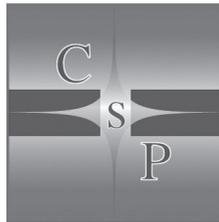


(1968)
Episodes of Culture in Contest

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Edited by

Cathy Crane and Nicholas Muellner



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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Introduction

Nicholas Muellner and Cathy Crane

One word on everyone's lips in May '68 was "contestation." It expresses a fundamental version of freedom: not freedom to change or to succeed, but freedom to revolt, to call things into question.¹

-Julia Kristeva

I.

Ideology cannot stand it when we make connections.²

-Felix Gonzalez-Torres

This critical and historical anthology reads episodes and practices in international visual culture from the socio-politically charged time surrounding an iconic date. Inspired by a symposium convened at Ithaca College in April, 2006, *(1968)* represents an effort to look at a broad and dramatic historical moment with an eye towards the specific and a focus on the diverse and radical sensibilities of its inquiries. This collection brings together a dynamic range of scholars, critics and media-makers whose work directly engages the period's international breadth of activism and critique through visual culture, from mass-media images to avant-garde practices across many fields.

We have chosen the year, and the time immediately surrounding it, because of the obvious and evocative ways in which it encapsulates a set of events, expressions and possibilities: a bracketed series of very public and dramatic contestations – to use Kristeva's term – that cut across a remarkable swath of cultures, continents, social contexts and discourses. In the current historical moment, when the idealist notions of individual and group agency, radical possibility and mass common cause often seem naïve or impossibly distant, we believe that it is important to look energetically and critically at a moment when the rhetorics of change and agency, on so many levels, seemed widely potent.

Rather than relying on a comfortable criticality of failed intentions, discovering bourgeois privilege, narcissism and delusion behind utopian rhetoric, we would like to assert the value of considering a time when vast numbers of individuals, across cultural, economic and national divides, were looking critically and hopefully, and with a willing suspension of doubt, at the world's structures.

The following series of close studies, across disciplines, contexts and cultures, provides both a move towards the atomized and specific – a close reading of tangible moments and practices – and an opportunity to see and learn from the connections and sympathies that emerge between them. This collection of essays – and images – does not focus directly on the familiarly epic narratives of French May or on the commonly referenced U.S. events. Rather, their collective relevance emerges through de-centering the cultural

memory of 1968, concentrating on cultural production and contexts often overlooked, in such countries as Mexico, Belgium, Yugoslavia and Germany.

Within this expanded framework, our volume places emphasis on the production of images within the historical moment, and the contestations of representation these image-making practices entailed. The making of these images both carried the ideas and arguments of the period into the future, and acted as contemporary laboratories and battlegrounds in the larger cultural and political fields.

In considering a time when the progressive work of intellectuals, cultural producers, political, labor and social activists frequently were entwined and mutually supporting, we feel that this book is an important opportunity to bring into direct conversation engaged critics and practitioners from a broad range of disciplines and perspectives. Thus, the structure of this volume deliberately rejects medium and subject-specificity in an effort to re-connect the separations that have been reinforced by the discrete 'professionalization' and cultural marginalization of intellectual, cultural and political work.

At the risk of sounding simple, I would like to remind the reader of the acceleration of specialization across our society. Echoing the terribly effective methods of 'niche marketing' and other high-capitalist innovations, this process is evident not only in the increased separation of physical and intellectual labor, but in the escalating (and often invisible) discreteness of fields of inquiry and creative production. This narrowing serves to blunt the ends of research so that they collapse back on themselves rather than connecting to broader experiences and challenging larger structures.

Such an imperative is clearly afoot in higher education, despite the frequent whitewash of words like 'interdisciplinarity' – a term whose pointedly empty generality should be evidence enough of a cover-up. This specialized model for the academy quietly substitutes the barometer of corporate 'success' for the measure of expanded understanding and experience. This volume is, in part, a modest attempt at correction. It is based on a hope that the sympathetic positioning of these disparate subjects, linked by a window in time, will encourage some reconnection of their various means and ends, reinforcing the processes of 'contestation' that are so central to the sustenance of an open society.

-Nicholas Muellner

II.

On the Matter of Bad Faith

The danger in looking to 1968 from the political perspective of 2008, is that it threatens to make us feel cynical, nostalgic, or both. Though the past threatens to deny us any ground for action or hope, it does point to the ongoing challenge to each of us as social beings -- the political implications of our subjectivity. Sartre understood the existential conundrum of action as a site wherein one both experiences and denies one's total freedom (insofar as the capacity to choose could lead to the deceptive claim that one possibility, in being chosen, takes undeniable precedence over another). Indeed, for forty years, haunting us in the blind spot of political/social/personal agency, is the challenge of bad faith³. For if each of us has become inert, in being dehumanized⁴ through each action absorbed and sold back to us, it is likely that 1968, having in 40 years become shorthand for "contestation" (or its parenthetical claim), might appear to us now as contestation's last gasp. Our impasse: though the militaristic industrial undertow continues to galvanize global reactions against it, it is also propped up through a conflict of allegiances. The question on everyone's lips today seems to be: "how did we get here?"

In the late 1960s, Herbert Marcuse and James Baldwin (as well as Kristeva and many others)⁵ insisted that the ground (however fictional) of psychological or theological interpretation was what was left to us in our efforts to decode or answer (though rarely resolve) the evolving problem of the modern subject. For when the freedom of an individual is constituted through an interiorized logic whereby the public sphere becomes its external manifestation, both conflict and retreat result. The social then becomes a vortex of selves torn asunder through misfiring interpolations that point to the sub-textual persistence of violence in human behavior. Unfortunately, the sheen of psychological interpretation does not adequately take into account the insistent materiality of things (nor their transmutations and migrations); here I refer not just to objects but to what Raul Ruiz calls the "subtle tissue of life"⁶. That is, to understand ourselves-cum-objects, we must pause before things themselves. All objects (including the modern subject) are in fact not merely receptacles for our most alienated feelings nor are they harbingers of our loneliness, but they do defy us. And in being defied, we - each of us - confront the ambiguity of ethics in action.⁷ The knot of material resistance in social action (of which artworks themselves are a crucial part), reveals the palpable intractability of nothingness and boredom⁸ at the very center of public protest.

It is often true that artists are the first to ascertain the problematic of action, the first step of which is contestation. In 1968 for instance, filmmakers Pier Paolo Pasolini and Rainer Werner Fassbinder foretold how perfect consumer capitalism would be in destroying even the call for calling things into

question⁹. It is not ironic that such a vision appears in the post-war, “post-fascist” states of Italy and Germany, for both men were suspicious of any language utilized under the rubric of unification. Common cause came to be read as a form of amnesia, normalization, or, under consumer capitalism, homogenization. To refuse absorption of any spoken, written word or conjured, constructed image through intractability or illegibility, though clever, can still be sold back to us as righteousness, as singularity; an unfortunate reification of the seeming solidity of the individual subject.

Still, the interval of 40 years cannot change the specificity of that moment’s means of protest, the diversification of speech and action that at that moment had outpaced the news media’s capacity to absorb and reroute it. And in these intervening years the means by which we experience freedom (the freedom to call things into question being foremost), has proliferated. But let us not forget that the first lesson learned by “the media” post-1968 was that one powerful way to diffuse critique is through the fine art of untrammelled bifurcation. This diffusion has devolved into a pervasive assimilation whose effect is a politics of divide-and-conquer. One need only recall the desperation of identity politics which, in the 1990s, was to become the final call for “freedom” in the 20th century while also eradicating that word’s teeth. To hold fast to our identities, our genders, ethnicities, and preferences denied or delayed any progressive political communion. Our charge in the 21st century is to question everything (something Kristeva meant in contestation), including the *appearance* of our freedom. As the rules of the game shift slightly, what remains is what we build; interrupting uplinks, activating blackouts, wrenches in the bulldozers, clarity in speech and word. Ours is a time when (as both Joan Didion and John Berger remind us¹⁰), each word is slowly, violently being torn from meaning, like “freedom” itself. As long as we and our words and images remain mobile, dense and outrageous (temporally, metaphorically) then they become catalytic. And not just to the willing or the already converted. In this lingual death throes, it is best to be reminded of the parallel polis¹¹, to direct one’s energy and attention in the service or production of a world or life, to which we imagine we want to belong.

Like all historical mythmaking, the pile-up before our haggard angel¹² that forces her headlong into the increasingly dark future is broad and complex enough to allow us the opportunity to sort through seemingly obscure details (to which the present volume attests), which together create, in part, a slightly more diverse history of a time and a year that had seemed to lose its resonance in being consolidated under the denuded word “revolution”. However, what might keep even a notion of revolution alive is a complex practice of consciousness shaped by the polemical limit of bad faith. Such was the quite palpable feeling, visceral and sure, of gathering together in a central New York town to discuss ideas, be reminded of strategies and confirm the academy as a sight of revolution.¹³ To call things into question is not to delude ourselves into thinking that oppositional slogans constitute revolution or that becoming specialized can solidify anything more than reputation and accessibility to the pulpit. Though both appear as consequential effect and even a mode of indoctrinated affect, aren’t we still slightly more savvy than to believe we can outrun the assimilation of ideas?

This collection of cultural archeology was first built from the unique engagements of its authors who then came together in a moment: April 7-8, 2006 and in a place: Ithaca, New York. These, like any two spatio-temporal coordinates, are ephemeral and threaten to pass into obscurity. However, (with gratitude to Cambridge Scholars Press) one small act of preservation of that node raying into and out of the central axis, or focus¹⁴, can extend the constellation of history to include you; revealing that what we recognize from the past and what continues to call us into being is the still unfinished project of becoming social.

-Cathy Crane

Notes

1. Julia Kristeva, *Revolt She Said*. (New York: Semiotext(e), 2002), p 12.
2. Felix Gonzalez-Torres, 1990: *L.A., "The Gold Field"* re-printed in: *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, Ed. Julie Ault (Gottingen, Germany: Steidl, 2006)
3. Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* made the subtle observation that the instrumentalization (or dehumanization) of humans is activated within acts as acts are predicated on the divisiveness of choice. This poses the still unanswered question: How do we act when to do so both precludes all other paths of action and is predicated on our immobility as rarified being?
4. See Alain Resnais' film *Night and Fog* (1955) on the Holocaust. Its voice-over narration insists that once beings are turned into things (an object of otherness), that is, viewed from an "objectified" vantage point, all forms of barbarism result.
5. James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, Dell Publishing (1962): (p. 47) "The principles were Blindness, Loneliness, and Terror, the first principle necessarily and actively cultivated in order to deny the two others. I would love to believe that the principles were Faith, Hope, and charity, but this is clearly not so for most Christians, or for what we call the Christian world." Herbert Marcuse's "Eros and Civilization", Beacon Press (1966): (p.16) "The struggle against freedom reproduces itself in the psyche of man, as the self-repression of the repressed individual, and his self-repression in turn sustains his masters and their institutions. It is this mental dynamic which Freud unfolds as the dynamic of civilization."
6. Raul Ruiz essay "Central Conflict Theory" collected in *Poetics of Cinema, vol 1*, 2005 Editions Dis Voir (Paris), pg. 14: "In daily life's subtle tissue of purposeful but inconsequential actions, unconscious decisions, and accidents, I fear that central conflict theory is not much more than what epistemology describes as a 'predatory theory': a system of ideas which devours and enslaves any other ideas that might restrain its activity."
7. Simone de Beauvoir *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, translated by Bernard Frechtman, Citadel Press (1948): (p. 7) "(Man) is still a part of this world of which he is a consciousness. He asserts himself as a pure internality against which no external power can take hold, and he also experiences himself as a thing crushed by the dark weight of other things. At every moment he can grasp the non-temporal truth of his existence." (p. 10) "It is true that the most optimistic ethics have all begun by emphasizing the element of failure involved in the condition of man; without failure, no ethics; for a being who, from the very start, would be an exact co-incidence with himself, in a perfect plenitude, the notion of having-to-be would have no meaning. One does not offer an ethics to a God."
8. Alberto Moravia, *Boredom*, translated by Angus Davidson, New York Review Books (1999): (p.6) "Once the tumbler ... reveals itself to me as foreign, something with which I have no relationship, once it appears to me as an absurd object-then from that very absurdity springs boredom, which when all is said and done is simply a kind of incommunicability and the incapacity to disengage oneself from it."
9. Pier Paolo Pasolini's essay "Genariello" was first published in 1975; translated by Stuart Hood, collected in *Lutheran Letters*, Carcanet New Press (1983): (p. 30) "The education given to a boy by things, by objects, by physical reality—in other words, the material phenomena of his social condition—make that boy corporeally what he is and what he will be all his life. What has to be educated is his flesh as the mould

of his spirit. Social condition is recognizable in the flesh of an individual.” Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s “Madness and Terrorism” was first published as a conversation with Gian Luigi Rondi in 1978 on the topic of his film *The Third Generation*; translated by Krishna Winston, collected in *The Anarchy of the Imagination*, The Johns Hopkins University Press (1992): (p. 125-126) “...the three generations of terrorism.... The first generation was that of ’68. Idealists, who wanted to change the world and imagined they could do that with words and demonstrations. The second, the Baader-Meinhof Group, went from legality to armed struggle and total illegality. The third’s the generation of today, which simply acts without thinking, which has neither a policy nor an ideology and which, certainly without realizing it, lets itself be manipulated by others, like a bunch of puppets. ...Nowadays it’s capitalism that brings forth terrorism, to boost itself and strengthen its system of hegemony.”

10. Didion, Joan *Fixed Ideas: America Since 9.11*, 2003 New York Review of Books (first published as “Fixed Opinions, or The Hinge of History”, Vol. 50, No. 1, January 16, 2003 New York Review of Books). Berger, John “Introduction” to *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* by David Levi Strauss, April 2003 *Aperture* [first excerpted in the monthly English language edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique* (February 2003) and quoted in *Harpers Magazine* (March 2003, p. 16) as “Where are we now?”]; “Reject all the tyranny’s discourse. I-its terms are crap. In the interminably repetitive speeches, announcements, press conferences, and threats, the recurrent terms are Democracy, Justice, Human Rights, Terrorism. Each word in the context signifies the opposite of what it was once meant to. Each has been trafficked; each has become a gang’s code word, stolen from humanity.” Both articles were written in response to the events of September 11, 2001.

11. Vaclav Havel “The Power of the Powerless” first published in October 1978, collected in the book *Open Letters*, Alfred A. Knopf (1991); (p. 194-196) “It would be quite wrong to understand the parallel structures and the parallel *polis* as a retreat into a ghetto and as an act of isolation, addressing itself only to the welfare of those who had decided on such a course, and who are indifferent to the rest...its proper point of departure ...is concern for others...in other words, the parallel *polis* points beyond itself and makes sense only as an act of deepening one’s responsibility to and for the whole, as a way of discovering the most appropriate *locus* for this responsibility, not as an escape from it.”

12. Walter Benjamin “Theses on the Philosophy of History” translated by Harry Zohn, collected in *Illuminations*, Schocken Books/Random House (1988); (p. 257-58) “This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”

13. Angela Davis lecture at Cornell University (September 18, 2007) “The Prison: A Sign of U.S. Democracy?” When asked by an audience member how she squares her radical work with the Black Panthers in the 1960s with her being Professor in the History of Consciousness Program at UC Santa Cruz today, Davis refers to the academy by saying, “this IS the revolution.”

14. Denise Levertov “Some Notes on Organic Form” collected in *The Poet in the World*, New Directions (1960-7); (p. 9) “Content and form are in a state of dynamic interaction; the understanding of whether an experience is a linear sequence or a constellation raying out from and into a central focus or axis, for instance, is discoverable only in the work, not before it.”

Part One

The Problem of Self-Representation For The Radical Left

On the Problem of Self-Representation for the Radical Left

Geoff Waite

The Truth is that one cannot choose the form of war one wants, unless from the start one has a crushing superiority over the enemy.

-Gramsci¹

Capitalism, I believe, is nothing like the economic infrastructure. It is a certain force that regulates humanity beyond its intentionality, a force that divides and recombines human beings. It is a religio-generic entity.

-Karatani²

Sarah Lewison's remarks about open society and land experiments in Northern California, specifically Morningstar Ranch, adumbrate an interesting case of acting locally without necessarily thinking globally, though with implications for ways of responding to (though not necessarily effectively resisting, let alone smashing and replacing) transnational capital. She juxtaposes, on the one side, a poster at the Diggers Free Store in San Francisco in 1967 alongside remarks by Lou Gottlieb of Morningstar in which he refers to "describing the concept of a new town that would be designed by the people who live in it and marked by folk architecture" with, on the other side, a quotation from *The Basic Programme of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism* published by the SI (Situationist International) six years earlier, in 1961. Lewison avers that it "seems like a strange exercise to read Morningstar Ranch against the Situationists' rigidity, although their assault is consonant with Gottlieb's solution." To which I add that the original, seventeenth-century Diggers lurk somewhere in the background as *tertium quid*. Yet, as a communist (with but scant nostalgia for the 1960s), I have never thought of the Situationists as peculiarly "rigid," so for me this juxtaposition is not exceptionally strange, not in at least three ways.

First, it keeps alive the not so very old, and still relevant, idea of uniting as one the sickle of the rural (aka peasantry) and the hammer of the urban (aka proletariat), at least symbolically—in other terms, uniting current manifestations of "the southern question" (Gramsci) with the world web or, say, with global WTO protests and the brilliant project of the WTI (World Tribunal on Iraq).³ Although here I add that Zionist Israel was inceptioned as a Marxist-Leninist state, and created well-nigh ex nihilo in hitherto barren desert sands with the sweat and blood of hitherto cosmopolitan intellectuals.⁴

Second, in Lewison's telling juxtaposition, at least some of the problems faced by the relationship between the more or less cohesive Morningstar collective and Northern California's surrounding Repressive and Ideological State Apparatus, can be seen as homologous to the otherwise different collectives encountered both by the more or less cohesive group of Tlatelolco residents before, during, and after the massacre in Mexico City on October 2, 1968, so astutely reconstructed by George Flaherty, and by the

decidedly cohesive, urban and yet nomadic RAF (Rote Armee Faktion), so appropriately returned to our consciousness by Petra Rethmann, though its military training took place in the so-called Near East. While the structural difference among these three collectives or rather snapshots in time and space of “The World Picture” (Heidegger)—Morningstar, Tlatelolco, RAF—may be ultimately greater than their similarities, their shared structure includes the old but still current problem of self-representation on the radical Left. This burning, or at least smouldering, problem we in this anthology, concerned with what we are calling “1968,” must confront without flinching. After all, as Marx citing Horace said, “*De te fabula narratur!* [this story is about you!]”⁵ In other words, our problem is not (merely) out there and back then—ca. 1968 in Northern California, Mexico, or Germany—but in us, *hic et nunc*, assuming that capitalism is (also) “a force that divides and recombines human beings.”

Third and finally, Gottlieb’s aforementioned remark about the layout of “a new town” (notwithstanding that he inexplicably regards his imaginary rural projection in terms of so-called folk architecture) is important to compare not only with one program of the SI but also with Mario Pani’s very real and bloody Tlatelolco. For, in Pani’s words, Tlatelolco’s “aim was to create a sense of familiarity, a community of identical ideas.” This last phrase Flaherty dialectically highlights to uncover its hidden architectural and ideological structure, namely, that it “both housed the urban problem, offering a solution, but it also created a critical mass of engaged/alienated residents, a nucleus that would both paradoxically facilitate and sabotage the state ideological apparatus and...state violence. Tlatelolco would facilitate the October 2 killings, offering an ideal panoramic viewpoint for the killing, but it would also sabotage the state’s efforts to make a clean sweep, with the colossal project housing and hiding survivors living to remember/narrative.”

I cite Flaherty’s (non-sanguine, tragic-sounding) words because they identify a fundamental structure of ideological-cum-concrete space that is faced *mutatis mutandis* both by Rethmann’s RAF as imagined or real point of (urban) attack and also, on a different front, by Lewison’s Morningstar (quasi-rural) *qua* real, or imagined, point of resistance.⁶

However, I ask, resistance or attack against what exactly?

This question—which I intend not to answer but to leave open for critical (self)reflection—points to the perennial problem of the relation of the global and the local, and it hardly obtains for Morningstar exclusively. But, of these three essays, it is Lewison’s that touches most directly on specifically *economic* issues, and I insist on keeping alive the inclusion of the economic superstructure in our predominantly superstructural analyses of “1968,” its causes and any enduring legacy. Without economic analysis, as Gramsci reminds us from in his Fascist prison cell in the 1930s, “political questions are disguised as cultural ones, and as such become insoluble.”⁷ And this remains true, I also insist, despite therefore qualified agreement with my second epigraph, by Kojin Karatani, who participated in the Japanese version of “1968.”

Through all our three essays, run a *red* but *tacit* thread that so intrigued

Marx from his dissertation in 1841 (“Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature”) to all four volumes of *Capital*, unfinished at his death in 1883. This theme is announced by the Epicurean concept *intermundia* (“between-worlds”); these are the imagined site or “interest” (*interesse*: “between-being”) and thus arguably the only place left (and Left) for what remains of the gods (though, for Marx, also of usury) in the radically secularized world from which those gods are increasingly fleeing.⁸ As Althusser showed, in his esoteric “aleatory materialism,” this concept must be additionally articulated with the Epicurean “swerve of atoms,” which is to say with chance.⁹ In any case, for *this* Left, the *intermundia* are sites remaining for economic systems, such as communes, resistant to the hegemonic, and increasingly global, capitalist economy. Few have elaborated on this, our current *intermundus* more cogently than has Karatani, to whom I will return shortly. But here we might again think not only of the benign Morningstar and the desperate situation in Tlatelolco but also, I repeat, of the RAF, the BR, the Weather Underground, the Black Panthers, the Sandinistas, etc. insofar as for all of them the problem—notably suffered by the latter groups much more acutely than by the former—was precisely to articulate, with self-reflection intense to the point of self-destruction, their local situation to the global political economy and militant struggle, in which one indeed “cannot chose the form of war one wants” and in which chance plays a role as determinate as does so-called historical determination. It is this role of the aleatory that I find overly absent in the otherwise valuable reflections of Rethmann, Flaherty, and Lewison (in all of whom I detect a certain methodological or theoretical Aristotelianism), and in any case is excluded in the problem of self-representation for the radical Left at all our peril. If the radical Left is to *be* radical, it must above all communist but also Marxist.

Marx, in his dissertation, had argued that Epicurus modified Democritus’ mechanical determination by introducing the swerve or declension of the atom (*the clinamen*) away from the straight line.¹⁰ Closely paraphrasing Althusser’s argument (which appeals also to Machiavelli and Spinoza), this had been considered as a mere diversion, rather than a serious philosophical development with grave ramifications beyond philosophy. Marx also had in mind another, and far more influential philosopher, Aristotle. On the one pole, Marx placed Democritus, *qua* sensationist, mechanical determinist, and consequently a sceptic; and, on the opposite pole, he placed Aristotle as a teleologist and rationalist. The *intermundia* were transversed by Epicurus by insisting on the *clinamen* of the atom, which produces a transmutation or development that is beyond the merely mechanistic, and which came to be grasped by Aristotle, and later by vulgar Marxists and capitalists alike, teleologically, from the standpoint of predetermined harmony. For Marx, Epicurus is the first thinker who criticizes both teleology and mechanical determinism by gazing into the swerve of the atomic movement—a gaze that came to be most intense in two rather otherwise rather heterogeneous but equally rigorous philosophical arguments that are exceptionally rich in their practical implications, and both Marxist, namely, as noted, that of Althusser in his secret and unpublished writings and, albeit differently,

that of Karatani in his *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (2003). I certainly cannot rehearse (or criticize) Karatani's theory here, but do suggest that it gives crucial economic perspective on the problem of the *intermundus* that was Morningstar.

I am thinking especially of Karatani's discussion of LETS (Local Exchange Trading System), as conceptualized and practiced by Michael Linton and others since 1982.¹¹ Unlike the Morningstar Ranch problematic, LETS, in Karatani's terms, is not merely a local but a *globally* "multifaceted system of settlement in which participants have their own accounts, register the wealth and service that they can offer in the inventory, conduct exchanges freely, and then the results are recorded in the accounts. In contrast to the currency of a state central bank, the currency of LETS is issued each time by those who are to receive goods or services from other participants. And it is so organized that the sum total of the gains and losses of everyone is zero."¹² Bataille might call this a potlatch or restricted economy. Returning to Karatani, "in this simple system exist a clue to solving the antinomy of money,"¹³ namely, as Marx puts it in *Capital*, the antinomy that *money should exist and should not exist*. "When compared with the exchange both of mutual aid in traditional communities and of the capitalist commodity economy, the nature of LETS becomes clear. It is, on the one hand, similar to the system of mutual aid insofar as it does not impose high price with interest, but, on the other hand, it is closer to the market in that the exchange can occur between those who are mutually far apart in space and strangers. In contrast to the capitalist market economy, in LETS, money does not transform into capital, not simply because there is no interest, but because it is based upon the zero sum principle, the principle of offsetting earnings and expenses in sum total. It is organized so that, although exchanges occur actively, 'money' does not exist as a result. Therefore the antinomy—money should exist and money should not exist—is solved."¹⁴ And along with it, ostensibly, "the slaughter bench of history" (Hegel) would be smashed—also *qua* "religio-generic entity"—the slaughter bench that continually rebuilt upon the base of filthy lucre.

We are duly reminded by Alain Badiou that *capital* is "nihilistic in its extensive form, the market having become worldwide; nihilistic in its fetishization of the formalism of communication; and nihilistic in its extreme political poverty, that is to say, in the absence of any project other than its perpetuation—the perpetuation of hegemony for Americans and of vassalage, made as comfortable as possible, for the others"; that *communism* is "the trans-temporal subjectivity of emancipation";¹⁵ and that *thinking*—which, I again add, must include thinking the problem of self-representation for the radical Left—"is nothing other than the desire to finish with the exorbitant excess of the State."¹⁶

But I conclude my direct and indirect comments on these three quite interesting essays on, and in, our own *intermundus* by reminding us that it was *against* that parliamentarianist politics and business as usual (Badiou justly refers to "capitalo-parliamentarianism") proposed by evolutionary Hegelo-Marxist and reformist Leftists such as Bernstein and the Second International, which Luxemburg and Lenin famously (though they differed

on other points; and on this one point shared something with Sorel, though he became fascist) insisted upon a strategy focused on workers' general strikes. Moreover, anarcho-syndicalists had, and have, their own version of this strategy, as do some religious fundamentalists. But none of these groups, alas, has to date been able to stop imperialist wars, including those to which, say, so-called liberals and so-called conservatives contribute equally, and which ever produce the ultimately ineffective, if not indeed counterproductive, efforts of No-Cal hippies and red army factions alike—and Tlatelolco was no Paris Commune—as well as the bloodbaths vividly recalled by Rethmann's *Projek Artur* in all genres: literary and audio-visual. For my modest part, the RAF "solution"—this "impossible possibility"¹⁷—remains more attractive than the other Morningstar and Tlatelolco: theoretically if, certainly, not necessarily in praxis.

As we were told a half-century ago, communism has never been allowed to struggle except against all odds and hence has ever existed in contexts of defeat.¹⁸ But now I add that real communism has never promised to create Heaven on earth but instead to combat Hell to the death.

In 1917, Gramsci wrote concerning what he called "The City of the Future": "No one in it sits by the window looking while the few shed their blood in sacrifice [...]. I live, I am a partisan. This is why I hate those who do not take sides, I hate those who are indifferent."¹⁹

Is this hate to be the perduring legacy of what we are calling "1968"? *This* is the question I must here leave *radically open*. After all, it too is a matter of *clinamen*.

Notes

1. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 234.
2. Kojin Karatani, *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003), 5.
3. On the former, see Richard J. F. Day's (egregiously mis-titled) *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto, 2005); on the latter, see Ayça Çubuckçu's splendid recounting and analysis, "Humanity Must Be Defended?" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2008).
4. See Francesca Cernia Slovin's crucial *In principio: Dove affondano le radici d'Israele* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003).
5. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), 1:90; Horace, *Sermonum*, I, 1, 69-70.
6. Of course, other movements can, and should, be considered in this regard, including the Italian BR (Brigate Rosse), the Black Panthers, the Sandinistas, the NFL (National Liberation Front, as depicted in Pontecorvo & Solinas's film *The Battle of Algiers*), etc. Needless to say, the differences among them all are equally significant. For instance, whereas the RAF and BR, at least initially, produced and were founded on detailed and informed analyses of capitalism, the Weather Underground and NFL did and were not.
7. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 149.
8. See, for example, Marx, *Capital*, I: 447-8, 733.
9. See the extremely important text, Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987*, ed. François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006).
10. See Marx, "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature in General," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow: International, 1975), I: 25-107.
11. See Karatani, *Transcritique*, esp. 23-5, 298-301.
12. *Ibid.*, 23.
13. *Idem.*
14. *Idem.*
15. Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, ed. and trans. O. Feltham and J. Clemens (London: Continuum, 2003), 98, 120.
16. Badiou, *L'être et l'événement* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 312.
17. "Impossible possibility" is Badiou's current synonym for *communism* in *Peut-on penser la politique?* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 78. He does not say so, but this was Karl Barth's synonym for *God* in *Der Römerbrief (Zweite Fassung 1922)* (Zurich: TVZ, 2005 [1918/1922]), 229, 345; and then Martin Heidegger's synonym for *death* in *Being and Time* (1927) and elsewhere. On my view, God may be dead, communism is not.
18. See Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: NLB, 1976).
19. Antonio Gramsci, "Indifferents," *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, ed. Pedro Calvacanti and Paul Piccone, trans. Pierluigi Molajoni, et al. (Saint Louis: Telos, 1965), 65-6.

Projekt Artur: An Investigation of a Film on 1968, Militancy, and the West German Radical Left

Petra Rethmann

I

This is about a film: fragmentary, unfinished, incomplete. The title of the film is *Projekt Artur*, with the name drawn from a postcard that circulated widely in West-German small bookshops in the 1980s. Depicting a small boy, cap tucked into his eyes, wild, bold, street-smart, Artur looked resolutely at his viewers. An inscription encapsulated at his feet reads:

You ask what shall I do?

And I say: live wild and dangerous.

Artur.

Artur was issuing an incendiary call: Get off your asses. Don't think. Act! Deliberately confrontational and offensive, the mood reflected in the call resonates not only with the circumstances of the film's production but also with its substance: the history of armed and militant struggle in West Germany from 1967 to 1985 (*die Geschichte des bewaffneten und militanten Widerstands in der BRD von 1967-1985*). This temporal frame is not accidental. Within the history of the Federal Republic these eighteen years register one of most spectacular and violent period of leftist political organizing and mobilization. As chronological pillars that hold a sequential history in place, the dates encompass a narrative that begins with the youth rebellions of the mid-1960s, moves on to student organizing of 1968 and the ensuing emergence of so-called "terrorist" groups such as the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*) and June 2. The deaths of Holger Meins in 1974, Ulrike Meinhof in 1976, and Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe in the high-security track of prison Stuttgart-Stammheim in 1977, too, form temporal reference points, in conjunction with emergence of the anti-nuclear power movement and the consolidation of the Green Party on the government level. This is a chronological history that, in the words of the filmmakers, "we do not want to forget, but discuss." Yet as *Projekt Artur* abides by a forward-moving timeline, it also reveals something simultaneously more tangible and vague. Rather than rethinking the form in which the film is organized (an effort worth undertaking in any case), I am interested in the formation of militancy as a political strategy and one of its enabling conditions: affect. It is the relation between these two moments that I will attempt to analyze here.

Militancy can have many meanings but it commonly denotes extreme aggression, and also fanaticism, an extreme devotion to a cause. Written into the term is a measurement of excess, a surplus of antagonistic incaltrance, an overspilling of out-of-control violence. Such classifications as-

sumed a legitimating function within the rhetoric of the state to mark the guerilla groups - Red Army Faction, June 2, Revolutionary Cells (*Revolutionaere Zellen*), and the militant-feminist group Rote Zora - as "terrorist" and extreme. By contrast, the guerilla groups that predominantly operated in West German metropolises chose the term "militant" as a descriptive category for themselves because it denoted some of the things crucial to their own self-understanding and definition: the unwavering commitment to a cause (in this case, although not always clear, the overthrow of the state), the deliberate damaging or destroying of property or equipment (sabotage), the choice to use weapons as appropriate political means, the willingness to continue "the struggle" until death. Militancy, as will become clear, also denoted a necessary component of resistance that a significant contingent of the West German left (at least at some point) desired, be it as a displaced wish to combat "the fascist" or as the need to expose the latent deceit of West German democracy and, by extension the state. Militancy was not simply an indispensable component of revolt, but an answer to the excessive violence exerted by the state. Especially the emblematic deaths of demonstrator Benno Ohnesorg and student leader Rudi Dutschke.

Within this context, the notion of affect is the second moment on which this essay pivots. In trying to understand the more emotive and yet unspeakably thorny issue of empathy (*Sympathisanten*) for the militant struggle, I draw on Brian Massumi's (2002) work on the multiple registers of movement, affect, and sensation. Affect, a non-signifying response to experiences of intensity, operates on a physical plane, that is, a plane that moves beyond (if not necessarily transcends) narrativizable levels of meaning. In invert relation to emotion, a "qualified intensity," affect is a form of intensity not owned and by and large not recognized. Rather, what it is is "[a] trace of past actions including a trace of their contexts [...] conserved in [...] the flesh." Drawing on this conceptualization in analogous relation, what I find useful here is the implied aspect of reverberation, the mode in which events, experiences, and actions form empathy, not simply as the ability to identify with another person's motivations but also to transfer one's own desires onto them. In *Projekt Artur*, the relations of affect are doubled. First, they connect with the hopes and imaginations of the militant (and not so militant) left inspired by the uprisings and revolutions that happened in the internationalist context of the late 1960s. Second, they connote the relation the filmmakers experience regarding the project and its subjects. Yet, as we will see in the end, these relations are not without their conflicts. It puts the film's makers into a tension-ridden relation with segments of the militant Left - tensions that proved insurmountable in the end and significantly contributed to the folding of the overall project.

As if to challenge the failed completion of the project, the film ends with a hopeful gesture, a final recognition-filled nod towards the necessity of the existence of a radical, militant left. Both the opening and final words in the film belong to Karl-Heinz Roth, and, by extension, to the film's authors who thus assert their own subjectivity and agency in this moment. *Projekt Artur* opens with a prologue by Karl-Heinz Roth, once head of the Hamburg chapter of the West German SDS (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*),

and now a historian and doctor who in the mid-1970s was closely affiliated with June 2. Taking recourse to a historical memory concerning the escalating fascism of the 1930s and the lack of resistance in this regard, Karl-Heinz Roth articulates: “The problem is that they [workers] allowed themselves to be hanged for the leaflets they distributed, and not because they were armed. This is a serious problem.” What is important about this statement is not only that it prefaces the film but also sets its tone. There is then a trauma. And this trauma can only be removed by acknowledging militancy as an integral part of radical practice. Again, says Karl-Heinz Roth: “I believe that the existence of armed groups does have a perspective when they move within a militancy of the masses, [and] when they realize their chance, to understand themselves as those capable of transporting the historical experience of our generation.” This is the kind of comment that seeks to provide a space for new possibilities to be produced, possibilities that are not locked in a predetermined course.

II

Projekt Artur follows a structure of periodization that closely echoes the self-periodizations of the left. Here the history of the militant left is divided into five parts: from the beginnings of youth rebellion to the arson in a department store (1965-1969); emergence of militant politics (1969-1972); the proliferization of militant politics (1972-1974); struggle for continuity (1975-1977); and the politics of the left after Stammheim (1978-1986). This account depends on some of the most significant moments in leftist memory, but it is by no means inclusive. It reduces 1968 – that has come to stand as a cipher for insurgency across the globe – to just one more date in a longer chronology of the left. Each of these segments traces the rise or formation of militancy, as well as the changing political landscape and conditions that either encouraged or limited it. What is de-emphasized are the spectacular moments that turned '68 into the political ferment that it was, the origin of militancy for the West German Left. For example, Projekt Artur leaves out the freeing (*Befreiungsaktion*) of Andreas Baader and the death of Rudi Dutschke receives only short mention.

Right from the start, the film is troubled by one of the most difficult problems of leftist historiography: the antinomy between the individual and the collective. In Projekt Artur, we see this uneasy relationship being played out between the authors' choice to feature (sometimes rather lengthy) interview clips of protagonists with the use of larger history as setting and contextual devise. This technique, of course, may well be inherent in the very logic of a chronological history, in which a vast material is being managed. This may not be as critical as it sounds. The fact is that we need these histories, and the amount of memory they generate, assist, or enable. But it should also be clear that the personalization of history (the biographical approach, so to speak) can just as easily translate into a defiguring approach in which a mass is reduced to a few individual itineraries of a few so-called leaders, spokesmen, or representatives. Circumscribed in this way, all collective revolt is

defanged. It does not amount to anything more than the existential anguish of individual destiny; revolt is confined to the jurisdiction of a few “personalities” upon whom the media bestows seemingly innumerable occasions for revising or recasting previous motivations.

Segment 1 of *Projekt Artur* begins with a short scene of youth dancing the twist and then, seamlessly moves to footage of U.S. brutalities in Vietnam, then to an interview clip with Norbert Kroecher, member of June 2 and co-architect of the underground papers *Agit 883* and *Fizz*. Next one sees and hears an interview segment with Karl-Heinz Roth, ending in a sudden cut to a student meeting in Berlin in 1968. Next there are clips of speeches by Rudi Dutschke and Hans-Juergen Krahl (the supposed intellectual rival of Dutschke). In a last shot here Thorwald Proll describes the preparation for the department store arson in Frankfurt in 1969, an arson on whose basis he, together with future Red Army Faction members Gurdun Ensslin and Andreas Baader, fled. The segment then ends with another commentary by Karl-Heinz Roth. In its density, it is perhaps the most intense in the entire film, betraying the sense of temporal acceleration, of vertigo, as Theo Pirker has articulated it in another context.

In its structure, this segment establishes the form of the film. Throughout the picture, interviews are interspersed with narrative panels that offer “factual” information and context. Thus we should be clear what kind of chronological history *Projekt Artur* offers. Apart from an, as mentioned earlier, forward-moving timeline, it is unconsciously diachronic; that is, it does not concern itself with the way discontinuities, or breaks in history, might shape changes in political subjectivity, or identities that exist on either side of the break (for example, the fracture within the West German left that prompted some to fundamentally denounce militancy, while others saw it as the only meaningful route open to the West German left). Instead, there is an unbroken continuity in which every interview or clip assumes its significance in relation to the next. Although the overall narrative serves as database from which the temporal elements of the film are fashioned, this does not necessarily mean that such a history is inclusive. As the authors state: “This is a history in fragments.” Yet precisely because each moment is fundamental to the next, some of the absences, gaps, or silences in the film draw attention to the authors’ own historical vision – and it is here that we can begin to detect some sort of violation. For do we necessarily need to understand the moments left out of the chronology of *Projekt Artur* as insignificant, or are they pointers towards the critique that has been leveled by segments of the left against the authors?

Projekt Artur is clearly a work of memory, a conscious attempt to protect one’s own history against the corrosive force of amnesia that tends to hide radical forms of protest and resistance from public view. *Projekt Artur* is a project that wants to rescue this memory. Yet the desire to preserve such memory amounts to a tremendous task, and the fact that *Projekt Artur* attempts to do so by accumulating an impressive quantity of facts and figures regarding each temporal segment accounts for why this chronological history tends to be so thick. As for how and why these segments connect, or interact with one another, or how their relation is figured in the film’s narrative