



Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*

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One of the difficulties Nietzsche bequeathed us was the difficulty of thinking politics without the categories of good and evil. Or, better said, that is one of the difficulties for those who take up the challenge, and refuse the politics of the crusade that marked the past ten years. One alternative offered was through Nietzsche's predecessor and mentor-at-a-distance, Ralph Waldo Emerson. For Emerson, all politics was the politics of affinity. We move in life by identifying, encouraging and extending like-mindedness. "I will have no covenants but proximities," he writes. No covenants – no commandments of right and wrong and duty – but only the association of ways of life. "If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly, but humbly and truly." I will not call you good or evil. I will not resort to morals that have no ground in the world. I will not even give human society the dignity of norms formed on chaos. Simply, the task is to learn to follow associations, to teach others how to do so, to abandon that which does not, and to abandon yourself to that which does.

In *The Coming Insurrection*, Tiqqun began a program of establishing such modes of association as a politics: "Communes come into being when people find each other, get on with each other, and decide on a common path. The commune is perhaps what gets decided at the very moment when we would normally part ways. It's the joy of an encounter that survives its expected end. It's what makes us say we and makes that an event. What's strange isn't that people who are attuned to each other form communes, but that they remain separated." The commune ruptures the train of associations that dominate our lives. Emerson called this conformity; Tiqqun speaks of it as "counter-revolutionary." Against this is aversion, or, the commune.

If the program is then one of coming together, why does it so often take place under the name of "civil war"? Precisely because the fact of association means that there are those with whom one will not associate – those whom Emerson tells to "cleave to your companions." What Tiqqun opposes, in fact, is not those who have different companions, but those who refuse to be addressed as the companion of anyone. This is the anonymous one, or they, or some one – a generic conformist. This general situation is what they call "hostility," a word whose Latin etymology signals a seemingly inexplicable variety of terms: guest, host, enemy, foreigner. The link they posit is that in all of these

situations the other is treated as generic – either as generic other in the discourse of foreign policy, or generic subject-of-care in the sense of human rights. They suggest, "The only way to reduce the sphere of hostility is by spreading the ethico-political domain of friendship and enmity." This Carl Schmitt-derived vocabulary of friend/enemy seems an unfortunate rendering of singularities which face each other, and either associate or do not. And the oddity of the vocabulary forces them to various redefinitions, such as civil war, "simply means the world is practice, and life is, in its smallest details, heroic." And practice? That everything "takes pace within its own limits, within its own immanent signification." And that again is to say, civil war names the fact that we need to develop an ethics of responsiveness to the processes by which we learn who we are and what we associate with. (Emerson again: "The difference between men is their principle of association.")

In certain segments of American culture, Tiqqun, or its wing under the name the Invisible Committee, came to attention after Glenn Beck read about them in the *New York Times*. He pronounced them the truth of the left, as a violent insurrectionary movement. More recently, he said the various world-wide occupations proved that the coming insurrection was here. To the extent that these have been largely non-violent movements, he is right. Tiqqun's position, after all, is that "the militarization of civil war is the defeat of insurrection." It ensures that there is a battle that can be won or lost, and the true play – the openness to the processes of forms of life which results in communization – will not come to pass. And it is also worth noting the proximity of their assertion, "An authentic pacifism cannot mean refusing weapons, but only refusing to use them," with Gandhi's statement, worth the length: "Nonviolence cannot be taught to a person who fears to die and has no power of resistance. A helpless mouse is not nonviolent because he is always eaten by pussy. He would gladly eat the murderess if he could, but he ever tries to flee from her. We do not call him a coward, because he is made by nature to behave no better than he does. But a man who, when faced by danger, behaves like a mouse, is rightly called a coward. He harbors violence and hatred in his heart and would kill his enemy if he could without being hurt himself. He is a stranger to nonviolence. All sermonizing on it will be lost on him. Bravery is foreign to his nature. Before he can understand nonviolence he has to be taught to stand his ground and even suffer death in the attempt to defend himself against the aggressor who bids fair to overwhelm

him" (I owe this reference to a recent talk by Norman Finklestein on the potentials of Gandhian politics for Palestine). The proximity and distance here is interesting, for these thoughts of Gandhi are often lost, as much as the real interest in peace in Tiqqun goes unseen. Perhaps this explains some of the choice, and the danger, of the vocabulary of civil war.

If my reading of *Introduction to Civil War* is largely sympathetic on conceptual grounds, it runs into a limit in the figure of culture that haunts the book. Taking a page from their mentor Agamben, himself building on a tradition going back at least to Hegel, they privilege and bracket a category of thought called "the West." (And though this is an old tradition, its current leverage seems to date from Foucault's *The Order of Things*, where the gamble on the table is this: if we can name our culture as some thing, we can prove that it is constructed, and therefore malleable.) They attempt to follow the politics of this invented entity, and pose their solutions as responses to it. So, for example, if the West names the rise of the order of the modern police state, then there is a European history to that which we can uncover and unwork. But the failure of this strategy is noted by Tiqqun themselves: "Every attempt to grasp a 'people'...as race, class, ethnicity, or nation – has been undermined by the fact that the ethical differences within each 'people' have always been greater than the ethical differences between 'peoples' themselves." Tiqqun is thus ultimately unable to think, or to perform the difficult task, of thinking through a truly universal politics, even though the concepts of association and its lack, and of exposition of form-of-life and its failure, seems within their grasp. They are thus reduced to such facile statements as, "Decolonization was an important moment in the establishment of Empire... Decolonization means: the elaboration of new forms of horizontal, sub-institutional power that function better than the old ones." Nkrumah, among others, standing on the precipice of the failure of decolonization, called this "neo-colonialism." Why Tiqqun would think that a movement for liberation should be collapsed within their conceptual category of Empire and not within the general framework of the attempt to name and negotiate forms-of-life is perhaps explainable by their general sense that the West, and Western politics, controls and dominates the world. Whatever truth there may be in this assertion, it is hard to see how international forms of coalition building are to be formed on the basis of such distrust and re-imperialization of categories and practices.

-Avi Alpert

Postcards from Venice



Utopia,

Even now it is rather hard to speak of.

I have no idea what they were talking about. Before I left, I mean, they said, here Snake, here are some biscuits, here are your glucosamine injections. Don't eat the meat Snake: it probably is man, or at best dog, and in any case it probably won't be very fresh and if it is, well then you're damn sure it's man! Here are your protein suppositories. These other things are vitamin patches. You can wear them on your thighs. That way you don't taste them. Your cigarettes contain an experimental combustible compound of omega-3, horny goat weed, and electrolytes. They're gonna burn a bit slow but they taste like acai or that's the story anyway and you're lucky we still give you anything that even looks like a cigarette after what happened. Those other boxes that are really cigarettes are for barter only. Maybe you can buy the island from those savages? Ha oh man, we're kidding Snake and that's in poor taste anyhow. But seriously don't touch the real smokes. Because we'll know. We just will.

Well, you know what they didn't know jack shit. Because if they did well then I wouldn't have sat down to an authentic Venetian meal would I? I think they don't know much as is. There are loads of people here, whole boatloads. They are still talking about the architecture and who did what to what buttress and when was a saint and they still put their tongues in each others' mouths from time to time, and when they do that, they still look to the side to hope to see me looking so they can say, oh yeah what if this was the hole in the middle of your skull that I was lapping, lapping at like a sloth, shhlp shhhllp (they say with their terrible small yet thick pink tongues), trying to steal little pieces of to bring back to mine? And they still go out to eat.

And I found the place. You know it's the real deal because the waiters weren't too nice, which would mean that it was just for tourists only, and they weren't too asshole,

which would mean the same thing, a big puffy bravado so everyone can feel like they've had an "Italian experience" and make a scorecard of restaurant service across the continents when they return to their hotel rooms and take their walking shoes off to let those stinky dogs rest and even put them up on the crinkling bedspread, without even washing them first. No, they just were, and more than that, there were honest white tablecloths, clean and starched. I hated the thought of getting wine on them so I stuck to beer. I know, I know.

There might have been a menu but I did not take it because I saw what the others were eating and I knew what I would be too, it's what I dreamt of, risotto al nero di seppia, risotto with little tendrils and slices of cuttlefish and the whole thing black, filled up with the ink of the thing that is cut up. I've been having this recurrent nightmare, but not at night, just awake while eating in which I am utterly convinced that I am going to bite down on the fork, that I am to shatter my teeth even though the whole time I am saying be careful! that's not food, that's a fork and this time it smelled so delicious that I actually stopped worrying about what was going to happen when I put the laden fork in my mouth. When they brought it out to me - I had already finished a beer and made that face while pointing at the empty bottle to say that I will drink another beer, please - I swear even the steam was black, clinging to the corners, whole snarling wraiths of it.

And my god was it good, and hot, and the inky grit was rough on my teeth, so when I caught my reflection in the almost fogged window I grinned and it looked like I had no teeth just a hole in my head. And I haven't been drinking here - you know - and it kinda went to my head, because I felt like those old Japanese women, or not that they are old, but they are young in an old time, Ohaguro it was called, and this was a different standard of beauty and I was the prettiest here with these black choppers. And after that anxiety about the fork and my teeth, that constant grinding fear, it was a relief to

get to pretend that I didn't have anything that could touch metal. So I showed em big to everyone, bared my teeth and I think I was kind of dancing a bit in my chair, they were grinning back those missing grins at me, all of us toothless as babies or old women, and even the waiter laughed a bit even though he sees this every night of his cursed life.

This one face I kept looking toward because it wasn't quite right, he was smiling too but it was as if someone had painted a perfect copy of his face on top of its face, so that it had feedback, a slight tremor, and he was sweating through his gray

polo shirt a bit. And then I noticed that he really was shaking, and that it started at his shoulder and went down his arm to his hand, which was under the table in his lap, and he kept that mirror smile fixed on me as his hand was working away down there.

He was grunting a little bit.

And I just couldn't believe it, I knew just what he was doing, there with that sick smile on his face, that sheen of pleasure, just going to town on himself here, and I said loudly, really sir this is a family restaurant! We are all trying to eat, every last one of us!

He didn't seem to hear me but he shuddered, a rattle, and there was a clatter on the ground, and I looked and saw that it was his dinner knife and it was all red, and just then he brought his hand up to the table and in his hand was a large chunk of his thigh that he had sawed off loose and ragged, the fat bright as days, and he dropped it right onto his risotto and, tears in his eyes, panting, he said

Man can't be expected to live on ink alone!

I thought I was going to be sick and raised my hand to cover my mouth and my hand too was red. And I could not look down because I could feel the raw ache in my thigh and I did not see my knife on the table where it should have been, and none of us could, all of us dawning on what we had been doing, our black teeth clenched and we did not feel much like eating anymore and there is a movement to the door.

And I am not even a thing that has been thrown to the garbage heap and I am not even giving this thigh meat to someone whose children are hungry even though they are already blackened with death. I am not throwing myself in the pot. We are just making a godawful mess, all of us, we don't know how to cook, just to make slices and how.

And how is it that to write this means that we end in red again, that one more thing else has been cut, as if this city was a film but it is not, I cannot let it be. Or how that I cannot see the white tablecloth which was the first stark thing I've seen in so long other than the black ink, which was also very dark. Or that I can't see either because, frankly, there is a blood everywhere.

The rain just started up again. How delicate it is. The canals shimmying in their little percussions. I'm eating a cigarette under what I think should be called an awning.

And really I do miss you like I would miss a piece of me that had been taken away and I'm not just saying that because I think there is actually a substantial piece of me that has now

gone missing, although just like missing you I don't want to look down and see because only then will it finally be gone.

Still, sorry about all the mess. I hope you can read what I wrote through it.

Love,
Snake

Utopia,

The natives get no rest.

On my raft a young girl holds a bird like it is no big deal to do so.

Though I fear that pot bubbles just for me. It has my name on it.

It is too big for even a thousand birds.

I sing loudly to ward them off. Nobody can stomach a warbler.

They have added spices the likes of which I've never known.

And that name is EATER OF MAN

Love,
Snake

-Evan Calder Williams

David Muenzer - Gareth James Interview

David Muenzer: Did you want to be an artist when you were young? When did you first (or do you) consider yourself to be an artist?

Gareth James: Not really. I wanted to leave school to be an electrician when I was fifteen, to get an apprenticeship with my best mate, Lee Hastings, at the Tate and Lyle refinery in Silvertown, East London: earn money, live it up. But my art teacher at school, Paul Finn, went on a campaign of deception, telling me how awesome art school is, all the parties, the drugs, misbehaviour. That convinced me to stay on at school, and it was too late by the time I went to my first party at the Slade (a miserable affair, no dancing, no outrageousness). I never really used the name “artist” while I was in the UK - it always seemed like a slightly delusional nomination to accept, like calling yourself a unicorn. A unicorn is just a horse that you thought you could have made a bit better, a bit more special by giving it a twirly horn but its real purpose of course is to make you feel more special for having the thought of it. I started using it ('artist' not 'unicorn') after living in New York for a while, but around the same time I started using a credit card, and for much the same reasons. It drops in and out of relevance according to the context.

DM: I was really blown away by your 2009 show at Elizabeth Dee. Looking at that work, I thought that the production of formal complexity by comparatively inexpensive (and possibly fugitive) materials let that complexity become poetic (as opposed to someone like Ansem Reyle, whose formal experiments harden and leave me feeling cold at best, angry at worst). Could you talk a little about that show, and particularly, how you came to work with bicycle inner tubes?

GJ: Thanks for the kind words ... they made a nice pun too: blown-away (blown-up, deflated and inflated, flat tires and flatulence and so on)!

It's an interesting problem once you attempt to find some non-subjective cause for a value judgement between two artistic practices: as often as not you discover that the grounds for making a value judgement -- the assumption that they share important attributes (being art) that would allow us to say that one manifests those attributes better than another -- almost entirely dissolves. In fact the ground is so unreliable that IF we choose to keep the formal integrity of the idea of art intact, in retrospect we can normally see that we had already unconsciously chosen one of the following tactical forms of compensation: either we explicitly or implicitly dismiss the claims of one of the two to being art at all in order to preserve the coherence of the identity between the idea of art and the other; or we have to force an identity between an attribute that is NOT shared and the idea of art, but behave as though it was shared in order for our preferred candidate to win.

I totally agree with you by the way, I find his work to be death, without regard to the question of whether his work is better art or not. I think that it's probably accurate to say that our work proposes extremely different ideas about art that are apparent in relation to the question of form you bring up: Reyle is touted as dealing with abstraction and formalism but these things are reductively objectified to become of the same order as Ikea decor or early Modern primitivism. They remain captured by a figurative economy and have very little to do with abstraction or formalism at that point it seems to me. I don't know how he speaks about it himself. Operating on forms is very different from understanding formalization AS operation: what's interesting to me is

the passage of a chaotic sensibility, the becoming formal of something that was not: it's a largely Badiouian description of the emergence of genuine novelty, substantial transformation, in this moving distinction between what, of the world, takes part in formalization and that which cannot be taken up. This relation is utterly immanent to questions of form, not statically disposed outside of it.

This is one way of summarizing the relation between one show and the next for me: a new possibility of formalization emerges with each show, and the subsequent show tries to do something with that new possibility, before it too hardens and becomes mere statistical form. There's a very specific relation between that show in 2009 and the preceding show at Nagel's in 2008 and the one I'm currently working on which we can go into later if you like, but to talk about the tubes themselves, they entered the work in the first place because I had stolen a bike without wheels of it's own. Within the symbolic economy, the stolen bicycle's access to the status of the readymade was blocked by it's wheels having already been distributed.

I was calling attention to this by the proliferation of tubes, but I was even more interested in the way in which rubber is different from most elastic materials in the way in which it stores strain energy. For some time I'd been interested in finding ways to decenter my subjective choices from the production of the work, but not in a systematized fashion and what I knew was that I wanted my materials to have a history that preceded my encounter with them (of course this is a banal truism at some level) that could resist being mystified upon entering my field of art, which has a tendency to represent itself as the historical origin of all that it encompasses. It's a contemporary problem, in terms of

identifying expression with contingency and necessity, but also an historical one - some years ago I read Primo Levi's book *The Periodic Table*, which remains one of the most important books to me in terms of the thought of materials in art. Levi attempting to extract life-sustaining calories from cotton wool pads by secretly frying them in the camp is a real problem of materials.

DM: As you say, I identify the expressive quality of Levi's wool-cooking-attempt with the necessity of the act and uncertainty of his situation.

You mentioned that the tubes entered your work after you stole a bike without wheels of its own. I have a vision of you, at night, "liberating" a rusted partial bike frame still sadly locked to a stop sign. In thinking about the objects in your gallery show, I wonder... what if those objects returned to that stop sign and the empty street? Would the objects remain similarly expressive?

GJ: The possibility of the stolen bicycle returning to the scene of the crime is absolutely central to the entire show. The exhibition's title was: *The Real* is that which always comes back to the same place. The exhibition was structured as a response to the problem of how to have a non-subjective relation to the question of materiality which had arisen in the previous show, *Dead Unconscious Desire* (my povera show as my friends would jokingly refer to it, not inappropriately). Some low-level criminality has been of interest to me for a long, long time - an inevitable attendant notion when dealing with iconoclasm - and it occurred to me that the best solution to the problem of decentering the authorial agency of the artist at the level of material would be to steal something. The illegal status of the materials trumps all other qualities, and trumps them indifferently (making this structural connection sensible allows us to show how aesthetics necessarily confronted questions of property for Kant too).

But now, as to your question of whether the objects' expressivity remains consistent upon return to the street ... this was, at the level of questions of art, the problem rendered as a threat to art. The subtitle of the exhibition, "*The Real* is that which always comes back to the same place: Broadway between 101st and 102nd Streets, New York, NY 10025, March 21, 2008" gives the date and location of the crime, and the remaining information necessary for the original owner to make a claim upon the bicycle was provided by the photograph of the locked bicycle (which was rolled to form the vertical cylinder standing in for the light stanchion) and the actual broken lock. All of which means that the art work here carries with it all the necessary information

for its own dissolution as art (the threat that the owner of the bicycle could at any given point come across the piece and say, "Hey, that's not art, that's my bike".

I considered this work incomplete until someone bought it: it only gets interesting when it bifurcates ownership: there is the owner of the bicycle and the owner of the work of art. Once this occurs, it is no longer a case of the object reverting back to its "proper" expressive, communicative relation to the world, but of considering expression as a binding of objects and worlds. Clearly, the bicycle cannot return to the world of riding untouched by having been an artwork, and the world of art, bereft of its bicycle is marked by this happy new negative presence. It has more than one bicycle after all.

DM: I am fascinated by how that is a kind of context specificity—a well-formatted relationship to the gallery, system, etc—but how your work is not overtly or traditionally marked as site-specific. The possibility of formalization, as I believe you put it, is very very much dependant on context.

Here is—to my mind—a related question: could you talk about the value of drawing as a technique? Would you talk about your use of drawing in your art practice as well as your work with *Scorched Earth*?

GJ: Lets be careful not to suggest that we can extrapolate from the operations of an individual work (one that explicitly draws the destinations for the values it causes to circulate into itself as its own critique) an affirmative and generic claim that could be used as a kind of apologia for the art market. What I mean to say is that for the most part selling the stuff does very little to make art interesting as art, even if the forms of speculation involved evidently produce interest. The sale of art is value-neutral in its effects at best, value-negative more often, and appears related to art as a kind of recursively structuring value-added. We can choose not to remain silent on the question of the market without reconciling with it. Anyway, this is not your point ...

Formalization, as we are beginning to talk about it, has a complicated relation with context, making it a good question for us to address. In an important sense, it is the very process of withdrawing from context that is necessary for formalization to take place. This necessity suggests to us that we ought to say that formalization doesn't depend upon its context at all, but rather determines it. That is, formalization limits the endless openness of the concrete situation in favor of making something intelligible within it that was previously inchoate. This is Brecht as much as Badiou. Its been Badiou's contribution to recover this operation (he names it subtraction),

from the critique of formalism as a sort of myopic isolationism. This would be a way again of making a critique of Reyle's formalism (poor guy, I really don't know his work very well and he's become our fall guy here). In fact, we would really have to be a bit more rigorous about our terms if we wanted to develop this argument further since we are using "context" in a casual fashion to mean something like milieu, when context is already a differentiated notion of a structuring and weaving process, much like the difference between formalism as a reductive homogeneity and formalization as an emergent power, but that's another discussion.

You can see I'm procrastinating about really getting to your question concerning drawing ...

Scorched Earth has become, to my mind, one of the great interminable projects of art that needs to be viewed in relation to the sort of map-territory farces played out in Lewis Carroll, Borges, and Musil. That sounds horribly grandiose of course, but I mean it as an affirmative critique to say that Sam Lewitt, Cheyney Thompson and myself resemble the unfortunate characters in these stories: what began as a political defence of drawing against its instrumentalization by the market quickly became mired in uncertainty. So, you're quite correct to link that project to this discussion – the market, reification and the reduction of aesthetic and philosophical questions to technical ones are all wrapped up in this story. And it is very much a work of fiction at the moment – the project was discussed as though it had already been printed by numerous people, when in fact we have still failed to bring it to publication to date.

For my own part, yes, drawing has a fairly prominent place within my work so I ought to be able to say one or two sensible things about it. The fact that I have been unable to choose in the end between two perfectly compelling but contradictory initial claims that, one the one hand drawing is a mode of inscription that displays a complete indifference to the surfaces and supports that make its inscriptions possible, and on the other hand that drawing is little else than an attention to this relation becomes precisely the interest that drawing maintains for me. Everything that's interesting for me about art proceeds from this indiscernable situation: a theory-practice relation in which thought resists being supplanted by techne, where a practice allows itself to be drawn out precariously ahead of its present-best powers, where art monstrosities the relation between a subjective conviction and a social-historical objectivity rather than represents a concept concerning its condition. Drawing is awesome. Or something like that.

lunacy in women than among men. With regard to the increase in the ratio of lunacy to population during the past seventeen years, it is worthy of remark that, among pauper lunatics, it has been equal to 47 per cent.; whereas, among private lunatics, the increase in the ratio has not exceeded 23 per cent. On January 1st last, no less than 88 per cent. of the lunatics in England and Wales were pauper lunatics; the proportion of paupers being 86 per cent. among the male, and 90 per cent. among the female lunatics. It is evident that there is an increasing proportion of lunatics treated as paupers in our workhouses and county asylums.

HYDROPHOBIA IN BAVARIA.

ACCORDING to the statistical reports for 1873, the number of dogs in Bavaria amounted to 291,841, out of which 821 died, or were killed, as suspected of being attacked by hydrophobia. This is an average of 2.8 per 1,000. The disease also declared itself in several cats, but it was not possible to determine whether it was spontaneous or consecutive on bites. The number of animals bitten is not stated; but five horses, ten oxen, six sheep, and eighteen pigs died of hydrophobia. Out of 109 persons bitten, seven died—one from the bite of a cat. The duration of incubation recorded was, in dogs 18, 18, 27, 33, 35, 42, 56, 61, and 98 days; in oxen, 21, 21, 28, 30, 42, and 240 days; in sheep, 21; in pigs, 21, 33, 33, 42; finally, in man, 38, 56, and 140 days.

A HEALTH-RESORT IN CORNWALL.

WE are given to understand by a local correspondent that the west coast of Cornwall, which offers many advantages to invalids, appears comparatively unknown. Padstow is spoken of more as a pleasure-resort, and is rapidly advancing; whilst within ten miles of Penzance—which is in many instances too relaxing for the consumptive—is the town of St. Ives, which, from its natural resources and position, should now, on the opening of direct railway communication, attract convalescents. The climate is bracing, and differs in temperature six or seven degrees from the south. It is hence suitable for certain cases of lung-disease; also for debilitated constitutions, the result of excess, overwork, or too long a residence in the tropics. The upper part and suburbs of the town command a view of thirty miles of coast; from the hills above can be seen both channels. The water-supply is good, and the sands and bathing excellent. Houses and lodgings are to be obtained, but there is as yet no hotel accommodation. The lower part of the town is built on a sandbank. Towards the island of Penennis, which forms a bay of ten or twelve square miles, the houses are densely crowded together, and, according to the last census, the inhabitants numbered 7,000. It is only superficially drained, and without a medical sanitary officer; nevertheless, epidemics are rare and of short duration. It is to be hoped that the corporation will carry out improvements, erect a commodious hotel, and conduce towards building villas.

SUICIDE BY DECAPITATION.

A VERY remarkable case of suicide, as regards the means employed, is related by Dr. Vinnedge of Lafayette, Indiana, in the *American Practitioner* for August. In June last, James Moon, a farmer, aged 37, hired a room in an hotel, and in it fitted up an apparatus for beheading himself. The instrument consisted essentially of a broad axe and a lever seven feet long, to which the axe was firmly fixed by pieces of iron fastened with bolts and screws. The widened end of the lever was attached to the floor by hinges. The axe being elevated, was sustained at the proper angle for falling the greatest distance possible by means of a double cord attached to the free end of the lever, and to a small hook in a bracket, which was securely fastened to the wood on the side of the window, about five feet from the floor. On this bracket was placed a lighted candle between the cords, which were consumed when the candle had burned sufficiently. The axe being then unsupported, fell to do its fearful execution. The suicide

placed an ordinary soap-box on its side, with its open end just even with the line marked where the axe would fall. This box contained his head, when he lay stretched out on the floor at right angles to the direction of the falling axe. His neck was supported by pieces of wood, and his body was fastened to the floor by straps and buckles. He had obtained two ounces of chloroform, with which he saturated some cotton, which he placed on the box so that it could be inhaled. Dr. Vinnedge, however, concludes from the fact that there was no evidence of any struggle, that he was still unconscious, though perhaps somewhat stupefied, when the axe fell. As to his previous mental state, Dr. Vinnedge gives the following information.

"He always enjoyed talking about mechanics. It was a hobby with him. One of his neighbours states that he without assistance became an excellent blacksmith, learning the trade during the intervals between working hours on the farm. His mind had a tendency to 'run' on methods of causing death. He had great admiration for men who have rendered their names famous as inventors of machines which would cause death suddenly and with dispatch. During a service of three years in the Sixteenth Indiana Battery, he would spend his leisure time in making out of wood, with a penknife only, various articles, and presented the products of his labours to his comrades as *souvenirs*, exhibiting great ingenuity in design and skill in execution. He had a good education, was temperate in his habits, and kind to his family. His intimate friends state that he was thoroughly familiar with the Bible—with both the Old and New Testaments—though a sceptic as to the inspiration of each. All his acquaintances testify to his habitual genial and pleasant disposition."

MEMBRANOUS CROUP AND DIPHTHERIA.

THE Secretary to the Scientific Committee of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, which is engaged in investigating the subject of the relations of croup and diphtheria, requests us to state that the Committee will be glad to receive all replies to their inquiries, together with any other information, as early as possible. Considering the importance of the subject, and the large amount of valuable experience which must be in the possession of general practitioners in all parts of the country, it is very desirable that all who are able to do so should contribute their quota of information towards the solution of this question. The opportunity afforded by the appointment of this Committee for clearing up a very important and difficult problem in the relations of disease is one which should not be lost, and we trust that members of the Association will give the Committee all the aid in their power. Replies and communications should be addressed to the Secretary of the Committee at the Society's Rooms, 53, Berners Street, W.

HEALTH AND SEWAGE OF TOWNS.

MR. PETER LE NEVE FOSTER writes to the *Times* :—

"In the general interests of public health, the Council of the Society of Arts appealed to the inhabitants of the metropolitan districts and to the public generally to send to the Society evidence of cases showing the various evils which have occurred from the present imperfect system of the drainage of houses. At the conference on the health and sewage of towns lately held by the Society, and attended by numerous representatives from various towns and localities in the kingdom, the importance of greater attention to the house-drainage as distinct from the sewerage was specially brought to the notice of the Society.

"It was pointed out that, however good the general sewerage might be, unless the drainage proper of the house and its connections with the sewers were carefully planned, executed under due supervision, and maintained in proper order, there was imminent danger of typhoid and other diseases from the imperfect exclusion of sewer-gas.

"The Council are well aware of the extensive powers which are given by Act of Parliament to vestries in the metropolitan district to deal with this matter. As regards buildings erected and in course of erection since 1855, the date of the Metropolitan Local Management Acts, no doubt a large amount of supervision is exercised, and plans of the house-drainage are frequently deposited and are open for inspection for the ratepayers. But the powers of the local authorities are rather remedial than preventive of disease, and are more or less imperfectly exercised. The evidence already collected shows that, in most of the metropolitan parishes, a small proportion of the total number of the houses in them has been properly dealt with. Consequently, the plans of house-drainage are, on the whole, comparatively few,

How To Succeed In Revolution Without Really Trying

In the wake of all the setbacks to the Occupy Movement, culminating in the eviction of protestors from Lower Manhattan, it would appear that we have truly arrived, both literally and metaphorically, at “the winter of our discontent.” With this in mind, it might prove a useful thought experiment to re-examine our notions of what success and failure might mean for revolution: namely, to conceive of failure as success. As usual, cinema and psychoanalysis can help us visualize this concept. The most obvious place to begin is *The Matrix*.

The similarities of *The Matrix* films to the Occupy movement barely require comment: it is in many ways a typical film about an underdog revolt against an oppressive system. However, what I want to emphasize here is how the revolution in *The Matrix* is part of the system itself. Revolution has been accounted for from the very beginning. As the Architect of the Matrix tells Neo, only 99% of people will accept the Matrix. The other 1% must eventually rebel so they can be used to re-start the Matrix when it inevitably crashes, so the system can continue as usual. (Aren't the 99% and 1% of significance here?). Thus, if Neo's revolution succeeds, i.e. overthrows the machines, it will inadvertently fail: it will destroy the Matrix and wipe out the human race.

Of course, Neo isn't going to let that happen. In the final film of the trilogy, the rogue agent Smith is infinitely copying himself and the system, as predicted, is spinning out of control (like Capitalism). Neo confronts Smith in a final showdown, but is unable to defeat him. In the climactic scene, Neo allows Smith to turn him into another duplicate, and then destroys himself, which in turn destroys Smith. Here, Neo has failed, i.e. failed to beat Smith in a fight, but in failing, he drew out the

inherent flaw in the system. Smith's greed to copy himself leads him to overextend himself, and the system collapses around him. Additionally, the machines, grateful for Neo's help, reach a treaty with the humans, a solution only attainable through failure.

To understand this scene, we can refer to Freud's primal scene as a sort of “original revolution,” where the sons rebel against, murder, and eat their father. However, this revolution fails when it succeeds: the dead and absent father figure turns out to be more powerful than the living one. For Jacques Lacan, this dead, absent father figure, the Name-of-the-Father, is the foundation of not only the superego but also of the social realm: the world of Law, government, Capitalism, religion, etc. The revolution that fails reverses this logic. It draws the absent Father out of his hiding place and makes him present again when he confronts the revolution. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, McMurphy's “failed” revolution against the Asylum forces the system to reveal itself for what it really is, and in doing so, demonstrates this presence. McMurphy's lobotomized, blank expression at the end of the film reflects the father figure made present, a father figure who is castrated, pathetic, and powerless.

Capitalism today is just such an absent father figure: it hides behind a world of obscure financial laws, anonymous banking systems, and numbers and profits that have replaced people. A revolution, even one that “fails”, forces absent Capitalism to become present: to defend itself like Nurse Ratched or Agent Smith. In doing so, the system is revealed for what it really is, and either destroys itself or becomes subject to change.

Let us take one final example: Hannibal's conflict with Fabius. But

to keep with our cinematic motif, let's look at this example as seen through the 30 Rock episode “The Fabian Strategy.” In the episode, Jack Donaghy/Fabius has an argument with his live-in girlfriend Avery/Hannibal about redecorating the upstairs. Avery wants new wallpaper; Jack doesn't. Realizing that he can't win the argument outright, Jack employs the Fabian Strategy: refusing to engage Avery/Hannibal in battle, an effort to win through attrition. That is, he absents himself, a capitalist par excellence: through absence, things continue as usual. Jack eventually decides to knock down an upstairs wall, “to make things more symmetrical” (In destroying the source of the issue, we might make the analogy to Bloomberg's shutting down of Occupy Wall Street). Only then does he realize that this is what Avery wanted all along. Avery/Hannibal's revolution failed in that it did not achieve its purported objective, but in failing, it made the upstairs, i.e. the economic system, more symmetrical and equal.

Successful revolution is often just a blip in the timeline of the status quo, but “failure” can achieve unforeseen and truly revolutionary results. To put it simply, the revolution that succeeds might change the color of the upstairs wallpaper, but the revolution that fails might renovate the entire social space.

- William Welty

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Surviving Life (Theory and Practice): *Swimming Lessons with Dr. Svankmajer*

Jan Svankmajer's *Surviving Life* (Theory and Practice), like his previous film, *Lunacy*, has the distinct feeling of a late-career summation, in which a self-deprecating professorial tone overtakes any more exploratory impulses. Confidently employing the innovative techniques that he pioneered and has long mastered (a frenetic mixture of live action and stop-motion animation), Svankmajer provides an overview of the themes and influences that have pervaded his 45-year career. Whereas *Lunacy* took on Edgar Allen Poe and the Marquis de Sade, *Surviving Life* tackles Freud, Jung and psychoanalysis (the film is subtitled *A Psychoanalytic Comedy*). Although Svankmajer satirizes psychotherapy and its institutionalized dogmas, his approach to the psychoanalytic is unfashionably complex and earnest. This is not surprising given that Svankmajer remains a committed surrealist, perhaps the last one still drawing breath. Willfully indifferent to current cinematic and cultural trends, Svankmajer's jarring low-fi surrealism resists providing the familiar slick pleasures of dream-imagery spectacles. In an era when surrealist tropes have long become a mainstay of popular culture, and psychoanalysis has devolved

into a tool for insular personal fulfillment (as well an irresistible dramatic device for screenwriters), Svankmajer insists on the power of both as valid means of piercing through the oppressive untruths, both political and personal, that we allow to constitute reality.

Ambiguously set in a de-beautified Prague where details of communist and post-communist life anachronistically mingle, the film's plot revolves around Eugene, an office clerk in late middle age who falls in love with a beautiful, mysterious woman who keeps appearing in his dreams. Neglecting his drab wife and job, Eugene becomes obsessed with his dreams. He goes to a psychiatrist, who analyzes him according to comically orthodox psychoanalytic theory as feuding portraits of Freud and Jung react on the wall behind them. However, he's outraged when he realizes the doctor only wants to figure out his dreams in order to cure him of them. Eugene wants the opposite: he wants to figure out how to keep the dreams going. He starts to supplement the therapy with occult methods when he

discovers a rare book on dream induction. After being fired for reading the book at work, he rents a cluttered shack and spends his days on a cot, drugged on sleeping pills, exploring his obsessive dream world.

In contrast to contemporary film culture, in which money is a benign enabler and the unspoken *raison d'être*, money explicitly haunts Svankmajer's film as an obstacle and an imposition. In a coy prologue, Svankmajer addresses the audience directly as a paper-cut-out animation, introducing us to the film's style. He tells us the film was supposed to be live action but they couldn't raise enough cash so they decided to use animated photographs to save money on actors ("Photographs don't eat"). He then quotes Georg Lichtenberg: "Only the fusion of dream and reality can make up the complete human life," adding, "Sadly our civilization

which the investigation of dreams can only be conceived when monetized.)

By the end of the film, which features Svankmajer's richest narrative to date, Eugene succeeds in discovering the basic meaning of his dream - he uncovers a secret from his childhood (his mother's suicide) and realizes the woman in his dreams is a stand-in for his mother (though even his psychiatrist admits that it's more complex than the usual Oedipal cases). While this is the source of some satisfaction, it resolves nothing for Eugene. When his wife forces him to choose between her and his dreams, he returns to his cluttered shack. However, Svankmajer subversively follows the rules of comedy to live up to his subtitle: order is restored and the lovers are united, but only in the twisted dream world. In the remarkable final scene, Eugene dreams himself into

an infantile state and discovers his mother/dream woman in a bathtub full of bloodstained water, her wrists slit. Awaking from the dead, she smiles and lifts him into the tub, telling him everyone must learn to swim to survive. The final image is of Eugene, with the head of a middle-aged man on the body of an infant, learning



has no time for dreams, there's no money in them." An upcoming lottery jackpot, which Eugene's wife is desperate to win, looms over his waking and dreaming life (in his dreams he buys lottery tickets is at the box office of movie theatre named World Cinema). While money is little more than a mundane burden for Eugene before his dream obsession, it takes on near-magical qualities when he starts using it to pursue his dream life. When he pays the inflated price for the occult book, he finds the face of his dream woman on his bills. The bookshop owner is impressed with the unusual money and buys it from him for double its worth. Money becomes both meaningful and self-generating once Eugene invests it with the power of his dream life. Here, Svankmajer succinctly illustrates money's status as an empty signifier dependent on psychic projection: money functions in reality only when it is imbued with the 'unreal' powers of fantasy – in other words, only when it is fetishized. (Incidentally, this is more or less the reverse of the logic governing Christopher Nolan's recent big-budget dream film *Inception*, in

the breaststroke in his undead mother's bloody bathwater as she rhythmically counts out his strokes. This is Svankmajer's image of a valuable life lesson learned, as well as a summation of his art: adult lucidity forced to navigate back to the horrors of childhood, which are the raw horrors of existence, and discovering perverse comfort there. However, if Eugene seems to choose fantasy over reality, this is not a cynical or escapist gesture in the Hollywood mode. For Svankmajer, choosing to inhabit one's dream world is choosing to live a complete life: not an escape from reality nor a repudiation of it, but a headlong plunge into the muck.

-Mike Vass