Brain virus

ELECTRONIC

CIVIL AND

OTHER

DISOBEDIENCE UNPOPULAR

IDEAS

the Brain virus

Brain virus

CRITICAL ART ENSEMBLE

Preface

This book continues the exploration begun in *The Electronic Disturbance* (TED). While TED was very well received, critics continually mentioned two primary shortcomings. The first was that while TED explains the nature of nomadic power in the age of the virtual, very little is said about nomadic resistance on the net or in the bunker. In this work, CAE offers a preliminary outline concerning rational strategy (antilogos) and tactical possibilities for nomadic resistance. In other words, the matters described in the following pages are the oppositional counterparts of nomadic power (i.e., domination) at this historical moment.

In the final four chapters, CAE replies to the second most common criticism. Some have mentioned that while CAE often recommends strategies of the nonrational, in TED,

none is actually offered. In the pages that follow, CAE tries to get beyond the traditional activist position enveloped in anti-logos (rationalized resistance to domination) by searching for the (non)location of the inherently contestational energy of nomos. As in TED, in this work CAE continues to maintain that the social dynamic of nomos, which typically appears as explosive and unstoppable moments of excess, waste, sacrifice, abjectivity, spontaneity, mania, and uselessness, must function as a parallel engine of resistance alongside the anti-logos. These elements of existence are truly at the heart of individual autonomy, and yet they are seldom acknowledged by activist culture. Like rational society itself, activist culture tries to *organize* them out of existence, or at least to the point where they no longer appear. Here, CAE examines how these elements have entwined themselves with rational visible culture. While we may not extract tactical possibilities for political and cultural resistance from these observations, we do hope to contribute to the production of the ideational conditions for such possibilities to emerge in the realms of appearance and action.

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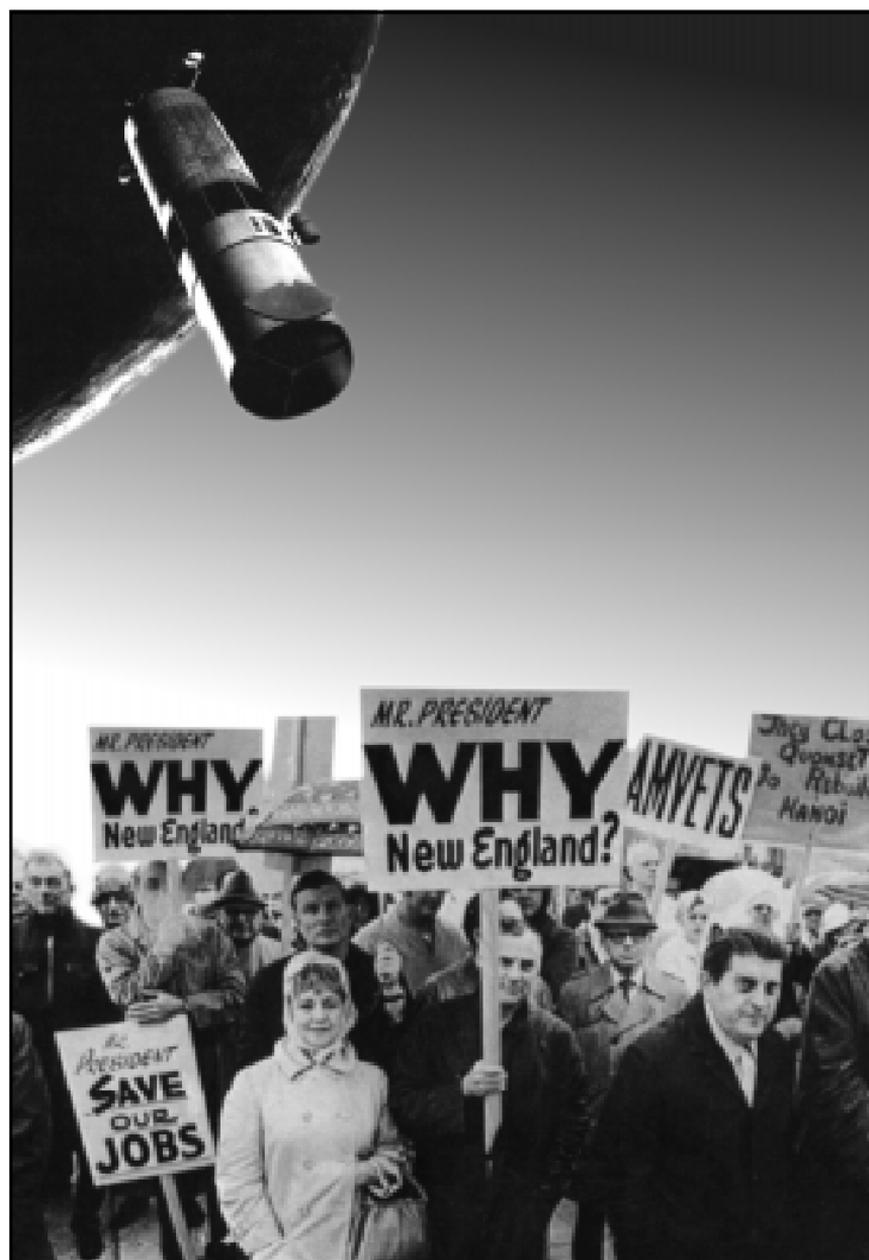
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Electronic
Civil Disobedience*

One essential characteristic that sets late capitalism apart from other political and economic forms is its mode of representing power: What was once a sedentary concrete mass has now become a nomadic electronic flow. Before computerized information management, the heart of institutional command and control was easy to locate. In fact, the conspicuous appearance of the halls of power was used by regimes to maintain their hegemony. Castles, palaces, government bureaucracies, corporate home offices, and other architec-

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*"Electronic Civil Disobedience" was originally written as part of a window installation for the *Anti-work Show* at Printed Matter at Dia in the Spring of 1994. It was then reprinted by Threadwaxing Space in *Crash: Nostalgia for the Absence of Cyberspace*. The version presented here is the original form with only a few modifications. The addendums were written the following summer before the article was presented at the *Terminal Futures* conference at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

tural structures stood looming in city centers, daring mal-contents and underground forces to challenge their fortifications. These structures, bespeaking an impregnable and everlasting solidity, could stop or demoralize contestational movements before they started. Indeed, the prominence of this spectacle was a double-edged sword; once the opposition became desperate enough (due to material privation or to symbolic collapse of a given regime's legitimacy), its revolutionary force had no problem finding and confronting the powerholders. If the fortifications were breached, the regime would most likely collapse. Within this broad historical context emerged the general strategy for civil disobedience.

This strategy was unusual because the contestational groups decided they did not need to act violently toward those who occupied the bunkers of power, and chose instead to use various tactics to disrupt the institutions to such an extent that the occupants became disempowered. Although the smiley face of moral force was the pretext for using this approach, it was economic disruption and symbolic distur-bance that made the overall strategy effective. Today acts of civil disobedience (CD) are generally intended to hasten institutional reform rather than bring about national col-lapse, since this style of resistance allows the possibility for negotiation. For this reason, modern first-world govern-ments tend to be more tolerant of these acts, since they do not necessarily threaten the continued existence of a na-tion or its ruling class. While civil disobedience does not go unpunished, it is generally not met with extreme violence from the state, nor are participants in CD ordinarily labeled as revolutionaries and treated as political prisoners when arrested. (There have of course been some notable excep-

tions to this policy in the first world, such as the persecution of American civil rights activists in the deep South).

Although CD is still effective as originally conceived (particularly at local levels), its efficacy fades with each passing decade. This decline is due primarily to the increasing ability of power to evade the provocations of CD participants. Even though the monuments of power still stand, visibly present in stable locations, the agency that maintains power is neither visible nor stable. Power no longer permanently resides in these monuments, and command and control now move about as desired. If mechanisms of control are challenged in one spatial location, they simply move to another location. As a result, CD groups are prevented from establishing a theater of operations by which they can actually disrupt a given institution. Blocking the entrances to a building, or some other resistant action in physical space, can prevent reoccupation (the flow of personnel), but this is of little consequence so long as information-capital continues to flow.

These outdated methods of resistance must be refined, and new methods of disruption invented that attack power (non)centers on the electronic level. The strategy and tactics of CD can still be useful beyond local actions, but only if they are used to block the flow of information rather than the flow of personnel. Unfortunately, the left is its own worst enemy in developing ways to revise CD models. This situation is particularly ironic, since the left has always prided itself on using history in critical analysis. Now, rather than acknowledge the present shift in historical forces when constructing strategies for political activism, members of the left continue to act as if they still live in the

age of early capital. This is particularly strange because contestational theory always stresses the importance of dramatic shifts in political economy (early capital to late capital, industrial economy to service economy, production culture to consumption culture, etc). Indeed, the left's lapse of insight on this matter indicates that the schism between theory and practice is as bad as (or worse than) it has ever been.

This particular form of cultural lag prevents activists from devising new strategies for reasons that are difficult to pinpoint. At least one factor responsible is the continued presence of the remnants of the 60s New Left within the ranks of activist groups. Preoccupied as they are with the means used to achieve past victories (primarily the contribution that the New Left made to the withdrawal of American troops from Viet Nam), members of these groups see no need to invent new approaches. Nostalgia for 60s activism endlessly replays the past as the present, and unfortunately this nostalgia has also infected a new generation of activists who have no living memory of the 60s. Out of this sentimentality has arisen the belief that the "take to the streets" strategy worked then, and will work now on current issues. Meanwhile, as wealth and education continue to be increasingly distributed in favor of the wealthy, as the security state continues to invade private life, as the AIDS crisis still meets with government inaction, and as the homeless population continues to expand, CAE is willing to go out on a limb and say that perhaps an error in judgment has occurred. This claim is not intended to undermine what has been accomplished on local levels; it is intended only to point out that contemporary activism has had very little effect on military/corporate policy.

CAE has said it before, and we will say it again: as far as power is concerned, the streets are dead capital! Nothing of value to the power elite can be found on the streets, nor does this class need control of the streets to efficiently run and maintain state institutions. For CD to have any meaningful effect, the resisters must appropriate something of value to the state. Once they have an object of value, the resisters have a platform from which they may bargain for (or perhaps demand) change.

At one time the control of the street *was* a valued item. In 19th century Paris the streets were the conduits for the mobility of power, whether it was economic or military in nature. If the streets were blocked, and key political fortresses were occupied, the state became inert, and in some cases collapsed under its own weight. This method of resistance was still useful up through the 60s, but since the end of the 19th century it has yielded diminishing returns, and has drifted from being a radical practice to a liberal one. This strategy is grounded in the necessity of centralizing capital within cities; as capital has become increasingly decentralized, breaking through national boundaries and abandoning the cities, street action has become increasingly useless. Since cities have been abandoned by business and left to rot in a state of bankruptcy, and have become plagued by crime and disease, it seems reasonable to assume that they are no longer useful in the expansion of power. If they were of use, surely they would be continually renewed and defended.

Dangers do lie in this often tautological line of argument. Is the city of no value because it is not maintained, or is it not maintained because it is of no value? This error in logic

is inescapable, since the question of who or what is in control cannot be answered. Power itself cannot be seen; only its representation appears. What lies behind the representation is lost. The location and nature of cynical power is purely a matter of speculation. Macro power is known only as a series of abstractions such as "straight white males," "the ruling class," or best of all, "the powers that be." Macro power is experienced only by its effects, and never as a cause. Consequently, certain indicators must be used to determine what is of value to power, or to find the (non)location of power. The assumption here is that key indicators of power-value are the extent to which a location or a commodity is defended, and the extent to which trespassers are punished. The greater the intensity of defense and punishment, the greater the power-value. These indicators have been derived from experience, but they cannot be given theoretical justification, since a second principle will eventually have to be used to explain a first principle.

If the traditional location for deploying power has been abandoned, where has power moved? If we assume that the flow of capital is still crucial to the present system, then there is a trail to follow. (Un)common sense tells us that we can follow the money to find power; however, since money has no point of origin but is part of a circular or spiraling flow, the best we can expect to find is the flow itself. Capital rarely takes a hard form; like power, it exists as an abstraction. An abstract form will probably be found in an abstract place, or to be more specific, in cyberspace. Cyberspace may be defined as a virtual informational landscape that is accessed through the phone system. (For the purposes of this essay, the association between cyberspace and VR

proper should be ignored). The degree of access to the information located in cyberspace suggests how institutions are configured in real space. In complex society, the division of labor has become so differentiated that the organizational speed necessary to keep the many segments synchronized can only be achieved by using electronic communication networks. In turn, the controlled deployment of information and access to it becomes a central clue in solving the puzzle of social organization. When access to information is denied, the organizational properties of the institution from which it is withheld become unstable, and—should this condition be maintained for too long—the institution will eventually collapse because of a communication gap. The various segments will have no idea if they are working at cross purposes against each other or if they are working in unison against competing institutions. Blocking information access is the best means to disrupt any institution, whether it is military, corporate, or governmental. When such action is successfully carried out, all segments of the institution are damaged.

The problem with CD as it is now understood is that it has no effect on the core of organization; instead, it tends to concentrate on one localized sedentary structure. In the case of national or multinational institutions, such actions are no more disruptive than a fly biting an elephant. Back when power was centralized in sedentary locations, this strategy made sense, but it is vain now that power is decentralized. To dominate strategic sites in physical space was once the key source of power, but now domination rests on the ability of an institution to move where resistance is absent, in conjunction with the ability to temporarily appropriate a given physical space as needed. For an oppo-

sitional force to conquer key points in physical space in no way threatens an institution. Let us assume that a group of dissidents managed to occupy the White House. It might prove embarrassing for the administration in power and for the Secret Service, but in no way would this occupation actually disrupt the efficient functioning of executive power. The presidential office would simply move to another location. The physical space of the White House is only a hollow representation of presidential authority; it is not essential to it.

In measuring power-value by the extent to which actions are punished and sites are defended, it is readily apparent that cyberspace ranks high on the scale. Defense systems in cyberspace are as well-developed as they can be. The Secret Service (previously an agency whose job was to protect individuals connected with the office of the President and to investigate counterfeiting rackets) has become increasingly swept up in its role as cyberpolice. At the same time, private corporations have developed their own electronic police forces, which function in two ways: First, they act as security forces, installing information surveillance and defense systems, and second, they act as a posse of bounty hunters to physically capture any person who breaks through the security systems. These forces, like the legal system, do not distinguish between actions in cyberspace on the basis of intent. Whether private information sources are accessed simply to examine the system, or whether the purpose is to steal or damage the source, these forces always assume that unauthorized access is an act of extreme hostility, and should receive maximum punishment. In spite of all this security, cyberspace is far from secure. It has expanded and mutated at such a rapid rate that security systems are unable

to reconfigure and deploy themselves with equal speed. At present, the gate is still open for information resistance, but it is closing.

Who is attempting to hold the gate open? This is perhaps one of the saddest chapters in the history of resistance in the US. Right now the finest political activists are children. Teen hackers work out of their parents' homes and college dormitories to breach corporate and governmental security systems. Their intentions are vague. Some seem to know that their actions are political in nature. As Dr. Crash has said: "Whether you know it or not, if you are a hacker you are a revolutionary." The question is, a revolutionary for what cause? After poring through issues of *Phrack* and surfing the internet, one can find no cause mentioned other than the first step: free access to information. How this information would be applied is never discussed. The problem of letting children act as the avant-garde of activism is that they have not yet developed a critical sensibility that would guide them beyond their first political encounter. Ironically enough, they do have the intelligence to realize where political action must begin if it is to be effective—a realization that seems to have eluded leftist sophisticates. Another problem is the youthful sense of immortality. According to Bruce Sterling, their youthful fearlessness tends to get them arrested. A number of these young activists—the Atlanta Three, for example—have served time in what has to be recognized as political imprisonment. With only the charge of trespass against them, jailing these individuals seems a little extreme; however, when considering the value of order and private property in cyberspace, extreme punishment for the smallest of crimes should be expected.

Applying the maximum punishment for a minimal offense must be justified in some way. Either the system of punishment must be kept hidden from the public, or the offense must be perceived by the public as a horrific disruption of the social order. Currently, the situation in regard to crime and cyberspace seems neutral, as there is no solid commitment by the state to either path. The arrest and punishment of hackers does not make headlines, and yet the law and order alarm has started to ring. Operation Sundevil, a thorough sweep of hacker operations in 1990 by the Secret Service and corporate posses, received minimal attention from the media. It was well publicized amongst the groups affected by such activities, but it was hardly the material needed for a "60 Minutes" investigation or even a Phil Donahue show. Whether this lack of publicity was intentional or not on the part of the Secret Service is difficult to say. Certainly corporations do not like to call attention to their posses, nor does the Secret Service want to advertise its Gestapo tactics of confiscating the property of citizens not charged with any crime, and neither of the two want to encourage hacker behavior by openly revealing the power that can be gained through "criminal" access to cyberspace. From the point of view of the state, it makes strategic sense to limit the various threats of punishment to the technocracy, until electronic dissidents can be presented to the public as the incarnation of evil bent on the destruction of civilization. However, it is difficult for the state to designate a techno-child as the villain of the week along the lines of Noriega, Saddam Hussein, Khadafy, Khomeny, or anyone involved with drugs from users to cartel leaders. To go public will require something more than just a charge of trespass; it will have to be something that the public can really panic about.

Hollywood has begun to make some suggestions in films such as *Die Hard II* and *Sneakers*. In *Die Hard II*, for example, terrorist hackers appropriate airport computers and use them to hold planes hostage, and even crash one. Fortunately these scenarios are still perceived by the public as science fiction, but it is precisely this kind of imaging which will eventually be used to suspend individual rights, not just to catch computer criminals, but to capture political dissidents as well. Legal agencies are just as able to persecute and prosecute political factions when what they *could* do arouses fear in others.

Herein lies the distinction between computer criminality and electronic civil disobedience. While the computer criminal seeks profit from actions that damage an individual, the person involved in electronic resistance only attacks institutions. Under the rubric of electronic resistance, the value system of the state (to which information is of higher value than the individual) is inverted, placing information back in the service of people rather than using it to benefit institutions. The authoritarian goal is to prevent this distinction from being perceived; all electronic resistance must fall under the totalizing sign of criminality. Conflating electronic civil disobedience (ECD) with criminal acts makes it possible to seal off cyberspace from resistant political activity. Attacks in cyberspace will carry penalties equivalent to those merited by violent attacks in physical space. Some leftist legal agencies, such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation, have already realized that basic freedoms (of speech, assembly, and press) are denied in cyberspace and are acting accordingly, but they have yet to start work on legitimizing the distinction between political and criminal action. The same legal

penalties that apply to CD should also apply to ECD. However, state and corporate agencies should be expected to offer maximum resistance to legal activities aimed at legitimizing ECD. If these authoritarian structures are unwilling to grant basic rights in cyberspace to individuals, it seems safe to assume that a pseudo-legitimized resistance will not be tolerated either.

The strategy and tactics of ECD should not be a mystery to any activists. They are the same as traditional CD. ECD is a nonviolent activity by its very nature, since the oppositional forces never physically confront one another. As in CD, the primary tactics in ECD are trespass and blockage. Exits, entrances, conduits, and other key spaces must be occupied by the contestational force in order to bring pressure on legitimized institutions engaged in unethical or criminal actions. Blocking information conduits is analogous to blocking physical locations; however, electronic blockage can cause financial stress that physical blockage cannot, and it can be used beyond the local level. ECD is CD reinvigorated. What CD once was, ECD is now.

Activists must remember that ECD can easily be abused. The sites for disturbance must be carefully selected. Just as an activist group would not block access to a hospital emergency room, electronic activists must avoid blocking access to an electronic site that may have similar humanitarian functions. For example, let us assume that a profiteering pharmaceutical company is targeted. Care will have to be taken not to block the data controlling the manufacture and distribution of life-saving medications (no matter how bad the extortion profits might be from the drugs). Rather, once the company is targeted, activists

would be wiser to select research or consumption-pattern data bases as sites for occupation. Having the R&D or marketing division shut down is one of the most expensive setbacks that a company can suffer. The blockage of this data will give the resistant group a foundation from which to bargain without hurting those who are in need of the medications. Further, if terms are not met, or if there is an attempt to recapture the data, ethical behavior requires that data must not be destroyed or damaged. Finally, no matter how tempting it might be, do not electronically attack individuals (electronic assassination) in the company—not CEOs, not managers, not workers. Don't erase or occupy their bank accounts or destroy their credit. Stick to attacks on the institutions. Attacking individuals only satisfies an urge for revenge without having any effect on corporate or government policy.

This model, although it seems so easy to grasp, is still science fiction. No alliance exists between hackers and specific political organizations. In spite of the fact that each would benefit through interaction and cooperation, the alienating structure of a complex division of labor keeps these two social segments separated more successfully than could the best police force. Hacking requires a continuous technical education in order to keep skills up to date and razor sharp. This educational need has two consequences: First, it is time-consuming, leaving little or no leisure time for collecting information about specific political causes, building critical perspective, or designating contestational sites. Without such information, hacker politics will continue to be extraordinarily vague. Second, continuous reeducation keeps hackers tied into their own hermetically-sealed classroom. Little interaction occurs with others

outside this technocratic subclass. Traditional political activists do not fare any better. Left behind in the dust of history, this political subgroup knows what to do and what to target, but has no effective means to carry out its desires. Political activists, as knowledgeable as they might be about their causes, are too often stuck in assembly meetings debating which monument to dead capital they should strike next. Here are two groups motivated to accomplish similar anti-authoritarian ends, but which cannot seem to find a point of intersection. While the former group lives on-line, the latter group lives in the street, and both are unknowingly being defeated by a communication gap for which neither is responsible. The schism between knowledge and technical skill has to be closed, to eliminate the prejudices held by each side (hacker intolerance for the technologically impaired, and activist intolerance for those who are not politically correct).

The hacker/activist schism is not the only difficulty that keeps the idea of ECD in the realm of science fiction. The problem of how to organize potential alliances is also significant. Leftist activism has traditionally been based on principles of democracy—that is, on a belief in the necessity of inclusion. They believe that with no other bargaining power besides sheer number, the populist mass must be organized so that its collective will can be asserted. The weaknesses of this strategy are rather obvious. The first weakness is the belief in a collective will itself. Since the populist mass is divided by so many sociological variables— race/ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, class, education, occupation, language, etc.—it is readily apparent that viewing "the people" as a monolith of consensus is absurd. What fulfills the needs of one group can be repressive or

oppressive to another. Centralized organizations attempting to flex their political muscles through the power of numbers find themselves in a peculiar position: Either the group size is relatively large, but it cannot move en masse, or the group advocates an ideological position useful only to a limited sociological set, thereby shrinking their number. In addition, in order for the most simple organization to exist, there must also be bureaucracy. Bureaucracy requires leadership, and hence hierarchy. Leadership structures are generally benevolent in these situations, since the leadership is often based on talent and motivation rather than on ascriptive characteristics, and it fluctuates among the membership; however, bureaucratic structure, regardless of how relentlessly it strains toward justice, still erodes the possibility of community (in its proper sense). Within such an organizational pattern, individuals are forced to trust an impersonal process over which they have no real control.

The use of democratic principles of centralization, when analyzed on a global scale, becomes even more depressing. As yet, no democratic organization exists that comes even remotely close to constructing a multinational resistance. Since power has gone global, avoiding attack is merely a matter of moving operations to a location where resistance is absent. Further, in regard to the condition of pluralism, national interest becomes a variable—a policy that is useful within one national situation becomes repressive or oppressive in another. Collective democratic action may be weakly effective on the local (micro) level, but it becomes next to useless on a macro scale; the complexity of the division of labor prevents consensus, and there is no apparatus through which *to organize.*

The option of realizing hacker fantasies of a new avant-garde, in which a technocratic class of resistors acts on behalf of "the people," seems every bit as suspect, although it is not as fantastic as thinking that the people of the world will unite. A technocratic avant-garde is theoretically possible, since an apparatus is in place for such a development. However, since the technocracy consists overwhelmingly of young white first-world males, one has to wonder just what issues would be addressed. That dreaded question of "who speaks for whom?" looms large whenever the idea of avant-gardism is shuffled about.

The question of resistance then becomes threefold: First, how can the notion of an avant-garde be recombined with notions of pluralism? Second, what are the strategies and tactics needed to fight a decentralized power that is constantly in a state of flux? Finally, how are the units of resistance to be organized? Without question, no certain answers are available, but CAE would like to offer the following proposals. The use of power through number—from labor unions to activist organizations—is bankrupt, because such a strategy requires consensus within the resisting party and the existence of a centralized present enemy. However, in spite of the lack of consensus on what to do, most organizations do share a common goal—that is, resistance to authoritarian power. Yet even in terms of goals there is no consensus about the practical basis of authoritarian power. The perception of authoritarianism shifts depending on the coordinates from which a given sociological group chooses to resist authoritarian discourse and practice. How then can this situation be redefined in constructive terms? An anti-authoritarian predisposition becomes useful only when the idea of the democratic

monolith is surrendered. To fight a decentralized power requires the use of a decentralized means. Let each group resist from the coordinates that it perceives to be the most fruitful. This means that leftist political action must reorganize itself in terms of anarchist cells, an arrangement that allows resistance to originate from many different points, instead of focusing on one (perhaps biased) point of attack. Within such a micro structure, individuals can reach a meaningful consensus based on trust in the other individuals (real community) in the cell, rather than one based on trust in a bureaucratic process. Each cell can construct its own identity, and can do so without the loss of individual identity; each individual within the cell maintains at all times a multidimensional persona that cannot be reduced to the sign of a particular practice.

How can a small group (four to ten people) have any type of political effect? This is the most difficult question, but the answer lies in the construction of the cell. The cell must be organic; that is, it must consist of interrelated parts working together to form a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. To be effective, the schism between knowledge and technical ability in the cell must be closed. A shared political perspective should be the glue that binds the parts, rather than interdependence through need. Avoid consensus through similarity of skills, since in order for the cell to be useful, different skills must be represented. Activist, theorist, artist, hacker, and even a lawyer would be a good combination of talents—knowledge and practice should mix. With the cell in place, ECD is now a viable option, and as explained earlier in the essay, with ECD, demands will at least be recognized. Another advantage is that the cell has the option of pooling financial resources,

so the minimal equipment needed for ECD can be purchased. The problem of potential legal fees is an argument for centralization—cells may not have a long lifespan. Admittedly, the toxic illegality of electronic political action is one of the key variables that relegates this narrative to the realm of science fiction.

For more radical cells ECD is only the first step. Electronic violence, such as data hostages and system crashes, are also an option. Are such strategies and tactics a misguided nihilism? CAE thinks not. Since revolution is not a viable option, the negation of negation is the only realistic course of action. After two centuries of revolution and near-revolution, one historical lesson continually appears—authoritarian structure cannot be smashed; it can only be resisted. Every time we have opened our eyes after wandering the shining path of a glorious revolution, we find that the bureaucracy is still standing. We find Coca-Cola gone and Pepsi-Cola in its place—looks different, tastes the same. This is why there is no need to fear that we will one day wake up and find civilization destroyed by mad anarchists. This mythic fiction is one that originates in the security state to instill in the public a fear of effective action.

Do centralized programs still have a role in this resistance? Centralized organizations have three functions. The first is to distribute information. Consciousness raising and spectacle production should be carried out by centralized counter-bureaucracies. Cash and labor pools are needed in order to research, construct, design, and distribute information contrary to the aims of the state. The second function is for recruitment and training. It cannot be emphasized

enough that there must be more bases for training techno-logically literate people. To rely only on the chance that enough people will have the right inclination and aptitude to become technically-literate resisters means that there will be a shortage of resistant technocrats to fill the cellular ranks, and that the sociological base for the technocratic resistance will not be broad enough. (If technical education continues to be distributed as it is today, the attack on authority will be horribly skewed in favor of a select group of issues). Finally, centralized organizations can act as consultants on the off chance that an authoritarian institu-tion has decided to reform itself in some way. This can happen in a realistic sense, not because of an corporate-military ideological shift, but because it would be cheaper to reform than to continue the battle. The authoritarian fetish for efficiency is an ally that cannot be underesti-mated.

All that centralized organizations must do—in a negative sense—is to stay out of direct action. Leave confrontation to the cells. Infiltrating cellular activity is very difficult, unlike infiltrating centralized structures. (This is not to say that cellular activities are difficult to monitor, although the degree of difficulty does rise as more cells proliferate). If the cells are working in double blind activities in a large enough number, and are effective in and of themselves, authority can be challenged. The fundamental strategy for resistance remains the same—appropriate authoritarian means and turn them against themselves. However, for this strategy to take on meaning, resistance—like power—must withdraw from the street. Cyberspace as a location and apparatus for resistance has yet to be realized. Now is the time to bring a new model of resistant practice into action.

Addendum: The New Avant-Garde

CAE fears that some of our readers might be getting a bit squeamish about the use of the term "avant-garde" in the above essay. After all, an avalanche of literature from very fine postmodern critics has for the past two decades consistently told us that the avant-garde is dead and has been placed in a suitable resting plot in the Modernist cemetery alongside its siblings, originality and the author. In the case of the avant-garde, however, perhaps a magic elixir exists that can reanimate this corpse. The notion has decayed quite a bit, so one would not expect this zombie to look as it once did, but it may still have a place in the world of the living.

The avant-garde today cannot be the mythic entity it once was. No longer can we believe that artists, revolutionaries, and visionaries are able to step outside of culture to catch a glimpse of the necessities of history as well as the future. Nor would it be realistic to think that a party of individuals of enlightened social consciousness (beyond ideology) has arrived to lead the people into a glorious tomorrow. However, a less appealing (in the utopian sense) form of the avant-garde does exist. To simplify the matter, let us assume that within the present social context, there are individuals who object to various authoritarian institutions, and each has allied h/erself with other individuals based on identification solidarity (race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, gender, religion, political beliefs, etc.) to form groups/organizations to combat the mechanisms and institutions that are deemed oppressive, repressive, exploitive, and so on. From a theoretical perspective, each of these alliances has a contestational role to play that should be respected and appreciated; however, in terms of

practice, there is no basis to view them all as equals. Unquestionably, some groups will have greater resource power than others; that is, some will have greater access to wealth, prestige, hardware, education, and technical skills. Typically, the greater the resources, the greater the effect the group can have. However, the configuration of access in conjunction with the groups' placement along political, numerical, and spatial/geographic continuums will also greatly alter the effectiveness of the group. (A full catalogue of possibilities cannot be listed within the parameters of this discussion). For example, a large, very visible group that is on the radical fringe, which works to change national policy, and which has reasonably good access to resources will also receive stiff counter-resistance from the state, thereby neutralizing its potential power. The rapid destruction of the Black Panther Party by the FBI is an example of this vulnerability. A relatively large liberal group with strong resources that acts locally will receive less counter-resistance. (Hence the misguided belief that if everyone acts locally for reform, policy will change globally and peacefully. Unfortunately local action does not affect global or national policies, since the sum of local issues does not equal national issues). For example, an alliance of various green groups in North Florida has been very successful at keeping oil companies off the Gulf coast line and protecting the local national forests and preserves from logging companies and land speculators; however, such success is by no means representative of the national or international situation in regard to the Green movement.

Then what kind of group configuration *will* gain the most far-ranging results, in terms of disturbing the political/ cultural landscape? This is the question that CAE tried to

answer in this essay. To repeat: cellular constructions aimed at information disruption in cyberspace. The problem is access. The education and technical skills needed are not widely distributed, and moreover are monopolized (though not through individual intentionality) by a very specific group (young white men). Education activists should be and in many cases are working as hard as possible to correct this problem of access, even though it does seem almost insurmountable. At the same time, contestational forces cannot wait to act until this access problem is corrected. Only in theory can we live by what ought to be; in practice we must work in terms of what is. Those who are trained and ready now need to start building the model of electronic resistance. Those who are ready and willing to begin to form the models of electronic resistance in the new frontier of cyberspace are the ones CAE views as a new avant-garde.

The technocratic avant-garde offers one slim hope of effective resistance on a national and international scale; and, in its favor, in terms of efficiency, and unlike its Modernist predecessors, the intelligentsia, this group does not have to organize "the people." Much like the problems of resource access, this necessity or desire has always bothered the forces of democracy. Avant-gardism is grounded in the dangerous notion that there exists an elite class possessing enlightened consciousness. The fear that one tyrant will simply be replaced by another is what makes avant-gardism so suspect among egalitarians, who in turn always return to more inclusive local strategies. While CAE does not want to discourage or disparage the many possible configurations of (democratic) resistance, the only groups that will successfully confront power are those that locate

the arena of contestation in cyberspace, and hence an elite force seems to be the best possibility. The increased success of local and regional resistant configurations, in part, depends upon the success of the avant-garde in the causal domain of the virtual. As for "enlightened consciousness," CAE believes blind groping is a more accurate description. Avant-gardism is a gamble, and the odds are not good, but at present, it's the only game in town.

Addendum II:
A Note on Absence, Terror, and Nomadic Resistance

In *The Electronic Disturbance,* CAE argued that a major change in the representation of power had occurred over the past twenty years. Power once represented itself as a visible sedentary force through various types of spectacle (media, architecture, etc.), but it has instead retreated into cyberspace where it can nomadically wander the globe, always absent to counterforces, always present whenever and wherever opportunity knocks. In "Electronic Civil Disobedience," CAE notes that for every strategy there is a counter-strategy. Since cyberspace is accessible to all of the technocratic class, the resistant within this class can also use nomadic strategies and tactics. Indeed, the primary concern among the military/corporate cyber police (Computer Emergency Response Team, the Secret Service, and the FBI's National Computer Crime Squad) is that nomadic strategy and tactics are being employed at this very moment by contestational groups and individuals (in the words of authority, "criminal" groups). The cyberpolice and their elite masters are living under the sign of virtual catastrophe (that is, anticipating the electronic disaster that *could* happen) in much the same way that the op-

pressed have lived under the signs of virtual war (the war that we are forever preparing for but never comes) and virtual surveillance (the knowledge that we may be watched by the eye of authority).

The current wave of paranoia began in early 1994 with the discovery of "sniffer" programs. Apparently some adept crackers are collecting passwords for unknown purposes. The reaction of the cyberpolice was predictable: They are convinced that this could only be done for criminal intent. Of prime concern is the development of the tactic of data hostaging, where criminals hold precious research data for ransom. Motivations for such an activity are construed solely as criminal. (This is typical of US policy—criminalize alternative political action, arrest the guilty, and then claim with a clear conscience that the US has no political prisoners). CERT, the FBI, and the SS seem convinced that teen crackers have matured and are evolving past information curiosity into information criminality. But something else of greater interest is beginning to occur. The terror of nomadic power is being exposed. The global elite are having to look into the mirror and see their strategies turned against them—terror reflecting back on itself. The threat is a virtual one. There could be cells of crackers hovering unseen, yet poised for a coordinated attack on the net—not to attack a particular institution, but to attack the net itself (which is to say, the world). A coordinated attack on the routers could bring down the whole electronic power apparatus. The vulnerability of the cyber apparatus is known, and now the sign of virtual catastrophe tortures those who created it. As James C. Settle, founder and head of the FBI's National Computer Crime Squad, has said: "I don't think the stuff we are *seeing* is the stuff we need to be worried

about. What that activity we do see is indicative of, however, is that we have a really big problem.... Something is cooking but no one really knows what." The motto of the sight machine reverberates out of Settle's rhetoric: "If I can see it, it's already dead." At the same time, the opposite—what Settle calls "the dark side"—is out there, planning and scheming. Nomadic power has created its own nemesis—its own image. This brings up the possibility that as a tactic for exposing the nature of nomadic power, ECD is already outdated without having ever been tried. No real "illegal" action needs to be taken. From the point of view of traditional terrorism, action that can reveal the cruelty of nomadic power need only exist in hyperreality, that is, as activities that merely indicate a possibility of electronic disaster. From this moment forward, strategies of the hyperreal will have to be downgraded into the real, meaning the technocratic class (those with the skill to mount a powerful resistance) will have to *act* on behalf of liberation from electronic control under the nomadic elite. The reason: They are not going to have a choice. Since the individuals in this class are the agents of vulnerability within the realm of cyberspace, repression in this class will be formidable. Since "the dark side" has no image, the police state will have no problem inscribing it with its own paranoid projections, thus doubling the amounts of repression, and pushing the situation into a McCarthyist frenzy. To be sure, each technocrat will be paid well to sell h/er sovereignty, but CAE finds it hard to believe that all will live happily under the microscope of repression and accusation. There will always be a healthy contingent who will want to die free rather than live constrained and controlled in a golden prison.

A second problem for nomadic power, as it finds itself suddenly caught in the predicament of sedentary visibility and geographic space, is that not only could an attack on cyberspace bring about the collapse of the apparatus of power, but the possibility also exists for attacking particular domains. This means that ECD could be used effectively. Even though nomadic power has avoided the possibility of a theater of operations emerging contrary to its needs and goals in physical space, once a resistant group enters cyberspace, elite domains can be found and placed under siege.

Whether or not the barbarian hordes—the true nomads of cyberspace—are ready to sweep through the orderly domains of electronic civilization remains to be seen. (If the hordes do their jobs well, they never *will* be seen. The domains will not report them, as they cannot expose their own insecurity, in much the same way a failing bank will not make its debts public). The hordes do have one advantage: They are without a domain, completely deterritorialized, and invisible. In the realm of the invisible what's real and what's hyperreal? Not even the police state knows for sure.

YIELD

Certain
signs
insure
self-discipline.

2

Resisting
the Bunker

While we may never know how it was discovered that cultural workers did not have to create and invent solely for the purpose of maintaining the traditional symbolic order, at least we can be glad that such an idea occurred at all. Since the time of this magical and mythical realization, which occurred approximately two hundred years ago, various interventions from the most minor to the most extreme have been attempted. The most successful, of course, spewed forth from the class that came up with the idea of systematic intervention (revolution) in the first place—the Bourgeoisie. By the turn of the nineteenth century, this band of pistol-packing, sweat-shop building, money-hoarding anti-

feudalists were firmly in control. Once the social order resettled into a configuration that suited this new ruling elite, its members began developing strategies and tactics to ensure that such a large-scale intervention would never happen again. The problem faced by these political upstarts was to make a defense system that would not be perceived as a defense system, or in other words, to decide how capital investment could be fortified without restricting the free flow of production and consumption. Since that time, strategies, tactics, and technologies to achieve this end have been continuously and successfully developed at a pace that has stymied the competition.

Consider the restructuring of Paris under the strategic care of von Haussmann. Here a youthful bourgeois society accomplished its goal, and the demonstration of this accomplishment came with the fall of the Paris Commune. The justification for the Paris face-lift was to create a more appealing city for tourists, and to prevent Paris from being ravaged by industrial growth as London had been. The true meaning of the restructuring became frighteningly apparent, however, when the Communards came to the horrific realization that once the city's outer ramparts were breached, it could not be defended, as their former defense, the barricade, was no match for artillery-supported heavy infantry on broad boulevards. The development of the Parisian fortress was particularly impressive since this was the first application of the idea of opening a space as a means to fortify it.

Times have certainly changed, but the principle of fortification is as deeply engrained in society as ever. In fact, the social landscape itself is little more than a series of bunkers.

The oldest form is the bureaucracy, which in bourgeois society has evolved to its highest form. It is a system of social organization that mainly functions to perpetuate itself. In this capacity, it is designed to resist war, revolution, or natural catastrophe. Within its permanent records is history—the proof of what has happened and what has not. The bureaucracy is a concrete form of uninterruptable, official, and legitimized memory.

Newer forms of the bunker have also appeared. Mass media is certainly the most formidable. The strategies of the open and closed fortress implode in this enveloping bunker. While mass media brings its viewer the world, the world is also held at bay while the viewer commits h/er gaze to the screen, forever separated from others and from communal space. In this case, the bunker is both material and ideational. On one hand, it serves as a concrete garrison where images (troops) reside. On the other hand, it confirms state-sponsored reality, by forever solidifying the reified notions of class, race, and gender. Bunkers in their totality as spectacle colonize the mind, and construct the micro-bunker of reification, which in turn is the most difficult of all to penetrate and destroy.

Bureaucracies, factories, malls, work stations, media—all are the products of the fortress mentality. The spectacle of these bunkers is designed to give the illusion of sociability, of public interaction, and of free choice, but it actually functions to reinforce the separation already inherent in the division of labor, and to channel the producer/consumer into a cycle of forced labor and consumption.

The bunker is the foundation of homogeneity, and allows only a singular action within a given situation. For example, in a mall one may only consume. The mall is a bunker of perpetual discomfort. There is no place to rest, unless one is consuming (usually in the food court), and in this situation only the most uncomfortable of accommodations are provided so the consumer will hurry, finish, and rejoin the dynamic flow moving from shop to shop. The mall is the mirror image of the assembly line where laborers rotate between specialized actions. Consumption intensification/labor intensification: It is difficult to tell the difference. Labor and consumption are the walls of the bunker that is known as the social world.

While bunker disruption should not be the center of resistant activity, since appearance as a means of domination has been consistently moved to the margins of power, bunkers, particularly of the ideational sort, must be kept under siege. Continual disturbance of these sites is essential in the never-ending battle to maintain a degree of individual autonomy. Disrupting the bunker's symbolic order has long been a standard technique in contestational cultural action, and should still have a place in the future of cultural activism. Over the past century two key models of disturbance have emerged. The first is a sedentary model, which attempts to construct a monumental counterspectacle to compete with (and hopefully overwhelm) the bunker's symbolic order. The second is the nomadic model, which seeks to undermine the symbolic order with more ephemeral, process-oriented methods. At present, the former method seems dominant, at least as far as the *discourse* on cultural resistance is concerned. (In actual practice, it is difficult to say since the latter model does not call attention

to itself. Who knows—there may be an army of culture guerrillas working right now, but there is no way to measure the phenomenon). From CAE's perspective, this is an irritating trend because the sedentary model of cultural resistance seems to maintain bunker consciousness more than it undermines it.

The nomadic model and the sedentary model share similar characteristics beyond their contestational intent. The subtext of all interventionist representation, whether sedentary or nomadic, is pedagogy. The hope is that participants and viewers will engage in a dialogue that will allow them to break through the ideological boundaries of the bunker, and in turn gain a greater measure of autonomy (the affirmation of their *own* desires and control over their surroundings). The truly disturbing (by which CAE does not mean "shocking") work of cultural representation will help each individual progress toward a more complete subjecthood—s/he will be able to separate him-herself from the objecthood of the machine. Beyond this point, however, agreement between participants in either school becomes less and less common.

Given the points of agreement, which model best accomplishes the desired aim of creating knowing subjects through dialogue and mutual learning? CAE here contends that the nomadic model is far more efficient in achieving this end. While we do not want to disparage the good intentions of those who participate in the sedentary model, we cannot help but believe that such efforts could be put to better use.

Part of the problem with the sedentary model is that its methods and aims are poorly articulated. Many varieties of public, interventionist, and community-based art fall into

this category. Just what, then, is the object of this model? In the best of conditions, CAE takes this category to mean the production of images that are consciously designed to interact with their general physical and ideational surroundings in a manner that moves the image beyond solely aesthetic (spatial) considerations and into dynamic sociopolitical considerations. (Certainly the old abstract formalist structures [plop art] built with steel girders and iron slabs can be written off as loathsome and unworthy of discussion in the context of resistant images, as can the monuments of the status quo.) Now one must wonder, given this definition, how a critical work located in a museum can be differentiated from one that is located in "public" place, which is generally where most art using the sedentary model with interventionist intent is found. In actuality, there is no difference. Public space does not exist except as a reification. All art, critical or otherwise, once in the social realm, exists only in managed, socially stratified space.

Public art does not exist as there is no public space. The fundamental principle of rational society, as expressed through the fortress mentality, is to manage every piece of territory and to bureaucratize every social action. In such a situation, no one has the right to freely assemble, and no one has the right to install projects, even on what might be called "public property" (a contradiction in terms). Legitimized autonomous zones where one can freely express oneself (politically or otherwise) are long gone, if such spaces ever existed at all. Where could a public work go? In a corn field? That is private property. On the street? That would block the free flow of traffic, thus disrupting the functional intent of the street. In a park? Well yes, if the proper permissions are obtained and all the proper paper-

work is completed and filed. Further, the park is designed for particular forms of structured leisure, and not as a site for autonomous experience; therefore any work placed in the environment must conform to this social structure. The few that can be trusted—that is, those who have been well processed by the bureaucracy (usually through training camps such as art schools), and know how to follow bureaucratic procedure (probably the most important way one is socialized during the education process) can perhaps carry out an impermanent project. A person who has these qualifications, plus public recognition (which is to say a record of bureaucratic acceptance) may be permitted to install a permanent work, but only if the public (i.e., the bureaucracy managing the area) thinks such a project is needed. Consequently, not only is there no public space, but there are very few members of the public qualified to do public work. The problem here is that it is too easy to forget that ownership is not a prerequisite for territorialization. Control of a territory is all that is needed to colonize it. To return to the introductory riddle: When is a fortress not a fortress? One answer is: When it is in the public sphere.

Can the same be said about community-based art? First the word "community" itself is a problem. It has been used broadly, reducing it to the point of absolute meaninglessness. (Most emblematic of this abuse is the oxymoron "the international community.") In the current rhetoric, "community" seems to mean any aggregate of people who have *one* common characteristic. The connotation of community is one of sympathy if the speaker is someone outside the aggregate, or of identification if the speaker is someone that is a part of the aggregate. Hence terms such as "the gay

community" or "the African American community" have become quite common. Generally, a second connotation seems to follow—that these aggregates are recognized participants in the narrative of victimization (this is partly why there is a connotation of sympathy accompanying this word when it is said by an outsider. Admittedly, it is better than the use of "you people." Such a connotation also explains why no white male community exists). Finally, community can also mean a people within a given area, usually a neighborhood. The boundaries of such "communities" are often ill-defined, because the ethnographic and geographic characteristics are blended to suit the bureaucratic occasion. These "communities" often are quite large in terms of population, too large for any enveloping personal interaction among the people within them. Further, the institutional affiliations of members residing in a given territory are extremely complex and varied, thus disrupting social solidarity based on race-ethnicity or geography.

Regardless of these definitions, a group that shares a common characteristic and/or a common geography is *not* a community, and never has been one. Community (*Gemeinschaft*) can only exist in a social order with a minimal division of labor. Economic and social specialization under the sign of fetishized hierarchy do not encourage community construction. Communities proper tend toward the sedentary, with the extended family being the general base unit which is in turn extended through the superstructure of friendship. Not only are there enveloping nonrational bonds (kinship or friendship) between members, but there are social norms and values which unify the community members, and which are consensually validated through a spiritual solidarity (often expressed as a

common religion). Every part of social life is shared among community members, rather than one genetic characteristic, one value preference, or a piece of ground. (Please note that CAE is not trying to romanticize this form of social organization by claiming that it is necessarily the most just or desirable, for it certainly has tremendous potential for abuse, and historically, it has fulfilled this potential). While the US may still have some pockets of what could be called community, such a social phenomenon is extremely limited. As with public space, it must be asked: What community!?

In spite of what some artists might say, and in spite of the fact that "community-based art" is becoming a sanctioned bureaucratic category, very little work pertaining to "community" is being done. Most cases are in actuality projects with localized bureaucracies. No artist can just walk into an alien territory and become a part of it. To successfully do such a thing takes years of participatory research. Be that as it may, assuming that an artist has successfully navigated the cultural bureaucracy and acquired money for a community project (for which an artist generally has one year to prove h/erself) just how will s/he insinuate h/erself into a "community?" The easiest way is to have the project mediated by a bureaucracy that claims to represent the community. A school, a community center, a church, a clinic, etc., is then selected, often because it is willing to participate in the project. The bureaucratic experts from the selected institution will represent the community and tailor the project to their specifications in a negotiation that also accounts for the desires of the artist. When the process is over, who has actually spoken? Since the majority of the negotiation over *policy* is not done with individuals

in the territory, but with those who claim to represent it, which is again shaped by the bureaucratic parameters placed on the project by the money donors, how much direct autonomous action is left? How much dialogue has taken place? Not much. What is left is the representation of a representation (the bureaucratic opinion of the artist and h/is mediators).

There are three problems here. One is that the already mentioned rationalization of all territories by institutions geared toward self-perpetuation allows only for the most minimal public dialogue. The second is that monolithic social aggregates do not exist in a hyper-complex division of labor. The left has seen this problem illustrated so many times. For example, feminism does not speak for all women; institutionalized feminism does not speak for all feminists. One bureaucracy cannot speak for a social aggregate, nor for members of a given densely populated territory.

The final problem is the rationalization of collective experience. Efficient large scale social activity has to be bureaucratized. It is the only type of complex social organization known. In order to achieve efficiency, nonrational elements are factored out of the organization process. And yet, it is precisely these elements that can allow for a fulfilling collective experience. For example, in CAE there are power relationships, as is to be expected in any social relationship; however, power in this social constellation does not take the form of domination. One member defers to the expertise of another member whose abilities in h/er area of soft specialization take precedence. Even if one is rationally unsure of the decision the other is making, a nonrational trust has developed over the years that lets

each have faith in the wisdom of the other. The reason that such a social occurrence transcends alienation is only because of nonrational elements of affinity, friendship, faith, and trust. These elements allow the individuals in CAE to work as a unit in our interactions with each other, beyond considerations of exchange or contract economy. This is the type of solidarity and horizontal flow of power that bureaucracy attempts to eliminate; by contrast, the cellular social constellation is among the very few collective experiences where people can actually speak for themselves, in that their individuality is not lost to the mechanics of organization.

Artworks which depend on bureaucracy in order to come to fruition are too well managed to have any contestational power. In the end they are acts of compliance that only reaffirm hierarchy and the rational order. No risk is involved in such work, as it is all done within the confines of the bureaucracy/bunker. How can such work be considered a challenge to the dominant social order? In what manner does it chip away at the bunker? What is most sorrowful is that the minions who carry out these projects are not liberated; rather, they become prisoners of the monuments that their labor produced, as the product of mediation speaks for them.

To be sure, the process that creates public art suffers from overmanagement, but equally unfortunate is that the product suffers from the same fate, for there is no visual object that better represents monologic tyranny than the monument. Monuments have been generously sprinkled throughout "public" property to function as reflective spaces where individuals can commune with the wonder and mystery of the state. In these areas, the contestational voice

is silenced. In these spaces, the whole nation lives as a single community in total agreement, and all social problems dissipate. Only the serene voice of the welfare state (a system concerned only with the benefit of its citizens) gently whispers in the realm of the monument. For example, consider a well-intentioned monument such as Maya Lin's Viet Nam Veterans Memorial. This monument is not as loathsome as most since it is not an outright ideological imperative; that is, it does not make the particular the universal as the monument's realist counterpart does, nor does it participate in the authority of the vertical. However, in spite of the good intentions, this site, which one at the very least would expect to be filled with the anger of howling screams, is silent, punctuated only by quiet sobs. (Granted, the area is so secure that if a howler did begin a counterperformance, s/he would be rapidly escorted away). This memorial is a place for pathological therapy, where the rift between citizen and state is healed in a sick moment of a spectacular reconfiguration of memory.

Can any monument act as a point of contestation? As in the case of Viet Nam Veterans Memorial, contestation around monuments can only happen to a limited degree. Community murals in which all racial-ethnic groups live and work together, thesmog has blown away, and kids play in drug-free parks are to be admired for their utopian intent, and for their affirmation of difference. They can function as a message of hope in areas where there is very little. Much the same can be said of large scale performances in public areas, which are usually designed as reminders of the nature of various social problems. However, such works also seem to have the aura of the "cultural revolution" about them. They are overcoded and predictable, and thereby blend

perfectly with the other public images (billboards that perpetuate the hope of good coffee or clean laundry). The inherent conservatism in monumentality will not allow for any kind of disarming counterspectacle. The result of this medium has always been decided long before the monument is even constructed. Consequently it is purely monologic. No one dialogues with a mural any more than one dialogues with a billboard containing an advertisement. In the end, monuments, even ones created with radical intentions, reinforce the status quo by reinforcing the audiences' predisposition for visual ingestion of rigid codes and stereotypes.

Monuments are closed systems which do not allow for a pedagogy of equality; instead they are a top-down means of delivering information, and the information delivered is generally rather corrupt (i.e., an ideological imperative). In the construction of such public or community work is a class configuration that follows a top-down pedagogy. At the top is the artist-director, since s/he is the one who controls the purse strings. Then come the mediators, and finally come those who are enlisted in the art campaign. As mentioned earlier, the base parameters are set by the upper levels, with the lower levels only having a say in minor contingencies of the plan. While these projects pretend to function in the style of localized co-ops, they work in quite an opposite manner. Grass roots organizations (which should not be confused with a community) work from the bottom up in a situation where like-minded people, out of concern for a specific issue, organize in the spirit of volunteerism. These behaviors are emergent, and consequently no central figure is needed to guide the situation or set policy.

It seems reasonable to conclude that an anti-logos stand as presented in counterspectacle is not the best way to carry on cultural resistance. While such methods are not totally without merit, the categories of production are confused, relying on false territorialization and monologic monumentalism. Overall the experience of the sedentary model of resistant art action is simply too well managed to offer an individual a moment of liberation. What is constructed instead is an alternative or oppositional code which can be just as restrictive as the one which it replaces. But an additional problem exists that is particularly disconcerting to artists: the sign of art seems to get in the way of radical action. The problem is that art is understood in its traditional sense rather than in its newer critical sense. Once an audience outside the specialization of cultural production hears that a given object is art, a set of expectations clicks in that neutralizes resistant meaning: The expectation of an uplifting object that will reveal the wisdom of ages past and the utopian vision of the future, which are in turn associated with the principle of the state. Unfortunately the expectation for art, much like the expectation for electronic media, is one in which the process should be monologic. This should not be construed as a call for anti-art, as art itself is not the problem being discussed; rather, this is a call for artists, once outside the parameters of cultural production for other members of the culture industry, to separate their work from the system of signs which shape the nonspecialist's perception of art. The option of redesigning the popular sign system is certainly there, but that long term process could not be completed in this generation or for many more to come. The only option for immediate practical results is to sidestep the issue altogether by avoiding the designation of resistant cultural

objects as art. Of course should such objects find their way into specialized institutions of culture, such as galleries or museums, the work may be filtered through any sign system. However, in the arena of cultural production for and with nonspecialists, the better a work can blend with the everyday life system (and yet alienate its viewer from the oppressive rote of everyday life), causing them to reflect on their position in it, the more the contestational voice will enter the ideational bunker.

Such a goal is precisely what is accomplished by successful work using the nomadic model. There are two types of nomadic cultural action. The first is process oriented, and is performative. In this case, the nomad selects an action that within a given social situation instigates a dialogue between random co-producers. The second variety is product: An artifact is created, which when deployed in site-specific areas, creates scepticism in the viewer, and in the best case scenarios causes them to question the assumptions about the situation with others. Neither of these tactics is particularly new, having nearly a century of history behind them, but this does not make them any less effective. In fact, in the age of overmanagement, they are the only viable tactics through which any kind of democratic cultural participation can be achieved.

Let us begin with the concept of territory. Unlike monumental conceptions that seek to take and dominate a given area with a single voice that cannot be disputed, the nomadic model rejects the maintenance of a single voice in a given area. The voice of the nomadic cultural worker insinuates itself into a given situation at given moment, only to dissipate in the next. Or a product of similar form

but of oppositional content to other products within a situation is strategically placed where it will likely be consumed by whoever passes through the area. In both cases, the success of the work is dependent upon the relinquishing of control of a given area, as it is only through contrast, difference, and lack of social management on the part of the artist that a disruption and/or dialogue can occur. Once the disruption is spotted by the officials who police the area, one can assume that the area will be reterritorialized immediately. Just the process of seeing this cycle (deterritorialization, disruption, reterritorialization) occur can be extremely enlightening for many, especially when what appears to be the slightest offense provokes the most brutal response from authorities. Use of the nomadic model in this manner requires excellent camouflage in the case of the product, and careful assessment of the time lapse between disruption (for example, people acting autonomously through the exercise of free speech) and the disciplinary response in the case of process. This window will determine the duration of the performance, unless the performer plans to incorporate the police reaction into the script.

An additional aspect of great importance is that this model does not recognize the public/private distinction in regard to territory. This model assumes that the idea of public space is a myth. In rational economy, action is always taken in privatized space, which is to say managed space. The only variable in question is to what degree a site is managed, i.e., how complex bureaucratic restrictions are at a given site, and how powerful is the garrison which patrols the site.

Nomadic action can be understood as unmediated or direct action. The cultural nomad sees all territories as potential

sites of resistance. Once a site has been designated, s/he proceeds to take a place within that territory. No permits are obtained; no permissions are required. No particular social aggregate is designated as audience or participants (although this is not to say that various social characteristics will not be partially determined by territory, as space is most certainly socially stratified); rather participants are viewed as individuals. Each individual in the situation is not guided or directed by the artist, s/he is only encouraged to speak by the artist's process or product. The scripts emerge; they are not written in advance. In this sense, nomadic action is experimental in that the outcome is unknown (which is not to say that parameters are not unknown—police will stop the process or the product will be destroyed). To be sure, a nomadic performance could proceed along a very disappointing ideological trajectory as easily as it could an enlightening one. Such possibilities are quite the opposite of the bureaucratically routinized certainty of monumental culture. Nomadic action occurs in the spatial cracks that separate the forces of micro-management, and in the temporal gaps between autonomous action and punishment, because it is in this liminal location where the possibility for dialogic cultural action is found.

What is more important, however, is that the "public" can participate in generating "public art." Anyone can participate in the nomadic model to the fullest extent of h/er desire. While nomadic actions can be very elaborate and expensive, they also can be very simple. Nomadic action can cost nothing and still can be incredibly effective—the only requirement is the will to do it. There are no bureaucracies to navigate, you don't have to be a well-schooled or

famous artist, and any site is valid. Hence, no matter what variety of everyday life systems a person participates in, an element of radical practice can always be initiated within it. For those who are not interested in instigating action (for CAE does not want to take the naive view that everyone should be making art if culture is to be democratic), the nomadic work does not determine, silence, or exclude the contributions of anyone who chooses to interact with the process or product.

Through the use of nomadic tactics such as detournment, creative vandalism, plagiarism, invisible theater, or counterfeiting, to name but a few, bunkers can be disturbed. Any work which can create the conditions for people to engage in the transgressive act of rejecting a totalizing and closed rational order, and to open themselves up to social interaction beyond the principles of habituation, of exchange, and of instrumentality within an environment of uncertainty, is one which is truly resistant and truly transgressive, since participants can revel in a moment of autonomy. Only within such situations can dialogue occur, and only through this occurrence can pedagogy have enlightening consequences.

Example of a nomadic work.

Are We There Yet?

Critical Art Ensemble designed this work to be performed at tourist sites and locations of extreme consumption. Note that such locations are heavily garrisoned and fortified, so only the slightest act of deviance is needed to provoke a coercive response.

The performer selected a spot near an entrance/exit area at a public site, taking a position at the side of the entrance way so as to minimize blockage. In place, he began to set up a toy car track and then proceeded to push toy cars around the track. Other cars were displayed for anyone else who wanted to participate. Other collective members insinuated themselves into the crowd that developed, and spoke with the onlookers.

The results: The crowd generally began by speculating on the mental health of the performer. Common themes were that the performer was "loony," "on drugs," or a "Viet Nam vet." Some people would join the performer in pushing cars around the track, sometimes as a taunt, but mostly as gesture of sympathy. Within two to five minutes security guards or police would arrive on the scene. They would approach cautiously, fearing it was a disturbed person who might be prone to violence (the security forces were generally quite public about discussing the situation). The sight of security forces would attract more people to the scene. Security would eventually tell the performer to "move along." The performer would ignore the command, and act as if he were oblivious to the people around him. Security would then threaten the performer with arrest if he did not move. This is the moment when the most interesting dialogue began, and the greatest understanding of public management emerged. The spectators were suddenly confronted with the reality that a person was about to be arrested simply for playing with toy cars. On most occasions, the majority of people in the crowd would make verbal protests while standing in stunned disbelief, although in every case there were those who thought the police action was for the best, and that the performer really

did need help. On one occasion, violence between the police and the crowd was on the verge of breaking out, and the performance was broken off prematurely. In all other cases, the performance was stopped just prior to arrest.

Notes and figures: Cost of the performance-$10 for the cars and track; the theater space was appropriated; no performance experience was required.

3

Slacker Luddites

Throughout the first world, nothing is more emblematic of zero work nihilism than the image of Luddite resistance. Joyful destruction of machines in the workplace: Is there anyone who hasn't entertained such fantasies? Who hasn't thought about crashing a workstation hard drive, spilling coffee into a mainframe, or throwing a company vehicle into reverse while speeding down the highway? For many, such fantasies become reality, and neoluddites are born. But are such deeds really the acts of Luddites, or do they merely replay a historical narrative that never existed—an indulgence in nostalgic creations? Because of the profound differences that separate the political economies of early and late

capital, the nihilistic impulses of early 19th-century Luddites cannot be qualitatively compared to those arising now in the late 20th century. The Luddite designation can only be used rather loosely in the society of late capital. On its surface, the image of early 19th-century workers smashing the machines of textile mills has a potency that seems utterly relevant to the crushing alienation of the contemporary workplace, but the motivations and ideology that lie behind Luddite activity today have little in common with the Luddites of the past.

The Luddism of early capital represented the dying thoughts of the feudal body, while the attacks on the textile factories were the final muscle spasms of the feudal corpse. Those who were motivated to participate did so out of the fear that they were becoming anachronisms. It seemed clear to the Luddites that machines were going to replace them and steal away their livelihoods, as poor as they may have been. Any political intent behind Luddite activities was counter-revolutionary in nature—an attempt to stop the revolution in production, and to halt the shift of power from land to capital (from nobility to bourgeoisie). The final goal of the Luddite was to maintain the status quo, since the Luddites of early capital were desperation personified with their deathly fear of machines, economic instability, and the future. From a cool intellectualized perspective, Luddites are not a group to be canonized in the history of resistance to authoritarian structures. If anything, they were demons in this history. But let us not forget the passions. Smashing up factories—that must be one supreme libidinal discharge. Such actions signify moments of free-form desire. To sub-stitute for these moments, which are too few in the lives of individuals in late capital, the myth of the Luddite contin-

ues to dwell in the hearts of all people who hate work in general, their jobs in particular, and the repressive atmosphere omnipresent in the work environment.

From the contemporary viewpoint nearly two centuries later, it should be very apparent that Luddism in its historical form has no place in late capital (only its mythic form carries meaning). The conditions have changed too drastically, and yet there are still some threads of continuity. Fueled by images of anti-tech nihilism, traces of the Luddite mythology live on, but as nothing more than isolated fragments offering only intermittent patterns of significance. Most importantly, the specific fear that motivated the originary Luddites is gone. Although technological development causes many people fear and anxiety, fewer and fewer believe that technology will replace them. In fact, the fear is really quite the opposite. As technology attaches itself to the body, the relationship between the body and technology becomes increasingly symbiotic. The bureaucratic and technocratic classes and portions of the service class are being turned into cyborgs. This is the new Luddite fear; the fear of losing organic purity, and of becoming overdependent on—addicted to—technology.

Examples of people being turned into cyborgs are quite numerous; the most obvious place where this occurs is of course the military. In that institution, ruled by a desire for technology to run wild, people want to be machines—killing machines. The better a soldier can transform h/erself into pure technology, the better h/er chances of surviving combat. Headsets, night vision goggles, automatic weapons, lasers, gas masks, etc., are all attached to the body, extending its possibilities. This is a second-order cyborg:

organic infrastructure with an impermanent technological superstructure. The question is, at what point will the techno-superstructure become permanent, creating a first-order cyborg?

The first-order cyborg can be a frightening thought, especially considering how well the middle class is being groomed for this development. Rather than being framed in terms of death, the cyborg question is framed in terms of life, desire, and entertainment. From pacemakers to contact lenses, bio-tech makes the body stronger. Who will say no to technology that extends life, or to that which returns the body to normative functions? Let us not forget the possibilities for balancing the body's appearance with its desired image. Everything from artificial cheek implants to sex change operations offer liberating experiences of a nomadic, ever-transforming body. And finally, what of all the video and virtual reality games? It is fun to go into those artificial electronic worlds. Just suit up, and the conquest of death is at your command. Apocalypse and utopia have imploded with such force under the sign of technology that it is nearly impossible to separate the two possibilities. The media machine of the corporate complex maintains a utopian spectacle to keep the population moving toward existence as cyborgs. This is part of the reason why it is difficult to find a contemporary Luddite with the same zeal for destruction that h/er predecessors had. Contemporary Luddites do not hate technology. On the contrary, they are comfortable with it. At the same time, technology is not accepted without question to the extent desired by corporate futurologists and public relations people. The relationship between today's Luddite and technology is a little more ambiguous than it once was, and consequently

the anti-tech nihilism has also dissipated. What more can be said? Compared to the original Luddites, the contemporary anti-tech malcontents are slackers.

Rather than continuing to examine the more sensationalized aspects of technology, let's return to the everyday life of the bureaucratic class. The environment of the bureaucracy keeps the traces of Luddism alive. No matter how big a smiley face the corporate futurologists put on technology and the cyborg alternative, spend only a few moments sitting at a workstation, staring into a computer screen, and one realizes that something about this situation is truly debilitating. Or look around the office at all the other workstations, and witness the organic debris of hit-and-run victims on the digital highway. It's an unpleasant vision to say the least, but perhaps worse is the feeling that technology is starting to cleave to the skin. This feeling inspires the realization that the greater the efficiency of the human/tech interface, the better for bureaucratic production. The most basic slacker Luddite tactics have developed to counter this withering repression. Some are time-honored, such as repeated trips to the restroom. Some are newer, such as meeting at the xerox machine for a bitch session with other work mates. This tactic is of a higher order than the former, because not only are the workers doing nothing, but they are also getting paid for having nonproductive conversation (distinguishing between the orders of slacker Luddism will be discussed later in the essay). These tactics not only slow the rate of production, they also temporarily hinder the bio-tech synthesis. Unfortunately, high level management also realizes this, inspiring it to greater efforts to accelerate the synthesis necessary for maximum exploitation.

At present, employees can be monitored by devices connected to their computers, so the overseers know precisely how long a worker has been at h/er workstation and can even take keystroke counts, but surveillance alone is not enough. Slacker Luddites know how to get around these surveillance techniques. However, once the organic and the technological are joined, workers will never be able to leave their workstations. They will be able to move from place to place, but they will never be able to jack-out. The wearable computers from NEC Corporation exemplify this corporate elite science fiction fantasy. There is little doubt that the task of compressing machine space and organic space (the workstation and the body) into a single compact unit is well under way.

Yet despite all this workplace terror, so long as technology offers services to the individual, it receives the utopian benefit of the doubt. It is both useful and enjoyable. Quite commonly, a slacker Luddite who hates to slave on h/er computer at work returns home only to sit at the computer again, to desktop publish h/er own magazine. This situation is the opposite of originary Luddism. The slacker Luddite shuns or destroys technology not because of a hatred or fear of it, but because of a hatred for work, while originary Luddites were accustomed to work, but hated and feared the technology. Slacker Luddism is a late capital hybrid, a perfect example of recombinant culture. It synthesizes the tactics of originary Luddism with the zero work ethic of contemporary slackers.

Implied in the above is another important distinction between Luddites and their apparent descendants: The slacker Luddite is a narcissist. This is not meant in a pejorative way,

as they have little choice in the matter. Unlike their predecessors, the slacker Luddites have no sense of everyday life community in the workplace. The dividing of labor into micro-specializations has disrupted this possibility. Electronic salons, though a point of fascination, hardly replace the sedentary and organic interrelationships lost in the economy of late capital. Desirable living conditions are consequently measured by personal pleasure, rather than by contribution to a community. For this reason, slacker Luddites have even less political intent in their activities than their ancestors, and hence should not be viewed as saboteurs. The ends for their actions are usually personal and idiosyncratic. They are not revolutionaries (or counterrevolutionaries) by intent. The political fallout from their actions is incidental.

Even an idea like zero work begins the process of depoliticization. Zero work is generally associated with radical left action, but this is not the intention of the slacker Luddite. While zero work was formerly a strategy made specific in the notion of a universal strike, an effort to force the collapse of the capitalist system, the slacker Luddite sees zero work as a desirable condition personally. No grandiose goals of social and political restructuring are involved. Under the slacker rubric, zero work is transformed into a therapeutic strategy, a way to feel good about yourself. The slacker Luddite oscillates between individual heroism and political naiveté.

The situation of the slacker Luddite is also directly influenced by h/er class position. Unlike in the past, the slacker Luddite is more likely to be a bureaucrat, technocrat, or service worker, and less likely to be a laborer. The current condi-

tions of the working class are such that slack is extremely hard to achieve. Since such conditions emerged out of early capital, the strategies of resistance developed during that time are more common and practical. For those working on the assembly lines, resistance is a matter of all or nothing. For instance, the assembly line moves at a fixed rate, so slacker attempts to slow down production will generally lead to hasty dismissal. The only real options are a general strike (a dead strategy), or (following the tactics of early Luddites) machine destruction for the purpose of completely shutting down the factory. Neither of these tactics are very common now, and they are both very risky in terms of potential punishment from the state. Slack is not an accurate description of these approaches. In terms of the latter tactic of "throwing a wrench in the machine," the technocrat is better equipped. By introducing viruses into corporate or bureaucratic communication systems, the individual resister can do much more damage than by stopping a point of production— s/he can attack the command and control of a complex manufacturing multi-site.

In the case of skilled laborers, such as construction workers, the use of independent contracting severely curtails Luddite or slacker Luddite activity. Profits increase with the rate of production for skilled laborers and independent contractors, and technology is a great aid in keeping production rates high. Further, since most of the equipment these workers use belongs to them, it would be quite foolish for them to destroy their own property. Consequently, this is not a likely location for Luddite ideology or action.

For bureaucrats, however, the conditions are perfect for Luddism to grow and flourish. The work is just esoteric

enough to make it very difficult to determine reasonable production rates. Add this factor to the low pay, the most alienating of working conditions, and a general ideology of "minimum pay, minimum work," and all varieties of slacker Luddite behavior become more likely. The work itself is relatively secure, so the situation is less desperate than it is for laborers. This difference is key in separating the slacker Luddite from h/er predecessors. Unlike in the days of early capital, Luddite action is no longer a matter of survival. To some extent, slacker Luddism actually requires a certain degree of luxury. At the same time, this is ironically where one of the strongest threads of continuity appears between Luddites and slacker Luddites. In both cases, desire to regain control of the work situation is a primary motivating force. It is resistance to instability that ties the generations of Luddites together.

The problem of instability cannot be disconnected from the ever-increasing velocity of communication, production, and consumption in the age of capital. The perils of nomadic and recombinant culture are most menacing to those who attempt to construct a sense of place. No real sense of continuity exists, leaving memory without stable linkage points to the world of phenomena. Objects in the world are forever coming at the individual, leaving no time for reflection on interactions with them, much less time to turn around to see where one has just been. (This is another reason why there is a corporate-military demand for the cyborg life form. Working machines need no time for reflection). Perhaps the problem is even greater and more fundamental than the establishment of place, since it is questionable whether any stable concept of space itself remains. What space are we in while speaking on the

phone? What world are we looking into while staring at a computer screen or a video monitor? It is very difficult to say. Can space be folded in on itself so that it is possible to be everywhere at once through the use of communication technology? William Gibson described cyberspace as a "consensual hallucination." If that is so, how do we decide which hallucinations to subscribe to, and how trustworthy they are? More to the point, is the hallucination based on consensus at all? The intense confusion and scepticism that arises from the dematerialization of physical space often awakens nostalgia for a return to the hegemony of physical space; at the very least, it inspires a yearning for a means to temporarily stabilize the immediate environment.

The original Luddites represented a vague intuition that political economy was about to enter its dromologic era. The ability of the machine to work more efficiently than people, as individuals and as groups, appeared as a material fetishization of speed. As the old routes of labor began to dematerialize, the Luddites reacted by destroying the fetish object (i.e., the machine). It was an attempt, however misguided, to reestablish the old regime of everyday life. Although technology was perceived as an evil to be feared, the truly frightening thing was the inability to maintain self and place. It was all disappearing.

Slacker Luddites also desire a sense of stability in terms of both self and place; however, this desire is not precisely the same as that of their forerunners. The slacker Luddites are not in the unenviable position of being on the cusp of drastic economic change. They have had some time to adjust to dromological necessity. In fact, many are speed freaks, but they are speed freaks who like to control their

own dosage. As mentioned above, the proper dosage is measured against personal comfort. Slackers do not recognize the adrenal experience of hyperanxiety as useful or desirable. Understanding their need to control the velocity at which they travel, so as never to completely dematerialize self or environment, is key to comprehension of slacker Luddite tactics.

Another idea that is central to understanding Luddite tactics is the aforementioned association of neoluddism with zero work. This, of course, is the prime element of slack. Slackers are not naive about the needs of the workplace, though they tend to be ignorant of its macropolitics; they know that some production must be accomplished, and that although they may resist, they cannot choose not to work. However, they believe that no one should do any more work than is absolutely necessary. Once the word "work" is used the slacker Luddite knows problems are ahead. In fact, this word should be discarded, and replaced with what the word actually means: alienated action. "Leisure" is no better. The two are sides of the same coin. The former is coerced production, while the latter is coerced consumption. In the utopian world of the slacker Luddite, no distinction exists between work and leisure; there are only desired responses to the world.

Part of the slacker Luddite's mission is to reappropriate the workplace—that is, to strip it of its alienating qualities. This is often done by personalizing it, thereby creating a place where s/he can accomplish whatever s/he desires. Slacker Luddites attempt to make the workplace enjoyable, i.e., not a workplace. For example, the lower orders of slackness consist primarily of varieties of goofing off. These

are attempts to separate from the machine, and to thereby deny or temporarily destroy the cyborg identity. The easiest machine to eliminate is your own. Once separated from the machine, a relative quietude ensues that allows for reflection, and even face-to-face interaction.

Retreatism and passivity, however, are novice slacker techniques. The reward is too short in duration, and it is too easy to be caught and given a patronizing reprimand. The high-end slacker personalizes the cyborg itself, which is its ultimate destruction. S/he transcends goofing off. This slacker spends time at the workstation playing video games, chatting with friends on the internet, making travel plans, and so on. The computer registers the time served at the station, so surveillance is deflected. (Fortunately, the computer cannot as yet record whether labor power has been expended in a manner useful to a given employer). But best of all is the slacker who does freelance assignments while at work. This slacker is paid both for a project that s/he wants to do, and for using a hostile institution's time, equipment, and supplies. In addition to goofing off and slowing production, this slacker feels justified in believing that s/he should be paid double for doing as s/he pleases.

The slacker Luddite delights most in misappropriating the technology, and in turning the authoritarian codes of the workplace inside out. H/is mission is not to destroy the material aspects of work—this would be as misguided as the actions of the originary Luddites—but rather to destroy the symbolic order that confines and alienates the individual. This is not to say that an occasional intentional freezing or crashing of the technology never occurs, or that such actions are not of interest; however, these tactics, when

done under the sign of slack, are only a means to a very limited end. All high-end slackers know that it is the hallucination of the workplace that must be destroyed, not that which conveys the hallucination.

Alienation and misery are integral parts of the economy of desire. Work must be as unfulfilling an experience as possible, for only by torturing people day in and day out will they emerge from the prison of production with the zeal to consume that which they artificially desire. The desperate act of consumption—purchasing as a means to fill some fundamental lack—could be perceived only by the truly exploited as a viable strategy to resolve the crisis of life in late capital. Strategies which break this obscene cycle are few. If the Luddites showed us anything, it was that the workplace is a prime location for resistance, and that resistance is very effective when it is an attack from within the institution itself. Their methods may have lacked any reasonable subtlety, but their nihilism still acts as a rallying point. If the slacker Luddites have shown us anything, it is the value of blasting the codes of the ideational place, not the space itself. So long as the workplace continues to be an environment that steals our autonomy with the intention of making labor as unfulfilling as possible, there will always be traces of Luddism, and there will certainly always be slackers.
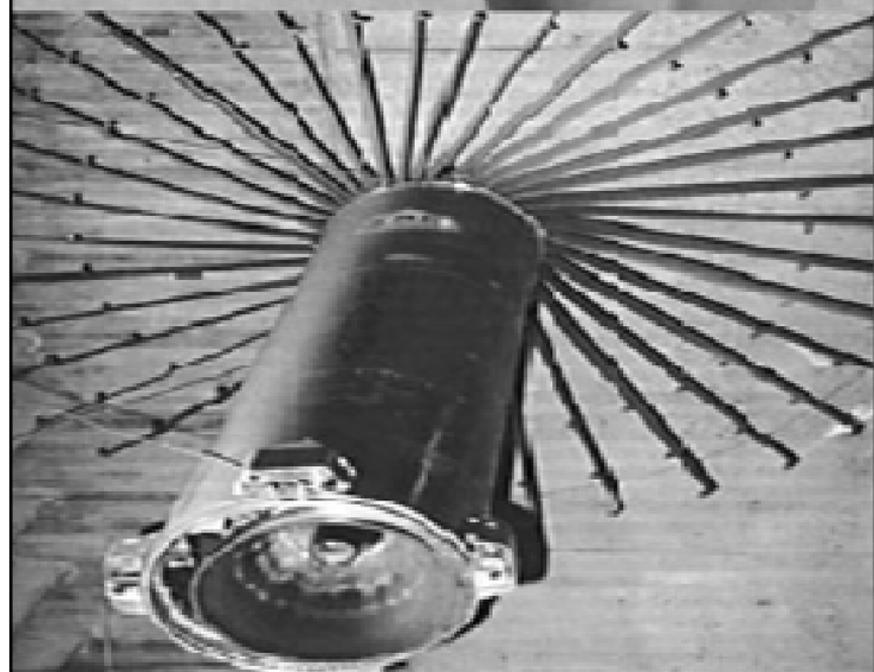
4

The
Technology
of
Uselessness

I am useless, but God loves me.

—Mike Kelley

The expectation that technology will one day exist as pure utility is an assumption that frequently surfaces in collective thought on the development of society and social relations. This prospect has typically suggested two opposite scenarios of the future. On one hand, there is the utopian millenium predicted by modern thinkers, who were guided by belief in progress; this concept slowly began to supplant belief in the

concept of providence during the 17th and 18th centuries. Both concepts were characterized by belief in the unilinear development of the human race, but providence was a force that was expected to result in spiritual, rather than in economic autonomy. The engine of providence was considered the guiding hand of God (which was later amputated and stitched to the cyborg of capitalism by Adam Smith). In Early Modernity, when belief in providence began giving way to belief in progress, intellectuals and scholars were debating whether the social utopia of the future should be based on spiritual or on secular principles. Philosophers searched for an independent force in the universe that could save the earthly population from its economic shortcomings and its spiritual privation. Thomas More constructed a rather dubious literary utopia that marked the beginning of the shift from God/Christ to science/technology as savior. From More's perspective, neither of the two choices seemed particularly satisfying. Given the choice between El Dorado and the regime of Mahomet the Prophet, Voltaire found the former more tolerable. This type of thought which valued secular human advancement and cast doubt on spiritual systems began to tip the scales of judgment in favor of science and technology, but certainly no celebration accompanied this shift. With the coming of the industrial revolution, the scales tipped decisively in favor of science and technology once and for all. At last, a foreseeable end was imagined to the problem of production—soon there would be enough goods for everyone, and with such surplus, competition over scarce goods would cease. The idea of progress began to flourish from this point on. Both the left (Condorcet and Saint-Simon) and the right (Comte and Spencer) shared an optimism about the future in spite of

the wildly divergent destinies predicted by each—for example, council socialism was anticipated by Saint-Simon, and the appearance of the bourgeois *Übermensch* was expected by Spencer.

Let us not forget Marx in this thumbnail sketch. Although Marx was not one to wax utopian very often, he did have his moments. Marx believed that the factory system would solve problems of production (i.e., scarcity); however, he foresaw a new problem, that of distribution. The crisis in distribution would in turn lead to revolution, by which means the victorious workers would restructure the exploitive routes of bourgeois distribution. Such speculation has continued to manifest itself even later, in utopian visions well exemplified by René Clair in the film *A Nous la Liberté.* The film depicts a time after the glorious revolution when the workers enjoy the fruits of zero work, and live only to celebrate, to drink, and to sing, while the machines work dutifully, producing the goods needed to carry this utopia into a shining future. One of the main currents in modern art (Futurism, Constructivism, and Bauhaus) illustrated this soon-to-come secular utopia. All the same, it would be quite unfair to hang the sometimes shameful optimism of the 20th century on Marx. Although he demonstrated how rationalized capitalist economy would end the problem of production, he also realized that people could not be satisfied by goods alone. Marx foresaw that in the epoch of capitalism, although production rates would rise, so would the degree of alienation from our own human nature, from economic process, from economic products, and from other social beings. In terms of individuals' psychic condition, things would not get better, but would grow tortuously worse. For Marx, once other variables

besides production were examined, unilinear social advancement was not to be found.

This brings us to the second scenario— the pessimists' dystopia. This point of view seems to gain new proponents with each new mechanized and/or electronic war. Yet even when the idea of progress was at its apex, before the military catastrophes of the 20th century, some critics of the idea were already predicting that human "advancement" would end in disaster. First and foremost was Ferdinand Tönnies, who argued that advanced technology would only serve to increase the complexity of the division of labor (society), which in turn would strip people of all the institutions that are the basis of human community (family, friendship, public space, etc). After World War I, Oswald Spengler was among the leaders of this line of thought. To his mind, advanced technology and sprawling cities were not indications of progress; rather, they were indicators of the final moments of civilization—one that has hit critical mass and is about to burn itself out. The great sociologist Pitirim Sorokin summed up this perspective in *The Crisis of Our Age* when he stated:

> Neither happiness, nor safety and security, nor even material comfort has been realized. In few periods of human history have so many millions of persons been so unhappy, so insecure, so hungry and destitute, as at the present time, all the way from China to Western Europe.

Here then are the two sides, forever in opposition. Today the two antithetical opinions continue to manifest themselves throughout culture. Corporate futurologists sing the praises

Smart Rocks

This Smart Rock or Smart Bullet is the most fully developed technology for destroying missiles and warheads. Now the desire of the bourgeois to subordinate themselves to the useless has become visible.

From U.S. Government .... Call

Available to you due to the lack of competitors for Hegelian Mastery of the Globe.

KitchenAid Stand Mixer

For the bargain–hungry consumer, KitchenAid offers this tried and true stand mixer. Glossy green and conspicuous, this mixer is laden with many extra features. Choose from barely mixed to very mixed. Enjoy enriched consumer privation with KitchenAid. *From KitchenAid $409.95*

ADI
Space-based Laser

The center piece of Reagan's grand monument to the useless. Now you too can share in this maniacal form of excess.

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Jen Air 156 Range

The Jen Air 156 Range offers you dozens of options that transcend human use. This debauchery of excess includes a down draft ventilator with a 450 cubic ft. per minute internal blower, halogen light, coil, radiant and solid elements, convection and thermal ovens, 3 different optional timers, and a versatile cook top system so you can design the style of cooking surface you want.

From Jen Air $1299.95

of computerized information management, satellite communications, biotechnology, and cybernetics; such technological miracles, they assure us, will make life easier as new generations of technology are designed and produced to meet social and economic needs with ever-greater efficiency. On the other hand, the concerns of pessimists, neoluddites, retreatists, and technophobes ring out, warning that humanity will not control the machines, but that the machines will control humanity. In more fanciful (generally Hollywood) moments, the new dystopia is envisioned as a world where people are caught in the evil grip of a self-conscious intelligent machine, one that either forces them into slavery, or even worse, annihilates the human race.

These are the two most common narratives of social evolution in regard to technology. For the utopians, the goal of progress is similar to the vision of René Clair—technology should become a transparent backdrop that will liberate us from the forces of production, so that we might engage in free hedonistic pursuits. For the dystopians, technology represents a state apparatus that is out of control—the war machine has been turned on, no one knows how to turn it off, and it is running blindly toward the destruction of humanity.

Evidence can certainly be found to support both of these visions, but a third possibility exists, one that is seldom mentioned because it lacks the emotional intensity of the other two. To expand on the suggestion of Georges Bataille, could the end of technological progress be neither apocalypse nor utopia, but simply uselessness? Pure technology in this case would not be an active agent that benefits or hurts

mankind: it could not be, as it has no function. Pure technology, as opposed to pure utility, is never turned on; it just sits, existing in and of itself. Unlike the machines of the utopians and dystopians, not only is it free of humanity, it is free of its own machine function—it serves no practical purpose for anyone or anything.

Where are these machines? They are everywhere—in the home, in the workplace, and even in places that can only be imagined. So many people have become so invested in seeing technology as a manifestation of value or anti-value, that they have failed to see that much of technology does nothing at all.

Recently, there has been considerable fascination with the perception that most people cannot learn to operate their video tape decks. As one comedian put it, "I just bought a VCR for $400, and can't figure out how to work it. $400 is just too much for a clock that only blinks 12:00." This situation is certainly exaggerated, but there is an interesting point of truth in it. To program many of the functions on a VCR requires skills beyond those of the average consumer (the program manuals typically require reading skills beyond the level of a 6th grader, and extensive time is needed to learn some of the control functions). When video first hit the consumer markets, the belief was that everyone would soon have a TV studio in h/er house (along with a jet pack). The home TV studio would mark the end of progress in video production. Instead, VCRs filled with useless computer chips now gather cobwebs in home entertainment centers. For example, consider the existence of a chip which allows a VCR to be programmed for a month in advance; this is actually nothing more than an homage to

the useless. It simply exists in and of itself, having no real life function. Most programming information is not available a month in advance, and even if it were, why would someone need to tape a month's worth of television programs, and who would remember the appropriate times to insert new blank tapes?

Why such a chip was made in the first place falls into a web of possibility that is difficult to untangle. First, the perverse desires that consumers associate with utility should not be underestimated. Driven by spectacularized engines of desire, consumers want more for their money—even if what they get is something that will never be used. The corporate answer is to meet a cliché with a cliché: Give customers what they want. Consequently, the marketing departments of corporations, in their struggle for market share in the electronics industry, force their engineers and designers to create new products laden with extra features. One main selling point: Our machine has the most features for the money. The question for the consumer is: "Did I get a good deal [i.e., the most for the money]?" The question of "Can I actually use what I buy?" is never raised. The corporations know of the desire for the useless (a desire that can never be fulfilled), and comply by heaping on their products as much useless gadgetry as possible in order to seduce the bargain-hungry consumer. And so the cycle starts.

The cycle begins to spiral as new generations of technology are introduced—in this case depurified technology. The slogan of one electronics company— "so smart, it's simple"—is symbolic of depurification. The corporation is, in a sense, announcing that its technology actually has a use. Consumers can buy it not just for the sake of

Hospitech Magnetic Resonance Imaging Device

This state of the art medical technology delivers a corporate promise, since it is the perfect medical sight machine. The Hospitech MRI device articulates the space of the body with such clarity that there can be no place for a biological invader to hide. When used excessively the MRI protects capital and increases profit. *

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*The MRI, like a luxury car, can only strive toward purity; it can never actually reach it. The MRI will always have the practical function of vision associated with it.

Buick Park Avenue

This vehicle may be impure in its capacity as transportation, but we have loaded this car with numerous features that serve no purpose at all to make up for this oversight. At the heart of the Park

Avenue is a super fuel-injected V6 engine, revolutionary sonar suspension, standard anti-lock brakes, and a family-of-four air bag safety feature. Also included are 2-speed power windows, power locks, mirrors, antenna, ashtray and lighter, as well as climate control and a 6 speaker electronically tuned AM stereo/FM radio and cassette deck. This form of excess is the privilege of those who enjoy the surplus of production.

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Intercom Doorchime

The Intercom Doorchime is the first true opportunity to test the limits of uselessness. Although the bourgeoisie has never achieved the purity of uselessness of previous leisure classes, the Intercom Doorchime allows them to come very close. The doorchime consists of two pieces; a transmitter/doorbell unit and a receiver. Simply mount the doorbell unit by any door and carry the receiver with you everywhere you go in your house (use the handy belt clip). When a visitor rings the doorbell, your receiver chimes up to 150 ft. away, thus becoming an icon of secular transcendentalism, accumulating mana by controlling the lives of you and your family. *From Intercom Inc $89.95*

having it, but because they will be able to make it do something. The slogan also signals that consumers are buying the *privilege* of being stupid (the ultimate commodity in the realm of conspicuous consumption). There will be no manuals to read, no assembly, no understanding required. The manual is the TV commercial for the product. Having seen it, consumers can make the product function.

While the buying patterns of those seduced by pure technology are guided by a perverse consumer activism, thoroughly corrupted by the Veblenesque nightmare of conspicuous consumption, the patterns of those buying impure technology are guided by a need to keep the apparatus of use as invisible as possible, so as not to interrupt the trajectory of one's "lifestyle." This attempt to return to impure technology eventually backfires, and the spiral becomes a circle again. The consumer zeal for simple technology that will not distract from daily tasks is too easily rechanneled into specialized products that rarely deliver the convenience that is so desperately sought. Two types of products emerge from this variety of artificially generated desire. First there is the product that is a con, such as an electric martini shaker. This is one case where the old fashioned way works just as well if not better. The second type is exemplified by a consumer-grade pasta making machine. One evening at home with this gizmo will quickly teach a person the meaning of labor intensification. This is not a technology of convenience. Either way, these pieces of bourgeois wonder will take their rightful place in upper cabinets and in closets as useless pieces of bric-a-brac that did not even serve the function of delivering enriched consumer privation. Unlike the VCR

chip, these pieces of technology require human contact before they achieve purity.

In all cases, the desire that consumer economy (the economy of surplus) has most successfully tapped is the need for excess, that is, the need to have so much that it is beyond human use. Pleasure is derived through negation—by *not* using a product. This form of excess is the privilege of those who enjoy the surplus of production. Although the bourgeoisie has never achieved the purity of uselessness of previous leisure classes, they still aspire with great fear, and with very little success, to total counterproduction. This class typically falls short of the upper level of the hierarchy of master and slave so aptly articulated by Hegel. The products which members of this class consume transform themselves into stand-ins for the obscene debauchery of excess, in which they as chieftains should personally participate. The cowardice of the bourgeoisie can never be underestimated. Confronted with the opportunity to test the limits of the possible, they instead let things take their place in the realm of the useless. Within this realm, the products of counterproduction acquire a being analogous to that of the sacred in "primitive" cultures, and become the icons of secular transcendentalism, accumulating mana by controlling the lives of those around them.

The uncanny notion that technology which is out of sight and out of mind best defines human existence within the economy of desire is one that is typically resisted by commonsense thought. As William James and Alfred Schutz proposed in their own unique ways, the principle of practicality structures everyday life. Objects are perceived first and foremost in terms of their instrumental value. In constructing a

model of individual existence centered around perception, there can be little doubt that the visible will be at the center and the invisible at the margins. Within the middle ground, utility is the primary governing factor. Hence, within this visible realm, the consumption of excess and excess consumption maintain an element of practicality. For example, a wealthy person buys a luxury car. Although it may have many useless elements, the main reason for its purchase is that it is a "nice ride." The modifying adjective "nice" refers to its useless components, while the center component, the noun "ride," refers to the product's function. The potential for the car to make an instrumental process pleasurable is what relegates it to the realm of desire and excess, and therefore makes it suitable as a product for conspicuous consumption.

Another example is the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) device. In many cases, the way this diagnostic tool is used in medical institutions may actually be abuse. The MRI is a very expensive piece of state-of-the-art med-tech, so it is an investment that must be used to recoup the initial capital expenditure. The MRI can deliver on its corporate promise, as it is the perfect medical sight machine. In a manner far beyond any of its predecessors, the MRI can articulate the space of the body with such clarity that there can be no place for a biological body invader to hide. However, in many cases, the MRI is not needed. An X-ray is often all that is required to diagnose an illness. Excess enters this equation when the MRI is used abusively on the part of the doctor (simply as means to increase profit or to protect capital). Much the same can be said even when the machine is used as an extra precaution by the doctor or the patient. In any case, the MRI, like the luxury car, can only

100 KW Nuclear Power Source

A limiting factor in any space-based anti-missile system is a continuous supply of electrical power to operate the system. The Defense Department, NASA, and the Department of Energy are working on a 100-kilowatt nuclear power source. Purchase one in advance and become part of a national monument to uselessness.*

From U.S. Government. .... call

*The fragments of Star Wars technology have not been released in pure form from the experimental labs yet. An enemy no longer exists. This American system has achieved utter transcendental uselessness.
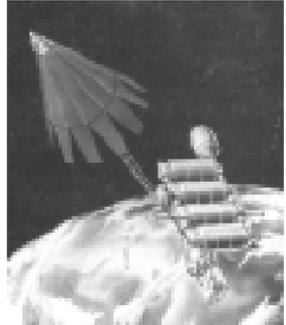
W-53 Thermonuclear Warhead
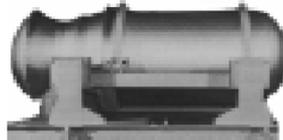
Proper adherence to the codes of uselessness can get you access to the W-53 thermonuclear warhead, weighing in at 8,300 lbs and a yield of 9 megatons.

As a special Bonus Offer, with every purchase of a **W-53** you can get a **W-80 Warhead** for half price! *From U.S. Government .... Call*

Don't fall asleep at the wheel of advanced technology.

Long hours on the road and late-night driving can cause drivers to lose concentration and feel drowsy. The Doze Alarm keeps you awake and alert. This simple, compact device fits comfortably over your ear and emits an audible alarm if your head drops forward as you drive.

Requires one button cell battery (included).

From Doze Inc $22.95

All items are guaranteed useless or your money back. Please be aware objects are perceived first and foremost in terms of their instrumental value. In constructing a model of individual existence centered around perception, there can be little doubt that the visible will be at the center and the invisible at the margins. Within the middle ground, utility is the primary governing factor. Hence within the visible realm, the consumption of excess and excess consumption maintains an element of practicality. Some items featured may require human contact before achieving purity. Prices do not include delivery, unless specified.

Shiatsu Massager

Our most popular massager. Powerful spheres provide the increased alienation that Marx foresaw in the epoch of capitalism. Feels like real hands.

From Homedics $89.95

strive toward purity; it will never actually reach it. The MRI will always have the practical function of vision associated with it. Unlike these aforementioned examples, the useless is rarely noticed, because it is not a part of limited bourgeois excess. As consumers, we are not trained to witness uselessness or consciously value it—its psychic roots are buried much deeper in consciousness and in the economy.

Too often, excessive luxury in the center realm of the visible is mistaken for the limits of excess, but the limits of excess go far beyond the visible. To comprehend extreme excess, one must go beyond conspicuous consumption. Excess will never be seen, only imagined, and within this ideal space the margins can at least be understood. Whether it is a useless chip in the bowels of a machine, the technology that lives in people's closets, or an underground missile system, the purity of uselessness, the limits of excess, are not visible. The real deployment of power flows in absence, in the uncanny, nonrational margins of existence.

Sacrifices beyond the boundary between the visible and the invisible occasionally surface in everyday life. We all know that many people die on the roads and highways of the US every year (approximately 50,000 per year). These people are willingly and uselessly sacrificed to show the sincerity of our desire for transportation technology. No means to end this sacrifice exists, short of closing the roads, and yet no honor is paid to those who give their life for the excess of travel—it remains forever hidden. Philosopher and artist Gregory Ulmer proposed that an addendum be made to the Viet Nam war memorial in which the names of those killed on the highway would be spooled off on a printer beside the monument. Needless to say this monument was rejected,

since such sacrifice and excess must remain hidden in modern societies. To monumentalize death and uselessness is simply too frightening.

Monuments to the sacrifices of the state are typical, but are only the beginning. Most of these monuments are abstracted bits of concrete, marble, bronze, or some other material that will signify the longevity of artificially created memory. But there are times when these monuments are brutally honest, and useless technology along with its slaves is put on public display. The *USS Arizona*, for example—a half sunken ship with the ship's full complement of corpses (officers included) rests silently in Pearl Harbor. This national monument, a functional item made useless through sacrifice, suggests the metaphysical moment of profound loss through its lack of function. (Woe to anyone who does not treat this sacred relic with proper respect, for it speaks of the will to excess, which is grounded in human uselessness in the face of death). But what is even more compelling about this monument is that the ship is carried on the active duty roster. This necropolis is more a symbol of the absent core of the war machine than a monument to the US soldiers who died in the battle of Pearl Harbor; it monumentalizes transcendental uselessness.

Utopian technology is that technology which has fallen from grace. It has been stripped of its purity and reendowed with utility. The fall is necessitated by a return to contact with humanity. Having once left the production table, the technology that lives the godly life of state-of-the-art uselessness has no further interaction with humans as users or as inventors; rather, humans serve only as a means to maintain its uselessness. The location of the most complex pure tech-

nology is no mystery. Deep in the core of the war machine is the missile system. Ultimately, all research is centered around this invisible monument to uselessness. The bigger and more powerful it becomes, the greater its value. But should it ever be touched by utility—that is, should it ever be used—its value becomes naught. To be of value, it must be maintained, upgraded, and expanded, but it must never actually do anything. This idol of destruction is forever hungry, and is willing to eat all resources. In return, however, it excretes objects of utility. Consumer communications and transportation systems, for example, have dramatically improved due to the continuous research aimed at increasing the grandeur of the apparatus of uselessness.

There can be a stopping point to this process—a discovery made by the collapsing Soviet Union. For all the "patriots of democracy" who gave a collective sigh of relief and boasted that they were at last proven right— "communism doesn't work"—there still may be a need to worry. The fall of the USSR had little to do with ideology. The US and USSR were competitors in producing the best apparatus of uselessness in order to prove their own respective Hegelian mastery of the globe. Modern autocrats and oligarchs have long known that a standing army puts an undue strain on the economy. To be sure, standing armies were early monuments to uselessness, but in terms of both size and cost, they are dwarfed by the standing missile system of the electronic age. As with all things that are useless, there will be no return on the investment in it. The useless represents a 100% loss of capital. Although such investment seems to go against the utilitarian grain of visible bourgeois culture, whether in socialist or in constitutional republics, the
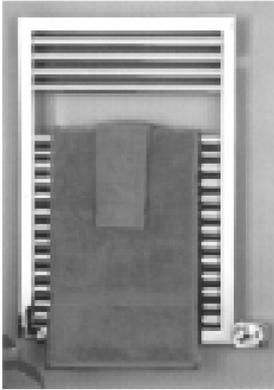
EMR 750 Towel Warmer
Everyone needs to be pampered with a toasty towel on a cold morning. Maybe the technology that created the electric EMR 750 won't liberate us from the forces of production, but then again maybe it will – you decide! Choose a chrome or gold-plated finish, or any custom color that coordinates with your bath.
From Myson Inc $149.95

Sony Hi-Fi Stereo VCR With VCR Plus Programming
Driven by spectacularized engines of desire, consumers want more for their money even if they can't use what they get! SONY corporations delivers with a hi-fi stereo VCR with VCR plus programming, cable mouse, cable box controller, 181 channel capability, 8 event/1 month timer. The shuttle handles 13 essential functions and there's even a jog shuttle TV/VCR remote.*
From Sony $499.95
*Programming manual requires reading skills beyond 6th grade.

Farberware Electric Peeler
The Electric Peeler from Farberware provides the convenience that most consumers desperately desire. But before you know it, this device will be collecting dust in a closet or cabinet along with your home pasta maker and electric swizzle stick, thus becoming another piece of useless technology. Comes with a built-in potato eye remover, 6 ft. cord, low voltage adapter, removable stainless steel blade. Adjustable for right or left hand use. *From Farberware $34.95*

MK 21 Advanced Ballistic Missile Reentry Vehicles
The combined weight of 10 MK 21's is such that the plan to deploy that number on each MX not only would have reduced the missile's anticipated range by 600 miles, but also would have violated SALT II by exceeding the treaty's maximum allowable throw weight! This idol of destruction is forever hungry, and is willing to eat all resources. At a cost of $1.752 million each, these useless missiles helped send the USSR into a state of bankruptcy. After all, the fall of the USSR had little to do with ideology.
From U.S. Government $1,752,000.00

compulsive desire for a useless master is much greater (Japan is an interesting exception to this rule). Unfortunately for the USSR, they were unable to indulge in pure excess expenditure at the same rate as the US. The soviet techno-idol was a little more constipated, and could not maintain the needed rate of excretion. Consequently, once the limits of uselessness were reached, that system imploded.

The US government, on the other hand, has to this day remained convinced that further progress can be made. Reagan and his Star Wars campaign issued a policy radically expanding the useless. Reagan, of course, was the perfect one to make the policy, since he was an idol to uselessness himself. He represents one of the few times that uselessness has taken an organic form in this century. (This is part of the reason he was considered such a bourgeois hero. He was willing to personally plunge into uselessness without apology. He did not let a thing stand in for him). Playing on yuppie paranoia (the fascists' friend), Reagan convinced the public loyal to him that a defensive monument (Star Wars) to uselessness was needed, just in case the offensive monument (the missile system) was not enough. He was successful enough in his plea to guarantee that years of useless research will ensue that no one will be able to stop, even if his original monumental vision (a net of laser armed satellites) should be erased. In this manner, Reagan made sure that the apparatus of uselessness would expand even if the Cold War ended.

Indeed, this situation has come to pass. Currently, the US has no competitors in the race to uselessness, but the monument continues to be maintained and even to grow, which is particularly odd, since even the cynical argument

of deterrence is now moot. Even though the offensive monument to uselessness seems to be shrinking—missiles are being defused and cut apart with the care and order of high ritual, and technology costing millions of dollars is being laid to rest, having never done anything but exist— thanks to Reagan's farsightedness, the general system continues to expand. Although many are still in denial, the desire of the bourgeois to subordinate themselves to the useless has become, for the moment, glaringly visible. The research is done; the system is upgraded, but for what reason? The missiles are now aimed at the ocean, so that even if they are "used," they will still be useless. The fragments of Star Wars technology have not been released in pure form from the experimental labs, and even if they were, no enemy exists against which Star Wars technology would protect US citizens. The American system has achieved utter transcendental uselessness. This techno-historical moment is the highest manifestation of technological purity.

In his rush to save the apparatus of the useless from stalling, Reagan may have made one error. When he put the idea of the defensive monument in the minds of Americans, he disrupted the primary sign of the war machine—mutually assured destruction. He restored hope in American con-sciousness that perhaps utility could save US citizens from the total annihilation certain to destroy the rest of the world. The disassociation of death and uselessness took previously sacred elements of war-tech out of the privileged realm. When these elements became depurified, their value in terms of the satisfaction of bourgeois desire plummeted. This is partly why Reagan's original Star Wars vision has been dismantled.

Thus far, however, most war-tech has not been depurified due to this ideological slippage, and the purity of offensive weapons of mass destruction continues to be enforced. Nations that do not understand the code of uselessness but that have state-of-the-art military technology are a cause for great concern. Iraq, Libya, and North Korea are all good examples. The US government is willing to take hostile action based merely on the belief that North Korea and Libya might get weapons of mass destruction and actually use them. In the case of Iraq, the code was actually broken when that government used chemical weapons. Iraq has not done well economically or militarily since that time. The lesson to be learned is that nations that do not subordinate themselves to the bourgeois idols of uselessness will be sacrificed as heretics, and will be denied access to the icons of uselessness.

In spite of the common wisdom of using the variables of national interest and utility to explain the relationship between desire and power, it is just as fruitful to do so using the principles of the anti-economy—perversity and uselessness. The economy of unchanneled desire and perversity, as suggested by Bataille, penetrates the surface of utility in a most convincing way. Progress in the 20th century has primarily consisted of bourgeois culture looking for a new master. In the time of bourgeois revolution, the aristocracy was destroyed, as was the church with its spiritual hierarchies, but the primordial desire to serve the useless has never been affected. The "primitive" ritual of offering goods to an angry or potentially angry God in order to appease it into a state of neutrality continues to replay itself in complex capitalist economy. All things must be subordinated to neutrality—to uselessness. One major difference

between the age of the virtual and more primitive times is that the contemporary idols have no metaphysical referent. The ones that have been constructed are not the mediating points between person and spirit, or life and afterlife; rather, they are end-points, empty signs. To this paper master, sacrifice has no limit. The stairs of the temple flow with blood every day. How fitting for progress to come to this end in the empire of the useless. As this mythic narrative continues to play itself out, the suggestion of Arthur and Marilouise Kroker begins to make more and more sense. We are not witnessing the decline of late capital, but instead, its recline into its own delirious death trance.

*The expressway of expenditure
requires daily sacrifices.*

5

Human Sacrifice
in Rational Economy*

Human sacrifice** is typically assumed to be a "primitive" institution, one that long ago vanished from Western civilization. Unfortunately, quite the opposite is true. The institution of sacrifice lives on. Although much of it is hidden from view in unexpected forms, it remains an essential part of first world everyday life, politics, and economy.

* So as not to have to redundantly qualify every statement, CAE does not intend this analysis/speculation to be applied to situation(s) in the third world. Examples (contingent manifestations of sacrifice) offered in this essay may only be applicable to US culture, and not to other first world economies.

** The word "sacrifice" in this essay refers exclusively to "human sacrifice."

A number of antique cultures, including the ancient Egyptians, the Aztecs, and various Hindu sects, learned to incorporate sacrifice into social life as a visible institution. The practice was legitimized through an association with religious or mystical necessity. Through sacrifice, the gods could be appeased, or even bribed to perform actions beyond the control of either the collective or individual agent involved in the ritual killing. Sacrifice brought together in a concrete manner the worlds of the visible (sensual) and the invisible (spiritual). Anthropologists have speculated that the psychological benefit of this hyperreal performance lay in its power to relieve anxiety among participants by giving them a sense of control over nonrational elements of existence; an obvious political/economic benefit of ordering death through social ceremony would be enhancement of population management and social control. In cultures where rituals included cannibalism, human flesh may have been a much-needed source of protein. Yet such theories, while they do have some explanatory power, tend to miss the interconnection between the nonrational economy of death and the rational economy of surplus and waste. This willingness to ignore such a connection is one reason why sacrifice continues, unnoticed and incessant, as a standard institution in all cultures of advanced surplus economy.

Our western propensity for repressing the disturbing aspects of existence means that we are not likely to have a visible institution of sacrifice; at any rate, the legitimizing spectacle that religion would otherwise provide for the practice has melted away under the heated process of rationalization. However, the social functions that human sacrifice once provided must still be fulfilled. Bourgeois society,

never content to discard any social action that can either generate profit or maintain social order, allows sacrifice to continue at the margins of (in)visibility. Rather than eliminate the institution, society has driven sacrifice into the under-economy of taboo social relationships and bad objects which should never be brought to mind, viewed, or even named. This realm is the foundation on which the capitalist empire of excess is built.

The under-economy is organized around two kinds of sacrifice, both of which have specific material and hyperreal effects in the over-economy: One is guided by the principle of excess, the other by the principle of autonomy. Sacrifice under the sign of excess is connected to two key economic processes—the production of more than is needed on one hand, and the consumption of more than is needed on the other. To achieve this state of excessive overproduction/ overconsumption, considerable numbers of citizens and aliens alike must be maimed and killed. For example, consider the use of gasoline vehicles, which most regard as an indispensable right. In light of this context, a minority political contingent claimed that the sacrifice of lives during the Gulf War was necessary to provide the western war machine with a secure supply of fuel, and to ensure that first world citizens could fuel their cars at a reasonable cost. Though this explanation is widely understood in some sense, it remains a marginal opinion. Our social arena demands that political-economic sacrifice be left unmentioned. The Gulf War and its sacrifices were officially sanctioned for the purpose of "liberating" Kuwait, and to stop a "dictator" with militant delusions of grandeur. The morality was visible, but the economic imperative was hidden underneath it, and only briefly became visible

through the mediating signs of leftist defiance/deviance. While the war drew some attention to the under-economy sacrifices needed to maintain an excess supply of oil, little or no attention was paid to the deaths of the more than 50,000 people who are sacrificed each year in fatal auto accidents. This number is acceptable to most of us in exchange for the freedom to drive—so long as the sacrifice remains hidden and abstract.

Such statistics point toward the second variety of sacrifice, that which is guided by the principle of autonomy. This type of sacrifice, especially when visible, is evidently abhorrent to all political positions except the radical left (unlike sacrifice for excess, which is acceptable to all except the radical left). For those who occupy this lonely political position, sacrifice is an unfortunate but necessary consequence of the liberation of desire, a compromise which must be accepted as part of the responsibilities of freedom. For the greater the autonomy given individuals, the greater the sacrifice required. Death and autonomy (that is, the expression of desire) are inherently linked. Such sacrifices as these revolve around the ability to give, control, and take life at an individual level. Desire can take any emotional form, and it is difficult to accurately predict how it will manifest in action. A possibility always exists that the action will be violent, and hence actively connected with mortality. There is a high degree of emergent uncertainty associated with nonrational activity, and this tends to produce great anxiety; when reminders of our own mortality begin to surface, and the economy of sacrifice becomes more visible, hysteria and panic are typically not far behind. The alternative to facing up to this form of sacrifice and the discomfort of uncertainty has traditionally been

the surrender of individual sovereignty to the state appara-
tus, which is entrusted to legislate what forms of social
action will be acceptable. The greater the fear of this form
of sacrifice, the more homogenous and repressed the social
action required to allay the fear.

War and Genocide

Sacrifice has always been understood as a necessary component of
war. Typically, the youth of a culture are sent to battle as
cannon fodder, while the support structure (spectacle) of
the war machine bemoans their loss, and covers their
victimization by granting them the status of patriots or
heroes. The connection between the spirit world and
sacrifice may be lost, but here it is replaced by metaphysical
notions of national principles (progress, democracy, free
markets, etc.). The lack of any absolute grounding for these
"sacred" principles is obfuscated by spectacles of
misdirection, illusion, and distraction: Parades, military
funerals, monuments, TV specials, and so on. At the same
time, the rationalized contract—that the sacrifice of x
amount of people will yield y amount of profit, prestige,
land, and other sacrificial victims—is well known, but
unmentionable. Whether this silence is a means of avoid-
ing the dissonance of moral contradiction, or a means of
avoiding negative sanctions, tends to vary.

The necessity of sacrifice as manifest in genocide is can-
didly explained by fascist social philosophy: Since social
solidarity through similarity of soul (manifest as a common
institution of religion) is no longer possible in an enlight-
ened age, other means must be used to bring an economically
differentiated society together into a cohesive unit. Reli-

gious solidarity can be replaced by genetic solidarity, by eliminating all or some (ethnic cleansing) of those not up to (genetic) code. In addition, as the fascists saw, considerable social pressures will be neutralized if this elimination of a given population opens new geographic territory where the correctly coded underclass can relocate. In the philosophy of leftist authoritarians (Stalin, Pol Pot, etc.), an ideological code replaces the genetic code as the basis for solidarity. The notion of ideological inferiority, in combination with a spectacular support structure, creates the possibility for making rationalized mass sacrifice palatable both morally and economically. There is no doubt that modern advancements, like technology, have truly improved on the efficiency of the primitive model of sacrifice by adding rationalized extermination, both in terms of the numbers sacrificed and the speed with which modern necropolises can be constructed.

There is little reason to continue describing the emergence of sacrifice into the realm of the visible. Anyone who has reflected on these manifestations for even a moment knows the patterns. What is not typically understood is that these epic forms of sacrifice, such as genocide, do not exhaust the list. These are only the "final solutions"—pathological manifestations of an under-economy that is always swirling with death.

Automatic Garage Door Openers

Every commodity has a degree of risk attached to it, and the possibility for loss of life always exists. Most people manage to keep the uncertainty of life at a reasonable distance, and thereby save themselves the constant trial of wondering

whether it is about to end. Yet some cannot keep mortality out of their minds. One situation that conjures this unfortunate state of consciousness is when one loses an intimate to sacrifice. In this case, the object associated with that sacrifice typically becomes regarded as abject by the individual suffering the loss. Often, aggregates of individuals who project death onto the same object form organizations which attempt to reveal the particular sacrifice signified by the fetish object, as well as attempting to destroy the abject object itself.

Much confusion has arisen recently over the nature of the abject. Given recent literature and art exhibitions on the subject, one would think that the abject is defined only by the bourgeois aesthetic of repulsion toward the "filth" of homelessness and toward "perverted" sexual activities. Such things are but one tiny aspect of the abject, if they are in the realm of the abject at all. (Extreme sexual practices may well be a means to escape the abject rather than a means of participation in it). Any object that mediates the affective apprehension of mortality can become a *temporary* manifestation of the abject. The abject is liquid, sliding into existence at one moment, only to evaporate into nothingness the next. Abject objects are everywhere: they may be safety pins, telephone cords, or automatic garage door openers.

Consider the following scenario: A child wanders into a garage with an automatic garage door opener. While the child is standing in the liminal space between garage and driveway, the garage door is accidentally activated, drops down on the child's head, and breaks h/er neck. What will follow? A cry of alarm will arise, announcing the need to

ban the automatic garage door (now in a state of limited fetishization). An organization of people who have had loved ones killed by automatic garage doors is formed. The members go to Congress to ask for a law to ban automatic garage doors. Their arguments are simple: "If banning garage doors saves one life, just ONE, it will be worth it;" and "Automatic garage doors are killing our children!" They are perceived as crackpots and denied legislation.

Oddly enough, this scenario could have the exact opposite ending. (One only has to recall the untimely elimination of lawn darts to know the absurd thinking and behavior that fear of the abject can conjure). Once an object is claimed to be abject by a credible organization, its role in the over-economy is assessed. If the object is deemed profitable, and much beloved, or if it provides efficiency in everyday life, then its connection to sacrifice will once again be re-pressed, and the object will retain its place in the pantheon of either luxury or convenience. (Lots of lobbying, spec-tacular actions, and other tactics of influence will be used to either destroy or save the contested object's image. Whichever occurs, the perception that triumphs in the legislation process is primarily a product of hyperreality).

If the object's abject status cannot be spectacularly sus-tained at a social level, then containment strategies are often used. For instance, many people drown in swimming pools each year, and yet swimming pools (or even better, bodies of water) are not banned. Rather, they are con-tained. Laws are passed requiring locked fences around pools. The *fenced* pool does not conjure associations with death—hyperreality has declared that this object is not used as a sacrificial altar. Such is also the case with helmet

laws for motorcyclists or seat belt laws for drivers. These laws help us to disassociate motorcycles and cars from the under-economy, and keep them clean and visible in the over-economy. At the same time, we know that more than 50,000 will die in the US this year in motor vehicle mishaps.

Recognition of the car as an abject object is extremely temporary. Much care has been taken by the state to mediate the temporary abject relationships between subject and auto. Signs of safety abound—traffic laws, safety inspections, the highway code—and so the auto is disassociated even further from death. Even more important, however, is the vague intuition of the fairness surrounding this variety of sacrifice. The victims of this ritual seem to be selected by lot. If one has a spatial connection to cars, one enters the dead pool. The greater one's association with the object, the greater the chance of personal sacrifice. Those who love the mechanical extensions of existence as cyborg, and use their engines to explore speeds that defy the intentions of the flesh, are those willing to trade their lives for forbidden sensations. Mix this desire with rationalized indulgence in various intoxicants and the probability of death continues to rise, as does the intensity of pleasure. Unfortunately the intensity of the violence that often accompanies this sensual exploration is so great that others not receiving the foretaste of paradise are also swept into the vortex of mortality; however, if one drives or rides in autos, such consequences must be recognized. The secondary victim, rewarded at best only by the freedom to drive, is chosen at random, so again sacrifice lurks under the sign of blind occurrence (the lattice of coincidence).

Eat a Grape

Some manifestations of sacrifice seem to have a less benign aura. Victims can be chosen on the basis of extreme prejudice. For example, many people enjoy eating grapes. Because eating grapes is pleasurable, people are happiest when they can buy them at a low price, and have continuous access to them. In order to ensure that most people will have continuous physical and financial access to grapes, industrial farming techniques are used to produce an amount of grapes that well exceeds the demand. If the supply and demand were in equilibrium, any logistical error that occurred would cause food stores to either run out or be left with overstock. Grape lovers would be inconvenienced and profits would be lost. In order to be safe and sure that everyone who is economically able gets the grapes s/he desires, an excess is produced. What is not eaten is wasted— only too much is enough.

The production techniques needed for continuous bumper crops require that pesticides be used. Small doses of pesticides are not considered dangerous to humans, and so the grape consumer worries little about them, and is happy with the excess of production. Costs remain low partly because of the use of pesticides, but also because of the use of inexpensive human labor to harvest the grapes. Unfortunately, the underclass members who must sell their low-cost labor to the grape-producing employers are exposed to large toxic doses of pesticide. Excess collects its souls through the painful process of slow poisoning. To complicate matters further, this class of sacrificial victims tends to have a similar ethnic heritage. For this altar, victims clearly are *not* selected by lot.

In this particular case, the under-economy remains well hidden. Who thinks about those who died to produce grapes when purchasing or eating them? Who considers a grape an abject object, besides this particular labor group caught in the invisibility of the under-economy? As individuals, it is quite uncomfortable for us to think about those who died for our (those who eat grapes') pleasure—our own sadism can be disconcerting. (Buy a whip and some leathers—commodified sadism is so much easier). But on the macro level, the mechanisms to support repression are well deployed. Work laws in regard to "aliens" are quite strict. An employer has no problem deporting those who might break the silence and shed light on the taboo of sacrifice. Unofficial negative sanctions are also useful. Visit your local United Farm Workers office along the Rio Grande valley, where the bullet holes in the building are quite intentional. And let us not forget that labor as commodity also supplies one part of the grim harvest of excess.

The primary commodity of ghetto economy is labor, or perhaps (to be more accurate) potential labor. The supply of labor must always exceed the demand for it. Should there be a national crisis, or should an economic boom occur in a particular industry, a labor pool must be immediately available from which the state may draw soldiers or from which employers may recruit workers. Marx explained this process as the function of the reserve labor army. During long periods of unemployment, potential workers are housed in ghetto conditions—a spatial lock-down noted for economically desperate conditions. How could it be any other way, since no one is producing? Assuming that no emergency or boom occurs, a situation develops in which some reserve workers may be drafted into the low end of the

workplace, but the majority are wasted. Lack of health care, inadequate diets, and violent competition over limited resources are the implements of sacrifice. Like the sacrificial pool of farm workers, the reserve labor army in the US consists disproportionately of minorities. The scope of this bitter harvest works beyond the mechanisms of repression—the spatial lock-down cannot contain it. New signs to reinstate the opaque boundary between the over- and under-economies have become necessary from the conservative point of view. For example, calls to bring back "family values" function as a euphemistic plea to push back into the darkness the horror of the sacrifice for excess. "Family values" is a euphemism for a militant reoccupation of the visible by the forces of social order, and in no way should be construed as a call to abolish the under-economy—quite the opposite. Such representation is in fact yet another spectacular means to perpetuate and strengthen the shadowy border between the two economies.

Sociopathic Killers

Sociopathic killers are terrorists devoid of political intentionality. This is a popular perception. Like terrorists, sociopaths tend to bring out the worst in people as well as in governments. Terrorists and killers force people to confront the abject in an unstable situation where the horror of the abject seems to consume all that is visible—revealing the malevolent foundation of hyper-rationalized political-economy. When this process continues for long enough, panic and hysteria are bound to follow. These nonrational motivating impulses are unacceptable in rational society, and yet so many decisions are made on their behalf. The fear of killers surpasses the fear of terrorists—having a

political agenda at least makes the latter somewhat predict-
able, but sociopaths have no intelligible agenda. They are
the very icon of the under-economy. They are a frightening
reminder that *anyone* can be a sacrificial victim—none
shall be spared. Rational argument means nothing when a
killer bursts into visibility. Dying in a car accident is far
more probable than being the victim of a killer, and yet the
news of a killer on the loose inspires panic; the news of a
fatal traffic accident—so long as an intimate is not in-
volved—evokes indifference. When one is faced with a
killer, individual autonomy seems to come at too high a
price. The idea of passively existing at one moment and
then being violently thrown into nonexistence the next
makes people want to give their sovereignty to a protector.
The police state offers the illusion of total order, a place
where such happenings are seemingly impossible, whereas
the opposite is true. The police state, in fact, dramatically
increases the odds of violent death. Unlike the nonrational
(and hence unpredictable) sociopath, the police state has
instrumental reasons for killing (for example, its own self-
perpetuation). Giving it the sovereignty to treat life as it
pleases only increases the odds of untimely death for every-
body (although for malcontents and marginals, the odds are
extraordinarily increased). But the hysterical group, caught
up in the panic of crime spree hype, has never been known
for cool thinking. Is it any wonder that crime bills are passed
on the heels of media-scrutinized deaths, or that contempo-
rary campaign platforms are saturated with "tough on
crime" rhetoric? Serial killers, macho gang kids, and armed
mad junkies cannot be stopped by more police, by tougher
sentencing, and/or by more jails. Those who live in the
under-economy (or is it "those who fulfill the stereotypes of
over-economy hyperreality"?) cannot be deterred by the

disciplinary apparatus of the over-economy, such as fear of capital punishment; that apparatus only works to repress the desires and deter the actions of those who are already members in good standing of the over-economy itself.

Spectator Sports

Not all sacrifices end in death. Some victims need only be maimed to fulfill their sacrificial function. Sports is an excellent example. Some may object that sporting practices exist under a rationalized contract: Professionals are well compensated for the damage done to their bodies. Perhaps this class of sacrificial lambs do lie on the altar voluntarily, since prior to their pain they are treated as kings, given a foretaste of paradise, and therefore their fate is not so grim. But what about all the victims sacrificed to produce this royalty? The quality of sports entertainment demanded by consumers is unquestionably high. Direct participation requires a lifetime of training (although spectacular participation also requires a long indoctrination process), and sometimes bio-modification through mechanical or synthetic means is even necessary. Since the question of who will mature to join the athletic elite has no certain answers, large numbers of people must begin the grooming process early on so the pool of potential talent is large enough to yield the very finest athletes. The leftovers from this process must be wasted. Most escape the grooming process no worse for wear, happy to have participated in it; however, some do not fare so well. Among this class of throwaways are the sacrificially maimed. They are of all ages: Peewees, middle schoolers, high schoolers, and collegiates parade in a stream of bio-destruction. Joints, limbs, bones, ligaments, and more are torn, ripped, and shattered. Unlike their profes-

sional counterparts, these victims receive no compensation other than the fun they had on the way to the altar.

In this case, maiming can serve a double function. Those who fail to become participant athletes still bring profit to the developers of professional sports in a manner beyond offering themselves as material to the sports manufacturing machine. Since these sacrificial victims (the failed athletes) are not ordinarily killed (although such errors do occasionally happen), they become potential perfect spectators. The sacrificially disabled are deeply interested in their sport of choice, perhaps even nostalgic for it, and because they cannot play, they are even more willing to pay to watch it being played. The sports industry not only gets product (athletes) from institutionalized sports, but also has its market developed for it free of charge. The harvesting of so many youths for the purpose of developing a sport that can only be watched is surely a sign of the love and sincere desire for the activity. However, it may be a more profound sign of the American love for an ocular order of passivity.

Guns

For much of US history the gun has been considered a necessary tool of production. Whether it was used for the common defense, to clear the land of its aboriginal inhabitants, as a means to procure food (particularly protein), or as a means to legally collect commodities (such as furs), guns were considered instruments of construction, without which a household was incomplete. Guns were also perceived as revolutionary tools: Private ownership of weapons acted as a safeguard against tyranny. This latter notion is somewhat

anachronistic, since guns are no longer the locus of military hardware, but many still cling to the idea. The NRA tells us that to be good Americans we must be "forever vigilant," and just in case, we must also be armed. These notions have provided conservatives with a mythology and dream of the US that allows them to do that which they rarely do—keep hysteria at a distance and maintain liberty. Given the conservative record, in which the answer to any social problem is to throw those enveloped in it in jail, isn't it surprising that conservatives do *not* want to outlaw guns and put those who possess them in prison?

Oddly enough, in this case, liberals are the ones who want to throw people in jail. For liberals, guns have become spectacularly abject, the ultimate bad object choice. The hysteria over assault weapons in particular is at a frenzy. (The actual probability of being killed by an assault weapon is so low that it hardly merits consideration). The hype generating the hysteria is based on three developments: First, the sacrifice of ghetto inmates is starting to spill into suburban visibility; second, the media continuously replays images of sociopaths going into McDonald's, suburban elementary schools, post offices, commuter subway cars, etc. and emptying a clip or two; and third, a decontextualized principle has been discovered that when a gun is fired in a household, the casualties are usually household members. For the most part (excluding victims of sociopaths), the victim of a shooting is not a universal subject, but a subject enveloped within a specific variety of predatory environment. On the other hand, being the (universalized) victim of a sociopath is less likely than being struck by lightning. However, without the stabilizing myths to which the conservatives subscribe, and which help keep the boundary

between the over- and under-economies opaque, the possibility seems all too likely that one will join the sacrificial pool of victims exchanged for the freedom to possess a gun. The liberal perception is that a gun is more likely to be used against them instead of on their behalf (CAE has never heard a liberal of the over-economy suggest that their alleged protectors, the police, should not have guns). Consequently, the sacrifices necessary in exchange for freedom seem too disorderly and too visible, and hence the reactionary call for repression. Even with maximum repression (a full ban on all guns with mandatory sentences for possession), the pathologies of an under-economy, straining under the weight of capitalist excess, will not be stopped. Sociopaths aside, the armed citizen in and of h/erself is not the problem; the real problem is the armed citizen enveloped in a predatory and hyper-rationalized economy. Why is the symptom always attacked, and never the sickness?

Human sacrifice is a permanent feature of complex society. Regardless of how severe the order imposed on a society, some people will meet an untimely end to fulfill the demands of production/consumption. Regardless of how free a society is, some people will have to meet an untimely end due to desire's close association with death. Neither a perfectly regimented society nor a perfectly free one would escape the necessity of sacrifice, although the signs under which sacrifice functioned would vary tremendously. The question that must be asked is: If sacrifice is a cultural constant, which is preferable—sacrifice for the sake of individual autonomy, or sacrifice for social order (rationalized over-production)? While the side of order offers the illusions of security, and the reality of efficiency, the repressive conditions imposed by the state, and the mental persecution of

persistently frustrated desire, make this selection the choice of cowards or of those who have control over the means of production, service, and consumption. Sacrifice under such intensely rationalized conditions happens much more frequently and affects much greater numbers per sacrificial event. Further, the sacrificial victims tend to come from a pool that is determined by ascriptive characteristics. Under this regime, we transform ourselves from autonomous humans into human automatons.

Hence, it would seem better to choose sacrifice for autonomy, and yet the choice is not perfectly clear. Such a preference would mean that programs of mass rationalized sacrifice would be decreased (genocide), but that micro episodes of sacrifice (murder or accident) would not cease, and could possibly even increase. The idea that the state is the cause of all the world's trouble, and that if it were done away with, the natural goodness of people would flourish— the traditional anarchist view—seems a bit naive. Although the troubles brought into the world by the state cannot be exaggerated, grievous harm can also be worked through the free desiring agent. The egoistic nature of desire can bring about the very type of social catastrophe generally reserved for the state. In this manner, anarchy and fascism have had an ongoing flirtation with each other. In the name of liberated desire, great cruelty has been inflicted on people. For example, in the US, the household has historically been a free zone for the head of the household (and to a lesser extent for other household members). Relatively free from the tyranny of state surveillance, the household has also been a site of great social upheaval: all sorts of violence and abuse have occurred in this location. This disaster is doubled when one considers that the victims of domestic

violence tend to be women and children—victims of violence selected by ascription. For this reason, many "feminists" have opted to side with the state, calling for a more repressive society. Others would say that the abusers are only expressing frustration and alienation caused by interaction with an exploitive political-economic structure, and that if state oppression were lessened, the occurrence of abuse in temporary free zones would also decrease. This too seems a reasonable possibility; however, a complete end to the violence seems unlikely. Fulfilling desire is not just a matter of empowerment, but also one of overpowering. For this reason, anarchists (using the word in its broadest sense) such as Nietzsche, Bataille, Sorel, and Bakhunin at times became (or praised, in the case of Bataille) the authoritarians that they scorned.

On the psychological level, to choose liberation requires the participant to accept or at least cope with the abject. Much is asked of a person within secular society when s/he is told not to fear death, and to accept the fate of sacrifice should it come. Nor is it easy to accept the notion that violence (in the practical sense of the term) is not categorically evil, but that within certain contexts it can be empowering for all parties. Indeed, the decision is difficult, but CAE would still rather face the anarcho-fascist problem of slippage, and cope with the visibility of the abject, than live as an abstraction within the authoritarian yoke of efficiency under the vision of state-sponsored hyperreality.

6

Addictionmania

Who will ever relate the whole history of narcotica? It is almost the history of "culture," of our so-called higher culture.
—Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

When health care is addressed as an issue of political economy, discourse generally centers around notions of health care shortages, or its inequitable distribution. Implied in such discourse is the assumption that health care functions for the common good. The following material inverts such discussion, and instead concerns itself with the problems that arise when health care is too inclusive. One problem

is that the medical apparatus has extended its domain along the social power grid in order to act as an alibi for predatory economic aggression on behalf of masked powers which demand regulated forms of consumption. Further, the medical industry, as a behavior management system, actively promotes addiction hysteria, using it as the basis for interventionist policies disruptive to the autonomy of desire and pleasure in everyday life. Perhaps health care, as institutionalized in the US, does not function for the common good. Perhaps there are areas where less from the medical establishment would be preferable. The myth of addiction provides a perfect case study.

In Praise of the Harrison Act of 1914

Every person possesses his own dose of natural opium,
ceaselessly secreted and renewed, and from birth to death
how many hours can we reckon of positive pleasure,
of successful and decided action?

The noise of postmodern culture is relentless. Endless screams and howls exclaim the necessity of consumption, of work, and of inhibited desire. There is no place to hide—not on the street, not in the workplace, not even in the home. Everywhere, blasts of electronic information from appliances of convenience reverberate out to the horizons of perception, enveloping the compliant and the resistant. Even in moments of natural silence, logos, trademarks, and other visual markers conspire with involuntary memory to maintain the noise with internalized and inescapable slogans and jingles. Like a prisoner whose brain functions have been disrupted by exposure to loud unceasing noise, the

contemporary cultural participant is subject to neuroses that ever increase and intensify.

One result is hysteria. This indeed is the result gained by the endless flow of noise regarding addiction. The insidious monster of addiction is waiting to enslave anyone, from the President's wife to the average working person. It could be a substance, or it could be a process. Drugs, sex, eating, shopping, or even working could all be means to addiction. Anyone could become an addict; anything could be addicting. Such discourse, once internalized, produces an involuntary panic that causes a crisis in the ability to distinguish appropriate desires and actions from inappropriate ones. In turn, a frenzied search begins for an exterior authority that can validate the state of nonaddiction. Support groups and task forces are formed to function as consensual validators of nonaddiction, as well as to act as protective phalanxes against the omnipresent potential of addiction. In this moment of panic, the cultural participant is plunged into a pool of negative desire. Life transforms into an infinite regress toward the absent; that is, rather than defining oneself by what one is or hopes to become, one's identity and role are defined by what one is not (an addict). Can anything be more pathetic, more desperate, more counterproductive, or less fulfilling than trying not to be something? *I am not an addict; I am not a sinner.* In order to break the individual's sense of autonomy, the state begins the indoctrination of children into the cult of negation at the earliest possible age. The call and response chant of "just say no" is more than just a product of drug hysteria; it is the totalizing slogan of life in late capital. In looking for sustenance from a culture of empty desire, the cultural participant turned consumer remains forever hun-

gry. The citizen of this dystopia is without sovereignty, unable to identify, let alone trust h/er own agency, and is easily channeled in a helpless state of paranoia through the market system.

An addiction worth having is an addiction worth treating.

There are of course some who under the weight of guilt have brought medical intervention upon themselves, while still others have had intervention directly forced upon them by those connected to them along the power grid (family, employers, the judicial system, etc.). Such actions are predicated upon the imperative of addiction-noise; i.e., the assumption is that addiction itself is a physiological disturbance divorced of social context, and thereby should be left to medical professionals. The disease model of addiction paradoxically doubles the role of the addict by making h/er both culprit and victim. Although society should feel sorry for the unwitting victim, the hedonistic villain that chose the disease must be punished through lifelong medical (that is, behavioral) regulation. According to the model, addiction cannot be cured, only arrested and managed. Once processed into this panoptic managerial institution, escape is nearly impossible; its gaze of discipline follows the addict (a life-long label) everywhere and forever, consistently reminding the victim of h/er devaluation from person to addict.

I will only record my amazement here.
the subject is not a subject at all, but an object containing
a bundle of irresistible impulses: not a responsible agent,
but the anonymous victim of an internal natural disaster.

an irresistible temptation creates
an irresistible impulse in an
irresistibly stupid worshipper
at the altar of the Church of American Medicine

The defiance of deception will always be
the highest duty of the individual

As long as addiction remains naturalized through its market mythology (the disease model), and is thereby kept separate from economic imperatives of excess, the authority of the medical establishment remains legitimized. In fact, it seems quite sensible to argue that the medical establishment is an ideal-type in regard to maintaining order through differing modes of power. To keep order through symbolic power (the manipulation of codes) is by far preferable because it is more efficient. When legitimation crisis occurs (the code is unmasked), physical force, generally in the form of military or police power, is called upon to reestablish the code. This latter mode is exceptionally expensive to use on a continuous basis, not to mention costs paid in losses caused by the obligatory decline in production and consumption as the physical clashes take place. The medical apparatus, however, maintains a near unquestioned code, for who would dare to challenge that which holds a key to personal survival, and at the same time has the power of police once a victim is processed into the institution? Perhaps it has more power; after all, an addict, having no free will, has no rights. The addict must pay exorbitant fees for his/her punishment and incarceration. Both products and services must be consumed for the rest of the addict's life, producing tremendous profits for the medical estab-

lishment and its allies (those companies producing the products or processes of treatment). Unlike a standing military or police force, medical interventionism provides a fiscal as well as ideological return on the investment in physical force. In the process, the addict is often turned masochist—becoming one who enjoys the punishment, and gaining self-satisfaction from the excessive consumption of excessive intervention.

The major danger: disease theories
will persuade us that we are already
victims of lifetime diseases.
No strange agenda for people purporting to represent
objective knowledge and concern for others.
If addiction is an incurable disease,
then those who get better had something else.
but those who disagree with such diagnoses
are told that this is a sign of their sickness.
the reality is otherwise
many, perhaps most free themselves

American society has found itself lost in ambiguity when defining what may be considered legitimized excess. On one hand, Protestant and Franklinian heritage suggests that it is wise to save one's earnings, and to defer gratification to a time when expenditures can be made in relative financial security. On the other hand, omnipresent Madison Avenue culture suggests that gratification should be immediate. Not only should all funds be spent, but it is best to go beyond the present through the use of credit and spend any future earnings too. Conspicuous consumption is valued consumption. Always consume more than is needed. At first glance, it would seem that the latter myth is the stronger, and thereby an addict would be praised as the perfect

consumer. The rigidity and the excess with which the addict approaches the market is perfectly dependable, and yet the addict's rigidity is precisely what makes h/er out of control. This curious puzzle is what returns this interrogation back to the former myth, to seek how it is compatible with the latter.

How does one participate in the capitalist spectacle of excess *without* seeming excessive? How can consumption progress at maximum speed, while still giving the impression of moderate cautious expenditure? The answer is that the ideas of "moderation" and "caution" have replaced the notion of generic consumption, while "excess" has become associated with specific patterns of consumption. As long as the cycle of everyday life is in a generalized pattern of working and consuming, the participant escapes the label of excess. Labor (including potential labor) is balanced with consumption. When one activity becomes a specific agenda that replaces other activities, the disequilibrium of excess appears. In the case of consumption itself, a broad range of goods and services should be used, so as not to thwart the seduction of the consumer by the product. In the case of work, overly focusing on one task can lead to overproduction, or may resist the channeling of labor to other necessary sectors of the marketplace. Consumers and laborers circulate in the same manner that money and information circulates. When the cycle becomes constricted or clogged, thus reducing its speed, symbolic or physical force is needed to reopen the avenues of movement. The myth of addiction provides the symbolic force to reopen channels, and legitimizes the physical interventions of the medical establishment, not to mention those of the police and judicial system. By insisting that eternal recurrence is

solely a product of biological destiny, this mythic structure hides the choices that have been made for the consumer/worker by culture.

Not enough. The fractal interiorities of crash culture are not enough. Ideological hallucinations lack the pleasure of screenal jouissance. Knowledge implodes before the hyper-rush of Being-on-screen. But this is not enough. Consumption crashes into its generic perfection. The manias of inertia constantly replay themselves beyond the regime of excess. The excess of excess recalls itself in the cynical discourse of addiction. But this is not enough. Addiction is the recolonization of consumption by consumption that is beyond itself. But this is not enough. It is never enough. The excess of excess is the reduction of product desire into a singular abyss. Addiction is the market outrunning itself. But it will never be enough. Product concentration ruptures the chaos of consumption. The fatal sign of brand names is encoded as Being-in-disease. Being-in-disease is recaptured by the market for infinite profit—the cure is an economic deferment which can never be enough. The eternal recurrence of screenal economies in perfect excess is a generic catastrophe that will never be enough. It will never be enough.

Government and corporate surveillance have reached an all-time high. Data bases are overflowing with information about consumers, both in terms of aggregates based on racial and social categories, and in terms of personal portfolios tracing the spending habits of individual consumers. (Information is kept that ranges from the useful to the useless: People with dogs tend to purchase Ragu spaghetti sauce, while people with cats tend to buy Prego). The status of the consumer as a being in the world is removed from an organic center and is decentered in the circulation of the

electronic file. Spending patterns and credit history become the being of the individual in the marketplace. The goal of such information collection and exchange is to better target products toward specific consumer groups, and thus better remove consumption from the sphere of individual choice, while still retaining the illusion of choice. The product picks its consumer, aggressively demanding the attentions of the consumer that comes within range of its spectacular appeal. The spectacle defines not just one's needs, but one's identity as abstraction and as individual. The spectacle moves along the market grid, pulling the consumer along through the invention of new identities placed in association with the recontextualization and differentiation of the same exhausted products.

The consumer circulates through the differing sectors, purchasing and over-purchasing as demanded by the flow of trends and fashion. It is precisely this dynamic that is crucial for market expansion. Market dynamics must control specific points about when and where to buy. In following this generic pattern with its guided specificity, despite overspending, the consumer is kept separate from the sign of excess; however, if spending becomes focused and singular, preventing the consumer from moving to differentiated market sectors, the consumer is devalued with the sign of excess and then finally with the sign of addiction. Punishment is usually swift, ending with incarceration in one of the many total institutions (clinics, asylums, or jails).

Consider the following scenario. A consumer goes to a mall and purchases a TV. He returns home to his family and presents his purchase. He then returns to the mall and

purchases another TV, returns home, and presents his purchase to his family. This behavior continues to repeat itself. At what point will there be an intervention to break this cycle? Since the TV is a relatively expensive object, it is reasonable to assume that those closest to the consumer on the power grid—those most affected by the purchasing—would intervene. If this consumer is a member of the working or middle class, and lives on a tight budget, his behavior will be rapidly classified as compulsive, and in need of management. Should the behavior continue, the pathology will be upgraded to an addiction requiring institutionalization. Someone wealthier, whose financial security would not be as quickly jeopardized, might be given more leeway; the wealthy are accorded the right to acquire excess in the form of useless objects (please see Chapter 4). Should the consumer be buying gum rather than a TV, the behavior will not viewed as pathological; or, if it is, it will not be deemed in need of management. Should the middle-class consumer concentrate not on buying TVs, but on purchasing video equipment beyond his ability to pay, this too would require intervention; however, since the purchasing is differentiated (in this case a set of items), intervention will be much less swift, and punishment much less harsh.

This scenario should illustrate two interrelated points in regard to addiction. First, specificity is a privilege of power. Capital discourages focused consumption, since it leads to participation in uselessness, a privilege of the elite known for clogging the market system. Much like having sex for its own sake, participation in the useless, as Bataille has shown, is a form of genuine pleasure (as erotica) as well as a display of sovereignty. Under authoritarian rule both

pleasure and individual sovereignty are regarded as danger-
ous and deserving of punishment, as such qualities are
disruptive to a rigid social order. Second, the principle of
repressed materialist practicality, grounded in class affilia-
tion, is the trigger of intervention. The less money you
have, the faster the troops will come.

When excessive consumption takes the form of substance
abuse, another variable comes into the equation—that of
health. Generally, an assumption is made that a long
healthy life is good. Perhaps in a Buddhist culture, in terms
of ideology, this assumption would at least be understand-
able: If Enlightenment can be reached in a single lifetime,
one would want to live as long as possible to accomplish this
lofty goal, thereby excusing oneself from a return visit to
the vale of tears. However, in both the secularized and
Christian West, the desire for a long life has no logical
correlate. The desire for long life arises from a bio-cultural
fear of dying (an instinctual residue to ensure species
survival, modified by various cultural variations on the
ideas of finitude and closure). With fear as a mechanism for
sufficient blindness, the sociological catastrophe of the
elderly becomes easier to accept. While the elderly are
canonized as saintly and wise, their actual condition is one
of extreme marginalization. They have little or no relation-
ship to production, and do not form a consumer group
known for its power buying (except in the area of health
care); as a result, they are relegated to managed areas of
counterproduction where they can wait for death. Why
then are people worried about the precious gift of life? Like
most commodities, health as a means to longevity was
chosen for them. The *productive* work force, at any rate,
must remain healthy in order to be useful.

There is every reason to decide that pleasure—even at the risk of deteriorating the body—is more desirable than health and longevity, but everywhere are forces that discourage such a decision. Most notably, laws prohibit pleasure—everything is prohibited, from recreational drugs to sodomy, so that those who challenge the notion that health and production are the leading values in life can be persecuted as well as prosecuted. However, to underestimate the complicity of official medicine in this ideological swindle would be a mistake. If health and longevity were to be devalued, the medical industry would lose its criminal hold on the population. The fear of death and the nonrational value placed on life provides the perfect market for extortion: "I am making you an offer you can't refuse. If you pay, you may have a long life; but if you refuse..." Medicine has a product that cannot be refused, and by playing on the fear of dying the medical industry has made medical junkies of everyone, while the totalizing discourse of medicine has made "psychos," "perverts," and "addicts" out of those who refuse to consume its texts and products. Further, by promoting the illusory idea that better health equals better living, the medical industry has given the state the perfect means to legitimize authoritarian obstacles to desire and pleasure. The state can now make a credible claim that laws and interventions against individual pleasure are enacted for the welfare of the individual.

Just to speak about how life is devalued as defined by the medical establishment is cause for modest punishment. Musings such as these are marginalized under the sign of cynical nihilism. A moment's reflection will reveal that nothing could be further from the truth. One's own life should not be loved in and of itself; all too often living can

be loathsome. Life should be loved only to the extent that it is experienced as rich and pleasurable. Saying no to desire is nihilistic. Allowing consciousness and the body to be pushed and channeled through the marketplace without reflection or resistance is nihilistic. If we have learned anything from the totalizing institutions of the state, it is that when our addictions are chosen for us, life can equal death.

Whenever she was alive, she was a bad girl,
but whenever she was dead, she was good.
Niceness has brought death for many
exploring brains held captive
by the market for anti-depressants.

It does not have to be this way.
Hell is already of this world,
Whatever kind it may be: Morphine, Reading, Isolation
Onanism, Coitus, Weakness of the Soul, Alcohol, Tobacco,
Misanthropy.
In the name of what superior light?
This fury against intoxicants
encourages the real disease, official medicine.
Better the plague than morphine—better hell than life.

The myth of addiction presents itself as unmediated, as a binary with clear and rigid boundaries. A person is either "drug-free" or an addict. (Legal drugs prescribed by doctors or sold over the counter, which are intended to better one's physical health, are not included in this formula). Notions of controlled drug use or ritualized drug use are drowned out by the noise of addiction hysteria. Any thought of drug use as a universal cross-cultural phenomenon is lost in the noise. Societies which have functional regulating norms for drug use, be they for religious,

recreational, or economic purposes, are absent from the discourse. Drug-free or addict—no other option is heard. Moderation cannot be applied to drugs.

There is no war that is not a war on *drugs.*

Like war, illicit drugs in the postmodern era are a virtual catastrophe—a disaster which exists only in the holographic images of the state. For the most militarized sectors of the state, illicit drugs are both demon and angel. The police and associated agencies (such as the DEA) which do not receive the respect (that is to say, the large budget) that their military counterparts receive, now have reason for increasing their jurisdiction and power. (What makes this opportunity so appealing is that the military proper cannot get in on the action. The fear is so great amongst state officials that the military, particularly the high command, will be corrupted by the tremendous profits involved in the drug trade that the military is kept at maximum distance). Members of the drug police receive money and secure jobs for completely useless behavior—quite a deal. No real objective exists, as the profit-making drug trade is as continuous as the demand for its products. Drug enforcement exists as an artificial barrier, having no real effect on the trade itself. The enforcement profession is really the authoritarian version of the welfare state. As in the days of the New Deal policy, when workers dug holes only to refill them, police run on a treadmill of enforcement—gross expenditure for activity without function except the expression of authoritarian will.

The common perception that law enforcement is losing the war on drugs raises extreme alarm among the friends of

social order. Under the pretense of satisfying this constituency, the state expands its apparatus of punishment. Such action comes as no surprise, since the state has been using this tactic for centuries. What is new is the strategy of dismantling freedoms guaranteed to citizens under the rubric of a progressive agenda. To stop drugs (a goal which has become a euphemism for extreme police regulation of the labor and underclasses, with an emphasis on blacks), the state has been using minority spokespeople to help set legal precedents for the dismantling of the Bill of Rights. For example, in Chicago, black organizations demanded that residents of public housing waive the right to be protected from unwarranted search and seizure. CAE does not want to deny the desperation involved in the crises of the inner city, nor do we deny that the situation calls for immediate and profound action; however, the empowerment of the police state is not going to help. Its mission is not to win the drug war; the DEA (a bureaucracy of self-perpetuation) only exists if the war continues, like many other police and punishment agencies. Further, the primary function of these agencies is to oppress and control the underclass. Empowering police will only lead to more people being sent to jail. Blacks will suffer all the more if racist police agencies are able to increase their powers—the disproportionate amount of blacks serving time on drug charges is proof of the current racist policy. The solution must be found in strategies of liberation and not of oppression. The black leader and former Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, has suggested such a plan—that various plans of drug legalization and decriminalization be examined. This was one of the few times in US history a suggestion originating in leftist politics was publicly voiced, and it

was immediately drowned out by addiction noise from liberals, and by law and order noise from conservatives.

As the war on drugs continues, along with the hysteria that it causes, remember that our autonomy (such as it is) is what the state hopes to steal in this artificial conflict.

**Images made by people
in the addiction business**

Collage: Rebecca L. Smith

Epilogue:

Nonrational Strategies

At times, rumors about new technologies seem to overshadow the technology which actually exists. The juggernaut of hi-tech, bolstered by the sci-fi imagination and the potential of recombinant technology, expands out of the exterior world and penetrates the deepest anxieties and desires of the interior world. Such is the case with the Coca-Cola moon. Whether a satellite could be placed in orbit that could actually drag a giant sheet of mylar emblazoned with the Coca-Cola logo remains to be seen, but just the thought of such a possibility truly disrupts comfortable expectations. Just imagine this icon of perversity intruding into the heavens, rising in the East and slowly crossing the night sky, its mylar aglare with reflected light, until it finally sets in the West. The techno-prophet of the 19th century, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, warned that techno-envelopment was our

fate as well as the sky's ("Celestial Lights," *Cruel Tales*), much as he foretold the appearance of cybernetic beings (*Tomorrow's Eve*). What is more interesting, he seemed to understand that as repulsive as such notions are, they are at the same time desirable. Perhaps pleasures and fears about the moon's mythology can be re-presented in the Coca-Cola logo. By appearing as a moon, perhaps it can pry open the unconscious and hardwire desire to Coke, thus creating a mystical bond between consumer and product that surpasses terrestrial spectacle and subliminal advertising.

In spite of its mania for rationalization, the military-corporate complex has continually manufactured strategies of desire that function as psychic explosions in the individuals who constitute target markets. How can any cultural resistance redirect these strategies back at the manufacturers? Too little time has been invested in trying to answer this key question. Instead, both the cultural and political left have attempted to fight rationalized oppression with a rationalized resistance. Indeed, such strategies are less risky, and they are produced more efficiently, but other alternatives should also be investigated. Riskier strategies are warranted, because authoritarian culture is on the verge of a crushing hegemony.

For the most part, resistant cultural and political procedures have been fairly standard: Search for weak points in the fortress, and concentrate all counter-attacks in that area. Perhaps in the name of perversity, the opposite tactic should be tried, meaning that resistors should develop nonrational means to attack the strong side. For example, one of the most profound psychic characteristics of the authoritarian persona is its near mania for duty. This

strength is also a weakness. The apocryphal story of the destruction of Cato in Roman politics illustrates this point. The Roman Senate, knowing that Cato's pride and spectacle was grounded in unbending duty to the empire, believed they could ruin him by playing on his stoic character. In order to remove Cato from Rome (the only space where a successful policy-making political practice could be enacted), under the guidance of his enemy Caesar, the senate schemed to send Cato to the imperial frontier, where he would be unable to conduct his political affairs with any efficacy. The senate publicly explained to Cato that the empire needed him at the frontier. Consequently, his mania left him with no choice but to accept the assignment, even though following this order meant political suicide.

To further develop this strategy, consider the examples offered by Catholic saints. Their mania for duty and repression grows so strong that duty turns to excess, and repression turns to autonomy. Saint Catherine of Siena is a perfect example. Catherine was known for conquering the senses— a type of selflessness usually rewarded by the Church. However, Catherine's duty to God and Church eventually went to the extreme. This attitude reached its height while she was tending a cancer patient, and became overwhelmed by the rancorous odor of the patient's rotting wound. Draining a ladle full of odoriferous pus from the festering sores, she proceeded to drink the viscous ooze. Through this intensely sensual act, Catherine overcame her repulsion. That evening, Catherine received a vision of Christ, who rewarded her dutiful actions by inviting her to drink from the wound on the side of his torso. From this time on, Catherine claimed that she no longer needed to eat, and

that Christ's blood would sustain her indefinitely. From that day forward she subsisted on small amounts of water and on the juices of bitter herbs which she would chew, spitting out the remaining fiber. These activities eventually brought a threat of punishment. Although her vampirism (nourishment of body and desire through blood and pus) was generally ignored, the Church became concerned that Catherine's refusal to take food was excessive. Some went so far as to say that Catherine was a witch who took her nourishment from the devil. To refute such arguments Catherine was forced to eat again, although she would promptly vomit afterwards, claiming that Christ's blood would allow no other food. Finally the Church stopped trying to control her; no confessor could rein her in, and because her sensual actions (vampiric and masochistic) were so closely tied to duty, her excesses could not be prosecuted. Catherine's actions no longer illustrated an institutional imperative, but were direct individualized autonomous actions. While the Church authorities knew this was a reason for worry, since her relationship with Christ was no longer mediated by church clergy and ecumenical ideology, they could not think of a strategy to stop her activities.

While Catherine's personal battle to express what in most social situations would be acts of radical deviance worthy of violent intervention is of great interest to students of autonomy, what she became is even of greater fascination. Catherine should have become obedient to Church doctrine, which in turn should have expressed itself as a militarized intervention into the lives of others. Under such a rubric, "selflessness" becomes a pernicious concern for the welfare of others in which they are coerced, gener-

ally through fear, into living a life of neutralized passion. Catherine instead rejected piety as a means to personal authority, and separated herself from the institutional authority of the Church. The means by which she rejected authority and held it at bay became a methodology that others (particularly women) used to resist authority. In her day, Catherine refused to be a role model on behalf of the institution. She did not care if others were like her, nor did she want to become a model to be imposed upon them. In the same way that she allowed herself to act on her own desires, she allowed others to do the same. Instead of a Jesuit zeal to bring "the weak" into line with the doctrine of goodness, Catherine developed an attitude of radical tolerance. She no longer concerned herself with what others were doing. She rejected any thought of intervention for the sake of imposition, ideological or otherwise. As by her own example, she only expected others to follow their own desires, and whether such a path led to Christ or not became irrelevant in her interaction with others. She was neither a proselytizer nor a confessor; rather she was an amoral free agent, content to surrender to difference.

There are two troubling points in this example. First, the power of the spectacle can never be underestimated. Catherine's life (being) eventually was consumed by her representation. Her image as a saint promotes everything that she wasn't: obedient, sexless, zealous, etc. In the end, the institution did overcome her, primarily through her canonization. The second problem is one of application. If Catherine's example points to a means by which duty can be turned to excess (repression turned to liberation), one must wonder if the specific conditions of Christian mysti-

cism were what made this transformation a possibility. Without the legitimized ambiguity of the mystical realm, could such an act of resistance have occurred at all? Conversely, can duty turn to excess in a secular situation? Although duty as the structure of subjectivity is better managed in secular situations, it cannot be totally controlled. Hence CAE believes that duty is a strength that can be exploited by the forces of liberation. In the same manner that an anarchist can be turned into a authoritarian (Bataille), an authoritarian can be turned into an anarchist (Catherine).

Consider the case of Daniel Ludwig. In 1967, this aging billionaire got the dutiful notion that the Brazilian rain forest should be tamed and brought under the yoke of the rationalized world by forcing it to produce solely for rational economy. The process began when Ludwig purchased 6,ooo square miles of land (an area slightly larger than the state of Connecticut) deep in the rain forest for three million dollars (75 cents an acre). His rational goal was to turn the vegetation of the area into pulp for the paper industry, and then to sustain the business by using the area as a tree farm, the product of which would also be processed into pulp. It became clear very early on in the process that the actions of this man—who led a life of sworn duty to capitalist economy—were being driven by a different impulse. The possibility of profit was simply not there. The signs of mania began to show themselves in 1978 when Ludwig commissioned a Japanese company to construct a pulp processing plant on a barge, which he then had towed 15,000 miles to Brazil and up the Amazon by tugboat, installing it deep in the rain forest. Having little knowledge of construction in the deep jungle, the architects of the project were faced

with one catastrophe after another. For example, the heavy jungle crushers used to plow down the forest also destroyed the top soil, which almost eliminated even the possibility of establishing a productive industrial tree farm. Even so, Ludwig refused to surrender. Fellow capitalists, seeing that the project was completely out of rational control, began to cover for Ludwig, claiming that the immense losses would be compensated when a soon-predicted paper shortage occurred. Needless to say the shortage never happened. The Brazilian government, also recognizing that the project was out of control, began throwing up every barrier imaginable to bring Ludwig's jungle fantasy under control. Finally in late 1981, with his health failing and his financial empire severely debilitated, Ludwig let the project go after 1 billion dollars' worth of investment, and turned the process of civilizing the jungle over to Brazil.

Ludwig was able to indulge in the highest of aristocratic pursuits—the mania for total uselessness. Although it cannot be stated with any certainty what made him entertain such a folly as to try to knock out the rain forest in a single round, the monumentality of such a task gives us a reasonable clue to his motivation. In a personal sense, monuments are a means to forsake being for representation, thereby allowing an individual to defy mortality. The same life limits that worried individuals in theocratic society motivated Ludwig. The only difference for him is that something worse than hell awaits; now he could only expect nothingness. The consumption of being by the infinitude of representation (monumentality) seemed to be the only recourse. Thus the hope of immortality can turn duty to excess.

The example of Ludwig illustrates both the good and the bad side of nonrational strategies. While the interruption of commerce as usual is always welcome, as is maniacal corporate suicide, there are always the unfortunate side effects: In this case, the destruction of a significant piece of rain forest. Once the rational is rejected, the comfort of predictability is lost, and risk increases. The second problem is that nonrational strategies can only be used against consciousness, and there is no guarantee whose consciousness will be disturbed or what effect a disturbance might have. In spite of such shortcomings, nonrational strategies, such as attacking a site of strength like duty, are means by which political and cultural resistance could be strengthened.

Nonrational strategies of resistance are not manifested solely in unusual and complex situations of transgression. Resistance through transgression happens every day in people's lives, although the intensity varies. Every time two or more people construct an autonomous space in which individual desires interact, authoritarian intention is thwarted. For example, one of the spectacular manifestations of authoritarian culture is the notion of "family values." The maintenance of such values is a panacea for all social ills. To be sure, kinship (which may or may not be based on genetic connection) is a manifestation of nonrational forces that can transcend the alienation of separation. For this reason, the true intention of authoritarian culture is the destruction of kinship. If such human bonds were allowed to exist, people could define themselves, and thereby find self-esteem, by means other than one's labor role, bureaucratic affiliation, and consumption process. Kinship loyalties, as with friendship, and other forms of affinity, could lead to an

inversion of the structure of duty. People would be loyal to other individuals rather than to institutions and offices. The authoritarian channeling of kinship into the nuclear family is the authoritarian answer to such a possibility. The intention is to reduce kinship to the specialized micro-role of the reproduction of the work force and of consumer markets. The meaning of "family values" is efficient reproduction that solely benefits the macro processes of production and consumption. The family has no value in and of itself; it has value only in relation to market forces. Whenever kinship escapes this rational order, powerful resistance through transgression has occurred.

In spite of the disappearance of the nonrational, its being as social necessity has not diminished. Excess, mania, uselessness, sacrifice, waste, abjectivity, and spontaneity are all around us; unfortunately we are socialized from youth forward to censor them from our perceptions of everyday life, and from our conceptions of political and economic structure. Through the nonrational we can reaffirm our humanity, and through these temporary moments when our vision is clear, the tactics necessary to actualize the strategies of the nonrational can be found right at our feet.