

ablsh yr slf



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affective disorder



journal of  
*common notions*  
[spring [two thousand ten]]

“deploying a politics  
of subversion,  
contemporary anarchist practice  
exercises a satirical pressure on the state  
in order to show  
that other forms of life  
are possible.”

“politically, humor is a  
powerless power  
that uses its position of weakness  
to expose those in power  
through forms  
of self-aware ridicule.”

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vast populations  
are not being integrated  
into societies, because they  
don’t want to, because they  
don’t know how to, or because they  
are actively being rejected.

if we wanted to be inte-  
grated, there would be no problem and democratic republican-  
ism would prevail again. instead, however, we reject western  
cultural values altogether, remaining on the fringe out because  
we don’t want to be a part of a society that doesn’t want us. ev-  
erything becomes a negation of everything that was before: riots  
before ballots, occupations instead of negotiations, smashing clocks  
as an alternative to holding meetings. western youth are often  
pinned as the most apathetic of generations yet, and to a degree  
this is true in that we are apathetic about an electoral politics  
that doesn’t work or represent anything or represents everything  
but is all representation.

as politicians  
and their apprentices  
wait around for  
pending legislation,  
students from greece,  
to france,  
to germany,  
to new york city,  
to california,  
to austria  
are occupying  
our universities.

one thing  
is certain:  
we simply  
can’t wait  
for catastrophe  
to come  
to us!

this isn't to say that sociology  
is necessarily a good  
or bad thing, but rather  
that the conception of sociology  
was dependent on the fact  
that the general public  
were beginning to by and large  
be incorporated into  
a political sphere.

on some levels this was  
obviously cathartic, especially in terms of basic human rights;  
without such enlightenment ideals there would have perhaps  
been no end to slavery in the western world.

however, this conception of the social as an actual entity made  
the social realm thought of as the basis for political life, in  
practice meaning that if people think they are being counted  
and incorporated, they are less likely to lash out against an  
unjust system. where does this leave us then? it is no wonder  
that time and time again there emerge movements of those that  
are uncounted or forgotten, those that feel they lost by society.  
one reaches a point wherebysociologists create such complicated  
theories of social webbing that we're all tied up. we're being  
choked, counted, and disregarded at the same time.

when individuals feel  
rejected  
by society,  
they reject back.

when enough people  
bounce back  
or bad thing, but rather  
it becomes as if society  
no longer exists,  
except as a connection that allows  
people to feel connected  
to other people,  
people that spend  
the majority  
of their time trying  
to create a personality  
that feigns  
social distinction.

this is nothing short of  
an identity crisis.

[affective disorder  
[in the spring of  
a still-born  
decade]]

a friend once said:  
no revolution is going to be generated  
out of systemic  
or structural laws.  
we are on our own, and what we do  
we have to do for ourselves.

we are the denizens  
of a strange epoch,  
the 'given' in a surreal situation.

while knowledge of space and time has been democratized, the  
modes of inhabiting them (the modes of being) are controlled  
more intensely than ever before. while sharing of information  
is ubiquitous, understanding and love appear empty at best - at  
worst cliché. but where global-capitalism's erasure of traditional  
and stable social structures and identifications might be seen as a  
fatal loss,

we eschew the temptation  
of nihilism  
out of preference  
for naiveté and imagination  
furiously unearthing potential  
from nothingness,  
conjuring opportunity  
from the void  
we find ourselves peering into.

our enemy has no name of its own.

we have named it  
time and again, but because the enemy only exists within a given situation, its face, tactics, and form change continually. with marx we had its first secular manifestation: the bourgeoisie and its weapons capital and the state. but since then, new faces and new techniques of exploitation have come to fruition:

national security,  
public relations,  
cybernetics,  
crisis-management,  
anti-terrorism,  
the media spectacle,  
biopower,  
- the list goes on.

but that capitalism is worth nothing without labor still holds: the harder we work, the more we are exploited; the more we try, the more we give away. but unlike in marx's day, capitalists no longer fund their ventures independently, nor are we only working in the fields and factories. it's not the people at the top that keep the gears in motion - the idea-people and managers who finance and organize companies with our lives (debts, labor, futures) - we're the ones that produce, trade, and borrow the things we are taught to, whether food or identities.

we've been taught how important a college education is, how we will be competing with our peers for the little work there is, how we want to own a house and car, how we don't want to end up wasting our precious free-time cleaning our own homes (the home is assumed). we fear the idea of waiting tables for a living, of working in the bleakness of the office, of collecting other people's garbage.

we fear debt,  
the neighbor,  
the boss.

we fear that we will not be enough.  
in this, we are our own  
worst enemy.

for we exist within  
a system that in even  
the most benign forms  
is nothing more than a means for control

no matter what liberal legislation is passed to make the people feel good. while the nature of almost all political units tends towards becoming as organized as possible, towards "organizing" the youth, "organizing" the poor and "organizing" people of color, the dialogue of constant organizing eventually gets to the point where people begin to realize that "to organize" anyone means little more than "to use to the advantage of the organization", the organization being little more than mush.

the traditional social justice framework suggests that the goal of revolutionary politics is to vie for the individual rights granted by the state, to grasp the straws at the bottom of the barrel. the alternative involves working outside the framework itself, creating an existential form of freedom that ignores the state and transcendental values. proponents of the latter believe that the reason why institutions of power look like they are not living up to their expectations as tools for equality, justice, and freedom, is because such a pervasive dialogue of justice, freedom, equality, and social reform for the greater good is the first sign that an institution is set up to take away the actual substance comprising those values. the institution wants to garner love and support, not higher truth; it engages in a passionate, monogamous love affair with the signifier.

political activism can then  
be regarded  
as no more  
than a love slap to the state,  
in an extremely  
masochistic relationship.

society itself is merely a theory of organization; it exists as something that is interesting to fathom, but isn't really there. sociology as a field was not created until 1780, when french scholar emmanuel joseph sieyes, author of the profoundly influential "what is the third estate?" used the term, and from its very outset, the use of society to conceive of relations between people has been contested. this comes at little surprise, having occurred during the enlightenment at an age in which constitutions were being drafted giving certain rights to individuals; in an age in which the general public had a greater influence on institutional politics than ever before.



# [ the black bloc && the hall of mirrors ]

for every issue  
of social importance  
there is a faction  
that pretends  
to represent it,

but every faction is quick to mimic the absurd democratic forms of representation that such groups allegedly work against. anyone who cares about the plight of dairy cows can join a group that fights for the ethical treatment of animals; those that like fresh air can buy canvas bags instead of accepting disposable ones, and those that want to speak can join whatever civil liberties union best represents the sound of their voice. anyone can stand out in a frozen public square asking for petitions until their fingers bleed and their thighs burn from the cold air. the more elite and inspired might even organize groups with specific goals and specific points of unity, perhaps electing leaders to guide them down the road of legal street-side protests wearing flowers in their hair and singing. they might aspire to be more radical, functioning by consensus only, even participating in illegal actions with specific demands on particular reprehensible leaders, demands as potent as the dismissal of such leaders themselves.

as touching as this all may be, it is impossible to escape state form by functioning in this way; any feeling of accomplishment is merely another triumph for institutional reality as we know it, because governance is a form of control, or if not control at the very least postponement. in this way all conventional forms of activism against the state must be negated.

furthermore activism itself  
must be negated  
because all symbolic  
actions demand  
something from a system  
that is inherently unjust, and desires  
no more than its own bare existence.

we have been thrown  
into a situation without  
a positive solution:

we can allow ourselves to be overcome with fears of poverty and failure and the desire for comfort and security; or we can call ourselves to struggle and uncertainty. unfortunately, the provided means of certainty demand servitude, the relinquishing of potential for creating a world, for living in common. to live with what's been given would require wasting our only opportunity, but

the side effect of facing  
the openness of the future  
is the anxiety of confronting  
existential and social death.

the war to be fought is not (only) external, but (also) internal: our enemies are the ethos of comfort and fear and the hegemony of the future, a cultural and temporal enemy occupying both our psychic and social spaces. it will be objected:

“you’re worried about culture  
and time in response  
to the brutal exploitation  
of capitalism?”  
“what has become  
of class war? direct action?  
communism?”

nothing. class war cannot exist without a class-consciousness; direct action without actors; communism without communists. we want these things too, but the tools we’ve been given no longer serve us. we must develop new technologies of the mind and heart, new weapons for a new war.

but how is it to be done? how do we wage war on ideas and emotion? how do we wrest control of our hardened relations, held together on one level with violence, but also by fear of the unknown, of one another, of the future?

we don’t know.  
yet.

this is *affective disorder*:

to share affect that allows us to find ourselves and one another, and to imagine who we might be. we already know we want something similar in this situation, but we have yet to imagine exactly what it is be or how to go about it.

it is no coincidence

*community, communication, communism*

share a form

and history.

what is common is shared, whether on paper, on the table, or in the street. the common is not the founding of an organization but the sharing of an experience; not the knowing who we are, but affirming that we are. our endeavor is to act and play a new world into being; to articulate a means of community that is communication itself; to invent a communism that stabs holes in orthodoxy and embraces imagination and sharing. in this way we might discover that we are and what we want to do.

by all means,  
speak your mind.

and while we offer no strategy or cure, we have found tactics and remedies to focus our anger and channel our vertigo: the emptiness of social life - revealed in the spectacular-state's endless game of destruction-of-old and integration-of-new forms of life - is our point of departure.

where the past is a burden,  
we sever it,  
like a pinned tail.

where the present is a full page,  
we fill up its margins.

where the future is an abyss,  
we greet it,  
killing ourselves  
laughing.

really, can i dream of something  
which is not this?

and i tell you honestly as i write this in a dark room of refracted emptiness at 4:52 am: i could, but only after having seen death burn; i can now dream that i have burnt dreams such as this wet-dream advertisement of 45 seconds consistency back into the dust from which it came, but it has taken pain on a level quite difficult to duplicate.

can i dream?  
i believe so,  
now that i know that i am dead.

and then...

"it's something new...  
it's the internet,  
in the shape of you"  
[yahooooo]

the internet, pure other, constantly changing and absorbing, eating and shitting, is now given to us as commandment, but only one this time: be yourself [buy yourself?]. thousands of bodies dancing in unison, undulating in carefully choreographed chaos, from spectacular mass to forceful word: you, the only tenant of the new religion of the ampaphoromized mode of relation known as cyber space: space without time, time without mass, mass without force. the other devours us in its everlasting death-throws: we are swallows whole and fed back to ourselves on a line of credit, the interest of which is ever-rising in terms of monetary capital, and yet ever falling in terms of social-capital. we hate ourselves, and those of us who fell through the glass-ceiling of the crystal palace of modernism feel the faintest breath of the depression of our daily lives upon the back of our necks. it is a chill wind, freezing beyond the point of ice, cold which cracks organs like empty oj-cartons, which devours the aftertaste of our own flesh with such unhibited delirious joy that it would be beautiful if only you could get past the putrid smell of long rotten wounds and crushed eyes across the floor. is this death? surely it couldn't be life. is this me? i think so. is this you? no, but it must be you, or so i am told. is this real? how could it not be, it is not alive, the pure non-life that the rock-stars pay so dearly for.

do you think it can burn?  
do you think *you* can burn?

yet everything is already dead,  
so the divine nature of capital serves to reinforce the fact that  
we are all twice dead. we were born dead, and then the self-  
realization of our own inherent post-modernism, our innate  
understanding that our lifeblood is not only some liquid, but is  
the commodity-form boiled down to its basest elements, has led  
to our deaths, again.

dionysian life in a controlled environment is still artificial life  
after all, so how could we be truly alive now? it is in fact,  
death, the second death multiplied over the potential endpoints  
of the temporal vector we call the real. the only "real" life [or  
the closest we can come to reclaiming agency over our second  
death, perhaps even overcoming it by going-under reality itself]  
is dionysian emotional output in an uncontrolled environment,  
which is to say,

a riot on a scale unknown,  
unimaginable.

*if i can dream,*

a new show enabling one to watch 5 different  
sexy unreal bodies, from any angle, 24 hours a day, at any time,  
on the internet, via a single website, for "free" is advertised on  
the same website, blaring old-world new-style jazz music includ-  
ed. it almost gets you hard, if only it wasn't so jarringly perfect,  
carefully off-kilter as the face of a credit card, in migraine-  
halcyon tones. architects tools and photoshop and cocaine  
come to mind, escorted by escorts who havn't been able to look  
themselves in the eyes for weeks now. mtv's realworld taken to  
its logical extension, a one-sided civil war on the unconscious  
followed to its inevitable end: total and complete annihilation of  
any form of feeling, modes fall down the wall, transforming into  
codes as they are swept up off the floor by an unknown maid.  
he or she is faceless, infinitely replicable as far as "we" are  
concerned, much like the code itself, the evolutionary virtual-  
migrant worker of consciousness-manipulation: all sex and no  
cum, no sex and all painted latex. it is everything we have ever  
hoped for, everything we have ever desired, everything we have  
ever dreamed, and yet it is moreso nothing in a manner horrible  
beyond comprehension, full of psycho-physical form and simul-  
taneously devoid of any feeling, any desire originating from the  
self-alone. we are fed this shit, it is pumped into our veins and  
down our gaping gullets like so much sludge, heroin of plastic  
feces and chanel shoes.

can i dream?

# [procedural notes [on the *occupization* of everything]]

"where have all  
the protesters gone?"

asks authority,  
in administration seminars and contrived editorials. the flashes  
of resistance have become elusive. perhaps there have not been  
any explosive occupations, moments of extreme joy and ten-  
sion, but our sedition is nonetheless maintained. last semester,  
our compassion was confined to several absurd and spontaneous  
situations, in which the coagulation of our desires proved to be  
no match for the relentless refrigeration initiated by state and  
corporate forces. no matter. in the streets of fifth avenue, we  
felt the power of our affective flux. we manifested ourselves  
amongst the falling leaves, affirming entropy as our answer to a  
static pollution. the celebration of tom ridge, bastard agent of  
power, was curtailed through carelessly organized insanity. the  
maintenance of order stuttered as we blazed through art shows,  
busy shopping streets, police lines. the relentless militarization  
of the new school, concurrent with the proud hopelessness of  
the obama administration, posed a fatal question. it was one  
we could not answer. so we presented fractal desires and ab-  
surd logic; we learned to laugh in the awkward silences. when  
faced with the meaningless abyss of neoliberal capitalism, the  
slow social death of higher education, we posed an alternate  
set of questions, this time unanswerable by the system itself.

we affirmed ourselves

*in catastrophic affective disorder.*

we have gone nowhere;

we have been watching and waiting. as  
our friends in austria and germany occupied and shut down the  
majority education system. as our friends in london and greece  
took back their lives. the huge protests in california succeeded  
in making the so-called crisis in american universities front-  
page news. there occupations succeeded in restoring an unprec-  
edented degree of militancy to a stagnant student movement.

[thirty two, thirty three]

we may act slowly,

*but we act surely.*

we know that this current crisis is not something to be intimidated by, nor is it anything particularly new. while the stagnant left holds out hope that some answer may emerge, some democratic or participatory alternative to relentless accumulation, we know that this crisis is merely a facade. the system is not breaking, there is no catastrophic meltdown threatening life as we know it. 'if only,' we find ourselves saying; witness the societal preoccupation with disaster movies.

capitalism is not in crisis, rather,

*it is crisis;*

its strategies absorb an infinite accumulation of disasters and use them

*to power its perpetuation.*

we say: "occupy everything" ...

while there have been no major occupations on the east coast in the past few months, we still find ourselves occupying certain spaces, certain precarious fractures outside of cybernetically manipulated space and time. riots, chaotic parties, theoretical breaches; an infinite plurality of moments of negation. we have no answers, so we call the questions into question. we have no power, so we invalidate such an arcane concept. our project is not the discovery of a new world, but the destruction of all maps that could lead to its colonization. we find the tasks we undertake rendered as aesthetic and ethical, rather than as social or political: so be it. we have more interest in a community of friends than a society of elders. the utopia is the non-space outside of time, the realm of pure potentiality which we are in the process of occupying. if contemporary neoliberal civil society is, to borrow a term from leibniz, the best of all possible worlds,

we can conceive of communism  
only through *aphophatic elucidation*,  
that is, as the divine synthesis  
*of each and every impossible world.*

[1] what i must do is all  
that concerns me,  
not what the people think.

this rule,  
equally arduous in actual and intellectual life,  
may serve for the whole distinction between  
greatness and meanness.

it is the harder, because you will always find  
those who think they know  
what is your duty better than you know it.

it is easy in the world to live after  
the world's opinion; it is easy  
in solitude to live after our own;  
but the great person is one who,  
in the midst of the crowd  
keeps with perfect sweetness  
the independence of solitude.

[ the third coming  
[and the three  
dead kings]]

advertisement before  
animated future  
from the past based in  
a further past:::

[cartoons are more real than the "realworld", we feel a deeper connection with them than with the homeless man on the street: "with this new system from verizon fios, you can watch your favorite shows in up to six different rooms...bedroom, man cave... or woman cave," [the dvd player is "gender neutral."]]

capital kills everything,  
capital reifies everything,  
including struggles based on a predetermined set of fighting-  
grounds, of playing-fields. even the struggle against the norms  
of capital ultimately increase the arsenal drawn up against our  
minds and hearts and maybe even souls if such a thing existed.



faculty, too, have resigned themselves to a path of minimum resistance. in a forum on student activism last semester occasional student ally andrew arato unveiled his plan of resisting the administration: "acting as though it does not exist." thus, the actual source of conflict-- the mixture of corporate hierarchy with the values of educational community-- is deferred and protest becomes integrated with bureaucracy.

the actual source of conflict  
- the mixture of corporate hierarchy  
with the values of educational community -  
is deferred and protest  
becomes integrated  
with bureaucracy.

the end of momentum of new school activist indicates kerrey's strategy of removing himself from conflict, thus engendering indifference for his management has proven itself effective, but also indicates the students have learned a valuable lesson -

rallying around single  
issue causes  
only carry the cause of  
structural inversion  
to the point of compromise.

this message has made its way to march 4th coalition organizers that now seem conflicted on calls to break from the solitary confinement of their transitional platform. a flier showing a clock as a bomb with a short fuse reading: "this is no time for another rally" has forced a defensive stance as they struggle to find numbers for the permitted rally in midtown. they answer the flier saying occupations can be a part of their movement, but this where they are wrong. their style of rallies-- police escorted-- have taken the form of a human petition-- bodies as signatures and the streets as a page. occupations hold the power systems that revere the power of managerial figures such as kerrey illegitimate, and thus are an irreconcilable challenge to the logic that sustains our culture. and although any action can be painted as risky or ineffective, the tactic has expanded dramatically across the globe in recent years, appearing in new york in december 2007...

and now perhaps coming full circle  
the reappearance of individuals,  
in perpetual conflict,  
who find the stench of solitude  
anything but sweet.

we refer to this process,  
the bringing to prominence  
*of the marginalia,*  
the process of  
*revealing ourselves,*  
as  
*occupization.*

understand that the actual physical, temporal or ideological space of the occupation means very little to us. instead, we find significant the irregular social relationships and forms of friendly wisdom which are brought forth through such a fracture. we have developed a great appreciation for the intense liberation of affective currents that our actions facilitate. by destroying the conception of 'political work',

we begin situating dissidence  
within the realm of play;

our community  
receives amazing bursts of energy, empowerment and emotion as a direct result. we disregard strategy for tactics that resonate with an alienated multitude, quite willing to be laughed at; we have realized that laughter is contagious. the very presence of alternative, seemingly absurd forms of dissidence undermines those forms of progressive action which strengthen the state and capitalist normalcy.

through occupization,  
the constant struggle  
*to develop fractures*  
and make occupation a possibility,  
*we assert our presence*  
as pure, dischordant  
*potentiality.*

# [the university, the social factory, [the broken class]]

the developments of late modernity brought with them the political philosophies of autonomia and further, the conception of the social factory. it was a matter of course that a culture so obsessed with progress and production would seek to maximize the output of its working classes. we see this attempt to extort the maximum amount of value from labor, this mode of valorization that has been labeled fordism, as inexorably linked with the development of mass production. we have witnessed its expansion out of the workplace, encompassing the life of the neoliberal subject in its entirety. socially, this means the domination and exploitation of culture, of art, of all forms of social interaction. entertainment, adolescence, and romance - once outside the sphere of work - soon become mere productive appendages. our lives prepare us for surreal forms of labor: seduction and persuasion, the branding of intricate commodities, and the manipulation of emotion. on the individual level, the effect appears more profound. was there ever a time our parents needed not experience the burden of work? taylorism, the management science of efficiency and exploitation, now no longer concerned itself only with employees' motions inside the factory, with how they worked. in their relentless search for a highly educated and completely disempowered workforce,

corporations also sought to control  
every aspect  
of how workers lived.

human resources concerns itself with which products people bought, but also whether they recycled them; not only which magazines they subscribed to, but also the corresponding political beliefs; not only where their children went to school, but also their course of study. corporations no longer needed to extract every ounce of value from workers in the workplace -

the management of consumption  
had become far more profitable.

despite its many  
points of friction, class  
society perpetuates its ability  
to atomize actors in conflict.

in the private sphere

resolution of conflict is simple: return to work and cease resistance. by retreating from conflict until his contract expires kerrey robs his opposition the chance to continue using him as a symbolic enemy for their anti-capitalist struggle. compromises are made, amnesty is granted, and all combatants return to their rightful workplaces: the interior of capital hidden in all conditions. in short, he sweetly resists the temptation to continue furthering his personality in exchange for making the struggle once again too big to fight.

this maneuver is a clever method of inhibiting agitators, who generally depend on salient points around which to call rallies. in kerrey's case, these exist as

transgressions of power  
pitifully referred to as a "crisis  
of authority."

on march 4th a broad coalition of groups is organizing rallies against the commodification of education. in new york the coalition plans to protest outside the governor's office in an appeal for reform. after all, such appeals have succeeded in california, where schwarzenegger can currently be seen desperately attempting to find the funds to reverse the tuition increase in hopes of appeasing the liberal faction of student protesters. the new school administration is continuing a similar strategy of minimal appeasement; two recent messages from the board of trustees reveal diluted solutions to student demands raised at the first occupation. the first confirms the convening of a search committee for a replacement for bob kerrey, who agreed to end his presidency in 2011 following the april fools occupation (but secretly jockeyed for a three year extension last semester.) the next email confirmed the creation of socially responsible investment committee. both committees are to employ input from student stooges handpicked by the board, and are

further transparent  
attempts to pacify  
'radical' student groups  
who seem to be descending  
to the same sweet solitude  
as their old rival.

# [a christmas card [from kerrey: the sweet solitude of activism]]

be self reliant  
in a crowd?  
of all places, yes  
even grand central?  
yes  
how?

keep with perfect sweetness  
the independence of solitude.  
ok, we'll try.  
-bob, sarah, henry

this is the text of the christmas card bob kerrey sent to all new school faculty. on the cover an overhead, panoramic photograph of grand central terminal. the crowd is blurred with the motion of commuters making their way to their individual platforms, but in the lower right hand corner three individuals are huddled together, suspended from the motion, expressionless. they are the only thing in focus. nowhere do the words "happy holidays" appear; this is less a christmas card than a clue to the interior workings of the new school as it maneuvers to absorb the consequences of three semesters of radical struggle.

sent to faculty, the card is clearly meant to be a response to the university's widespread disrespect towards his administration. substituting "unilateral authority" for "self reliance" the poem becomes concerned with how to effectively manage a territory teeming with elements that resist management. kerrey awkwardly appropriates a quote from emerson: "keep with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." (1)

like an arcane monarch,  
he exercises his god-given  
authority with infinite compassion, and  
when he is forsaken  
he retreats to his  
heavenly ivory tower  
continuing his 'duties' as if  
his opposition no longer exists.

one should not take this to mean that subsumption and commodification of life outside the workplace only begun at the end of the century; it was, however, in this period, that the procedure became completely normalized. throughout the twentieth century, we could point to a plurality of autonomous cultures, sub-cultures and forms-of-life. now, however, this task becomes increasingly difficult. with the defeat of the second world through the failure of state communism, and the neutralization of third world independence movements through post-colonial forms of domination, we saw the emergence a boundless universe of neoliberal capitalism. there was no alternate form of production for capitalism to compete with, no form of structural organization that could possibly produce more goods. the battle had become largely a question

of the possibility for  
autonomous cultures.

and so, the factories closed. fordism was over by the late 1970s, as the american model of industrial production gave way to japanese-inspired just-in-time cybernetic production. what emerged was a new phenomenon; post-fordism, a new psychedelic, psychotic american dream. the west had, and was won. the united states and its allies had out-produced every other country and were capable of flooding repressive socialist regimes with cheap commodities and cheaper culture. it had begun to export to everywhere on the planet, establishing a globalized circuit of commerce and commercialization. and so, having produced everything imaginable, it was left to the citizens of the west to destroy and consume.

[after the battle came the feast.]

paradoxically, despite the untold toil of a century of hard labor, few have seen real rewards. the retired factory worker, the elderly nurse, the wounded veteran; all have memories of lifetimes of backbreaking work, yet many are left in poverty, told by the american dream-turned-nightmare that they have failed only through their own impotence. we, their descendants, have learned from their mistakes and know to whom they fell victim.

their pensions,  
our supposed futures,  
as stockholder dividends  
or defense appropriations.

while some talk of an absent future, we might talk of a past of absence. the privileged among us were compensated for the removal of our parents with an avalanche of stuff, of obsolescent toys, and twenty-four hour prime time programming. some of us received a rudimentary education in violence and turmoil or perhaps suffered narcoleptic delusions under the influence of prescription drugs and video games. like our parents, we have been lead to believe that this is our fault: the conspicuous consumption, decomposed affect, and juvenile delinquency result in a generation gone mad. but really, we know the specter that taunts our sanity first hand; we exist as mirrors, even if the reflection we encounter is ugly.

we are doomed to already know  
everything  
they could possibly teach us.

the management of 'free time' through propaganda - advertising and public service campaigns teaching us to be good, normal consumers/producers - is the logical extension of cybernetic control of the workplace to every moment of life, not only waking life, but dreaming life as well; cybernetics concerns itself with the future [re]production of desired scenarios based on the interplay of agents in the past. where taylorism studied the movements of workers in time and mapped them out to locate the most efficient, consumer research is aligned temporally with advertising to see what turns us on and off - what makes us buy - in order to produce more and more effective cycles of desire, anxiety, and satisfaction. the catch is, our satisfaction never matches the spectacular nature of manufactured desire, nor can it ever negate the anxiety it produces in us. instead, we enter a cycle of endless excitation without release, like worker bees sipping saccharine, an infinite leading-on of the population. it would almost be a relief to know that mere sadism were at work here, but we know this is not the case. this we know we are teased for profit, scared into production, pavlovically conditioned to reproduce and enhance the existing order-of-things, ourselves included:

there are no cybernetic people,  
only black boxes  
with inputs and outputs.

we can drink ourselves stupid,  
as long as we remain locked  
in our rooms. we are allowed  
to hurt ourselves, but any damage  
to university property  
is heavily punished.

those attending parties after finals,  
sports games will attest:  
in our society, it is not the  
riots that are controlled, rather,  
it is their meaning.

it is this manipulation of appearances  
that makes demands so dangerous;

they are attacks that  
can be turned against us. whereas modern capitalism frequently made use of brute force, the postmodern combine has developed a form of martial arts that allows it to use our own attacks against us. rallies and activist groups are used in university marketing material, political dissidence is a selling point. pseudo-progressive schemes such as socially responsible investment and student representation are used against us, complexified beyond belief and incorporated whole-heartedly into the management strategies of the administration. asking for a voice in university matters is like asking to be allowed to scream in a torture chamber where your voice is recorded and replayed to you at a hundred times the volume. making demands effectively entails negotiation. negotiation entails negotiation amongst ourselves. if the university offers to go half-way, or to meet some demands but others, where do we draw the line? our fundamental demand should be for the dissolution of their authority over us, yet every demand further entrenches the administration. the answer, therefore, is to constitute ourselves as an autonomous entity, to recognize that both we and they are fundamentally unable to fix this 'system'. we do not demand nothing, in the sense of a passive absence of will. rather,

we do not  
'demand nothing'  
in the sense of a passive absence of will, rather,  
our demand is nothing itself,  
the definitive negation  
of the systemic processes  
which hold us in thrall.



at the close of the 60's

when consciousness of the alienation inherent within contemporary society was at its peak, students and young people engaged in a mass withdrawal from routine forms of life. jobs, classes, nuclear homes were all systematically abandoned. we might stay in the university or the workplace only long enough to realize its fundamental emptiness; soon, we would head for the communes or the barricades, for the precarious fractures threatening to overturn capitalist or socialist normalcy. production was disrupted, order was overturned; it didn't matter. the forces formerly known as capital and the state adapted to do without the processes that had been their birthplace. an economy once orientated around production became globalized and automated; it was now focused on perpetuating and increasing consumption. similarly, the maintenance of order was discarded in favor of a constantly managed disorder, in which riots, natural disasters and even revolutions did not disrupt, but rather strengthened the stranglehold of power over its constituents. some academics hold that the university in the late sixties took on the functions of a 'knowledge factory', others believe that civilization itself became one big 'social factory'. what we notice following the upheavals of the sixties and seventies, however, is not that of the gradual extension of the factory, but rather of its diminution. instead, at the close of modernity, another model comes into play.

the university functions  
as the ideal space for social  
reproduction and biopolitical manipulation

we learn to play the roles that we are fated for, while similarly amassing enough debt to make escape from our mundane futures impossible. we refine our bizarre habits and individualized passions, so as to become ideal consumers for our ever expanding, increasingly insane market system. we learn to socially network, to advertise our selves and our desires in ways that leave us feeling meaningless and unfulfilled. our lives resemble dorm rooms, rented not owned, gradually filled with more and more junk. or they resemble classrooms, where we are alternately in a daydream, absent or under conditions of extreme stress. anyone familiar with campus security or residential advisors knows

their job is not to  
prevent destruction  
but to ensure that it is subdued,  
completely reflexive.

we exist  
as a new kind of *product*.

everything material is created elsewhere, in maquilladors and sweatshops without labor or environmental protections. yet the legacy of late fordism is a glut of products so horrific that capitalism must now produce those who will consume. the challenge capitalism set itself after fordism was the reproduction and totalization of consumption, which has occurred through globalization and the subjugation of communities on the one hand, on the reproduction of the spectacular homogeneous society of the 'developed' world on the other. each generation since that of the sixties, since the advent of adolescent liberation has been fated to outdo its predecessor. every year, our hairstyles become crazier, our lifestyles more outlandish, our parties more hedonistic. the culture we are creating, with its hipster nonchalance and green economy, is the most unsustainable yet. as our universities become more expensive, our jobs more scarce, our psychic burdens heavier, we are preparing for one of the most competitive and destructive periods of civilization to date.

this era is the age of the social university. while institutions of higher education have been implicated by the state and commercial sectors since their conception in the 11th century, they have always played a peripheral role to the management of society itself. their role was revolutionary, in the negative sense that it capitalized on innovation and discovery and brought it within the realm of an updated imperial-capital totality. it was in the university that a society developed and refined its relationship to the other, regardless of whether this other was a heretic, an indigenous population, subversion of gender norms or an experiment in aesthetic inquiry. a university, therefore, was essential to the conception of new products and means of productivity that allowed for the development of classical and modern societies. yet the university and its education were not wholly essential to production itself. it functioned to support the economy from the outside, withholding some of the brightest minds from industry in exchange for new conceptual and epistemological breakthroughs. it affected politics, but remained partisan and progressive; this revolutionary energy was not yet fully accommodated into the system itself. it supported cultural ingenuity, but did not yet serve as a necessary

*incubator for fashion.*

it is only in the age of consumption,  
in the age of reproduction  
and the manipulation of surplus values,  
that the university becomes essential.

for education and the resulting cultural milieu makes for more refined and sophisticated consumers, more expensive and more rapidly obsolescent products. greater literacy allows for us to digest greater and more complex forms of media, of mediation. the proliferation of university education hides a sad fact: we are all being prepared for some form of management role. some of us will have the sick pleasure of having to exploit underpaid, disadvantaged laborers. others will only have to manage and subjugate themselves. in return, we are assured a lifetime of debt, of insertion into a system from which there is no release. we're so glad our freshmen history lectures taught us the difference between an indentured servant and a slave. we seek not to deny our privilege, for we attend college and lead comfortable and meaningless lives of hipster frivolity. yet the reality of living in a totalized system is that we are all incorporated into a rigid, exploitative hierarchy and we resent the fact that we are allowed little more than to continue living, to continue consuming. the consequence of massive debt, of seeing countries invaded and children worked to death for our benefit, it is

an immense and increasingly  
inescapable psychic burden.

capital has arrived at the realization that the university is the ideal model for a new, terrifying post-fordist cycle of reproduction. and so it has sought to reproduce the conditions of the university in the entirety of society. the cacophonous milieu of campus life, of social interaction and fashion conscious adolescents, provides for the constant creation of trends, for the rapid obsolescence of every meaning. hence the proliferation of social networking sites: we gain an illusory respite from the loneliness of the present civilization in exchange for the infinite repetition of our high school and college lives, of the anxiety, abandon, and consumption that serve as their corollaries. the thirst for knowledge, the constant quest for stimulation and satisfaction, becomes totalized as a

lifelong addiction to media  
and electronic entertainment.

[elucidated demands:  
absence, catastrophic  
longing, the space  
between sentences?]

"whatever precautions you take  
so the photograph will look  
like this or that, there comes a moment  
when the photograph surprises you.  
it is the other's gaze that wins out  
and decides."

we do not make demands. to  
make a demand of a system  
is to recognize its fundamental legitimacy;  
we want nothing to do with the lethargic behemoth that is the  
new school bureaucracy. it does not function as a part of a uni-  
versity dedicated to liberating forms of education, as it would  
have us believe. rather, it functions to transform the university  
into a space of abstraction, into a blueprint for a static society.  
the thousands of administrators are only symbolic of the process-  
es of control occurring within the university; we are alternatively  
being 'admitted', 'advised', 'housed', 'disciplined', 'directed'  
and even 'fed' by a legion of bureaucrats. it is their presence  
that has sent education costs through the roof, as they draw  
benefits of the kind that adjuncts and tas can only dream of, or  
draw salaries often in excess of \$100,000 a year. yet this is not a  
problem unique to new school, and this is why we cannot ad-  
dress this administration directly, even to ask for its dissolution.  
rather,

the problem results  
from a structural change  
within contemporary  
society specifically designed  
to stifle our potential  
diminish our possibilities for secession.

we say:  
destroy that which destroys  
our capacity  
to relate  
to one  
another  
[in flames  
it's  
hella sexy]

we say:  
sabotage  
the machinery  
of *social* reproduction,  
forcing us  
to decompose  
for stability and  
for profit.

we say:  
give up  
being single, form  
a singularity, actualize  
your desires in  
the space  
of the common.

we say:  
break  
up with  
the system,  
occupize everything  
and spend  
your nights in  
orgasmic  
abandon.

our collective abandon,

our fixation with sports,  
means we resign ourselves to achieving victory vicariously as  
spectators, instead of fulfilling our own desires. the state's  
judicial system begins to resemble the disciplinary apparatus of  
a small liberal arts college: you can get away with anything, if  
your parents are rich or friends with the president.

more serious, however, is the way in which new forms of pre-  
carious labor resemble the completion of college assignments.  
rather than a salary and a boss, entire sectors are now left with  
a cryptic assignment and deadlines and some vague promise  
of remuneration for completed work. we might spend as much  
time looking for work as we spend working. a resume becomes  
little more than a transcript of assignments handed in, credits  
received. at every point in our lives, our performance is exam-  
ined and graded, as is our appearance and social standing. no  
wonder the internship is rapidly being totalized, or that new  
job applicants find themselves undergoing exams and perfor-  
mance examinations. biopolitical competition becomes the  
norm, with our appearances, cultural background and friend  
rosters becoming increasingly important in achieving employ-  
ment.

we see a flip-side also: on campuses, illegal subcontracting and  
corruption is rife. the living wage struggles of the 90s, many of  
which occurred on university campuses, served to highlight a  
greater societal problem - that of an unbelievable wealth gap,  
of the gross exploitation of minorities and the undocumented.  
the university serves to reinforce this separation, to acceler-  
ate social reproduction, through the creation of an increas-  
ingly significant education gap, through systems of tracking and  
advanced placement on the one side, exclusive policies and  
increased tuition on the other. nowhere is this process more  
evident than in california, where we have seen the dramatic  
enclosure of the university on the one hand and the increasing  
disenfranchisement of marginal populations on the other. the  
battle over education currently occurring on the west coast is  
by no means a minor struggle; rather, it is

the *messianic strike*  
at the inauguration of the university  
as *social factory*.

# [art [ in the age of mechanical asphyxiation ]]

are you free  
or are you just lonely?

you are thankful to live  
with one or two people,  
a modest existence that allows  
you to buy a new pair of sunglasses  
year by year, to eat quinona when its in stock.

you draw when  
you want to  
- representations  
and non-representations -

when you smoke a bowl  
and when you thought  
you were going to get laid,

never on commission,  
always autonomously.

your family fluctuates  
between congratulating your ability  
to maintain existance without becoming  
a trial lawyer and encouraging you to change  
your last name after conducting  
jerk-off performance art.

above all, you work for noone.

isn't it strange, though  
that when we read shakespeare's sonnets  
they read like love poems and not adornments  
for some lesser noble's fingers? we only need  
to search for references to gold to realize  
wheat they really are.

art is not seperate  
from social conditions.

everything can and must  
be fashionable  
not just our clothes but every aspect  
of our lives and loves.

by constantly transitioning  
between groups of friends and subcultures, we generate a huge  
demand for new products, for cultural artifacts and forms of  
meaning. by constantly developing and destroying new relation-  
ships, we are forced to renew ourselves and remain trapped  
within shallow social spheres. we believe we are doing this of our  
own accord, but in reality we are trained, even designed to act  
this way, just as we learn to flick between channels or web pages.  
there is no mastermind to this process; graphic designers, garage  
musicians, culture bloggers are all responsible and simultaneously  
in a state of grace. all of this matters little; what is certain is  
that is that a system has been created whereby failure, not just  
of objects, but also of social relationships, becomes necessary to  
its perpetuation. the biggest corporate pop icons will talk of the  
commodification of love, or of the banality of postmodern sexual-  
ity. yet we see the way in which our angst is packaged and resold  
back to us, the total recuperation that has been made possible.  
and we understand that to complain, to bemoan the inadequacy  
of ourselves or others - to have an existential crisis - is to fall into  
a trap. after all, the market is quite prepared to

sell you a new lover, or at least  
two overpriced drinks and a  
trendy contrived space to meet one.

if any institution is guilty, besides the ephemeral market that can  
never be pinned down, it is the university. for it is the university  
that plays the primary role in contemporary social reproduction;  
it is here we learn to become fashion bloggers or heideggerian  
philosophers, that we learn strategies to perpetuate the system.  
yet this institution also provides the vulgar laboratory in which  
modern forms of emotional relationship are developed. we learn  
to communicate through vague metaphors, critique each other  
based upon contrived interest in awkward, crowded social situa-  
tions under the influence of stimulants or intoxicants.

is it any wonder  
that our sad attempts  
to relate to one another  
soon deteriorate?



# [we smell the reddest roses [as the system decomposes]]

let's start from a basic but self evident assumption: that you are not the only one failing to get laid. if we view the inadequate relationships of the global petit-bourgeois as a social phenomenon, we prefigure a conception of the social itself as flawed. yet are we doomed to perpetuate such banal forms of connectivity? only given the current political, economic and cultural order. for contemporary society refers to heavily on something we might refer to as the planned obsolescence of the neoliberal subject. in the heyday of fordist mass-production, industrial conglomerates developed the manufacturing capacity to provide for the entire world, yet developed the realization that doing so would totally undermine the social and symbolic hierarchy of the entire planet. labor might become almost obsolete, the lives of humans given over to the realm of play, with gods and masters ignored.

three strategies were adopted, with the first ensuring that products would break down or decompose. this process eventually entailed the architecture of fashion, in order to ensure that even working commodities would need to be replaced. the second strategy enacted a subtle but intense shift in the realm of labor, whereby workers were transitioned out of their roles in industrial and agricultural production and into a vast, chaotic service sector. this provided salespeople, advertising executives and retail workers to artificially induce consumption, while helping to ensure that conceptions of joy would become completely dominated by the entertainment industry. finally, new immaterial products, comprised of cultural ideals, of aesthetics and meaning, were developed. yet to properly market these new forms of commodity, there had to be mechanism to render old ideas, old culture and values, fundamentally obsolete. such a process was inaugurated in the postmodern period,

the increasing popularity  
of the break-down,  
break-up or break-out.

# [an insider's guide to the vortex]

uncle ernest:

i talked with your dad over the phone. Had a chance to see many of the harris, woods, bullock, lavazza clan in marjah after my stay in rejavik. while there, i talked with your dad over the phone for so many reasons- timezone deltas, misplaced priorities, etcetera. We don't connect very often. your dad is very proud of you, and i miss you.

donkey kong:

i love to be nomadic.

uncle ernest:

your aunt and i moved back to seoul, korea.

new york is nowhere but a diseased conglomeration of everywhere else. everywhere is nowhere but a sick conglomeration of everywhere else that new york threw up on. upon projectile vomiting entities that are close in range are not safe. those farther away are likely to get flecks splattered on them like a hen's feathers. i am suffering from a number of symptoms.

1. dysplasia.

cells mature abnormally. they transport themselves from place to place morphing in shape and size and becoming wrinkled, ugly. they take pills for it.

2. confusion.

i know who i am if who i am is a series of half thought out rituals, if who i am is buried under a good 250 million years of dirt.

3. sluggishness.

change is a slow progression, an adaptation to social structural changes that actually seek to maintain continuity. It is a swim through quicksand. a bar, a house show, a party, a joint, a shot, a subway ride, a film, a meal.

i am waiting for the carnies at the county fair to cart me away on a ferris wheel and feed me an elephant ear by hand. I am waiting to powder myself in sugar. i am waiting to barrel through the united states as if i actually live here.

# [ i </3 totality ]

[one]

nothing should be free;

everything shared and stolen.

the concept of freedom has been so completely assimilated  
into the logic of neoliberalism that it has become  
meaningless. what does it mean to assert that people are free  
to choose from a million products,  
a thousand forms of exploitation?

for the majority of the world's population, freedom is  
the freedom to work or to die.  
for us, there is some modicum of freedom, but this  
liberation only serves  
to enable us to become delicate dynamos for the  
machines of cultural production.

our freedom,  
artistic and affective, is repackaged  
and sold back to us;  
revolutionary aesthetics and reality television scripts ensure  
distraction  
and the maintenance of social order.

we want to steal our education and our joy  
in squatted classrooms and lecture halls.  
we want to fortify the studios  
and coffee shops in which we labor and plot our  
counter-attack.

we want to share everything  
and consume nothing.

we want to join the struggle  
of billions, seeking desperately  
to be liberated  
from their freedom.

q. this all sounds dangerous,  
immoral,  
and illegal.  
how do you live  
with yourselves?

a1. of course, or else  
it wouldn't *mean*  
anything.

a2. where do you think  
all the suicides  
come from?

a^2. some people once screamed  
"the system has made  
us sick!  
let us strike the death blow  
to this sick system!

b[1-r]. now reads:  
"the spectacle is all systems, combined,  
and they have given us  
the gift of every malady  
imaginable.

now, we seek  
to help it along  
in its death throws,  
all we must do  
is return the favor.

[ after all, who wants to suffer alone,  
when *the sickness* is part of our collective eros?  
*to be* is not *to live*, *to be* is *to allow the eyes to cut,*  
*the lips to kill*; to refuse to hide any longer.  
*we are so sick we see it* in empty mirrors  
and scientific love letters - and we are pissed off.  
this sentence needs no propositional phrase here,  
insert whatever you like, our anger and strength  
are furies of hell.]

[[[ and all we want  
is one little kiss. ]]]

# [fractal segments]

- q. i've read a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?
- q. i've smashed a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?
- q. i've lived a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?
- q. i write a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?
- q. i've seen a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?
- q. i hurt a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?
- q. i protest a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?
- q. i question a lot,  
doesn't that make me a good revolutionary?

[circle] a. who wants to be a *good* revolutionary?  
to do anything *a lot* is to cease *being*.

repetition does not make you stronger,  
only strength makes you stronger,  
anything else is *just so much noise*.

q. don't you have to believe in *some-*  
to get you through the day?

q. isn't it a waste of time  
to be sarcastic with me?

q. don't you want to change the world?

@. no, time does not exist

a. but how else will we get each other hard?

a. we want to destroy the world as it exists now,  
so that we may finally create  
space to breathe.

[two]

recomposition

is the realization  
of new common notions,  
of razor possibilities.  
class structures are not fixed; rather, they are  
constantly being altered  
by the development of new modes of relation to  
- and refusal of -  
labor and capital. we have observed shifts  
in the early 20th century with the development  
of mass production, in the 50's and 60's with the emergence  
of spectacular culture and mass media  
a similar process is occurring now.  
following automation and outsourcing, a majority  
of jobs are to be found in the service and cultural sectors;  
realms of immaterial, ephemeral  
and affective labor.  
we have experienced the end  
of production, what we are seeing is an economy  
that is depended on the one hand on the intense  
branding and veneration  
of the commodity form.  
on the other hand, we see a growing reliance on the  
extreme valorization  
of affective energies.  
the proleteriariat has mutated:  
the workforce is largely diffused through chain stores  
and temporary offices, restaurants and homes.  
unions have all but disappeared  
unemployment is rising,  
pensions are gone.  
the average worker will have a dozen or more jobs  
in their lifetime,  
if they are *lucky*.  
existential crises and moments of  
extreme anxiety, panic  
are no longer the exception, but the rule; in this society,  
*everything* is precarious.

[twenty, twenty-one]

[three]

recombination

is the tendency for capital  
to recuperate new forms  
of resistance, new forms of refusal of labor.

conventional strikes are

no longer effective,  
since it is impossible to kill  
off a brand in a matter of months, or  
effectively disrupt the supply  
chain of a multinational corporation. we could target  
smaller corporations and companies, but this would  
simply facilitate the shift  
towards monopolistic domination.

we do not however propose a strategic retreat  
from workplace organization, instead a flanking  
maneuver, the initiation of social war through

a proliferation of human strikes:  
workplace disruptions,  
flash mobs, sabotage and theft  
on a major scale.

we also have a great opportunity to begin striking at  
the level of consumption,  
which is now a space arguably  
more crucial to the reproduction  
of capital than production itself.

that entails the disruption and occupation of stores,  
but also shopping malls and cafes,  
television studios and social networking sites,  
anywhere people remain.

we must strike also at the spaces where the  
existential meaning and cultural logic  
of consumption is validated, namely schools and universities;  
these sites are key to the process  
by which capital subverts  
and assimilates resistance.

in our struggle, we must disrupt.

not only the mechanisms,  
but also the space and the time  
of capital.

[four]

we seek neither self management, nor self determination.

we do not want to construct  
a new totality,  
a new state or university or corporation that is  
more efficient  
or more friendly  
than the one which currently exists.

rather, we want to sabotage

delusions of progress,  
to ensure that the warped rationality  
contemporary civilization  
is abandoned  
once and  
for all.

destroy the means of production,  
occupy the means  
of consumption,  
challenge each day the social relations  
that have been forced upon us.

[five]

we make neither demands,  
nor history.

rather, we articulate our own manner of being,  
we assert our presence in the world. rather,

we make our own present;  
we forge it as a challenge  
to a stagnant totality. to make demands would be

to attempt to participate  
in a narrative of domination and exploitation that  
we want no part of.

instead, we wish to

affect our friends  
and our loves,  
to incite them  
to form singular modes of existence,  
autonomous from the logic  
of imperial capital. everything we know  
is bankrupt. develop common notions.  
build the  
party in the streets