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# Terror of Acceptance: Mass-Murders and Political Dystopia

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## Abstract

The paper offers a comparative analysis of Franco Berardi Bifo's treatise on modern terrorism (*Heroes. Mass Murder and Suicide*, 2015) and its (semio)capitalist background on one side and Montažstroj's theatrical performance, inspired by a half-documentary fiction novel *Jugend Ohne Gott* (1937) by Ödön von Horváth, on the other. Employing some of the contemporary theoretical insights on violence and terror in modern society, Montažstroj's performance is thus interpreted in the context of recent theories of globalization – and its prevalent communication and circulation of capital paradigms – as well as in the light of Breivik's Darwinist and anti-Marxist manifesto.

**Keywords:** globalization, terrorism, fear, Breivik, Montažstroj, Ödön von Horváth

“Conquistador” writes in a comment: “I know a guy that wants to end himself but the only reason he goes on is because he's looking forward to the next major movie, comic book, and video game release. I kid you not.” (Berardi Bifo 2015: 28).

One man's imagined community is another man's political prison.  
(Appadurai 2006: 5)

There are three interconnected discourses present in this paper, occurring and reoccurring in different, fictional and factional modes of their existence, firstly in a half-documentary metafiction *Youth Without God* (*Jugend Ohne Gott*, 1937) by Ödön von Horváth, then in Franco Berardi Bifo's theoretical treatise (*Heroes. Mass Murder and Suicide*, 2015), and thirdly, in Montažstroj's theatre adaptation of von Horváth's novel. These discourses establish a strong relation to contemporary problems of mass-murders, either under the political semantics of terrorism, threat to humanity, or,

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on the other hand, in the light of the widespread political or even post-political conformism in Europe, mainly its political elites, towards all of the above mentioned topics. Before going into the elaboration of some aspects of von Horváth's oeuvre, as well as their re-emerging structures in Montažstroj's piece, I would like to call upon some well-known thesis on political and post-political *nomos* and its relations to terrorism structures. In one of his essays, Walter Benjamin discusses the nature of legally and politically justified resistance, a force in which, paradoxically, its criticism is contained. The author points out that the most common task of any critique of force ought to be described as a representation of its relation to law or justice, because the cause, however effective, becomes violence only when it engages in moral relations towards law and justice (Benjamin 5). Author emphasizes the importance of the three basic principles of action integrated in legal force: first one, of structural nature, which implies a force that embodies the legal-political order or, on the contrary, abolishes it; second, according to which the most elementary of all relations inside of the legal-political order is that between the goal and the means; and the final, third one, according to which political force could serve both righteous and unrighteous ends, as fore the transcendent mean consequently transcends the ends. Fundamental question of the philosophy of politics, therefore, according to Benjamin, should be that of the justification of force in favor of just ends and not that of the legal and/or political justification of violence *per se*. For Benjamin, political force is always a raw material, a natural product, and can be applied ideologically without any doubt, but the unjust goals, nevertheless, as the author continues, require "just criticism." Benjamin emphasizes the difference between natural and positive law, which is to say that the natural-law thesis of force, thus, as something naturally given, can always be countered by the positive-legal assumption of force as a historical and political side-product, that is, the result of the validity and/or narrowness of interpretation of legal norms, which are, in a way, nonetheless binding. Natural law seeks to justify its ends, although it rarely succeeds, while, on the other side, positive law seeks to guarantee the ends by the pure justification of means. For both assumptions, the blind spots of logics emerge. Positive law is often blind to non-conditionality of goals, while natural law often skips the pre-conditionality of resources. Therefore, Benjamin concludes, there is a necessity to (re)appeal some form of validity and non-validity of political force, beyond any legal-political norm and its axiological and dogmatic interpretations. However, there lies a paradox of the norm itself. General claim of European law could be expressed as follows: natural aims of the individual are usually in conflict with legal aims, if exercised by greater or lesser force. Law considers force in the hands of the individual as a danger that undermines the legal order, a danger that challenges legal

goals and/or all legal executives. One therefore ought to reconsider the sudden possibility that the interests of the system to monopolize force against the individual cannot thus be explained by an intention to protect legal ends, but rather to defend the whole system itself. A force thus established as a pure mean, whether in a legally favorable or in a completely unfavorable case, participates in the problem of law in general, as a creative or mythical force. For Benjamin the mythical force in its primordial form is a manifestation of the gods. It is not a manifestation of their will, and above all a manifestation of their existence, in the ancient sense of a force of punishment that reflects the right, as shown by the legends of heroes, in which the hero as Prometheus provoked with daring fate, struggles with it with changing luck, but the legend does not deprive him of hope that one day he will bring a new justice to people. These kinds of heroes, as Berardi would say, and this kind of legal power, innate to this myth, are in fact what the people still present to themselves today when they admire the villain, such as the modern terrorist (19). The function of the force that “establishes” law, in this sense, is twofold. On one hand, every establishment of order or justice is, at the same time, an establishment of power and an act of direct manifestation of force. Power and force, on the other hand, through involvement in the establishment of rights, transcend justice, which is why the ignorance of the law does not guarantee punishment, nor does knowledge of the law, of course, guarantee a positive effect or, in Foucault’s words, discipline. The mythical force, in Benjamin’s conception, is the one that will establish the order, while the divine one will destroy it, will question it. But, interestingly, Benjamin consequently displaces divine power, as well as all its actions, from the sphere of religious tradition into the sociopolitical order, calling it, however, by various names, as the educational, political, social or moral vertical of the legal order *sui generis*. The existence of such a force could lead to violence, destruction, but Benjamin is against such interpretations, because they reduce a person to a “mere life” or to the mere executioner of something beyond the legal norm – as an exception (23). Carl Schmitt used to believe that state-building consisted in constantly leveling the possibilities of both external and internal hostility. The national *raison d’être* is exhausted in the idea of the potential crisis or conflict that lies ahead. According to him, a crisis is much more interesting than a rule or norm, or a kind of normal state, especially since the state of crisis arises from some form of anomaly and exception. This is not, of course, about legal-political chaos, an uncontrollable state of anarchy, but, above all, a state that cannot be subordinated to anything, because it exists by itself, beyond law and within law, beyond its norms and *nomos* in entirety. The authority of the sovereign, for Carl Schmitt, not only adheres to political or legal order, derives from it, as a norm, but

at the same time – transcending it. Every norm presupposes a normal situation and no norm can thus be applied in a completely abnormal situation. As long as the state is a political entity, this request for internal peace compels it to decide, in critical situations, in emergence of an internal enemy (Schmitt 46). The relationship between the protection of order, discipline and, finally, obedience, is a central theme of Schmitt's philosophy of law and his political theology, and it can easily be applied to modern terrorism, directed towards some imaginary anti-European and/or anti-Christian “mutual enemy.” The decision to attack thus frees itself from all normative elements and becomes an absolute in the true sense of the word. New anti-migrant hostility that re-emerged in a recent decade epitomizes the whole concept of the systematic response *to a common threat*, as well as its problematic nature.

Giorgio Agamben, among many others, has repeatedly attempted to re-conceptualize the basic tenets of Schmitt's philosophy of law, or to incorporate them into his own explorations of relationship between bare life and its superior social and political legislation. On one occasion, he points out that it was certainly difficult to reconcile the idea of divine omnipotence with the idea of an orderly and non-arbitrary, meaningfully non-chaotic rule, i.e. “nomos of the earth” (Schmitt 7). Michel Foucault concludes in a similar manner, when he distinguishes three basic modalities in the history of power: the first considers the state of sovereignty and indicates what enters the legal norm, and what comes out, what is punishable, and what is not; the second relates, in turn, to medical, police or criminal and sociopolitical mechanisms of disciplining, that is, of controlling, supervising and/or correcting the bodies of its subjects; the third, after all, refers to a kind of “security apparatus” or what Foucault calls “rule of the people.” If a ruler rules, according to Foucault, he certainly does not govern, because governance is much more than “a game of sovereignty” (Foucault 76). Governance, therefore, should be defined as a technique over a technique, which implies a secularized concept of the soul-care (*regimen animatorum*). Agamben, thus, points out that the ancient Greek language did not possess a single word to express life. Two terms, *zōé* and *bíos*, explicable by a common etymological root – *zōé*, which expresses a simple fact of life, common to all living beings (animals, humans, and gods), and *bíos*, which refers to form or mode of life inherent to an individual or a group (Agamben 2006: 7), thus imply the gradual incorporation of natural life forms into mechanisms of state power. The bare life in Western politics has been privileged so far, as the one on whose exclusion a community of people is based, which is why the basic categorical pair of Western politics is not *a friend* and *an enemy* but *a bare life* versus *political existence*, *zōé* in conflict with *bíos*, or even *inclusion* versus *exclusion*, *us* versus *them*, and thus *individuality* against

*difference*. Schmitt's idea of the sovereign is at the root of Agamben's definition, because it situates its subject both outside and within the order, which in turn gives him the power to suspend valid laws and the validity of laws in general. The Roman procedural exception exemplifies this "quality" of the exception procedure – this exclusionary procedure that originally served as a mean of defending an accused in the court – but, at the same time, it excludes the concept of "barbarian otherness". The norm proves nothing and indicates nothing, the exception not only confirms the rule, the rule truly lives out of the exception, which is why there is no *nomos* in the establishment of *nomos*, fixed and/or permanent rules (Schmitt 5-35). The state of emergency is born precisely out of the indecisiveness of the political norm, between absolutism and democracy. As a borderline phenomenon, it implies a suspension of legal order *per se*. Agamben thus uses Derrida's notion of the "power of law" more specifically, derived here from his reading of Benjamin, to show that the exception appears *in an anomic space* that is, at the same time, involved in the power of *the law* and excluded from it, or included in some other force of law without law (Agamben 2008: 51-57).

Global terrorism, nowadays, but merely because of its exception-like semantics – mostly towards the international *nomos* of humanity and ethics – seems not to be only reinterpreted or reanalyzed but, in an utmost perverse way, as Berardi Bifo explains, almost justified and rationalized. Long before Berardi Bifo, several theoretical accounts on global terrorism, by Slavoj Žižek and Arjun Appadurai, underlined this perverse nature of terror as such. In his book *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006) Arjun Appadurai reflects terrorism as a transcendent, although nonetheless universal act, which goes hand in hand with the phenomenon of globalization – economically, culturally, as well as politically. The old joke about the occasional outbreak of peace has become a sobering social fact (Appadurai 25). He therefore rightly points out pedagogical or politically-moralizing functions that the global age of terrorism provides – rightly or wrongly, that is still questionable. Appadurai emphasizes some major differences between the spinal and cellular concept of the world in contemporary globalized and conceptually rounded societies and states. The modern system of nation-states is the most striking example of the spinal structure, because, as much as nations get carried away with their stories of diversity and uniqueness, they bear to function exactly because of the assumption on which they rest, namely that there is an international order guaranteeing diverse norms, not least – the norm of war/peace. This spinal order is symbolized not only by the United Nations, but also by a growing set of protocols, institutions or agreements, as well as treaties that are to ensure that relations between nations function on symmetric principles, regardless of the hierarchy of power, economy or

even wealth, semiotic recognition and communication, made up of simple elements, such as flags, emblems, postage stamps and airlines, as well as a much more complex system of bilateral agreements, consulates, embassies, and other reciprocal political forms of recognition and dependency, neither centralized nor hierarchical, but essentially based on a finite set of rules and coordinates, regulatory norms and signals. It is not difficult to understand why the Treaty of Westphalia and Kant's writings on moral reciprocity and symmetry are so close in time and space (36-38). The cellular system of arrangement of structures is, on the other hand, typical for modern terrorist networks, which the author, interestingly, analyses as "global terrorists". Not so much because of their global and transcultural influence, but because of their most dangerous "trans-reach." The Al-Qaeda 9/11 attackers were not only eager to start a war against the United States but also, as the author claims, to attack the global idea of nation-states, this relict of the nineteenth century political mythology. 9/11 models and algorithms of terrorist sociopathy demonstrated, first of all, how small numbers can quickly alter international politics. Modern terrorism is post-political, forming cellular structures that often use new information technologies to gain transnational support. Or, as the author puts it, small number cells have now reconsidered to utilize all globalization disadvantages, mainly to recruit members – not only allegedly oppressed, but anyone willing to instantly become the aggressor, mass-murderer, etc. A terrorist sect or a cult, ready to attack with any chemical and/or biological weapons, such as sarin or anthrax, or ready to kill "young upper class," like in Breivik's case, is a true example of the utopian "cell form" that Appadurai is talking about. Algorithms for organizing such forms, paradoxically, are quite dispersive. In other words, an acceptance of the situation of unrest is superimposed as a natural state of exception, to put it in Schmitt's or Agamben's words. In this sense, Appadurai refers to an interesting text by Achille Mbembe, written in 2003, in which the author elaborates on the idea of a modern "necropolis." In societies characterized by physical violence and militarized conflict of pure terror, physical brutality, all in the name of collective identity, one can no longer simply oppose nature and war on the global scale. Mbembe invites us to imagine a wicked landscape in which order (as well as regularity, predictability, everyday routines) is organized around the fact of higher likelihood of violence, such as terrorism (42). It is precisely in this state of "non-order" and "unpredictability" – that lies inside of the nomos-matrix – that terrorism finds its existence, thus setting everyday life somewhere beyond space and time of the (super)imposed terror-regimes. Modern sociological theories often put such a state of fluid and pervasive fear under the name of "post-political uncertainty" (Bauman), but nevertheless attributing its own politics to it (Žižek 39-52). Appadurai



continues, it is a terror based on the constant “fear of small numbers,” that represent a hidden or, most often, latent obstacle to the nomos-structure of the majority. A terrorist sect or a cult is a true example of an identity capable of reproducing such fear. Small numbers can disturb the liberal thought. They evoke the classic idea of an oligarch, monarch, leader, tyrant or a sovereign, indicating the possibility of elitism or appropriation of resources, invoking hidden conspiracies of the conspirators, spies, dissidents, revolutionaries. In Norway, Israel and Sri Lanka, as well as in New York, Iraq or London, a suicide bomber or a rifle-armed killer is a darkest version of the liberal emphasis on the true values of the individual – *the number one*. He (or she) completely abolishes the boundaries between the body and the weapon of terror. Whether they tie a bomb to their body or otherwise hide the explosive, a weapon, such as a rifle, suicide bombers are explosive bodies that promise to disperse their own bloody bits and mix them with the bloody bits of the civilians. Not only does a suicide bomber manage to defraud control, (s)he also produces a terrible mix of enemy’s blood and the innocent bodies, damaging not only the “soil of the nation” but the very bodies of the victims that infect the “blood of the martyrs.” Christianity and Islam attach great values to this explosive martyr, who is also an executioner. Suicide bomber, or a random killer, like the brainwashing agent in the film *Manchurian Candidate*, is always portrayed in a paranormal state of conviction, enthusiasm, eagerness or commitment to the main goal, often constructed by quasi-religious technique, such as isolation, indoctrination and quasi-hallucination often caused by ideological drugs consumed *on the eve of the attack*. Breivik was inspired by the Bible as well as by the Japanese Bushido code, interpreted as a salvation point for the alleged purity of the European ethnic-body. This image is thus a complete opposite of the liberal individual that works in his own interest. Conceived as a machine gun killer and/or as a suicide bomber, however frightening an example of an individual is to a liberal politician, the number one is, in fact, always understood as representative of a crazed crowd or mass, a victim of propaganda and irrational conviction, a perfect example of reckless recruitment and dangerous unpredictability of a mob that appraises his ideas. Berardi Bifo is quite aware that there are many acclaimers of Breivik’s manifesto. In pragmatic terms, if we are to follow Schmitt’s ideas, namely, terrorism is never quite, to the very end, a teleological activity. It certainly has a goal, most often a purpose of a political and ideological outlook, but is, in principle, guided by the logic of the rational scenario. Slavoj Žižek approaches the issue of terrorist violence in a similar, but somewhat skewed perspective. He thus considers a dominant political model of today to be based on post-political and even biopolitical foundations, with post-politics defined as a policy that claims to leave behind classical

ideological disputes or focus on professional management/administration, and biopolitics considered as regulating force for the safety and well-being of the individuals. Related to terrorism, he considers biopolitics as a policy of fear, focused mainly on defending against potential victimization and abuse (39). Terrorist is situated somewhere in the abyss between the anemic liberal thinker (who often does nothing) on one side and the passionately, extremely engaged fundamentalist, equipped with racist religious or some other weapons of fanaticism on the other. For many years, European society behaved like an anemic liberal. Although Žižek's claims seem too radical for me, it seems that he is not that far from the truth, as recent terrorist manifestos of Oslo attack or Christchurch attack have shown. This is where Brecht's idea from the *Beggar's Opera* comes to mind, especially if one is to follow Žižek's argumentation. It seems like the real criminals are probably not the ones robbing banks, but the ones that, initially, set them up (100). Simply put, not sanctioning the potentiality of a crime, inside and outside of the system, is not the same thing. Breivik's anger that lead to the fanaticism or, ultimately, his terrorist act, if one uses Žižek's terms again, could also be declared *ancient* and *nomos-centered*, cause it was allowed to sublimate ideas of righteous Judeo-Christian anger and animosity towards non-European otherness. Violence is unevenly redistributed between context and action, which is why the same action can be viewed as violent and non-violent. The fear generated by these terrorist attacks, as it is shown by Bauman, therefore always has two faces, the face of the perpetrator and the victim. And so it has always been, as evidenced by the statement of Lucien Febvre, which Bauman thus underlines, that refers to Europe's early modernity: *peur toujours, peur partout* (Bauman 5-33). This is why fear has become a very fluid fact – a liquid phenomenon that flows from one context to another. But it has, nevertheless, remained a hallmark of the modern age. The basic question, a problem that arises here, is, of course, not the (essential) problem of the existence of terrorism or the act of terrorist attacks, but, on the contrary, of the possibility of human beings thus being able to do such deeds. Causality of terror and uncertainty causes new forms of fascism, emerging, mobilizing people to embrace populist versions of racist sentiments, the most dangerous ones, because this kind of sentiment usually arises out of depression, lack of understanding, and even despair. Nowadays, most of Europeans are willing to defend their privileges gained during long periods of colonial history, although these privileges are being radically reduced, redefined or even transformed by capitalism and the idea of free market, if not demolished, especially in the light of the recent universal economic recession.

Originally published in 1938, short novel *Youth Without God* explores an indoctrination of youth under the totalitarian regime. From the

perspective of a disgruntled school teacher, Horváth's characters narrate a sinister story of disillusionment, betrayal, dark despair. Set in a dystopian world of a pre-military camp for adolescents, all names are replaced by initials, in a time where racial intolerance rages, freedom is denied and everyone is a secret spy for the state. Without any direct reference to the Third Reich, Horváth offers a stark and haunting portrait of paranoia in Nazi Germany (Merriman 334-335). We start with an anonymous narrator in an unknown country where he is a high school teacher, correcting his students' essays. The overall topic of the essays was supposed to be why their country needed outside colonies. As he corrects one of his student's essays, he encounters a very strong, racist remark: "All niggers are dirty, cunning, and contemptible" (Horváth 22). He therefore immediately responds with a small remark: "They're human too, you know" (Horváth 22), which puts him into a fight with student's father who subsequently accuses him for seditious act against the homeland. After that incident the narrator finds his students fighting at the top of the school, surprised by the increasing brutalization of the nation, which he interprets as – fighting for nothing. After that incident the school decides to put students into camp in order to be trained in army life and to serve the national-body of the state. Here I would like to emphasize one more that Breivik was obsessed with his body, same as Yukio Mishima was, before the state-attack, which they felt to be an extension of their ethnically homogenous national-body (*kotokukai*). The narrator of Horváth's novel explains it in the following way:

I think it's an unbridgeable gulf. If these fellows merely rejected everything that's still sacred to me – well, that wouldn't be so bad. What hurts is that they put it aside without even having known it. Worse still, they haven't the slightest desire to know it. Thinking is a process they hate. They turn up their noses at human beings. They want to be machines—screws, knobs, belts, wheels—or better still, munitions—bombs, shells, shrapnel. How readily they'd die on a battlefield! To have their name on some war memorial—that's the dream of their puberty [...] The Greatest Plebeian's birthday meant a holiday today, and the town was decked out with flags and streamers. Through the streets marched the young girls who had searched for the lost airman, the boys who would have left the Negroes to die, and their parents, who believed the lies inscribed upon their banners. Even the skeptical joined in the march and kept time with the rest—spineless divisions under an idiot's command. As they marched, they sang—of a bird fluttering upon a hero's grave, of a soldier suffocating in the fumes of poison gas, of brown girls and black girls who lived on filth, of an enemy that only existed in their minds. With their songs, the liars and the debased celebrated the day on which the Great Plebeian

had been born. From my window too, a flag was waving. I noticed it with a certain gratification: I had hung it out the night before. For if you are ruled by the lawless and the debased you had better adopt their methods or they might flay you alive. You must drape your home with flags—even if you've a home no longer. When submissiveness is the solitary trait in the human character that those who rule will tolerate, truth flies away and lies creep in—the lies that engender sin. But don't wait—hang out the flags. Better bread than death (Horváth 47).

The Austrian writer died in 1938, as a critic of fascism, working in the same epoch as Carl Schmitt. His reputation likely would have grown if he had lived long enough to face political persecution, and his novel might have enjoyed bigger reputation in English. Instead, Horváth is virtually unknown, and his *Youth Without God* unfortunately fell quickly out of print after its initial English release in 1939. Horváth's work evades the rhetoric of fascism in the form of allegory, but his own allegory, emblematic allegory of African colonialism, which creates serious difficulties in the analysis of oppression as a universal affront to human dignity, but also in universalizing it in order to understand persecution as a trauma that happens in a quite specific political context. The novel centers upon the life of a teacher at a boy's school, located in an unnamed fascist country whose leaders appear only at a distance, through different radio broadcasts and memoranda on curricular reform. The teacher, unnamed, wrestles with his students' enthusiastic hatred. The conflict between teacher and his students begins in one of the book's earlier episodes. The simple assertion of humanity loses him the respect and creates trouble with administrators and parents. His weakness and discomfort with his own authority that earns the scorn of his students, who only respect force. Horváth stands to the side of this conflict. Though he is known as a worldly cynical writer in the Viennese tradition, he allows his provincial, conservative, ineffectual narrator to tell the tale (Merriman 334). Teacher is not able to understand his students' hatred or violence, but neither can he understand modern mentality *sui generis*. He tries to make sense of the present only through his knowledge of the classics, speaking ponderously of the timeless indifference of God, and he feels at a relatively young age that he cannot keep up with the pace of life. Therefore, the book's obvious target is fascism, but it could also be understood as a criticism of different opposition(s) to fascism: the opponents fail because they cannot think their way into the fascist mind or match brainless courage of its fervent supporters (*ibid.*). But this second criticism does not quite succeed, in part because *Youth Without God* remains allegorical, attempting to substitute one specific set of circumstances for another (335). This type of post-political criticism of the novel will be a dominant

strategy in Montažstroj's adaptation as well, but with different stakes. By using black colonial subjects as a stand-in for the more proximate targets of fascism, Horváth creates a lexical problem for himself. Nazism invented extraordinarily hateful and/or dehumanizing rhetoric to refer to Jews, Communists, Slavs, Roma, and many other European groups. Although scientific racism was a central part of the Nazi ideology, hatred of Africans did not have a central place in this rhetoric – in part because the number of Africans living in Germany has always been very small. Both teacher and students refer to Africans as Neger – at the time a relatively neutral German word – although now considered derogatory. In the context of fascism's elaborate language of supremacy and hatred, these very divergent political sentiments should lead the characters to speak virtually distinct dialects. That the two sides share a same vocabulary, when they don't even agree about the humanity of Africans, thus threatens to render novel's political language inert. Horváth's use of African colonialism as a failed proxy for fascist speech, nevertheless, does not pose a big problem for anybody attempting to render the text in a modern context of *the European other* (ibid.). In the twentieth century countless writers replaced these or other specific politics with universal stories of extremism and hatred. When the allegory speaks to a current conflict, this may call attention to an essentially more basic form of violence that often rests beneath the particularities of a political discourse; and this is certainly what Horváth wanted readers to understand about true fascism. Yet because allegories enable writers to keep the ideological language off their pages, in time the political stakes may become very obscure. If we did not remember Nazism so vividly today, *Youth Without God* would be a closed book that tells us nothing about where fascism happened, from what kind of ideological paradigms it arose and whom eventually victimized. Montažstroj's performance succeeded to emphasize exactly that semantics of the novel, thus employing Berardi Bifo's analytic connections between capitalism and mental health, between symbolic order of mass murder(er)s and their neo-liberal, post-political, and conformist semiotics.

Berardi Bifo's treatise emphasizes the idea of a failed future – he did so in most of his books – while trying to highlight the utmost terrifying connection between the individual's mental health and the financial nihilism rooted in contemporary capitalism. But, besides its uncomfortable, although convincing arguments brought forward to uncover mass-murders as a kind of “suicide by proxy,” Franco Berardi Bifo is definitely not an optimist when it comes to humankind – and its everlasting obsession with “futures” of all kinds. That gloomy territory dwelled by individuals who decide to take their own lives, but not before ending other's (Pekka-Erik Auvinen, Seung-Hui Cho, Aurora “Joker” killer, Anders

Behring Breivik, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold), without oversimplifying their motivation, Bifo attempts to reconstruct some missing or maybe just conveniently overlooked links and short circuits. He does so by interpreting notions of absolute capitalism that keeps on giving birth to highly competitive and even coldblooded individuals and feeds their compulsion to stay connected all the time, horrified that they may miss something when away from their keyboards, their screens, their virtual realities, sharing and commenting every bit of their lives, as if this was suddenly the most important thing, as if this was something more essential than just pure index-contents for all-traceable browsers and search engines. Montažstroj's characters all live in and inhabit the pre-produced virtual reality on the stage – as some kind of meta-characters – led by far-encompassing ideological goals. Montažstroj's performance is thus eager to deconstruct two dominant modes of global thinking: the first one is a disassociation of language learning from one's bodily affective experience; the second one is a constant virtualization of the experience of otherness. Anders Behring Breivik, responsible for the Norway attacks in 2011, came with his own agenda, which was full of coherent political ideas with ideological connotations. He acted as a neo-conservative automaton, as Bifo often puts it, desensitized by his own delusions – by the way he perceived the current Western civilization as a territory threatened by, first of all, process of feminization, Islamization, and in danger of losing its Christianity and Father figure. Examining Breivik's background, for Berardi Bifo, one thing is of utmost importance, his disconnection from everything outside and inside himself, alienation that could be translated into countless hours spent online, often wired to role-playing games, discussion forums, and niche-websites that did nothing but reinforce his already existing psychic suffering and populate it with menacing avatars of otherness, avatars that need to be defeated in order to claim one's belonging to the “right” community. These avatars will all be impersonated on stage by Montažstroj's performance, inspired by Bifo's arguments that psychic suffering coupled with the extended exposure to the online flow can lead to such tragic attempts to win one's life back, and to re-territorialize a ground that is colonized against one's will and without any visible effects, until it seems almost too late to do anything about it. Berardi Bifo emphasizes the following assumption: “Financial capitalism is based on a process of unrelenting deterritorialization, and this is causing fear to spread among those who are unable to deal with the precariousness of daily life and the violence of the labor market. This fear in turn provokes a counter-effect of aggressive re-territorialization by those who try to grasp some form of identity, some sense of belonging, because only a feeling of belonging offers the semblance of shelter, a form of protection. But belonging is a

delusive projection of the mind, a deceptive sensation, a trap. Since one's belonging can only be conclusively proved by an act of aggression against the other, the combined effect of deterritorialization in the sphere of financial capitalism and of re-territorialization in the realm of identity is leading to a state of permanent war" (Berardi 111). Deep and turbulent changes triggered by capitalism dominance, or semiocapitalism, according to Berardi Bifo, lead to unstable identities, produced and constantly re-semanticized by ideological processes of constant deterritorialization and re-territorialization, caused, mainly, by political immigration and/or displacement. This nurtures constant need for a kind of identitarian belonging, in Breivik's case deeply rooted in aggressiveness against almost anything perceived as a threat to the so-called true and also purified origins of white, Judeo-Christian Europe. Despair emerges out of pure communication short circuit, where "politicians call on us to take part in their political concerns, economists call on us to be responsible, to work more, to go shopping, to stimulate the market. Priests call on us to have faith. If you follow these inveiglements to participate, to be responsible, you are trapped. Do not take part in the game, do not expect any solution from politics, do not be attached to things, do not hope. Dystopian irony (dyst-irony) is the language of autonomy. Be skeptical: do not believe your own assumptions and predictions (or mine). And do not revoke revolution. Revolt against power is necessary even if we may not know how to win. Do not belong. Distinguish your destiny from the destiny of those who want to belong and to participate and to pay their debt. If they want war, be a deserter. If they are enslaved but want you to suffer like them, do not give in to their blackmail" (ibid.).

On this occasion it is impossible to summarize more than 1,500 pages of Breivik's *2083. A European Declaration of Independence* (with the Latin title, *De Laude Novae Militiae Pauperes commilitones Templique Solomonici*), dated in 2011, under his anglicized pen-name Andrew Berwick, but major points expressed on the first couple of pages, as well as its finishing hypothesis, occur as a dramaturgical essence of Montažstroj's 2019 theatre performance project. Breivik writes:

I have spent several years writing, researching and compiling the information and I have spent most of my hard earned funds in this process (in excess of 300,000 Euros). I do not want any compensation for it as it is a gift to you, as a fellow patriot. Much of the information presented in this compendium (3 books) has been deliberately kept away from the European peoples by our governments and the politically correct mainstream media (MSM). More than 90 per cent of the EU and national parliamentarians and more than 95 per cent of journalists are supporters of European multiculturalism and therefore supporters of the ongoing Islamic colonization of

Europe; yet, they DO NOT have the permission of the European peoples to implement these doctrines. (11)

The author of this manifesto seemed to be eager to cover the following main topics: the rise of cultural Marxism/multiculturalism in Western Europe; several reasons why the Islamic colonization and/or Islamization of Western Europe began; current state of the Western European Resistance Movements (anti-Marxist and anti-Jihad movements); solutions for Western Europe and how the resistance forces should move forward in the coming decades; finally, covering all, highly relevant topics including solutions or strategies for different political fronts. Breivik summarizes his manifesto in two initial sentences, emphasizing that this compendium “presents advanced ideological, practical, tactical, organizational and rhetorical solutions and strategies for all patriotic-minded individuals/movements”, and will thus be of great interest to all of the audience, “whether you are moderate or a more dedicated cultural conservative/nationalist” (ibid.). It is perfectly clear that cultural relativism or under-cover humanism, as he calls it, is another name for cultural-Marxist, as a doctrine, wanting to deconstruct European identity, traditions, culture – and even nation-states. Some of the key-problems of so called European version of humanism, debated and therefore attacked in Breivik’s manifesto and, thus, deliberately put on stage in Montažstroj’s performance, are of following nature: political correctness and its consequences, inaugurated by Marxist thought and Frankfurt school, the Western academic system, European Islamic *negationism*, mythical discourses of tolerance and peaceful ecumenism, rise of the pseudo-intellectual elites, feminist ideology and feminization as severe anthropological process, multiculturalism and immigration policies, politics of labor, etc. A passage from the immigration policy deconstruction chapters warns us:

Do gang rapes boost GDP? Was that an offensive question, you say? Well, according to Sweden’s finance minister Pär Nuder, more immigrants should be allowed into Sweden in order to safeguard the welfare system. However, in reality estimates indicate that immigration costs Sweden at least 40 to 50 billion Swedish kroner every year, probably several hundred billions, and has greatly contributed to bringing the Swedish welfare state to the brink of bankruptcy. An estimated cost of immigration of 225 billion Swedish kroner in 2004, which is not unlikely, would equal 175 per cent of Sweden’s tax income that year, a heavy burden in a country which already has some of the highest levels of taxation in the world. At the same time, the number of rape charges in Sweden has quadrupled in just above twenty years. Rape cases involving children under the age of 15 are six times as common today as they were a generation ago. Resident aliens from Algeria, Libya, Morocco



and Tunisia dominate the group of rape suspects. Lawyer Ann Christine Hjelm, who has investigated violent crimes in one court, found that 85 per cent of the convicted rapists were born on foreign soil or by foreign parents. Swedish politicians want to continue Muslim immigration because it boosts the economy, yet the evidence so far indicates that it mainly boosts the number of gang rapes. Meanwhile, research shows that fear of honor killings is a very real issue for many immigrant girls in Sweden. 100 000 young Swedish girls live as virtual prisoners of their own families. (415)

Praising the new knighthood, Breivik often calls upon the re-emergence of the new military order or new Templars, avatars of the nearest future, that will recruit themselves mainly through gaming platforms, virtual reality structures, armed with their own military and militia platoons on-line and business intelligence strategies, their own financial and communication platforms off-line and on the web, as well as self-manufactured chemical and biological weapons, etc. Future allegedly democratic models that Breivik aspires are all of, supposedly, patriarchal, conservative, xenophobic, monocultural nature: "Justification and driving force for the re-introduction of monoculturalism will be based on practical issues and circumstances related to social cohesion and not on hate. This re-introduction of monoculturalism will resemble that of today's Japan, South Korea and Taiwan" (1190). The post-political super-human arising from this kind of discourse is a political and social Darwinist, a natural side-effect of the alleged European weakness to channel all of its capacities against Islamization. Western civilization that was, according to Breivik, supposed to function inside the norms of humanism and/or Christianity, now has to engage its social-Darwinist powers in order to mobilize *the youth*, or *new generations*, willing to unite through different communication platforms. Berardi Bifo connects these school mass-murders, as well as terrorism *sui generis*, with the manipulative and social engagement of contemporary media, but also with contemporary financial, absolute capitalism, tracing it all the way to the realm of nihilism – *the black hole we live in*. From the position of the Left, as Berardi Bifo emphasizes, there is actually no hope, because people can only benefit from capitalism when they sleep or when they kill themselves, and if they do not kill themselves, then they are obliged to live this daily life of media spectacle, as well as their own paid work. Heroes in Berardi Bifo's analysis, as well as those in Horvath's book and Montažstroj's performance, are young men who shoot to kill. Their daily lives are often being depicted as a form of bizarre individual sociopathy, putting young people in a strange context where they are obliged to decide or act, while absorbing the neoliberal anti-humanism around them. These young people are coming back with their own brutal laws, killing out

of pure curiosity, just because they can. Montažstroj's performance has shown that Breivik was a rational thinker, in a perverse way. As Berardi Bifo puts it, it would be perversely simplified to interpret his attack only as an act of a madman. His political or ideological statements, although definitely unacceptable from my own point of view, are nevertheless very clear, even rational, in an utmost terrifying manner. He advocates the need to exterminate Leftists, cultural Marxists – in order to foreshadow the war between Christians and Muslims, because Europe's demographic picture is now radically, rapidly changing and even super-capitalism cannot depreciate it. The benign multicultural Left, as Breivik puts it, as well as a Liberal-leaning pro-immigrant ideologist, clearly supposed to be responsible for these changes. What does a hero do – an avatar on the virtual game-board? He starts shooting, killing not only left-wing politicians, but their youth, which is precisely what Breivik did on Utoyi Island in Norway. Total Darwinism of the mass-killing youth is directed towards extermination of the weak, already vulnerable, wretched, because humans are not able to generate, even to articulate or to conceptualize a sustainable humanist concept for the twenty-first century – that would become a political project. In this context, it is definitely not surprising that, nowadays, even mentally disturbed people can buy weapons, but, on the contrary, the metaphorical density of mass-murders directly committed *in the name of rationality or sanity-projects* is something to be worried about. Furthermore, as Berardi Bifo often puts it in his most recent works, “sensitivity of a generation of children who have learned more words from machines than from their parents appears to be unable to develop solidarity, empathy and autonomy” (Berardi Bifo 7). As well as Breivik's, Pekka-Erik Auvinen's *Natural Selector's Manifesto* can also be interpreted in the context of cynical existentialism as active critique of humanism and of social Darwinism, whereby not all human lives are worth saving, especially those lacking intelligence, survival instinct, power to act, self-determination or strong-minded individuality, group or even military solidarity. “Social Darwinists say that benevolent principles cannot stop the affirmative strength of evolution” (40). Their metaphorical *motto* is, at least in Auvinen's case, that *humanity is overrated*. Montažstroj criticizes precisely this kind of complex relations between apathy, lack of empathy, “annihilating nihilism” (88-92), and terrifying accordance with xenophobic movements in all European countries. One more time Bifo gives us an interesting example from the contemporary European political platform: “Only a few days after the Utaya massacre, Mario Borghezio, a representative of the Italian Northern League and member of the European Parliament, lauded Anders Breivik's manifesto. Live on Italian state radio, Borghezio claimed that he shared Breivik's opposition to Islam, including his call for a 'crusade' by Christians against

Europe's drift toward Islam'. He then added that positions like Breivik's "account for 20 per cent of votes in Europe," and that "100 million people think this way." In a separate interview with *Il Sole-24* radio station, Mr Borghezio declared that the ideas expressed by Breivik are generally good – barring the violence – and some of them are great" (Berardi Bifo 97). If he talks like an idiot, looks like an idiot, acts like an idiot, do not be fooled, he definitely is an idiot. Nevertheless, regarding his statistical estimate passage about a terrifying twenty per cent, he is probably right. Digital tribes, manipulated on-line, can easily form an opinion, recruiting members by creating a "phobic ghost of otherness" (118), or even their militia-supporters, cultural relativists and Marxists, that could be easily killed, first in virtual reality of World of Warcraft or Doom gaming platforms, and afterwards in real life. All Montažstroj's performers perform in a semi-virtual environment, surrounded by screens, gaming platforms, mobile phones, etc. They amplify their own experience and killing instincts in a virtual space, with no boundaries, or totally deterritorialized, by capitalism, mass-media and new communication identities of contemporary avatars. End of the performance is, thus, deliberately symptomatic and provocative, not only echoing a summary of Breivik's main political ideas, but, above all, waiting for the probable and even disputable final applause of the audience present in the theatre. Theatre performance convention of the fourth wall, therefore, camouflages the possible accordance and/or acclamation, creating a gap for terror of acceptance to emerge, or terror of pure subjectivity in its purest form.

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