Hostis
A Short Introduction to the Politics of Cruelty
22nd July 2017

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Contents

Hostis is a negation. It emerges devoid of ethics, lacking any sense of democracy, and without a care for pre-figuring anything. Fed up with the search for a social solution to the present crisis, it aspires to be attacked wildly and painted as utterly black without a single virtue. In thought, *Hostis* is the construction of incommensurability that figures politics in formal asymmetry to the powers that be. In action, *Hostis* is an exercise in partisanship – speaking in a tongue made only for those that it wants to listen. This partisanship is neither the work of fascists, who look for fights to give their limp lives temporary jolts of excitement, nor martyrs, who take hopeless stands to live the righteousness of loss. *Hostis* is the struggle to be dangerous in a time when antagonism is dissipated. This is all because *Hostis* is the enemy.[1]

I. Beyond Social Ethics

Religion played midwife to anarchism. We do not fault them for this, but we are amused at how quickly anarchists 'keep it in the family' of faith. All modern radicalism has the same root: the anabaptists. Such dignified roots are hard to disown, as many of the original anabaptists were anti-authoritarians who rejected the rule of law on earth and fought for a collective way of life anchored by the shared resources of the commons. The grand importance of this revolt is not simply their criticism of authority or their appeals to collective life, but their apocalyptic millennialism. In short, the pre-

[1] Hostis was what Rome called enemies of the state, though it also means 'stranger.' The term is inspired by the barbarian, who is not understood by Imperial powers because they do not speak a recognized language and break civic norms through uncontrolled acts of violence. For more, see Crisso and Odoteo's "Barbarian: The Disordered Insurgence," an amazing 2003 Italian insurrectionist critique of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, Michel Foucault's Collège de France lecture "Society Must Be Defended" pages 194–208, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's two nomadology plateaus in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

history of anarchism begins with utopia – the complete upheaval where the rotten world is wholesale turned into paradise.

Do not misunderstand; we too are utopians. What disturbs us are the utopias spoken about in the company of friends. Those more concerned with history than us can trace this thread through time, detailing how each overturning corresponds with the historical content of its era – why More's utopia put an end to religious strife through common property, why Fourier's oceans turned to lemonade, and why Le Guin rewilded Northern California. Our concerns are tied to two images of utopia peddled by contemporary anarchists: those confused souls who imagine that they can 'be good' (ethics), and the many confused attempts to create islands of good in an otherwise fallen world (prefiguration).

The first: do-gooders. We do not want to be better than our enemies. They are good, and that is why we hate them. They go to church, pay their taxes, and play well with others. They care about the environment, they oppose intolerance. The problem with do-gooders is that they try to be better than their enemies. So busy being 'for good things and against bad things' that they lack vision. Strategy is utterly lost on them.

Our readers are no doubt familiar with Nietzsche's critique of morality, but there is little harm in briefly rehearsing the argument. His genealogy of morals goes like this: in the deep mythological past, the strong prevailed. These 'masters' of the world glorified themselves, and so they pronounce that which extolled their power to be 'good' and denigrated their weaker foes by calling 'bad' anything associated with their feebleness. In a stroke of genius, a weaker but far more cunning people toppled their oppressors by inciting a 'transvaluation of values' that labeled their own meekness as 'good' and denounced the power of their captors as 'evil.'

[2] There is no use bothering with a morals/ethics distinction. Far too much ink has been spilled in attempts to draw distinctions without a difference. We have the least distaste for Tiqqun's 'ethics of civil war' but still find it too unpalatable to waste any effort discussing.

Capital's First Commando). Perhaps simply bluster, but Marcola boldly claims that the terror of prison is nothing compared to the terrifying power of a fully functioning criminal organization. Beyond the bravado, he gives a wide-ranging strategic assessment of Brazil. His most provocative suggestion is that there is a now underclass "raise in the mud," "educated in the streets," and "armed with "satellites, cellular phones, internet, modern weaponry." He names them the subjects of 'post-poverty' and claims that will inherit the earth.

The issue ends with a poem by Cassandra Troyan, "Interlude III." The poem is a portrait of the beautiful devastation wreaked by sexuality. In it, we are given a subterranean view of cruelty as a wild, destructive force. Stark statements propel the poem, signaling a series of punctual moments that shatter idealized notions of the body. The corporeal scene yawns with mouth and taste imagery, spilling its guts. To us, the poem demonstrates the deepness of queer sexuality. We see how gestures sprung from the body in fragments can overpower the heady thoughts born from men's jailhouse of reason. At its most heinous, it is at its very best.

Theses five pieces are only a small snapshot of cruelty. We can already see beyond it – to a building cold war between those who actively frustrate the rule of law, and the forces of repression that extend the social order. Even in our small survey, our intention is to make something incredibly clear. We want little truck with self-sacrifice, social protest, collective process, and democratic equality. Rather, the way forward burns hot with the cold desires of masochism, civil war, partisanship, and revenge.

to do with respect for the motherland, the glorification of work, and definitely not forced rationing. Restraint must be purged from our political vocabulary! There is nothing fearful about indulgence. Nothing has made reading Marx's *Capital Volume II*, in part a sloppy treatise on consumption, so delicious.

The next contribution is a rigorous challenge to idealizations of anarchist life. In this piece, "An Enduring Passion for Criminality," Tom Nomad and Gallus Stanig Mag draw a clear line between anarchists who want to *feel criminal* and those who *commit crimes*. The difference, they show, is that self-styled criminals simply flaunt an appearance to be recognized by others while actual crimes dismantles material deployments of the state. The key to the separation between the narcissism of publicly opposing the law, an ethical practice they lay at the feet of Kant, and the strategic necessity for concrete acts that diminish the forces of our enemies. The lesson to be taken from this piece is clear: we need fewer criminals and more crimes.

Hostis is also pleased to publish a number of creative pieces. The first is a paean to Ulrike Meinhof, "¿Ulrike?" In this pair of poems, Daniel Gutiérrez explores the self-inflicted cruelty of Meinhof's alleged suicide in Stammheim Prison. Incredible suspicion surrounds the event, and the Red Army Faction insists that the Stammheim suicides were murders. Key physical evidence was destroyed before independent autopsies, that evidence that did remain contradicted the state's case, and the state-appointed doctors who performed the government autopsy had already been accused of misconduct – not the least of which, a forensic surgeon for the autopsy was a former Nazi and even kept death masks of numerous Red Army Faction members as mementos. Gutiérrez goes beyond the controversy to ponder the difficult consequences of 'what if?'

What follows is "There is a Third Thing," an interview with the capo of a Brazilian prison gang translated from Portuguese by Pepe Rojo. In it, we hear the words of Marcos "Marcola" Camacho, leader of the criminal organization Primer Comando de la Capital (PCC,

While that singular event was genius, the people who came after them stupidly believed this 'slave morality' to be more than a clever trick. These fools committed themselves to a pathetic 'ascetic ideal' of false modesty whereby the joys of this life are given up in exchange for a richer afterlife.[2]

No matter how far anarchists – the great opponents of the church, state, and capital – think that they have distanced themselves from their original foes, Nietzsche is surely laughing at them today.[3] Consider the holy habits of those punks who sleep on the floor and dress in all-black hairshirts. No anarchist is starving themselves to death in a symbolic expression of their hunger for God, yet there are plenty of St Catherine of Siena's among us who take their special diet to be a purity strike against the-powers-that-be. To these people, we say: we could care less about how you have 'dedicated your life'! Save any talk about personal commitments for those who believe in an afterlife.

Ethics is an impediment to us. For Christians, the reward for leading an ethical life is spiritual. For non-believers, the only compensation is psychological – the knowledge that 'goodness is its own reward.' This is the self-righteousness that fuels the principled stances, empty proclamations, and futile deeds that makes one's life into a million acts of insignificant personal resistance. It is the voice that tells you that dignified defeat is worse than playing dirty. We say: rid yourself of these illusions. The earth does not smile any more on those who refuse to shop at Wal-Mart, call themselves anti-capitalist, or eat organic. We are incensed by anyone who thinks that they can 'be good,' 'do good,' or even 'be part of the solution.'

At the core of ethics is the concept of virtue. We are convinced by those anti-racist theorists who have shown how any concept of virtue is inseparable from a certain notion of whiteness. Hidden within this whiteness is a caesura that splits the good from the

[3] Perhaps the only group worth even engaging in our context, even if we are critical.

bad. We know exactly what good stands in for here – good means nonthreatening. Virtuous subjects are afforded the presumption of goodness, while others must fight for it, to justify it, to beat back the skepticism. This is why straightness has no coming out stories, why whiteness claims no common history, and why children simply 'make mistakes.' But do not worry!, liberalism says. While some are born with the presumption of good on their side, we are told, everyone has a kernel of evil deep within. Be careful, be prudent, be smart! Each person decides their own fate, the story continues, for everyone is simply a collection of their past choices: their jobs, their friends, their search history. The absurd thing is that liberalism actually believes its own tale. It has charts that plot everyone with a statistician's accuracy. Innocence is awarded to the best, dangerousness to the worst. People respond to this strategic terrain through a variety of tactics. The two most common are based in the fight for recognition, each taking a side of the grand fissure, both born of a common cause and thus twins, hopelessly dependent on the other. There is the politics of safety, which protects innocence by associating risk with privilege. There is the politics of abjection, which revels in dangerousness only as much as it has already been marginalized (the dumb "existence is resistance" platitude). The dirty little secret is that governments long ago found forms of management that secure virtuous outcomes even with non-virtuous subjects.[4]

The alternative to personal ethics is outlined in Bernadette Corporation's film *Get Rid of Yourself*. Ethics, on the one hand, demands a unified, consistent, principled set of habits that constrains one's activities to what is good. This is why the politics of abjection can be the most reactionary, as it simply parrots the world in relief. A life without ethical commitments, on the other hand, allows one to be free to do whatever. The immoralist's freedom does not come from the transgressive deviant's 'being not as one is supposed to be,' but the freedom of someone who has gotten rid of themselves

[4] Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality*, 2nd edition, 190–191.

ing her husband, mutilating and manipulating his impotent 'caring' liberalism for her own pleasure.

Afamiliar example for us is the vengeance of queers that 'bash back.' Explored with ferocity in *Queer Ultraviolence*, it is clear that queers do not always need 'protection' from the violence of society. Queer vengeance turns demands for submission into the fire that fuels criminal intimacies. *Are Christian protesters blocking the park where a Pride stage is being set up? Form a crew and roll on them hard. Did it not save the stage? So what! The newfound taste of power will awaken new appetites. The party will go on…* It is easy to see why Bash Back! burned out. It is hard to live a life always consumed with white-hot rage. Do not be mistaken: we are not preaching moderation. We are concerned with something much more mundane, which is how to avoid ending up like Valerie Solanas, dying broke and alone. Bash Back!, for all its talk of criminality, merely détourned the old game of identity-based visibility politics. For evidence, consider that the majority of writing collected in their anthology are communiques meant to publicize their actions. (We promise not to say anything about *Details* magazine.) Though a little too close to civil disobedience for comfort, Bash Back! remains an important experiment in politics worthy of repetition in new ways, in new contexts.

III. In Defense of Cruelty

This volume offers five striking cases of cruelty. The first is Global Shade's maximalist defense of the slogan, 'we want everything,' entitled "Nice Shit for Everybody." The audacity of the piece is its brilliance. They cruelly take leftists to task for using a theological narrative that builds a false equivalence between atonement and political success. We will not apologize for our desires, they declare, and subsequently pose the revolutionary demand for a system that can actually sate them. Such a thirst for communism has nothing

The most satisfying form of revenge is depicted in Lars von Trier's *Antichrist*. In it, we are shown how gender transmutes into the dark forces of nature. She is lightning. She is thunder. She is a swarm of locusts that descends like a plague on mankind.[14] The heroine does not disavow her gender but allows it to consume her, and she dissolves in it, only to emerge uncompromising hostile, operating at the edge of consciousness. By the time that "chaos reigns," subjectivity is left behind as a mere afterthought. It shows how subjectivity is a disposable accident – a mistaken focus caused by arrogance. More importantly, her transformation demonstrates how points of trauma either sediment into a fragile self or are turned inside-out with terrifying force. Liberal feminists, most of them men, dismissed the film as misogynist tripe. What a convenient way to ignore a very real path to women's empowerment. Von Trier himself provides this excuse, as he famously plays out his anger with his second-wave mom through his films. We hear that he is sadistic to women actors, and his misogyny is not hard to spot. The fate of women is central to his narratives, and one could read *Antichrist* as the nightmare of a misogynist. We will not argue with this interpretation but just flip it on its head: *Antichrist* is our holy ideal. Her ordainment by nature, "Satan's church," is not a credentialization but an increase in capacity.[15] She gives up her trembling fear for a pornographic combination of lust and desperation. The depravity of her sexuality is overshadowed only by the vengeful punishment she dishes out. Our heroine claws out of her paralyzing trauma by injur-

Reiser's band Sharam.

[14] Do not take mistake this as essentialism, as we do not mean to imply that there is some natural quality to women that allows them to channel nature. This is not some half-baked ecofeminism. We take Judith Butler's "Critically Queer" as a point of departure to simply note how 'women' can mutate into the cruel power of a milieu through "a compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms" (17).

[15] Earlier in this piece, we criticized theology. This should go without being said, but our claims here are wordplay and not a support of Satanism or any other theism, no matter how debauched.

and therefore becomes indifferent to *being any particular way at all*. Only then is one free to take on multiple identities, free to advocate contradictory positions, and free to speak in as many voices as necessary. There are certainly risks involved, and we have nasty names for those who use this freedom poorly: opportunists, cheats, and traitors. What one does with such freedom, however, is not ethical; it is political.

When it comes down to it, the point is not to be better than our enemies but to eliminate them. And such a task is completed on the field of politics, not ethics.

The second: prefiguration. We are not pacifists. And while not all practitioners of prefigurative politics would call themselves pacifists, prefiguration is inherently pacific – it pursues social solutions to political problems.

The first proponents of prefiguration affirmed society against the state. There was something provocative about 'the social' in the concept's early days at the tale end of the 18th century. Rationalists and free thinkers dreamed of socially-engineered alternatives to the strife of aristocratic war, plebeian food riots, and rampant exploitation. While anachronistic, it is still fun to read the utopian socialist fantasies of William Godwin, Henri de Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier. With the second-half of the 19th century, however, the new 'social sciences' invented techniques for charting, measuring, and managing the social – these now ubiquitous techniques were made to survey population groups for various behavior and risks, and led to voluntary social programs (insurance, compensation, education, training, and assistance) for peacefully creating 'more moral' and 'more effective' patterns of social behavior without the need for much direct intervention.[5]

[5] Jacques Donzelot, a student of Michel Foucault, claims that the techniques invented in France at that time were used to resolve labor conflicts. The key, he argues, was that the state wanted to compensate workers without also granting them any political power. See Donzelot, *L'invention du social: essay sur le déclin des passions politiques*.]

The problem with the social is not that it fails at its intended goals. There is no use in disputing the advances in education, science, or medicine brought by scientific planning of the social – they work. We instead take issue with the means through which the social brings social peace. As French historian Michel Foucault points out, the social was invented simultaneously with the science of the police and publicity, or as they are known today, Biopower and The Spectacle. The former ensuring that everything is found and kept in its proper place, and the latter making certain that everything which is good appears and everything which appears is good. The historical effects is that within the span of a few decades, the governmentalized techniques of the social were integrated into contemporary life and began passively making other means of existence either unlivable or invisible. Today, the social is nothing but a decentered category that holds the population to blame for the faults of government.[6]

Prefiguration fails to question the social. This is because prefigurative politics is: the act of reinventing the social. Socialist radicals come in a number of flavors. There are dual-power anarchists, who believe in building parallel social institutions that somehow run 'better' (though they rarely do, or only for a select few). There are humanist anarchists, who believe that when most styles of governance are decentralized, they then bring out human nature's inherent goodness. There are even pre-figurative socialists ("democratic socialists" or "reformists") who believe that many equally-allocated public resources can be administered by the capitalist state.[7] Ultimately, the social functions for prefigurative politics just as it did for utopian socialists and now the capitalist present – the social is the means to an ideal state of social peace.

[6] Recognizing the victim-blaming function of the social is not new. Anarchist nihilism as a long, storied history of rejecting the influence of the social. For a good overview, see Aragorn!'s 2013 essay collection *Boom: Introductory Writings on Nihilism*.

[7] Interestingly, many liberal anarchists are not pre-figurative. Though they

is mobilized: people of color as patronized as unable to participate in actions because of the differential risks entailed (likelihood to be targeted by the police, ability to make bail, etc.), and instead either the objects of charity or subjects capable only of retreat. Wang correctly asserts that the fact of those power differentials is accurate, but the politics of safety only draws conservative conclusions. This is because more privileged actors may have 'less to lose,' but they also have less to gain – they engage in radical politics out of choice, either on a whim or out of a misplaced sense of guilt, and can back out at any time without much consequence. Against the politics of safety that encourages only protection or retreat, Wang proposes a *militancy of the most vulnerable* where "it is precisely the risk that makes militant action more urgent – liberation can only be won by risking one's life" (10). Militancy underwritten by risk, she explains, fights with tools forged from riskiness. In principle, the same swelling of emotions that hardens into colonial "kernel of despair" becomes an essential resource for action when its direction is reversed (Wretched of the Earth, 293). This is the cruel capacity of partisanship, and it is exhibited when those most familiar with the territory transform their enemy's base of operations into a source of hostility.

Revenge. We find revenge underrated and underutilized. Revenge is as easy as it is familiar. It follows a comforting, geometric logic. It avoids the silly question of justice that seems to abstract to us to hold any value. Rather, its object is the real cause of suffering. Within intimate quarters, we may hold open the possibility for forgiveness (whatever that may be). But in approaching our enemies through the dilemma of "to punish or forgive," there must be a different solution. Our enemies can never be forgiven. Instead, we say to punish and forget. Continue until you "destroy what destroys you."[13]

[13] A 1969 song, "Macht kaputt, was euch kaputt macht," written by Rio Reiser and Norbert Krause for the play *Rita und Paul*, and later recorded in 1970s by

for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none."[12] The failure of humanism should be obvious – because empires are built on reason, tearing down an empire requires a confrontation with reason itself. Such a confrontation should not be performed head-on. Disputing colonial reason reveals its hollowness, as its contradictory voice is a resonance chamber that contains no fixed propositional content. Fanon recognizes the fruitlessness of fighting for legitimacy in a courthouse where one has no standing. He understands that the power of the colonial subject resides instead in its status as an object of desire. Colonial powers are both in love with but fearful of the native, which causes anxiety, paranoia, and obsession. "We must keep our eye on them! They cannot be trusted! Do not trust their sly, duplicitous mutterings!" Fulfilling his end of the seduction, Fanon gives a definitive answer to Spivak's question: the partisan should not speak their mind but rather voice their fury through action.

Jackie Wang's recent article "Against Privilege" outlines the consequences of Fanonian partisanship. She masterfully lists numerous examples of violence against people of color that never gained the notoriety of the Trayvon Martin case. The cause, she says, is that the appearance of innocence has become a precondition for public sympathy. This is why Trayvon Martin was presented as 'just a kid,' and we would add, why everyone emphasized Michael Brown's 'potential as a college student.' Wang's diagnosis is fairly non-controversial, as there are many humanist feminists who use it when arguing for simply expanding the frame of grievable bodies ("count more than the American deaths in the War on Terror," they say). Wang flips the script, however, arguing that the cult of innocence has lead to a politics of safety. 'Privilege analysis,' her target, appears obsessed with safely 'securing' the vulnerability of at-risk populations. Wang shows that time and again, how privilege theory

[12] Speech in Stockholm, available in audio-visual format in The Black Power Mixtape, Olsson 2011.

Let us be clear, we are not calling for social war. Everywhere, the social is pacification. Even social war thinks of itself as (good) society against the (bad) state. This is just as true of an 'anti-politics' that pits the social against politics. Look to John Holloway or Raúl Zibechi, who focus on indigenous resistance to the imperialism of capital and the state. Both argue that the threat is always 'the outside,' which comes in the form of either an external actor or a logic that attempts to 'abstract' the power of the social. Holloway argues that when the state is an objective fetish that robs the social of its dynamic power (*Change the World*, 15–9, 59, 94), while Zibechi says that indigenous self-management provides "social machinery that prevents the concentration of power or, similarly, prevents the emergence of a separate power from that of the community gathered in assembly" (*Dispersing Power*, 16). Such a perspective is deeply conservative in nature, and they lack a revolutionary horizon – they reject whatever are dangers imposed from without only by intensifying the internal consistency of a (family-based) community from within, thickening into a social shell that prevents relations of externality. Without going into much detail, this is the largest drawback to already existing utopian socialist experiments – the same autonomy that allows a group to detach from imperialistic domination also becomes cloistered, stuck in place and lacking the renewal provided by increased circulation.

Civil war is the alternative to the social. Against the social and socialism, we pit the common and communism. Our 'alternative in-

would bristle at the label, most anarchists today owe their theory of power to the liberal tradition. Such anarchism is concerned with the legitimacy of power, which begins with a possessive individualism that expands through the principle of non-coercion ('your freedom ends where mine begins') and contractual exchange (voluntary agreement). Liberal anarchists are in essence anti-corporate libertarians, as they hold that either individuals cannot accede power to institutions (*corporatio*), or if they can, such consent must be democratically determined. This is why we should be suspicious of liberals, even the anarchist ones, for they come dangerously close to the neoliberalism of Margaret Thatcher', who herself declared that "there is no society."

stitutions' are war machines and not organs of a new society. The goal cannot be to form a clique or to build the milieu. Insurrectionary communism intensifies truly *common conditions* for revolt – it extends what is already being expropriated, amplifies frustrations shared by everyone, and communicates in a form recognized by all. We fight for sleep, for every minute in bed is a moment wrested from capital. We deepen the hostility, for anger is what keeps people burning hot with fury during the cold protracted war waged by our faceless enemies. We spread images of insubordination, for such scenes remind everyone of the persistence of defiance in these cynical times. If we build infrastructure at all, it is conflict infrastructure. Most of the time, we take our cues from pirates, who would never strike out alone like Thoreau to invent something from scratch. They commandeer full-formed tools of society and refashion them into weapons. The other thing we have learned from pirates is that duration is a liability; abandon anything that becomes too costly to maintain – a project, a struggle, an identity – there are a million other places to intensify the conflict. But even in our life behind enemy lines, we agree with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who insist that war is only a secondary byproduct of the war machine; producing new connections is its primary function (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 416–423). We like how Tiqqun elaborates on this difficulty. If one focuses too much of living, they descend into the insulated narcissism of the milieu. If one focuses too much on struggling, they harden into an army, which only leads down the path of annihilation. The politics of civil war, then, is how exactly one builds the coincidence between living and struggling. Though most know it by its reworking, *Call*: to live communism and spread anarchy.

who are shill supporters of a cause. We mean the armed groups of history, such as the Soviet Partisans who fought a guerrilla war against the Nazis. Like their struggle, we must draw power from a surrounding milieu occupied by our enemies. While not criminal in principle, we act criminal in effect, acting in the furtive secrecy necessary to pull off sophisticated plots. This is a conspiracy, and we must learn how to act as smart, capable, and free conspirators. (That is the only version of freedom we can bear muttering: at large.) Making matters more complicated, the line between citizen and partisan zigzags through every one of us. Citizens follow the rules of the road while partisans drain the state's capacity to rule – yet even partisans drive of the correct side of the street on their way to blow up a bank. The fantasy of always living one's life as a partisan is a false one. The political question is how best to weave each rhythm into an eccentric counterpoint whose crescendoing moments of intensity are expended by the partisan and not the citizen.

Fanonian decolonial partisanship among the most intense example of partisanship. In 1963, Frantz Fanon addresses the colonial question in *The Wretched of the Earth* by saying that the time for thinking is over and the time for action is now. One could understand the distinction as a dull call for urgency, but that is far from the truth. The claim that he is making is far stronger; it is a response to the question of rhetoric that Spivak will make so many years later, "can the subaltern speak?" Fanon has been largely drowned out by humanist chatter that says that the subaltern should talk of 'our shared humanity.' Yet a unanimously denigrated people have little to gain from the language of universality. Kwamé Ture (at the time Stockley Carmichael, Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), revealed how humanism leads to tactical error, arguing that "Dr. King's policy was that nonviolence would achieve the gains for black people in the United States. His major assumption was that if you are nonviolent, if you suffer, your opponent will see your suffering and will be moved to change his heart. That's very good. He only made one fallacious assumption: In order

always be working to their advantage. Keene is thus the ideal image of 'social' unrest – the forms of contestation are over a state understood as nothing but the shared means for private appropriation. This is why insurrection is directed away from pumpkin patches and toward the organization of power, as it was done in Ferguson. Only then do we catch sight of refusal's true meaning: civil war.

Remember these images of civil war (Ferguson) and social unrest (Keene), for the Spectacle always operates by reversing this relationship. Through the eyes of the Spectacle, the people of Ferguson represent social unrest, yet we see a multitude who refuse to be properly socialized into their present conditions. Through the ears of the Spectacle, the students of Keene represent civil war, yet all we hear about 'civil war' is a temporary suspension of 'good manners,' and 'orderly conduct.' So in the face of corporate news reports, we say we are thankful for our failure to be commensurate with society. We relish any deepening of this incommensurability, with the desire to see it reach the threshold where insurrection exceeds social unrest and becomes civil war.

Partisanship. Partisanship can be contrasted with citizenship. Citizens are those who contribute, knowingly or not, to the wellbeing of the (social) state. The do not do this alone, as biopolitical governance is happy to offer loans to homeowners, educational opportunities, job training, and other things to irrigate the channels. Even unruly citizens help iron out the kinks of liberal institutions looking to 'deal with their diversity problems' and often end up leading the corporations charge for 'disruptive innovation' that rakes in profits. Those who participate in 'civil disobedience' are then the best citizens, and are no better than those so-called 'white hat hackers' who preemptively find vulnerabilities before they can become a problem. Civil disobedience draws on the power of good citizens rising above bad laws, implying of course, that citizens will publicly flaunt their own best behavior until they get the good laws that such good people deserve. Partisans, in contrast, are those who covertly fight a civil war. To be clear, we do not mean partisan politicians

II. The Politics of Cruelty

The politics that seduces us is not ethical, it is cruel. Few emotions burn like cruelty. Those motivated by cruelty are neither fair nor impartial. Their actions speak with an intensity that does not desire permission, let alone seek it. While social anarchism sings lullabies of altruism, there are those who play with the hot flames of cruelty. We are drawn to the strength of Frantz Fanon's wretched of the earth, who find their voice only through the force of their actions, the sting of women of color's feminist rage, which establishes its own economy of violence for those who do not have others committing violence on their behalf, the spirit of Italy's lapsed movement of autonomy, which fueled radicals who carved out spaces of freedom by going on the attack (*"Il Diritto all'Odio" – The Right to Hatred*), the assaults of Antonin Artaud's dizzying *Theatre of Cruelty*, which defames the false virtues of audience through closeness with the underlying physicality of thought, and the necessity of Gilles Deleuze's ontological cruelty, which returns difference through a change so painful that it breaks through the backdrop of indifference.

Interested in cutting through the noisy clutter of modern society, The Red Army Faction invited their enemies to "attack wildly" and paint them "as utterly black and without a single virtue" (*Urban Guerrilla Concept*). This wonderfully illustrates *Hostis* because our struggle is similarly one of asymmetry. This is also why we do not agree with the Maoist conclusion that the RAF draws; for them, "we must draw a clear line between us and our enemy." We have little patience for such manufactured decisiveness, an axiomatic decisionism of 'the two' that is best left to rot with the petrified corpse of Lenin. Our enemy no longer confronts us a subject, but as a general environment of hostility that seeks to neutralize us (*Introduction to Civil War*, §66). Such diffuse conflict is no doubt disorientating, but it does not prevent a return of certainty. Yet any reorientation at the level of the subject – friend, enemy, innocent, dangerous, or other-

wise – will be a false one. More appropriate for us is then the politics of difference, which usually gets coded according to categories of identity. But this requires first peeling back the liberal synthesis that dominates the politics of difference. Only then do we find that each perforation is a point of leverage.[8] The question arises: what cruelties make our differences into a million cutting edges?

Masochism. Cruelty materializes out of the world itself. Spiders are never taught how to spin a web or suck an ant dry. It is merely how they live. Meaning is not some human thing that we invented to make sense of the dumb universe, nor is it given from on high from some divine all-knowing authority. Thought bubbles up, escaping through cracks. We breathe it in like gas, sip on it like wine, or let is pass right through us like some hard, undigestible meal – and to our hazard. For thought is what allows us to override our programming, biological and social. There are those sadists who think of themselves as warriors of truth. Their names annoyingly find their way into many conversations, "Christopher Hitchens said that…" "Did you hear what Richard Dawkins did the other day…?". Their sadism shows them to be nothing but narcissists who pleasure themselves by condescending to others. The sadist's economy of cruelty is self-serving, as it works through a zero-sum game that builds up the sadist by tearing down their foes.

Opposite the sadist, there is another important figure in the sadistic's zero-sum economy of cruelty: the martyr. The martyr is someone who sacrifice themselves. So common is the martyr today, that nearly everyone already understands how they live. It is the logic of our enemies, and it is clear who seeks refuge in the logic of sacrifice: fascists and activists. Fascists ritualistically feed on the flesh

[8] Tiqqun myopically claims that predicates/qualities are only possible points of control. While true, it seems obvious that the opposite is also the case. Others just as short-sighted repeat the claim, such as the Institute for Experimental Freedom who use it as a fundamental precept for *Between Predicates, War*. While we can blame Badiou's influence for Tiqqun's aseptic definition of the Common, IEF's is far less clear.

retain all of this statement's polemical force and extended it to all identities. In the present society, there cannot really exist any identity category, except in recognizing how it only produces the opposite of the desired, stable, identity it promises; every identity merely tells the story of war – wars past and wars to come – and the asymmetrical power formations that have brought bodies to their present collective moment.

Instead of appealing to the absence of divine authority, as the law does, the force of insurrection comes from a long history of distrusting such authority. It is through cruelty that feminists rightly say that we can tell our stories of becoming politicized through emotions.[11] Politics is nothing but the *anger* we feel at the degradation and exploitation of the global south for the benefit of the select few in the global north, the *shame* we feel passing beggars on the street, and the *love* we feel for those people who have proven to us that what is most necessary. This is our chance for taking the politics of struggle beyond a strategy of one-ups-man-ship over privileged individuals. Shared affects are the basis for an alternative, and they signal our absolute refusal to buy into the game.

If there is any doubt on the different structures of feeling that separate us from the law, look at the incredible discrepancy between the recent protests in Ferguson, Missouri (civil war) and the inanity of the student 'riots' in Keene, New Hampshire (social unrest). In the former case, people of color mobilized against the state and police brutality after the police shot and killed and innocent black youth. In the latter, white college students were educated in the insubordination appropriate to their career-climbing futures, upset by their frustrated entitlement to pumpkins. Unlike the people of Ferguson, the students in Keene were motivated by the mutual confidence of coddled children, protesting a state that they think should

ipino Condition, 2.

[11] Mary Eagleton and Sara Ahmed, "Feminist Futures," in *A Concise Companion to Political Theory*.

Its image of change does not involve activist campaigns, mass movements, or political campaigns. The theater of cruelty is played out as "an insurrection without an immediately recognizable enemy" (Gorelick, "Life in Excess"). Its politics of sensation spreads at the level of our passions – privately simmering in the cold hatred of isolation, erupting on the streets in the hot flash of riots, and fought in all the moments between the everyday and the spectacular.

Civil War. We reject the whole idea of 'the law' that Derrida so famously problematizes.[9] He shows how the law is a text like all others – a set of fictions whose authority comes from nowhere in particular and is justified through empty absolutes. Moreover, acts executed in the name of law are arbitrary and random, for the only defense for the violence of their actions is sovereignty. There is nothing that differentiates the law from any other act of force, except that the law claims to hold the exclusive right to commit violence. To cede authority to any law, then, is to cede any potential for *insurrection.*

What insurrection promises is civil war, as in the indefinite suspension of the social. If there are no rules in war, then there are no identities left to affirm in civil war. There is nothing to praise in the unjustness of war, except that it lays bare the starkness of how social categories promise peace but only deliver war. Behind every claim to an identity is a history of suffering, colonialism, violence, and exploitation that renders meaningless the statements of 'proudly' claiming 'our' identity. We should not pride ourselves on the victories of our enemies, but rather pride ourselves in finally coming to terms with the freedom to have been done with any identity whatsoever. This line of thought, taken up by Dylan Rodriguez and his work on Filipino American identity, leads to only one conclusion: "there really cannot exist a Filipino or 'Filipino-American' subject, or collective identity…"[10] The challenge of civil war is to

[9] Jacques Derrida, *The Force of Law, the 'Mythical Foundation of Authority.'*

[10] Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Fil-*

of broken bodies and drink spilled blood to gain eternal life. Activist ritualistically transubstantiate their creature comforts by gifting them to the cause. Such death and discomfort is slavish. Reeking of the worst theology, the martyr's sacrifice follows from thinking stunted by a restricted economy of representation. In their limited imagination, they imagine lives to be scarce commodities, and that these lives can be exchanged for something in return. Think 'nice guy' sexual entitlement, murderous 'service' to the state. Also think anarchists' vouching for other's great acts, do-archists' sweat equity, privilege theorists' measured valuation of bodies. "Those who deserve the greatest are those who have given the most (of themselves)."

Masochistic thought operates through an economy of terror. Such thought feeds neither the sadist nor the martyr. It does not build up one side while tearing down the other. Thought here is not a weapon to be used against horror, as in reason triumphing evil. The masochistic creates an economy of pleasure whereby thought disputes through disruption, troubling and upsetting all parties involved. "Extreme horror alone keeps reason awake," Blanchot reminds us, arguing that "the logic of sacrifice" is a sham, for it holds onto the hope that "the only awakening is an awakening to horror, in which the moment of truth shines through," but without any real effect (Blanchot, *Une pensée finis*, 70–71).

The cruelty of masochism is the result of a paradoxical interpersonal scene that occurs only when there is enough intimacy to wound but too much distance for understanding. As a formula: intimacy + distance = masochism. Desire is the key to understanding such a queer combination of forces. We think of cruelty as only a tool of the sadist. But here we approach you as masochists, through and through. To understand our position, first cast aside what Freud told you about S&M. His own sadistic voice hides masochism by telling us that it is the subservient half to a whole. What a lie. There is nothing complementary about the writings of Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. The first is a bureaucrat's meticu-

lous obsession delivered through his bored cataloging of the laws of obscenity, while the other performs a mythical displacement of sex that remains suggestive in description while artfully evading any obscenity. So yes, sadism is the pleasure of control. But masochism? It is not the pleasure of being ground into dirt, no. Masochism bargains in coldness. There is a dialectical cleverness to its coldness, however. (Masochism is not disinterest.) The masochistic scene begins with attraction – it excites, it provokes, and it builds anticipation – but only to withhold, to frustrate, and to drive mad. The seduction of masochism creates belief, but only as it can continue stringing someone along.

This is not a simple call to transgression. Our enemies have wised up and few include virtuosity in their marketing campaigns. They realize that everyone wants to feel at least a little transgressive these days. The recession of saintly figures does mean that morality tales have disappeared. Virtuousness now appears in negative; wickedness is paraded in front of audiences for them to 'make their own decision.' It hardly works, though, as postmodernism took the piss out of disruption – little is truly shocking anymore. Frat boys love either American Psycho or Fight Club, depending on their mood. There are plenty of stockbrokers that read Bukowski and defense analysts who refuse to miss 'Girls' on Sunday nights. This confirms a suspicion many have had about the radical potential of cultural politics obsessed with its own marginality: rather than condemning badness, today's depictions of transgression end up making it mundane.

Imagine the outrage in 1917 to seeing Duchamp's urinal for the first time! We are reminded of Antonin Artaud's "theater of cruelty." Artaud believed that theater is the most inspired when it connects with our most basic instincts. Instead of a theater of cognition that shocks you think, the theater of cruelty shocks you to feel. Yet the point of the theater of cruelty is not the shock – it uses sensation as a medium that speaks directly to our various capacities as human animals. This is what separates the theater of cruelty from

confessional fiction that peddles in the banality of transgression. The theater of cruelty taps into connections that exist at a level that precedes thought, identity, or representation – mutual hunger, not concern for the other – and seeks to rob us of the words *that we have already found* (Artaud, *Selected Writings*, 35). This is how Artaud's theater breaks through the habits of mind that prevent real thought, but without priding itself on ethical commitments, principled stands, or statements belief. Such masochist cruelness provokes because it robs us of the convenient comforts we use to put off the painfully difficult, disorienting process of creative thought.

Our call to sensation is not to titillate or entertain. Postmodernism has so thoroughly colonized pleasure that the 60's slogan 'just do what feels good' now plays more to the interests of Levi's Jeans than anyone else. We instead speak of desire, which reflects the realities of that very primal urge to act against our own best interest. Pleasure is just a feeling; desire sets it all in motion. The jolt of power that comes from slinging a racist insult is pleasure. The delirious notions that center society, such as our ideas of racial hierarchy or financialized capitalism, are the workings of desire. Rationality is an obvious response, but axioms are not terribly effective at combatting desire. Try skipping the bill through the assertion that no monetary mass 'exists' anywhere. Artaud's theater shows us how to proceed *by way of delirium*. It cuts into desire, rearranging investments and builds a new will to power. Strategically, we are interested in the cruel desires of masochism. Instead the usual focus on deviants, who rub their exceptional filthiness in the face of prudes, we approach desire as communists speaking to what is truly common among the masses. Our point of access not that grandma's hidden kink or our neighbors subtle racism. We follow the theater of cruelty's search for things so basic that they exceed our best attempts to contain them (limited by a sexual identity, divided by racialized categories). Cruelty instead feeds on our shared appetites, collective frustrations, and mutual fascinations. There is nothing further from the politics of policies, programs, and planned futures.