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MRX-Maschine

(English working title: MRX Machine)

Sample translation by Madeleine LaRue

[pp. 7–14]

Neighbors

Alongside my siblings — full, half, and unrelated — this book is dedicated to Hegelmann. Hegelmann, whose bourgeois name has either gone unmentioned or been forgotten, was my neighbor when I lived in a flat share in Neukölln. One day he rang at our door and asked if we would accept his furniture as a gift to keep it from falling into the hands of the court repossession officers. He himself intended to escape his debt collectors by fleeing to a friend in the Canary Islands. Before the situation had escalated to this point, before he came to believe that only flight could save him, he had been caught in a Kafkaesque correspondence with his health insurance company, which continually harassed him with demands for payment. His exceptionally comprehensive and rigorous argumentation seemed to simply bounce right off the standardized apparatus of the insurance administration. On the evening before the foreclosure, we went to his apartment and were hastily gifted with items of furniture, among them a somewhat sticky — but promising — record collection, complete with a record player. Hegelmann was no stranger. A few years before, during my philosophy studies, he had often gotten himself noticed in well-attended lecture courses by his unprompted and extensive references to Hegel, time and again pushing the show of opening up the lecture to questions from the audience to its limits. Both his person and his protests were immediately recognized by the credit-collecting students as foreign bodies. The unspoken rules of academic sobriety had spread even to the first-semester students after only a few days of university praxis. His advanced age, his incongruous appearance, his shaking voice, and his wild gesticulations were unequivocal indications that he did not belong to the institutional establishment, and was therefore not someone whose monologues needed to be reverently attended to. Not infrequently did the auditorium, in pre-emptive obedience to

professorial authority, sneer pointedly at him, exhorting him into silence before the professors could be put in the awkward position of having to respond to his interjections. In such moments, Adorno's talk of laughter as capitulation to forces to be feared¹ finds its object.

There must have been some message in this neighborly encounter. From the exiled Hegelmann and his specific generosity, then, comes this text's concept of solidarity/relation/militancy, which reaches its limit neither in the paranoia of others nor in the capitulation to the whole.

1 Cf. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, London and New York: Verso, 1997, p. 140.

Enter Machine from stage M_RX

*A nothingness
that we use
to indicate
when we do not know something
from what side
we do not know it*

Antonin Artaud²

*In every era the attempt must be made anew
to wrest tradition away from a conformism
that is about to overpower it.*

Walter Benjamin³

This is not the description of the machine, it is the machine. The eyes are already coupled to the letters. Traces of MRX-Machine connections are already detectable in the system. Since Marx countless mutations have been run through. New mutating agents are being conceived now and here. The immunizing effect of the name *Marx*, the geniality, the originality, the historical distance, the scholarly authority, the rational gathering of evidence is abating. We are already moving in the field of perversion, deviation, of male and female mutants, of genderless mutants. Unnoticed penetration and infiltration. MRX-Machine is the becoming-flesh of the Red Scare. The coming-to-life of a group photo out of J. Edgar Hoover's nightmare. The confirmation of fear of the wave of the unregistered. A secret connection between the tardy, the chaotic, riot girls, beatnik girls, and dyslexics. MRX-Machine has adopted metal and punk tactics to develop its profile as a countermovement to the patterns of resistance and fear fantasies of the dominant ideology.⁴ The worship of fitness, health,

2 [Trans.] Antonin Artaud, *Watchfiends & Rack Screams: Works from the Final Period*, trans. Clayton Eshleman, Boston: Exact Change, 1995.

3 [Trans.] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1968.

4 Family relationships construct themselves not through a common origin or identity, but rather in the paranoid gaze with which the center of bourgeois order looks down upon its other. The metal researcher Keith Kahn-Harris finds an example of such unintentionally inquisitorial fatherhood in terms of a heretical relation: "In

hygiene, and harmony is exchanged for the exaltation of obsessively manifold processes of decay, epidemics, bodily secretions and a wild ruckus. The right-wing battle cry of “cultural Marxism,” which supposedly conspires behind the scenes, infiltrates all areas of society, and masks itself in non-economic discourses in order to overturn societal relations — even to bring them down when no one’s looking — is seen by MRX-Machine as a challenge, a mission. We meet in the archives, file cabinets, observation and treatment protocols of *moral panics*. In the patient files, in the gaps in the attendance lists, in the registries of social welfare recipients. There is no family bond. The sterilized and the castrated, the childless dead-before-their-time, the police-state victims, the disappeared are not shut off from father-, mother-, and sisterhood. A secret greeting goes out to the ones who smell like urine, the ones who live with the small and the smallest of animals, the unsteady, the disoriented, the toothless, unkempt, hungering comrades and the ones with a thousand-yard stare. A manic rubbing of the eyes, until the ones who vanish down the mine shafts, the ones locked in windowless factories, the ones buried in the slums come into sight. Proletarian and bourgeois, polymorphically perverse, female and male, white and non-white, homosexual, environmentally conscious, immigrant, anti-colonial, childless, criminal, drug-addicted, uneducated, impotent, attention-deficit, grown-up and past-their-prime, exploitive and exploited elements have already begun with the transfer of confidential data and the confusion of meaning. The reds are not on the advance, they have already arrived — albeit failed and defeated for now. Sleeper cells to be left to their sleep, so long as they dream of waking.

The movement of MRX-Machine does not follow respectability as an impulse to reject recklessness for the sake of self-preservation and to separate Marx from muck. There is an oscillation between the two which can be slipped in and out of. It lacks (still, one must hurry) the unambiguity that would render it usable to the search engine’s algorithms. The proletariat as footprint of capital, as swelling shaped by collision, is not concerned with maintaining its form or a stance. It is a class that yearns for its own destruction, that must think beyond the future of its disappearance. A pride in or defense of the consistency of its status quo is untenable.

Because of its willingness to disintegrate, the proletariat in the context of MRX-

1999, presidential candidate Gary Bauer attacked a number of ‘anti-Catholic’ artists, including ‘the homosexual music group Rotting Christ’. Rotting Christ is a Greek black metal band with no known connections to homosexuality” (Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007, p. 28) — *but now they know!* It was the presidential candidate himself who, in his paranoid resistance produced a relationship that must now be developed. In this way our enemy makes us aware of our vanished siblings. While censorship thinks to reveal satanic messages by playing records backwards (Judas Priest), many more secret messages can be discovered in its slip-ups.

Machine functions as a *mutation engine*, a polymorphism motor, a manifold center, a black hole. MRX-Machine is not a therapy prescribed (for beautiful hair, strong nails, increased concentration capacity), but a pill against the proletariat. Or, in the words of the “bluesologist” Gil Scott-Heron:

[quotation]

[pp. 174–179]

Queer

When we speak of the dissolution of the proletariat, of its strike, we must also speak of the dissolution of femininity as the opposite of masculinity. Fucking-up and cutting-up overlap with the idea of queerness as an opening up of identity, as a disidentification. Not to identify oneself and others as feminine or masculine means not to measure behavior and appearance against the norm of two opposing sexes. It considers the world as open to possibilities of action and negotiation not provided for in the repertoire of biologically assigned sexes. Within the labor invested in the determination of masculine or feminine, queerness as fucking-up means to fail, to refuse, to strike — instead of performing, for example, stoic resolve, heroic courage, indiscriminate friendliness or unblemished beauty. Cutting-up means drawing on sources other than one's assigned identity to form one's image of oneself in the world. Barbie's head on a stormtrooper's body.

Fucking-up and cutting-up contradict the unambiguity, assignability, and attraction of masculinity and femininity. Prol-mutation in a queer context means viewing masculinity and femininity as factories for the purpose of heterosexual reproduction. We rediscover sabotage, strike, the appropriation of the means of production and their repurposing as forms of action. The problem around which the proletariat, men and women, gather lies in the fact that they cannot exist without the means of production, which remain in foreign possession, and that they are offered the performance of gender as work for pay. The production of norms of masculinity and femininity are in the possession of the beauty, advertising, food, entertainment, fashion, and porn industries. As commodified or reified forms, feminine, masculine, hetero- and homosexual identities are presented as durable inner truths cut off from the sphere of their production.

Properties like gender — even though they seem to be *owned* by the individual — remain alienated. Gendered people who *possess* certain properties do not own, control, or define them, as the expected form or structure of these properties does not originate in the people themselves. It is not the bearer of a title of femininity, but the capitalist order that structures and reproduces her property and its functioning as capital. Identifying as a woman

binds one in lifelong servitude to femininity. The response can only be appropriation, expropriation, and strike. The same goes for the heteronormative, patriarchal structure, the *private* factory where men and women pursue their second jobs. Queerness goes on strike when it does not itself become a reified identity, affecting a sphere of work beyond the reach of classical labour organisations. It fights for the expropriation, appropriation, and reorganization of apparently gender-specific patterns of behavior, abilities, and qualities, not in the sense of a new, more just distribution, as allocation and mutual exclusion, but in the sense of sharing. Cutting-up as cutting-out and cutting-off is life and settling-in at the breaking point. An everyday between ruins and rubble, stolen goods and pirate copies. It cannot be about the unity and authority of a new integrity, identical to itself and free of friction and fracture. Always there is a snippet in the wrong place, the gaze follows the traces of the fissures: bumps and hair on the wrong parts of the body, jaggies, contortions, test cards, breaking voices, feedback mechanisms, blurs, omissions, confusions, transmission errors. The desire for a cut-up, for a rupture, for a fuck-up, for a strike, is a countermovement to the sedimentation of habit, a sabotage of what Althusser calls “rituals of ideological recognition.”⁵ It is a celebration of deviation from the norm of heterosexual, white, healthy, and willing to perform, from the regulations, the marching formation, the comfort of conformity. The deviation does not refer to the Other as autonomous sphere; it targets the relationship from which it will deviate. It is not the sphere of the individual and not the unfractured queer identity, the discrete queer subculture, the new queer market niche, toward which it aims. Avoiding recruitment is more complicated than a one-time defection from the hetero- to the homosexual camp. From the housewife camp to the career-woman camp. It is pointless to argue over whether the two biological sexes constitute a material basis for social gender roles. For MRX-Machine, biology as an ultimate foundation — like every other recourse to the “nature of things” — is an attempt to cement the societal status quo through naturalization. Inter- and transsexuality are only some examples of the fact that a field of gender plurality becomes visible as soon as one grows willing to release oneself from the bipolarity of genders. This plurality brings with it a manifold of sexual practices and forms of interpersonal relationships. When we speak of women and men, we are speaking of embodiments of ingrained practices in medicine, biology, pedagogy, family life, speech. The opposition of masculine and feminine pervades all areas of bourgeois society. This does not mean that gender is not real. It is real as action, as historical growth, as a proper way of

5 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” *On Ideology*, trans. Ben Brewster, London: Verso, 2008, p. 47.

handling the given status quo, as an expectation which every visible body comes up against. It is real as job, as office and factory of reproductive labor. It is real and in need of change as a part of the capitalist order of things and bodies. Gender as a “necessarily engendered illusion”⁶ has a similar status to the commodity fetish. It too revolves, as expressed in the Marxist formula, around “a social relation between men, that assumes [...] a relation between things.”⁷ We are contending with historically and spatially grounded and/or institutionally anchored habits of vision and action that appear natural, and thus universal and inalterable.

In this respect, queerness — the praxis of that which is queer: unfamiliar, uncommon, and allegedly *unnatural* — is part of the revolutionary project. Wherever nature, either of humans or things, shows up as an argument, an appeal is made to the superhuman authority of an inalterable order. Every assault upon order will thus be queer. Rosa Luxemburg describes how Adam Smith strove in vain to prove a natural “inclination to trade” not only among humans, but even among dogs. Whereas the bourgeois impulse consists in enlisting nature as a guarantor of the patriarchal as much as the racist and capitalist order, an ideological-critical impulse animates the queer, proletarian, anti-racist reaction. The anti-racist, proletarian, queer affinity is illuminated in the queer way of reading that José Esteban Muñoz explains at the beginning of his study *Queer Futurity*: “Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.”⁸

6 Georg Lukács, “What is Orthodox Marxism?,” *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971, p. 6.

7 Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1887, p. 43.

8 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York: New York University Press, 2009, p. 1.