

**self**

**interview**

**no.3**

**doosra... the other one**

**frère**

**dupont**

# self interview no.3

frère dupont

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**A Whiskey Priest:** What comes next?

**Sinéad O:** Now seems an opportune moment to conduct another self-interview.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Why not a play for voices?

**Sinéad O:** But this is 4 real.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What about calling it a gonzo-socratic dialogue?

**Sinéad O:** Never!

**A Whiskey Priest:** Why the questionnaire format?

**Sinéad O:** It works. The Situationists' questionnaire is the template. I like it where it asks of itself, 'how many of you are there?'

**A Whiskey Priest:** But asking and answering the questions seems contrived.

**Sinéad O:** It is contrived but the important thing is to break the conventions of exposition. There is movement in the format and this draws the reader further in than if he was presented with yet another lengthy essay. I have always tried to anticipate and include the arguments against mine but there is a limit to that, the simple

expository form soon becomes overstuffed and loses definition. The formally informal procedures of the Q&A format keeps things light and fluid.

**A Whiskey Priest:** But I thought progressively alienating readers has been the defining characteristic of this project.

**Sinéad O:** I think the format helps break open the project, it exposes the flesh, the workings, the uncooked dough of it.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What do these Q&As positively achieve?

**Sinéad O:** I think definite answers to particular questions tend to create a white space around themselves. They invite the reader to respond, 'yes, but...' This white space is essential to the project.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Then what is the white space that is created by definite answers?

**Sinéad O:** It is whatever has gone unanswered in the answer. It is that which remains to be answered and which must be engaged by others, elsewhere, at another time... this is so much preferable to exposition which seduces the reader with its seeming completion by rhetorical rather than substantial means. Please understand that the answers I give here, are understood as responses to the questions set and no others. It is the yes/no game.

**A Whiskey Priest:** And what is this interview to be about?

**Sinéad O:** What would most amuse us?

**A Whiskey Priest:** Undoubtedly, something perverse.

**Sinéad O:** Then let it be about this 'doing nothing' of ours. Ask some obvious question about it so that I might be outrageous.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Let us talk about the origins of the concept.

**Sinéad O:** No, no. Nothing could be more tedious. That is not the question. Talk about the origins at the end.

A Whiskey Priest: Okay, what about talking about *doing something*?

**Sinéad O:** Yes, lets talk about the mechanism by which every sequence of events set in motion by the question, *what is to be done?* must always end in tears.

A Whiskey Priest: Tell me something unsubstantiated and arbitrary about Egyptians.

**Sinéad O:** Ask something more precise like, ‘why does this sort of thing always go wrong?’

A Whiskey Priest: Ah, now, let me see. There is a great body of people. They are gathered in a square called Tahrir, it is the 25th of January, the year is 2012. These people are commemorating their experiences of one year before. Amongst their number is Sara (engineer). Do you know her?

**Sinéad O:** No. What is she doing?

A Whiskey Priest: She is a picture in a newspaper, and there are some words next to her face.

**Sinéad O:** What do the words say?

A Whiskey Priest: They say, ‘I feel angry and frustrated. I’m annoyed with those sat at home... When people ask why I’m going back to Tahrir, I say it’s simple – nothing has change.’

**Sinéad O:** Ah yes, some good words. They seem honest at least, if also problematic.

A Whiskey Priest: And what do you say to them?

**Sinéad O:** Firstly, how wrong she is. But then, also how right.

A Whiskey Priest: Is that all? This is not going to be much of a self-interview.

**Sinéad O:** This is just the introduction.

A Whiskey Priest: Do you want to hear the opinions of another protester?

**Sinéad O:** Go on.

A Whiskey Priest: This is what Mourad (IT engineer) said, ‘I’m very proud... Under Mubarak, we used to wake up and know the day would be just the same as the day before.’

**Sinéad O:** That is rather too easy, and thus unfair. I can only play my statements against those statements which are suitable for being played against... and the tragically ironic are not suitable. What other quotes do you have?

A Whiskey Priest: I can’t see any more. There’s great clouds blowing again.

**Sinéad O:** Ach, the mean old clouds!

A Whiskey Priest: So you have nothing to say to Mourad? You do not want to tell him that Mubarak was not the cause of the similarity of the days? You do not want to engage what is implied about politics, about action, about life, in his remarks?

**Sinéad O:** Like I said, other people’s sincerity is not my object.

A Whiskey Priest: Would you like to convince Mourad of your analysis of his statements?

**Sinéad O:** No.

A Whiskey Priest: What about Sara?

**Sinéad O:** No.

A Whiskey Priest: Would you like to say something about the criteria by which you formulate the object of your critique?

**Sinéad O:** Eventually, yes perhaps. Through the words of these Egyptian protesters you are attempting to get me to set the threshold between the conceptual framework of ‘doing nothing’ and the

assertive self-rationalisation of participants within protest actions. I think there is no such threshold... The protesters are not speaking to me, and nor am I speaking to them.

**A Whiskey Priest:** So, 'doing nothing' is not an injunction to protesters. It is not a call for them to go home?

**Sinéad O:** It is not a call at all. It is not a strategic alternative to what they are doing. It has no bearing on them. This will become clearer when we discuss the mechanics of protest, of what it is that moves people to attempt to act against that which sets them in motion.

**A Whiskey Priest:** If you are not addressing protesters, who are you talking to?

**Sinéad O:** The gambit of 'doing nothing' is a means for opening up for analysis the underlying, and otherwise undiscussed, structures which make the arguments for the voluntary transformation of conditions.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It is an image launched at a theory.

**Sinéad O:** It is an attempt to slow down certain accelerating assumptions about changing the world according to one's demands.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Now would be a good time to give a very short statement on the cycle of protests in 2011. It would give us something to work with, and a sense from where 'doing nothing' is coming from.

**Sinéad O:** In three statements: i. Protests are caused by shifts in the underlying organisation of society which they are therefore expressive of. ii. Protest movements are not as responsive to the participants as the participants imagine. iii. The object of our analysis is therefore those aspects of protest movements which remain unresponsive to the movements' participants.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Let us go back to Sara's statements, in order of your preference: 'nothing has changed' and 'I'm annoyed with those sat at home.'

**Sinéad O:** We can enter the space of the observation 'nothing

has changed' along the pathway to that specific hostility which is compulsively uttered by participants against non-participants. There is a structuring to participants' dissatisfaction with their own achievements... some of that residual hostility which was externalised onto hate-figures, Murbarak, Israel, the police is later displaced at first onto those who have not participated at all, and then onto rival factions within the movement.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The dream of the participant is that all should participate, but this is undermined by an insidious worrying in the very act of participation that there are not enough participants.

**Sinéad O:** The participants' own dissatisfaction with the terms of participation, a sense during manifestations that the 'atmosphere' is somehow against them, is often expressed in terms of insufficiency of means. However, in reality, it is impossible to unite the members of a mass society behind a single purpose. And there is no demonstrable means by which the voluntary actions of a minority may represent those who are not participating. So the sense that 'we can change everything', and the 'moment has passed' are both subjective states, an 'atmosphere' related to ideological feedback. What the participant senses as dissatisfaction, even at the point of participation, is a problem which cannot be overcome by participation. And 'Escalation' is called for only in the moment where the atmosphere has shifted... the call itself crystallises hostility and internal fragmentation.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Grossman, in *Life and Fate*, describes this phenomenon, 'Often, it is the understanding of this transition that gives warfare the right to be called an art.'

**Sinéad O:** Yes, that passage is reminiscent of Debord although it is probably specifically referencing Tolstoy. I would suggest however that the transition in 'atmosphere' occurs more often towards dissolution (although this was not the case for either Borodino or Stalingrad where victory is drawn out of defeat).

**A Whiskey Priest:** Why should frustration take the route of hostile externalisation onto non-participants?

**Sinéad O:** It is an exacerbation of already latent tendencies. Those who seek change are ambivalently motivated, and some of these motivations for change are structurally misanthropic.

**A Whiskey Priest:** There is an exultant moralistic turn in protest, 'Whose streets? Our streets' and 'We are your crisis' as examples. There is a horribly false braggadocio and triumphalism which fundamentally mistakes what it is. The more exaggerated the claims made for the protesting body the more abject will be its self-dissolution. How could it not collapse back onto itself when it sets out on such vaulting terms?

**Sinéad O:** Old lines get spoken from the most unexpected mouths: *People fought a war for the likes of you; People suffered and died for democracy, so that you could vote.* As soon as the discourse of martyrology is introduced, the language of participation becomes violently contorted in relation to its ends, and thereby internally repressive. Protest tends always to misanthropy via the imperative of participation and against the impediments to the imagined realisation of 'full participation'. At some point, probably very early on, the act of sacrifice, of going further, is more invested in than the end, which is often no more than a rationalised pretext. For this reason, all sacrificial behaviours, no matter for what end, resemble each other psychologically.

**A Whiskey Priest:** When people die during their participation in a protest movement it becomes more real, more fixed in the world. Suddenly, what is going on is not just another protest, it is historically significant.

**Sinéad O:** I do not agree. I think a 'movement' is actualised when it generates dependants. At the point where individuals depend for their existence on the success of a particular social formation it has become component of social reproduction.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Dying for a cause is not real for you?

**Sinéad O:** Social change is not a question of demonstrating commitment through acts of recklessness or self-harm. Change is

always the result of exercising leverage, of gains made and of losses incurred. The acts of self-immolation by Tibetan monks (21 such suicides in 2011) has had a declining effect over the last year.

**A Whiskey Priest:** I did not expect instrumentalist logic from you.

**Sinéad O:** The deaths in Libya and Syria have not bought a qualitative separation of the protesters from sentimentalist ideologies of nationhood, on the contrary. The constant move of this mode of opposition is into, what I will call 'abject realism', by which I mean there is an irresistible trait to crash-reduction of the terms of opposition, which is reconfigured to the most banal of abstractions, 'nation', 'freedom', and so on – the more extravagant the sacrifice the more simplistic the cause. This slippage is so predictable that it functions like Iggy Pop's 'villain' running to the sugar bowl – it is an ideological addiction. And it takes another sort of 'courage' in Egypt, in Palestine, in Tibet to refuse to resort to cultural references such as martyrs, which are otherwise seen as self-evident justifications for further attenuation of the 'end'.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What is this other courage which you mention?

**Sinéad O:** It is not a courage at all. It is that form of intelligence based on self-preservation which states itself as, 'Blow this for a game of soldiers, I'm going home.'

**A Whiskey Priest:** So, your great principle is self-interested cowardice.

**Sinéad O:** I am referring to those sets of behaviours that hold back from mob hysteria: Those behaviours that do not map at all onto notions of sacrifice and struggle: *We should treat all the trivial things of life seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality.*

**A Whiskey Priest:** That is hardly a basis for changing the world.

**Sinéad O:** Why not? Most people in the world are very happy to live at that level. And if their environment were benign, then existence in hot pursuit of frivolity seems an entirely adequate utopian goal.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Is there anything in the events of 2011 which strikes you as suitably frivolous?

**Sinéad O:** I would point to Ajmal's doosra.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Oo Matron.

**Sinéad O:** It is a cricket reference.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What? Now, I know you are just out to deliberately bait the anarcho-syndicalists and other moralists.

**Sinéad O:** I am serious, but yes the apoplexy of morally outraged anarchists is a rare delicacy always to be savoured.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Where is the seriousness?

**Sinéad O:** Where significance is found within the insignificant, something else is set in motion. Where significance is drawn from the significant, the outcome is mere positive feedback. Similarly, communist discourse discovers traces of the human community in its readings of *other* texts. Communist readings of communist texts results only in ideology.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Communist readings of communist texts is unavoidable... and although the outcome is often as you say, a runaway into unchallenged affirmationism, it is also possible to read critically without confounding solidarity with belonging to some political racket. Where communist readings define themselves against identity thinking, there is the creation of a project which, as described in your old phrase, *twists on the hook of itself*. If this were not the case, communist theory would have to perpetually abandon itself in favour of other paths. However, it also seems plausible that the encounter with external discursive registers amplifies the register of communist discourse (although it stands on its head all 'principle based' communist formulations.) So, give us your communist reading of the 'doosra.'

**Sinéad O:** If you need a way in, consider the doosra in terms of the 'clinamen' (or swerve) which is variously described by Deleuze,

Negri, Tiqqin and so on, as that feature which is specific to an event which causes it to be other than just the quantitative outcome of an external causal sequence; the clinamen, or swerve, is an indication that an event is not just a particle in the general movement of all things, but has its own particular crabbed movement. It is a movement within movement, a current within the stream. This is well illustrated by balloon travel. Travellers in hot air balloons do not experience the wind because they are moving with the wind, they belong to it – the balloon has no clinamen, no character. But immanence with the flow of air means that the balloon is also not dirigible. The capacity to steer, to swerve against the determination of the wind, requires either that the balloon is powered (and moves faster than the air current) or that, through resistance (contact with the ground) it moves slower than the wind.

**A Whiskey Priest:** And the doosra is an example or illustration of the clinamen – you are making a connection between the clinamen and the chinaman?

**Sinéad O:** Not really, but we do find in it the movement belonging to a smaller object which does conform to the general movement of all things.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Okay, well I suppose you have to go into more detail.

**Sinéad O:** Cricket has been around for the same length of time as 'critique' which appeared at the end of the Enlightenment as the thought of history, of the change in societies, of the contrast between rurality and urbanism and yet, always unexpectedly, cricket, just like critique, is still generating new forms within itself... The doosra is a newly developed spin bowling technique. One asks oneself how is it possible to create a new precedent in a heavily constrained context after 200 years of continuous activity by large numbers of the world's population, and without altering the rules?

**A Whiskey Priest:** To break up your soliloquy, I will say something like, *fascinate me some more*.

**Sinéad O:** From the 1960's to the 1980's cricket's spin bowlers were a conservative or negative force in cricket. They did not look to spin the ball but bowled in a manner to restrict the batsman and draw him into making mistakes. It was not until the arrival of Abdul Qadir that leg spin, the attacking form of spin bowling, was revived.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Okay, so the doosra, which rather poetically means 'the other one' introduces an unexpected and in fact unprecedented term within a historically constrained field of play and has dramatically changed it. What is the significance of this?

**Sinéad O:** First I want to reframe the term 'historically constrained field' within cybernetic theory's concept of 'the law of requisite variety'. In cybernetics, 'variety' refers to the total number of distinct states and thresholds belonging to an identified system. It is through our understanding of the variety of states of a system that we know it is still the same system and not something else (we know an 'individual' can be awake or asleep, inhabit different regions of the Earth, feel different emotions, engage in numerous relations and yet still remain the same individual). The recognisable outcome of processive self-correcting within systems is governed by a regulatory 'law' called the 'law of requisite variety' which states that a given system's capacity for various states must be equal to, or greater than, the actual number of states it is generating. For example, we could ask that when an individual suffers dementia, delirium or has died whether these states are contained by the system called 'this individual', or do they exceed its constraints and cause it malfunction or disperse? Where the law of requisite variety is broken, the system itself fragments and becomes something else.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Returning to the doosra.. *the other one*. It has undoubtedly changed both spin bowling and the batting against it, and has fed into umpiring decisions based on DRS, but it has not put cricket's law of requisite variety into question; cricket is still cricket.

**Sinéad O:** Well, yes. Perhaps I have already gone too far and yet I have still not made my point. If we return to the idea of the doosra as clinamen we return to that safer ground of wild speculation, and unsubstantiated associative thinking.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Which is the ground I prefer above all others.

**Sinéad O:** The population in which the doosra has appeared is significant. Within that population it is not just a new technique, it is a piece of knowledge, an emblematic fragment of beauty.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The doosra is a Pakistani phenomenon. What does that have to do with 'The Arab Spring'?

**Sinéad O:** It has a tenuous geographical connection with the events of the Arab Spring in that it arrived in Dubai during the October test series (broadly within the timeframe we are discussing) between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The only local audience for these matches were the slaves/proletarians from the Indian Subcontinent.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Very psychogeographical, I am sure... or at least, as you say, tenuous in the extreme.

**Sinéad O:** Even so, I think the doosra is in fact a quintessentially Islamic form, it could not have emerged from any other tradition, and although it has appeared within a sporting context, it is in fact an aesthetic phenomenon.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Even so, yourself! There is still no connection between the Arab Spring and Pakistan playing home games in Dubai... Damn, I think I know your next move.

**Sinéad O:** Precisely. Pakistan are playing home matches in Dubai because of a much longer trend in the Islamic world of popular unrest. The doosra-like movement of this unrest from the Subcontinent to North African and Arabic countries is an event not easily played with the ideological straight bat of neat media encapsulations such as 'The Arab Spring'. The unrest is a phenomenon of structural proletarianisation and de-proletarianisation as this process is set in relation to traditional cultural norms – but it is not understood as such, even by the participants.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Either I am drinking what you are drinking or you are beginning to make an argument.



**Sinéad O:** Then, lets abandon it and go even further out on the limb. Why is the doosra, this lateral movement off the pitch, a way into comprehending the deep-down stuff of protest movements?

**A Whiskey Priest:** Hold on. Why the doosra, and not some other cultural artefact?

**Sinéad O:** Because it is an irresolvable knot, a bamboozler! And every puzzle is set above a deeper puzzle which is accessed through it. For the purpose of revolt against conditions, the doosra sketches out the appropriate spinning, dog-legging, movement by which the participants in the Arab Spring might begin to engage the force that is driving them on, and through this movement they might avoid collapsing back into nationalism.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Ah, at last, a political payoff. Extraneous rationalisation rules, even here.

**Sinéad O:** It is not a prescription. I do not expect the population of Tahrir Square to study the doosra. I am just describing the type of movement which consciousness must follow (beginning with a trace of the least insignificant and relating it to the seemingly most significant) if it is to get to the bottom of what it is the consciousness of. I begin my description with something wondrously unexpected, and I relate the intensity and marginality of it to my understanding of a particular culture where specific events, which were unpredictable in their beginning have now played out in a tiresomely obvious pattern. I have attempted to think 'visually' in a context where the pictorial representation of the human figure has been culturally attenuated. My thesis is that where this attenuation occurs there is a corresponding lack of capacity for transferring visual encapsulations and metaphorical material into other areas of life... this lack of visual imagery damages precisely those registers which tend to casually evade, without even intending to, the repressive apparatus.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You are saying that the the doosra is a picturesque motif for 'the other one', for the 'other way' for the *via negativa*. But you have no evidence for this at all, it all sounds like wishful thinking mixed in with the unthought-out projected orientalism of the type

that we might expect from a cultural studies programme in some provincial college.

**Sinéad O:** Even so, the point here is to try and pinpoint the sort of image that is necessary to draw the populations of the 'Arab Spring' out of the self-perpetuating downward spirals of political consciousness, islamic-nationalism, martyrology and 'going to war'. How are they to evade the discursive realm of *abject realism*, of finishing their unexpected beginnings in abjectly predictable bloodbaths and corrupt bureaucracies?

**A Whiskey Priest:** Okay, the doosra, a type of reversed grip throwing in a cricket game that results in the ball achieving lateral movement when it bounces off the pitch. It is a metaphor for something emerging from out of a constrained scene and moving unexpectedly within it.

**Anna O:** The argument for the doosra concerns how a scene, a population, an event might exceed through metaphor and association the law of requisite variety that governs it. By deprioritising the significant, by placing marginal traces at the centre, there is perhaps a white space opened in which the small life might evade the great defeats of politics, religion, tradition, culture. Simply by not talking about the protests on their own terms we open a white space in relation to the protests which puts them in another perspective, without actively negating them.

**A Whiskey Priest:** A sort of psychoanalytic approach? An attempt to make things difficult and to bring other objects to the fore, objects which are related to traits which go otherwise unexpressed in demonstrations concerning 'freedom' and 'democracy.'

**Sinéad O:** We have discussed how the ideology of 'third estatism' suppresses certain other materials necessary to human life even as it is framed in terms of 'freedom'. With this in mind, we should ask ourselves, what are the means by which a protest movement avoids feeding back into itself and becoming its own pastiche? How does it escape itself, a 'self' which is always a decline, a self that even as it proclaims itself a unity is in fact fragmented and self-contradictory, a self that is running against the momentum towards dissipation which

all protest movements are constrained by (see the essay Paris Match)? How does a protest movement refer itself beyond the framework it has set itself, when its first inclination is to search out confirmations for its already adopted positions?

**A Whiskey Priest:** The left suggests 'education' as an answer: imiseration leads to action, action leads to organisation, organisation leads to consciousness, consciousness leads to further sensitisation to imiseration and so on. But for you, this process of education through struggle leads to a continual attenuation in the variety of existence... everything is reduced to political consciousness of struggle, a programmatic view of *what there is to be done*.

**Sinéad O:** The problem is how nonnegotiable communist principles are to engage with everything else in the world that is not communism. Hitherto, all communist practice has supposed the objective historical tendency of the world to convert to communist principles. In practice, this turns out to be not only unhelpfully reductive (i.e. principles become pathology), it is literally impossible.

**A whiskey Priest:** So your answer is that communism must discover and engage the 'doosra', the other one, within all other discourses which are not communist and thereby avoid setting in motion a conflictual spiral of externalisation and 'going to war.'

**Sinéad O:** Firstly, communism will never result from communist practice, the world will not bend to its prescriptions. Communism is not the result of communism. There is no progressive movement of communist realisation. That is the place we find ourselves in the world now. There is no correlation between the historical reduction of necessary labour hours in the productive process and the objective material base for communist relations. There is simply no obvious movement from capitalism to communism. Secondly, where a particular form seeks to capture the reproduction of itself the result is always reductive. For this reason, social transformation cannot be derived from the discourse of social transformation. For this reason, social organisation cannot be derived from the discourse of social organisation. For this reason, revolutionary consciousness cannot be derived from the discourse of revolutionary consciousness.

No problem may be resolved within the terms that it is set. Transformation, organisation, consciousness are all the result of the entirety of the social mechanism. The law of requisite variety refers to discrete systems but it has a tendency to be nested recursively into ever more wider frameworks because in the end, every specific social problem is resolvable only by the transformation of the totality of relations, of which it is a product. Thus, humanity cannot move from the 'wealth' generated by the capitalist relation to the communist expropriation and organisation of that wealth as these belong to two separate recursive structures (i.e. the set, 'capitalist wealth' does not nest in the organising set 'communist relation'... there is no means of accessing the former without also activating that which it is a member of).

**A Whiskey Priest:** If definite political action is out of the question, can't we identify the traits of other relations as they come into being, as they attempt to by-pass the productive relation and can't communism be associated with these tendencies to communisation.

**Sinéad O:** If you mean acts of expropriation, I do not agree. Theft, or even the transgressive/lifestylist distribution of free commodities, are not the basis of either communism or resistance to capitalism... piracy, ordinary criminality and primitive accumulation all fulfil both these criteria. Acts of expropriation are at the basis of the capitalist model. The qualitative difference between 'cultural' struggles and productive struggles is that the world is produced, at numerous levels (materially, as source of value, as a set of relations) from within factories... this is the source of the 'relation of production' and also its 'original' form. If communism is at all practicable it must manifest its principle of *ne travaillez jamais* within the context of the factory. Other relations will follow only from the relations undertaken in the production of the social relation. Addictive, accumulative acts of 'Illegal downloading' for example do not contest capitalised behaviour, or the relations of production which feed back into it... similarly, looting is an individualised compensation for something else that is structurally lacking in the entirety of the relation. No matter how many songs or movies one accumulates, one does not gain access to communist consciousness. Communists are not against 'illegal

downloading' or looting but nor are they in favour of it... similarly, they are not for or against eating disorders, they feel empathy and seek to explain such behaviours by connecting them to higher order categories which organise them. Looters, rioters and thieves are not proto-communists, they are enacting the pain and contradiction of their situation under present conditions. There is no route from these acts to communist consciousness.

**A Whiskey Priest:** To return to the question of principles. If communism is not to 'go to war' and instigate further cycles of reductionism, and yet must also uphold its principles, how is it to engage in the world? What is a non-reductive engagement?

**Sinéad O:** Firstly, it is important to point out that a critique of militarised communism is not an advocacy of pacifism but rather it supposes a different relation to the violent contradictions of the world. Up to this point, the idea of communism as a real movement has been based on an assumption that communism as a social relation will emerge from 'the premises now in existence,' this is theoretically no longer tenable as no revolutionary subject or 'premise' is identifiable from the present as either potentially communistic or currently antagonistic to capitalist relations. The communist milieu has identified proletarian victory in the class struggle as its proposed goal. Today, this seems naively formulated and communists must seek out a particular form of proletarian self-defeat, or perhaps a victory which abolishes itself – a puzzle that is also set at the entrance of a greater puzzle. The communist no longer sees the violence of the world as a historical process from which he might select a more progressive side to align himself with – the right to exercise such preferences died with Kropotkin. Communists cannot identify what is historically progressive any more... and from the evidence of history, they never could. Every battle ends in the same outcome. Every victor re-establishes the 'exception as the rule' and there is a general reversion to the underlying relations of society. In fact, conflict has become homeostatically necessary for social organisation... overall, it seems the relation finds it necessary to depart into a state of exception in order that it may return to itself. How might a mode of relating be opposed when it manufactures

opposition as a means of its own renewal?

**A Whiskey Priest:** Is all this a reference to Borodino?

**Sinéad O:** We will return to 'doing nothing', but for now we are presented with the spectre of the proletariat as saviour of the productive relation... it is only last year that much of the 'libertarian' left was praising the potential for worker's self-organisation in Libya; and yet it is this very self-organisation which has delivered yet another post-revolutionary client state for recursive gangsterism. The outcome of 'struggle' is always a return to an earlier state. The motivating principles of protagonists are decisive because the rules of conflict itself are set at a higher level of organisation. Thus constrained, the participating military forces may only realise in their 'victory' those rules which have brought them to this point.

**A Whiskey Priest:** How does the communist not 'go to war'?

**Sinéad O:** First he assumes that war is perpetual. It is unavoidable, and the basis of his existence. There is no historical requirement for him to declare it. His analysis has prepared him for that most tragically ironic of outcomes: victory is another form of defeat.

**A Whiskey Priest:** That sounds more like doublethink than irony.

**Sinéad O:** Even so, he has no capacity to intervene in any conflict and decide who wins, as the historical outcome between 'progression' and 'reaction' has already been decided. His analysis has prepared him to understand that all conflicts are regressive, backwardly mapped, onto existing relations. No conflict may be organised upon a set of relations that are still to come into being. Conflict itself is always a surface expression of the contradictions inherent within past relations. Conflict cannot resolve conflict... it is a symptom and neither the cause of itself nor the remedy.

**A Whiskey Priest:** And so we arrive too neatly at the theory of the therapeutic encounter with the discourses of the other. How does the doosra relate to 'doing nothing'?

**Sinéad O:** 'Doing nothing' is the means by which we structure our

theory not to think in the same patterns as the left. The movement of 'doing nothing' is comparable to the movement of the doosra. Your original question asked what I thought was most significant in the events of the Arab Spring. I have answered that the communist invests the peripheral and insignificant with meaning as a means of evading the problem of over-determination and an ideological feedback runaway. The doosra is a phenomenon that (barely) falls into the temporal and geographical frame under discussion. My intention is to set out a pathway away from the 'villainous' path that converges upon the sugar bowl of political-economic events. I want to show how it is possible to lay a path away from the established paths of the left (which even the left's critics reproduce). This other path could be said to lead away from Marx, and towards Wilde. My intervention is an attempt to cause communism to break from the discourse of politics which contains it so that it might re-relate itself to the entirety of life. The 'psychoanalytic' element of this intention is to locate the most significant insignificant object in the field and place it at the centre of communist analysis.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Even those sympathetic to your project would not place Wilde above Marx as a communist thinker.

**Sinéad O:** Marx turns out to be a less useful writer for communists than Wilde. Where Marx inhibits, Wilde enables. Where Marxism is burdensome, Wilde lightens the load. Where Marx precipitates reductionism, Wilde turns things on their head and brings in new frames of reference.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It is a contrarian assertion, no more than that.

**Sinéad O:** Where Marx functions in communist discourse as an authority, and is used to fix a claim for precedent and orthodoxy, Wilde is a generous guide in communism's exploration of humanity's hinterlands. Where readings of Marx collapse back into questions of correct readings, Wilde is a means for expanding the register of communist discourse. The communist's relation to communism is not one of participation but of 'reading' or analysis and is comparable to Jacqueline Rose's stated approach to Zionism, 'I don't see myself as an anti-Zionist or a Zionist: I see myself as a reader of Zionism trying

to understand why it's so powerful and why it does seem to find it very hard to look at its own past.' Another thing about Marx...

**A Whiskey Priest:** He was as white a sheet.

**Sinéad O:** And he also made false teeth.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Your strategy here seems to be one off avoidance. When presented with a moment of intensity, such as the Arab Spring, you immediately look away... you say, 'what everyone thinks is important is not important, but look at what is not important instead.' Avoidance is a 'classic' defence mechanism.

**Sinéad O:** There is something intriguing in what you say. And I feel a relief at that question. In other questionnaires there is a sense of a prepared script but this question has opened up something unexpected for me. After all these pages of fencing between pseudo-question and pseudo-answer, we are now getting to something outside of the script. Your question is a way into what we are really talking about here... the distanced relation between affect and event.

**A Whiskey Priest:** I think I see what you mean. It shows how wordy and unwieldy, how convoluted is the path of psychoanalytically informed communist theory.

**Sinéad O:** The question concerns what it is that communists, as both communists and individuals, can do when presented with events that they have not set in motion, have not participated within, which they cannot influence and which make no reference to them. The question of affect here refers to the problem of having no discernible impact... it illuminates the problem of strong feelings, of insightful intelligence developing in response to an event but of these responses not feeding into it. The practical solution seems to be to talk about something else... to access something else through critical reflection and establish a pathway to an other configuration of human community. If politicised crowds cannot be communised (i.e. they are structurally armoured against the dog-leg movement of communist thought) then it seems that political crowds are not a social body adequate to the communist project.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It seems you are formulating an approach to communism that is not based in unfolding contradiction but on the incongruous and the anomaly.

**Sinéad O:** That would suggest a fetishism of exceptions, and transgressivism. That is not the case. There is an element within 'anti-political communism' (or nihilist communism) which sets itself apart by issuing a 'curse on both your houses.' However, it remains committed to setting the concept of 'relation' at the centre of its project... it does not seek 'breaks' or 'ruptures' for their own sake.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Nonetheless, the approach appears quietist.

**Sinéad O:** In one sense it is 'post-antagonistic, in that it perceives the universality of conflict but cannot identify a force that might lead out of it. It cannot take sides. It is more concerned with placing different capabilities within their appropriate context. Anti-political communism cannot stop conflict, it cannot progressively develop conflict, it cannot organise millions of people to agree with it, it cannot whisper the correct formula into important ears. Its capacity is highly constrained, it is a rare single cell life form... it is most of all capable of talking to itself, of continuing the dialectic between its DNA and its cytoplasm. It cannot change the world.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It does not throw in its lot with the proletariat?

**Sinéad O:** The proletariat is not a side to be chosen. Communism's anti-political turn is a 'survival' strategy... it has included the thought of its isolation, which is no greater than that of any other communist grouping, as an integral part of itself.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Rival theories of communism would find all this weak and avoidant.

**Sinéad O:** Not avoidance but an aversion to the politics of the left which requires a sacrifice of intelligence for the party, and of the party for the masses, of the masses for the ideal. I am embarrassed by, more than fearful of, the proposal that communism is a form of warfare against capitalism.

**A Whiskey Priest:** There will be violence at the beginning of communism.

**Sinéad O:** Yes, but where it occurs, the moment of violent separation from the established order is very short, there can be no prolonged engagement with revolution. The space between what went before and what comes next must be absolute and thus paper thin... the past must remain accessible but not determinative. Communism cannot survive a prolonged period of antagonism without defaulting on itself. It is not civil war and is incompatible with civil war. Where there is civil war, there is no communism. There can be no communist 'social war' as insurrectionists term it. There can be no 'revolutionary war' as left communists term it. Similarly, communism is not a crowd, it is not in 'the streets', it is not manifestations, it is not struggle. It is something altogether unobtrusive, it is a self-aware social relation. And there is no necessary relation between it and anything that has gone before.

**A Whiskey Priest:** On this question of relation to bodies of knowledge, I guess your term 'abject realism' makes unfavourable reference to the popular text *Capitalist Realism* by Mark Fisher. For all the descriptive power of his text, his political analysis remains quite conventional. Is this conventionality your problem with his thesis?

**Sinéad O:** I do not have a problem with it more than any other leftist text, it is mostly a fun read until the last chapter, but there are horrible manifestations of bland leftist politics within it. His diagnosis of proletarian teenage 'depressive hedonia' is very obviously made from outside the class, it is the diagnosis of a social professional who despairs of his students.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Teachers are managers, you have said that before, and no doubt his critique of managerialism is therefore managerialist.

**Sinéad O:** His version of the 'left' is incredibly weak, with most of his *third estatist* recommendations place teachers and lecturers centre stage (this is typically resultant of the emphasis on education as progressive). His formulation of the 'left' is beyond ugly: it should 'subordinate the state to the general will'; it should oppose to capitalist

globalisation the burden of its own 'authentic universality'; it should not 'keep going over Kronstadt.'

**A Whiskey Priest:** Yes, that part in particular is incredibly naive... as if the past may simply be cut off.

**Sinéad O:** This last point, which is a veiled call for the abandonment of the critique of Leninism (Kronstadt and NEP should no longer be talked about) in favour 'planning and organising for a future that it really believes in', is a leftist half-time team talk and thus chafes in the most delicate of places. There is no 'future', and its reality does not increase through anyone's belief in it... society will not, and must not, be based either on the future or belief. On the contrary, communism is a reorientation towards the past, to the dead. It is only where the ghosts of the past are laid to rest by their inclusion, the ghosts of Leninism as well, that human beings will begin to understand what society is. In other words, the revolution is nothing but an endless 'going over' of Kronstadt.

**A Whiskey Priest:** I felt my smile freeze and my heart shrink when I read this, 'The failure of previous forms of anti-capitalist political organisation should not be a cause for despair, but what needs to be left behind is a certain romantic attachment to the politics of failure, to the comfortable position of a defeated marginality.' As if any of this can be achieved by act of will. As if this left really were not a capitalist formation spouting third estatist platitudes.

**Sinéad O:** He has framed his work so that he does not have to engage the mechanism by which pro-revolutionaries, in the act of their victory, reproduce capitalist relations as the mode of that victory. The problem has not been 'defeat' and 'marginality' but success and centrality. In short, his presentation lacks the historical presentation of proletarian formations as provided by *Endnotes* and *Theorie Communiste*.

**A Whiskey Priest:** So, we don't have a problem with 'Capitalist Realism'. Not at all.

**Sinéad O:** We do seem to have got ourselves a trifle hot under the

collar.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Well, the anarchists like him but I have recently read similar neo-darwinist business pep-talks all over the media: 'The credit crisis is an opportunity – but it needs to be treated as a tremendous speculative challenge, a spur for a renewal that is not a return.'

**Sinéad O:** Yes, Caillois put it so much better in *The Winter Wind*. The advice to become more efficient in one's opposition, to become more credible as an alternative is anathema. Our project has always been to diminish our plausibility.

**A Whiskey Priest:** To be diminished to the size of Uriah Heep's thumb: *and when he presses it onto the table all the objects of the room bend towards it.*

**Sinéad O:** The thumb is inversely the measure of all things.

**A Whiskey Priest:** From a distance, with perspective.

**Sinéad O:** To become irrelevant, to disappear... the incredible shrinking critique.

**A Whiskey Priest:** To inhabit the helpless, the pole of the infinitesimal.

**Sinéad O:** The smallest voice.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The voice that is a remainder to all discourse, to articulate from within the position, as a politics, that which all politics disregards.

**Sinéad O:** As an accusation. The thumb of judgement, the point from which all things in the field may be inverted.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The point which does not even appear within the field. The point on which the thumb is placed.

**Sinéad O:** In the scene, find the ever so humble one, the one who is not assigned lines and...

**A Whiskey Priest:** And cause all the lines of all the characters to pour into him, as down a drain.

**Sinéad O:** In Brecht's *He who says Yes/He who says No*, we are presented with the burdensome figure, the one with the broken shoe, the one taken ill, the one who is injured, the old one, the child – the one who must be abandoned. We are presented with the question of the one who holds up the advance of the party, the one who does not judge but is judged. Without him, the project which has gone to war has a chance of success. With him, it has no chance. Should it kill him? Should it kill the Kulak?

**A Whiskey Priest:** And Brecht gives the burdensome one a voice, the capacity to make a judgement from his perspective on his relation to the goal of the party. If he insists on their care, the party must halt, the goal must be lost.

**Sinéad O:** If he insists that the party goes on, then he requests his own abandonment for the sake of the project of going to war.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What is that to Uriah Heep's thumb? What is that to the ever so humble?

**Sinéad O:** It is this. It is the question of the distribution of interpellated roles amongst a group of persons as they undertake a particular task (the leader; the rival; the wise man; the thug; the woman; the joker; the brilliant traitor, who is best of all; the burden). It is a question of the precipitation of the capacity to judge within the least capable of judgement... the problem is whether to make a judgement according to afflicted need, the path of Simone Weil, *I am in anguish, why?*, or whether to make a judgement according to the rationale of the group in relation to the task and its goal which seems to be the very glue which binds it together.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You are saying it is false to make this judgement. That judgement is no way out of predicament.

**Sinéad O:** Decision is no way out of predicament. The group is a constellation of roles held together because of the tension between

all its functions. No role is in the position to make a judgement of this sort, this Oates of the Antarctic type sacrifice which Brecht presents and which is typical of militarist thinking. Each position is the result of the tension between all the positions.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It is unfair to assign a judgement function to the thumb, the least powerful of the group because, like Heep, he would only transform his victimhood into a terrible vengeance, or else he would perform the logic of sacrifice as required by group instrumentality. Then what?

**Sinéad O:** Groups are not the locus of decision but of relation.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Shouldn't a distinction be made between decision and judgement?

**Sinéad O:** With reference to Brecht, clearly not as they are the same. Ordinarily, decisions are made between quantities whilst judgements are transformative events within the hierarchy of relations. With Brecht, a decision is always a precedent to be applied beyond the confines of the scene in which it appears, and thus performs the function of judgement. This is the basis of the *Lehrstücke*.

**A Whiskey Priest:** To return to *He who says, Yes...*, you are saying the weakling ought not be put into the position to pass judgement on either himself or the fate of the group as it is a false position.

**Sinéad O:** The group must allow its dissolution by exterior forces. As it arrives at the point of decision, so it has ceased to be. Where the question of decision, of judgement appears. It must refuse decision. It must do nothing.

**A Whiskey Priest:** So, no structure is capable of resolving the problem which appears within its constraints?

**Sinéad O:** All problems are resolved at a higher order of recursion than at which they appear. Adorno called Brecht a peasant moralist. The conundrums of Brecht's *Lehrstücke* tend to be weighted in the 'party's' favour but they are always falsely formulated and wrongly placed. Because Brecht wrote the plays in the stalinist moment, all

judgement's appeared in the form a clash of interest between a sullied collective and a pure individual – the 'lesson' to be drawn by the audience member is to think 'against' identifying with the individual in pain and to identify instead with the collective of which he is a part. But in real life such judgements cannot be made.

**A Whiskey Priest:** A reference to stochastic process no doubt.

**Sinéad O:** If we take the Maoist tendency towards self-critique by which the Party's logic is made to appear from the mouth of the individual as a means to condemn the individual for his failings to properly relate to the party we see both a category error in the confusion of individual ethical capacity and organisational rules. The individual is never the Organisation writ small as the latter is only ever the emergent result of the combination of factors which have produced it.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It is true that the logic of the *Lehrstücke* can be seen in groups such as 'The United Red Army' which we learn 'had 29 members and lost 14 by killing them in less than a year.'

**Sinéad O:** The clash between irreducible interests cannot be resolved by executive decision. Unexpectedly, and counter to Brecht's intention, the Party form is repudiated in the *Lehrstücke*. It attempts to take on a historically selective role when the actual function of all antagonistic formations is to present contradictions. Where the Party chooses against the individual interest it is subsumed as a gang and contrariwise, where it chooses in favour of the individual, it finds the logic of its reproduction as a discrete entity impossible to sustain from there on.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Then judgement dissolves structure.

**Sinéad O:** Where judgement is made the body within which it has appeared, is resolved otherwise.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You mean if a formation makes a decision then that formation becomes something other than when it was not making decisions.

**Sinéad O:** The 'judgements' relating to a group must be made outside of the group's internal relations.

**A Whiskey Priest:** This is something to do with recursion, something like Russell's attempt to resolve the paradox which bears his name and which he sets out as the rule: *a set cannot be a member of itself?*

**Sinéad O:** If groups are resultant of what can be called higher order 'judgements', then they are in no position to make selective decisions on their components. The group cannot externalise any part of itself without transforming into something else, i.e. being transformed onto the co-ordinates of a different, higher order, judgement.

**A Whiskey Priest:** If judgement is a heuristic technique, then it cascades through recursively set designated host-categories towards definition of an embedded but external object.

**Sinéad O:** To the 'law' through precedent. Heuristic descent is contrary to the idea of self-corrective or autopoietic systems... judgement seeks out the beyond, that element of any defined formation which self-regulation does not recognise.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The concept of heuristic descent is the key to your critique of 'the right' to self-judgement?

**Sinéad O:** The judgements of the fathers are inherited by the sons.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The fathers do not judge themselves.

**Sinéad O:** God's judgement becomes the Law for Abraham, Abraham's judgement becomes the law for Isaac. All subsequent generations remain 'Isaac' until a new judgement is made which will write the law (or operating code) for a different grouping of descendants.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The important point seems to be that the law is manifested in the host group, which embodies it but the members of this group cannot use it... they belong to it, it does not belong to them.

**Sinéad O:** The law is manifested by displacement through the



generations but not in an accessible form. The descent of judgement transforms the sons' world into a collateral world. Through inheritance of tradition, their lives become incidental to the transmission of the tradition.

**A Whiskey Priest:** We see this in the 'generations' referred to by the Russian intelligentsia (most explicitly by Turgenev) and in the Generations of the Red Army Fraction.

**Sinéad O:** This latter case is readily appreciable because it is so familiar. That which was latent in the first generation, meaninglessness, authoritarianism, caprice, all buried behind purpose, ideology, critique became manifest in the third generation as its defining characteristics; hence Fassbinder's satire.

**A Whiskey Priest:** To return this to the imperative of 'doing nothing', the act of judgement skews the field for those who come later.

**Sinéad O:** Groups receive judgement, they are precipitated by judgement. They do not make judgements relevant to themselves but are vehicles of law for later others. Where groups seek to judge, they diminish the field of reference for their descendants for whom such judgements become constitutive Law. This tendency is clearly seen in the SI where it is addressed, in 'The Veritable Split'. The pro-situ inherits the judgements of the SI as his Law.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Then to 'do nothing' means to live without judgement.

**Sinéad O:** It is to live open to judgements, to organise as a receptacle for receiving judgement.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You are being satirical, you are attempting to engage the ideology of self-organisation; to think it in other terms.

**Sinéad O:** I assure you, I am not joking. The role of the group is to live against the idea that its role is to make judgements, to inscribe its principles onto the world. It is rather to inherit the principles of its formation and thus engage them.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It reads but does not make the laws of its tradition?

**Sinéad O:** The group, properly configured, does not self-correct but is itself externally corrected by its environment. Its success or failure is decided outside of its own activities. It ought not to seek to ensure its survival by manipulation of the environment of which it is a product.

**A Whiskey Priest:** The natural form of life does not seek victory over its environment...

**Sinéad O:** As an analogy, it does seek to 'communist' but to be communised. The communist group does not bring communism, it waits for communism to organise it. It seeks 'defeat' by its environment, or at least partial defeat... in this case, 'doing nothing' defines an acceptance of constraint. Where the natural form of life is victorious over its environment it becomes a plague, and then collapses. The group must not seek to judge the world but to be judged by it. It must not seek to project itself onto the world but must sense the world within itself.

**A Whiskey Priest:** There is a form of inverted arrogance here, you are treading a very fine line.

**Sinéad O:** It is precarious just like a mattress balances on a bottle of wine.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Your entire rational has something ugly in it. 'For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction. Here a resentment without equal is in control, something with an insatiable instinct and will to power, which wants to become master, not over something in life but over life itself, over its deepest, strongest, most basic conditions; here an attempt is being made to use one's power to block up the sources of that power; here one directs one's green and malicious gaze against one's inherent physiological health, particularly against its means of expression—beauty, joy—while one experiences and seeks for a feeling of pleasure in mistrust, atrophy, pain, accident, ugliness, voluntary loss, self-denial, self-flagellation, self-sacrifice.\* All this is paradoxical to the highest degree. Here we stand in front

of a dichotomy which essentially wants a dichotomy, which enjoys itself in this suffering and always gets even more self-aware and more triumphant in proportion to the decrease in its own prerequisite, the physiological capacity for life. “Triumph precisely in the ultimate agony” —under this supreme sign the ascetic ideal has fought from time immemorial. Inside this riddle of seduction, in this picture of delight and torment, it sees its highest light, its salvation, its final victory. Crux, nux, lux [cross, nut, light]—for the ascetic ideal these are all one thing.’

**Sinéad O:** We re-instigate the ascetic ideal after reading Nietzsche.

**A Whiskey Priest:** There is a coldness in it, which others identify, which causes your unpopularity. There is a calculating coldness which is the antithesis of ‘involvement’ no matter how muddle-headed. Most people would prefer to be theoretically incorrect but active than whatever it is you are calling for. Even if you are intellectually coherent and perhaps even fully justified in your analysis... there is something wrong, deeply wrong in the position that you have arrived at.

**Sinéad O:** It is true that we must play the white and the black pieces. It has fallen to us to appear more like Iago than Cassio. But it is a work in progress, we re-calibrate our position according to the knowledge that we gain.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You preach failure and defeat.

**Sinéad O:** But only for particular lines of descent. We wish harm on the constraints of our field which are the result of ‘traditions’. We despise belief. We wish to contribute to the further confounding of ‘class struggle’ anarchism because of its unmanifested aesthetics, we wish for it to be swept from the world, particularly in its syndicalist form.

**A Whiskey Priest:** That is *ressentiment*, a priestly vision of revenge. The vision of the ascetic ideal. Even in its most debased form as it appears in anarcho-syndicalism, there remains an active communist component which all true communists should seek to preserve.

**Sinéad O:** There is a prescribed pseudo-communist component which is not worth the paper it is written on – in practice, the proposed goal is in fact secondary to the organisationalist method. Communism is not the victory of communist organisations, there is literally no relation between the two. On the contrary anarcho-syndicalism is an ideology which defends more of the object of its critique than it is able to frame for criticism. We are primarily concerned with those aspects of capitalised being which ‘class struggle’ anarchism is unable to identify, and in particular its own capitalised traits.

**A Whiskey Priest:** I cannot see the appeal. It is a cold-eyed rejection of the wish to change the world for the better.

**Sinéad O:** That may or may not be true but we articulate something that has not been articulated within this context before. To return to Nietzsche, we tighten our distress into a bow-string for it to become a ‘magnificent tension of soul’ with which we aim ‘at the furthest of goals.’ In trying to impede malign lines of descent (to which we belong as much as anyone else) we hope to expand the field of engagement for all those who arrive later. We are fond fathers to the unborn generations, we are tender-hearted... in opposing reductionist militancy we wish to facilitate other, softer voices, or at least the voices of the soft boys. Jarvis Cocker framed our means if not our goal: ‘There won’t be fighting in the streets.’

**A Whiskey Priest:** You do want to have an effect?

**Sinéad O:** We do want to publish our findings.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What does ‘publish’ mean? What are the intentions behind it?

**Sinéad O:** The act of ‘publication’ calculates for an optimal context, but then must content itself with the context that is available. From the outset, we must acknowledge that our readers are in their one’s and two’s and are not numbered hundreds and thousands... and if they were a multitude, we would have to alter the parameters of our undertaking in order to shed the great majority of them. The world will not listen and to a large degree we work on the assumption

of it not listening – it's not listening facilitates the lightness of our undertakings. To a large degree we seek our unpopularity and conspire with it.

**A Whiskey Priest:** We are laughing cavaliers. I mean, carefree avant gardists.

**Sinéad O:** Turning away from the world.

**A Whiskey Priest:** To be with our own laughter.

**Sinéad O:** Amen.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Humour in knowledge, its intensity, its heat, is chills and dies where it is shared.

**Sinéad O:** We treasure the hermetic jests above all else.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It is the source of who we are.

**Sinéad O:** Whenever two, or three are gathered together then they shall perform the parrot sketch.

**A Whiskey Priest:** It is an ex-parrot.

**All.** It has ceased to be.

**Sinéad O:** So it is that the publishing of our findings, as a ritual of closure, must flood the need for connection with a strong sensation of unburdening, of confession perhaps. We would very much prefer not to go down the route of seeking, or expecting an external response.

**A Whiskey Priest:** We will never win a popularity contest.

**Sinéad O:** No. Nobody within the pro-communist milieu will ever win a popularity contest. We are the relatively more unpopular figures within a field of hopeless outcasts. But, it is in the nature of critique to take the path otherwise not taken... it would be a very strange occurrence indeed, if a multitude of others thought that deliberately travelling in the wrong direction down the way to think was a good move.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You make it all sound quite sordid.

**Sinéad O:** We assume that we are moved by the basest of motives. It is an assumption which equates the 'race to the bottom' with honesty.

**A Whiskey Priest:** I suppose from down there you are looking at the stars?

**Sinéad O:** Well, that is our excuse. But the question of communication comes down to something like the options described in the useful, if discredited, theory of r/K selection.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You don't want lots of low grade followers, you just want a few of higher quality?

**Sinéad O:** We are only capable of elaborating our analyses through fairly prolonged contact with others. By necessity, these others, who are produced as we are produced, through the elaboration of our field, must be few in number, we do not have the capacity for anything else. Our analysis is anti-propagandistic... it has its aura of particularity, it does not involve the extrapolation of a truth that is otherwise endlessly applicable to the masses.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Or to most.

**Sinéad O:** Or to any. Statistically, nobody is interested in this.

**A Whiskey Priest:** This seems like an after the fact rationalisation, a defence mechanism.

**Sinéad O:** Undoubtedly. I would prefer to be captain of the football team. But where one is thwarted there one must flourish.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Even so, there is something distasteful about a project which is not prepared to defend itself, but which waits passively to be discovered.

**Sinéad O:** Yes, it is a project which does not recognise bravery as a category for self-legitimation.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You would not fight and die for what you believe?

**Sinéad O:** No.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Explain.

**Sinéad O:** We do not believe. We analyse, we conduct critique and experiment. We find things out. We are not contributing to, that is to say, we are not working for, communism. It would be more accurate to say we are working *about* communism... it is our 'home' but we remain unfamiliar with it. Whatever we undertake is neither a groundworks nor a prefiguration of what a communist relation might be. It is external to our activities. But we must return to the site of it, which is sacred to us, even though we ourselves have removed the structures built there and have allowed the forest to retake it. Whatever we do, neither adds anything to, nor takes anything away from, the communist social relation. For this reason, in order to demonstrate our remoteness, we are drawn to unenthusiastic sacrilege. For us communism is a field of strenuous philosophical endeavour, not a territory to be militarily defended.

**A Whiskey Priest:** (It is strange that you term what you do 'philosophy') And this field of your endeavour appears where, for others?

**Sinéad O:** That is a good question. It is not a set of principles which must supplant other sets of principles. It does not enter a disputed territory and compete. It is not an enemy. We are not an enemy. And we must return to the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, as this sets the question of what is to be done at a slightly higher level of formulation to that of leninism. It seems that it falls to us to lapse into the role of interpretive philosophers (an inaccurate term for what we are) in the white space created by Marx's injunction, if only to counter the historical disaster of his formulation.

**A Whiskey Priest:** But isn't a return to 'interpreting the world' parasitic on 'doing something'?

**Sinéad O:** Parasitic is always an unfortunate word.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Aren't you dependent on what you criticise?

**Sinéad O:** There is no pathology if that is your concern. We are not obsessed with scoring points against leftists and activists. In Marx's formulation we do not find the agent of change... we do not find the activities 'change' or 'interpretation'. However, we are deposited in the same field as these others... as it is for them, our concern is with both the process of social change and the formation of a benign human society.

**A Whiskey Priest:** But you are not contributing to either.

**Sinéad O:** That is not for any of us to say for sure. It would be fair to say we are not directly contributing to either but it is possible that on an other day on another planet, some of what we have said positively contributes at some important juncture, or that by some accident we might find ourselves at that juncture with the responsibility for making an important intervention.

**A Whiskey Priest:** To make a judgement?

**Sinéad O:** To be transformed into something else by such a judgement.

**A Whiskey Priest:** In relation to a disputed territory. For example the territory described by the traditions of leninism and anarchist critiques of leninism, where does your position appear?

**Sinéad O:** To the North perhaps.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Where is it located, how is it oriented to a struggle between certain principle based practices.

**Sinéad O:** In truth, it does not appear at all in direct relation to the discursive domains of 'what is to be done', and 'how is it to be done'. It perhaps covers the same territory, it may appear out of those discourses as an exit from their logics, but only becomes visible at certain points of exhaustion and defeat. It is a crepuscular phenomenon.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Then, the experience of failure and defeat are a

necessary precondition of your project.

**Sinéad O:** It is a loser discourse, yes.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What does that mean in relation to the imperative to change the world... you are a pessimist, a fatalist?

**Sinéad O:** It means that the world changes but rarely according to principled activity, and then rarely in accordance with that principle activity. There is instead a relation within change that is not articulated by principles... this internal process between parts is very quiet and impossible to ventriloquise, but it might be possible to make space for it to do its work at twilight.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Practically, this seems to involve some sort of parallel occupation of the same territory as described by pro-revolutionary discourse. That is to say, your endeavour seems, shall we say, dependent upon the domain of 'what is to be done?' Your endeavour seems to involve little more than inverting the crosses of pro-revolutionary discourse, it has become a sort of fetishistic devil worship. Why not describe a quite other territory, an independent 'field of endeavour.'

**Sinéad O:** This has something to do with history, something to do with idealism, something to do with the origin of our ideas. *Historically*, there can be no authentic field of endeavour which takes the process of social change as its object but which is also wholly divorced from the discourse which this process has already developed. We have no choice but to pitch our tent in the field we are deposited within. This is not to say we are not disgusted by the history of dishonesty which characterises the discourse of change. This is not to say we are not repulsed by its present day practitioners. This is not to say we do not wish to breathe in the air that is free from those traditions. We do want to escape but we cannot. On the question of *idealism*: communism is for us a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality (will) have to adjust itself. We reject the argument that communism is a real movement which abolishes the present state of things, from the premises now in existence. Our idealism begins from an assumption that everything presently

articulated, only articulates the present. This includes the critique of the present conducted in the name of 'communism.' Finally, on the matter of our *provenance*, our narrative begins in those discourses, within that territory, which we seek to leave but within which we are constrained to stay; it remains an intimate part of who we are. Jesus said, *let he who has ears, hear!*

**A Whiskey Priest:** You use that phrase quite regularly. What does it mean?

**Sinéad O:** Theoretically, it means it is possible only to communicate with those who are able to adequately respond. Practically, it means regulating one's flame just short of extinguishment.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Aesthetically, it is possible to go much much further than you have already gone, and yet something in your project causes you to correct the runaway into isolation with a sort of appeal, a call.

**Sinéad O:** Yes, a howl. There is something of the world within us, even as we withdraw as far as possible from the world. The world is the source of the call which passes through us. It is the element that renders our findings worldly, or socialisable, to use the jargon. It is the world-historical element in our analysis that is communicable to others (supposing it were to be converted thus by some ideal reader).

**A Whiskey Priest:** It seems though that this flame that you nurture; this relation of the tension to the territory of the discourse of change which you maintain; and through that domain, the tensed involvement with the processes of the world; this channelling of a call which you allow; this tendency to self-correction, all of this suggests 'doing something' more than it does 'doing nothing.'

**Sinéad O:** Doing nothing obviously supposes some elements of doing something. It supposes a conscious agent, it supposes a sensitivity before the question of activity, it supposes the verb 'doing', it supposes a tensed up ambiguity in the concept of 'nothing' which plays variously between: not doing 'anything', not doing this thing, and deliberately and actively doing nothing. In all this, there is at least

a minimum of activity.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You have used this text before, so I will quote Stephen Jay Gould here as a reference for minimal activity: 'For reasons related to the chemistry of life's origin and the physics of self-organisation, the first living things arose at the lower limit of life's conceivable, preservable complexity. Call this lower limit the "left wall" for an architecture of complexity. Since so little space exists between the left wall and life's initial bacterial mode in the fossil record, only one direction for future increment exists - toward greater complexity at the right. Thus, every once in a while, a more complex creature evolves and extends the range of life's diversity in the only available direction. In technical terms, the distribution of complexity becomes more strongly right skewed through these occasional additions.'

**Sinéad O:** Yes, the left wall, at which 'doing nothing' appears as a minimum activity casts a different illumination over what is possible and what tasks might be undertaken.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Then it is a ruse, a brechtian *verfremdungseffekt*.

**Sinéad O:** It is both a way in and an attempt to describe a wholly different field. Or rather, it is an attempt to describe the same territory but with different constraints, as if under ultraviolet light.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Okay, but to what purpose more than simply exercising the avant gardist's schtick of 'defamiliarising' the banally familiar.

**Sinéad O:** I think there is an attempt to describe another 'path', what we have called a therapeutic path.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Which you have set against, what you describe as the adversarial conventions of 'going to war' which is the predominant register in which the discourse of change is made to appear?

**Sinéad O:** Change assumes an earlier state of structural contradiction, and this is always expressed in society and in individuals as violent incoherence. However, a theoretical error occurs wherever the

discourse of change over-identifies with a particular subjective form as it appears enmeshed in that contradiction. The agent of change, the subject, does not simply articulate the 'way out' from contradiction, it is the contradiction. In other words, the subject is as expressive of the entirety of its conditions as those externalised elements which it sets itself against, as if they were mere obstacles on its path.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Communist change involves the abolition of the subject every bit as much as its conditions.

**Sinéad O:** The hold over society by the entire contradictory relation must be released.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Because if the subject survives it will compulsively seek out the conditions which generated it.

**Sinéad O:** The subject which struggles against its conditions, thereby reproduces them... it is an integral, essential, element in the full articulation of the relation which is thus articulated through 'class warfare.'

**A Whiskey Priest:** If we return to Brecht and discuss his play, *The Measures Taken*, we might get a clearer idea of the opposition you have set up between 'going to war' and the 'therapeutic path'.

**Sinéad O:** *The Measures Taken* assumes an identity between the goals of the Party and communism, between the interest of the Party and the interest of the membership, between the politics of the Party and the revolution, between the role of the party and the role of the proletariat. Within this field, as it is presented within *The Measures Taken* the contradictions as they are made to appear are identifiable as the nonconformity of the secondary components with the unifying aspects of the primary functions of the Party form. These are resolved in favour of the project of unification within the Party's primary function:

*The individual has only two eyes / The Party has a thousand eyes / The party can see seven lands / The individual a single city / The individual has only his hour / The party*

*has many hours / The individual can be annihilated / But the party cannot be annihilated / For it is the vanguard of the masses / And it lays out its battles / According to the methods of our classics, which are derived from / The recognition of reality.*

**A Whiskey Priest:** Terrifyingly innocent.

**Sinéad O:** The plot of the play involves the execution of the 'Young Comrade' by the 'Three Agitators' for his failure to fall into line and follow orders. His body is thrown into a lime pit in order to remove all trace of his existence within the Party. His disappearance is enforced so that his error will not gain any future followers and the Party may reproduce itself in a purer form. Brecht conceives the communist movement, in accordance with Marx's theory of 'fetters' on the productive relation, in terms of the progressive eradication of error and the correlative advance of 'use-structure' coherence. The implication is that the pure internal coherence of the Party is infinitely transferable across the world. Brecht's communism is made identical with the process of correcting identified faults as they appear within the Party's field of action. Communism thus conceived is a war against error waged for the purpose of coherent organisation. It is easy to locate the problem within this vulgarity but it is present latently as a submerged moral code within all projects of social transformation. That this code is inherently dangerously lunatic cannot be disputed by any historically minded person, the question though is how to constrain it, if it cannot be entirely suppressed.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Evidently, there is a problem in 'going to war' against 'going to war'.

**Sinéad O:** Often, that is what we are left with, it is the least worst option but perhaps it is not the only option.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You mentioned earlier the problem in which the pro-revolutionary group must inhabit a 'collateral world', by which you mean the surplus environmental constraints which inhibit the function of the group, and the constraints being the solidification of the judgements of earlier incarnations of the group.

**Sinéad O:** We see this heuristic descent clearly in Brecht.

**A Whiskey Priest:** How is the group to escape the collateral world?

**Sinéad O:** It cannot escape it but must bring it to full consciousness. Communism if it is anything is the release of social tensions at a higher than symptomatic level. The group must engage its fate which is to inhabit that which has been written as a condition of its formation. One of the outcomes of collateralism is the henchman, the sort of characteristic that Brecht endorses. We see the henchman figure manifested throughout the pro-revolutionary milieu.

**A Whiskey Priest:** How would you define the henchman figure?

**Sinéad O:** He is crystallised in the anticipation of orders perhaps never to be given. Brecht's impetuous 'Young Comrade' becomes prey to henchman consciousness in the form of the 'Three Agitators'. The henchman always responds to the implications of authority's eternal complaint: 'Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?'

**A Whiskey Priest:** A henchman seeks to echo in his behaviour what he perceives to be the crucial mannerisms of the dominant male.

**Sinéad O:** He is no mere subordinate, he does not respond to 'orders' but seeks to autonomously 'anticipate' what it is that the dominant male most desires. He thereby proves his allegiance and his value to the leader. In acting autonomously he also preserves his sense of self-worth... he has freely chosen to act in such a way. He has nothing to add and nothing to say, he has suppressed his own intelligence, which is traitorous. On his own account, he agrees with the established conventions and having not the imagination to add to them seeks to embellish what is already in place with his boundless enthusiasm. A henchman, a yes-man, makes his jokes in support of convention. He is what Lear's fool contradicts. Where henchmen are present, there is a problem of organisation.

**A Whiskey Priest:** You perceive this personified problem of organisation in current pro-revolutionary formations.

**Sinéad O:** It is easily identifiable on internet discussion forums and

particularly amongst anarcho-syndicalists or similar groups which straddle informal/formal structures.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What is the alternative to henchman consciousness?

**Sinéad O:** There is no alternative, it is an outcome of a heuristic descent within organisationalist traditions.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Even so, if the henchman consciousness is brought to our attention, what do we do with our knowledge of it?

**Sinéad O:** They cannot be defeated. They are an irreducible manifestation of human stupidity. The single most disenchanting feature of the ideology of revolutionary change is that the predominant characteristic of its proponents is abject realism. This inherited perversity is beyond anything we could deliberately invent. Revolutionary organisations are inherently counterrevolutionary.

**A Whiskey Priest:** This is obvious. I want to get to the nuts and bolts of 'doing nothing' but you seem fixated on your own disenchantment. What happens once you have got past trying to talk to imbeciles? What happens next?

**Sinéad O:** The imbeciles are always with us, we are in relation to them. They move against us.

**A Whiskey Priest:** But you talk of bringing such character formations to consciousness. What is the point of it? Is it the case that the manifested is more easily swept away by the Winter Wind than that which remains latent and unconscious? Is some sort of redemptive, or therapeutic, transference possible once all has been brought to the surface?

**Sinéad O:** These are not questions I feel able to answer. I need a way into what you are talking about.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Okay, what is the influence of taoist concept of Wu Wei, or for that matter, Casteneda's 'not doing'?

**Sinéad O:** The charlatanry of Casteneda is probably hard-programmed

into our project through my early reading of him. My idea of fiction comes from him, and the exigency of making things up. His idea of 'not-doing', as I remember, is illustrated by his attempt to not see the leaves of the tree he is contemplating but rather he tries to focus on the shadows between the leaves. I am not sure of the profundity of this as every visual artist lifts the image by engaging its shadows. Even so, for Casteneda there is something else, the shadows are their own world: not-seeing the tree but privileging its shadows causes a field of perception to emerge which does not 'map' onto the object... it is a separate field. I don't want to go into Wu Wei, how is one to make a claim for it? But, yes, Casteneda, a discredited charlatan, that is an appropriate figure to study... something else is to be located in his shadows which has been worn away in the exaggerated claims by association with the idea of Wu Wei.

**A Whiskey Priest:** How do you live in the shadow, tear at the shadow?

**Sinéad O:** The field of doing is populated by objects that come to hand. The shadows are fixed in one direction as in Rohmer's *L'Amour l'après-midi*, there is movement of and in affect but then a resetting to the original arrangement. However, the habitualised organisation of the field by intent causes as much to disappear into the shadows as is illuminated. Intent is a means of closure.

**A Whiskey Priest:** So, both intent and closure are objects of your critique?

**Sinéad O:** Foreclosure yes. Intent is inescapable. But it must be made to work hard for its object.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What is the field of shadows, the field of doing nothing in relation to this?

**Sinéad O:** Art is separated from didacticism by the fields of white that are opened up around the art object.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Its aura, aura all the time with you.

**Sinéad O:** I look dead beat.



A Whiskey Priest: O stands for aura. And Brecht's didacticism reduces aesthetics to education.

**Sinéad O:** But *l'art pour l'art*...

A whiskey priest: it presents an object developed to the finest point of ambivalence...

**Sinéad O:** ...between meaning and meaninglessness.

A Whiskey Priest: We are not artists but we use didacticism against itself, aesthetically...

**Sinéad O:** ...our task is to present a work which, even in the very act of its expository insistence, must create a white space which it does not describe.

A Whiskey Priest: *The secret to the successful collage is the quality of saturated white space that percolates through it.*

**Sinéad O:** We use hard theory to create a white space that is not shadowed by the objects described by hard theory.

A Whiskey Priest: We foreclose by critique on the possibilities inherent to specific territories in order to open undescribed and non-territorial spaces elsewhere.

**Sinéad O:** The whiteness comprises that space which escapes the inheritances captured within the heuristic cascade of judgment.

A Whiskey Priest: Inheritance is unavoidable, judgment as an exception becomes the rules for living, but you seem to suggest that Debord is now wrong, even if he was not at the time, when he said men resemble their times more than their fathers.

**Sinéad O:** The historical, and thus the 'times' of any group of men, is a category that has been eclipsed by lines of genealogical descent.

A Whiskey Priest: How is descent countered?

**Sinéad O:** Not directly. The project within which descent has

become so integral as an explanation of society and the natural world seeks to manage the logistics of change both from the past through the present into the future... it wishes to map what could happen next and to ensure that that which is favourable to its interests is sufficiently facilitated. This is no different to Brecht's idea of the Party as a self-perfecting social/historical mechanism. The past always throws its shadows onto what is possible in the terrain of the future but there is also always an interruptive white space that is not pre-prepared for the descent of judgments.

A Whiskey Priest: This is quite a difficult concept, can it be presented in other terms?

**Sinéad O:** In the discourse of evolutionary biology the white space available to any particular species represents its capacity to respond to changes in environment. Where a species has become over-adapted to very specialised conditions, the white space available to it is extremely limited and so any change to its environment could be catastrophic for it. Contrariwise, relatively non-specialised species have relatively more white space available to them, they are more capable to adapt or to learn to cope with a wider range of environmental conditions. As communists, being a future-orientated species, white space, the space not already territorialised by the descent of judgment, is its home environment... communists seek out an optimal environment for immediately lived relations not encumbered by the weight of dead labour.

A Whiskey Priest: If you were to describe the tree of doing nothing how would its topography differ from that of Casteneda's tree of not-doing?

**Sinéad O:** The tree of doing nothing is laden with winter berries if bereft of leaves. Fieldfares, waxwings, redwings, blackbirds and song thrushes approach the tree from different angles and scoff the fruits that are available to them from the branches on which they perch. When they cannot reach any more fruit, they fly out of the tree into another and then return again to the fruit tree but from a different direction. This brings them to a different branch on which to perch and more berries become available to them.

**A Whiskey Priest:** If it, *doing nothing* could be represented visually, what would it look like?

**Sinéad O:** My first thought is something like a comet as it might be presented as a woodcut. The black head of the thing set in a white tapering sheath that is set in a relentless darkness. It is a thing set in motion, a signal from the past. It has no volition of its own, it is a record that is also passing through the present. My next thought is of a tree in blossom, perhaps Hegel's tree as it really is. The cherry blossom is a fragile and momentary phenomenon, and yet also eternally cyclical.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Then, not Hegel's tree but Weil's blossom.

**Sinéad O:** *Doing nothing* is a puzzle set at the entrance of the overwhelming puzzle of 'what is to be done?' By taking this *via negativa* we find something which can be perceived, as Weil says, in both its 'utter permanence' and its 'extreme fragility.' It is a militant position against human planning, and yet also an agitation for ambivalence in relation to materialist-determinism.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Above all, the anti-political communist, the dupontist, the 'pro-revolutionary' (as it was originally conceived) is ambivalent about the field in which he appears... precisely because this field, and what his function is within it, is set before his own appearance... his every act contributes to and is expressive of that which he also fundamentally opposes.

**Sinéad O:** That is not a question.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What form of organisation do you advocate?

**Sinéad O:** For ourselves, closed formalism is always the ideal. The purchase of a monastery and lands. A chivalric code of honour. A network of sanctuaries across the world. It would work something like Pirandello's *Enrico IV* a theatrical performance in which each of us plays both the deluded and collaborator in delusion. But in reality a lose and ever flickering set of communications between individuals who are always about to lapse into silence.

**A Whiskey Priest:** How do you reproduce yourselves if you do not recruit?

**Sinéad O:** We are like the Jazz men. We are always the last of a dying breed, but then there is always a next last representative.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What is the process by which another becomes a dupontist or whatever you are called?

**Sinéad O:** We use the SI procedure by which the applicant must submit a substantial critique of one of our formulations. It is a request that nobody has ever completed – a source of amusement to us.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Then how do they arrive at your barred door if they do not use that route?

**Sinéad O:** I don't know. My guess would be that of those people who get denounced for promoting a similar version of revolutionary defeatism as ours one or two will follow up the framing of that denunciation... if they are accused of 'dupontism' they might then investigate the term and some way further down the line they might consider that those ideas are similar to theirs at which point they might want to send us their substantial critique.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Who were you denounced as?

**Sinéad O:** I think I have been more mocked than denounced. And more ignored than mocked.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Who, of all the billions in the world, is going to be attracted by such formulations? If an individual wishes to change the world then he will not want to follow a path which negates that wish at every step. And if the question 'what is to be done?' never occurs to an individual, then your response, 'do nothing' would be entirely superfluous.

**Sinéad O:** You are right. But this is not an appeal to the masses. We assume that our readers have already set certain questions to themselves and answered them in such a way that they have become, how shall I put this, peculiarly dissatisfied. Anyone contemplating

reading this text must be discontented with the proposals made by those positions which present 'change' more straightforwardly. Such individuals must have already entered into an irregular orbit around the question of intended social change.

**A Whiskey Priest:** Communism assumes the participation of all, not some mystical quest.

**Sinéad O:** The sorting mechanism for every individual human consciousness is formed, from childhood to adult, through history to the present, by incalculably subtle interactions. Every man is an accident. Each component in every consciousness is activated by the erasure of earlier components. We are wholly bound into our conditions but we cannot trace back those determinations – what we are is closed to us because our consciousness is the result of the erasure of our construction. And for communists, the determination of their consciousness by their conditions is that bit more complex, more untraceable and yet not less bound into the selective/erasing process. The thought of communists against their conditions is determined by their conditions – a strange and perverse paradox and so rare that it is highly improbable that such thinking (thinking against the condition that conditions the thought; a recording of determination set against the process of recording) could ever become widespread. Every communist is a comet travelling outwards from the past to the past through the empty dark.

**A Whiskey Priest:** A dark head in a tapering white sheath.

**Sinéad O:** Most of these comet-communists, becoming fearful, and end up committing to some or other ideal of the Party form, or a subjective representation of communism itself. But there is no objective need for them to do so... their true role, it is not a role but a trait... that is to say, to live according to their true character, the communists must keep heading outwards, recording the process of their own erasure. The communist project can recognise no 'victory' against conditions...

**A Whiskey Priest:** But the comet returns.

**Sinéad O:** The comet returns. And the blossom returns every year, it is fragile and momentary but it is also eternal.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What was I? Still a human being? Or was I the man of the future? Would other beings follow me into this vast new world?

**Sinéad O:** I looked up, as if somehow I would grasp the heavens. The universe, worlds beyond number, God's silver tapestry spread across the night.

**A Whiskey Priest:** And I felt my body dwindling, melting, becoming nothing.

**Sinéad O:** My fears melted away. And in their place came acceptance.

**A Whiskey Priest:** One finds meaning in the universe where there is none. The communist looks for communism which is the meaning of that which he knows cannot be.

**Sinéad O:** The communist travels on, he carries a message, a principle, out into the universe. But the message decays and becomes increasingly incomprehensible, increasingly inappropriate, the more often he repeats it. The message is dissolved by the universe.

**A Whiskey Priest:** As with William Basinski's *Disintegration Loops*.

**Sinéad O:** And yet the decay, the loss of what he has to say, in the lapsing of his memory of his purpose also preserves his message in its purist form... the message carries his negative relation to the world. All information is information of difference... the communist message is the place where the message of communism flickers and tears. He travels but not by his own volition. He is set in motion, but not entirely in accordance with the universe. Even as he conforms to the movement of what has created him, there is something of him that refuses it in its entirety.

**A Whiskey Priest:** What is the message of this comet-communist?

**Sinéad O:** I am wholly determined by the conditions which produced

me, and I protest against them.'

**A Whiskey Priest:** Doesn't the principle of doing nothing just mean, 'to hell with it, I'm going to do whatever I want'?

**Sinéad O:** Now is the moment to talk about Borodino, let us commemorate it as it is two hundred years to the very day that it was fought. Tolstoy presents the paradox by which Napoleon's 'victory' in this battle articulates the defeat of his campaign. He has Kutuzov speak on military outcomes and their non-relatedness to decisive actions: *I'll tell you what to do,' he pursued, since Prince Andrei still did not reply. 'I'll tell you what to do, and what I do. Dans le doute, mon cher,' he paused, 'abstiens-toi.' He spoke the words with slow emphasis. 'When in doubt, my dear fellow, do nothing'. We fly out from the tree of doing nothing and then we fly back into it from another direction.*

**A Whiskey Priest:** Is all this a joke?

**Sinéad O:** If someone laughs, it is a joke.



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