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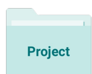

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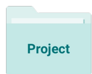

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History, The Sublime, Terror: *Notes on the Politics of Fear*

Gene Ray

In his 1757 book on aesthetics—very chic, in fact, when it was published two years after the Lisbon earthquake—the young Edmund Burke proposed that anything connected to terror is potentially a source of the feeling of the sublime.[1] Six years into a so-called war against terrorism—a "war on terror," as the U.S. president prefers to say—it seems timely enough to ask whether this category from eighteenth-century aesthetics has anything relevant to say to us about the world we live in today. In particular, can this figure for excessive power or the power of excess contribute anything helpful to our political understanding at the beginning of the twenty-first century? I will argue that it could be, so long as we grasp how history has changed the sublime—how this traditional category has been profoundly transformed. The sublime is sometimes characterized as a response to the Terror of the French Revolution, or else as a theorizing premonition of it. According to this kind of interpretation, the sublime was already then a projection into aesthetics of collective experiences of political violence. I'm not at all rejecting this kind of materialist reading, but I want to suggest that the crucial shift in the category occurs in the twentieth century, after 1945, in the wake of events of massive and traumatic violence. Here, I'll first summarize this shift and situate it in its social context. Then I'll draw some implications, including some conclusions about the possible relevance of the sublime as an artistic response to the wars, atrocities and disasters that threaten us today.

From First to Second Nature

The category of the sublime as it emerges, or re-emerges, in European aesthetic discourse—and especially following its codification by Burke and Immanuel Kant—is above all a response to the *power or size of nature*. The sublime names an aesthetic response to nature's capacity to strike us with fear, terror, awe and astonishment. Terror is indeed key. As Burke put it: "Terror is *in all cases whatsoever*, either more openly or latently *the ruling principle* of the sublime."[2] Terror and the sublime go together and are even inseparable. For Burke, there can be no sublime without terror, and wherever there is terror, there is also, at least potentially, the feeling of the sublime. In Kant's formulations in *The Critique of Judgment*, this moment of terror is specified as the power of raw nature to overwhelm and render helpless our faculty of imagination.[3] So the exemplary figures of the sublime that come down to us through this tradition remained, at least through the nineteenth century, raging storms, earthquakes, erupting volcanoes, avalanches, and the like—what we now call natural disasters—or else the vast desolation of mountains, deserts or ice fields, the starry sky or the high seas.

In any of these instances, a direct encounter with the violence or size of nature—actually to be in the landscape, that is—could precipitate a plunge into undiluted terror. But to contemplate such scenes from a position of relative safety renders the feeling of terror somehow delightful and fascinating. ("Delight" is Burke's term[4]; we might find "enjoyment" or "*jouissance*" more fitting.) We can see how this works in Edgar Allan Poe's 1841 story, "A Descent into the Maelström." The fisherman who tells the story's narrator about the famous tidal whirlpool off the coast of Norway had the bad luck actually to be sucked into its maw. He survived by lashing himself to a barrel, but the terror of the ordeal turned his "jetty black" hair white overnight. As a survivor, the fisherman now shares his experience with Poe's main narrator, whom he guides up a high cliff overlooking the maelstrom. Even this remote vantage proves to be exposed to the power of the surging waters in the distance. The main narrator's ears fill with its roaring, and he begins to feel in the soles of his feet the tremors passing through the rock of the cliff:

> The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation."[5]

As readers, however, our vicarious involvements do not put us bodily at risk; safe, we can fully enjoy the spectacle and its aura of danger. The feeling of the sublime is possible, though in differing intensities, from all three positions: that of the fisherman as survivor-witness looking back on his ordeal; that of Poe's main narrator, who actively places himself at risk in trying to learn about the maelstrom, and that of the reader-spectator whose approaches are through the medium of fiction or art. Only the actual moment of pure terror, which remains a traumatic and unrepresentable excess, is excluded. This moment can be approached retrospectively through stories and representations but strictly speaking is never fully assimilable. The sublime always has to do with terror, then, but is not identical with pure, immediate terror: it is rather terror mediated by a certain physical

or temporal distance and compounded with enjoyment and fascination—a strange and singular mix of pleasure and pain. As Kant has it, the feeling of the sublime is an "indirect" or "negative pleasure."[6]

In the twentieth century, however, the unprecedented scale and intensity of two World Wars radically transformed the traditional category. Over the course of this bloody century, eruptions of human violence came to displace nature as the exemplary object or trigger of the sublime. In short, the catastrophic violence humans inflict on other humans became more terrible and terrifying than the power and size of nature. To inflect Georg Lukács's Marxist-Hegelian idiom, we could say that the sublime begins as an attribute or effect of *first nature*—raw nature beyond the human, nature as the non-human that sometimes threatens humanity but nevertheless is a material condition for its existence. But in the twentieth century these complex feelings become associated more with the self-made disasters of society, or *second nature*. Society hardens into a second nature because the fact that social relations are historically constituted—and thus transformable—is concealed from everyday experience: social relations become reified or *naturalized*. This shift in the object of the sublime—from first to second nature—is a long time taking hold in critical discourses but is consolidated in the decades following 1945.

The trauma of the Second World War was decisive. By most estimates, this global bloodletting took between 50 and 60 million lives, although some recent accounts put the number as high as 70 million.[7] Of these dead, something like two-thirds were civilian. But I want to suggest that it was two events of violence in particular that compelled this displacement of first nature within the category of the sublime. It's more or less customary at this point to refer to these events by their exemplary place-names: Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Each realizes a qualitative leap in human potentiality, in the human power and capacity for organized violence. Far from being the first to claim this, I'm merely working with and on certain strands in critical theory and scholarship arguably first opened up by Theodor Adorno and pursued since by many others.[8] And I'm very aware that linking these two names—Auschwitz *and* Hiroshima—is in some contexts controversial. But I'll explain why I think that in this context the linkage is necessary and inescapable.

Very schematically: Auschwitz realizes the qualitatively new potential for systematic genocide inherent in the technics and logics of rationalized industrial or Fordist production, when these are put at the disposal of the state and directed toward the aim of mass murder. Hiroshima realizes the qualitatively new potential for genocidal destruction inherent in the project of modernist science itself, when all the state-directed resources of research and development and rationalized production are mobilized for the war machine. The extermination camp or factory, then, and the all-too-real doomsday weapon—the so-called weapon of mass destruction or WMD—set the new standards for terror and sublimity. The shift, again, is from the power, violence and size of first nature to the violent potentialities of second nature, or society itself. Viewed in this way, Auschwitz and Hiroshima are shorthand for qualitatively new powers of violence gained by the nation-state—beyond all the obvious differences in their specific historical character and in the political forms and aims of the governments that realized them. These qualitative historical events are the demonstration that such powers are real and can be deployed. That these possibilities were historically realized is a new *social fact* that quite properly should terrify us far more than the random natural disasters of old.[9]

This shift is indeed a radical transformation of the category of the sublime. In the traditional sublime—above all as formulated by Kant—the encounter with the power or size of first nature is ultimately the occasion for reaffirming human freedom and dignity. The helpless distress of the imagination before the power and violence of raw nature turns out merely to have been the trigger for a reassertion of the faculty of reason and for a reflection on man's supersensible dignity and destiny.[10] As the basis for moral freedom and human autonomy, reason is the capacity that ostensibly raises humanity above mere sensible nature and the blind play of forces, drives and instincts. So humans need not be in terror of expressions of natural power, for they are reassured of their superiority over it: reason and freedom to the rescue.[11]

After 1945, however, this compensatory pleasure of self-admiration within the feeling of the sublime becomes highly improbable: these events are nothing less than devastating to human dignity. In "After Auschwitz," the first of the powerful "Meditations on Metaphysics" that end *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno argues that Auschwitz was a kind of irreversible liquidation of metaphysical optimism.[12] But for the reasons I've already indicated, we have to include Hiroshima to properly grasp what has changed here. For these two events together accomplish a terrible and deep-reaching ruination that shakes —or should shake—human self-confidence and optimism to the core. After 1945, we could say, a gap opens between, on the one hand, a fundamental uncertainty that now surrounds our notions of humanity and the future, and, on the other hand, the officially proclaimed and manufactured optimism surrounding the overproduction and consumption of commodities. Objectively, as it were, the meaning of what happened is that the myth of automatic progress is dead—the future will from now on be in doubt. But the postwar "economic miracles" of reconstruction and growth make it possible to repress the meaning of this history in everyday life: despite what happened, I'm optimistic because I have a house full of things and next year I hope to buy a new car. For critical theory, in any case, in the wake of

Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the meliorism and Enlightenment notion of progress that inform Kant's sublime become naïve, when not obscene. For these staggering events seem rather to establish that society, in its capacities for violence, has escaped rational, humane control and has generated atrocities that cannot be folded back into any redemptive narrative of progress.

State Terror and Capitalist Modernity

It is important to note that the new powers of violence that are out of the box after 1945 belong to the state. They are properties and prerogatives of the modern *nation-state*, with its monopoly on violence and its power to declare *the state of emergency* or *exception*—that is, as the Nazi legal theorist Carl Schmitt famously put it, the sovereign power to declare the existence of an absolute and intolerable *enemy*.[13] As is well understood —and this will be of obvious relevance to our grasp of the present situation—the state, in declaring a state of emergency, invokes the rule of law *to exempt itself from the rule of law*: it gives itself permission to do whatever it deems necessary to crush the enemy, and it, the state, alone will decide when it is safe to return to normality. It is the declared state of emergency, of course, which self-authorizes the state to take control of whole sectors of science and the economy and to mobilize all techno-instrumental capacities toward political ends, including the end of terror.

Whatever we're officially told today, terror remains above all the prerogative of the nation-state. So-called non-state actors may get hold of a WMD, but only the state has the power and capacity to develop, produce and deploy them as a matter of strategy and policy. And we know that state strategy and policy ultimately and necessarily aim at preserving the status quo of power—the given system of social relations. Objectively, with regard to who has control over what, we have far more to fear from the state than from its challenging others, however brutal and excessive certain of those others—al-Qaeda and such—may be. The contemporary sublime is linked irreducibly to *state terror and violence*, and events since 2001 and the so-called war on terror don't change that at all.

In the end, these terrible, sublime new powers the state holds in reserve have to be grasped systemically. They are products of *capitalist modernity itself*. That is: of techno-productive power and instrumental reason developed within the frame of the modern nation-state and capitalist economy and under the globally dominant logic of capitalist social relations. This is to say that *second nature is capitalist*: it is the society and world system that capitalist modernity produced. And so to speak of the sublime today is to speak of the terror of wars and genocidal eruptions, but also, necessarily, the terror and violence of the nexus of social relations as a global totality.

It's no secret that the global logic of this totality is war: an unceasing and unforgiving war of all against all. When Thomas Hobbes penned this memorable phrase in the seventeenth century, he was describing a projected hell—the anarchic state of nature from which the modern state and the rule of law allegedly delivers us. But we'll be excused, I trust, for having doubts about this kind of deliverance. For the law that capitalist modernity instituted and still imposes on us is a war that has been legalized, formalized and apparently pacified as "the market" but nevertheless continues to generate conflicts that break out frequently enough into real violence. Capitalism is "symbolic" and "limited" rather than "real" and "absolute" war, but only so long as the excesses it generates are not grasped as belonging to its conflictual logic. Marx of course pointed out the coercive element in the market: those who don't own and control the means of production are free to sell their labor-power as a commodity or else to starve on the streets. In Marx's theory of class, this relation of domination in the sphere of production increasingly divides society into two hostile classes locked in historic struggle. The rise of the welfare state, however, produced levels of social mobility and security that tended to "decompose" the unity and homogeneity of these classes and to take the edge off of class struggle, so that by the 1950s many sociologists considered Marx's theory of class refuted and were writing of "post-capitalist" industrial society.[14] Since then, of course, so-called neo-liberal economic policies have been rolling back and demolishing the welfare state, and the specter of social insecurity and class struggle is returning.[15]

Here, however, I want to point to the core rationality of capitalist competition—the master logic that cuts across and conceals class divisions, by making the conflict of interests appear as a liberal virtue. In the ideology of capital, competition is a social asset and spur to progress; war, in contrast, is a mistake, a slip into excess or miscalculation to be corrected by a return to the market. Unhappily, this distinction between competition and war is spurious. With nation-states as with individuals and corporations each *must* tirelessly exploit and dominate the others, so as not to be exploited and dominated *out of existence*. This imperative holds for capitalists and CEOs, but also, if a looser conception of exploitation is admitted, for workers and consumers, as bearers of national identity and interest in a globalized market of labor and commodities.

Marx was not unaware of this structural imperative. Capitalists, he noted, "have the same interest inasmuch as they form a class vis-à-vis another class," but they have "opposite, contradictory interests as soon as they are confronted with each other."[16] And of course the famous "industrial reserve army" of unemployed laborers is a structural way of pitting workers against each other. But Marx concluded that the unifying tendencies of shared class interest and the intensification of organized class struggle over time must prove stronger than the atomizing effects of economic competition. Today,

empirically at least, this conclusion is very much in question. In the present contradictory mix of both socially *integrative* and *disintegrative* tendencies and processes, it remains to be seen whether proliferating differences in power and conflicts of interest between social strata can still develop into classes and class struggle, in Marx's strongest sense of these categories. In any case, we can no longer imagine that such a development is necessary or will be automatic. My point is that under capitalism, competition is *generalized and enforced*, often in ways that undeniably do deepen the processes of class decomposition and the destruction of solidarity. What I want to insist on is that the logic of competition is a *logic of war* that pushes against and takes aim at all values and logics that would constrain it—and for this reason in fact leads to war, in the common language sense of open armed conflict.

The global result of this imperative is a world in which the economy grows, but at the cost of continuing social misery, human deprivation and ecological damage. Most of the world's 6.6 billion people remain basically powerless over the social factors that affect their lives. Despite all integrative tendencies, society still confronts and dominates this global majority as the alien force of anonymous economic processes on which they must depend. Basically, this holds for all of us, of course, but some indisputably are positioned better than others and can exercise degrees of autonomy and control over their situations. For most, the pathways to enlightened autonomy and self-realization remain structurally blocked. They are forced to adapt, accommodate and compete in order merely to survive. They do it but understandably are not happy about it. Unconsciously at the very least, they register their real powerlessness through the smiling spectacles of progress. And the reserves of repressed rage that accumulate inevitably break out in eruptions of violence. Manipulated and channeled by the state, this rage can become genocidal. This would be the structural barbarism Adorno famously called "perennial catastrophe"[17]—of which Auschwitz was, as he put it, only "the first sample."[18] This is why he insisted that the objective social conditions that made fascism possible "continue to exist."[19]

The "War on Terror" as War of Systemic Enforcement

In sum, war is the real cost of the logic of war. One challenge for critical thought today is to grasp the current wars and occupations not merely as resource wars or imperialist adventures—they certainly are those—but more fundamentally as wars of systemic enforcement. In other words, we need to understand—though this kind of analysis fell out of fashion during the "po-mo" decades—how state violence is structurally generated by the very same social relations and logics that seemed to provide us with—or at least promise—material security and prosperity based on a superabundance of commodities. And more than that, we need to grasp how the brutal atrocities that strike us with fear today in fact function as means by which the global status quo maintains its power and hold over us—declaring and at the same time continuously generating the absolute enemy, from which, we're told, the state alone can protect us.

Clearly we need a more differentiated and periodized account of capitalism here. The post-Fordist and neo-liberal forms of capitalism that became globally dominant beginning in the early 1970s are more intensive and violent modes of exploitation than the capitalism of Keynesianism and the welfare state. This has to be analyzed and taken into account, and of course the debates about the contemporary form of capitalism are well underway. But the "logic of logics" of capitalist social relations—my provocation was to characterize this bluntly as a *logic of war*—remains unchanged. It may be that capitalism as we know it today simply follows that logic more directly than did the form that preceded it. In retrospect it appears that the relatively more moderate and constrained form of the welfare state was a concession gained by the working class through struggle—a concession that was cancelled from above as soon as working class power was no longer robust enough to maintain its position in the balance of social forces. The struggle of labor and capital has taken countless forms, gone through many phases and cycles, and been "translated" into so many different local contexts that generalizations are bound to appear somewhat crude. That said, the neo-liberal attack on social rights and securities and the re-organization of the global labor regime—the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist modes of production—can plausibly be understood as a major counter-offensive against working class power launched in response to labor militancy in the 1950s and 60s.[20]

There can be little doubt that this combination of neo-liberal policies and a shift in the organization of production, both of which are ongoing today, has been largely successful in "decomposing" traditionally organized working class struggles. The category of the "multitude" proposed by Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno and others is an attempt to re-conceive Marx's proletariat and to project possible lines of class re-composition and struggle under conditions characterized by the rise of post-Fordist production[21]. Although this attempt has been controversial, I find it very plausible that the so-called movement of movements that was largely inspired and catalyzed by the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in 1994 and that erupted into global visibility in Seattle in 1999 represents the beginnings of a practical attempt to build a new internationalist class composition around global anti-capitalist social movements and struggles. Suspicions that the "war on terror" has from the beginning had this attempt at class re-composition in its sights, in addition to Jihadist and other networks that could more justifiably be called "terrorist," seems confirmed by the uses to which the new emergency powers

everywhere have been put to use: in the context of a general militarization of everyday life, an unprecedented expansion and perhaps qualitative intensification of official surveillance, and an erosion of habeas corpus and other basic civil and democratic rights, there is a clear tendency among states, almost without exception, to criminalize established forms of dissent and protest and to re-categorize forms of civil disobedience and direct action as "terrorism."

This tendency is pronounced in the United States, where it predictably follows from the arsenal of emergency powers asserted in legislation from the USA Patriot Act of 2001 to the Military Commissions Act of 2006, to the new so-called "Homegrown Terrorism Act" making its way through Congress at this writing. It can be seen at work in the treatment of demonstrators and activists opposed to the occupation of Iraq, in the re-activation of domestic surveillance programs (targeting, among others, antiwar protestors and Quaker peace groups), and in the so-called Green Scare targeting ecological and animal rights activists with the "enhanced sentencing" provisions reserved for terrorists. The trend is hardly limited to the U.S., however; in Germany in 2007, section 129a of the federal Criminal Code, a 1970s-era provision reserving exceptional powers for combating "terrorist organizations," was used to justify widespread surveillance, legal harassment, and selective detention of activists before, during and after the G-8 Summit in Heiligendamm.

And in a kind of globalized, post-Fordist refinement of the old dirty war tactic of "disappearing" those deemed enemies, state security agencies and private contractors have collaborated in building a planetary network of off-record snatch teams and "rendition" planes, bases and transit camps, and secret prisons for interrogation and torture—into which, it is now well known, not a few innocent victims have already been abducted and cast[22]. Given the well-known dubious quality of "intelligence" gained by such means, one suspects the real intent is the intimidation and terror of "enemies" and would-be enemies. If so, this aim seems ultimately doomed to failure, most fundamentally because it merely exposes the state's inability to define terror in a way that excludes the categorical priority of *state terror*. And in the long run, the need to use state terror, rather than hold it in reserve as a guarantee of sovereignty, marks a crisis of governance, a political failure to manage social contradictions becoming acute: that a global hegemon like the U.S. is re-activating the apparatus of terror and assuming all the risks of manifold "blowback" indicates, at the very least, a crisis of global hegemony.

However, the declared planetary state of emergency has had, at least in the short term, a chilling and disorienting effect on legitimate and progressive movements and struggles for social justice and systemic transformation. As the moods and anxieties created by the politics of fear blow through so-called civil society and the various public spheres, the openings for oppositional thought and action tend to constrict and sometimes, as in the U.S., abruptly slam shut. Disorientation in the face of the "war on terror" clearly was most acute in the U.S. and the wealthy core of the global North—though was not uniform even there. Confusion seems to attenuate and clarity to grow with time and distance from the nexus of power in Washington. But these national and political differences—which to a large degree are mediated reflections of global stratifications—also indicate how difficult any globalized class re-composition would be. Impressive and significant as they were, the mass protests against the impending invasion of Iraq in February 2003—in fact the largest linked demonstrations in world history—fell short of converting justified skepticism and disapproval regarding U.S. war plans into a practical systemic critique of the logic of war. However, there are signs, some of them very inspiring, that this period of disorientation is coming to an end now and that a new cycle of social struggles is gathering. Struggles over immigrant rights and the precarization of work in Europe and the U.S., indigenous struggles over land and privatization in Mexico and Bolivia, and resurgences of organized labor militancy in Argentina, Chile and elsewhere[23] all indicate the persistence of class antagonism under globalized capitalism. The movement of movements clearly is far from dead; it makes analytic sense provisionally to grasp these signs as the early moves of an emergent project of class re-composition. Meanwhile, the security industries are thriving and massive resources are being poured into devising new weapons and tactics for quelling urban unrest—clear indications that the ruling classes, too, are deeply anxious about the future.

I have been pointing throughout to the ways in which capitalist modernity and the nation-state are historically entangled and remain to a great degree inseparable. Noting how far liberal-democratic forms of state are now dominated by neo-liberal economic aims and assumptions, few would doubt that in the end the bourgeois state is indeed, as Marx and Engels had it, the executive committee of the capitalist class. But it would be too crude to say no more than that. States are shot through with conflicts of interest and must respond—to some degree and on some levels at least—to shifts in the balance of social forces. So it's necessary to acknowledge that every state is also a singular force-field of antagonisms and agendas. Not every state endorses and participates in the U.S.-led "war on terror," for example, or co-operates with it to the same degree. A comprehensive analysis would need to distinguish between kinds of state formation and to take into account differences in national history, traditions of repression or democratic responsiveness, position in the global hierarchy of nation-states, the character of national economies and patterns of stratification and conflict, and so forth. It would also

need to acknowledge those areas in which state power and national sovereignty seem to be tendentially in decline.[24] Here I'm just indicating broadly and cursorily the logics shared by states in general, within a capitalist world system being contested from below in various ways.

Recent history has also confirmed that struggle and demystification are related in what Hardt and Negri call a "virtuous spiral": each makes possible and catalyzes the other.[25] The simultaneous emergence of globalizing social movements and struggles and the renewal of the systemic critique of capitalism is thus no accident. And at least this much has been gained: neo-liberalism may still be in power, but its real character today stands starkly exposed. If to begin with many of us misrecognized neo-liberalism, or were slow to see it for what it is, tending at first to accept it at the face-value of its own triumphalist self-advertisements following the collapse of bureaucratic communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, few of us can remain deceived today. The phase —if that's what it was—of soft power and market expansions and enticements that apparently used to suffice, in general, to secure global consent and hegemony just a decade or two ago, is clearly over: preservation of the current global order now depends on continuous interventions and repressive applications of state violence. This can be seen every day by anyone who bothers to look: it is the unacknowledged meaning of the "global war against terrorism." Whether consciously conceived in this way or not, permanent emergency and war and continuous military interventions clearly have a social basis and reflect a systemic logic and imperative. This being the case, all the violence held in reserve by the dominant nation-states—up to and including the new capacities to inflict practically unlimited genocide and destruction—comes back into play as active threat and terror.

In this light, the "war on terror" is at least an efficient way of generating fear and maintaining the conditions of emergency that justify in advance new applications of state terror in defense of a world system going into crisis—or which perhaps has turned permanent war and crisis into a conscious *modus operandi* and new normality. The Bush government did not declare a state of emergency in any official, juridical sense, in the way that, for example, Pervez Musharraf did in Pakistan in 2007. Bush did not proclaim the suspension of the U.S. Constitution or the rights to free speech and assembly; he did not declare martial law or a curfew. But after the atrocities of September 2001, Bush performed the speech acts of emergency, if I can put it like that, famously activating the friend-enemy distinction and invoking the reasons of state and language of exception —even as he enjoined Americans to go shopping. More pertinent and telling is the fact that the laws granting expanded and exceptional powers quickly followed, with results I alluded to above. Of all the emergency laws asserted *de jure* and *de facto* by the Bush government in its prosecution of its "war on terror," the most damaging to the rule of law itself is the restriction on habeas corpus, the right of those detained to be formally charged with a crime or else speedily set free. With the new category of "unlawful enemy combatants," allegedly beyond the protection of the Geneva Conventions, there is a lapse back to arbitrary power, preventative detentions, secret evidence and legal limbo; the reprehensible return of torture aside, those who are not allowed to face their accusers or challenge their detention and treatment before an impartial judge are simply denied the conditions of liberal justice.

These moves directed at the external enemy are accompanied by real shows of force in the "homeland" itself—the soldiers and automatic weapons at airports and the tanks parked on corners from time to time, as it were; fear is worked deeply into the substance and pores of everyday life. And the special danger is that with such a schizophrenic normalization of emergency—Be afraid! But go shopping!—it is difficult to see how this situation can be brought to an end short of massive pressure from below. So far, the established liberal checks and balances have been ineffectual. The U.S. judiciary is not immune to the politics of fear, and Democratic politicians have yet to risk offering any serious or fundamental challenge to the new ideology of "homeland security." At this writing, the emergency laws remain in place, and are even still expanding, and any new attack by al-Qaeda or its imitators will very probably trigger a torrent of new ones. In any case, it has long been public knowledge that it was the strategic calculation of the militarists of the "full spectrum dominance" school that the U.S. has a better chance of maintaining its top position against rival nation-states and emerging blocs in a situation of generalized fear and terror and continuous emergency than in one characterized by a relative absence of war, in which democratic aspirations from below could hope and work for their global realization.[26] The unspoken assumption —impeccably capitalist after all—is that the aspirations of the global majority will not coincide with U.S. national interests. (Of course they won't.) It is the attempt to understand this new situation in terms of a logic of systemic enforcement that I admire about Retort's analysis, in *Afflicted Powers*, of what they call "military neo-liberalism" and the functions of failed states and weak citizenship.[27]

And to bring this right up to date, I would argue that global climate change, rogue storms and tsunamis, and all the other extreme "weather events" and ecological disasters now looming over the horizon hardly change this inescapability of the social. For if these new disasters are the result of cumulative human impacts, then they don't represent any simple return of the old first nature. They would be the product of a dialectic between first and second nature: in short a *third nature*. The cumulative human impacts that shape and transform

this third, socialized nature would be nothing other than cumulative *capitalist impacts.* Capital, we know, sees the natural environment and ecological base merely as factors to be dominated and exploited—objects for commodification and sources of raw materials for the production of (the production of) commodities. Here as elsewhere, instrumentalizing rationality runs amok and reverses into irrationality. Ultimately—and this is also well known—there are absolute limits, on a finite planet, to an economic system set up for and requiring infinite growth. Who can be surprised if these limits do not sooner or later come into play? Long ago, Max Horkheimer insisted that anyone who wants to talk about fascism had better be ready to talk about capitalism.[28] Today, if we want to talk about climate change or, indeed, the sublime, we'd better be ready to talk about capitalism and the urgent problem of finding a passage beyond it.

Reinventing Revolution

From these critical propositions I draw three conclusions:

(1) Unlike the sublime terror of first or raw, unmediated nature, that of second nature is *social in origin* and should in theory bear the openings for a *social solution.* It should be possible after all to de-reify and reorganize social relations in such a way that these capacities for terror and violence are socially contained. However, since these capacities are the products of capitalist modernity and its relentless logics, they cannot be durably contained without altering those logics themselves. In other words, only system change—only social transformation based on a non-capitalist logic: in short, a *revolutionary process*—could get us out of this vicious circle.

Undeniably, the history of anti-capitalist revolution has so far been one of terrible defeat. This is not to be denied or glibly dismissed. The doubts and fundamental uncertainties about the direction of history after Auschwitz and Hiroshima also have implications for the revolutionary expectations and orientations of radical politics. An irreducible ambiguity now surrounds the dialectical motif of the qualitative historical "event." For, it has now been shown that not only the "good" qualitative events of revolution are possible; events have already taken place that are so "bad" and counter-progressive as to be utterly irredeemable. Not just the myths of automatic progress that inform capitalist ideology are called into question, then, but also the versions of these myths that were reproduced within orthodox Marxism-Leninism. Long before the eventual collapse of the "East bloc," leftist critique of so-called communist societies had established how far these "revolutions" had gone disastrously wrong. However, the caution that is certainly now justified risks passing over into resignation, practical paralysis, and that subjective posture Walter Benjamin in another context named "left-wing melancholy."[29] And yet the blockages and impasses of traditional revolutionary theory and practice—the problems of state power and bureaucracy, and of agency and organizational form, and the dilemma of revolutionary violence, to name a few—remain burning urgencies and, like it or not, still mark the current limit of social progress.[30]

In the twentieth century, humanity made a qualitative leap in the "progress toward hell," as Adorno bitterly put it.[31] Capitalism itself cannot stop this undesired regress, for it continues to be the result of a rigorous law of profit—the law, as it were, of *capitalist selection.* No mere techno-fix will help us here; imagining that the market can address or manage global climate change, for example, would merely be one more failure of the imagination. The market doesn't think in terms of its own long-term conditions of possibility; its calculations, under the relentless pressure of globalized competition, must be based on short-term profit. The constraints of this imperative only intensify: capitalist entities that concede any short term advantages to competitors are not likely to be around for the long term, and this is well understood. Other goals and values would have to come from outside capitalist logic, which today dominates the parties and forms of liberal democracy and effectively blocks the political channels that functioned more openly in the previous centuries. Nor is it merely a matter of checking this contemporary phase of aggressive class war we call neo-liberalism—however especially urgent that task is today. If there is a way out for us, it can only be through a passage to a different social logic and order: a system of human relations not based on domination and exploitation. "Capitalism," Walter Benjamin warned us, "will not die a natural death"—though it may deliver us up to common ruin.[32] And so we're thrown back on the need to reinvent revolution: that is, to work collectively and carefully on those blockages and strategic impasses holding back the revolutionary process. And Benjamin has left us a startling metaphor for thinking about this: revolution as a way of pulling the emergency break on a runaway train.[33]

(2) Ultimately, the real terror is the threat that system change is no longer possible—the threat that there is no way out of this *capitalist thing*, this race to the bottom. This is of course a claim, not a certain fact: it's the threatening claim of established power that history has ended, having realized itself in the current status quo. "There is no alternative," as Margaret Thatcher pompously put it: capitalism and the nation-state are all there is or ever will be. This is of course a claim, not a certain fact. The fact is, we don't know—and can't know in advance—whether or not a system change to something better than capitalism is possible. But this absolute insistence that it isn't, this proclamation made with all the power of the state and the relational nexus of second nature behind it, I think may be the most threatening terror of all, a paralyzing terror that robs us at once of

history and a future. History has ended, there is nothing else than this—this systemic given. "Therefore, resistance is futile." This is indeed the terrifying, sublime, spectacular message continuously repeated by the voice of power as such today. And if you do resist, we can deem you an enemy—and here's what we do to them...

(3) As far as the power of art to respond to this predicament goes, we had better abandon all illusions before entering through the gallery gates. Not to say, abandon all hope, however. The promise of art to improve us and raise us out of barbarism was always overblown. Adorno in any case insisted that Auschwitz was the end of any such claims for the power of culture; not even art's "right to exist" can be taken for granted today.[34] Adorno, of course, circled the wagons around the remnant autonomy of the modernist artwork. I have argued elsewhere that this kind of retreat—a familiar enough symptom of "left-wing melancholy"—is an abandonment of the socially revolutionary impulses of the artistic avant-gardes.[35] The cultural avant-gardes can contribute to keeping a revolutionary process alive and moving—not by making artworks as much as by inventively supporting and participating in anti-capitalist social movements and struggles. The Situationist International in the 1950s and 60s and certain tactical media groups, such as the Yes Men, Electronic Disturbance Theater, the Überflüssigen and the Grupo de Arte Callejero, today would be exemplary of the cultural avant-garde I am thinking of. (And I trust it goes without saying that what is meant here are the progressive and internationalist forms of anti-capitalism still more or less associated with the political left, and not the virulently regressive forms of reaction of which al-Qaeda is a current exemplar.)

But even within the paradigm of the institutionalized and administered bourgeois artwork, Adorno's call for a sublime art of *negative presentation* on the model of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* is a gambit whose time is past. The history of negative presentation as a visual strategy for evoking and obliquely representing historical trauma begins with Yves Klein and Arman and reaches a peak around 1985, a year that saw the realization of Joseph Beuys's felt environment *Plight* and Claude Lanzmann's negative documentary *Shoa*. By the mid-1990s at the latest, negative strategies of sublimity and indirection had become the dominant mode of institutionalized memorial art. Think of what it means, for example, that Daniel Liebeskind's design was selected for a memorial structure on the former site of the World Trade Center in Manhattan. Once they have become dominant modes of art-making and official remembrance, then even by their own logic negative strategies begin to lose their capacity to deliver sublime hits capable of jolting spectators into critical reflection and social and political wakefulness. Where spectators are conditioned to expect it, no hit is possible, and the negative way begins it slow slide into convention and formula. Again, the example of Liebeskind for me confirms this.

Moreover, we have to acknowledge that the dialectic of public remembering and forgetting has to a very large extent been instrumentalized by power today. No memorial art that merely looks back to past disasters, genocidal or otherwise, without vividly linking them to the wars, atrocities, occupations and seizures unfolding continuously around us can be of much help. Mourning as a retrospective posture is merely an arrested process of enlightenment and emancipation. Where it is not arrested, the processing of genocidal trauma digs all the way down to the social basis and merges with the revolutionary process itself. In political terms, as I've argued at length elsewhere, what is needed is a radicalized conception of mourning.[36] In short, the argument is this: violence is always traumatic; and everything that belongs to the critical processing of trauma is, in psychoanalytic terms, mourning. Mourning, however, cannot end so long as violence persists; and violence persists so long as it is installed in the dominant social logic. That is the problem toward which all real mourning sooner or later must orient itself and work.

At the level of representation, there certainly are counter-images to the images of state terror. As markers of a finally unrepresentable excess of trauma, such counter-images can be understood by means of a historicized notion of the sublime. The leaked images of Abu Ghraib are in this sense an answer to the officially disseminated images of the "shock and awe" night bombardment of Baghdad. This kind of image war is real enough: counter-images can produce real material effects and, as Retort has suggested, can initiate at least momentary shifts in the balance of forces.[37] And what Benjamin called "dialectical images" can generate energies for reigniting the social struggles we inherit as the unpaid debts of history.[38] But I doubt that art is any longer the privileged site for the production and circulation of such imagery. To be sure, the art system is one place where it can be introduced and circulated, and in the present situation the more sites and counter-images the better. But the Internet would seem to be a far more important global medium for this today. Think of the role of YouTube in now routinely disseminating video documentation of police brutality, the use of Tasers against students on university campuses, and so forth, as well as new amateur critical productions that easily could pass as art. It's not my intention to discourage artists from critical interventions in the galleries and art institutions—again, the more the better from those who are going to work in these places, and defending the remnants of artistic autonomy is much preferable to resignation and disengagement. I'm only insisting that the decisive moves must be elsewhere. The fact is that art—even the most critical forms possible within institutions today—cannot in itself be the solution to our problem. What we need is to *generalize* autonomy and gain collective control over social relations and processes in the

economy, where the logics of exploitation and domination are continuously generated materially, and this can't be done within a differentiated sphere of relative autonomy that is only a subordinated part of a social totality. For this reason, the most effective forms of anti-capitalist art and culture will likely emerge not in the "art world," but in the openings created beyond the art institutions by social movements and struggles.[39]

In the end, only a global passage beyond capitalist social relations—only the real social rupture of a "good" qualitative event—can break this pattern of terror. That, it seems to me, is where the problem lies and where energies need to go. There, in other words, is where critical and affective pressure for a collective leap needs to build up and be lived as an urgency. Work that focuses—or re-focuses—us on these historical impasses and blockages is to my mind helpful and responsible. Nor, needless to say, will these blockages be overcome by theory or critical reflection alone; they will be solved, if they are at all, by still unforeseeable leaps and practical inventions made collectively in new cycles of social struggle. And this very perilous passage would need to avoid the temptations to regressive nationalism and mutations of fascism activated and mobilized by the security-surveillance state and its politics of fear. These are in any case the very tough problems that we—we latecomers, objects of capital, potential subjects of struggle and a history beyond capitalism—inherit without wanting to. In the end, this is merely to say that terror will remain a central part of our reality unless and until we break its hold over us.

Notes

1. This essay began as a talk given in London in October 2007, at "The Sublime Now," a symposium on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* co-organized by Tate Britain, Middlesex University and the London Consortium, and was first published in Seamus Kealy, ed., *Signals in the Dark: Art in the Shadow of War* (Toronto: University of Toronto/Blackwood Gallery). The text was developed further and presented to the MFA program in public art at Bauhaus University, Weimar, in December 2007. I'm grateful for the valuable questions and comments on these occasions, which are substantially reflected in the present essay; I also thank Iain Boal, Gerald Raunig and Luke White for their friendly and critical responses.
2. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 54, my italics.
3. In what Kant calls the "mathematically sublime," the imagination, confronted by the magnitude of nature, strives toward an idea of infinity that is beyond its capacity; in the "dynamically sublime," observation of the might of nature leads the imagination to grasp the physical impotence of the natural human body. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* [1790/3], trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), pp. 106, 120-1.
4. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, pp. 36-7.
5. Edgar Allan Poe, "A Descent into the Maelström," in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1993), p. 50.
6. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 98.
7. The debates over such numbers don't interest me. It wouldn't change my arguments or conclusions at all, if someone established beyond doubt that the true number was, say, 40 million, rather than 50, 60 or 70 million. The point is that from any humanistic or progressive perspective whatsoever, all these numbers are staggeringly incomprehensible and utterly unacceptable. Those interested will find a decent introductory discussion of estimates, with citations, at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II_casualties>.
8. For a fuller account of this tradition and my work on it, see my *Terror and the Sublime in Art and Critical Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), of which this section is largely a summary.
9. I'm following Adorno here in his critical appropriation of Émile Durkheim's notion of "*fait social*." For Adorno's dialectical approach to sociology, social facts or appearances are ciphers of social essences, or the relational nexus that mediates between individuals and holds them together in historical formations. Social facts thus manifest and confirm that "the concept of society, although not a fact, is nevertheless something extremely real." Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to Sociology*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 50.
10. See Kant, Critique of Judgment, pp. 106 and 121.
11. This leads Kant to insist that, strictly speaking, the sublime is an attribute, not of nature or any artefact, but of the *feeling* that accompanies the mind *in its own movements of self-reflexivity*. Ibid., p. 123.
12. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* [1966], trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1995), pp. 361-5.
13. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* [1922], trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) and *The Concept of the Political* [1932], trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 27-45. On the state's *Gewaltmonopol*, or monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within a territory, see Max Weber's "Politics as Vocation" [1919] in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 77-128.
14. I'm thinking especially of Ralf Dahrendorf's *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), a revision in English of a work first published in German two years earlier. Here I can only indicate passingly what is at stake, even methodologically, in the problem of class decomposition. Dahrendorf points to the processes tending toward the decomposition of both labor and capital. Offering a competent enough "completion" of Marx's unfinished chapter on classes from *Capital*, vol. III, Dahrendorf analyzes the linkage between ownership and control in Marx's account of bourgeois property relations in the sphere of production. Drawing the implications of the rise of joint-stock companies, in which ownership and control are de-linked, he proposes the term "industrial society" and argues that the capitalist form of industrial society of Marx's time has developed in ways that can be called "post-capitalist." These terms were drawn into the famous *Positivismusstreit* in postwar German sociology. While Adorno advocated the Frankfurt School's Marxist-oriented dialectical approach against the anti-philosophical and liberal-accommodationist tendencies of empirically oriented or "positivist" sociology, Dahrendorf (who in 1967 was elected to succeed Adorno as chairman of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, or DGS) belonged to the opposing side. In characterizing contemporary society, the Frankfurt theorists argued for the category "late capitalism." The theme of the 1968 conference of the DGS was accordingly "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?" For Adorno's perspectives on these problems see his *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. G. Adey and D. Frisby (London, 1976) and *Introduction to Sociology*, pp. 66-8. Finally, it's necessary to point to how crucial these problems of class decomposition and possible re-composition will be for Italian *Operaist* Marxism and how far they remain central to the "post-Operaist" analyses of Italian "autonomist Marxists" such as Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno. See for example Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004) and Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito and Andrea Casson (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2004). On the Italian context, see Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto, 2002).
15. It is especially in this regard that Dahrendorf's 1959 study today reads as dated and problematic, to say nothing of his trajectory and positions since then. Recent decades have refuted the implicit assumption that social rights, once asserted and institutionalized, cannot be retracted—with all that this implies for the processes of social integration.
16. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, quoted in Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 15.
17. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms* [1955], trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), p. 25.

18. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 362.
19. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 98.
20. This would be one way to acknowledge the operaist insights of Antonio Negri and others regarding the *primacy of struggle*, without however giving up Marx's law of value as an account of exploitation. For an excellent orienting discussion of these issues, see Ben Trott, "Immaterial Labour and World Order: An Evaluation of a Thesis," in *Ephemera*, vol. 7, no. 1, Special Issue on Immaterial and Affective Labour, pp. 203-32.
21. See note 14, above.
22. The existence of a U.S.-run, globally-dispersed network of so-called "black sites" was at first denied, but finally officially admitted by the U.S. president on September 6, 2006, after vigilant citizens and journalists had uncovered "rendition aircraft" registered to CIA front companies and tracked their movements to airports in Romania, Poland, Morocco and Guantánamo Bay. While the U.S. administration defends its use of "extra-ordinary rendition," "ghost detainees," and "enhanced interrogation techniques"—all these extraordinary euphemisms betray a systematic attempt at obfuscation—it has been reticent and obstructionist with regard to specific sites or individual detainees. While the U.S. government bears the primary responsibility for this network for "torture by proxy," it is obviously a collaborative, transnational joint venture in which the security agencies of many states function de facto as sub-contractors, alongside private sector firms providing the needed logistics and support services. A 2007 report published jointly by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Center for Constitutional Rights and three other human rights NGOs concludes that at least 39 people held in secret CIA detention centers remain "disappeared." Among the known victims of this network are Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr (an Egyptian cleric granted asylum by Italy who was abducted by a CIA snatch team in Milan in 2003 and "rendered" to Egypt, where he was held and tortured before being released in 2007) and Marwan Jabour (a Palestinian arrested in Pakistan in 2004 and flown to a CIA "black site" in Afghanistan, where he was tortured during a two-year detention). Similar and now well-publicized cases include those of Maher Arar (an engineer of Canadian-Syrian citizenship detained in New York in 2002 and deported to Syria, where he was held and tortured for nearly a year) and Khalid El Masri (a German citizen detained in Macedonia in 2003 and flown to a CIA site in Afghanistan, where he was held and tortured for several months). See *Off the Record: U.S. Responsibility for Enforced Disappearances in the "War on Terror"* (Amnesty International, et al., June, 2007); *Ghost Prisoner: Two Years in Secret CIA Detention* (Human Rights Watch, February, 2007);
and Dick Marty's 22 January 2006 "Memorandum on Alleged Secret Detentions" prepared for the Council of Europe Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights.
23. The scale and success of strikes and struggles in the mining, timber and garbage collection sectors in Chile in 2006 and 2007 may be especially significant. These struggles against the power of multinationals spread to the employees of subcontractors and broke legislative prohibitions on industry-wide labor negotiations. One analyst notes: "It should be emphasized that all these movements are technically illegal, and the first major strikes in industries where a significant part of the workforce is atomized between hundreds of sub- contractors, creating exhausting and underpaid jobs with very few labor-rights, short-term and highly precarious—the position with most jobs in Chile today." Manuel Riesco, "Is Pinochet Dead?" in *New Left Review* 47 (September/October 2007), pp. 7-8.
24. The case for giving these tendencies centrality in contemporary analysis is put forward by Hardt and Negri in *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000) and *Multitude*, and by Virno in *Grammar of the Multitude*.
25. In Hardt and Negri's idiom, this becomes the "expanding, virtuous spiral" of the multitude and "the common." The latter is both the basis of co-operation and collective action and its *result*. See *Multitude*, p. 350.
26. I'm thinking of The Project for the New American Century, the neoconservative think tank whose members developed the militarist strategies that they later attempted to realize as empowered officials in the administration of George W. Bush.
27. Retort (Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, and Michael Watts), *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London: Verso, 2005). Warm thanks to Iain Boal for his stimulating reflections and provocations in the "House of Tate."
28. Max Horkheimer, "The Jews and Europe" [1939], in Stephen Bronner and Douglas Kellner, eds., *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 77.
29. Walter Benjamin, "Left-Wing Melancholy," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1927-1934, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, and trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 423-7.
30. By "revolutionary process," I mean the struggle-driven movement to supersede capitalist social relations—to imagine collectively and realize practically and materially a society based on non-exclusive collective self-realization, mutual support, care and cooperation rather than exploitation and domination. Today it is not self-evident that revolution in this sense must aim at a direct and decisive combat with the state or must be led by a party organized along Marxist-Leninist lines. Nor is it self-evident that a socialist state and command economy must be seen as the exemplary determinate negation of capitalism; it is certain, however, that the twentieth-century regimes of "really existing socialism" did not abolish class society or supersede relations of domination and exploitation. All this is to say that revolution is an inherited *problem* whose solution will require leaps of collective imagination going beyond past defeats and traditional revolutionary theory and practice. But this problem consists of concrete strategic blockages and dilemmas, and focusing and working on them—and linking them to the experiences of active social struggles—is the condition for keeping the revolutionary process alive and moving.
31. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* [1951], trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), p. 134.
32. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 667.
33. Benjamin, "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History'," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938-1940, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, and trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 402.
34. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* [1970], trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 1; and *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 365-8.
35. See my "Critical Theory and Critical Art Theory," *Links.net.de*, July 2007, online at <http://www.linksnet.de/artikel.php?id=3147>; and "Avant-Gardes as Anti-Capitalist Vector," *Third Text* 86, vol. 22, no. 3: 241-55.
36. This is the major contention of my *Terror and the Sublime in Art and Critical Theory*. For a recapitulation of the thesis, as well as further exposition of the history of negative presentation in the visual arts after 1945, see my "Mourning and Cosmopolitics: With and Beyond Beuys," forthcoming in Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, ed., *Beuysian Legacies: Art, Culture and Politics in Ireland, Europe and the U.S.* (Berlin: LIT).
37. See Retort, "All Quiet on the Eastern Front," *New Left Review* 41 (September/October 2006), pp. 88-91; and my "Revolution in the Post-Fordist Revolution?: Notes on the Internet as a Weapon of the Multitude," *Third Text* 84, vol. 21, no. 1: 1-8.
38. See Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, pp. 390-1; and Arcades Project, pp. 463-4.
39. Or possibly, as Gerald Raunig suggests, as "concatenations" that cut across these separated zones to organize new "revolutionary machines." See his *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2007).

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