

# Introduction

## Recognition and its Discontents

Hostis

March 2016

### INTRODUCTION

#### *RECOGNITION AND ITS DISCONTENTS*

*For reasons that will become evident in the course of this text and to save the reader the trouble of sifting through the details, we offer up our analysis at the start: the politics of recognition, insofar as recognition is treated as the means for collective emancipation, is nothing more than a mirage that welcomes those upstanding citizens of Empire into civilization's warm embrace. We view recognition as another way to fall back on the illusion of the 'neutral observer,' as a nonpartisan; as if innocence will save us from one more act of State violence; a respite from the surplus extraction part of Capital's growing expanse. It is in the name of partisanship, of taking sides, of choosing enemies, that we repeat the advice of our Tarnac friends: "To no longer wait is, in one way or another, to enter into the logic of insurrection. It is to once again hear the slight but always present trembling of terror in the voices of our leaders. Because governing has never been anything other than postponing by a thousand subterfuges the moment when the crown will string you up, and every act of government is nothing but a way of not losing control of the population."*

Seeking recognition is always servile. We have little interest in visibility, consciousness raising, or populist pandering. Recognition always treats power as a give-and-take. On the one hand, the dispossessed use recognition as respite from exploitation; while on the other, the State expects its authority to be recognized as the first and final say. According to this logic, for the dispossessed to even get a step up, they must first acknowledge a higher power than themselves.

The particulars of our own time are even more obscene. Following the spread of economic rationality on a global scale, it is clear that the flow of forces has reversed. The State pornographically exposes its long-protected interior for others to abuse while lasciviously grooming what is beyond its regular reach. Recognition chastely reassures the State of its powers. All the while, the most banal State functions are farmed out to the highest bidder. So when their parking ticket is authored by a private corporation, those who seek recognition fall back on the State dictum that nothing good comes from the outside.

Recognition is the last refuge of those unwilling to make a break with what is intolerable about this world. The worst of them are power brokers looking to sell access to those who subjugate

us, urging us to find common interest with politicians, capitalist, and NGO cheats of every kind. It is easy to identify these swindlers by their pitch for "making a difference" by "working inside the system" with "community partners," or even worse, the business of "social justice" aimed at "serving the underrepresented." They're always generous, far too generous, with advice on pitching a project meant to enroll others. Ever wonder if, behind all their 'selfless' marketing wisdom, they believe anything themselves? We're convinced that their only strongly held beliefs are a nebulous faith in 'the power of people raising their voice' and other vague populist propaganda about the benefits of civic engagement. The one clear thing is the consequence: of the projects that operate by seeking recognition, the only ones that succeed are those that also somehow benefit the powers that be.

By far the worst aspect of recognition is its role in resolution. From where we stand, civil society appears only as a degraded arm of the State. Collective process, democratic representation, and community accountability might feel radical, but they are the actions of the State dressed in black. They transform our desire for antagonism into 'agonistic' fuel for the engine of statecraft. The process of recognition begins with a riotous insurrection, makes it into an angry mob, then into an unruly crowd, into a gathering of concerned citizens, into a protest organization, into a political party, and finally into a class of legislators. Some enlightened 'direct democrats' believe in abbreviating the process of resolution in a return to representation. Our path is far darker. Ours is the 'mad black communism' that haunts the goodwill of these leftist party bureaucrats. This does not simply mean a politics where your socialist party finance minister wears a suit without a tie or walks the halls of Parliament with his hands in his pockets. It means, first of all, to transform what is present within riotous insurrection into sites of material leverage, to the point where any 'movement' worthy of the name is, in itself, irreversible.

However, it is worth noting that there is nothing new in saying we must move beyond recognition. Remembering Stokely Carmichael on non-violence, we refuse the ready-made game of back-and-forth; waiting for the State to recognize the violence it purports to shield us from. Add to this the reminder from our Tarnac friends that "waiting is madness... [because] we are already situated within the collapse of a civilization. It is within this reality that we must choose sides." It is this manner in which we assert that *waiting for recognition is like waiting for the democracy to come: a war by other means waged through infinite deferral. As in warfare, there are enemies regardless of whether or not a declaration of formal conflict is recognized. Empire does not have a conscience. Empire does not give a shit about critique.*

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We contrast recognition with the destruction of worlds. Our destruction is both affective and collective – *Hostis* nurses a hatred for this world, and it works to annihilate everything it hates. Our purpose is to make apparent to all what is already self-evident to us: that our collective self-interest lies in the destruction of this world. Orthodox Marxists argue that revolutionary politics emerges from the working class when they realize the benefits of overturning capitalism. This is why the *Communist Manifesto* denounces "philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind." The line we draw is not between bourgeois/proletariat (good/bad, left/right, oppressor/op-

pressed, etc.) but between those who preserve what is intolerable about this world and those of us dismantling it.

We must learn how to weaponize the concrete asymmetry between Empire and the dispossessed. We are drawn to those who sharpen the gap between the State and its subjects, not into biting tongues but cutting edges. Thus, against the State's idealized invocation of authority, *Hostis* listens to military strategists who say that opening with a concession is to begin from a position of weakness. The point of *Hostis* is to spread the crisis of representation; to antagonize the vulgar translation at every step along the way. It is for this reason that we retain the language of anti-politics, the destruction of worlds, and so on. We have no interest in 'rights,' as they imply the exploitation of wider swaths of the global population. The State or Capital may grant some individuals rights, freedoms, or security, but is quite plain that these benefits only extend so far. The only guarantee we acknowledge is that the global population Fanon called *the wretched of the Earth* continues to grow. Following Fanon's advice, *Hostis* evades recognition altogether. It leaves the job of identification to the police. Abandoning the project of the struggle for recognition is already at work in various areas of the globe, and *Hostis* simply seeks to add to this growing body of literature.

#### LAYING SIEGE TO EMPIRE FROM OUTSIDE THE CITY GATES

*§1 Royal etiquette demands specific protocol: paramount is the rule of no touching; one should never extend a hand in the expectation of a handshake. Begin by saying "Your Majesty" and wait to see if they initiate a handshake. If offered, accept, but do not squeeze too hard, as it would be seen as a challenge to their power. Similarly, refrain from conversation unless they start it...*

We were buoyed in 2015 by sustained activity in the U.S. against the police, who executed more than a thousand people. Through a perverse deployment of the legal right to *habeas corpus*, it appears that United States citizens are guaranteed representation by the State insofar as this right is granted, in large part, through the literal 'presentation and/or having of the *corpses*' of those it claims to represent. It was interrupted by parliamentary victories by the Left in Europe, with the short lived excitement of Syriza in Greece and recent success of Podemos in Spain, further bookended by attacks in France. What do these events have to do with our struggle to move 'beyond recognition'?

For one, it is increasingly transparent that the social categories of recognition take the perspective of State power, and that they are the means through which the State *represents* the power of a people. We see this activity in the public person of the good-citizen who has purified themselves of any cultural or religious heritage that may hint of any Islamic affiliation. Muslims unwilling to pass as completely secular are compelled to make pre-emptive denunciations of violence to make public 'whose side they are really on.' This is where recognition reveals its true purpose as the State's biopolitical tool in the ongoing civil war.

On November 22, 2014, Tamir Rice was executed by two Cleveland police officers. The justification, as it goes, was that his airsoft gun constituted enough of a danger to the lives of the

police officers and the community at large that Tamir's murder was necessary. In the eyes of the law, a young black body playing by himself in a park was all suspicion needed for police officers Timothy Loehmann and Frank Garmback to kill him. The most vocal activist response is to proclaim that 'the civil rights movement is not over,' implying that such brutality is an effect of black Americans not being fully recognized as citizens in the eyes of the law. The only thing those rights guard is the path to innocence. They are the words of those who say with all honesty, "injustice is when the wretched of the earth are treated as a problem, for they are not one." In their haste to not be a problem, the innocent strip themselves of everything but their proof of good citizenship, which is a script only redeemable with those already looking to punish you. Innocence can only be cashed out to pay for a single act: the event of the sovereign adjusting the scales of justice so that punishment once again fits the crime.

What if Tamir's gun had been real, Mike Brown had actually charged like a demon, or what if Trayvon really did hit first? We would support them even more. Our solidarity does not extend in spite of alleged criminality but usually because of it. Though it is trite, one must remember that colonialism, slavery, the Holocaust, and apartheid were all legal. Yet we have nothing good to say about Clement Attlee, Abraham Lincoln, Dwight Eisenhower, or F.W. Klerk, even if it was their pen that ended each one of those terrible systems. Our heroes come from the ranks of the Haitian Revolution, the *Creole* ship revolt, Eastern European partisan units, and Umkhonto we Sizwe. We could care less about being recognized by those who see it as their job to rule over us, justly or unjustly. ***Fuck justice, we want revenge.***

Recognition has not evolved much since the days of that Royal etiquette we mentioned before. Though it has traded a bit of its gold gilding for bureaucratic banalities, the State still insinuates itself in all conflicts as the vanishing mediator – the ultimate arbiter of justice, and the final judge of what is good. Its goal is to ensure that anything not recognized simply ceases to exist at all.

Foucault clarifies the stakes with his concept of biopolitics – as we become modern, recognition expand from courtly game to principle of governance. The nation is no longer worn like a badge of honor by the sovereign and is actively grown according to scientific principles of security, territory, and population. The pompous social sport of recognition (as seen in any comedy of manners) is developed into a finely-tuned system of surveillance, development, and policing. He summarizes this transition from a monarchy largely indifferent to their commoners to a modern State obsessed with waging wars in the name of its population; from "letting live and making die" to "making live and letting die." But how can the State go from letting live to letting die? Dispossession. Modernization is just shorthand for so-called land reform, which expropriates people from their ancestral lands and in turn withholds access to their means of subsistence. This is why the greatest violence today is not the State's summary executions or that of those who fight back, but the biopolitical system of abandonment meant to make life outside the approving eye of the State unlivable.

The obvious strategy is to reverse one of the two processes: abandonment or dispossession. But what does a reversal of abandonment look like in the age of biopolitics? That the State act on our behalf? The recognition of a previously unsanctioned way of life as worthy of State support? The State codification of a freedom or entitlement as a right? All of these approaches already cede too much. Those who were never expropriated from their own means of subsistence do not suffer the same way from abandonment; they can engage the State as an all-or-nothing proposition. So instead of expanding the system of recognition premised on the power of another, we are interested in strategies that reverse our dispossession.

Simply put, our goal is to lay siege to Empire from outside the city gates. For this, we are called barbaric. Not self-attributed but a smear, the term 'barbarian' was invented by Hellenistic Greeks as onomatopoeia for the blabber of those who could not speak their language. Lacking the capacity for reason, 'barbarian' is used to paint certain foreigners as unworthy of social, political, or legal recognition. They are not just any stranger, as not all strangers are vilified by the citizens of empire. Rather, barbarians have two defining characteristics: they refuse to be educated in the language of the polis, and they act with a savage roughness that exceeds the boundaries of appropriateness. The first jams the usual logocentric means of recognition that would extend them the communal rights of being a human. The second banishes them to the uncivilized realm of beasts that lacks decorum, protocol, and restraint. Nomads are perfectly satisfied with such a one-sided story. What initially appears as an insulting depiction of their limited capacities instead is a definition of how they avoid capture. As the Italian authors Crisso and Odoteo argue, barbarians can continue their siege as long as the likes of Hegel, "an honest subject of the Prussian state," cannot apprehend "a completely autonomous, sovereign, uncompromising opposition – a multiplicity that does not allow itself to be enrolled in any synthesis." The outside to the new 'socially-conscious' economy, barbarians avoid the liberal trap of tolerance, compassion, and respect. The only risk is that ferocity will abate and passion subsides.

#### ALL THAT IS RECOGNIZABLE MELTS INTO AIR

*§2 The State is not our sole enemy in moving beyond recognition. Capital proves time and again that the State is merely its functionary for the accumulation of global surplus in the hands of the few. It was already in the 1970's that Gabriel Ardent formulated what we are still witnessing in the beginning of 2016: namely, the neoliberal transformation of capitalism through the credit-debt relation. As Ardent notes, credit is "one of the most effective instruments of exploitation man has managed to create, since certain people, by producing credit, are able to appropriate the labor and wealth of others." It is precisely through finance that the marriage between Capital and the State utilizes its mode of economic recognition as the means to determine which sections of the population are fit for the extraction of value from social life.*

Between the years of 2005 to 2008, Wells Fargo targeted Black and Latino families with mortgages the bank knew they could not repay: "Wells Fargo ... saw the black community as fertile ground for subprime mortgages, as working-class blacks were hungry to be a part of the nation's home-owning mania. Loan officers ... pushed customers who could have qualified for prime loans into subprime mortgages. Another loan officer stated in an affidavit filed last week that employees had referred to blacks as 'mud people' and to subprime lending as 'ghetto loans.'" As Beth John, a former loan officer, recounts, "We just went right after them [black families] ... Wells Fargo mortgage had an emerging-markets unit that specifically targeted black churches because it figured church leaders had a lot of influence and could convince congregants to take out subprime loans." It is the power relation of debt managed by finance-Capital that destroyed whole neighborhoods and constitutes Baltimore's real looter. As Marc Belisle put it, "The real "thugs"

in Baltimore wear suits.” In any case, whether we consider recognition from an economic, socio-political, or legal perspective, it appears to us as nothing more than a power relation used for the management and control of a population for ends other than its own.

From this perspective, our present state of affairs appears as a thief in the night with one purpose: to possess all possible futures by wresting them from us in the present. What is debt if not an obligation to future work? Thus, present day economic models of recognition (e.g., the determination of which social groups will reap the most profit through their debts) simply repeats the wisdom of the Middle Ages:

”Usurers are ... thieves [*latrines*], for they sell time that does not belong to them, and selling someone else’s property, despite its owner, is theft. In addition, since they sell nothing other than the expectation of money, that is to say, time, they sell days and nights. But the day is the time of clarity and the night is the time for repose.”

As we write, think, and struggle during these first months of 2016, that tired and worn-out slogan ‘NO FUTURE’ appears as relevant as ever. If for no other reason than this slogan signals a situation where the intersection of those processes of exclusion and violence obstruct the orthodox tools offered to us by the Left. No longer able to affirm some unified class identity; no longer able to treat processes of racialization and the construction of genders/bodies as secondary or tertiary points of struggle; and living through Capital’s debt extraction that operates differentially across race, class, and gender lines; we no longer can pretend to shore up our partisanship against this world in accord with the thesis of recognition and representation at the heart of much of the Left’s strategies for struggle.

In light of the past wave of protests, and insofar as something like NYC’s ‘Fight for 15’ could have happened in Midtown while the Occupy protests got under way in Wall st. just some blocks south of the fast-food workers strikes in the same city; and insofar as it would be the Black Lives Matter movement that would take their place on the streets of Manhattan a few years later; it is clear that the ongoing decomposition of working-class identity necessitates our move beyond the politics of the civil and innocent citizen who remains respectable, and therefore recognizable. *All that is recognizable melts into air.*

Thus it is worth repeating how recognition fails, whether from the State or from the Left, insofar as our present situation is such that every identity is in a process of decomposition vis-à-vis the civil war waged by Capital in its current form: ”Participants in the milieu observed that, even in factory struggles, the re-emergence of an affirmable working class identity seemed to be off the table: workers were self-organizing, but without illusions about the revolutionary potential of such self-organization...Meanwhile, many struggles were erupting outside of the workplace – concerning students, the unemployed, racialised minorities – with no interest in finding their way in. Workers in what were once bastions of working class strength...could no longer offer up their struggles as a container for the needs of the class as a whole. Struggles over ”reproduction” were supplanting those over ”production”, even if the former seemed to lack the power vis-à-vis capital historically wedded by the latter.”

#### THE OTHER: A RELIC OF RECOGNITION PAST

§3 *We all know the popular argument about anthropology being a perverse theater where the Other is always ‘represented’ or ‘invented’ according to the sordid interests of*

*the West. Nothing can camouflage the paternalism of this thesis, as it simply refocuses the conversation back on Westerners too anxious to talk about anything but themselves. Doubling this subjective phantasmagoria of the colonial system simply piles insult upon injury. These critics once again suggest that all roads return to Europe, even if it is to challenge its civilizing pretensions instead of celebrate them. The result is that European history remains the only universal required reading – the only change is that we are to be wagging our fingers all the way through. By always seeing the Same in the Other, by thinking that under the mask of the other it is always just 'us' contemplating ourselves, we we can only see what is 'of interest to us.' Anthropology thus reveals recognition to be the mirror of Narcissus. In light of the narcissistic trap of recognition it is imperative to accept the idea that our "negation does not signify nothingness; when the mirror does not reflect our own likeness, it does not prove there is nothing to perceive."*

For a long time, and due to its acceptance into academic discourse, the 'Other' has come to be seen as the pillar of the politics and ethics of recognition. However, a *non-* and even *anti-*academic history of the Other requires special mention since we refuse to partake in the self-serving system of 'the Other' whether defined as "the face" of vulnerability, or as the non-White and/or non-Male/Masculine partner in that suffocating courtship of earning the privilege to see and evaluate oneself through the eyes of another.

Additionally, some of our contemporaries simply expand the narcissistic mirror, beginning from the myth regarding anthropologies tainted origins, to the whole world through a radical animism whereby humans, bacteria, and mountains all have minds that need to be recognized. Without even cracking a smile, one theorist honestly suggests that we 'respond to the call' of a littered bottlecap in the gutter. Such recognition presupposes that the world exists in some sort of primordial equality; between rivals struggling to be recognized by their Others. We do not criticize this perspective as anthropocentric, but rather, to stave off the ridiculous anthropocentrism of giving every-thing 'the human treatment.' Extending human virtues to all things does advance our position in civil war. In fact, some things do not deserve our recognition: we refuse to recognize that bosses produce value as capital has no value without the power labor; we refuse to recognize social solutions as they are the biopolitical management of our lives; we refuse to recognize the authority of the law as it is only the codification of routine violence; we refuse to recognize popular opinion as it is merely a reflection of the Spectacle. To them, to the extent we appear to them at all, it should only be as Rimbaud said: as an I that is essentially an Other.

Let's take another case from film: Abel Ferrara's *Ms .45* (aka, *Angel of Vengeance*) tells a story of a mute woman who works as a seamstress in Manhattan's Garment District. While walking alone one day, she is raped by a male stranger. And even though he need not cover her mouth, since she cannot make a sound, he indulges in a few reaches at her face. However, in a world where speech has atrophied – in the lives of women who are violated even as they loudly make their protest public – our heroine finds other means for fighting back. She refuses to accept the unmitigated access men have over the female body, which gives her a new sense of purpose and the means for its realization (a gun). This is the very principle that Godard gave to cinema ('all one needs is a girl and a gun') raised to the level of the political/aesthetic education of our affects. The final

scene tells us everything we need to know regarding cruelty and its taste for vengeance: when 'Ms .45' realizes that she has been stabbed (in the back, no less) by another woman, she mouths, though silently, the word 'sister'. That is, to her surprise, she has been betrayed by someone who is like her; and despite this betrayal, communication between women is possible only in the silent mouthing of the words which cannot be spoken. This lesbian moment ends before it can begin, with the literal killing of a 'love that dare not speak its name.' As if 'Ms .45' was uttering the phrase "Sister, why have you forsaken me? *Don't you know that your silence won't protect you!?*"

Ms. 45's lesson is clear: in all those forms of social life, structured according to the logic of hetero-patriarchy, one is silent because one is a woman and a woman because one is silent. This is the Fanonian insight manifest in a queer negativity that wants nothing more than to abolish the false promises extended by striving to be seen, to be heard, to be recognized. It represents our own world, where the only communication between 'Ms .45' and her male counterparts can take place by means of the bullet. We do not seek to form parties, organizations, or syndicalist organizations. It is not 'peace now!' but 'a piece, now!' that trades social recognition for political force. This is the 'counter-violence' of Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X, which produces a separation from the system of recognition. Such violence is not itself political, yet the violent reciprocity of 'a direct relation of force' that breaks the abstract bond holding together State domination of its subjects and poses a disharmony that arrests the dialectic of recognition while opening a space in which politics can emerge.

This issue continues "Five Theses on the Politics of Cruelty," a restatement of the main features of our defense of 'the politics of cruelty' in *Hostis* issue 1. Though it should go without saying, such cruelty is not meant to be directed at friends and neighbors. It is certainly not an excuse to act shitty to members of your crew, be abusive to a loving partner, or sow divisiveness of any kind. Our cruelty follows in the footsteps of Spike Lee, who replaces the self-appointed Reverend Harry Powell's moralism in *The Night of Hunter* with Radio Raheem's struggle to fight the power. In his telling of the battle between love and hate, Radio Raheem does not act as a false prophet telling us how good prevails over evil. Instead, Raheem tells us that he divides the world in two: love and hate. Those he loves, he loves; those he hates, he hates.

This lesson is at the core of *Hostis* – we believe that we are in the midst of a civil war. There are two sides: our accomplices and our enemies. To our accomplices, we promise our undying conviction. For our enemies, we have nothing but cruelty. Insofar as the contemporary civil war is ongoing, we are, and despite ourselves, drawn into partisanship as a default condition of our everyday lives. To be and act as a partisan, it could be said, summarizes those founding theses of the politics of cruelty. Additionally, there should be nothing awe-inspiring in such theses. And if philosophy begins, and draws its inspiration from, wonder and awe as Aristotle thought, then thinking, feeling, and fighting as a partisan seeks to put an end to the tired and academic justification of "philosophy as a way of life." There is nothing wonderful or satisfying in contemplating "being" or some eternal "essence;" especially the "being/essence" of those power relations specific to the civil war waged by Capital.

## BEYOND RECOGNITION

In their "Letter to the Editors," the Mary Nardini Gang give the reader their assessment of *Hostis*'s first issue; our stated aims, commitments, and their points of affinity and divergence. For these authors, what they have termed 'vengeance' is what *Hostis* calls cruelty. By reflecting



on this point of agreement, and the resistance they met by other activists regarding the attempt to transform a praxis of vengeance into a politics proper, we get a better sense of where this resistance stems from. As they write, "We suspect that much of the problem in this misreading lies in the attempts at visibility..." The skepticism one meets regarding vengeance and cruelty is intimately related to the equation between politics and the struggle for recognition and one's visibility from the point of view of the State.

For the Mary Nardini Gang, it is clear that striving to be acknowledged by the State is symptomatic of the material conditions in which the civil war we effectuate against the World is undertaken: "We yearn for recognition when we feel alone, when we fear our pains and joys might go unacknowledged by our friends." In the shared project of the destruction of the world, the authors do not hesitate to underscore points of contention they maintain with our project. While we cautioned our readers that burning out was a real possibility and a real danger for a politics of cruelty, these authors see things otherwise. For them, the figure of the burnout is not a danger but a source of the continued nourishment of the praxis/politics of vengeance they call for. The figure of the burnout, in the end, turns out to be a case of misplaced concreteness. It is not we who burnout; it is the juridical, political, and moral machines that management the reproduction of globally integrated capital that burns out. For our authors, we have nothing to fear in burning out since it is capital that manifests as the global burnout of a society that is increasingly hard to believe in.

The "Letter" ends in a manner that brings home the urgency and necessity for cultivating the vengeance we all compromise by engaging in political recognition. It is the recounting of the death of a black, trans woman, and the subsequent practice of seeking vengeance against her murderer that the Mary Nardini Gang conclude their piece. In the face of the indiscriminate murder of trans women, and the ongoing State-sponsored extermination of Black life in the US and across the globe, the politics of vengeance, the cultivation of cruelty, and destroying the world that has an interest in our collective destruction appears as simple necessity and not as a moral catechism we use against each other. We respond with "A Cautious Reply," which focuses on our points of divergence regarding the figure of the burnout, how our desire for excess is used against us, and a renewed drive for vengeance.

Regarding the question of recognition in its contemporary manifestation of State power, we have included translations of two responses to the recent state of emergency in France recently published in the online magazine *Lundi Matin*. Though the authorship is anonymous, it is obvious to us that the pieces emerge from a milieu targeted by State anti-terrorism forces for the better part of a decade. The first, "The Real War" [*La guerre véritable*], explores the effects of the Paris attacks on State power. Of particular interest is their description of a spectacularly anti-economic form of power, which reminds us of a recently translated critique of economics as the science of police, Jacques Fradin's "Economy, Ecumenes, Communism: Economy as the Devastation of Ecumenes, Communism as the Exit From Economy." The second, "Against the State of Emergency" [*Contre l'état d'urgence, l'urgence de prendre la rue*] responds to the subsequent state of emergency. This text was originally written in response to a request made by the French newspaper *Le Monde* who asked some of the "Tarnac" defendants ("*des mis en examen*") to comment on the 13 November 2015 attacks on Paris and what followed. Despite *Le Monde's* initial request the piece was accepted but never published. The newspaper provided no rationale, so we leave it up to our readers to determine why. Perhaps it is their claim that "the real danger doesn't come

from the Middle-East but from the successive governments that have plunged us into these dark waters and are attempting at present to close their trap on us once more.”

Throughout this issue we have included images from Gabriel Salmon’s “Notes on People Who Have Been Surveilled by the Police or the State Asked to Take A Picture That Reveals Nothing About Them.” The project is a collaboration between the artist and people who have had the experience of being surveilled. The purpose is to use the artistic process to resist the act of surveillance and acknowledge the emotional impact of surveillance as an assault. Since 2012, he has been asking people to take a photo according to the following instruction: “Take a photo that reveals absolutely nothing about you.” Earlier contributions to this project were included in an art exhibition looking at surveillance, forensics, and the way that artists are being changed by surveillance. As this archive grows it will continue to be used in public exhibitions and publications that share a critical rejection of surveillance as a tool of repression and control. In his artist statement, Saloman argues that the governmental technology has become so ubiquitous that it has changed our whole way of seeing. The consequence, he suggests, is not just that we see world as surveilled, but that “we produce ourselves for the world to be surveilled.”

Building off the the themes of State surveillance and its models of recognition, “The Tyranny of Imagery, Or, Escaping the Zoopraxiscope,” offers a critique of recognition in light of the context of cybernetic governance. Anonymously authored, this piece draws a line of continuity from the early days of media to today’s Internet-connected world. The beginning stitches together the first film, Eadward Muybridge’s 1878 *Sallie Gardner at a Gallop*, and Alphonse Bertillon’s early card-based police database. The former would have been initially viewed on a zoopraxiscope, a rotating disc-device invented by the filmmaker for projecting images in quick succession, the second captured the likes of criminals such as notorious French anarchist Ravochol. The essay winds through a discussion of Spinoza, Agamben, Debord, and Scott to arrive at today’s world of Facebook, Google maps, and other forms of digital connectivity. The author’s concerns could be summarized in the words of Félix Guattari, who said, “I am convinced that all of the possible variants of another May 68 have already been programmed on an IBM.” Fortunately, the essay ruminates on the version questions the preoccupy us: in a time as bleak as our own, how do we ward off our enemies while making a break for it?

Furthering our advance beyond recognition, K. Aarons’ “No Selves to Abolish: Afropessimism, Anti-Politics, and the End of the World,” uses the work of afropessimist theorists such as Frank Wilderson, Saidiya Hartman and Jared Sexton to suggest ways in which contemporary anarchist, communist, and queer approaches to coalitional, affinity-based radical organizing might respond to what Wilderson calls “the crisis of the existential commons.” It argues that for non-Black folks, the philosophico-political consequences of Afropessimist existentialism’s negative identity politics (or anti-politics) demand an overcoming of ‘privilege-based’ anti-racist politics of recognition, and its replacement with a regulative ideal of self-abolition.

Aarons specifies how afro-pessimism “wrecks affirmative identity politics.” This begins with his rehearsal of the afro-pessimism claim that black bodies are structurally defined as *a priori* guilty. Yet he does not argue for a return to Eden, but a world in which insurrections become just as guilty. There are two consequences he suggests: one, an ongoing refusal of terms of legitimacy such as ‘the people,’ ‘the oppressed,’ and ‘the 99%’; and second, calling into question any liberatory framework which frames the recovery of lost wholeness (of land, culture, personhood, etc.) as a precondition to overcoming suffering. To conclude, Aarons proposes a geometry that draws lines of convergence in various insurrectional movements:

If we fight because our own lives compel us to, and it is our own idea of happiness that orients us in these struggles, what is left of 'anti-racist solidarity'? While the notion of a 'solidarity' with Black suffering cannot be stripped of a certain paradigmatic incoherence, if it means anything at all it must be premised not on an attempt to identify, recognize, or render visible Black suffering, but on a *disidentification with ourselves*.

Aarons' radical redefinition of 'self-abolition' to eradicate anti-Blackness thus contributes to the communist theorization of the proletariat as 'the class of its own self-abolition.' But by challenging this intellectual tradition with the radical thought of afro-pessimism and practical politics of recent insurrections, Aarons also offers an ambitious new image of autonomy.

And rounding out our second issue, Helge Peters and Johannes Büttner's "Peak Panik" afford one an encounter, through a collection of works of performance art, with the question of subjective life in the context of ongoing crises - whether economic, political, existential, or environmental. Through the intersection between aesthetics and politics; and their mutual production of subjectivity; Peters and Büttner raise a set of questions that serve as heuristics in order to avoid further succumbing to those vague discourse that circulate around terms such as 'anthropocene' and 'crisis.' Peak Panik asks: what are we to do, identify or utilize? Is the task to identify the motor of history or to utilize it? To identify one's gender or to weaponize it? To identify with peaceful non-violence or to understand that no side of our ongoing civil war holds a monopoly on violence?

Their answer to these questions is clear: *don't identify, utilize!* Sift through and salvage what you can from the junkyards of anthropocenic/digital capital so that you may be able to breathe in the toxic air of our future collapse and be capable of waging a war upon the wastelands that remain. As they state at the outset of their piece: "Peak Panik appropriates fragments salvaged from the collective écriture of our moment - manuals, manifestos, inventories, rumours - to draw partial maps, not only cognitive but material, for navigating crumbling anthropogenic landscapes precariously held in place by a metastasising techno-economy of identification, security and control. Along this journey we might just lose the Self and find each other." The analytic and pragmatic resources one can expect to find here are numerous: coal as the motor of history; how oil becomes a class traitor; the pleasures of insurrection and why we need to rekindle a love for the passions; the digital trap of opting for *identification* instead of *utilization* as seen through the 56 gender options, courtesy of Zuckerberg himself.

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