing]

... transmuted under this weird Libertarian/Welfarist coalition.

Everything possible is voluntarized—but funded by the County. The one public high school in the region is privatized but taken over by a non-profit alternative education group funded by the County. Zoning is more-

or-less abolished, but a Green Covenant is circulated, and any non-signers are boycotted or otherwise driven out of the region. An extremist vigilante group has vandalized or destroyed a few structures deemed ecologically offensive; somehow the Sheriff never manages to apprehend any of these mysterious eco-warriors.

The county capital, Sion City (pop. 18,000 or so), has the plastic rural highway fast-food sprawl and rundown 19th century backstreet gloom of any similar sad place in the bioregion—but in a way this is mere camouflage. The fast-food franchises have been bought-out by whole-food/organic collectives, which are funded by the County. Still they use names like Tastee Burgers or Salad Bar & Grill; the locals get a lot of amusement out of this sly nomenclature. The Public Library consists of four pink double-wide mobile homes, but contains amazing collections. It's as if the whole town was a disguise.

The danger, [says the Sheriff,] is that the place could become too damn picturesque. Dunkers in black hats in their buggies, a few Indians in traditional gear, spaced-out tie-dye types: a tourist trap, Woodstock! We don't like tourists around here, do we! And as Debord would put it, we don't want to work at the job of representing some quaint notion of authenticity just to become the Exotic Other for a media-poisoned shower of

zombie voyeurs!

Up-country, however, there's no presence of normalcy. The Dunkers are living in the 18th century; some of the hippies and Indians are heading back toward the Stone Age. The remotest valleys are given over to hemp plantations and/or bizarre drop-out cults. Over a third of the County has no electricity, other than a bit of solar, and no mail delivery. The Combine or the County own much of the wildest land in various forms, including parks and preserves.

The Sheriff told me,

Naturally, we 'deplore' the idea of funding utopia by crime. I admit that Sion County has some disagreeable aspects. But how can you hope to maintain even such a flawed and low-level utopia in a 'time of war' without some alternate economy? A Green Liberated Zone would be impossible; we all know it wouldn't be permitted. We try to think global—but we have got to act local.

Maybe you'd prefer some Jeremiah on thorazine stumbling out of the Time Magazine of your head—hollywood jerusalem grand guignol cheapjack prognostications of nuclear ho-hum & SciFi african plagues—Y2K, harmonic convergence, yuppie Rapture—a culture gets

the armageddon it deserves—fire ice whimper bang or eternal sit-com, no, it's all far more interesting than we deserve.

—interview with the Sheriff

The Monastery of St. John-in-the-Wilderness was built in 1910 by a group of Anglican Benedictine monks who intended to proselytize the nearby Indian reservation. But after a dim career it burned down in 1963 and the Church sold the ruin and the land (hundreds of acres) to an investor who later sold it to the Combine.

The monastery gardens and greenhouses were taken over by the Society for the Interiorization of Lost Knowledge (SILK), a small group of Combine research “scientists” who began experimenting with ethno-botany and bio-assay work. They constructed a secret underground “alchemical” lab.

The ruined monastery and the ramshackle but habitable Abbot’s House or Abbey were turned over to another group that organized itself as the Monastery of St. John-in-the-Wilderness, Order of the Resurrection, Anglican Benedictine (Non-juring): the “Greenfriars.” The Christian identity is useful as camouflage, but some of the members are into it sincerely. They perform regular masses

in the abbot's Chapel, and in summer organize "Sacred Concerts & Festivals" in the picturesque and spruced-up ruins of the old monastery.

Some of these festivals are fuelled by the very potent liquors and concoctions of SILK, and some of the monks work in SILK's gardens (for surprisingly healthy salaries paid in cash). The monks grow vegetables and keep a few chickens and goats, but are not involved in subsistence farming. Needless to say, the Order receives a grant from the County in return for leasing some of their remoter acreage to the Combine.

About half the brothers and sisters live in the old Abbot's House, and half are scattered through the woods in various caves, Taoist huts, Franciscan oratories, or prefab yurts. Besides the monks themselves there is also a "tertiary order" of friends, associates, allies, relatives, regular guests, and correspondents—maybe 20 fulltime live-ins and 100 occasional "retreatants."

Everyone's bewitched but no one cares
we have one universal evil eye to share
like flies beguiled by television's glare
or three ugly sisters with their empty stares.

There's always a worldly world and one to flee into some desert no one else can see.

(A Word from the Abbot)

A secret unknown to the worldly about the desert: it's a positive pleroma of pleasure compared to the arid deathscape of vespucian/jerk kultur, that bleeding Babylon without the courage of its convictions—seduction without desire—the Universal Mall—safety rules, litigation, crash-worship, spleen, worldwide surveillance. Yes by comparison a dank cave, solitary pine barren, silent summer mountain—the “stupidity of rural life” (Marx)—seems like wallowing in luxury billions couldn't buy. The real ascetics are gritting their teeth in traffic jams, TV/PC screens bathing them in leprosy-light, other people's music, vicious boredom. Anyone who doesn't go postal deserves beatification.

The Rule of the Monastery is No Rule: anarcho-monchism. The monks have adopted a Benedictine identity only because the original foundation was Benedictine. But in fact, they've found some inspiration in St. Benedict's Rule. Once the bits about chastity, obedience, humility, punishment, and excommunication were deleted, they

still liked the basic idea. In the original text, they found a description of the “four kinds of monks, including the “Sarabaites, which are the worst kind—unschooled by any rule. Their only law is the pleasure of their desires; whatever they wish or choose, they call holy. They consider whatever they dislike unlawful.” Half-jestingly, the monks claim to follow the Sarabaite Rite.

They’ve retained Benedictine titles and forms of organization: an Abbot, Canons to assist the Abbot, a Cellarer (logistics and supplies), Provost (ritualist), and Porter (security). They follow the rules of weekly kitchen service and weekly Reader, and also the Rule of One Hemina (1/4 liter) per day allowance of good wine. They wear, both sexes, an adapted version of the Benedictine habit—homespun green—at least on formal occasions.

But aside from monkish play and conviviality what hold them together are common interests. The first and all-embracing one is negation—a desire or need to escape from the vulgar materialist world; to retreat, whether for spiritual or political or even “military” reasons; whether permanently or periodically.

When you’re beaten Von Clausewitz calls for retreat rather than senseless going down in defeat.

Query: have we retreated far enough?
invisible yet? translucent? gossamer stuff?

Militant monks know when to head for the mountains for
a century of boxing practice.

A monastic order founded and decreed
in the hinterland beyond the emerald city
the hidden Imam's jasper isle: a seed exempt from the gaze
of the dead and their sterile pity.

Li Po could kick back and unplug the phone
uncork some applejack, feel right at home.

Once I saw green moss growing inside a Dublin omnibus—
like Dali's "Rainy Taxi." If science has conquered nature
why does it keep beating the dead horse?

The next stage: mail-order monasticism. Text itself as
ectoplasmic reverie. Dear Reader:
a message from the Abbé: to each their own cinnabar
grotto or Egyptian cave.

Hocus Pocus means this is the body
just as much puzzle as soul

whatever New Age twaddle seems to work
channeling the old black mole

We know our Blake and Paracelsus. Nobody here but us
Nolans. Mushrooms and the voices of the dead: exfoliation
of spirits

According to Gustav Meyerink the nausea that overcomes
us occasionally even in museums must arise from the fact
that sooner or later everything made by humans begins
to stink of the charnel house.

The conquistadors forgot that they themselves
were animals not aristotelian elves
“arguing with something Plato said”
or tidying up their vast linnaean shelves

If only our bad karma would permit it
I'd like us to be ornamental hermits
not cranks who can barely keep their logs afloat
or dionysiacs without a sacrificial goat.

There I see us bathed in light in rain
hoping Romanticism didn't die in vain
saying our beads or inviting each other to supper

wreathed in clouds and overcoming pain.

—Letter from the Abbot

For various motives both practical and theoretical, the Greenfriars have adopted a neo-Luddite approach to tech that owes much to the nearby Dunkers—especially since the Anabaptists’ shops and workshops provide the tools and skills needed for a comfortable low-tech life. Moreover, ‘Whole Earth Catalogue’-styled tech can be used to supplement Dunker resources since the monks have no religious injunctions to observe against zippers or can-openers. They even keep an old pick-up truck for emergencies, though they prefer horses.

SILK uses solar and other off-grid sources of electricity but the monastery and Abbot’s House are un-powered and lit by candles and oil lamps. The Sacred Concerts and other monastic events utilize daylight or torchlight, etc. The basic rule of all Luddism, whether religious or secular, is to use only technology that will not “injure the commonality”—therefore they agree to have (on the premises anyway) no computer, no TV, no telephone, nothing to replace human contact and connection with mediated representation (as the Sheriff would say).

Perhaps there's something a bit precious and artificial about this luddery, since the monks are not self-sustaining like the Dunkers or the more successful permaculturists. They've made certain choices on the basis of pleasure and beauty. As the Abbot says, "We're not really renouncing anything... nice. All of us feel the absence of electricity as an immense luxury. Our velvet nights are set with more than stars." Some of the hermits have their own hot tubs.

On the positive side, the Order's common interests center on "lost knowledge." They believe that their research may help to inspire and even direct the growth of a global green spiritual movement. As Universalists, they nevertheless have no truck with any New-Age multi-culti interpretations of "tolerance"; as the Unabomber said, "You can do anything you want—as long as it's unimportant." Rather, they seek certain non-negotiable constellations within all spiritual human manifestations, and on these, they maintain strict intolerance and an unwillingness to compromise.

They're also very interested in secrets, which they define as anything not found on TV or the Internet. The Abbot says, "We should cultivate secrets against the day when the unknown might regain its power."

The brothers and sisters follow their own

interests but regular sessions are held for discussion and development of group projects. One major interest for some lies in the “Western occult tradition,” especially serious Renaissance hermeticism and alchemy. Other shared research includes Christian ritual, particularly chanting, which is practiced for its “psychedelic” effects (and as rehearsal for Sacred Concerts). Fancy gardening—flowers and herbs for tinctures and distillations—”spagyric medicine.” There’s a fad for calligraphy and copying manuscripts, which generates a bit of extra income as well. They spend most of their “grant” on books, although they also have an excellent 2-inch telescope that provides a lot of entertainment. This is an homage to Johannes Kelpius, the German Rosicrucian who founded “The Woman in the Wilderness” in Pennsylvania in 1694. He brought to America: the first serious telescope, to scan the skies for signs of the coming End!; the first harpsichord; one of the first printing presses. He admired the Indians’ religion, and lived in a cave practicing alchemy and composing hymns.

Quilting bees are held on winter evenings with readings from literature and philosophy like the Benedictines—and monks are devoted to *viva voce* reading—like the old anarchist Egyptian and Cuban cigar workers, or the radical tailors in 18th century London.

Dining well is another shared obsession, at least with the group that cooks and eats in the Abbot's House, who claim inspiration from Rabelais, from Fourier's "Gastrosophy," and chapter one of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste*. By contrast, some of the hermits are strict vegetarians or raw foodists, etc.

It may be that some of the monks are engaging in "revolutionary activity"—but what exactly? since they could scarcely be preparing for armed insurgency...who knows? Maybe they're growing mushrooms for the combine, or counterfeiting Euro-dollars, or providing safe caves for anti-global activists on the lam. Maybe they've made a breakthrough in occult science—say, the therapeutic use of hieroglyphic emblems to "de-program" human awareness from media/consumer trance? Or maybe it's all another layer of camouflage, like the famous ghost that haunts the monastery and keeps idle gawkers and tourists away.

The Greenfriars consider themselves committed to certain local things and people because they're living in a certain place and want to remain there. They maintain collegially close relations with some of the elders on the Reservation, and a few pious ecstasies amongst the Sabbatarians, but they also see themselves in the Romantic tradition, as adherents of the "Religion of

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Nature” of the Transcendentalists and Hudson River School painters. And needless to say, Sion County is beautiful and relatively unspoiled, at least in the northern mountains. According to...

[text missing]

In mourning for the idea of the woods
psychic space/time pollution blues
almost as bad as being in love
this thinking about distant mountains and money
Seems you can't get one without the other
no car no hunt club no socialism
property tax on the taoist hermitage
electromagnetism no peace no quiet
Knowledge of mountains as source of pain
but dreamy (an anaesthetic revelation)
a numbness every bit as beguiling
as real estate itself: Atavistic
the summer camp the tactical retreat
astral travel on February nights.

Escapism

Is the enemy strong? One avoids him.

—Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap,
People's War People's Army

Sun Tzu, Von Clausewitz, and Napoleon all agree. When the battle's over and one has lost and They have triumphed again, one must run away—especially if one hopes to fight another day. Napoleon points out that a good tactical retreat is not a rout and shambles but an orderly withdrawal toward sources of logistical reinforcement, complete with rear-guard guerilla and political action.

A sufi once mentioned to me that mystics are accused of “escapism”—but when there's a tiger chasing you, he said, doesn't escapism make perfect sense? To evade repression by vanishing—to wriggle out from encirclement and siege—to fade into the underbrush or maquis (whether natural or social)—to “drop out” (as Generalissimo T. Leary put it) and head for the hills and no-go zones (whether actual or metaphorical): wouldn't this constitute the best stratagem we can hope for under present circumstances?

In fact, given “the will to power as disappearance,”

wouldn't a successful escape provide good cause to congratulate ourselves on a touch of strategic brilliance?—almost turning defeat into victory? Escapism as a political/military movement recognizes amongst its great precursors Houdini and the Count of Monte Cristo.

In my fictional mini-utopia (published in the last issue of *Fifth Estate*), “Pastoral Letter from Sion County,” I explored tactics for dropping out clandestinely through benign crime and social camouflage, on the scale of a small rural political unit infiltrated by pot-growing anarchists and neo-luddites. A number of readers have asked if such a place really exists. Unfortunately the answer is “well, sort of,” since the piece was inspired by some real-life examples—but not really, since none of them have achieved the de facto independence of “Sion County.” Sorry—no tickets to Erewhon.

In the course of my research, I wrote to activist/historian Kirkpatrick Sale (who certainly qualifies for the title “Gen. Ludd”) to ask if he knew of any secular luddite communities anywhere in the world. His sad answer was “no.” But he did turn me on to some interesting sources.

The first was a book. I'm embarrassed to say I'd never even heard of it: *The Breakdown of Nations* (1957) by Leopold Kohr. The simple and beautifully-argued thesis

of this work is that Small is Beautiful. (Actually I think this slogan was coined by Kohr's better-known disciple, EF Schumacher.) The English "Fourth World Journal," which carries Kohr's work, summarizes the message as "For Small Nations—Small Communities—Small Farms—Small Industries—Small Fisheries—and the Inalienable Sovereignty of the Human Spirit."

When Kohr wrote *Breakdown*, world power was divided between two enormous political units, the USA and the USSR. When he asked himself whether he expected his idea ever to be realized in history, he answered himself with a whole chapter consisting of a single word: "No." The notion of secession seemed very dim in the 1950s. But Kohr himself never gave up revolutionary hope and in fact ended his career working for the independence of Wales from the UK. In those days who could've predicted the breakdown of the USSR?—or the UK, for that matter?

Kohr's book seems quite relevant now, and certainly it deserves to be brought back to print—along with another neglected masterpiece on "minarchy" and mutualism, Proudhon's *Federalism*. Secessionism has always appealed to some anarchists, not as the end of the revolution but at least its beginning. (The end, as in Kropotkin and G. Landauer, would be regional anarcho-federations of auton-

mous entities.) Lysander Spooner liked to shock people by saying he supported both Abolition and Secession. The American Philosophical or Individualist Anarchist school has always defended a universal right of secession: small state from big state, region from small state, town from region, neighborhood from town, family from neighborhood—and children from family. Naturally this right also includes that of voluntary association, as in Stirner’s “union of egoists.”

I learned a second interesting thing from Kirkpatrick Sale: secessionism is “in the air” these days; movements are springing up here and there, partly inspired by the demise of the USSR, more recently by the Pure Capitalist Imperialism of the USA, which has become too disgusting to ignore. Zapatista-style armed uprisings seem utterly futile in the face of US military and police power—but secession may offer a political and non-violent option: a kind of legal Escapism.

The internet is abuzz with these ideas and movements, including break-away proposals from Maine (the “Second Maine Militia” headed up by novelist Caroline Chute); New Hampshire (the “Project” launched by capital-L Libertarians to persuade twenty thousand freedom-lovers to migrate to that state); the Republic of Texas (a

politically-dubious but amusing group; I once met their “Ambassador to the Court of St. James” in Dublin, after he’d been thrown out of his London “Embassy” for non-payment of rent); Alaska; North Carolina; etc. etc.

Kirkpatrick invited me to a conference on secession in Middlebury, Vermont, co-sponsored by Fourth World and Second Vermont Republic (SVR), a secession movement pushing for Vermont independence. Rad.Con 2 (“second radical consultation”; the first was held in England in 2001) asked its delegates, “After the Fall of the US Empire, Then What?”) The event was scheduled for the weekend after the national election in November, on the premise that Bush would “win.” Delegates expressed the belief that four more years (minimum) of imperial war, insane deficit spending, predatory capitalism, and general immiseration will result in conditions propitious for secession. They intend to get ready by organizing now.

The mood of Rad.Con 2 was upbeat and hopeful. A good deal of discussion was devoted to the question of the constitutionality of secession. SVR founders Thomas Naylor and Don Livingston argue for its legality; their reasons are fascinating but naturally of little interest to anarchists. I presented the old Lysander Spooner argument that the Constitution itself should be considered illegal,

based as it is on a false definition of the social contract. The Constitution represents a counter-revolutionary coup d'état by plutocratic anti-democratic forces. Our last "legitimate" governing document was the Articles of Confederation (based in part on the Iroquois Confederation), which made a serious attempt to organize for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Agrarian and democratic forces in the American Revolution detested the Constitution and correctly identified it as a conspiracy of wealth and power. The so-called "Anti-Federalists" (who were actually the true federalists, not Alex Hamilton and his gang of bankers and landlords) resisted to the point of violence. New York, Virginia, and Rhode Island actually reserved the right to secede when they finally joined the "union." Vermont, which had seceded not only from the British Empire but also from New York, retained its independence from 1777 to 1791. Ethan Allen (like Sam Adams, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Gov. George Clinton of New York, Tom Paine) was one of the original "unterrified Jeffersonians" (unlike Jefferson himself!), but unfortunately Allen died before he could lead the Anti-Federalist resistance. It's nice to imagine a rebirth of his Green Mountain Rangers (the true non-sexist name of the so-called "GM Boys") in the maquis of modern Vermont...

Anarchism in North America has never developed sustainable success despite significant rhetoric and periodic moments of tactical promise. Beyond small and scattered anarchist liberated zones, isolated actions in radical labor unions, a waning co-op movement, a youth movement with multiple styles but limited substance, and no effective anti-global movement or even anti-war movement... nothing's really moving. Thousands of websites pass as "organization" and big protest marches are now considered ends in themselves. "Symbolic discourse" is confused with "praxis." Some anarchists have embraced "nihilism," the belief that nothing can be done except hope for the end of Civilization. No strategic alliances are allowed to sully the purity of our intransigent positions; in fact, most of us spend most of our time denouncing each other.

Anarchists often complain about the lack of "non-whites" at various of our events, etc. Purist anarchism seems to offer little to people facing immediate oppressions of poverty and racism. Why should anarchists who claim to be "post-ideological" find it so difficult to cut slack for other people's definitions of freedom?

In fact many radical Blacks, Chicanos, and Native Americans are intensely interested in separatism—which

need not imply racism. We should remember that it's the US government that defines "race" according to genetic heritage, whereas Native Americans, for example, formerly defined themselves by way of life not blood. The Iroquois Constitution has a whole section devoted to adoption, both of tribes and individuals. This wide-spread practice resulted in "Black Indians" and "White Indians" (including at least one Iranian friend of mine, adopted into the Native American Church).

Can anarchism re-invigorate itself by making strategic alliances with separatist and secessionist movements? Or—if this question seems too parochial—does secessionism stand any chance of success?—or victory?

Well, how about anarchist revolution? How're its chances of success these days?—Or how about the downfall of Civilization?

Secessionism of the Second-Vermont-Republic variety is based on Kohr-type thinking, basically decentralist, non-authoritarian, roughly "socialist" (although they prefer the term "commons"), green and sustainable, not to mention anti-imperialist and anti-war. If anarchists in the Northeast bioregion were considering strategic alliances, the SVR might seem a good choice. Just now they're on a roll—maybe.

Certainly, anti-statists can make valid critiques of varying aspects of the currently configured secessionist project. Like any radical endeavor, we should only participate with our eyes open and intellects engaged, hoping to enhance the revolutionary tenor of groups grappling with intentionally unraveling mass culture. If nothing has happened in four years to further the cause, then obviously I'll have to reconsider. Meanwhile, however, I hope at least for a virtuous form of Escapism, a spark for the imagination, maybe even...a cause.

—December 2004

Note:

Ten years later. The SVR still persists, but I've given up hope in secession as a possible "escape". The Fourth World is defunct, and Thomas Naylor, founder of SVR, is dead. My own position is much closer to that of the "nihilists" I criticized in this article. So it goes.

—PLW, Apr. '14

Somali Pirates

The past is not only not dead, it's not even past.

—W. Faulkner

The second ship ever built was probably a pirate ship. When Sumerians and Harappans and Egyptians sailed to “the Land of Punt” 5,000 years ago seeking apes and ivory, gold and copper, no doubt some proto-Blackbeard on a reed raft was already dogging their wake.

In the 17th century, piracy in the Indian Ocean enjoyed a brief golden era of pre-capitalist globalist excess when freebooters such as Capt. Mission and Capt. Tew established their pirate utopias in Madagascar and preyed on Mogul as well as European shipping. Colonial New York City absorbed much of the loot, as did my rascally ancestor, Gov. Cranston of Rhode Island, who hanged a few pirates and did good business with others (including Capt. Tew), depending on what he could get away with.

When I was a 10-year-old pirate fan digging the Jersey Shore for Capt. Kidd’s treasure (another new York/Madagascar connection), I thought piracy was dead finished, a romance of the distant past. But piracy never

dies. It has its classical periods, its romantic eras, and its vulgar doldrums, but it never dies.

In 1980, when I was combing the beach on Koh Samui Island (off Siam in the South China Sea), seven corpses washed up on the shore, victims of certain rotten pirates who were then preying on the Vietnamese boat people, poor refugees on leaking fishing boats and even bathtubs. These sea-going scum habitually murdered all their victims to eliminate possible witnesses. The Thai fishermen on K. Samui buried the bodies secretly, unwilling to get embroiled with “the authorities” in a hopeless case.

Thus, I learned that some pirates are merely floating muggers while others could be said to have a “social” aspect, as with Cap. Mission’s ranting and motley crew, or the virtually-anarchist buccaneers of Hispaniola.

The idea of the “radical pirate” as rebel against nascent capitalism was perhaps first mooted by British historian Christopher Hill, and then taken up by a small crew of anti-authoritarian piratologists such as Larry Law, William S. Burroughs, Marcus Rediker, Peter Linebaugh and Stephen Snelderes. I also added a volume to the “social” history of piracy with my *Pirate Utopias; Moorish Corsairs & European Renegades* (Autonomedia, 1995).

Our “school” proposed that although piracy can be

seen simply as primitive predatory accumulation, some pirates were nevertheless engaged in forms of resistance against the State and in the construction of egalitarian utopias on their desert islands and “floating republics.” This is certainly a possible reading of the ur-texts of pirate history such as those of novelist Daniel Defoe (who wrote as “Capt. Johnson” in the early 18th century) and the Frenchman, Alexandre Olive Exquemellin.

In the 21st century new world maritime order, 80 percent of the world’s goods are now shipped in huge container vessels or tankers, driven by computers and manned by tiny skeleton crews. Under such conditions, some genius was bound to realize that a new golden age of piracy is now possible, that a few determined desperadoes in a rubber raft can capture and hold for ransom a ship worth millions. And, in fact, such tactics are being used even now in such dangerous waters as the Straits of Malacca or off the coast of Nigeria.

The ancient Land of Punt is now part of Somalia, a “failed State” that has not had a functioning central government since 1991. According to the mass media, Somalia is a violent chaos of contending warlords, tribal coalitions, Islamist terrorists and corrupt legal regimes.

Curiously enough however, not all Somalis seem to be pining away for the lost days of central authority. One Somali visitor to New York City told a friend of mine, “We don’t like governments and we just don’t want one.”

Among the armed groups roaming around Somalia, no doubt the strangest are five or six companies of good old-fashioned pirates who have discovered just how easily a leaky dhow or motorboat-full of AK-47 toting ex-fishermen can hijack a huge container ship. These crews go by such names as “The National Volunteer Coast Guard,” and “The Somali Mariners.” The implications of patriotism and self-defense are not meant as irony. The pirates believe they have a social role to perform, and they have good reasons.

With the collapse of government in 1991, the unprotected Somali coast began to attract two kinds of international criminals: illegal fishing expeditions and illegal toxic waste dumping operations. Local fishermen were violently shoved aside by high-tech armed vessels from many countries; even the Italian Mafia got involved. Facing starvation from highly depleted and poisoned fisheries, the Somalis felt forced to take “law” into their own hands and resist the invaders. Then, once they discovered how easy it was, they got ambitious.

A well-informed Kenyan journalist, Mohammad Abshir Waldo, maintains that “Somali piracy” is simply a response to the international capitalist piracy of illegal fishing and dumping¹. But while the pirates are condemned as monsters, nothing is done to protect the Somalian people from wholesale depletion of fisheries or the pollution from toxic nuclear and medical waste.

As one socialist in the European Union Parliament noted, the moral outrage is all about “protecting oil tankers. Nobody gives a damn about the people in Somalia who die like flies.” The Western media have mocked this suffering with headlines like, “They Stole Our Lobsters,” say Pirates,” or simply ignore it.

According to the “pirate spokesperson” Suguli Ali, who enjoyed his fifteen seconds of fame when his crew took a container ship full of tanks and other military goods last year, “We don’t consider ourselves sea bandits. We consider the bandits to be those who illegally fish and dump in our seas.” While the pirates earn about \$100 million a year in ransoms for Somalia, the poachers and dumpers make about \$300 million a year, so the battle remains uneven.

1 “The Two Piracies in Somali: Why the World Ignores the Other?” 1/8/09.
wardheernews.com

For this reason I would argue that the Somali pirates have a distinct “social” aspect to their struggle. Unlike the murderous S. China Sea pirates, they rarely kill anyone (it’s so bad for business) and generally treat their hostages well. “We eat spaghetti with them,” said Suguli Ali. “You know, human type food!”

Although not all Somalis approve of the pirates, many do. “K’Naan,” a Somali poet and rapper, said: “Can anyone ever really be for piracy? Well, in Somalia, the answer is: it’s complicated...the truth is, if you ask any Somali if they think getting rid of the pirates only means the continued rape of our coast by unmonitored Western vessels, and the production of a new cancerous generation, we would all fly our pirate flags high.”²

Several sources mention that many of the most beautiful young women in the country are flocking to pirate ports such as Eyl (in Puntland) hoping to marry pirates. Not only are they rich, they’re also romantic. Eyl, which was a forgotten fishing village till the 1990s, now throbs with Land Cruisers and big cars, fancy new houses, and even special restaurants for the hostages serving “foreign food.” Most pirates may be sincere about their protective role, but clearly they have no objections to

enjoying their fame and booty.

Naturally, the Western press has tried to link the pirates to “Islamist terrorism” and Al-Qaeda, but this ploy backfired when Somali’s actual Islamist militia declared war on the pirates after a Saudi oil tanker was taken last year.

The Islamists are called al-Shabab, literally “the Youth,” meaning chivalrous youth. A pirate spokesperson quipped, “We are the Shebab of the sea and can’t be scared by Shebab of the land. If anybody tries to attack us, that would be suicide.” And, so far the Islamists have not dared to attack.

After an American vessel, the Maersk Alabama, was captured this April and its captain rescued following the killing of three pirates by US Navy SEAL snipers, and one wounded teenager, Abshir Boyah, “rendered” to NYC for trial, with Hillary Clinton making war-like noises offstage, it may be that the golden age of Somali piracy is about to pass into history and/or legend. But then again, maybe not.

The basic trouble remains: it’s just so darned easy to capture a modern cargo ship, so very difficult to escort and protect all the shipping that passes within 500 miles of the coast, and so impossible to “invade” the pirates’ enclaves. Moreover, so long as nothing is done to protect the sea

itself and its fish wealth, the basic social problem just isn't going to go away.

As I researched this article I was struck by the fact that no journalists seem to have succeeded in making real contact with the pirates in order to present the story from an insider's point of view (what a great book it would make!); with one notable exception. The good old pinko *London Guardian* ran an interview with a real pirate, and I consider it such a rare and important document that it deserves to be quoted (or pirated), in lieu of any lame conclusion of my own.

At sea, foreign fishing vessels often confronted us. Some had no license; others had permission from the Puntland authorities, but did not want us there to compete. They would destroy our boats and force us to flee for our lives.

I started to hijack these fishing boats in 1998. I did not have any special training but was not afraid. For our first captured ship we got \$300,000. With the money we bought AK-47s and small speedboats. I don't know exactly how many ships I have captured since then but I think it is about 60.

We give priority to ships from Europe

because we get bigger ransoms. We make friends with the hostages, telling them that we only want money, not to kill them. Sometimes we even eat rice, fish, pasta with them. When the money is delivered to our ship we count the dollars and let the hostages go.

Then, our friends come to welcome us back in Eyl and we go to Garowe in Land Cruisers. We split the money.

Our community thinks we are pirates getting illegal money. But we consider ourselves heroes running away from poverty. We don't see hijacking as a criminal act but as a road tax because we have no central government to control our sea. With foreign warships now on patrol we have difficulties.

But we are getting new boats and weapons. We will not stop until we have a central government that can control our sea.³

Back to 1911: Temporal Autonomous Zones

Reversion to 1911 would constitute a perfect first step for a 21st century neo-Luddite movement. Living in 1911 means using technology and culture only to that point and no further, or as little as possible.

For example, you can have a player-piano and phonograph, but no radio or TV; an ice-box, but not a refrigerator; an ocean liner, but not an aeroplane, electric fans, but no air conditioner.

You dress 1911. You can have a telephone. You can even have a car, ideally an electric. Someday, someone will make replicas of the 1911 “Grandma Duck” Detroit Electric, one of the most beautiful cars ever designed.

1911 was a great year for Modernism, Expressionism, Symbolism, Rosicrucianism, anarcho-syndicalism and Individualism, vegetarian lebensreform, and Nietzschean cosmic consciousness, but it was also the last great Edwardian year, the twilight of British Empire and last decadent gilded moments of Manchu, Austro-Hungarian, German, Russian, French and Ottoman monarchy; last “old days” before the hideous 20th century really got going.

The next step backward would be to join the Amish and other Old Order Anabaptists in 1907—no telephones, no electricity at all, and no internal combustion. With this move, the battle would virtually be won. The next generation would be able to make the transition to no metal—the neo-neolithic. Arcadian pastoralism.

After that a dizzying sliding spiral back into—illiteracy. Oral/aural culture. Classless tribal anarchy. Democratic shamanism. The Gift. This would be the ultimate Luddite goal. But the first step will be back to 1911.

Those who long to live in 1911 choose that year—really any year from 1890 to 1914 would be equally OK—just because it's safely in the middle of that long lingering last decade of the long 19th century, which was also the first heroic decade of true modern radicalism, e.g., the Wandervogel, Stirnerite anarchism, the IWW and Jim Larkin, Ascona, Sex Radicals, and Nudism, etc. And, still far removed from the future of total war and totalitarianism to come—a time of utopian revolutionary hope.

Also, it's the Age of Decadence; the final year of the Manchu dynasty; opium ten cents a bottle at any country store; the Paris of J.K. Huysmans. Gaslight. The last gasp of true

agrarianism in the USA; the age of Populism, the Grange, Farmers Alliance—the last rural decade.

But there's another reason we choose 1911 (or thereabouts) for our little Golden Age. It has to do with technology. In 1911, almost all the actual conveniences of modern technology already existed: the car, the electric bulb, the phonograph.

Now, we Luddites do not approve of cars or any of these inventions, which all subtract from the quanta of Imagination available to individuals and to the Social. But, we have to admit—they're convenient.

In their primitive forms they're almost likeable. The only real convenience invented since then—the electric refrigerator—can be replaced by an Amish-built propane refrigerator, or, we could re-invent the ice-box. We hope some day to learn to sing again, but till then, we can accept a few hand-cranked shellac records (but no radio or TV). Computers are not in any way a part of a revived 1911, however. It's time to wake up and smell the rot of technopathology.

The telephone easily corrodes social presence and reduces selves to disembodied “voices of the Unseen,” as the Arabs called this invention. But again the primitive version, with its party lines and snoopy local operators, had

a social aspect now completely leached out of the medium. If we must be thus haunted let it be via one of these elegant sinister objects—large enough to be a real murder weapon.

Recorded music realizes a dream of pure magic, but at the same time the end and even the death of music itself. As the Muzak company understood, recorded music eventually loses its presence—and in its state of absence or deprivation it becomes a potent subliminal form of anxiety, often alleviated by a shopping spree or food binge—perfect Capitalist behavior.

Thus music becomes background; in expensive restaurants one is expected to listen (but not pay attention) to music appropriate to a honkytonk whorehouse: rock'n'roll, which should be a highly presential dionysiac experience becomes aural vanilla for jaded yuppies. Youth buys its latent rebellion from the world of commercial greed and adult condescension called the Music Industry.

With headphones and computers, everyone composes a soundtrack for their own stupid boring movie, their life as student or wage slave and consumer—music as anodyne for the constant immiseration (as the Situationists used to say) of Too-Late Kapitalismo.

Finally, recording replaces our own voices with

dumbness. We let stars sing for us. We let machines come between us and the divine musician within us. Music attains Spectral status. It haunts us with its own non-presence reduced to residual noise pollution.

There is next to no amateur communal music anymore (recording killed it), no “music bees,” so to speak. Music now lacks all sociality except the ersatz of mass consumption at a concert or music festival, but at least it remains possible to hear live music sometimes. Usually, now, when I hear any decent live music, I burst into tears. I give it my attention—a process that produces a kind of high or rush.

If we have to hear a recording, let it be a 1911-style shellac disc or even wax cylinder, cranked up by hand, not electricity; a magic music box to baffle the dog with its master’s voice; a cabinet of aural marvels. If we have to be haunted by music’s non-presence (every recording is the tombstone of a live performance) let it be by one of those graceful ear-shaped or seashell-shaped machines, a Surrealist’s delight or Spirit Trumpet for a charlatanesque medium.

The years between the death of Nietzsche and Queen Victoria in 1900 and 1914, constitute a dawn of Modernism that never happened into day. Instead it was smashed to nihil by the one long war (1914–1989) of the

ghastly 20th century. The *liberté libre* of trends like Symbolism, Expressionism, anarchism/socialism, lebensreform, Cosmicism, etc., turned into the cynicism of Dada, the fascism of Futurism, and so on. Hope seemed dead.

Even reading and writing is contaminated with Civilization's technopathologies. Oral/aural culture would constitute the Luddite ideal. But as an isolated individual and lifelong print addict, I can't give up books, that necessary poison, like certain drugs. Life in 1911 requires books just as it might ideally include cheap and legal laudanum or tincture of Indian hemp.

Charles Fourier praised the Pigeon Post. It seemed quite modern in 1830, "utterly modern," as Rimbaud would say. In 1911, we're allowed telegraph and even telephone, but our hearts still go into writing and receiving letters—handwritten, private, mysteriously brought to your very door by an unseen hand for only pennies per message, the money having been transformed into beautiful stamps.

None of these pleasures are afforded by electromagnetic CommTech, which eliminates everything (including privacy) except text and image.

Imagine perfumed letters sealed with red wax and heraldic imagery; letters like Prince Genji used to write, or Proust, who could send little blue notes by pneumatic post anywhere in Paris. Think of mail-order degrees in Rosicrucianism. Yes, the post—under the sign of Hermes—is sheer magic.

Full play of Imagination becomes possible only without modern technology, because it has become the heartless operation of Capital, which hates all forms of sharing. Let's work for a secular Anabaptism, bold enough finally to refuse everything back to the steam engine—at least.

Whereupon we may resume life.

History

An Esoteric Interpretation of the I.W.W. Preamble

People who think that they know our politics, who know that we are individualists (or even worse, “neo-individualists”), will no doubt be shocked to discover us taking an interest in the IWW. They’ll be even more flabbergasted to hear that Mark Sullivan & I joined the NY Artists & Writers Job Branch of the IWW this January at the urging of Mel Most (who subsequently went & died on us!). Actually, we’re a bit shocked ourselves. “Never complain, never explain”...; but perhaps this time we’ll relax the rule a bit—hence this apologia.

The Mackay Society, of which Mark & I are active members, is devoted to the anarchism of Max Stirner, Benj. Tucker, & John Henry Mackay. Moreover, I’ve associated myself with various currents of post-situationism, “zero-work,” neo-dada, autonomedia & “type 3” anarchy, all of which are supposed to be anathema to the IWW & syndicalism in general. Other members of the NY Artists Branch are also individualists or pacifist anarchists (in the Julian Beck line of transmission); some unease has already been expressed during meetings about the Preamble &

other IWW texts...; so, aside from making a sentimental gesture in honor of Mel's memory... why are we collaborating with IWW?

First: what's wrong with a little sentiment? When I first discovered anarchism at about 12 or 13 I wanted to be a hobo (more practical ambition than piracy, I figured), & the Wobbly organizers appeared to me as authentic american heroes. I still think so.

Second: we type-3's like to show our contempt for ideology—even our own brand of anti-ideology. Class-warfare may not suffice for us as an explanation of all reality, but obviously it is real—& we know where our sympathies lie. We oppose the idea of the social construct “Work”—but we are far from opposing “the workers.” The alienation of labor, we feel, cannot be explained entirely by wage-system economics; it also has a psychological origin. This double critique throws the very concept & deep structure of “industrial work” into the crucible of radical deconstruction. Meanwhile however industrial work is real, & workers' control must be considered a fully valid tactic toward realizing both the economic & psychological aspects of any hypothetical “new society within the shell of the old.”

As “individualists” moreover we have good reason

to appreciate the IWW concept of the union. Stirner—contrary to the belief of those who have not actually read his book—spoke approvingly of a “Union of Unique-Ones” (we prefer this translation to “Union of Egoists”), in which all members would reach for individual goals through common interests. He suggested that the workers had the most to gain by embracing this notion, & that if the productive class were to organize on such a basis it would prove irresistible. (The prejudice against Stirner, by the way, can be traced to Marx & Engels, who considered him potentially even more dangerous than Bakunin, & wrote their biggest book to destroy his influence.)

The Mackay Society, incidentally, represents a little-known current of individualist thought which never cut its ties with revolutionary labor. Dyer Lum, Ezra & Angela Heywood represent this school of thought; Jo Labadie, who wrote for Tucker’s Liberty, made himself a link between the american “plumb-line” anarchists, the “philosophical” individualists, & the syndicalist or communist branch of the movement; his influence reached the Mackay Society through his son, Laurance. Like the Italian Stirnerites (who influenced us through our late friend E. Arrigoni) we support all anti-authoritarian currents, despite their apparent contradictions. Why? Because we feel that some realization

of personal liberty is possible even in the very act of struggling for it. From our point of view, radical organizing (up to the point of insurrection) is not a sacrifice one makes to the future; it is rather a mode of self-liberation with its own immediate reward—even if that reward consists only of fragments & moments of realization. Wobblies, with their contempt for “pie in the sky someday” (or as Lewis Carroll put it, “Jam tomorrow or jam yesterday, but never jam today”), must feel the same distrust of any leftist utopianism which demands our martyrdom on behalf of a materialist “someday” which we ourselves will not live to see.

In a recent issue of Factsheet Five, M. Gunderloy (another notorious neo-individualist) salutes the “winds of change...blowing thru the One Big Union” as exemplified by an “intriguing article on ‘The Greening of the IWW’” in *The Industrial Worker*. If the IWW is compatible with Earth First!, it must surely be able to accept pacifists & individualists. In the Jan. issue of the *IW* a San Francisco delegate describes in the 1989 Without Borders Conference as a “festival of anti-work counterculturalism”—but admits that the local Branch benefitted greatly from the gathering. The SF delegate would perhaps be surprised to hear that we “neo-individualists” also felt underrepresented at the conference. The point is that the anarchist movement is

growing & that all varieties & currents of anarchism will thrive, cross-pollinate, & bloom. No anti-authoritarian tendency should be excluded—or exclude itself—from this ferment. Ideology is dying—Communism today, maybe Capitalism tomorrow—and anarchism is the only modern political movement left with any chance of being taken seriously. We challenge the IWW to broaden its horizons beyond class consciousness, just as we challenge the punks (or the environmentalists) to become more aware of class, of labor, & of anarchist history. We're all in this together, & it's time to start treating one another in a comradely fashion.

The IWW Preamble is almost a sort of “sacred” text—a Scripture. No believer likes to meddle with Scripture—and we're just superstitious enough not to want to disturb the ghosts of those old hobos we venerate. But times change, & Scriptures need to be re-interpreted. Thus, with a smile, this suggestion for an “esoteric” reading of the text.

From the viewpoint of the alert exegetist, there are some wonderfully vague & elastic key-terms to be found in the Preamble. The definition of “working class” could be extended to include all those who suffer the alienation of labor, both economic & psychological. “The employing class” would then consist of all forces opposing both

economic & psychological freedom. “The good things of life” are clearly not to be understood only as material goods, but also as the arts of life, actions, creations, inspirations, modes of freedom, ways of living.

“An injury to one is an injury to all” not because “we” are parts of some mystical body or church under some categorical imperative or moral code or Holy Spook, but because each of us aspires to “good things” which circulate freely only among free spirits, individuals acting in “union” for certain values—values which begin to emerge in the very act of declaring them, & declaring one’s willingness to struggle for them.

But after all why are we against “hunger & want”? Because we’re bleeding-heart pious do-gooders? Or because hunger & want (both economic & psychological) prevent the full realization of a society in which good things circulate freely, & therefore diminish the power of each individual to obtain those things?

As artists & writers we appreciate the image of the banner inscribed with the revolutionary watchword—our own “work” is precisely the creation of such banners, such symbols. We do not create icons to be worshipped or slogans to be carved in eternal stone—no, we make tools for realization. Our Job Branch “produces” the potential

for free consciousness by working toward the abolition of consensus perception, both self-repression & the oppression of authority. The wages of alienation is the death of the human spirit; the revolutionary watchword is “possession of the earth”—which includes possession of self, of the imagination, the body, the creative power—all these, too, are “the machinery of production.”

Notes:

Mel Most was an IWW organizer who died last year.[1990]

Mark Sullivan is the founder of a branch of the John Mackay Society.

“Type 3” anarchy is a term coined by Bob Black to mean an amalgamation of individualist and communist anarchy.

“Autonomia” is an anti-authoritarian movement which began in Italy and Germany in the 1970s.

Julian Beck founded, with Judith Malina, the Living Theatre.

(—Eds.)

Cross-Dressing in the Anti-Rent War

Shiv Kumar...has eluded police for decades in the northern forests of Uttar Pradesh, taking on illegal tree-fellers and even gunning down a poacher. He has 'created so much terror both among the forest mafia (including transnational corporations) and conniving forest officials that illicit felling and poaching have virtually come to a halt in this region,' a forest official said. Known as Dadua (elder brother), Kumar once beat up two forest guards he caught poaching and then wrote to officials to complain about them. Police said the lower-caste outlaw had eluded them because of a thick forest cover and strong local support.

—(wire services)

Nightriders horsemen dressed in outlandish garb
brandishing pikes scythes hunting muskets
blaring on tin horns shouting slogans
Down with the Rent—tar & feather the Sheriff

Each of these nightmares rigged out like a woman
calico gown with leather animal mask

horn'd or feather'd devil in a dress
singing rebel songs in Upstate moonlight

Calico Indians the farmers call themselves
Black Hawk, Thunder Cloud, these are their chiefs
but no real Indians ever dressed like these
Circean metamorphic antler'd & furred

They have a ritual they call the Snake Dance
hundreds of hillbillies in a conga line
afterwards a picnic & fiery speeches
in a forest glade painted by Thomas Cole

The squadron leaders duck into the bushes
dressed as squaws pretending labor pains
each one emerges with ten Calico Indians
claiming to be the mother of the brood

Somebody shot Under-Sheriff Osman Steele
when he went to seize the cattle of Moses Earle
for arrears of rent on his farm just outside Andes
owned by the landlords of the Hardenbergh Tract

Down at Hunter's Tavern they warned him the Indians

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were on the move but he laughed & drank & boasted
“lead can’t penetrate Steele!” got on his horse
rode out past the graveyard to Earle’s place

Moses was scared & ready to pay the rent
but his housekeeper young Parthenia Davis
Staunch & angry Down-Rent partisans
sounded the horn & raised the Calico Indians

In Delhi the bourgeoisie were terrified
in Albany the patrols called out the militia
laws were passed forbidding the wearing of masks
the Indians went underground, the killer escaped

(Recently in New York City the mayor
evoked the 1845 law against disguise
& insurrectionary masking to prevent
a demo at City Hall by the Ku Klux Klan)

Radicals rallied in support of the Anti-Renters
including Thomas Devyr the Irish Chartist
on the lam from England, based in Brooklyn
started a newspaper in the agrarian cause

The farmers were even noticed by Marx & Engels
& mentioned in The Communist Manifesto
(see Part IV Engels footnote 29)
their cause betrayed by mere insipid reform

Radical Indians demanded abolition of rent
not petty reform: Universal Rent Strike
(as the late anarcho-taoist Kerry Thornley
put it so succinctly): land in common

Ownership based on usage not property
an idea worthy of the Iroquois or Proudhon
down with enclosure—ancient rights & customs
New York's only armed resistance to Capital

A few years later the panic finally died down
the randomly-arrested Indians released
politicians scented a powerful “issue”
rents were replaced—by private property

(Now the Dutch work the same trick on the squatters
the government gives them the houses they occupy
abracadabra the squatters are now landlords
soft oppression the neo-liberal triumph)

Whose idea was it to dress as “Indians”?
nobody knows or bothered to write it down
the only reason given at the time
was a passing refence to the Boston Tea Party

Another theory: during the Revolution
the backwoods farmers were Tories to a man
Why? they saw the so-called Patriots
as land speculators & damn'd patroons

They sided with the “British Indians”
like Joseph Brand the Freemasonic Mohawk
they raided burned & kidnapped along the frontier
often disguised themselves as Iroquois

Later perhaps there were family traditions
fragments of old costumes in the attic
folk memories of riding against the landlords
whooping scalping looting—a fabulous game

But Calico Indians looked nothing like Iroquois
the costumes resemble those of the Molly Maguires
of Ireland & the Pennsylvania mines

or another group in Wales called Rebekkahs

In the 18th century the French Jacquerie
in the royal forests sometimes dressed as women
it seems there exists an ancient inclination
or secret tradition of radical transvestism

Some nowadays would say the farmers felt
solidarity with oppressed natives & women
so adopted or appropriated signs
or masked themselves as the invisible

Fair enough but I think of Salvador Dali
in his paranoid-critical diving bathysphere
(Life Magazine in the 50s made a big impression)
the Mummers Parade the necessity of drag

The archetypes—not the pallid versions of Jung
protean shapeshifting werewolf ecstasies
paleolithic dionysian frenzies
restoration of the Golden Age through violence

Re-enchantment of the sacred landscape
Catskill warlock shrines to Manitou

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mythopoeic mimic männerbunden
rural alchemists of consciousness

The holy sites of Ulster & Delaware County
the pasture where Steele fell from his horse
the hole in the stone in the woods in Dry Brook Hollow
where the Down-Rent banner was raised by night

In a museum I handled a Calico Indian dress
& counted the stitches. Behind a glass the mask
horn'd & beak'd—a False Face—haunted
as an owl passing silently overhead

Burnt Over

(for Th. Metzger)

1.

The Utopian Zone in 19th century America coincided with a certain frontier complex from the Berkshires (where soil was giving out & Calvinism with it) across the Finger Lakes along the Erie Canal and western NY

to Ohio, Illinois, & finally Wisconsin a matter of Yorkers & New Englanders moving West & experiencing illumination anonymous Emersonian transcendentalist hobos disinherited younger sons & Universalist heretics

“Come-Outers” who came out & kept on going wave after wave like prairie fires of thoughts: Fox Sisters, table-turners, extruders of ectoplasm luminous trumpets of disembodied hands the first women to speak in public in America possessed by dead philosophers of Summerland

—Shakers in trances, sexless American Zen

Joseph Smith’s Golden Angelic Tablets

(& angelic spectacles to read them with)

the Universal Friend, the Perfectionists of Oneida

Spiritualist camps, mushroom Phalansteries, ecstatic Revivals

Unitarianism, Abolitionism, the Millerite Apocalypse

vegetarianism, Free Love, hydropathy, phrenology

Mesmerism, Hegelianism, Nitrous Oxide & Tincture of Indian Hemp.

After utopia came fraternal organizations
Masons & Anti-Masons, Oddfellows, Elks
Woodsmen, Theosophists, Knights of Labor
Daughters of Isis, Black Shriners, Indian Scouts, Boy Scouts
& one of my favorites the Patrons of Husbandry
a.k.a. The Grange, a Masonic offshoot for farmers
based on the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter
passed on in Naples by a Duke to an Upstate farmer
with mystic orders for men & women—unlike
the chauvinist Masons (Fourier approved
of mixed or “Androgynous” Masonry of this sort)
they opposed the railroads & the money interests
agrarian radicals, 4th of July picnics
with fried chicken lemonade & fireworks
the old original Grange Hall Number One
still stands & functions in Fredonia, NY
(the name ripped off in the marxist film “Duck Soup”)
not far from the very first Chautauqua
summer camp for the uplift of the masses
a tradition passed down to socialist bungalows
Kommie Kamps for Kids & yoga farms of the Katskills
not to mention hippie communes of the 1960s.

2.

New York once seethed with Fourierist tendencies due mostly to Albert Brisbane the only American to sit at the feet of the Demi-Messiah himself in Paris where Fourier received him in his rented room with potted ferns & housecats à la Douanier Rousseau and mirlitons those little cakes that Brillat-Savarin contributed to the science of Gastrosophy. Fourier predicted that the Era of Harmony would give us humans such joyous appetites we'd eat some 30 meals a day not the wormy bread & turnips of Civilization but gastrosophic fruit compotes cakes & champagne—oddly enough this was the only aspect of F's oeuvre that Brisbane censored in his American translation even the sex survived but New World Reformers tended to defend a dreary bread & water diet (& New England's still a culinary wasteland)—nevertheless Brisbane's propaganda sparked a bonfire hundreds of Phalansteries sprang up & vanished in a year or so—but some proved more enduring: the North American Phalanx in Red Bank, New Jersey (mostly settled

by New Yorkers) and Brook Farm, which converted from Transcendentalism to “Association” (Hawthorne & Emerson somewhat disapproved!) but none of them achieved the minimum size demanded by Fourier: 1,620 persons representing the 12 major Passions such that all Attractions could be satisfied, all “manias” foot fetishism pederasty tribadism b&d and every Harmonist find labor so attractive that even picking pears would give them boners & wet pants & just cause for happy picnics. A real Phalanstry’s a palace not a farmhouse fine sparkling wines are served not Graham crackers 12-tone operas are performed every morning gardeners march to meadows with trumpets & banners but no job lasts more than an hour or two leaving time for dozens of meals & snacks art projects, Butterfly Cabals, Museum Orgies great cooks musicians & sexual geniuses are given grand titles & worshipped as near-saints cults of chivalry & voluntary amorous servitude oceans turn to lemonade, humanity evolves in a few years everyone grows a tail (archibras) with a hand at the end & an eye in the palm

(as depicted by the proto-Surrealist Grandville)
—industrial armies converge on Constantinople
(Fourier was angry at Paris & decreed
that Istanbul would become the capital of Harmony)
the planet's Aromal Ray is re-harmonized
orgasmic perfumes pervade the solar system
occult correspondences are awakened in every Series
& the Sun is the visible god of the multiverse.
Fourier's system obviously resonated
with Swedenborg & other hermeticists
one New York offshoot of this strange symmetry
Jonathan Chapman known as Johnny Appleseed
missionary Swedenborgian tramp & pomologist
another was the greatly bearded Manhattan prophet
Stephen Pearl Andrews who combined Fourier
Swedenborg & Bakunin with Josiah Warren
(the anarcho-individualist) to produce his own
unique blend called Universology & Pantarchy
with himself as the Universal Pantarch & sage
he founded the anarchist commune Modern Times
in Brentwood, Long Island, & wrote campaign speeches
for "Mrs Satan" (Victoria Woodhull) first woman
to run (as Feminist & Spiritualist) for President
founder of NY's branch of the First International

(later kicked out by Marx for “Free Love & anarchism”)

Pearl Andrews also invented a universal language called Alwato, but no one else ever learned it.

I can trace my own anarchist affiliations

back to Pearl Andrews thru Benjamin R. Tucker

Jo Labadie (part-Indian labor poet of Detroit)

& other leftwing individualists & cranks

& come to think of it (since Andrews met Brisbane)

right back to Fourier himself in a golden

chain of initiation as the Sufis say

to the original revelation in 1799

(the revelation had to do with apples

apples and pears were Fourier’s favorite fruits

quite appropriate symbols for our Northeast biosphere).

3.

Each of these utopias by itself

amounts to very little but en masse

& in the long durée they seem to add up

to a genuine continuous tradition

with its own poets, Thoreau, Whitman, Ginsberg

an American panorama of rebellion

within rebellion, “Gone to Croatan”, Maroons

White Indians, mountain men, Merry Mount

Underground Railroaders, Jack Tars, Wobblies
 the old freethinking Druids of Newburgh
 Andrew Jackson Davis the “Seer of Poughkeepsie”
 who taught a kind of tantrik union
 with spirits fairies ghosts & “spiritual brides”
 —the political wing of American Romanticism
 with its own Hudson River School of painting
 & a myth of original freedom now betrayed
 by oligarchic slave-owners & monopolies
 utopia deferred beyond the next horizon
 & the next—until the map was closed.

4.

Mood shifts with the dying of the wind
 & the mountain burial of the February sun
 I see how thoughts propelled me forward
 into what Ernst Bloch called revolutionary hope
 but now I remember standing on a corner
 in midtown Manhattan suddenly looking round
 with UFO eyes at ranks of advertisements
 blaring & flashing like P.K. Dick automata
 mirrors reflecting mirrors ogling themselves
 synthetic funhouse frenzy cybergreed
 babes & kidz & even Death commodified

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Citibank advises “money’s not everything!”
digital tyrannies of someone else’s music
reduced to grinding petty inauthenticity
at everyone else’s expense in social deafness
& addiction to permanent boogy images
of somewhere elseness, envy & spite
a whole society under the sign of mal’occhio
the Evil Eye the malignant digital gaze
of consumption angst & atomized consciousness
terminal state of screenal involution
dystopia devoid of all seduction
Gnostic Heaven of Glass, body’s hell
this is what Fourier predicted for us
unless we kicked the poison of Civilization
this is the inside of the mind of Global Capital
there’s no way out, not even Imagination.
This is the permanent daylite of the Mall
& night itself is swallowed by stagnation

5.

till suddenly one day someone in the suburbs
mowing the lawn like Saul on the Road to Damascus
shouts “Enough of this shit”—an epiphany
that spreads like wildfire from lawn to lawn

all the neighbors flow together in a mob
toward cellphone tower disguised as a giant tree
topples with a crash heard round the world
smashing TVs PCs VCRs DVDs & SUVs
rampaging spontaneous luddite secular Anabaptists
everyone an artist of creative destruction
always the dream of Golden Age Restored
our memories of Stone Age nonauthoritarianism
shamanic democracy of vision & Gift Economy
memories passed down in gesture, tone, hint
folktale, heresy, unwritten gospel
from child to child like jumprope rhymes
the old utopian milk & honey Cockaigne
the Rock Candy Mountain the seas of lemonade.

Caliban's Masque: Spiritual Anarchy and the Wild Man in Colonial America

If those that go thither propose to themselves an exemption from laws to live at their liberty, this is to...divest allegiance and be under no man.

—John Donne

“Sermon to the Virginia Company” 1622¹

For a hundred years after Columbus, England did nothing in the New World but watch enviously while Spain harvested all its gold. But Queen Elizabeth I had a court astrologer, the Welsh alchemist and magus John Dee, who out of love for the Virgin Queen dreamed of an occult British Empire in North America. He talked up his pet enthusiasm among his most powerful and intelligent friends—Sir Walter Raleigh, for example, and Hakluyt the mapmaker, and Will Shakespeare. In a crucial audience with the queen, the wizard convinced her to promulgate an official claim to America based on prior discovery—by King Arthur!

Raleigh raised money. Maps—which like magic

spells idealize the real world in order to control it—were supplied by Hakluyt; and Shakespeare later wrote a propaganda piece, *The Tempest*, to memorialize the scheme. Prospero was based on Dee, while the savage and unknown New World (which might have indeed been Mars or Venus for all anyone knew of it) was symbolized by the Wild Man, Caliban.

The Wild Man appears in countless Renaissance emblem books and alchemical tracts. Standing like a shaggy cave man at the antipodes of civilization, he also symbolizes hyle or materia prima, the inchoate primal matter of the alchemist, the pure chaos which he hopes to transmute into pure order, which in turn is represented on the material plane by the element gold. Caliban therefore stands for sheer potentia, potential power, wild and ungoverned but also untouched by the corruption of history.

Now the New World was already populated by Wild Men, and the intellectuals of the Old World argued about the dual Calibanish nature of these “Indians.” Were they subhuman cannibal monsters with faces on their breasts? Or were they “noble savages,” in many ways superior to the corrupt and tired races of Europe and needing only the light of Christ to obtain perfection in a single leap?

Of course Europe also had its Wild Men—gypsies, vagabonds, rogues, crazy sectarians, barbaric Celts, witches, sodomites. In fact the intelligentsia themselves sometimes seemed dangerously wild, all of them a bit mad and perhaps even daemonic. Raleigh and Dee and their circle (known as the “School of Night”) were vaguely suspected of paganism and freethinking. “Moses was a juggler,” said damnable Kit Marlowe, rowdy boy genius and Faustian pederast, slain in a tavern brawl.

The first experimental colonists in “Virgin-ia” (that land of pure potentia) seem to have been either marginalized intellectuals fascinated by occultism (which then included what we now call “science”) or marginalized adventurers from the fringes of the Elizabethan underworld. Neither class proved overly fond of work, and laziness soon emerged as the major social problem of the little Roanoke enclave. The bohemian gentlemen wanted to write poems and fill their sketchbooks, while the colonists seemed to expect Nature to relieve them of all labor and boredom, as if Roanoke were a Garden of Eden. The intellectuals bailed out at the first opportunity and went home to publish their diaries. Several years passed before anyone thought to send out an expedition to the abandoned colony—and when it arrived found the island deserted.

What happened to the colony of Roanoke? Pessimists jumped to the conclusion that hostile Indians had wiped it out, and this explanation later found its way into American history books. It suits the image of the Wild Man as racial enemy, treacherous and violent and deserving of genocide, on which our official U.S. mythos is founded. But it does not fit the facts.

The rescue mission found no evidence of a massacre—no bones, no burned houses. It found the colony's cannon carefully buried. And it found a note carved into a tree: "Gone to Croatan." The rescuers knew that the Croatans were a tribe of friendly Indians who lived on another island down the coast, but for various reasons they failed to follow up on this clue. Years went by again before a ship reached Croatan—and found it deserted. And so the mysterious legend of the lost Colony was launched.²

The "mystery," however, was an illusion. The fate of the colonists is easy to trace. Clearly fed up with slaving for a bunch of absentee London gentlemen, the lower classes of Roanoke had simply dropped out and gone native. They moved to Croatan and joined the tribe, then moved again to the mainland near the Great Dismal Swamp on the present Virginia-North Carolina border, where they avoided

discovery for a long time (despite elusive rumors of “grey-eyed Indians”); later they absorbed runaway slaves into their population and survived as a “triracial isolate community” for centuries.³ In fact the Croatans are still there, still have the family names of Roanoke colonists, and still know exactly who they are. The hideously embarrassing fact is that North America’s very first English colonists had decided to become Wild Men. European vagabonds transmuted themselves into noble savages, said goodbye to occult imperialism and the miseries of civilization, and took to the forest.

Nor were they they last to follow this path into the heart of darkness. For the next century or so, a hidden struggle was waged for the future of the New World: Cotton Mather called it “invisible warfare.” It was a many-sided affair: first the imperialists—Anglican aristocrats, protoscientists, Renaissance classicists; then the Puritans, who became the ruling elite in Massachusetts and who viewed Nature as a “howling wilderness” and the red man as a devil; then the Indians themselves; black slaves; and finally the dregs of European society, the outcast criminals, neo-pagans and witches, etc., who sometimes found a common cause with Indians and slaves, and always held a common hatred for the gentry and Puritans.

We could trace the submerged story of this struggle

by various sets of signs—social, economic, historical, even military. But a different approach may offer us a better chance to discern underlying ideologies in this warfare: the technique of the history of religions. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century thinkers thought in religious language, not modern political or cultural language—and if we wish to understand their politics and culture we must try to decode their language.

There existed what may be called a Church of the Wild Man in America, a religion of wildness or wilderness, opposed to both the High Church in Virginia and the Low Church of the Northeast—a dissidence within the Protestant dissidence, and one which has been almost ignored by history. After all, history is written by those who believe in history. But the Wild Men are attempting to escape from history, and so they do not write (of if they do, they write poetry or wild rants), and so “the pen is in the hand of the enemy.” We can recover only scattered shards, folklore and rumor, the hebephrenic tracts of crackpot heretics. But out of these broken pieces we can assemble a pattern.

The first canonization bestowed by our invisible antichurch belongs to Thomas Morton of Merry Mount. Morton came of minor West Country gentry, had a passable

education, and could boast of contacts in the School of Night (his patron Sir Ferdinando Gorges was a close associate of the Raleigh clique). He arrived in Massachusetts at Plymouth Bay Colony in 1624 and soon fell afoul of the dour and precise sectarians there. Morton was an Anglican and a Royalist, but in the New World these conservative instincts put him in a marginal position vis-à-vis the local elite, the Pilgrim Fathers under Governor William Bradford.

In truth Morton seems to have been something of a crypto-pagan. As a Renaissance gentleman he preferred Greco-Roman mythology to the Bible, a taste he shared with Sidney and Spenser and others of the School of Night, and which seemed to justify his value system of humane libertinism. In his writings he invariably refers to himself in the third person as “mine hoste of Merry Mount,” or, as he spells it, “Ma-re Mount,” with a cluster of puns around his chief obsession and key term, “merry.”

Near Mount Wollaston in the Massachusetts wilderness, Morton dropped out and built a small trading post and tavern, where he soon gathered around him a small Comus-crew of disaffected fur traders, antinomians, loose women, Indians, and bons vivants. Morton got on well with the Indians, whom he much preferred to the Puritans. In his mind the natives were like the pagan

Canaanites who had been slaughtered and oppressed by the Israelites of the Old Testament—and if the Pilgrims claimed to be the Israelites of this new Holy Land, Morton’s sympathies lay entirely with the redskinned Canaanites. In 1627 he erected a huge Maypole (an eighty-foot pine trunk topped with a set of deer antlers), proclaimed the “Revells of New Canaan” at Merry Mount, and invited his white and Indian friends to the first interracial neo-pagan gathering in North America. In his account of these events, Morton declares that “Cupid’s mother” inspired him

*With proclamation that the first of May
At Ma-re Mount shall be kept hollyday.*

But, he goes on, “the setting up of the Maypole was a lamentable spectacle to the precise separatists that lived at New Plymouth. They termed it an Idoll; yea they called it the Calfe of Horeb; and stood at defiance with the place, naming it Mount Dagon; threatening to make it a woefull mount and not a merry mount.”

Morton’s New World experiences had turned him from an old-fashioned rural squire into a raving radical—or rather, the New World had changed the meaning of his life for him and revealed to him his own inner connection with the wild(er)ness. No wonder the Pilgrims recoiled in horror to find Morton and his friends dancing hand in hand around

the Maypole “whiles one of the Company sung, and filled out the good liquor like gammedes and Jupiter” (i.e. Ganymede and Zeus).

In his song, Morton hinted of pederasty (alluding to Ganymede), boasted openly of drunkenness, praised pagan deities like Venus and Hymen, criticized the “melancholy” Pilgrims (whom he derided as “moles”), and advocated miscegenation with Indian “lasses in beaver coats”! Or, as he himself boasted, “Hee that played Proteus (with the help of Priapus) put their noses out of joynt”—in other words, Morton the shapeshifter, with the aid of his erect penis, cocked a snoot at all Protestant morality.

And Protestant morality, in the person of Governor Bradford, answered him by sending an ad hoc police force under the command of the famous Miles Standish (or “Captain Shrimp” as Morton called him) to arrest the merry-makers. Thus began Morton’s career of misery. Sentenced to jail, he escaped and was exiled to England. After publishing his book, *New Canaan*, in 1637, he returned to America, where he endured more trouble and strife until his death in 1647 in Maine, where Sir Ferdinando Gorges had established a small colony at Agamenticus. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his fictionalized version of the events at Merry Mount, claimed that “the future

complexion of New England was involved in this important quarrel. Should the grisly saints establish their jurisdiction over the gay sinners, then would their spirits darken all the clime, and make it a land of clouded visages, of hard toil, of sermon and psalm, forever. But should the banner-staff of Merry Mount be fortunate, sunshine would break upon the hills, and flowers would beautify the forest, and late posterity do homage to the May-pole!”⁴

If Morton had prevailed, we twentieth-century marginals might at least have a sort of North American Santeria tradition, a syncretistic religion based on antinomianism and Celtic, classical, and Algonquin paganism—a cult bearing the same relation to High Church Anglicanism as Voudon and Santeria bear to Catholicism. But as Hawthorne knew, Morton lost the battle, and the American future belonged to puritanism and the work ethic. And yet the revels of Merry Mount were not the last festal days of our invisible Church of Wildness, nor was Morton its only saint.⁵

Anne Hutchinson makes a brief appearance in official American history as the heroine (or villainess) of the “Antinomian Controversy” in Massachusetts. She’s remembered because she was a woman who defied the

Puritan patriarchy, and because she was married to one of the chief patriarchs and thus belonged to the “upper classes” (the classes who write themselves into history), and because for these reasons her fame has diverted historians’ attention from the general context of dissidence in early New England. It often seems as if she were the only antinomian, a lone mutant, a single fly in the ointment of Bostonian orthodoxy. At most it’s admitted that she had a few women disciples, some of whom (like Mary Dyer) were persecuted again twenty years after Hutchinson’s banishment in the Puritans’ anti-Quaker campaign.

Writers seeking an explanation of the Anne Hutchinson mystery tend to set her in a context of “social deviance,” or else treat her as a protofeminist.⁶ Valid as they may be, these approaches miss the context which would have seemed most important to Hutchinson herself: the antinomian movement.

Antinomianism (literally, being “against law”) is generally seen as a failed and forgotten offshoot of Protestantism, but it may be more accurate to think of it as being descended directly from certain medieval heretical sects such as the Adamites, the Beghards and Beguines, the Franciscan extremists, or certain followers of Meister Eckhart. The mainstreams of Protestantism (Lutheranism, Calvinism,

etc.) never really engulfed this movement. Though for a while they all ran parallel courses (in rebelling against Rome), they soon diverged again. The decisive moment came in 1525 when Luther himself directed the massacre of the antinomian Anabaptist insurgents of Munster. Thus we may think of antinomianism as a third way within Western Christianity, neither Catholic nor Protestant.

Antinomianism had no center and no dogma. It was made up of a congeries of sects—the Family of Love, My One Flesh, Ranters, Seekers, Levelers and Diggers, Libertines, Fifth Monarchy Men, Muggletonians, etc.—all of whom were more or less in agreement on the meaning of certain basic experiences. In fact the mystical experience itself meant more to them than any dry-bone doctrine (or even the Bible), and from this direct and subjective tasting of “grace” they derived the certainty of freedom from sin.

No mere moral code can impinge on a soul—or a body—in this state. No action, however paradoxical or seemingly amoral, can stain such a realized mind. The Adamites had symbolized this attainment by “going naked for a sign” of their Edenic reintegration, a practice revived by the Familists. The more extreme Ranters smoked, drank, preached, “blasphemed gloriously” in low taverns, and greeted one another with “Rejoice, fellow creature—all is

ours!” Angry Puritans charged them with orgiastic rites—and for once we may well believe them.

Antinomians also tended to agree on politics. Not only did the state have no right to control religion, but it had no right to legislate morality, or taxes, or military service, or indeed anything at all. Antinomianism can be clearly defined as spiritual anarchism, and most adherents considered themselves active revolutionaries. The rich would be overthrown, the poor exalted, “the world turned upside down.” The millennium, which had already arrived for the sectarians on the psychic level, would be realized through insurrections on the social level.

When Anne Hutchinson began to preach in her home to a group of enthusiastic ladies, she scarcely considered herself an antinomian in this sense. She simply believed that her own inner light outshone those of the Boston ministers, even that of the great John Cotton (once her spiritual teacher but now left behind by her new revelations). It was the Puritan “Fathers” who pinned the antinomian label on her and persecuted, tried, condemned, and banished her from their Holy Experiment forever.

By the time she’d passed through these fires, however, Anne Hutchinson knew the Fathers were right—she was

an antinomian—and she knew they were wrong as well, because they were cruel, woman-hating, dense, narrow bigots. Moreover, she knew her true allies: not the upper class of merchants and divines and pious men, but another class made up of the marginalized, the women, the poor, the outsiders. She was not broken. Like Roger Williams (who had also been condemned by the church), she went into exile as into triumph. In fact she followed him to Rhode Island and settled in Aquidneck with some of her associates. There she openly preached anarchy and “broached new heresies every year. Divers of them turned Anabaptists, and would not bear any arms, and denied all magistracy [i.e., government].”⁷⁷

After her husband died, Anne and her group moved to Pelham Bay on Long Island to escape “the abnormally long arm of Massachusetts persecution.” There, tragically, although she and her followers had always condemned violence against Indians, she was murdered in 1643 by tribesmen who mistook her for one of their Dutch enemies. The Puritans rejoiced at this deliverance from a “sore affliction,” and promptly published their own propagandistic version of her life, “A Short Story of the Rise, reign, & ruin of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines that inflicted the Churches of New England.” The “short story”

was not finished yet, however. In time it would lengthen into an epic.

Roger Williams was a sincere and moderate liberal—which by Massachusetts standards made him a raving radical. He belonged to a sect called the Seekers, who preached that one should wait and search for the inner light, but meanwhile remain tolerant of all creeds (even those of Jews and Turks!) since one never knows whence illumination may spring.

In the eyes of the Puritans such tolerance could only stand condemned as heresy, since they already possessed the one true light and all its doctrines. Williams never taught anarchy or rebellion and was certainly no antinomian. In fact he turned out to be a brilliant administrator and transformed his exile into the triumphant founding of Rhode Island, a haven of toleration which extended even to Indian paganism and antinomianism. Many Hutchinsonians fled to the new colony, where they would later involve themselves in Quaker and radical Baptist activity. The purest expression of radical Rhode Island thought, however, arose not from any of these groups but from the left wing of the Seekers themselves, and especially from one remarkable man, William Harris, who may well

deserve to be known as the first American individualist Anarchist.

Harris had accompanied Williams into exile and shared the hardships of the first few years. But once the colony reached an even keel, the two men discovered that their aims for it were diametrically opposed. Williams' radicalism ended with religious toleration, while Harris' only began there. Williams gradually took on the role of supreme leader, while Harris moved farther and farther from any form of authority.

Williams' drift to the right continued with the establishment of compulsory military service in 1655. The Hutchinsonian Baptists and Quakers protested and even attempted open rebellion. Williams reacted with new laws against "immorality" and "loose living," and with anti-Baptist persecutions. In 1656, Harris at last launched his revolt against these Cromwellian tactics by publishing a book (which has been lost), and Williams again responded with legal action.

Harris, said Williams, had lived "in the woods like Nebuchadnezzar not fit for the Society of men in town;" he was moreover "harsh and knotty in body, resentful in temper, pugnacious, keen in perception, and in voice rasping and acerbic." Since his book is lost, we cannot say

for sure that Harris called himself an anarchist, but that is what he was. His own term for his ideas was “Generalism.” According to Williams’ biographer James Ernst, in Harris’s book he upheld liberty with a vengeance. A transcendental anarchist, he expected liberty to descend somehow upon the individual who was to realize himself fully by the overthrow and destruction of all law and order in society. As a social being, the individual was to sail safely and unmolested over the uncertain lands, shoals, and rocks, unaided by civil chart or social compass.⁸

History has forgotten Harris, of course, because he lost; and Roger Williams is remembered because he won. Harris was plagued by bad luck all his life (once he was even captured by Algerian corsairs and sold as a slave), and in his latter days his lifelong quarrel with Williams degenerated into legal squabbles over land titles. Nevertheless this is no reason to impugn his sincerity or demote him to the rank of mere eccentric. Individualist anarchism is usually said to have appeared in America only in the mid-nineteenth century with Josiah Warren and Lysander Spooner, but Harris had expounded all the central ideas of “individual sovereignty” in the mid-seventeenth century on the basis of radical antinomian speculation. Hutchinson died before she could fully develop these ideas, so the title of the

first American anarchist seems to belong to Harris.

The big difference between Quakerism and other antinomian sects lay in the Quaker adoption of pacifism and nonresistance, as opposed to the open revolutionism of the Levelers or Ranters. But in most aspects the early Quakers were scarcely distinguishable from other extremists. When the Quaker prophet James Naylor rode into Bristol on an ass in 1655, Cromwell responded to this messianic display with violent persecution: Naylor's tongue was bored.

Cromwell, taking it all quite seriously, then launched into a general persecution of the mystical "left." The Quakers reacted by distancing themselves from politics and preaching against Ranterism, and this relatively conservative policy undoubtedly preserved Quakerism as an institution in the long run, and in fact made it respectable enough to be granted its own American utopia in Pennsylvania.

The Ranters also came to the New World, but as refugees or transported criminals rather than as colonists. A Quaker lady "found herself troubled by the Ranters at general meetings in Oysterbay and Rhode Island" as late as 1680.⁹ It seems logical to assume that when Boston Puritans accused people of being Ranters, Familists, Libertines, etc.,

they were not necessarily just mudslinging. Some of their victims really did belong to these sects and had doubtless ended up in Massachusetts as deported “rogues” (especially after the mid-1650s). Similar suppositions may be made about Rhode Island and Pennsylvania; even the Carolinas were called “the refuge of the sectaries” in 1683,¹⁰ and Georgia may also have served this function.

As for the Quakers of Pennsylvania, although they lacked some of the flair for self-martyrdom they had exhibited earlier in both old and New England, nevertheless they took the idea of the “Holy Experiment” quite seriously—in fact a good deal more seriously than William Penn himself. As a wealthy Protestant grandee, Penn envisioned Pennsylvania as his own fiefdom, complete with quitrents and monopolies. While he preached religious toleration and peace with the Indians, compared to Roger Williams he was a rightwing reactionary.

Luckily for the holy experimenters, however, Penn was an absentee landlord, and they simply decided to ignore him. Spurred on first by the Lloyd family (Thomas and David), and later by the offshoot “Keithean” radicals, the colonists ceased all governmental activity, refused to vote taxes, and ceded all real power to the consensus rule of the Friends’ Meeting. According to Murray Rothbard’s

analysis, Philadelphia enjoyed four years of total de facto anarchy from 1684 to 1688, and thereafter struggled to retain it till at least 1696.¹¹ At that point the first tax bill was finally passed—and was of course denounced by the radicals as an attack on “our ancient rights, liberties and freedom.” As one of Penn’s unsuccessful agents had complained in horror, these Quakers “have not the principles of government amongst them, nor will they be informed.” And when the conservatives condemned George Keith, who preached that Friends should not engage in government any more than in war, they quite properly pointed out that his pamphlets showed “a tendency to sedition, and disturbance of the peace, as also to the subversion of the present government.”¹² Keithian doctrines are said to have interested Ben Franklin and Thomas Paine.

Deism, which is usually depicted as a stage on the way to cool agnostic rationality, also had a hot and mystical side to it. After all, it was but a short step from the antinomian God of inner light to the Deist God of the inner light of “Reason” (a word which then meant something more like “mind” than mere “rationality”). The Ranters (who sometimes spoke of God as “Reason”) were accused of

“atheism,” which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries meant denial of religious authority rather than materialism. Deists were also “atheists” in this sense, and like the extremist sects they had their mystics and visionaries. Their mysticism, however, tended away from the pole of contemplation and toward that of action. As freethinkers and heirs to much libertarian Protestant thought, their imaginations worked in utopian and revolutionary ways.

One brand of mystical Deism crystallized as Freemasonry, an occult order with radical revolutionary aims. The first American Masons appeared a few years before the official establishment of the London Grand Lodge in 1715, and by 1730 Franklin provided the first reference to organized lodges in the New World. (The Masons claim that Raleigh and Dee were Masons and Virginia a Masonic experiment.)

In their recent book on Masonry, *The Temple and the Lodge*, Baigent and Leigh document the fascinating double nature of New World Masonry.¹³ On the one hand, bourgeois colonists tended to belong to the lodges chartered by the “official” London Grand Lodge; on the other hand, many soldiers of lower-class origins joined “military” lodges which were not chartered by London but by the Grand Lodge of Ireland. These Irish charters, which were consid-

ered spurious by London, gave rise to a kind of underground Masonry (the so-called “Scald Miserable Masons”) that was never successfully integrated into mainstream Masonry. George Washington and his cronies of course belonged to the “official” branch—but clearly both branches found common cause in the vision of American independence.

As everyone knows, Washington won. Somewhat less clearly remembered is his private inauguration ritual in full Masonic regalia. Baigent and Leigh make a very convincing argument for the Constitution as a Masonic manifesto and America as a Masonic republic. It would be interesting, however, to know more about the politics of the Irish or Scald Masons. Were they amongst the extreme democrats who felt betrayed by the oligarchic American counter-Revolution of 1789? Were they among the Revolutionary veterans who fought against Washington and his cronies in Shay’s Rebellion of 1786–87 and a handful of lesser uprisings in the 1790s? A futile inquiry, perhaps—but in any case, clearly Masonry cannot be excluded from the roll of revolutionary mystical sects of colonial America.

The Deists, like all antinomians, were attracted by the image of the Wild Man as noble savage. It’s no accident that the

conspirators in both the Boston and New Jersey Tea Parties dressed up as Indians, or that rebel backwoods farmers declared that their region—the Berkshires in Massachusetts—had reverted to the “State of Nature.” For both revolutionary intellectuals and the revolutionary “mob” felt a certain kinship with Native American spirituality. The treaty of confederation for the Iroquois Six Nations exercised a powerful influence on the American Articles of Confederation (a radical democratic document) and even on the Declaration of Independence. This unlikely link between Native shamanism and Deism emerges with poignant clarity in the mysterious case of Priber of Georgia.¹⁴

Priber (first name unknown) arrived in the New World in the 1730s as an accomplished philosophe, conversant in English, Dutch (German?), French, and Latin. He had one all-consuming obsession: the founding of a utopian socialist/libertarian community among the natives of South Carolina and Georgia. At his trial in 1743 (coincidentally the same year American colonists first rioted against impressment, an event marked by some historians as the beginning of the Revolutionary movement), it was said that Priber had schemed to set up “a Town at the Foot of the Mountains among the Cherokees, which was to be a

City of Refuge for all Criminals, Debtors, and Slaves, who would fly thither from Justice or their Masters.” Moreover in the words of a contemporary observer,

There was a book found upon him of his own Writing ready for the Press, which he owns and glories in...; it demonstrates the Manner in which the Fugitives are to be subsisted, and lays down the Rules of Government which the town is to be governed by; to which he gives the title of Paradise; He enumerates many whimsical Privileges and natural Rights, as he calls them, which his Citizens are to be entitled to, particularly dissolving Marriages and allowing Community of Women, and all kinds of Licentiousness; the Book is drawn up very methodically, and full of learned Quotations; it is extremely wicked, yet has several Flights full of Invention; and it is a Pity so much Wit is applied to so bad Purposes.

During the previous year Priber had sold all his possessions and disappeared into Cherokee country. There he learned the language (and wrote the first dictionary of it, which was later lost along with his “Book”) and “ate, drank, slept, danced, dressed, and painted himself with the Indians” to such an extent that whites could no longer “distinguish him from the natives.” According to one of

Priber's enemies,

he proposed to them a new System or plan of Government, that they should admit into their society Creeks & Catabaws, French & English, all Colours and complexions, in short all who were of These principles, which were truly such as had no principles at all.

Priber was no authoritarian utopian in the tradition of Plato and More; he stressed "liberty" along with community of property, and in his "Kingdom of Paradise" the only law was to be the law of Nature. "Moreover," as his biographer notes,

the liberty which was allowed to men should be shared equally by women, in sign of which no marriages should be contracted. The children of the temporary unions were to be reared by the state, and instructed in everything which they were capable of learning.

Apparently Priber won the hearts of the Cherokees, though he may have ended by learning more from them than they from him. In any case, they protested angrily when the colonial authorities, under James Oglethorpe of Georgia, arrested and imprisoned him. Priber languished in jail a few years, then died. His books vanished. He was another "failure," another bit of lost American history condemned to insignificance by his victorious enemies.

Or was he? The Cherokee later became famous for developing the first Native American alphabet. They were also known for their hospitality toward maroons (runaway slaves) and white indentured servants. Certain subtribes of the Cherokee, such as the Lumbee, are characterized as “tri-racial,” some of them are actually descended from Priber, that obscure savant who played out again the story of Roanoke, but this time in full consciousness of its utopian implications. [Note: The Lumbee are in fact more likely to be descendants of the Lost Colonists and the Croatan. (2014)]

The American Revolution is generally interpreted as a bourgeois liberal movement. But recently some radical American historians have begun to pay closer attention to the roles of the “mob,” to proletarian and extremist elements in the struggle, and to their antecedents and influences.¹⁵ Just as official Puritan Protestantism has been considered in some ways a foreshadowing of official American republicanism, one may argue that unofficial radical Protestantism (and its attendant “Indianism”) served as the matrix for extreme revolutionary tendencies within the general dissident and anti-imperialist movement. The nameless antinomians of low estate who followed Anne Hutchinson into exile were the spiritual ancestors of the rioters, farmers, sailors, soldiers, freed slaves, Irish laborers, and debtors

who pushed “leaders” like Sam Adams and Thomas Paine ever further to the left. Spiritual anarchy is America’s oldest heritage, and its most submerged tradition.

And although we’ve limited ourselves here to the colonial period, we cannot end without asserting that our invisible “church” outlasted not only the Revolution but also the Federalist counter-Revolution.

Nathan Barlow, the New England mystic, led the squatters of Kennebec county in Maine during the 1790s against the sheriffs and land agents of the out-of-state proprietors in small bands of armed “white Indians.” He wrote “every man to his right and privileges and liberty, the same as our indian nation enjoys.” They burned barns, rescued prisoners, upset courts, and destroyed writs into “attoms.”¹⁶

Here trembling on the verge of the nineteenth century, we’ll close our story, confident that the reader will be able to trace the trajectory of our tradition right down to the twentieth century and our own days. Caliban’s masque is not yet played out, nor can spiritual anarchy be consigned to the catalog of dead things.

(Endnotes)

1 Quoted by A.L. Rowse, *The Elizabethans and America* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1959), p. 204

2 For Raleigh and Roanoke, see Rowse; also C.M. Andrews, *Our Earliest Colonial Settlements* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959); and Robert Lacey, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (New York: Atheneum, 1973).

3 See E. Leaming-Bey, *Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas* (microfiche, 1979), chapters 8 & 14.

4 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Maypole of Merry Mount," in *Works, Vol. I: Twice Told Tales*. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1882).

5 For Morton and Merry Mount, see *Morton's New English Canaan, or New Canaan*, Amsterdam 1637 (facs. ed., Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Ltd. and New York: De Capo Press, 1969); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), chapter 3; and Devyn, "Of Mine Host of Ma-re Mount," in *Green Egg*, No. 88 (1990), pp. 14-16.

6 See Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966); and Selma R. Williams, *Divine Rebel: The Life of Anne Marbury Hutchinson* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981).

7 Williams, p. 193.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 368-69

9 Peter Linebaugh, "All the Atlantic Mountains Shook," in *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 10 (Autumn 1982), p. 105

10 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

11 Murray Rothbard, "Individualist Anarchism in the US: Origins," in *Libertarian Analysis* (Vol. 1, No. 1) Winter 1970, p. 21. See also Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House: The Quaker Merchants of Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1948), especially chapter 4.

12 Rothbard, pg. 25.

13 Michael Beigent and Richard Leigh, *The Temple and the Lodge* (New York: Arcade, 1989), part IV.

14 See Verner W. Crane, "A Last Utopia of the First American Frontier," in the *Sewanee Review Quarterly*, Jan.-March 1919, pp. 48-61

15 See for example Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper, 1980) for its grand scope and bibliography. I'm also indebted to Peter Linebaugh, author of *The London Hanged* (New York: Penguin, 1991) who has begun to apply to America the methods of the English school of E.P.Thompson, Christopher Hill, et al. See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Viking, 1972), and Norman S. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), for English spiritual extremism of the English Revolutionary period. For the general thesis of this essay I'm also indebted to Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

16 P. Linebaugh, "Jubilating: Or, How the Atlantic Working Class Used the Biblical Jubilee against Capitalism, with Some Success," in *The New Enclosures* (Midnight Notes #10), Fall 1990, p. 89.

postscript: this essay contains some errors but I still like it and have decided to let it stand as is. (2014)

All plans for "saving the world" ultimately rest on the assumption that humanity must undergo a change of heart. The paradox here is that if this change were to occur, no plans would be needed to bring about a "different world." The change of heart, the different consciousness, would be in itself the very shift in direction, the Reversion to human and spiritual values required for "salvation." Smash the machinic mind and there'd be no need to smash the actual machines.

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