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NOAH DE LISSOVOY

Some Notes for the Imagination

An intersection of the political and the imaginative is in this, that the material of the human mind is the whole world. So living becomes a creative act. Political praxis is a dive into a collective re-imagining. Conversely, the imagination proposes a practical task. The poem is being used by the grammar, understood in a large sense. History.

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The imagination reflects the movement of the forms of things in time. Not just the *forms*, but the *forms of things*.

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Revolution means imagination. A metamorphosis. It is motivated by the needs of the moment. Like a baby, frustrated, straining to put two words together: for a purpose. One is thrust forward. Held out against the living social plasma of other subjects. Infectious.

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The individual is held taut in a series of contradictions that leave it flailing. These become internalized, it being impossible to figure the actual dilemma. Only the collective subjectivity can act against the outside in a way that crystallizes a single contradiction that can potentially be overcome.

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There is something for which we want to use the vocabulary of emotions, but wrongfully. The experience of the structural integrity of social meaning. Not the feeling of being connected to others, but the actual connection. It's not a feeling. This is operative.

*

We walked into a consciousness. It has an address, just like the doorway our shoes took us through. So there is a going outside into the world that is not a going outside, but a staying in one place. A confrontation with the contradictions of one's social being. A more fundamental project than the divagations of psychological or "spiritual" interrogations. The latter refer to ideas of "self" or "selflessness." But what about the means by which selves are produced? (The machinery that produces the self.)

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People are burnt up by days. The double sense of this: the one economic—the daily sale and consumption of a labor power; the other social—one's being told moment to moment by a history that's external. The agony is not the living itself, but its alienation. The alienation of the productive power from the producer, and the alienation of the means of creating history from the self.

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So the imagination is exploited. Not only in the sense of being employed toward the production of a surplus, but furthermore, to the extent that it reproduces these objective relations of exploitation within itself. In other words, in rationalizing and universalizing to itself the particular relations of capital in which it is embedded, the imagination exploits its own power to figure the outside. Thus setting up a hall of mirrors, an optics that denies its authentic agency in the world.

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Poetry creaks more or less eagerly toward the accomplishment of the small tasks allotted to it in this context. How best (quietly, quickly) to dispose of a quantum of imaginative surplus that has somehow escaped other circuits. Do we cooperate in this *harmless* incineration? Campfires at the edges of the engine, what stray impulse is lying around to toss in, send off a few sparks...

*

Or is there another kind of acting? Against this "system" there is no wildness. Disruptions of the exploitation of physical and imaginative labor only appear chaotic from the standpoint of the entrenched, familiar chaos. Rebellions are logical. Whether or not they are premeditated according to our juridical definitions. The "unconscious" is not the artifact of an individual psychical economy, but of a collective political regime. Unconscious to who?

*

The whole faith of a scientific revolutionism rests on the understanding that there is a limit beyond which people cannot be pushed without engendering insurrection. Within the individual, the imagination is crossed by a corresponding boundary. After this point, in order to preserve a horizon for itself, the imagination rebels. Then poetry starts, startled, headed in a *direction*—