

# TODAY



Anna Galkina, *Forests*, collage, 2011 - Courtesy of the artist

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## THE WINTER WAR

*Saint Augustine claimed that evil is just the lack of good. How else could we describe nature, the bottomless pit of the universe, the deserts of Saturn, the solar tempests, the carelessness of the weather? Humans, insects, birds, grass, fish, all living creatures are together in the struggle against evil. They are the rebels, doomed to a perennial fight. They are the resistance, because they are alive.*

In medieval times, all wars stopped with the arrival of the winter winds. Before the imperialism of centrally heated offices, people used to be subjected to the evilness of nature more than to that of their fellow men. In that horrifically wise age, humans like us used to relegate the vanity of war to times of luxury, when the loss of one's life or freedom could at least have been mitigated by the gentle warmth of the evening and the abundance of raspberries even at the edge of a serf's field.

Now war expands to the darkest hours of January, when not even leaves dare to unfurl. War: the capital double-u like the cross of martyrdom of Saint Andrew, the final 'ar' like a scream softened by agony. Ages pass, martyrdoms take different names. So, it is Work today. The same cross, hiding the final sound of an Ogre, inhumanely muscular, insatiably hungry. On that cross the monster hangs his prey, cures them, lets them dry. And as their skin hardens like the leather of an executive chair, as their neurons take the square shape of silicon, he finally sinks his teeth into their flesh.

I propose to follow the wisdom of the ancient warlords and their bands of armed peasants. Let us stop Work as the winter approaches. The lustful anchors of sleep that keep us in bed at the sound of our alarms are the last shades of life hiding under the frozen crust of an employee's life. What fools we are to ignore their subtle warning, the messages of sleeping foxes in the patches of sun, the threats of dark clouds. We shall declare the North the bed of the world, where our life shall be spent in a perennial dream.

Capitalism is a dream, too, but far too tiring for our fragile bodies. Better is the caress of whiskey on a soft mattress, as it tells us to wait, to wait for the longer days, when all the monkeys like us will awake to war.

Governments shall declare the months from November to March as seasonal retirements for all people, paid for by the summer frenzy. Strolls in the cold shall not be mixed with the freezing sweat of rushing for a commuter train, the warmth of one's breath shall not breed with the stable's atmosphere of the tube.

We shall learn the art of striking from our fellow creatures, as they withdraw from the murderous cycles of nature. Only snow leopards, arctic foxes and employees share the idiotic desire to camouflage themselves with the white death of the sunless season.

If we do not spend the winter dreaming, what dreams are we to realize on the burning stage of summer?

Abolishing work simply means to withdraw the ungrounded trust we put in our ability to fight the carelessness of nature. Everything is nature, except living things! Icy fogs tighten our throats, as the frozen soil strangles the roots of a tree. November rains cover us like the shipwreck flood that drowns sailing mice. With our fellow victims, we share the struggle

for a ray of tepid light, in the abyss of a forgetful universe, in which no trace of us is ever left but the mark of joy of one's present.

Winter is the dress rehearsal of the afterlife. We ghost on through it, palely undead, denying our destiny. We shall learn from it the objectiveness of atheism and the urgency of liberation. Let us practice dreaming in our counted seasons, so that we will meet our final winter fully ready. Able, may be, to dream forever. Of us shall remain only what we are.

## FLY THE STATE, DON'T SEIZE IT!

### - A response to the idea of 'citizen politicians' in UK government -

Andreas Whittam-Smith [recently wrote about the possibility of 'a group of like-minded citizens running for election for one term only'](#) in order to bring about the requisite change that is patently needed within British politics and which, it seems increasingly clear, is not forthcoming from career politicians within the bowels of the palace of Westminster. His proposal, therefore, was one in which a better group of persons would in part replace the current cohort, as inept and frequently corrupt as they seem to be. This would be in the hope that improved personnel might be more effective 'problem-solvers' while also mediating a crisis of confidence in our democratic institutions which are, we are often told, of central importance in British public life and whose redemption is seemingly necessary.

As was the case with Guy Aitchison's response to the piece I am certainly sympathetic with the basic proposal and it is clear that, as Guy writes, '*...the British elite stand politically, morally and ideologically bankrupt*'. This is a basic point. Those contributing within the piece, myself and vast swathes of the British population share a common ground – that something has to change. This is an increasingly evident point, but also a basic premise upon which meaningful social and political change can and might be built. The institutions which govern, rule and represent us are failing at every turn.

The idea of a virtuous citizen(ry) intervening and resolving a political crisis is nothing new. As Guy Aitchison points out, in Republican Rome the 'Dictator' was given extraordinary power to lead the republic for six month terms during periods of crisis. According to the historian Livy it is the humble Cincinnatus, a farmer from Hispania who is called on to lay down his tools and lead Roman forces on the Italian peninsula during the Second Punic War.

As well as the honourable citizen redeeming the body politic, another trope frequently alluded to during times of crisis is that the system, no matter how evidently degenerate, is not to be blamed for its structural failings. Instead it is those individuals ensconced within it that are morally suspect and ultimately culpable. It is a greedy and avaricious minority, acting from private vice rather than the destructive principles of the system, that are to be condemned. This is an evident inclination in how the media popularly portray the 'individual, moral failings' of Fred Goodwin at RBS, Alan Greenspan at the Federal Reserve and 'greedy bankers' more generally. Such a position is also tacitly implicit within Andreas' proposal.

I would respectfully disagree however that those involved in anti-austerity struggles, which have only just begun within the context of a pronounced and intensified period of attack after May 2010, should see election to the House of Commons as a suitable conduit for aspirations for social change. After all, we have seen with Blair in 1997 and now Nick Clegg in 2010 that even those holders of public office who seem to all intents a better 'sort' to their parliamentary contemporaries almost inevitably disappoint those who put faith in them.

Barack Obama is a prime example of an elected representative who failed to deliver on promises made when seeking election. Since charisma alone cannot overcome the inertia

of the American political establishment, the only solution is to change that establishment rather than perennially investing misplaced hope on yet another 'candidate for change'.

### **No to Westminster, or why we Don't Need a British Nestor Kirchner**

We have also seen how movements very similar to those we now see in Europe and the US behaved in Latin America during their own debt crisis amid the genesis of the alter-globalisation movement. One particular group within those struggles, *Collectivo Situaciones* wrote several years after the crisis had somewhat ebbed;

*“At long last we have learned that power – the state, understood as a privileged locus of change – is not the site, par excellence, of the political. As Spinoza stated long ago, such power is the place of sadness and of the most absolute impotence... emancipatory thought does not look to seize the state apparatus in order to implement change; rather, it looks to flee those sites, to renounce instituting any centre or centrality.”*

But what do such words mean and what is their relationship to the demands of those new movements which seem, for now at least, to be beyond the parameters of centre-left political parties. What do such words mean in relation to 'Real Democracy Now' and 'Occupy Everywhere' movements and how they engage with the 'legitimate' political process in Washington, Whitehall and Madrid?

The relationship is this. The new movements, based as they are on direct action and direct democracy and with a proclivity to regard themselves as creating spaces within which one can re-imagine social relations and even 'politics' itself, seem almost in direct opposition to institutional actors as they are currently constituted. This includes those actors within the political establishment, the economy and the media.

In contrast to the sentiments of Andreas I would advise the new movements to view themselves in opposition to existing institutions. Such institutions are systems that, as many well-meaning individuals (such as Barack Obama and perhaps even Nick Clegg) have shown, change participants within them well before they themselves are changed. Furthermore, to pursue the route of legislating at the national level within the current system is insufficient for two reasons. First of all the nation state is no longer the primary locus of political or economic endeavour. Secondly, one should not see 'politics' as a realm that is detached from 'economics' and in control of it. Indeed social management within the 'Network Society', for better or worse, simply does not work like that. Politics no longer exercises oversight over the economy and civil society. After all we now have the IMF, the EU, bond markets, the WTO, trade agreements imposed on us which have implications for public services (such as GATS) but which have been negotiated by the European Commission. Simply put, Westminster is not the locus of political change or management of the economy. Not unless there are immense changes and pressures, both from above and below. As Manuel Castells wrote well before the Great Recession of 2008;

*“The nation-state, defining the domain, procedures, and object of citizenship, has lost much of its sovereignty, undermined by the dynamics of global flows and trans-organizational networks of wealth, information, and power. Particularly critical for its legitimacy crisis is the state's decreasing ability to fulfil its commitments as a welfare state because of the integration of production and consumption in a globally interdependent system, and the related process of capitalist restructuring...to the crisis of legitimacy of the*

*nation-state we must add the crisis of credibility of the political system, based on open competition between political parties. Captured in the media arena, reduced to personalized leadership, dependent on technologically sophisticated manipulation, pushed into unlawful financing, driven by and toward scandal politics, the party system has lost its appeal and trustworthiness, and, for all practical purposes, is a bureaucratic remainder deprived of public confidence."*

These two basic points – the end of the nation-state as an effective mediator of citizens interests within a globalised, network society and the demise of the parliamentary party as popular conduit for democratically backed social change and intervention in the economy allude to why the new movements – in my opinion rightfully so – choose to not engage with parliamentary parties or participate within the existing political apparatus. From such institutions they often demand nothing and instead base their politics on real, direct democracy. Both sides of this culture, not making demands and 'instead re-conceiving our own political agency are neatly summed up in a statement written by local activists specifically aimed at 'Occupy Baltimore':

*"We're not asking for better wages or a lower interest rate. We're not even asking for the full abolition of capital, because we know that whatever's next will be something we make, not something we ask for."*

The context of the new movements is the end of globalisation 2.0 and an emergent global culture built on ubiquitous and distributed digital networks. These new networks catalyse an information abundance that leaves institutions such as representative parliaments (as well as retail stores) that were created within a context of previous information scarcity increasingly anachronistic. It is clear that there is a need for new institutions to match new cultural realities. This would include an appreciation of personal identity over the imposition of social homogeneity, new and more complex understanding of emancipation - replacing the idea of liberty as the antithesis of equality - a recognition of the 'limits of growth' and of course the need for ecological sustainability.

While I would never castigate anyone who attempted to work within institutions as they stand, within the current context such endeavours seem futile. These will, inevitably, be the last systems to recognize the necessity of change – this would after all, require them to abolish themselves. Better, surely, to renounce those sites and build our own cultures, tools and systems for sustaining ourselves - from housing to education and childcare. Such a task seems utterly necessary - the good ideas about how we live after the crisis and possibly, the 'end of growth' - from urban farming to localised, open source manufacture will not be coming from Westminster. For such exciting movements and individuals to allocate their energy exclusively there would be a tragedy indeed.

After 2008 we now know another world is possible. The task then is to create the tools and culture(s) to bring that world about – while this may occasionally involve the input of existing institutional actors, in the main it will not.

## **THE RIGHT TO INSOLVENCY AND THE DISENTANGLEMENT OF THE GENERAL INTELLECT'S POTENCY**

### **Austerity in Europe**

"The German worker does not want to pay the Greek fisherman's bills," the fanatics of economic fundamentalism are saying, while pitting workers against workers and leading Europe to the brink of civil war.

The entity that is "Europe" was conceived in the aftermath of the Second World War as a project to overcome modern nationalism and create a non-identitarian union based on principles of humanism, enlightenment, and social justice. What is left of this original project, after the recent financial collapse that has stormed the American economy and jeopardized the Eurozone? Since the beginning of the European Union, the constitutional profile of the European entity has been weakly defined, such that economic goals of prosperity and monetarist financial constraints have taken the place of a constitution. In the 1990s, the Maastricht Treaty marked a turning point in this process. It sanctioned the constitutionalization of monetarist rule and its economic implications: a decrease in social spending, cuts in labor costs and an increase in competition and productivity. The effects of a narrow application of the Maastricht rules became evident in 2010: overwhelming Greece and Ireland and endangering other countries, the financial crisis exposed the contradictions between the desires for economic growth, social stability, and monetarist rigidity. In this situation, the Maastricht rules have been shown to be dangerous, and the overall conception of the EU, based on the centrality of economic competition, has revealed its frailty.

If we are to compete with emerging economies where labor costs are lower than those in Europe, we must lower European wages. To compete with economies where the working day never ends and where labor conditions are unregulated - with poor safety, crippling shifts, and lack of job security - we must abolish the limits on the working week, make overtime mandatory and renounce safety at work in Europe, too. Thus the evolution of capitalism requires not only the abrogation of the principles that derive from socialism, but also the revocation of the Enlightenment tradition and the humanist legacy, up to and including the abolition of democracy, if this word still means anything.

Is this the Europe we want? Is this the image of itself that Europe has decided to accede to? Obviously, we are not dealing here with principles but with power relations. In the last few years, the financial class, a now dominant group in the world's economic government, has used globalizing technical powers to enormously augment the wealth that ends up in the pockets of a minority in the form of profit and financial rent. The working class and polymorphous cognitive labor could not resist the attack that followed globalization. This uneven wealth distribution is in conflict with the possibility of a further development of capitalism: the reduction of the global wage is bound to cause a decrease in demand. The result is an impoverishment that makes society more fragile and aggressive, and a deflation that makes it impossible to re-launch growth.

### **Financial Power and Capitalist Nihilism**



The European leading class seems unable to think in terms of the future. They are panicking and, frightened by their own impotence, trying to reaffirm and reinforce measures that have already failed.

This European collapse is exposing the agony of capitalism. The flexibility of the system is over; no margins are left. If society is to pay the debt of the banks, demand has to be reduced, and if demand is reduced growth will not follow.

Nowadays, it's difficult to see a consistent project in the frantic action of the leading class. A culture of "No future" has taken hold of the capitalist brain. The origin of this capitalist nihilism is to be found in the effect of the deterritorialization that is inherent to global financial capitalism. The relation between capital and society is deterritorialized insofar as economic power is no longer based on the property of physical things. The bourgeoisie is dead, and the new financial class has a virtual existence: fragmented, dispersed, impersonal.

The bourgeoisie which was in control of the economic scene of modern Europe was a strongly territorialized class. Linked to material assets, it could not survive without a relationship to territory and community. The financial class which has taken the lead of the European political machine has no attachment to either territory or material production. Its power and wealth are founded on the perfect abstraction of digital finance. This digital-financial hyper-abstraction is liquidating the living body of the planet and the social body of the workers' community.

Can it last? Without consulting public opinion, the European directorate that emerged after the Greek crisis affirmed its monopoly over decisions regarding the economies of the different countries approaching default in 2011. It effectively divested parliaments of authority and replaced EU democracy with a business executive headed by the large banks. Can the BCE-FMI-EU directorate impose a system of automatisms that secures EU members' compliance with the process of public-sector wage reduction, lay-offs of a third of all teachers, and so on? This order of things cannot last indefinitely as the final collapse of the Union is the point of arrival of the spiral debt-deflation-recession-more debt that is already exposed in the Greek agony.

Society has been late to react, its collective intelligence deprived of its social body, and the social body itself completely subjugated and depressed. At the end of 2010, a wave of protests and riots exploded in the schools and universities. Now that wave is mounting everywhere. But protests, demonstrations and riots seem unable to force a change in the politics of the Union.

Let's try to understand why, and also let's try to look for a new methodology of action, and a new political strategy for the movement.

### **A Movement for the Reactivation of the Social Body**

The movement of protest has proliferated during the last year. From London to Rome, from Athens to New York, not to mention the North African precarious workers who have been part of the recent upheaval changing (for the good or the bad) the Arab world, this movement is targeting financial power and trying to oppose the effects of the financial assault on society. The problem is that pacific demonstrations and protests have not been able to change the agenda of the European Central Bank, as the national Parliaments of the European countries are hostages of the Maastricht rules, financial automatisms

working as the material constitution of the Union. Peaceful demonstrations are effective in the frame of democracy, but democracy is over as techno-financial automatisms have taken the place of political decisions.

Violence is erupting here and there. The four nights of rage in the English suburbs, as well as the violent riots of Rome and Athens, have shown the possibility for social protest to turn aggressive. But violence, too, is unfit to change the course of things. Burning a bank is totally useless, as financial power is not in the physical buildings, but in the abstract connection between numbers, algorithms, and information. Therefore, if we want forms of action able to confront the present form of power, we have to start from the consciousness that cognitive labor is the main productive force creating the techno-linguistic automatisms which enable financial speculation. Following the Wikileaks example, we must organize a long-lasting process of dismantling and rewriting the techno-linguistic automatons enslaving all of us.

In the face of the financial assault, social subjectivity seems weak and fragmented. Thirty years of precarization of labor and competition have jeopardized the very fabric of social solidarity and weakened the psychic ability to share time, goods and breath. The virtualization of social communication has eroded the empathy between human bodies.

The problem of solidarity has always been crucial in every process of struggle, and social change. Autonomy is based on the ability to share daily life and to recognize that what is good for me is good for you and what is bad for you is bad for me. Solidarity is difficult to build as labor has been turned into a sprawl of recombinant time-cells, and consequently the process of subjectivation has become fragmentary, un-empathic and frail. Solidarity has nothing to do with an altruistic self denial. In materialistic terms, solidarity is not about you; it is about me. Like love, it is not about altruism, it is about the pleasure of sharing the breath and the space of the other. Love is the ability to enjoy myself thanks to your presence, thanks to your eyes. This is solidarity. As solidarity is based on the territorial proximity of social bodies, you cannot build solidarity between fragments of time.

I think that the English riots and the Italian revolts and the Spanish *acampada* should not be seen as consequential forms of revolution, as they are unable to really hit the heart of power. They have to be understood as a form of psycho-affective re-activation of the social body. They have to be seen as an attempt to activate a living relation between the social body and the general intellect. Only when the general intellect will have been able to reconnect with the social body will we be able to start a process of real autonomization from the grip of financial capitalism.

## **Right to Insolvency**

A new concept is coming out from the fogs of the present situation: a right to insolvency. We'll not pay the debt.

The European countries have been obliged to accept the blackmail of debt, but people are refusing the concept that we have to pay for a debt that we have not taken. Anthropologist David Graeber, in his book *Debt the first 5000 years*, (Melville House, 2011), and philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato, in *La fabrique de l'homme endetté* (editions Amsterdam, 2011), have started an interesting reflection on the cultural origin of the notion of debt, and the psychic implications of the sense of guilt that the notion of debt brings in itself. And, in

his essay, *Recurring Dreams The Red Heart of Fascism*, the Anglo-Italian young thinker Federico Campagna locates the analogy between the post Versailles Congress years and the present in the debt-obsession:

*“Last time, it took him decades to be born. First it was the war, and then, once it was over, it was debt, and all the ties that came with it. It was the time of industrialization, the time of modernity, and everything came in a mass scale. Mass impoverishment, mass unemployment, hyper-inflation, hyper-populism. Nations were cracking under the weight of what Marxists used to call 'contradictions', while capitalists were clinging to the brim of their top-hats, all waiting for the sky to fall to earth. And when it fell, they threw themselves down after it, in the dozens, down from their skyscrapers and their office blocks. The air became electric, squares filled up, trees turned into banners and batons. It was the interwar period, and in the depth of the social body, Nazism was still hidden, liquid and growing, quiet like a fetus.*

*This time, everything is happening almost exactly the same way as last time, just slightly out-of-sync, as happens with recurring dreams. Once again, the balance of power in the world is shifting. The old empire is sinking, melancholically, and new powers are rushing in the race to the top. Just like before, their athletic screams are the powerful ones of modernity. Growth! Growth! Growth! Their armies are powerful, their teeth shiny, their hopes murderous and pure. Old powers look at them in fear, listening to their incomprehensible languages like old people listen to young people's music.”*

The burden of debt is haunting the European imagination of the future, and the Union, which used to be a promise of prosperity and peace is turning into a kind of blackmail and threat.

In response the movement has launched the slogan: We'll not pay the debt. These words are deceiving at the moment, as actually we are already paying for the debt: the educational system is already de-financed, and privatized, jobs are cancelled, and so on. But these words are meant to change the social perception of the debt, creating a consciousness of its arbitrariness and moral illegitimacy.

A right to insolvency is emerging as a new keyword and a new concept loaded with philosophical implications. The concept of insolvency implies not only the refusal to pay the financial debt, but also, in a subtle way, the refusal to submit the living potency of the social forces to the formal domination of the economic code.

Reclaiming the right to insolvency implies a radical questioning of the relation between the capitalist form (Gestalt) and the concrete productive potency of social forces, particularly the potency of the general intellect. The capitalist form is not only an economic set of rules and functions; it is also the internalization of a certain set of limitations, of psychic automatism, of rules for compliance.

Try to think for a second that the whole financial semiotization of European life disappears. Try to imagine that all of a sudden we stop organizing daily life in terms of money and debt. Nothing would change in the concrete useful potentiality of society, in the contents of our knowledge, in our skills and ability to produce. We should imagine (and consequently organize) the disentanglement of the living potentiality of the general intellect from the capitalist Gestalt - intended first of all as a psychic automatism governing daily life.

Insolvency means disclaiming the economic code of capitalism as transliteration of real life, as semiotization of social potency and richness. The concrete useful productive ability

of the social body is forced to accept impoverishment in exchange for nothing. The concrete force of productive labor is submitted to the unproductive and actually destructive task of refinancing the failed financial system. If we may paradoxically cancel every mark of the financial semiotization, nothing would change in the social machinery, nothing in the intellectual ability to conceive and perform. Communism does not need to be called out from the womb of the future; it is here, in our being, in the immanent life of common knowledge.

But the present situation is paradoxical - simultaneously exciting and despairing. Capitalism has never been so close to the final collapse, but social solidarity has never been so far from our daily experience. We must start from this paradox in order to build a post-political and post-revolutionary process of disentanglement of the possible from the existent.



## EL GOBIERNO DE NADIE - una pesadilla -

*“Consideramos un gobierno tecnocrático de unidad nacional la mejor opción para llevar a cabo las reformas y mantener la confianza de los inversores, con una composición que abarque izquierda y derecha del espectro político y cuente con líderes de confianza (...) Luchando como están las democracias modernas maduras con la crisis de la deuda soberana, los gobiernos tecnocráticos, ‘apolíticos’, pueden ser una opción imperiosa, conforme decae la confianza pública en los políticos, se afianza la resistencia a las reformas estructurales y los partidos sienten pavor por las consecuencias en las urnas de aplicar reformas dolorosas” (Tina Fordham, Citigroup)*

A diario suceden mil cosas, pero ¿cómo descifrar cuáles son señales de las transformaciones que vienen? ¿Cuáles son huellas o ecos del pasado, y cuáles anuncian tendencias sociales decisivas? ¿Cómo saber cuándo hemos traspasado un umbral histórico? Me lo he preguntado estos días pensando sobre los “gobiernos técnicos” que se han impuesto en Grecia e Italia. Los veo como signos de muy mal agüero, fórmulas en experimentación que podrían luego reproducirse, rápido. Prototipos.

La verdad es que ahora mismo no me cuesta demasiado imaginar un gobierno técnico a escala europea, que se presente y justifique como única alternativa posible a un *crash* total inminente o incluso como el menos malo de los gestores posibles en caso de un desastre ya en curso (un corralito general, por ejemplo). Un gobierno “de transición”, sin políticos de por medio, compuesto enteramente por expertos y gestores *quesaben lo que hay que hacer* y no tienen miedo a llevarlo a cabo, ya sin ningún vínculo por débil que fuese con la ciudadanía (voto, etc.). ¿Pesadilla?

Grecia e Italia serían los laboratorios del futuro. El experimento no va mal. Para empezar, *se puede hacer*. Estos dos golpes de Estado bajos en calorías militares no han provocado el escándalo en la opinión pública “demócrata”. Así me lo parece al menos. Nadie ha elegido a Monti ni a Papademos. Nadie votó los programas que van a llevar a la práctica, pero los parlamentos han refrendado ambos gobiernos y en general se percibe un clima de resignación, cuando no de entusiasmo. ¿Por qué no? Si lo que hay es lo único que puede haber, pues que al menos lo gestione alguien capaz, [sin extravagancias](#) y que sepa de cuentas, ¿no?

Hannah Arendt llamaba “Gobierno de Nadie” al dominio de la burocracia y comentaba al respecto: “no es necesariamente un no gobierno, bajo ciertas circunstancias incluso puede resultar una de sus versiones más crueles y tiránicas”. ¿Por qué? Sencillamente porque “no podemos considerar responsable de lo que ocurre a nadie, no hay auténtico autor de las acciones y de los acontecimientos. Realmente es sobrecogedor”. Lo que sigue son sólo algunas intuiciones y citas que me vienen más o menos desordenadamente a la cabeza al pensar en los gobiernos técnicos de Monti-Papademos. Notas de una pesadilla.

### El Gobierno de Nadie es hijo de la crisis de la representación

*“La falta de políticos nos facilita las cosas” (Mario Monti)*

*“Papademos nunca estuvo involucrado en política. Sabe lo que hay que hacer” (Thanos Papasavvas, jefe de Investec Asset Management)*

El contexto de globalización ha hecho trizas los atributos clásicos de la soberanía del Estado-nación: fronteras, moneda, defensa, cultura, etc. Los estados se limitan cada vez más a gestionar en un territorio concreto las necesidades de la economía global. A izquierda y derecha del *espectro* parlamentario, se defienden en general los mismos intereses, las mismas ideas sobre el crecimiento y la competitividad. La permeabilidad de las instituciones a la participación ciudadana está bajo mínimos. A estas alturas todo esto son banalidades, secretos a voces. No son los anti-sistema, sino todo tipo de personas quienes se lanzan a la calle al grito de “lo llaman democracia y no lo es” y conspiran en la Red para *hackear* como pueden el sistema electoral (voto nulo, voto a los partidos minoritarios, etc.).

Los gobiernos técnicos se asimilan muy bien sobre este fondo social: rechazo masivo de la política de los políticos, inoperatividad absoluta del eje izquierda/derecha, hartazgo generalizado de la corrupción y los políticos-estrella (tipo Berlusconi), etc. Monti-Papademos anuncian gobiernos post-políticos y post-ideológicos, de pura gestión técnica. Ellos mismos sólo son máscaras como las de Anonymous, pero bajo las cuales no hay nadie de carne y hueso, sólo el poder abstracto e impersonal de los mercados financieros. No son de izquierdas o de derechas, de hecho lideran gobiernos nacionales de concentración izquierda/derecha. No son políticos, menos aún políticos-estrella, sino simples gestores, ingenieros, expertos. No están atados por fidelidades torpes a una ideología, a la gente que les votó, a su ambición personal. Aspiran a rentabilizar por su cuenta el rechazo de los políticos: son el *reverso tenebroso* de la crisis de la representación.

### **El Gobierno de Nadie, un gobierno racional**

*“Monti promete ser, en fin, un primer ministro mucho más normal y “aburrido” que Berlusconi. Pero lo que de él se espera es seriedad y eficacia. La fiesta ha terminado” (La Vanguardia)*

*“Cinco palabras definirían el programa de Monti: eficacia, urgencia, crecimiento, rigor y equidad” (Paso a paso).*

A Mario Monti le llaman *Il Proffessore*. Tanto él como Papademos sólo hablan de eficacia en la gestión. Ambos aseguran no tener ideología: simplemente ejecutarán “lo que debe hacerse”. Lo que debe ser.

Según toda una venerable tradición filosófica que va desde Platón hasta Kant, actuar “libremente” es actuar “por deber”, es decir “necesariamente”. Es la teoría platónica de un “gobierno de la filosofía”: un gobierno de las ideas universales y necesarias, lo que debe hacerse en tanto que es racional y justo, independientemente de lo que opine o desee cada quien. Es la teoría kantiana de un “agente libre”, es decir un agente que actúa “por deber”, esto es “racionalmente”. El Gobierno de Nadie se presenta como un gobierno técnico e instrumental: pura aplicación de las verdades de la ciencia económica. Un gobierno sólido, en tanto que no actúa o decide por prejuicios o intereses privados, sino “desinteresadamente”. Un gobierno eficaz donde mandan los que saben, no los que más

brillan en los medios de comunicación o los que mejor ponen la zancadilla en los pasillos del poder.

“El Gobierno de Nadie es el más tiránico de todos ya que no se puede pedir cuentas de sus actuaciones a nadie (...) es imposible localizar al responsable o identificar al enemigo” (Hannah Arendt). Quien disiente del Gobierno de Nadie no es un adversario con razones o intenciones respetables: sólo puede ser un loco o un ignorante. Porque sólo un loco o ignorante pelea contra la fuerza de la gravedad. Sería también de locos o de ignorantes pedir la opinión al pueblo sobre las políticas a ejecutar, como si la verdad de una formulación matemática pudiese elegirse por mayoría en unas elecciones. “¿Qué sabrá la gente sobre lo que le conviene?” Lo que dice la gente no puede ser más que ruido o furia. Es inútil, absurdo y altamente pernicioso escucharlo.

Por el contrario, la racionalidad del Gobierno de Nadie es la “inteligencia de lo necesario”: descifrar las leyes que rigen el mundo y actuar conforme a ellas. Pero se trata de leyes bien diferentes de las que pensaban Platón o Kant. El “imperativo categórico” de Monti-Papademos es simplemente la obediencia a las necesidades y exigencias de Goldman Sachs y los mercados financieros. Esa es hoy nuestra fuerza de la gravedad.

### **El Gobierno de Nadie como “potencia de salvación”**

*“¿Nos salvaremos? Absolutamente, sí” (Corrado Passera, súper-ministro a cargo de Desarrollo, Infraestructuras y Transportes).*

*“Vamos a la carrera” (Mario Monti)*

*“Para salvar a Italia hay que apostar por la credibilidad y la responsabilidad. Hay que ser prudentes con ir a las elecciones” (Franco Frattini, ministro de Exteriores).*

El Gobierno de Nadie es el poder que nos promete el rescate de la catástrofe. El [cometa de la crisis](#) se acerca imparable a la tierra, los medios de comunicación anuncian su inminente llegada (ibex 35, prima de riesgo, calificaciones), los ciudadanos de a pie miran boquiabiertos el cielo. Sólo un puñado de héroes decididos entienden lo que pasa y actúan en consecuencia. Seguro que no pueden salvarnos a todos, eso por descontado. Hay gente que corre muy lento. Pero quién sabe, igual a mí sí, confiamos...

El poder de salvación ya no se justifica en nombre de tales o cuales valores (democracia, etc.), sino de nuestra pura y simple supervivencia como especie. *Poder pastoral* que vela y garantiza nuestra conservación como rebaño. *Poder médico*: si te rebelas contra él firmas tu propia sentencia de muerte. *Poder providencial*, como explica el filósofo francés [Maurice Blanchot](#). “Nuestro destino está ahora en el poder: no un hombre históricamente destacable, sino cierto poder que está por encima de la persona, la fuerza de los más elevados valores, la soberanía, pero no de una persona soberana, sino de la soberanía misma, en cuanto que se identifica con las posibilidades reunidas en un Destino”. El gobierno técnico no es una dictadura, un poder tiránico personal: “un dictador no deja de desfilarse; no habla, grita; su palabra tiene la violencia del grito, del *dictare*, de la repetición. (El soberano) se manifiesta, pero por deber. Incluso cuando aparece resulta como extranjero a su presencia: está retirado en sí mismo, habla, pero secretamente...”. Frente al *show* berlusconiano, la discreta “aparición por deber” dell *Proffessore* ([y señora](#)).

Blanchot explica que el poder de salvación impone siempre una “muerte política” a cambio de la seguridad que ofrece. El soberano debe ser incuestionable, de modo que se cancela toda posibilidad de disenso (a la que se acusa además de complicidad con la catástrofe). Delegamos en el soberano todas nuestras capacidades (de expresión, pensamiento, acción) y la política queda proscrita. Porque en realidad el Gobierno de Nadie no hace política. Ni actúa, ni decide: sólo *gestiona*. Es decir, modula como puede un poder que le rebasa y precede. Una máquina hiper-compleja orientada por intereses económicos. Un poder inhumano que no se puede alterar, gestionar o modificar, sino simplemente obedecer lo mejor posible. Es el poder de lo automático, de lo necesario. Es nuestro Destino.

### **La danza de los *nadie* contra el Gobierno de Nadie**

¿Cómo despertar de esa muerte política? Los discursos “ilustrados” que aún identifican nuestras democracias con la racionalidad política libre, voluntaria y organizada suenan cada vez más a chiste pesado. Pero todavía [habrá quien](#) aconseje, ante la amenaza del Gobierno de Nadie, que recuperemos la confianza en el sistema de partidos, la representación política, el eje izquierda/derecha, etc. Más aún. Habrá voces que responsabilicen con toda seguridad a la [revolución anónima](#) que se extiende ahora mismo por el mundo de haber allanado el terreno al Gobierno de Nadie. “Mirad, ahí está el resultado de vuestro ‘no nos representan’”.

En realidad es todo lo contrario. Entregando todo el poder a los mercados financieros, blindándose contra todo atisbo de participación ciudadana, convirtiéndose en simples gestores de lo Inevitable y lo Necesario, los políticos han cavado su propia tumba. Ya pueden quejarse todo lo que quieran Papandreu, Berlusconi o Rajoy cuando le toque: los poderes a los que se ataron han decidido de pronto prescindir de sus servicios y poner en su lugar a otros ingenieros de más confianza. Punto.

El único despertar posible de la muerte política es lo que [Hannah Arendt](#) pensó como “acción”. Actuar es interrumpir el dominio de lo automático, lo contrario de obedecer o repetir. También en la vida personal: interiorizamos los automatismos cuando hacemos lo que debemos hacer, vemos lo que tenemos que ver, decimos lo que hay que decir y pensamos lo que está prescrito pensar. Arendt lo llamó “conducta”: un comportamiento normalizado, previsible y predecible. Por el contrario, cuando actuamos “nos unimos a nuestros iguales y empezamos algo nuevo”, salimos del aislamiento y la impotencia, nos volvemos capaces.

La “[política del cualquiera](#)” de movimientos como el 15-M no es equivalente ni simétrica al Gobierno de Nadie: no confía el mando a los que saben, sino que parte del principio de que todos podemos pensar; no tiene rostro, pero precisamente para que quepan todos y cada uno de los rostros singulares; no gestiona lo que hay, sino que inventa colectivamente nuevas respuestas para problemas comunes.

Pluralidad, invención, pensamiento: así es la danza de los *nadie* contra el Gobierno de Nadie.



## COSTRINGERCI AL NOMADISMO

### - Se lo sgombero di Occupy Wall Street può far bene al movimento -

Avevo visitato il primo campeggio di Occupy Wall Street il 17 settembre scorso, non appena s'era installato nello Zuccotti Park su ispirazione della rivista *Adbusters*. Era poco più d'un avamposto beduino nel deserto. Spoglio e quasi indecifrabile, per noi mediterranei barocchi, nel suo rigore puritano: pochi cartelli e qualche sedia, tende immacolate, volti ancora spensierati nonostante gli arresti già numerosi. I più giovani venivano mandati a fare provviste di kebab e pizza dagli ambulanti locali, che alla vista di qualche signorina-manager in talleur facevano l'occhiolino: *Let's occupy some bitches, men!* Quelli più propensi alla performance artistica facevano capolino nei negozi, nei McDonald, improvvisando recital, canti e balli a tema. Nel campo c'era bisogno di tutto perché mancava tutto, essendo incerta la sua sopravvivenza.

Passeggiando tra quei ragazzi mi veniva in mente il bel saggio di uno studioso canadese morto troppo presto, Jerry Cohen, che usava il campeggio come metafora di quell'ideale socialista ormai abbandonato dalle nostre sinistre. Nel contesto di un campeggio, scriveva Cohen, «pressoché chiunque, perfino i più contrari all'egualitarismo, accettano, anzi danno per scontate, norme di uguaglianza e di reciprocità», ed era un'idea che per quanto fragile aveva il suo fascino, specie se riproposta in quel modo, come un presepe vivente tra i vetri a specchio delle banche e delle *corporation*.

Lunedì 14 novembre, a due mesi dall'inizio dell'occupazione, mi trovavo di nuovo a New York. Ho telefonato a Zelene Suchilt, attivista che da mesi e' mia guida e compagna nella pre-apocalittica Big Apple del 2011, e insieme abbiamo deciso di passare la nottata tra gli occupanti. Ci siamo presentati al campo di Zuccotti Park verso le otto di sera, come sfollati durante un terremoto, con un paio di zaini e l'aria ingenua di chi cerca asilo in una repubblica sconosciuta. Ci ha dato il benvenuto una ragazza di vent'anni, serba, dai capelli tinti di rosso, e dopo una breve chiacchierata ci ha offerto uno spazio all'aperto davanti alla sua tenda. Intorno al campo ronzavano senza tregua mandrie di turisti appena scesi dagli autobus, che scattavano foto ai *protesters* più appariscenti e venivano smistati dalla polizia come visitatori di un museo d'arte contemporanea. Forse avevano preso il campo per un'installazione di Tracey Emin. Alcuni giapponesi si facevano fotografare con uno scarnito Capitan America – ah, l'ossessione degli *yankees* per la bandiera! – che distribuiva volantini standosene in piedi su una sedia. Decine di telecamere acciuffavano occupanti dall'aria sonnecchiosa che facevano capolino dalle tende-tane, per intervistarli sui motivi della lotta. Il campo era visibilmente sovraffollato, diviso in tante micro-aree dove si svolgevano diverse micro-attività. C'era chi cucinava con grossi pentoloni. Chi leggeva ad alta voce la Costituzione americana. C'erano un paio di vecchietti dall'aria nordica e le guance rosse che lavoravano a maglia, vendendo calzini e sciarpe. C'era chi offriva servizi di *independent business* lustrando scarpe. E c'era la libreria. La libreria era in realtà un corridoio brevissimo dentro una tenda, arredato con alcuni scaffali di libri, un tavolino, una sedia, e male illuminato da una fessura che s'apriva su un tanfo di carta umidiccia. Quello spazio, credeteci o no, era l'unico spazio pubblico di lettura di tutta Downtown Manhattan. La domenica ci andavano persino le famiglie con anziani e bambini.

Eppure ai bordi del campo lo sguardo dei turisti cercava qualcosa in più di qualche buffo *indignado* da fotografare. C'era, nei passanti, la voglia di scrutare la vita dentro il campeggio con un senso di morbosa e forse imbarazzata invidia. C'era, questa la mia sensazione, la voglia di capire se davvero, lì dentro al campo, la vita dentro fosse regolata

da leggi diverse da quelle che loro conoscevano. Volevano capire, in fondo, se davvero le rigide distinzioni di classe fossero state abolite, e in definitiva che volto avessero i figli ribelli d'America. Quel possibile esempio di cameratismo, di fratellanza, e anche di spensierata promiscuità aveva una forte attrattiva sui turisti, e devo dire anche sugli stessi poliziotti.

Ma l'isola felice, il campo di Occupy s'era istituzionalizzato. Comprensibilmente, era entrato nella sua fase di strutturazione e stanzialità. Non v'erano gerarchie ma un preoccupante odore di muffa. Quello spicchio di terra era ormai talmente raddensato di attività artigianali che non v'era spazio nemmeno per uno sgabello su cui leggere in pace. Niente di paragonabile col mondo-di-fuori, ovvio. Era comunque un esperimento antropologico e politico unico nel suo genere, e si respirava davvero la sensazione che potesse durare ancora a lungo, e quasi divenire parte del paesaggio urbano.

Tutto questo è stato spazzato via nel giro di una notte. I ricchi si sono ribellati con i mezzi che gli sono propri: invocando improbabili rischi igienico-sanitari in una città già da tempo occupata in ogni anfratto da ratti e blatte; poi rimproverando gli accampati con i toni del genitore che, tornando a casa, dichiara conclusa la festa e straccia via gli addobbi. La polizia non ha dato agli accampati il tempo nemmeno il tempo di discutere: le tende sono state strappate via scoprendo ragazzi seminudi e infreddoliti, cinti dalle squadracce della NYPD come da una tenaglia di ferro e kevlar. Tra quelli che non hanno ceduto sono stati portati via a decine. La libreria, forse il segno più limpido dello spirito originario di quell'isola felice, in poche ore è stata rozzamente smantellata, e migliaia di volumi sono finiti nell'immondizia municipale. Questa è la cronaca di uno sgombero: sempre uguale, ovunque si vada.

Ma sarebbe convenuto, ai pirati di Occupy Wall Street, mettere su famiglia e commercio nella Tortuga che s'erano scelti per casa? Elemosinando soldi ai giapponesi di passaggio? La comunità era sì rimasta felicemente anarcoide, ma aveva incamerato evidenti segni di mercantilizzazione, di apatia, di pigrizia perfino. Rischiando di divenire baraccone. O peggio, uno zoo umano. A costo di risultare impopolare, vi dirò che lo sgombero può essere salutato come un evento positivo per il movimento.

Occupare nel cuore del capitalismo finanziario non vuol dire mettere radici. Vuol dire scegliere di volta in volta obiettivi simbolici da colpire, invaderli fisicamente e mediaticamente. Vuol dire anche attivare un meccanismo che rimanga imprevedibile, tenga impegnate le autorità e inquieti la middle class consolata che da fuori osservano. *Épater*, non *ennuyer*. Occupare in queste condizioni vuol dire contrapporre alla «linea levigata del potere» quella «molecolare dei migranti» e la «linea di fuga» di cui parlavano già trent'anni fa Deleuze e Parnet, per evitare pericolose piaghe da decubito. Se la resistenza attiva alle manganellate rappresenta la migrazione forzata e la ricerca di una nuova sedentarietà, al contrario uno spirito consapevolmente nomade, che accetti lo spostamento non come sconfitta ma come *festa mobile*, può essere per il movimento una vera e propria *prassi d'attacco*. Poi certo non mancheranno, in futuro, i momenti per parlare di repubbliche piratesche, di nuove colonie dell'immaginario da costruire insieme, anche al di fuori dei percorsi legali che l'Impero e la borghesia ci hanno messo finora a disposizione.

Non importa dove il nuovo campeggio sorgerà. Se di nuovo a due passi da Wall Street o in cento o mille nuove piazze. Chiuso uno, «altri ne seguiranno» avrebbe detto Panagulis. Di

questi tempi, in Grecia come in Italia come negli USA, repressione vuol dire solo moltiplicazione.

## THE STATE OF CONNOTATION

This text derives from a conversation with [Federico Campagna](#)

A common criticism of contemporary capitalism is that the financial industry has completely decoupled capital from the materiality of production: The crisis in Europe has achieved such epic proportions because the creation of wealth was no longer inextricably linked to the labour of workers in the eurozone but could be amplified by complex algorithms of a computerised speculation. However there has also been a twin decoupling that has taken place alongside the rise of financial industry from the 1980's; a race to the bottom of signification which has seen a wedge driven between signifier and signified: The rise within advertising of a pure aesthetic of connotation which has created a feedback loop that engulfs the entire cultural sphere.

In 1981 Jean Baudrillard wrote in *Simulations and Simulacra*:

*"Today what we are experiencing is the absorption of all virtual modes of expression into that of advertising. All original cultural forms, all determined languages are absorbed in advertising because it has no depth, it is instantaneous and instantaneously forgotten. Triumph of superficial form, of the smallest common denominator of all signification, degree zero of meaning, triumph of entropy over all possible tropes. The lowest form of energy of the sign. This unarticulated, instantaneous form, without a past, without a future, without the possibility of metamorphosis, has power over all the others. All current forms of activity tend toward advertising and most exhaust themselves therein."*

In a world where all original cultural forms are absorbed into advertising it doesn't become the only possible language but any changes to this language are logically seen in all the subsumed cultural forms. Baudrillard speaks of advertising's overtaking "madness", that of "always voting for itself" and this overdeveloped system's power being stolen by the language of computer science. This predicted loss of power does not seem to have been borne out, yet advertising's always voting for itself has indeed become the dominant cultural form: an advertising which advertises advertising is now the only language that cultural forms can speak. In this respect advertising has become the reserve in a cultural gold standard, the value to which all subsets of value are tied to. This shadow decoupling is not widely discussed due to the pressing nature of unfolding economic events yet the effect this absorption of cultural forms has had on products and importantly the way we consume them has important ramifications for political engagement.

\* \* \*

From its very beginning advertising has sought to persuade and to manipulate. In its earliest forms advertising promoted the qualities of its product and assured consumers that its object was the leader in its field, yet almost at its birth advertising became associative. Not only were products the best in their specific context but they were able to tap into the deepest aspirations of their consumers. Through connotation products became associated with everything from social movements to fundamental hopes, and fears, of each different strata of society. From (now) quaint 'groovy' adverts for banal domestic products to sophisticated lifestyle marketing advertising became increasingly adept manipulating consumers through their own culturally embedded desires.



However, beginning in the 80's, the contextualisation of this cultural embedding became disrupted whilst simultaneously more and more consumers became aware of the levels of sophistication with which advertising was able to operate. Yet this did not lead to an end to advertising or even a radical break with its past methods, rather the functions and connotations imbued in products were replaced with a single signifier, that of signification itself.

This process began with the emergence of Post-Modernism in the 80's and 90's which dismissed the reverence for the cultural and historical contexts of cultural forms. Combining images and objects in a form of bricolage that couldn't necessarily be reduced to a simple irony or juxtaposition, post-modernism gave artists, writers and designers a freedom from historical context that those who spent their formative years in one or both world wars would never have. To its critics post-modernism's freedom resulted in a shallow preoccupation with surface, yet it was to become the dominant aesthetic across the dominant cultural sphere. Its disrespectful focus on existing objects rendered the whole world its palette and allowed for a disruption of the relation of signifier and signified that had previously been the domain of advertising.

Advertising however flourished, at first it was able to utilise this bricolage and play with signification as an aesthetic, projecting a cutting-edge vitality on to products. Yet as the level of appropriation broadened exponentially to include multiple aesthetics from the past and imagined futures it became harder to identify a unifying aesthetic. At this point, with all signs fair game for appropriation, the only function adverts need to perform is that of an empty signification. Products would still be made to appear to connote some culturally desirable affect or function but the aesthetic or strategy for producing this connotation is almost arbitrary; the very act of connoting, rather than what is being connoted, is now the one that instils value.

\* \* \*

The feedback loop created by adverts that advertise advertising has a profound affect on products. They cease to be receptacles for the properties advertising once projected on to them but exist instead as vague signifiers of an ill-defined quality; imbued simply with an abstract quality of connotation products become adverts themselves. In this world products never fail to live up to the qualities ascribed to them by advertising; as adverts themselves they are filled with an empty connotation which becomes value in itself, unfettered by the constraints of material imperfection.

It is true than products and their packaging have often contained advertising yet this formation is different, here products have no value other than the pure value of advertising: That is, an aesthetic or more often a combination of aesthetic tropes which appears to signify something more than its base materiality, but which never actually enunciates anything. In this respect the product-as-advert speaks a kind of semiotic jargon, a language which sounds convincing but on reflection says nothing at all.

*"If at a given moment, the commodity was its own publicity (there was no other) today publicity has become its own commodity. It is confused with itself (and the eroticism with which it ridiculously cloaks itself is nothing but the autoerotic index of a system that does nothing but designate itself "- Jean Baudrillard*

Again we can see the beginning of this of this formation in the late 80's and 90's where an initial crude version emerged in the prominence of brand logos in the fashion industry, usually dismissed as simply buying in to a brand or projecting affluence or fashionableness . This was then developed to utilise our sophisticated ability read values through signs as object were transformed by a colour, a stripe or a fragment of a logo to become an object of value. However as these signs become further buried in the form of the object every idiosyncratic turn in the design can become an allusion to a brand, the end result being that the object itself disappears and is replaced by a patchwork of indefinite allusions.

The consumer is faced with a market of unreadable symbols, yet rather than call the products' bluff, calling out its meaningless signification, the consumer treats products with the reverence of the uninitiated. The assumption that the rich combination of aesthetic tropes implies some hidden meaning, that there is a wealth of semiotic relationships just beyond the consumer's grasp, both plays on the consumer's intelligence in expecting an advert/product's manipulation and belittles them for not understanding this manipulation whose apparatus is so clear. The fact that an understanding is impossible when the quality connoted is purely that of connotation is the very thing that upholds the value of the product.

\* \* \*

One reason for this inability to question advertising's meaningless signification comes from the effect of the now default aesthetic deployed by adverts and products, that of novelty. This novelty has nothing to do with originality or progress but is rather a novelty of combination: Whether that be a novel aesthetic bricolage or a novel combination of object, aesthetic and context, it forms an ever accelerating stream of recombined layers of pseudo-symbols which are too fleeting to have their semiotic jargon caught out. Here the instantaneous form, without a past or future, disrupts the critical gaze; terms such as 'new' and 'limited edition' are applied to each passing wave whilst 'vintage' and 'retro' encourage an ever quicker recycling of de-contextualised historical styles.

With products reduced to the role of adverts, they too are subject to advertising's short memory. As a product's particular combination of signification grows old it must be recombined to continue to be affective, however the product's function as an advert and its constant connotative recombination demands a shift within consumers themselves: This shift can be seen in the fact that where once products were consumed to change the consumers' life, now the consumers' life is altered in order to consume.

As products become adverts it becomes impossible for consumers to interact with them in conventional ways, instead they must change themselves in order to meet advertising on its level. Traditionally the only members of society able to transcend this barrier are celebrities, those in the public eye who are able to manipulate their own image in order to embody values in much the same way that advertising once had. Yet in the last decade a tool has emerged which allows all consumers to meet advertising on equal ground; social media.

Social networking allows users a total control of image previously only enjoyed by marketing departments. This unprecedented level of identity branding literally gives users the ability to manipulate the scope, angle and focus of the others gaze, effecting a

flattening out of identity that can bear little resemblance to reality. However this is not to say this manipulation is crude, on the contrary given advertising's tools a consumer's different brand identities and marketing strategies are developed through different social media and online presence to target specific markets. Slowly identities, like those of the post-modern artists are transformed into brands whose marketing departments work longer hours than even the biggest ad agencies and whose brand ambassadors commitment is unmatched. Again material relationships are reduced to numeration, whether posts, friends or followers.

A lineage of social networking can be traced from the movements of identity politics and radical subjectivity in the 1960's and 70's and it is well documented how this identity politics has been appropriated by the consumerism of contemporary capitalism. Where consumerism was able to sell a false individuality through the tailoring of products to a plurality of identities, a veneer over an unchanging exploitation, social media shifts the radical subjectivity to a radical objectification. The precise control of an online presence through the entirety of visual and textual output is simply the creation of an object, a self objectification which allows for an entry into the closed system of advertising.

The defining cultural myth of the US, and one that has proved pervasive across the western world is the prosperity of the post-war years and the emergence of American hegemony. The ideal of this mythological period was that of middle class conformity yet identity politics replaced this ideal with its opposite, that of individualism. The past fear of falling out of the middle class, into the chaotic identity of the working class was been replaced by the fear of lacking a unique, defined identity. However, as advertising and products become indistinguishable this individualism, through social media, also began to resemble advertising. The content of the required identity became unimportant, as with advertising's equivalence of all signifiers the value lay in the production of the identity regardless of what it actually contained. In this formulation identities and products become part of the sea of meaningless signifiers which are the interchangeable variables of advertising's novelty: A novelty which up holds the connotation of connotation, the empty signification which is the pure value of advertising.