

self interview

no.6

self-laceration
as a season in the life-world
(a play for voices)

**frère
dupont**



<https://insipidities.blogspot.com>
<http://thetheologicalturn.blogspot.com>
<http://editor-horns.blogspot.com>

Horns: Then, that's it. A way out. Writing no more.

Insp: *No more writing!*

Horns: Let us become adjusted to our own quiet.

Insp: Let us become adjusted to unwriting.

other occasions, we should have allowed others to follow their own path, and not interfered, not intervened - not attempted to bind them into a common cause. We should have remained aloof - silent. The question we must ask ourselves is whether there are any socialised structures in our project that have been materialised through the phases of our self-destructiveness.

Insp: We cannot know. That which is truly relevant must be taken up at another level of recursion. However, we do know that we have not found an adequately active readership and therefore we can deduce that nobody is working within our categories.

TT: If we have failed, and we have failed, in that we have not attained an appropriate level of coherence to justify our existence to the world spirit, then we can at least comfort ourselves that the scale of our failure is not greater than that of others - we have not failed, for example, *more* the situationists, who are our only relevant orientation point of the post-war years. We have been weak. We have been driven by a self-contempt we could not face. We have squandered life in the attempt to alter its conditions when we should have simply lived within them.

Insp: We can forgive ourselves that. We can let it go. None of this matters.

TT: It doesn't really matter. It would have been better if we had remained silent.

Insp: We can forgive ourselves. We can afford to show mercy.

Horns: Then, are we resolved? Shall we relinquish *this* writing? And put ourselves out of our misery? Are we agreed, *shall there be no more writing?*

Insp: What, just when we have secured our eternal irrelevance?

TT: There shall be no more writing! We are agreed because we must agree.

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and roast it before the twilight was over. I felt nauseated. He very patiently talked to me as if he were talking to a child. He said that the powers that guided men or animals had led that particular rabbit to me, in the same way they will lead me to my own death. He said the rabbit's death had been a gift for me in exactly the same way my own death will be a gift for something or someone else. I was dizzy. The simple events of that day had crushed me. I tried to think that it was only a rabbit; I could not, however, shake off the uncanny identification I had had with it. Don Juan said that I needed to eat some of its meat, if only a morsel, in order to validate my finding. "I can't do that," I protested meekly. "We are dregs in the hands of those forces," he snapped at me. "So stop your self-importance and use this gift properly." I picked up the rabbit; it was warm. Don Juan leaned over and whispered in my ear, "Your trap was his last battle on earth. I told you, he had no more time to roam in this marvellous desert."

Insp: It is a revealing passage. We are thus presented with the alternatives of Debord's self-destructive externalisations and Casteneda's self-destructive pity. What potentially redeems both errors is an 'other' other content hidden at the heart of their projects... a socialising or objective structuring which fixes to the contradictory energies of self-destructiveness and deflects them. If something fundamentally unpleasant (and un-situationist) did lie at the heart of the SI's internal relations, driving them to error and disintegration, then at least some of the tension was directed towards setting out new registers in which the human community might be better understood - or as Camatte would say, towards the deepening of the mode of capitalist being.

TT: It is true, there is a point, as Freud observed of the dream work, past which interpretation no longer contributes anything. I forget the designated name he gives for this point, but it suggests a hidden content that may be allowed to remain so. In pursuit of knowledge of self, we have committed both Debord's and Casteneda's errors, and fallen into the same traps... at times we should have been merciless when instead we were indulgent. On

acknowledging it, we can then proceed to query the necessity of self-harm in the process of realisation of external objects. Self-loathing is one of the drives for all human activity, it is the primary hidden content of what is called *motivation*. It is relevant because it is an essential component in the process of transforming the context... it should not be thought of as a 'thing' but a kinetic heuristic, a processive rite. It does not rest like a lump of clay, or sit like a fog, it is frenetic and bounces off the walls of the self. We seek to change the world firstly because we cannot stand ourselves, and secondly because we cannot stand the idea of being the sort of creature that admits to not standing itself... what guano splattered ledge would such a creature inhabit?

Horns: I am reminded of the iconic moment where Casteneda's frenzy of self-loathing is revealed to him in *Journey to Ixtlan*. It is disclosed in the form of a rabbit that he has trapped and which he must but cannot kill. 'I looked at it, and it looked at me. The rabbit had backed up against the side of the cage; it was almost curled up, very quiet and motionless. We exchanged a sombre glance, and that glance, which I fancied to be of silent despair, cemented a complete identification on my part. "The hell with it," I said loudly. "I won't kill anything. That rabbit goes free." A profound emotion made me shiver. My arms trembled as I tried to grab the rabbit by the ears; it moved fast and I missed. I again tried and fumbled once more. I became desperate. I had the sensation of nausea and quickly kicked the trap in order to smash it and let the rabbit go free. The cage was unsuspectedly strong and did not break as I thought it would. My despair mounted to an unbearable feeling of anguish. Using all my strength, I stomped on the edge of the cage with my right foot. The sticks cracked loudly. I pulled the rabbit out. I had a moment of relief, which was shattered to bits in the next instant. The rabbit hung limp in my hand. It was dead. I did not know what to do. I became preoccupied with finding out how it had died. I turned to don Juan. He was staring at me. A feeling of terror sent a chill through my body. I sat down by some rocks. I had a terrible headache. Don Juan put his hand on my head and whispered in my ear that I had to skin the rabbit



Number Six: Who are you?

Number Two: The new Number Two.

Number Six: Who is Number One?

Insipidities (*insp*): This is how we will begin. First you must set the scene by announcing, *we are present at the meeting of Writers Anonymous* (or should we call it *Scribes Invisiblous?*) *where one of the attendees prepares to announce his weakness*. Then I say, *My name is insipidities and I make things up*.

Theological Turn (*TT*): That is possibly your most clumsy opening gambit.

Horns: It also suggests a reprise of our discredited and incomprehensible 'impossibilist fiction' phase.

Insp: Why are you distancing yourselves from this? We are setting the scene for a crucial investigation into the forces which overdetermine the impulse to produce our written record.

Horns: Groan, but even with that statement you indicate the problem at the heart of our project. Everything that could be written about writing *has* been written and written *better* than anything we could come up with. Our *metier* is not metacommunication but the coining of niche 'nihilist communist' style quotes for subsistence-circulation on social media.

TT: Agreed, this really does seem to be scraping the bottom of the barrel. The longer we go on, the more we expose the poverty of our ability.

Horns: Isn't there some 'work' we could read and produce a serious commentary on? Or some life event that might, in its recording, be transformed into a tragic rite? We are evidently just not good enough at what we are attempting.

TT: True, there's a lack of seriousness which descends either into whimsy or flippancy and even this gesture at futile self-denunciation (no doubt driven by genuine anxiety at there being something radically wrong) feeds into the problem and exacerbates it. Our efforts reek of mediocrity. We should try communicating something important and engage with others who are doing the same.

Insp: Yes, we depend (or do we depend?) upon the patience of our readers; and there is an awareness that something is very wrong in our project. Or, is there anything wrong? Certainly, we are as tired of this as they are. Or, they are not tired at all. And nor are we.

TT: That comment just beggars belief. It is a sign either of utter bankruptcy, or a severe case of inauthenticity... a habitualised failure in the capacity to engage others.

Insp: Well, as a sort of defence of this. It is not really about writing in general, but the production of *this* writing. It seems extraordinary that our various influences (the Anarchist Communist Federation, Subversion, Sam Moss, Camatte, Mattick, Rühle, The LPA, amongst more general influences which have both pushed us on

Horns: Debord was driven by intolerance for what he found within the SI but did he really understand what he was intolerant of? Probably not. How much of what internally constitutes a communist organisation conforms to communist principles? Again, very little... much of the energy driving social structures is incomprehensible and/or appalling. And, according to Nicanor Parra's mother, 'knowledge kills action/Action requires the veil of illusion'. Where knowledge advances, action recedes. At the centre of the SI lay Debord's personality traits, and if what he found there (essentially, himself) dismayed him he was unable to face up to it... he was compelled to rebury his dismay within 'revolutionary' discourse. By attributing error to others, he at least could preserve the righteousness of the project and remain blameless in relation to it.

TT: The culture of externalisation and blame which drives the sect mode of consciousness is incredibly corrosive to its participants... All pro-revolutionary groups rely upon the displacement of personal self-loathing which functions as a double bind, and a trap; the sense of self is legitimised through its allegiance to a righteous project. 'Commitment' and the dynamic of brinkmanship/sacrifice which it involves as militants compete to demonstrate their worth is a sublimating path taken by those who are not brave enough to directly express their arrogance and egotism. The complicated passive-aggressive modalities required by sect consciousness preclude personal awareness... nobody was more damaged by Debord's gestures of exclusion than himself - but then perhaps, at some level, he *may* have come to understand this but continued anyway... the content of his self-destruction seeming worth it.

Horns: We have agreed that reductionism is not very illuminating. Self-abasement before the universe is occasionally necessary but otherwise we are bound into one or other delusional life-world. Self-loathing is merely, to deploy the discourse of bureaucracy, a merge-source file. It is not very interesting in or of itself...

Insp: I disagree, Debord's self-loathing is a way in to this. From

viciousness of forms such as neo-darwinism/scepticism).

Insp: This is also true for the manifest 'communist' contents of communist structures. In the *Veritable Split in the International*, Debord wrote the following on hidden contents, and the contradictory drives at the heart of projects: '[...] But also because the SI had never written anything that might secretly be in contradiction with what, on the whole, it was. At the moment when the SI knew a great part of its misery, but had not yet surmounted it, its silence avoided the unpardonable split between writings that would attempt to present themselves as partially or completely grounded in reality, and the real miserable conditions that would remain uncriticized: the authentic writings of some justifying the inauthentic existence of the silent followers. Such a dissimulated split would not permit us to say anything really valid about and against the Chinese bureaucracy or American leftism: everything would have assumed a lying coefficient. The SI thus maintained its truth by saying nothing that could indirectly conceal a lie or a grave uncertainty about itself.'

TT: Debord assumed that he could afford to dissolve the SI because not only was situationist consciousness sufficiently distributed throughout the proletariat (as a self-disclosing hidden content) but he considered the self-dissolution of the group would thereby disperse the 'other' malignant hidden contents/motivations structured within the SI. Unfortunately, he was completely wrong on both counts. Firstly, he wildly overestimated the penetration of situationist type revolutionary ideas into wider social consciousness (in reality there was only a passing resemblance/interaction between the two) and secondly, he misinterpreted (or misattributed) the passive content at the heart of the SI, *which was driving it*. This latter error caused the content to remain *undisclosed* and was thus reproduced at the heart of all post-situationist endeavours as a sort of machismo and *knowingness* via which, variously, both sexist and anti-semitic structures were reproduced.

and dragged us back) should have caused us to deviate so wildly from them. It is even more extraordinary that we should have arrived at a stance of quietism from out of our analysis of class struggle, and our experience of it... how did we suppress our desire for revolutionary *justice*, our orientation to the necessity for violence? In earlier years, it was difficult to give words to the *anger* we felt against the world because we felt *so much* anger; it corroded us. How did we get from that anger to here? And what is this 'here'? This guillemot's ledge over an abyssal, purgatorial sea, a landing stage of the far North that nobody else has arrived at. What were the messages that we received, and perhaps misunderstood? How did we travel so far outside of the confines of what we have read? Nobody else is finding what we are finding, why? Have we gone so far wrong? Is it because we have deliberately sought out a non-authoritative voice, that we cannot be taken seriously? Is it the refusal to edit out our fallibility, the accidents and errors, which now counts against us? Is it because we self-relativise, making light of our own efforts, dismissing our own centrality? Do you not think it is necessary to further investigate what this writing is, what this territory is that holds us?

TT: No, the question is not about what 'this' is, but who it is for. Who is supposed to be reading it?

Horns: I think it is both of those. There has been a turn inwards. There has been a shift from addressing the condition of the proletariat in relation to the relations of production to an articulation of the subjective experience of proletarianisation. We now find our position in relation to the totalising process of class struggle is something like that of the *He* of Dostoyevsky's *Grand Inquisitor*. There is nothing more to be added to original scripture without detracting from it. There is to class struggle, a left wall of invariance which prevents any further contributory analysis... There is an objective requirement only for events, for ruptures, for decomposition of present forms. And these events and the forces which they express, are beyond our scale. We are their outcome not the cause - no strategy, organisation or analysis is

adequate to this *really real movement*. The processive environment of class struggle is locked in, it cannot be resolved from inside. It is an inescapable but perhaps still abolishable condition (albeit only through the occurrence of some equivalent to a cosmically derived *extinction event*). And so, we are left to talk about other things, over tea, with the war raging on outside.

Insp: In answer to the question, who is the message directed at, it is to *other guillemots*. To those amongst the proletarianised billions who have arrived singly through the storm at a similar level of redundant sensitisation as we. More precisely, this writing is for those who have found the given form of opposition to the world to be inadequate, to be not expressive of their own revolt. They, who have found themselves dragged back by the mere politics of so called revolutionaries, when it is their entire being which is being pulled this way and that... They have refused their conditions and they sought out common cause with others... but they encountered only trotskyists, maoists, anarchists who urged them to exteriorise capital when they had already intuited that they are fatally *of the world* which they refuse and are dependent on it. They cannot cut it out from their own flesh.

TT: Okay, so it is for those who have extended the domain of their unbelief to include the modes of the unbelief of others.

Insp: I am aware of others, living far away, perhaps in difficulty, who read this... I do not know for what reason that they scan the words here. Our message is directed to them, or rather our literature is a record that may be examined by them, because there is no discernible 'message'. Like them, we have been processing various modes of dissatisfaction with the available terms of the discourses of revolt and opposition... we have attempted to lay paths through the constrained options, the requisite orthodoxies, the sect form, the petty squabbles that are inherent to isolated elective groups. Our works are intended for those for whom the given form of political consciousness is inadequate and inexpressive of their experiences. It is directed at those living in

worth in what we have done is supremely difficult to adjust to. And, because the relevance of our work is not recognised, we feel we are not recognised. We are not intrinsic, we do not belong to the ostensible core of anyone else's project. We are not precious. That feeds back into what we do. We must remain fixed at the point at which we became intolerable, we must continue to reproduce the same, until others discover us and thereby release us.

Insp: All true... this project has somehow become trapped in the repeated gesture of revealing that the gold of others is worthless. But we have no gold which might be devalued by others, and no real sense of what it is to live in the reflected glow of a delusory wealth. We do not live *in relation* to principles for which we would die, or from which we might become traumatically separated. We have already arrived at the point at which others become disillusioned. We are not golden. And just as we do not prize, so we are not prized.

Horns: Then, it must be that the thing which drives *this* writing, the thing which the writing tolerates and the thing which it does not, is all the more relevant to the process by which it is attempting to write itself out, to escape from itself. Perhaps, there is always a structuring bias to the moment of disclosure in writing which is itself skewed towards *worthy* hidden contents. After all, there is a singular advantage in possessing delusional beliefs, and this lies in the potential for an abreactive disclosure of their rational core. The passage from a lived state of delusion to one of disenchantment (or enlightenment) is an elevated mode of personal *experience* and a supreme cultural motif in the representation of personal 'progress'... however, as a sort of contrast, wherever *life's journey* must commence from already established 'rational' values it is immediately, and chronically, afflicted with an undisclosable, regressive content which becomes a secret burden (an antagonistic content that is communicated in all its messages)... if enlightenment is hidden within 'self-incurred tutelage', then something *lapsed*, something unconscionable, is fixed within the core of an already established rationality (an undisclosable content which drives the

body.

Insp: The idea of returning a content to its context, and then behaving as if it were there naturally and undisclosed, in order to extract power from its capacity for effecting change upon its conditions (e.g. as happens with the reintroduction of certain transformational animal species⁴ to environments where they have been hunted to extinction) is a fascinating branching-off, particularly when considered with reference to 'communisation' or 'detournment'. Perhaps we will never get a chance to explore the thought further. Perhaps it will be the one time we ever think of it.

TT: If this project is understood to be somehow a hidden content of the communist milieu (and that is a big 'if'), then surely 'we' are not requesting that *we* be tolerated, are we? The goal of this project is not its containment within the manifest content of the communist milieu, is it? Or, is it? To put it from another angle, what is it that is intolerable to us of communism and what is tolerated at our core as a hidden content, as what is not communism?

Insp: 'To put it from another angle,' you are asking, what is it that is *really* driving this writing? As a half answer, I do not think we either request, or demand, inclusion as an acknowledged component of communist consciousness. Nor do I believe that we somehow *embody* or personalise some communist fragment. It is more likely that our writing is *drawing out* (invoking) a content from communism which communism did not know was there. This latency is not 'ours' and nor should 'we' be associated with it. As individual communists, we are all too conventional in our materialist comprehension of social forces... so, this is not about 'us' but about *it*, I mean, the content which we have discovered.

TT: You say it is not about us. Are you sure? Even though we are not noticed, and that our work is not recognised, isn't that painful to us? We should openly admit that others not perceiving the

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem_engineer

repressive, women-hating, difference suppressing, homophobic circumstances, where those who have achieved a modicum of acute, if also redundant, awareness and *dare not express it*. We cannot hope to give expression to what they experience day to day but at least we will also not present them with *solutions*.

TT: But what is the content in that? Despair?

Insp: Not despair. But not a politics of liberation either. History has used up every possible mode of opposition and resistance, we now must move on from these truncated forms. To that end, and if we *were* to reduce this to a succinct message, it would be this: you cannot change your world, even though you can see something of what is wrong with it. Therefore, it is better to remain hidden and to survive, there are others like you but you are so isolated you will probably never meet them. You are alone, ever alone, cast adrift and abandoned, but don't give up. Don't stand up and don't make a move. *Wait*.

TT: There is a comet in the sky. It would like to come and meet us. But he thinks he'd blow our minds.

Horns: Agreed, this version is a little too perfectly *sentimentalised*... I am waiting for the transformative 'but' in the narrative, there must be a redemptive 'but' subsequent to which these poor huddled guillemots are expected to soar up from the gaping maw of their circumstances.

Insp: Ha ha, keep waiting. There is no, 'but there is just one small chance that we can make it through.' We must insist that there is no hope to be found at the level of politics... Don't invest in identity politics, don't think you can change anything - don't get sucked into the enthusiasms of others, they are not always what they seem. Don't make common cause with religious fanatics, nationalists, activists... Don't assume your circumstances will improve, they are more likely to deteriorate - that is the outcome of the events of 2011 in Libya, Syria and Egypt, and more recently, Ukraine. Your consciousness is a curse - you are separated by your

deviation, you are marked out from the rest... then again, you are lucky that the mark is invisible to others - even so, you must live carefully.

TT: This is saying nothing. Abject conformity to exterior pressure is no sort of 'message.'

Insp: As capital dismantles repressive societies, the register in which decomposition is first manifested is at the level of interpersonal manners. Proletarianisation has begun where neighbours suddenly attack neighbours - where centuries old tolerances break down in days. Where communal violence is erupting, the structure of society has already been tunnelled out by universal abstract equivalence - an expropriation is taking place. It is at the moment when the hollowing begins to show through the surface, that people begin to run around like savages. Where there are stirrings in the lithosphere, there is turbulence at the surface - whatever the flag that they might attach to their motivations, they are passing into a feral state induced by capital's decomposition of all values. In such circumstances, our non-involvement and disinvestment from the given form of *enthusiasm* are more telling than active commitments and *the measures taken*.

TT: Then what?

Insp: Speaking over your head, and to those far away others, but also as a note to self: it may happen in your life, that you will encounter another, similar to you... if this occurs you should have organised your life so that you are in a position to safely afford a life-changing show of mercy to them. You should be able to assuage their need and help them with money, shelter, asylum. Perhaps you will guide them across the border - however the border is understood. You must fix their broken heart.

TT: Enough of the Jimmy Jones references.

Insp: Show mercy, fix their heart, but do not make common cause - do not begin again another cycle of political accumulation,

the private individual. At the point of the hidden content's formal appearance, the process of schism is automatically commenced and that which was tolerated becomes suddenly intolerable and must be expelled.

Horns: The schism probably occurs in accordance with a set logical progression. The disclosure of a hidden content is probably integral to the process of the writing. The resultant schism, which occurs along the faultline of established manifest and disclosed latent contents, is dependent on a ripening or germinating mechanism... as with the spartoi.

Insp: The spartoi motif is evident in the history of the Surrealist Group which split, tellingly, following a dispute on the nature of the Mexican jumping bean. Breton's group located a significance in the bean's affective capacity, and thus sought to preserve its movements as a mystery (they wanted to maintain a hidden unknown *mechanism*). Those associated with Caillois, wished to open the bean and discover the source of its movement (they wished to inhabit a world of perpetual disclosure of the hidden).

TT: But often, internal cohesion is maintained through the encouragement of an on the need *not* to know basis amongst those involved. The problematic of a complicit, staged ignorance is inculcated by all structures to varying degrees. Within every compound structure, there has to be a degree of collusion with the process by which earlier stages of lucidity are deliberately subsumed by a later state of credulity. An alibi for 'not knowing' is provided by the theory of repression, but that is all too convenient. More often, there is instituted a *willingness* to not recognise what is *really going on* in order to derive energy from the artificially maintained hidden core (as demonstrated by Breton's jumping bean).

Horns: There is also operative within the same mechanism, an opposing tendency of 'entryism', by which the designated *intolerable* content is re-interred beneath the texts of the host

TT: This project has always lacked the charm and charisma that is necessary to engage others, and that is not going to change. We are chronically unappealing. Writing can accumulate here forever, and it will have no relevance beyond its ongoing encrustation with referrer spam.

Insp: This writing is directed towards uncovering what else is communicated in the communications which have as their content, 'communism'. The project asks of its content whether it is still accepted, is it still worthy of love? Sometimes, this question is internalised and becomes pathological - is the experiment with the content tolerable to the writing itself? The downward spiral of the self-hating text armours itself with internal queries and commands, and amasses a knot of coding at its core, which then only further lowers its tolerance thresholds to its own experiments and eventually induces a sort of autoimmune response.

TT: This project is always in danger of going haywire. Horns indicated the problem of a continuity in content with reference to the surrealists³ as old men. Were they always obliged to be surrealists or only when they were wearing their surrealist hats? In more general terms, if there is a 'discrepant' content in writing, then what would constitute a lived discrepancy? Are we obliged to exist within the communist milieu, enunciating within communism's other registers, some awkward truths?

Insp: That would be the romantic ideal. In practice, 'other registers' and the contents manifested within them, are progressively expelled as they formally emerge. That which is tolerated, is tolerated because it has passed unregistered by the ongoing processes of reproduction - it has not been given a name. It falls outside 'the law' because the law has not located it as a nameable content. For this reason, certain practices and opinions that are not in accord with the official content of the Law can be tolerated as long as they are not formalised as vices and are carried out at the level of

³ <http://editor-horns.blogspot.com/2014/04/somewhere-along-way.html>

another group, another faction, another 'force'. The wounded one, who arrives with a broken sandal, like Shane, like Jason, like Oedipus, comes from who-knows-where and for who-knows-what purpose. If you help a wild animal from a trap, they are likely to bite you. So, help them, but allow them free passage, help them to follow their own trajectory.

TT: What does this have to do with *this* writing?

Insp: First we must inhabit the *this* writing of our written record before we can understand anything else. We find ourselves in a strange place, somewhere without hope of escape and yet also a place not without tiny morsels of triumph (if we are prepared to recognise them as such)... we are now overly familiar with the science fiction conceit of the individual stuck between worlds. Our circumstance is something like that, we appear to ourselves as a flickering apparition, belonging in neither one place nor the other. The figure is conflicted by its not achieving a solid presence in the world, it seems tortured... we are the same, we have suppressed our urge to speak directly in a political register and to use it as a vehicle for our anger. As a result, we have become convoluted, unhomed even from our previous certainties. By suppressing the direct expression of political consciousness we have caused to appear before us, numerous apparitional *worlds*, or registers, mutually exclusive life-worlds, which are the environmental equivalent to the figure trapped between realities. We have come to perceive different territories overlaying the same space... each appearing successively as a ghostlike superimposition, as another configuration of what is. We cannot choose or commit to any one of these as a real world, but must somehow adapt to all of them in the form that they appear, ghostworlds.

Horns: We are far into this already but it is such a terrible way to start a piece of writing. It is so terrible in fact that I feel inspired to resort to koan form: A student responds to the Zen master's teaching, 'when I ask you about the meaning of the words you have just used, you explain them in an equally mysterious manner.

I therefore assume that your purpose is to reproduce the imbalance of our relation.'

Insp: Yes, there *is* an imbalance, it is introduced by each successive statement which does not abolish what went before but infinitely conditions it. If you are asking why this should be, it is easy. The pretext for all instances of writing is that they are trying to communicate their ostensible contents - but there is an ulterior function to writing.

Horns: So, the ulterior function of communist writing is not the communication of communist principles?

Insp: Do you think it should be?

Horns: I can see the direction this is taking. A reduction of writing to the iteration of principles involves the writer in an editorial process driven by the imperative of what *ought* to be included. And as both writing and communism are oriented towards that which is *not* easily reduced to what ought to be, the expression of *principles* and of argument must appear by other routes within the writing, or even not at all.

Insp: This is why we set ourselves the question of what it is that *drives* the writing. To begin with, we can make out the basics: an external object is apprehended as writing and the object as writing then becomes the frame to what may be set within it. However, this external object/ostensible content is really only an alibi for the activity of writing itself. Writing seeks to include *everything* which, by its arts, it is able to make relevant to the apprehended object. Its means are a sort of associative self-assertion which it disguises as a logic. In all cases, the written text immediately sets off in pursuit of any content *other than* the content stated.

TT: But *this* writing we have become involved in, a puppy chasing its own tale, is radically unlike any other writing on communism -

as the mechanism by which new forms emerge. And in *By Association*² the process through which meaning is coupled to pattern is investigated.

TT: But what is the substance here of this reference to 'heaps'? Why are you referring back to something written nearly a decade ago? What is the point in repeating something which has had no reception in the world? Do you think you are about to persuade anyone?

Insp: It is a necessary question. Why *do* we go on? We could not have imagined, when those pieces were written, that in all the world there would still only be about ten people interested in our involvement with this material. And we also could not have imagined then that most of those people we encountered would go on to find other contents more compelling than the content of this project. There was a time when we assumed a guise of passivity, I think because we were convinced of our capacity to transform conditions on our terms, it was a brechtian 'alienation device', a *via negativa* - we actively sought to put others off our trail. How futile that now seems. Today, we are confronted with the real hidden content of our works - *we really don't have a capacity for transformation*. What we played at was real, and our playing turned out to be an elaborate process of adjustment to that reality: our irrelevance. We are getting older. We are hemmed in. We are becoming weaker. We have lost the ears of powerful men.

Horns: All true. But it goes on.

Insp: It goes on. We continue. And it is repetitive. We arrive back at the starting off point. This was never about producing original research material, we were giving an account of our own life-process. But it is surprising, startling even, this rehearsal of the same basic ritually constrained figures over and over. *This* is our process.

2 <http://editor-horns.blogspot.com/2011/10/by-association.html>

alienation - what other motivation could there be for looking beyond the given surface?

Horns: You may be right... but that is still the material we must work with, it *is* our 'surface'. For example, in the film, *Jiro Dreams Of Sushi*, the 'shokunin' Jiro (a tyrant of rice) lists the different registers of sushi within which he is capable of applying his fanatical 'mastery'. One of these details is the alteration in size of the sushi relative to the mouth that is about to consume it. But this is not an efficiency measure, it is not designed to make the experience of eating sushi more processive. The portions of sushi, regardless of the size of the receptive oral cavity, remain just *larger* than a comfortable mouthful. There is an intimation in the design that *this* act of eating must be *excessive* despite it occurring within a domain of rigorous reduction. In the passage from plate to mouth there is a pelican quality of jerking or *shoving*, an imperative abruptness to it. This is not so much attributable to the means of conveyance than it is to the relative disproportionate dimensions of sushi and the *concept* of a mouthful. In this particular gesture of consumption, a cultural process is being dramatised.

TT: You are making an association of sushi with the proposal of a hidden content?

Horns: Yes, a hidden content beyond meaning but functioning as a source for the creation of meaning. In this case it is derived from an awkwardness which results from a culturally set disproportionality. It points to an other content, a hidden content, which is not otherwise accessible. It is the dramatised awkwardness of each mouthful which uncovers it.

Insipidities: We have discussed before this latent potentiality of the overdetermined heap - and sushi is nothing but a *heap* - from which emergent cultural procedures are arranged. For example, in for earthen cup¹, obsessive compulsive rites are investigated

¹ <http://thetheologicalturn.blogspot.com/2012/05/for-earthen-cup.html>

so much so, that it is not clear if it really is writing on communism at all.

Insp: Writing does not adhere to the world. It does not seek to map it to a consistent scale, or even to describe or explain it. Sometimes it might achieve all of these but then it ceases to function as writing - which, at its purest, is driven by an intrinsic compulsion to produce a record *as* writing.

Horns: We are all familiar with Flaubert. Were you about to cite the example of 'Charles's cap'? No doubt, there was also going to be an argument that the purpose of writing is to idealistically produce writing-dependent objects - objects which could not exist otherwise. Let's skip the 1850s and approach somewhere a little closer to the present day.

TT: It is a somewhat romantic argument. And writing's 'intrinsic drive' is easily reduced to more comprehensible components. Is writing drawn onto the page? Is it coaxed by the imperatives of the technology, as a form of work? If it is 'intrinsically' driven, is that another, more positive, presentation of mental illness, compulsion? Or is this drivenness merely an egotistical projection?

Insp: I am not convinced a reductionist approach to this question would provide an appropriate level of sustenance to our project... despite everything, there is a content.

TT: Do you know what? Maybe we should consider changing the project.

Insp: Not just yet. This writing is driven to ask a question about its own project. It wants to locate a significance in what it is doing. It is compelled to know whether it will still be loved if it transgresses against what it is about... Again, the reference is Dostoyevsky: *I do not disown the formula "all things are lawful", but are you going to disown me because of it?*

Horns: This act of transgression against the expected, reliable

content is true for all modernism. Form plays an experimental game with its periphery, bringing previously secondary questions to the centre. The form becomes its own content.

Insp: Historicisation is also a form of reductionism. I don't want to set the question at the level of *what is the modernist project?* This concerns a more intimate imperative... the writing is driven to ask of itself, *will I still be worthy of love if I dare to say this, or this, or this?*

Horns: We can agree that there *is* a border set upon permissible contents, and then another border set upon the manner of presentation of each content. Both of these borders are set historically through the interplay of expression and reception. That is entirely conventional, and says nothing that is not said better elsewhere.

TT: What does it imply about communism as a content within *this* writing? Only that there is a radical incompatibility. There is no authentic *interplay* between expression and reception because there *is* no reception. The writing here has passed below the threshold of being recognised by its ostensible content.

Horns: I know. The Vagenda blog got 60,000 reads *on its first day* whilst this project rarely exceeds 20 after *4 years*.

TT: Funny. But whilst a correlation between circulation of ideas and their relevance is not reducible to simple numbers, we should not ignore the absolute non-engagement with the ideas presented here. And in anticipation of what I expect will be your response, even if some of the arguments here *are* appropriated (always uncited) by others for their purposes, it does not draw this project into the 'wider discussion'.

Horns: Nobody's engaging with us but then all *insp* is interested in, is concocting a pretext for unloading further *content*.

Insp: To reiterate, there is always active an absolute threshold

between the tolerable and the intolerable. Where the writing's content is communism, the experiment involves gradually increasing the proportion of non-communist, or even anti-communist, content that may be supported within the text and it still remain recognisably 'communist'.

Horns: A sort of LD50 test or boil-a-frog experiment? The very apogee of romanticism.

Insp. The reactions obtained from mixing the tolerable with the intolerable also drives the literatures of love, friendship, science, statecraft, war, exploration, analysis. Without a transgression against what is tolerated as love, there can be no love in literature - all instances of love are instigated as transgressions against love's stated content.

Horns: This is not disputed, and it is not news. There is no innovatory content in what you are suggesting. At most, you are attempting to apply a convention, unconventionally. That is all.

Insp: Writing is always generated through the same basic heuristic, for example: *this writing's content is 'war', but if this writing does not directly include any reference to war, is it still to be tolerated as a work about war?*

TT: This is some writing about some other writing about communism where communism is not named?

Horns: To go at least part of the way with the thesis: what is proposed can also be understood as an ethnography of specific relations - or, in our case, an ethnography of the material form of our non-relations. Even from the unpromising material that constitutes our output, a discrepant content worthy of record becomes discernible within it.

TT: I think there is a deep melancholy sound to this... as I said before, it is the noise of scraping barrels. The search for hidden contents is commenced only in circumstances of near total