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Autothapsis

**a selection of
(not quite)
posthumous writings**

Ed Emery



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ed.emery@soas.ac.uk

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Si forte aliquid repertum fuerit quod lima correctionis indigeat, corrigatur ut dicit Augustinus: "Talis volo essere in scripturis aliorum quales exspecto correctores meorum et haec est caritas".

Preface

[Still to be written]



Fig. 00: Peterhouse Library, 9 August 2023. Photo: Sarah Anderson

'Faith, sir, the book was lost,
and because 'twas pity so good a play should be lost,
we found it, and play it.

John Marston, *The Malcontent*

London
24 December 1983

At that very particular cross-over of Berwick Street into Old Compton Street, we shopped for Christmas fare. Tangerines. Chicory. Chestnuts. Cox's Orange Pippins. "Sparra-grass and broccolay!" shouted the man with the red face. Half a maturing Stilton. A yellowing Camembert with herbs. Giant oyster mushrooms for breakfast. Sun-dried Italian tomatoes in oil. A quarter slab of cod-roe, smoked. Avocados. Small, sandy patate. Purple-sprouting broccoli. Miniature brussels and carrots. A quarter pound of green gunpowder tea. And a cock pheasant, proud-feathered in all his finery of greens and blacks and reds. Stall after stall, piled high with the world's fruits and vegetables, arranged with varying degrees of artistry, from the banal to the breathtaking.

A brief confabulation in the Lina delicatessen. A passing nod at the French charcuterie. A look of amazement as the sessile crab in the fishmonger's opposite – somebody's dinner-to-be – gets up and walks across the marble slab. Coffee and cream cake in the Valerie. Olives and lamb from Mahmoud's. Our further passage westward blocked by a large police operation that cordons off the environs of Marble Arch for a suspected bomb. A pause, a think about this and that, a kiss or two in the street, and so home to a secret home tucked down a secret street.

Paris
19 February 1987

Paris forever throws up little surprises, and this time they are musical in form.

My train comes in at the Gare du Nord. The metro took me as far as Strasbourg-St Denis, where I changed. I heard the rumble of subway trains. The rumble stayed, though. Did not move off, as a train would have done. As I went down the tunnel, direction Balard, I realised that I was hearing drums. African drums. Curiosity got the better of me – or rather, my feet could not resist the incredible pounding, echoing rhythms that were coming from somewhere.

I rounded the corner. There, against a wall, were four black Africans. I'd placed the sound already – had picked out two separate conga drums, a maracca-type shaker, and a side-drum. Except that the sound wasn't quite right for a side-drum, so what was it?

Two of the men had drums about 3 feet long, with a playing surface of about 18 inches. The drumskins were held taut with an arrangement of cords. The men sat on cloth pads on top of the drum-sides, and held the playing-surface between their legs. The variety of rhythm was extraordinary, but more so was the tone – rim-shots, centre-padding, and an occasional change of note when the player pressed his heel

against the drumskin to tighten it.

The maracca man, as I say, had a shaker of sorts. And the side-drum? Not a drum at all. A tall black man with wild hair was beating against the white-tiled sides of the subway wall with a drumstick, and he too was summoning up an extraordinary variety of tone.

Gathered in the space of that subway were about two hundred people – Arabs, black Africans, white French, men, women, all sorts. A couple of young women dancing. And everybody listening, completely enraptured. And the curious thing was that the ensemble made no attempt to collect money. They just played, and they were brilliant, and they knew it. Close, tight ensemble work coming from goodness knows where on the African continent.

A striking contrast with street music in London. In Paris the music is often played ensemble; it is often very firmly ethnic, of one country or another – and represented by its exiles; the performers are often very, very good; and a whole audience will gather and listen for ten minutes at a time. By contrast, in the London underground, the performers are almost always solo; generally they perform US folk/pop material (or perhaps classical); they are often stunningly mediocre, to the extent that you'd pay them to go away; and an audience never gathers to listen and watch because people are too busy hurrying on their way. Somewhere in the middle of all that are the roots of a deep sickness of the spirit.

Anyway, on from there. To a pizzeria in Rue du Commerce. A simple enough place – a family of Sicilians and Calabresi trying to earn an honest crust. But from the moment I arrived, it was obvious that the entire staff and management were itching to do something musical. A guitar player had come in, to play a few numbers and raise cash from around the tables. They tried to cajole him to play more, but he proved recalcitrant, and moved off to give a guitar lesson to the young man making the pizzas – who then got shouted at for ignoring his work on the dough-board. That having failed, the owner pulled out a battered old accordion and began to play wild tarantellas.

One of the waiters grabbed a tambourine, and did a high-kicking dance with a Sicilian customer who had that day been released from prison. All this in a space barely six feet by six. Then they grabbed the French lady cook, and she joined in the dancing.

At this point, Rico, the other waiter, was summoned. A floor-full of customers on the premiere étage was entirely ignored while Rico licked down, his hair, gave a slanty-eyed look, and sang a love song in Japanese. The whole thing was entirely extraordinary.

It really was as if all they wanted to do was sing and dance, and the whole business of serving customers came a poor second. And once again, where in London are you going to find musical spontaneity of that sort? Even when the "performance" stopped, the waiters were still singing and dancing as they continued with their evening's work. Extraordinary.

And then home, to a few minutes' viewing of television. A rock- music show on Channel 6. A picture of a lone girl, sitting on a grave in the middle of a huge cemetery. She is reciting a long list of names – Alain R, Rashid M, Sylvie B. etc – of people who have died of drugs. Then she launches into her song: "*Dis leurs – merde aux dealers*". A violent, specific, loud, euphoric condemnation of drug culture and everything to do with it. "Dealers are murderers... dealers are shit!" The chorus (which is the title of the song) is sung by a 200-strong gang of boys and girls, high- school age, who punch clenched fists into the air to stress their slogan-message. They're filmed from above. Ten or fifteen years ago they would have been communist, socialist, anarchist, punching the air with the same clenched fist salute, and their slogans would have been very different. A whole imagery here, that has been expropriated in the name of conformity. And then follow pictures of drug usage, drug victims, drug suffering. Not a glimmer here of the notions of an earlier generation – my own – that believed that drug usage opened the door to expanded consciousness and enhanced life possibilities. Ends with a slogan: "*La Drogue – C'est de la Merde!*" – "Drugs are Shit!" One who lived the "Years of Liberation", and the drug culture that was a part of that liberation, feels uncomfortable.

So there we are. Music and what it does. A three-fold experience, all in the space of a couple of hours in the streets of Paris in February, all busy, lighted, and flurrying with snow.

London
1 February 1988

"Did you see the..."

"Yes, I saw it. It wasn't what they said, though. At least, not as far as I know."

"By the way, there was something I wanted to ask you. Was there anything else went when they...?"

"Yes. There was a... It wasn't there when I went back the week after."

"Oh brilliant! That's just fucking brilliant!"

"There was also a... It was mine. I thought I should do something about it."

"Oh that was yours, was it? I wondered whose it was. It's rather good-looking."

"You can have it, if you like. I've no further use for it. But if I were you I'd..."

"What?"

"You know "

"Oh for fuck's sake! You don't mean to say that..."

"Yes. That's right."

"Ha! Ho! That's ridiculous. That's the most ridiculous thing I've heard all week. That's so fucking ridiculous that it's almost funny. In fact it is funny. It's so funny it's fucking hilarious. Ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

Conversation, held in the presence of an unsuspecting friend and conducted at least partly in sign language.

Essex
24 July 1988

Like a sovereign city state of the Italian Trecento; the approach road winds in a small spiral up the side of a hillock; the hillock is, or was, a tip; the flat top of this sovereign encampment is swept by the wind.

The eye takes in: a towering electricity pylon feeding London's main grid; pyramids of multi-coloured oil barrels on the premises of a recoverer of used industrial oils; a large skyscape which is uniformly grey; two freestanding towers of council flats dominating the barren plain; the great circular roundabout and underpass where London's circulatory motorway dies because it has reached the wastelands of Thameside and can go no further for want of a bridge across the river; a convoy of military trucks travelling at uniform speed with regulation spacing, flying small black flags, one towing a howitzer; the stinking black sludge waters of the River Roding; a culvert cutting beneath the Tilbury road, briefly in the open air before descending into an outflow pipe, and filled with green slimy weed; a steep bank of rubble and discarded items of wire and plastic, where three horses and a tethered donkey graze; a sign indicating the route to the Council waste tip. We are in Jenkins Lane, Barking.

The sovereign encampment is, and has been, the home of Leonard Aylwin and his family circus.

Slowly, a step at a time, they are building their circus. It has pigeons, it has ponies, it has horses, it has a donkey, it has a population of cockerels, chickens, dogs and puppies that may or may not be part of the performance, and it has a big top whose three masts rise to the sky, but remain undressed because the wind has blown holes in the canvas of the tent-top.

One, two, three, four, maybe six or seven caravans. Caravans built in the traditional style. Caravans that have been built by Mr Aylwin and his family. They will be drawn by horse. They will carry all the luggage and baggage of this travelling circus. They are painted in the traditional colours – bright yellows, blues, reds... They are lettered in the traditional style, with fishtail letters. A traditional family circus, traditionally coloured, drawn by horse, and touring the villages of Essex and Suffolk. Next season perhaps moving on to Oxfordshire and the Cotswolds, where there are still villages.

Nothing that I can say at this moment can adequately express the hope and indomitable optimism of this venture. They have built their circus out of nothing, from the debris, the jetsam of this sub-industrial periphery of a great and stinking city. They live and build their dream on a patch of ground of unredeeming ugliness, on a terrain to which the burghers of the City of London have for centuries banned the vilest of extractive and reprocessing industries.

My heart wants to cry for you. My heart, like yours, is impaled and slowly bleeding on the implacable spike that is the time-span, ever-impossible, between concept and realisation. We have a world to change, or we have pleasures to give, and the scale of an individual's efforts is so unbearably small.

My little boy at my side remembers the five-step climb that took us up the ladder into your kitchen caravan; he talks, too, of the puppies that tugged at his coat; of the painting of your circus tent, brightly lit; and of the cockerel.

Figs. 00–00: Leonard Aylwin's Circus, somewhere along the A13.

**Castelli, Crete
17 October 1988**

The gods, it appears, are angry. A great, wonderful, raging, thrashing storm. Yesterday, an earthquake on Zante. The elements are troubled.

Great black storm-clouds drive in from the North and come to rest over the mountain range behind me, where they shed their load of grey-black water and forked lightning. Long cresting breakers come curling in from the sea and break on the shore, chased in by a steady and unceasing wind. *Sostenuto assai*. Suddenly a break opens in the black cloud; a great pool of sunlight illumines the evening sea; and just before the sun sets, a bright rainbow plunges into the dark waters at that selfsame spot.

I am honoured to be present at all this, with the wind tugging at my coat and the surf roaring in my ears; it is exhilarating. Who knows, though, what it bodes for tomorrow's voyage to the mainland...

It happens that I am billeted a bare ten yards from the roaring sea. My landlady is a good woman. This is the tale that she tells:

"Ego dhen xero polla ap'tin historia... ego gennitheka to '44... otan etan o polemos..." I don't know a lot about history... I was born in '44... during the war. But my father was already dead when I was born. No, he wasn't killed by the Germans. He was killed by Greeks. I never knew him. You're from where, did you say...? From London? Is that in Germany? In England. Ah. Where our Prime Minister has gone for his operation... you have good doctors there... Well, anyway, I don't know about the war... the Germans, the English... were they

good, were they bad...? They say that when Greeks used to hide the English soldiers, if the Germans found out, they would punish them. Do you know what happened in my village? The Germans came, and they took all the men of the village, all 65 of them, and they took them to a place and they shot them, rat-a-tat-a-tat. Killed them all. And you had the wives of these men, who had children, and some of them already pregnant, with their bellies out to here, and all their menfolk gone, dead... In my class at school we were all orphans... Imagine it... not one of us who had a father... a whole generation of us now, fatherless... because of what the Germans did. There was only one man who escaped. They shot him, but he lived. And as he lay there, he crossed himself and prayed to God and said that he would become a priest if God saved him, and that's what he did, and he's still the priest in our village today

The Olive

The coastal plain runs between two tall hill ridges to the sea. Upon the hill ridges stand defensive stone towers, a protection – during a certain phase – against sea-borne predators. The terrain is a carpet of silver-green foliage – olive trees – broken by the occasional rising black cypress or spreading green fig or the neatness of the enamel-green orange leaf (trees that are precisely spaced and watered).

A monoculture of the olive, which was imposed on the area in the eighteenth century.

An olive tree renders 75, up through 100, to, occasionally, from a good tree, 150 kilos of olives.

It is October. The owners of the olive-processing factories are stripping down their plant and machinery, giving everything a thorough service for the mad intensity of the harvesting, which will reach its peak in December. The boss would like you to work the whole of Christmas Eve, because some people have come from Athens to harvest their trees, and they only have three days leave...

You, if you are lucky, are in a position to refuse.

There are various methods to the harvesting. The ground should be cleared at the base of the tree. Brushwood may be removed and burned after the first of the rains, in October, when there is no longer a danger of firing the whole landscape. Sheeting is then laid under the tree. Since the tallest branches are no higher than a man with a stick, a rod may be used in order to knock the ripe fruit to the ground below; or a forkish implement may comb the olives from the branches; or, these days, there exists a vacuum machine which, when applied to a branch, will strip the fruit and not the leaves.

Once harvested, the fruit is left for collection. It is bagged up in sacks. The more or less fascist olive farmer bagged his in 50-kilo sacks, which is liftable. From a proletarian point of view, one is grateful. The more or less communist olive farmer bags up half as much again into the one sack (which is entirely unnecessary, since extra sacks can be had, free, from the factory), making a 75-kilo sack, which is a pig to lift, in the mud and the pissing rain.

The olive on the tree is inedible. It contains a bitter substance.

The eating olive is preserved in the following manner: each olive is scored with two or three lines. It is then put to soak in brine. The brine is renewed once, twice, perhaps three times. This process removes the bitterness. The olive will then be packed either in brine or in oil-with-vinegar, according to the preferences of the markets for which the fruit is destined.

As to the olive which is to be pressed for oil: it will be collected by tractor from the sites where it has been harvested.

The sites are often remote and inaccessible. The harvesting may have been done by the trees' owners themselves, or the owners may pay hired labourers to do the work. The tractor brings the olives to the mill on behalf of the owners – in the same way that a miller of flour would mill flour for a customer. The mill-owner's income consists of 9 per cent of the product – which is weighed on large scales and apportioned accordingly. The mill-owner will have an arrangement with an olive-oil buyer, who will take the oil-income thus accrued.

Once at the mill, the olives are tipped from their sacks onto a vibrating conveyor associated with a vacuum machine. This clears the stones and leaves which inevitably find their way in with the crop. They then feed into the mill proper. The mill consists of large stone wheels - litharia – rolling round within a trough. They grind the olives to a mulch, wherein the stones remain intact.

At this point, *carrozzi* are brought up – trolleys on wheels with a large metal pole sticking up from the centre of the platform. Associated with these trolleys are coconut-fibre mats, and metal sheets, each of which has a hole in the centre, to fit over the trolley's pole. The olive mash is piped onto one of the mats, to a certain thickness. A second mat is then laid over this, and more mash is piped onto it. These layers build up on the trolley. After about five layers, a large metal disc is placed on top of the stacks, to be followed by further layers of matting and mash – to a height of fifteen to twenty layers.

Already, with the pressure of the metal discs, the oil is beginning to run from the mash. It runs into a runnel that surrounds the trolley, which feeds to a pipe from which it can be tapped.

Once laden, the tottering tower of metal, matting and mash is wheeled to the olive press. Let us hope that the boss has invested some of last year's profits in a new concrete floor – it is desperate work when the trolley's metal wheels get stuck in pot-holes in the floor.

The press applies pressure from the top of the stack. The oil is pressed out – this is the "first pressing" – and is collected.

The pressing lasts about twenty minutes per trolley. Most of the pressing and ancillary equipment is of Italian manufacture. A long-standing relationship with Italian techniques and technology, which was also strong at the period of Venetian domination.

Once the virgin oil has been pressed out, there remains a dark, thick substance known as *pyrina*. It contains the stones and skins of olives. This hard-pressed substance is removed from the mats (work which requires two people per mat and a degree of coordination, so as to flick the stuff free) and is piled on a heap.

This waste matter may either be sold to livestock farmers for animal feed; or it may be sold to a secondary oil-presser, who will extract a lower grade of oil from the remnants of the first pressing; or it may be used as a fuel for burning.

Now the bitterness has to be extracted from the oil. This is done by passing it into an autoclave. The autoclave is heated by a fire which is kept burning day and night. The fuel for the fire is, in part, wood which the farmers are expected to supply from timber that they have pruned from their trees (the olive trees are pruned at the same time as they are harvested, in these parts). The bitter liquid is separated out – it is indeed vile – and the oil is ready to be stored. The miller's obligation extends to delivering the final processed oil back to the farmer.

A moderately small farmer will get, for example, two tons of oil from his trees. The trees, incidentally, take seven years to come to maturity; they appear not to outlive their fruitfulness – a farmer says that a tree can be up to a thousand years old; they are adversely affected by frost; in many parts of Greece, olive trees have been decimated by fires, some of which are started deliberately by the political Right wing in order to destabilise the country (what a vile and despicable way to go about it!); I have seen pigs tethered in olive groves – their rooting-around keeps the surrounding vegetation to a minimum, and keeps the soil turned over.

The market for these olives and for their oil have developed – and changed repeatedly – over the course of several thousand years. A further profound change will come with the creation of a fully European market in 1992. Nobody is clear what this change will be. There is a powerful sense of a lack of self-determination in this area, which was similar in the case of a farmer I met, who has been paid a grant of about £18 per tree by the Common Market authorities, in order to plant mandarin orange trees (mandarins are more frost-resistant than ordinary oranges). He has planted 1,300 trees up on the mountain this year. In five years they will begin to bear fruit – lots of it. I asked him where he expected to find the markets for his fruit. He said that he had no idea – the "authorities" would take care of that side of things.

A footnote: the Cretans, incidentally, had developed more sophisticated olive-processing techniques than the farmers hereabouts; they are reputed to be a more astute people anyway – witness the rapid development of hothouse farming in eastern Crete; people tell me that the Cretans would laugh at the primitiveness of the methods employed hereabouts.

One final element to add to the hearsay information gathered above. Regarding the preservation of figs. This is one old lady's recipe:

Once harvested, you take the figs to the seashore. You also take a large cooking pot. You fill the pot with sea water and light a fire under it. When the water boils, you put the figs in for a brief period of three minutes apiece. The figs thus preserved, and then flavoured with oregano, will last for as long as you need them.

Finis.

Fig. 00: Grandfather Onufri's tobacco company – Thessaloniki, 1920s.

Crete
24 October 1988

Elements of the Caique

I find it impossible not to be moved by the sight of the small-to-medium, wood-built, sea-going craft that take Greek fishermen about their business. At root, what moves me is that they are so impeccably female in their lines – the line of their hull, the uplift of their bow and the particular motion with which they cleave to the water.

The broadness of their beam is the broadness of a woman's lower belly, a dimension generated by child-bearing and transposed, via the boat-builder's art, to this configuration of wood-on-water.

Anyway, where to start? Start with the bow-stem. The bow timber of a 28-foot caique – *kaiki* – under construction. It is evident that the bow-timber is not a single piece of wood, but several, fixed together with unusual and elaborate joints. Why is this? It is either because the local trees will not yield a single timber plank large enough to cut the bottom curve-into-the-keel out of it. Or it is because it is the part of the boat most vulnerable to damage, and so you might as well make it in sections that are singly replaceable.

The boat will take about a year to build and fit out. In fact this one will take three, because the man who ordered it is being remiss with his payments. Expected final cost £20,000.

From what I can see, the stringers that run the length of the boat are not (as in our practice) built into the outer face of the ribs, immediately adjacent to the timber skin of the boat; rather, they are on the inner face of the ribs.

The ribs are many – spaced perhaps nine inches apart. They are made of two widths of timber joined together and in several sections, proceeding vertically in standard sections which are bolted together.

The closeness and thickness of the ribbing on even a small boat is a testimony to the enormous strength of construction of these craft:

they appear all but indestructible.

The timber? Maybe a local eucalyptus. More likely, pine, imported from the island of Samos, adjacent to the Turkish mainland. The pine is more workable.

The fastenings? Some bolts, for the major timbers, but, other than that, iron nails, driven home with a nail punch and then puttied over.

The hull is built carvel-style, of adjoining planking, hand-caulked with cotton. The wood is treated with red oxide paint.

The decking consists of longitudinal planking, but not in one plane; the deck falls away to the gunwales from a central axis; it may also fall away fore and aft, to give a shaped, rounded effect. The gunwales rise perhaps a foot above the deckline; they are pierced with drilled holes just above the deck-line, in order to permit waters to drain off all around. My impression is that they welcome waves washing over the gunwales, for the water will drain away, rather than endangering the boat.

The boat will generally have no cabin accommodation as such; there is a cabin on boats of all sizes, from large to small, but this simply houses the engine. Steering is done from the stern, by a wooden rudder which hangs on two iron pins, fixed to the stern stem. The rudder has a long, detachable wooden handle. For tight-circle manoeuvring, the steersman often stands astern and pushes the tiller hard-round with one foot, stretching his leg out behind. The boats are not designed for tight manoeuvring.

The impedimenta of the boat – its fittings – depend on the kind of fishing it is used for.

A characteristic style of small boat has an identically shaped bow and stern. The decking of the immediate bow and stern areas is raised slightly above the rest of the deck. At each end, a hole is cut through the raised decking, a hole which is provided with a removable round wooden cover. The two holes are intended to house gas bottles; the gas bottles feed large incandescent lamps with circular metal brimmed tops and hemispherical glass globes hanging below – lamps which are suspended from the bow or stern, to give a general illumination of a wide area of sub-aqua terrain. These boats are for octopus-fishing.

They have additional characteristics: they may have a diesel engine (Listers and Petters are much favoured), but they also have oars. The oars are cut from a single plank of wood, with no spoons. Sweeps, in fact the oar handles are rounded and fashioned. The pivot arrangement of the oar is not the rowlock as we know it; a waist is carved out of the oar; a cord is wound several times around the waist, loosely; the resulting loop is dropped over one of two wooden pins which are fixed to the gunwales fore and aft of midships, and which act as pivot for the rowing action. The rowing is done from a standing position. It will be the oarsman's job to keep the boat consistently in position above the fishing-ground, for an hour or more at a time.

On both sides of the boat, fore and aft, two U-shaped iron brackets protrude upwards. These are to hold the fishing implements – principally a long wooden pole, with a barbed fork at one end, a Poseidon's spear. Once the octopus are located, they are illumined with the lamp and then speared with this spear. Thereafter, they are beaten on a rock until they are soft, then cut into small portions and served as a grilled meze with ouzo.

To the above, I have to add, several days later, on the basis of my experiences in Crete, the following:

that the construction of the boat is overseen by a wooden cross, which is nailed to the top of the bow timber when it is first laid in the stocks ;

that the particular pine which is used – from Samos – is harder than pine as we know it;

that the supporting cross-timbers for the deck are curved. The curve, however, is not achieved by steaming and bending the wood – it is cut from wood that has been grown with a curve in it;

that the names for various sections of the boat are:

deck – *katastroma*
mast – *katarti*
rudder – *timoni*
stern – *prymni*
bow – *plori*
keel – *karina*
bow-keel – *skari*
thole-pin – *skarmos*
gunwale – *koupasti*
hull – *skaphos*
ribbing – *skeletos*
oar – *koupi*
sail – *istion*
mast – *istos*.

All of which belie my idea of Turkish and Italian words having taken over the Greek nautical vocabulary. In this part of the world at least, boatmen – who had two hundred years of the Venetians and as much again of the Turks – have maintained a seagoing lexicology which derives directly from the classical Greek.

Incidentally, with the exception of *kaputt*, there appear to be no German loan words in the modern Greek vocabulary. This is interesting, inasmuch as many Greeks have German as their second language. The national psyche seems strongly resistant to German inputs.

Yorkshire.
26 March 1989

De Stercore Quaero

The weight of last night's dinner lay heavy in my bowels.

Traversing a country estate or two, and skirting the village of Nidd, we arrived at Ripley Castle.

Ripley village is a subsidiary entity, appended to the landed gentry that inhabit the castle- self-styled. The village caters for the passing trade. It has small shops, some within the castle precinct, which sell luxury items at inflated prices to people who wish to take away, consume, wear, some of the aura of nobility.

There is, however, nowhere to shit.

I asked one person, then another, then another, all of whom were engaged in this retail trade. No, they informed, me, there is indeed nowhere to shit.

This enraged me. After all, a fellow would not have asked the question in the first place if he was not in some dire need. And not one helping hand was extended...

The ungenerous part of my temperament proclaimed within me that the landed gentry of Ripley Castle (self-styled) are happy enough to take our money, but if you want to shit, you shall go elsewhere.

So it happened that I went in search of a small and private place.

The verger of the parish church, a lean and bent old man looking for all the world like the Stick in the Old Dame Trot story, made way for me as I traversed the graveyard. One cannot, I thought, shit in a graveyard.

However, there was a gap in the churchyard wall. And a small iron gate.

And stone steps. Here, it transpired, separate from the common mortals whose remains lay within the graveyard walls, lay the buried bits of the former and deceased lords of the manor of Ripley.

This moment, my masters, I shall share with you, I thought. Under the branches of an austere yew, I dropped my trousers. And, in the presence of William Ingilby, baronet, of Ripley Castle and the Scots Guards, and his father before him, William Ingilby, Of Ripley Castle and the Scots Guards, and of his father before him, William Ingilby, baronet likewise, and so on, I relieved myself of my load.

And so, as the ancient, dull bell of the church clock struck four o'clock, I went upon my way. Much lightened.

The cathedral workshop at Worcester is located in the cloisters. You bow your head, to go down into a basement.

As you enter, you face a large board, bearing moral precepts lettered

in a large hand.

The board advocates:

Respect for the people who teach you the job.

Good manners.

A sense of responsibility.

The paternalist tone is striking, in this day and age. Myself, I would not consent to work under such a board.

The preceptors then add a sentence which surely lies at the very fundamentals of the capitalist ethos, but which I have never, in all my years of study of the relations between labour and capital, seen so clearly expressed. Under the heading "honesty", it proclaims:

Stealing time is just as bad as stealing money.

The parish church at Aldborough, Yorkshire, dates itself to 1316. A board in the church lists all the vicars from that time to this – not only listed, but numbered also. Presently the list has reached number 53, and it is apparent that for centuries that church has made sure that its pastors have been either bachelors or masters of arts.

The mania for listing is not limited to vicars. There was, in this parish, a benefactor by name of Smithson. In the seventeenth century this Smithson gave various amounts of moneys, to be apportioned between the poor of the borough, the upkeep of the church, clothing for the needy and so on. The startling fact about this bequest is that it is recorded on an enormous wooden tablet, in enormous gilt lettering. The scale of the tablet is extraordinary. It must stand a good seven feet high and almost as much across. It dwarfs every other artefact in the church, and in fact dwarfs the church *tutt'intero*. Thus is mammon more loudly served in the house of God.

Paris
4 April 1989

The chef is in good humour, unlike *le patron* (who has been up for most of the night). The last of the lunchtime clientele is just leaving. "You share a plate of spaghetti with us?" he says. "Sure," I say, as I wrap myself round a glass of bubbling prosecco. "*Sai che venerdì facciamo festa?*" ("Did you know we're having a party on Friday?") "No... a party? What for?" "*Ma non lo sai...? Sarà il sette aprile!*" (Don't you know...? It's 7th April!)"

Dio cane, as they say. It hadn't even entered my mind! 1979-1989... Ten long years since the mass arrests began in Italy... Ten long years since the first of the comrades had to flee to the four corners of the world... Ten long years that set some on the path of opening restaurants... And so there will be a press conference, and films, and food, and champagne, and dancing.

He tosses the pasta into the scales. Spaghetti, for four. "You know, I think this marks a turning point for us exiles in Paris. I'm expecting that the comrades will take this as the moment to start making politics again." He turns the pasta into one of six cylindrical pots juggling up and down in a cauldron of boiling water. "The past few years have been hard for us. Very hard. And not even in Italy are people making politics. From what I hear, they're only interested in making money."

In a large frying pan, sliced tentacles of squid are beginning to sizzle slightly in the olive oil. He turns the gas down a touch.

"But there have been huge changes all over Europe, huge changes, and we have to address ourselves to them. New social subjects that we have to start to define." He bids goodbye to the French waiter, who has just left, and eyes the Italian wine salesman in the window seat, to make sure he's not eavesdropping on our conversation.

"Take the Green movement. A lot of it's just Catholicism – save the poor trees, and so on... but inside some of these struggles there are interesting things beginning to emerge, from a communist point of view..."

He takes a parboiled tomato, peels it, and cuts the red outer flesh in with the pink squid. The core goes into the bin with the champagne bottles. He outlines the communist indications of some of these struggles, and continues: "The thing is, the political leadership, the *direzione*, cannot be said to be there, but things still move nevertheless. Take the students in 1986... their movement came, like a bolt from the blue, and you could say it disappeared just as fast. But it had resonances. Maybe in the French railway workers' strikes... Maybe now with the hospital nurses... You're finding that people are pushing for money on the one hand, but also for a better quality of life..."

He moves to the big sink and, with a quart pot and the characteristic hollow sound of seashells, fishes up white-shelled cockles and black-shelled mussels from the basin where they have been purging.

"But these are not the social subjects that we knew and understood ten years ago. Things have moved on." With a shushi-shushi noise the shellfish go into the hot oil in the pan. In the heat they hiss and die and slowly their shells open to reveal their succulent flesh.

"Toni's been doing some interesting writing on this. The man never gives up. Have you read his Manifesto of the Social Worker (*Manifesto dell'Operaio Sociale*)?" I admit that I haven't, but say that I had translated Negri's *Archaeology and Project*, which must have been the precursor of that piece.

He tosses the shellfish in the pan, and at the same time reaches over the white wine. A liberal helping of wine, and the whole is almost ready to serve. "Well, it needs to be translated. Because all these developments are happening Europe-wide, and there's no point in each of us being confined in the boundaries of these ludicrous nation

states... France, England, Italy..." He tests the pasta, finds it nicely *al dente*, and strains it. Then into the pan together with the squid and the cockles and the mussels, and on to the table.

Here, to the delicate accompaniment of a fine pink rosé, we fork our way through seafood and ideology, as three autonomists of yesteryear (and the French wine waiter) discuss the political prospects of this year and the years to come.

And over our heads hang the implausible pink draped curtains of this rather elegant Italo-French eating house.

Aghia Galini
Sunday 22 October 1989

Elements of the Caique [continued]

Dry-berthing the caique: In this town the boats are taken out of the water in the last weeks of October. The operation is performed more or less collectively, involving about forty people out of a population (off-season) of 700, plus, on a Sunday, the wives and children who come to watch, and bring *raki* and long-sliced cucumber.

The boats are to be pulled out on wooden sleds. These consist of two long pine logs, rough-cut, about two thirds the length of the boat.

They are spaced apart and held together by two substantial steel bars, which also act as the towing bars, one at each end of the sled. Rising from the pine-log tops are three stanchions made up of bits of wood, piled up, and held together by long iron nails and staples.

They look implausible, in the sense that they look incapable of taking lateral pressure. Along the top of the stanchions runs a slightly bevelled wooden strip, a few inches wide. It is against this that the boat will rest along its length, while the keel rests on the steel towing bars and thus stays clear of the ground.

The caique draws up at the jetty facing the concrete launching ramp that runs into the water. The pine sled is floated into the water. Sandbags are placed carefully on the stern end; the weight of this submerges the stern sufficiently for it to slip under the keel of the boat. The two men manoeuvre it into position at the bows, and then hang from the bow-rail and walk it under. Ropes are passed to the stern of the boat, and the sled is helped under by the ropes. At first the men are careful of not wetting their clothes; by the end they are swimming around in shoes and trousers. The boat is not roped to the sled, which sits equidistantly on both sides of the hull.

The boat is then driven to the beachhead, and the sled runs aground.

At this point the cable from the tow-bar is attached to a vehicle (in this case a 15-foot high mechanical digger), and the boat is pulled out of the water, across the pebble beach, up the concrete ramp, and onto

the car park on the jetty in front of the restaurant, where it will stay until next season.

As it turned out, the implausible stanchions were quite functional in their implausibility. Their lateral springiness allows for different shapes of hull to be accommodated. Not, however, in the case of the boat *Capitan Georgis*, however, because the craft was not halfway out of the water when the starboard sled stanchion collapsed and left the hull tilting dangerously to one side. Collective manpower came into play, bringing lumps of tree-wood and logs, nails, chain-saws, large hammers and ropes. The starboard stanchions were re-wedged, and half an hour later, after much thrashing about by hot, argumentative men, mostly clothed, up to their waists in wet water, with wood and iron, the mechanical digger made a huge and noiseful lurch and judderingly dragged the boat up the hard.

The exhilaration was to watch the pine-log timbers of the sled dragging across the concrete. First they shed their wet skin in a trail of moist wood-fibres across the ground; then they started to smoke, as the pine suffered the weight and the friction, and the dryness of its own internal fibres. Fire was starting, or about to start. Something wonderful about that.

I lay awake in the small hours last night, with the sea lapping outside below my window. As I lay in the dark, my three lovers appeared before my closed eyes, and would not leave me. They were there in all the intense tangibility and softness of their flesh; they were there with the particular ways they look at me; they were there with the particular ways they like to lie in my arms and I in theirs; they were there with the dark and light of their hair; they were there, each, with their smells, their scents, the fragrance of the secretions of their sex; they were there, with all the things they like to say, and the things they don't say, and the things they like to have said to them; they were there with all the hot intensity of passion of the heights that sometimes we reach together. And it was unbearable. I was awash, helplessly, in a great rolling sea of desire.

And today I dived off the jetty, and dived again, and rolled and splashed, and swam to the harbour mouth, and found again the great gasping life desire that the big city drives out of me.

**London
Undated**

PARS PRIMA

She said:

Not an easy letter. Been mulling over how to communicate this for weeks. It is an uncomfortable place to be sitting. I feel that we could perhaps talk – not sure really why I feel that we haven't talked because we seem to spend quite a lot of time talking. So... I s'pose I have to take the position that I haven't communicated with my talking.

I said:

This, in response to your very considered letter. First and foremost I love to fuck with you: I love to fuck with you. I love you to fuck with me. I love we to fuck. I love the way your head goes when we fuck and you lose yourself in it. I love the way you change the chemistry of me, and we go on and on. I love moving round you, this way and that way and the other. I love the way you want me to do it more and more.

I love the feel of you, and the heat of you, and the thrustingness of you. I love to fuck you hard, because you love to be fucked hard, and because you wanting it makes a rhythm in me and a rising above the mere mundane materiality of the everyday fuck to a little passing something that is almost eternal. I love the way that to fuck with you is an honest to goodness no tricks and trimmings get down to it because we love to fuck sort of fuck. And if your letter of today really does mean goodbye and we never do it again, that I shall treasure the memories of what we did and what we had.

She said:

I got your letter. It made me laugh. It made me think that I'd like to fuck.

I said:

Fine. I've got a bit of work to finish. About half an hour. Then I'll get the train. I reckon about nine o'clock.

She said:

Does that mean nine o'clock?

I said:

It means not before nine o'clock.

PARS SECONDA

She said:

The reason I pulled you across me to cover me is because I need a second skin. When you come into me like that and try to split me in two, I open up. I open up in all sorts of ways. I become open. I feel as if I have lost my skin. Or a snail losing its shell. I feel very vulnerable and open. That's why I need to grow a second skin. That's why I wanted you to cover me.

I said:

Oh.

She said:

Which part of you is most stimulated, erotically – apart from the obvious bits

I said:

For me the components of erotic desire are more diverse than bits that can be touched or stroked and so on. For example, for me desire has a lot more to do with balance, poise, tension, suspension, weight of body against body. And distance. Yes, distance. The dialectic between distance and closeness. I love it when we fuck and your head is at one end of the bed and mine is at the other, and we are distant but at the same time close, and then you draw me on top of you.

She said:

What do you mean, tension? Mental tension?

I said no. Physical tension. Like when you take my hand and push it away and I push it towards

(and, I thought to myself, the bone above my cock rides hard against the bone over your cunt)

A suspension bridge. I always thought I would like to be a suspension bridge.

She said:

Do you think you could piss inside me?

I said:

I don't know, really. I know it's not easy to piss with a hard-on. I don't know whether that's because the mind separates the two forms of activity. After all, the vas deferens forms part of the urinal tract, so the urethra is capable of carrying fluid during intercourse. On the other hand, maybe the swelling of the cock muscle tends to block off the flow of piss.

She said:

You're so big inside me. I know it's sounds silly, but it feels as if you've got your whole leg inside me.

I said:

Oh.

She said:

I'm engorged.

I said:

That's a good word. She said:

Yes. It's a technical word. To do with having babies, I think. I said:

Se despertó con el sexo a media asta y urgencia sexual en los testículos. Fue al lavabo con la duda de orinar o masturbarse, y tras orinar le habían desaparecido otras urgencias de entrepierna, pero no de la imaginación.

That's from the book I'm working on.

She said:

Do you always see subtitles when you fuck me. Sometimes I think you're working with a sort of a sub-text. Do you have other phrases for the kinds of things that we do.

I said:

Hundió el suo dedo a mitad... I don't remember how the rest of it goes. She said:

Do men have cumulative orgasms? I don't, really. I tend to be sort of serial. I can go up to, I don't know, maybe four times. But some of the girls say they can go on and on.

I don't know about men, really. How is it with them?

I said:

As far as I know there's no physical limit to how many times you do it. Except, for instance, when your cunt's tight and my cock gets rubbed sore. I don't know whether there's a physical limit to the amount of sperm you produce in a given times.

She said:

The girls say there is.

I said:

As to how soon a man can start again, after the last time, it all depends on how many elements of desire are present. If there is a great warmness and desire and good feeling there, I find that 'recovery' is more or less instant. A few minutes, really.

I used to know a girl who went on and on and on, each time building up to a new intensity. Like climbing the big stones of the Pyramid at Giza, with big steps, and getting higher all the time.

I know another girl who shakes and trembles and comes in great rushing waves, like a juddering and crashing of waves. It's astonishing.

She said:

I wish my tongue was really, really long, so that I could stick it up your arse.

I said:

Oh.

She said:

You're very cerebral.

I said:

Well I suppose it's all to do with giving you pleasure. I get a lot of pleasure out of you getting pleasure. But I suppose there's a degree of art to it. I suppose you could say that I work at it, sometimes. I could do it another way, though, and just concentrate on taking my own pleasure...

She said:

You never know, I might find that even more pleasurable.

I said:

Yes, maybe. But you'd run the risk of it not lasting very long!

She said:

In that case I would get annoyed and hit you!

PARS TERTIA

She said:

Nothing at all.

The wild October winds were blowing themselves out, across the country. Leaves were falling, eddying, gusting into swirling piles.

The sun was shining in a clear sky.

Her hand reached behind her, looking to touch me. Rested most easily against my cock. My cock swelled into her hand. She was lying as if crouched. I pushed her head a little away. I put my hand round to her belly and pulled her back towards me. I slid into her with an ease that still astonishes me to think about it, I don't know, like into the open mouth of a something. My one hand on her shoulder, pressing her away, and the other hand pressing, with the flat of the knuckles, into the small of her back as I pushed my cock as far, far, far inside it as it would go

I am tired now, thinking about it, writing about it, finding the words.

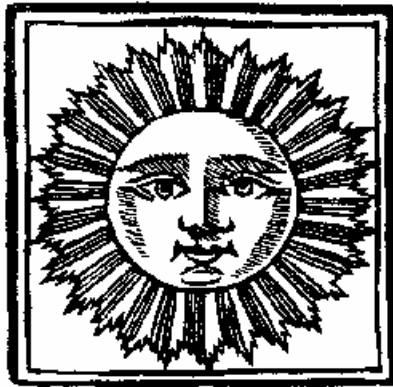
Ed Emery

We walked the banks of the Thames. There and back. Right at the top
of the tide.

And ended with a beer and a Sunday roast at the Blue Anchor.

**Northumberland
15 March 1990**

Requiem For
Two Or Three
Scottish Miners...



Ed Emery

Libera animas

de poenis inferni

et de profundo lacu

Pit. Pits, as was. Ter and trice, thrice threefold, around and around, and
then one closed and then one was closed and was capped, both the
one and the other, capped with concrete, and the one hole remains,
driven into the foreshore

of a sea that has raged but today is calm

Deliver the souls

from the pains of hell

and from the bottomless pit

One hole remains.

"This pit closed, well, it must be nigh on twenty-one year ago, now. A fire it was. The coal here, d'ye see, is very combustible. Aye. The moment it makes contact with the air, it's likely to burn spontaneously at a moment's notice. They had terrible trouble even on the coal ships. It would burn in the hold..."

We picked coal along the foreshore, from a narrow seam. Sandstone etched into layered whorls, a thumbprint. And along the line of the high tide were:

the shredded strands of the mine's conveyor belts
that carried the coal and
one or two blackened boots and the broken handle
of a pit shovel and twisted wires and
cables and for some reason the shattered
porcelain of the shower and toilet
fittings where the day's grime was washed off and
shitted away
shattered and scattered among sparse grass and plastic
bits-bits-bits all

washed up and along the very blackness of it all where the beachstone sandstone has coal somehow engrained into it

and black sludge

and orange sludge

brilliant black

and brilliant orange

that changed the tonalities of all that you then looked at. *Ne absorbeat eas*

tartarus, ne cadant

in obscurum

"It must be nigh on twenty-one years ago now. A fire there was.

And there's two or three of the lads still down there."

STILL DOWN THERE. Still down there.

Still. (Still, I said). Down. Down there down.

THERE, THERE, DOWN THERE AND
THERE AND THERE.

STILL.

Dies Illa

Dies Illa. That was the *day*. That day. A day like another. A day when (we do not have the date, for no memorial records it in the austere churchyard, and perhaps, who knows, the lads were communists, because that would not have been surprising when you have seen what we saw) the myriad voices of the world talking, whispering, shouting, crying, singing all about their daily business, of love and hate and fear and joy, and things consequential and inconsequential and there was the dull silence, above ground, of a population, listening to the dull silence, underground, of a pit fire ...

"And there's two or three of the lads still down there."

(PARENTHESIS FOR TWO BOY SOPRANOS)

"I remember the day in fact. There was the rugby international on the television. All of a sudden the screen went blank. I thought it was a power cut. It wasn't. It was these lads come down with a hacksaw to steal the cables because they thought the mine was shut and closed. It wasn't. Thirty thousand volts through those cables.

They took the lad to the house of the pit electrician. The pit electrician's wife put his hand in a bowl of cold water he was screaming he was, screaming so much, the hacksaw was still in his hand, burned to his hand.

I do not know how anybody could have lived after that. But he did.

I still remember it. He had steam coming off the top of his head.

I still remember it he had steam coming off the top of his head."

.....

...

(EXORDIUM PARTIS SECUNDAE)

There is, about the pit at Wemyss, a clearly explicit set of class relations embodied in the political organisation of space. I was grateful for this. The structure of domination felt no need to soften its hard edges.

FIRST: There is a huge landed estate. It stretches for acres. Green grazing ground. Outouses. Stables. Yards. Gardens. Trees and shrubs tonsured. Castle, perhaps. Almost. But not built for defence. A ruler who is sure enough of his power to have windows on the ground floor. The gravelled drive to the front door, a large spread of frontage, and inside all this the dowager duchess or somesuch. A hundred years old. On her own. In all that space. Cousin, they told us, of the queen mother.

SECOND: The landed estate is bounded by a wall. Onto which pheasants jump to look out to sea and then hop back again.

Beyond the wall is a no-man's-land of green. And then the village. Signposted and named Coaltown of Wemyss. Why Coaltown? We have yet to find out.

Mean little houses. Mean little houses in Plantation Row. The architecture of domination. Packed in together. Single storey shacks, probably one room apiece. Two-storey houses for the overseers. Red-tiled, in the Flemish manner. Red tiles brought from Flanders by the same ships that carried coal abroad. And the bricks of all this marked with the noble's name of Wemyss.

I have to hand the collected pamphlets of the Communist Party library, the coal section, sold to me some years ago, and dating from 1927 to 1953, and including, from the closing months of the War, the tract entitled: *Miners Indict the Coalowners of Scotland*, by William Pearson of the Scottish Mineworkers. Regarding housing, he states:

'The Committee made a tour of the principal parts of the Scottish coalfield to see the housing for themselves. Many relics of the old miners' rows *were* inspected and found to be still occupied, in all districts. These hovels are the most depressing places in the country and are a national scandal and eyesore. Many of these houses had water in them, yes, the water came through the roof when it was raining. In some of the houses the coal had to go below the bed; no privacy for any member of the family and lavatories that are nothing but breeding dens for disease...'

Wemyss brought this to mind.

THIRD: Principal buildings of Coaltown: The chapel. The Miners' Institute. Built and dated 1925, the year before the General Strike, what does that tell us? And the Wemyss School of Sewing. For the wives. And the daughters. And why?

FOURTH: But most of all, the upness and the downness of it all.

While the mineowner sat up in his landed splendour, and his view over green fields and pheasants and the Firth of Forth and his ships carrying coal to Edinburgh and to countries beyond the seas, the miners that he employed

sat down at the bottom of a pit, at the bottom of three pits, down two thousand feet of gut-wrenching black mineshaft vertigo in the

bowels of the earth, hacking out coal, the coal that paid for every brick in that fucking mansion not once but many times over.

(PARS SECUNDA)

Dona eis requiem sempiternam.

"we think it desirable to state in the clearest possible terms that the Mineworkers Federation of Great Britain does not regard the present rates of compensation for disability as being at all inadequate..."

And the parts proportional were, by due compilation comprised, serially and individually, as laid down:

Loss of both hands or amputation at higher sites.

Double amputation, through thigh, or through thigh on one side and loss of other foot, or double amputation below thigh to four inches below knee.

Double amputation through leg lower than four inches below knee.

Amputation of one leg lower than four inches below knee and loss of other foot.

But there are also the cases of men

consumed by fire

flammis acribus

.....
LACRIMOSA DIES ILLA

LACRIMOSA DIES ILLA

LACRIMOSA DIES ILLA

And wasn't it sad when that great pit went down. And the fires burned and burned, and there was neither the will nor the way to stop its burning, and the mine was closed, and still the fires burned, and with what little air there was, burned and burned, and the times changed, and nobody wanted coal, and the pits were closed for reasons other than fires burning, and the ghosts of those dead and buried lamented alone under the bleak roaring of this sea shore.

But what of justice? What of the Lord of the Fucking Manor, who for decade after decade had sat in his greenery while his miners sat in their black?

There is a certain justice, or so we like to imagine.

For the pumps still pump water from the mine.

The deep pumps pump the deep water from the deep mine.

The pumps have been relocated up the mine shaft. From two thousand feet to one thousand feet. The bottom half of the mine has been let to flood.

The sea water has consumed the bottom shafts of the mine. Nature has returned to take her own.

And pit locomotives that were left down there have turned to rust. And the miners that were left down there have turned to molecular accretions of that rust.

And the pumps pump up that water and the rust
and the bits of the pit locomotives
and the bits of the miners.

And pump it all out to sea.

And on a clear day when the sea is calm, from a great height,
which is to say from the casement windows of the stately house
overlooking the Firth,

there appears a great yellow orange stain on the water, as the pumps
pump out

the bits of the pit locomotives

and the bits of the burned miners

(PARS TERTIA)

And to myself I say a small prayer,

I pray, small-ly to myself.

A prayer in small words, and an ardent hope. hoping, as I keep small
fires alive.

I say:

AND LACRIMOSA DIES ILLA

THAT DAY WILL BE ONE OF WEEPING

QUA... JUDICANDUS HOMO REUS...

WHEN THE GUILTY MAN WILL BE JUDGED

And I open a chapter which is called "The People's Justice", and

I wonder what lies therein.

It is, perhaps, time for a politics of revenge.

And I wonder, again, about revenge, and was it a worthy notion to guide politics.

And *is* it.

And whose part is it to exact that revenge.

And once again

DIES ILLA, DIES IRAE

takes on a new meaning.

For that day will be a day of anger.

London
15 October 1990

Hackney Borough Housing Office

An impersonal door giving on to Mare Street. Inside, a large anteroom which is more or less an extension of the street. A mass of people waiting in this anteroom. Waiting to be interviewed by the clerks. Access to the clerks is controlled by security men. And they wait.

A system of last resort. Don't phone because you'll be fobbed off. Come and confront the system in person. Bring the family. Family groups, here. Children. Babies. The few seats are rapidly filled. The tenants are obliged to sit or squat on the floor while they wait.

The tenants are black, overwhelmingly black. African and West Indian. Asians too, and a Turk or two. And they wait.

The scene, invisible from the street, is frankly shocking. It is a refugee camp, to all intents and purposes, on the frontier of an unknown territory. The grubby, sordid, overcrowded conditions in which these people are expected to present their pleas. And they wait.

Noticeable that lone men are bottle-feeding babies. Unemployed, perhaps, or shift workers, and the mother out at work. And they wait.

Citizens' Advice Bureau, Poplar

That same overcrowding. Asians, in the main. Crammed in the waiting room and obliged to sit on the floor in the hall, and up the stairs. Country people, come to the town. A heavy pall of cigarette smoke.

New arrivals from the Third World, heavily addicted to tobacco.

Social services of all sorts have been cut to the bone. If you are of the working class, you wait and wait and wait.

London International Financial Futures Exchange (LIFFE)

Now housed in the Royal Exchange building. Occupies a strategic location between the Far East markets and the US market. Operates at the arcane heart of the most intangible of intangibles that makes up this capitalist system. A lot of money is being made here, trading financial futures. And the place is a bear garden. The dealers, in multi-coloured jackets, in their pits. Young, most of them. A rabble. An elaborate tic-tac language that passes between them. The formalised gestures of this semaphore are contorted to the point of obscenity. Somehow deformed (which, I suppose, is fitting).

Computer screens relay the latest prices, interest rates and suchlike.

One of these young twerps – for so they are – signals to another "I buy" or "I don't buy", and in a moment a decision has been taken in this most arcane, rarified and above all sanitised of environments – a decision which will mean suffering, bloodshed perhaps, hunger, but above all manipulation in some debt-ridden corner of some debt-ridden country.

And the hunger, the suffering and the bloodshed will cause the inhabitants of those countries to leave hearth and home, and travel halfway round the world to seek the means of survival. In Hackney, perhaps. Or Poplar.

Ironic that they pronounce this exchange "Life". "Death" would perhaps be more appropriate.

Bank Station: Beggars

At the foot of the stairway that leads from Bank Station up to the Grecian splendours of the Royal Exchange, two young people are sitting on the ground. A boy and a girl. Eighteen years old, perhaps. They do not have begging bowls. They murmur to passers-by: "Can you spare some cash?"

They are from the North Country. Young people are begging all over London. Squatting in corners, knees drawn up to their chins, maybe half covered with a coat.

Well-heeled shoes pass them by, accelerating slightly as they pass.

**London
20 February 1991**

Bought an Afghan rug from a man south of the River. Made by Afghan carpet-makers who fled the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, to Peshawar, Pakistan. The rugs portray both the symbols of their oppression and the symbols of their resistance. Kalashnikovs, hand grenades, MIG fighter planes, RPG launchers, Scud missiles, tanks and teapots.

One in particular I wanted to buy. Curiously, it had a lot of green in it.

I asked why. The rug-man said that it was indeed unusual.

Perhaps it was intended to convey the notion of camouflage colour.

There had been an earlier example of green in Afghan rugs. In the 1920s. When the British were warring in Afghanistan. There was a carpet made which commemorated the bombing of Kabul airport by the British. This too had khaki green in it. The wool for this green was obtained from regulation British Army socks, which the Afghans had acquired. They unpicked the British Army socks and wove them into their tapestry.

Wonderful story.

Fig: 00: The Afghan rug

London
15 March 1991

THE EVERLASTING STORY

[A Conceit]

There was a King. He had everything that a person could ever want, or even might ever imagine they'd want. Everything that money could buy, and even more besides. Love and happiness and good strong children and horses that rode like the wind, and dogs that ran alongside. If he wanted to do something, he did it. There was only one thing that he could not do. He could not stop time. At first it was just a small thought in his head. He thought, how hard it was to imagine a time before all time, a time when he himself was not. A time when all his friends and family were not. A time when all people, all humanity were not. He thought, also, that one day there would be a day when he himself would not be. A time when all his friends and family would not be. A time when, perhaps, all people, all humanity would not be. He could not bear this thought. He wanted time to stop. He wanted everything to be just as it was now, perfect in its happiness, for all time and for ever and for ever. He wanted to stop time.

But he could not.

Then, one day, he heard tell of a poet, who lived in a far-off corner of his kingdom. The poet, they said, had the power to stop time. So the King summoned the poet. And the poet rode for six days and six nights, across mountains and deserts and rivers and through forests and towns and small villages, until in the end he arrived at the King's castle. He had barely dismounted from his horse, barely shaken the dust of travel from his clothes, when he was summoned into the King's presence. The King said: "I hear that you have the power to stop time." The poet said "This is what people say." So the King commanded a banquet to be brought, and the people of the King's court ate and drank and listened to fine music, and at the end of it all

the King said to the poet: "Now you must tell me, how do you stop time?"

And the poet began:

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And the poet began:

[Etc]

London
27 April 1991

A BIRTHDAY SONG FOR MOTHER MAY

We're gathered here together, on a very special day
Because last Wednesday – or was it Tuesday... or Thursday...?
Was the birthday of Mother May.
She was actually invited to the Palace today,
But we didn't want to lose her -
So we've kidnapped her, shanghaied her, stuck her aboard
And brought her by boat to this boozier.

Chorus: She's a fine old lady,
And if you'll let me have my say,
I'll sing you a song of the life and times
Of good old Mother May.

There were people we were expecting here,
But sadly they missed the boat -
There was Patrick McGinty,
But he had to look after his goat.
There was Danny Boy,
and the Spaniard Who Blighted My Life
And the Earl of Devon, the Ancient Briton,
And the Duke of Edinburgh's wife.
But there's Burns's and Finns and Houlihans
And of course O'Briens large and small,
And squatters and claimants and all of her friends,
I wish I could name them all.

She's drunk in every pub, she says,
In London's old East End.
There isn't a bar, either near or far,

Where she won't find a friend.
She likes a whiskey and lemonade,
And Mr Guinness's beer,
Which she's been drinking, not a word of a lie,
For all of fifty years.
Now there's a little fact, which I would like to mention
I reckon that Mr Guinness owes Mother May a pension!

Now we all like a drop of beer,
But you know what people say -
If you put it about with a drop of the stout,
You'll end in the family way.
Well, I've got a strong suspicion
That she keeps a crate in the cupboard,
'Cos she's had so many kids that all the family
Call her Granny Hubbard.
Nineteen children – the number would amaze ye!
Shouting and leaping and jumping about
And driving their mother crazy.

There's farmers the length and breadth of this land,
When their harvest is under way,
They know where to turn when they need a hand
"Send word for Mother May:"
She's picked potatoes and raspberries in Scotland
She's picked hops and strawberries in Kent.
It gave the kids a holiday,
And it helps to pay the rent.
And when the night was closing in
And we were sitting round the fire,
The sound of the singing was better by far
than God's own heavenly choir.

At seventy – or is it sixty-nine? - *
She's ever so hale and hearty
And everyone knows, wherever she goes,

She's the life and soul of the party.
She'll do a fine fandango, dance a waltz or do the twist,
And Mother May's still going strong
When everyone else is pissed.
And on a Sunday morning,
When the church bells start their ringing,
It's the birds in the trees, and Mother Hubbard,
Will still be out there singing.

She's a friend to all who are down on their luck,
Be they black or be they white;
She knows it's only the working class
That will set the world to rights.
Be you English or Scottish or Irish,
There's a welcome at her door.
If you haven't a penny, she'll give what she's got
'Cos she knows what it's like to be poor.
They call her the Queen of the Squatters,

And she's marched for many a cause –
She's a diamond, an ace, the Queen of our Hearts,
And just before I pause... I'll say

She's a fine old lady,
And may she live for many's the day.
So let's raise our glasses and drink a toast
To good old Mother May.

The Royal Cricketers, Bow – Saturday 27th April 1991

* May freely admits that she doesn't know how old she is.

Fig 00: May O'Brien, Bow, 1990. Photo: Carlos Guarita.

Fig 00: Mother May with the family. Hopping in Kent.

Padova
6 December 1991

Moments of pure magic in theatre... few and far between... but what happened last night I shall not forget in a long time.

Ten years ago, when Dario Fo came to London to do *Mistero Buffo* at Riverside Studios, there was a young Italian in the audience. A squatter, he was, from Kings Cross, making a tenuous living doing this and that. Mario, by name. He came, he saw, and he was conquered. He fell instantly in love with Dario and Franca. He dumped everything he had in London – house and all – and went back to Italy to work for the La Comune company. Of his antecedents, let that suffice, except to say that during the ten years that he has been employed by D&F I have heard them address him in terms that you would think twice about using to a skivvy.

I arrived at the theatre in Trento. An hour and a half before the show was due to go up. Dario nowhere in sight. Foyer deserted. Mario emerged from the auditorium. Greeted me like a long-lost brother, and there was a great excitement about him. He took me by the hand and hauled me into the theatre, which would shortly be packed to the wings but was now deserted, except for the sound technician setting up the amps. "Come, come," said Mario, all bright-eyed, "I have something to show you... Come!" I could not imagine what he could have to show that was so exciting.

He went and took Dario's radio mike and clipped it to his shirt. He bounded up the stairs to the stage, and stood there, with the floodlights full on him, facing an audience that was there in spirit if not in body.

The stage was his, and myself the sole spectator. And he began his performance. It was the Resurrection of Lazarus, from "*Mistero Buffo*".

The performance was pure Fo. Every gesture, every intonation, every tic of the master, reproduced with a precision that was unbelievable. The dialect rendered to perfection, the bodily movements rendered as if he were the maestro himself.

This was Mario's little secret. In ten years of following Dario all around the world, he has absorbed the man's method, style, delivery, timing, everything, and on this chill winter's evening in Trento he was on-stage, performing for a sole spectator in the audience that was me.

His timing was deadly accurate. I asked how he did it. He explained. "All these years, I have operated the overhead projector with the subtitles for the show, when we travel abroad. You have to watch the timing all the time, because the show is different every night..." He absorbed the timing as if by osmosis.

Dario has never seen his man-servant perform this piece – one of the key pieces in his repertoire. Perhaps he never will. He may never know that his dogsbody and factotum can stage a performance of his work with a style and elan that is easy a match for the old man himself.

An extraordinary moment.

Fig 00: The occupied Marinoni Theatre, Lido di Venezia

Mons
13 December 1991

I have a photograph here. However, regrettably, I left my camera at home, so this one I was not able to take.

It is a close-up. In Belgium, a few miles short of Mons. One of my favourite landscapes. Coal mines, with their respective slag tips, their villages with simple two-storey houses, black slate roofs, cobbled roads. That, as the background. Bright sun. White frost on the fields. Winter. White birch planted up the slag tips, bare of their summer leaves. I am on a train.

In the foreground, at my eye level, a small expanse of pot-belly appears. It is sheathed in a navy-blue woollen knitted pullover, close-knit.

A rounded, pampered sort of a thing, with probably a shirt and a vest beneath it, because who would wear just a woolly jumper on an icy day such as this?

Perhaps the jumper is too short for its wearer. It has ridden up over his trouser belt, which is the black leather belt of a Belgian passport control officer. He is doing the rounds on the train. On his hip he carries a gun. Riding right up on his hip. This is the next thing that comes into my field of vision after the pot-belly.

The gun is stored at such an angle that he would have to raise his right shoulder and twist his elbow back to be able to draw it. In another country, he would have had a strap or a button over the top of the gun, to place it one unbuttoning step away from immediate use, but not here. This surprises me. But more particularly, the holster is made of worked and beaten leather, soaked and hammered round a mould, and stitched with big stitches. Black leather. Thick. Moulded precisely for the job. The kind of working that the Florentines do so well.

A bare half a hand's span away, to the front of his belt, is another leather holder, in black. It nestles under his pot-belly. It too is moulded, purpose-made, a small more or less cuboid open-topped box, which juts out curiously from the belt. Protruding from its top, as the gun too protrudes from its holster, is a round wooden knob, worn shiny smooth with use. The warm brown of the wood contrasts strongly with the dull grey of the gun. This is his rubber stamp, with which he stamps, in your passport, the date of your entry into Belgium.

These three items – pot-belly, grey gun, wooden stamp – conjure up page after page of further thoughts, wonderings, sighs for our times, paradoxes to do with flight and homecoming, home and homelessness, nationality and no-nationality, freedom and no-freedom, and the fundamental principle of the free circulation of the individual. The right to free circulation of peoples. Which is the principle that has most firmly been nailed to the wall and crucified in this week's talks for a united Europe, in Maastricht. The gun and the rubber stamp. The letting in and the shutting out. The hopes, on the one hand, and on the other hand the lines of fear on the faces of people who have reason to fear.

But what arrests the eye most particularly is the fact that the officer's little rubber stamp box actually has an inked pad built into the bottom of it, so that each time he returns the stamp to its resting place, it automatically inks itself. It will have taken hundreds of years and some great whirrings of the bureaucratic brain for this genial solution to have been arrived at.

There the story would end. But I caught two more glimpses.

One was of the officer's hat. Down the carriage. In a natural perspective that gave you its contours better defined than from close-up. The design and inspiration and evocation of his peaked, braided hat is precisely that of the Nazi SS. Not because I was wishing it to be so, but because it was.

The other was of Monsieur Pot Belly advancing down the train corridor. In his hand he held someone's plum-coloured passport. Bringing up the rear came his colleague, and sandwiched between them was a thin black African. He had paused long enough to pick up his crocodile-leather bag. He evidently thought he would not be coming back. There was some irregularity in his passport. His face betrayed that fear of someone who has something to fear, and what he had to fear was

developing itself with every pace he took. Developing in the direction of expulsion. In other words, the gun, not the stamp.

There are few moments in life more helpless, more all-alone, than when a passport officer has stripped you of your passport, and you can go neither forwards nor back.

**London and Devon
15 July 1992**

THE POET RETURNS HOME

There was a poet. The poet went to the War because he had not been in a war and wanted to see what war looked like. The war ended and the poet boarded a ship to return home. But, for reasons that we shall not go into here, the crew of the ship on which he travelled mutinied. Among other things they decided that a poet was just another useless mouth to feed, so they set him adrift in a small boat to fend for himself.

It happened that after two days adrift the poet was cast ashore in a land that he did not know. As he landed, he was met by the people of that land. They were of an extraordinary beauty, and dressed in long flowing robes.

It took him a moment to realise that they all only had one leg, and that this was their right leg. He wondered whether these might be the skiapods of classical fame – who lived in the heat of the desert and had one large single foot which they raised above them in the form of an umbrella to ward off the sun. But seeing his puzzlement, they explained.

They were, they said, ruled by a more or less benevolent tyrant. As a child, their king had been on a hunting expedition with his mother and father. On a moment he had been seized by a great wolf, which had torn off his left leg and escaped into the forest. When he became king at the age of fifteen (as was their custom), because he did not want to feel strange in his own country, he ordained that all children who were born in that country, upon reaching a certain age, were to have their left leg cut off. Horrifying though this may seem (the people explained), the operation was performed by skilled surgeons, and was relatively painless. And since the alternative to amputation was death, it soon ended up that the whole population of the country (except those who fled never to return) was now one-legged.

They explained to the poet that they would be able to help him find his way home, to "his land in the West" as they called it, but that if he chose to stay with them for even half a day, he would have to consent to having his left leg cut off by the surgeons, because otherwise the King's bodyguards (who incidentally were the only people in the country allowed to be two-legged) would come and kill both him and them. The only alternatives were that they would lead him to the edge of the desert and leave him to find his own way... Or he would have to fight the, king and kill him.

"Oh no," cried the poet. "Cut my left leg off?! Never. My leg is as dear to me as my life. I would rather take my chance and find my own way across the desert. And as for killing the king, I am but a humble poet, unschooled in the ways of fighting."

So they gave him as much food and water as he could carry, and set him on a camel path across the desert.

By the end of the first day, the weight of the food was such that he decided to leave some of it to lighten his load. By the end of the second day the weight of the water was such that he decided to leave some of that too. Three days passed, and then four, and by the fifth day he had no food or water left, and the sun beat on him all day long, and as is the way in deserts he became delirious, and lost his bearings, and the seventh day found him right back where he had started from, for he had walked in a huge circle.

And the one-legged people gave him food and water and put him in a secret place where they could nurse him back to health. And when he could speak and stand again he said: "Please, do what you must. I long to see my own country again, for there lie all the things that I hold most dear. If it is necessary for you to cut off my leg, then please do. And anyway, what does a poet need a left leg for, for all day long I sit at my desk and write..."

So cut it off they did. And they buried his leg in a special cemetery where left legs are buried. And they gave him two fine pairs of one-legged trousers, and two finely crafted right-handed shoes. And when his wound had healed, they mounted him on a fine white horse with a leather saddle and one fine golden stirrup, and accompanied him across the desert, and through a forest, until they came to a broad shallow river.

"We are not allowed to cross this river, because across it is another country, ruled by rules which are not ours, and we have no place there. Therefore we must leave you at this point. The river is shallow, so you may ride across. Follow the western star at night, keep the east wind at your back, and let the sun's course guide you by day and you will reach your home. The horse, however, will return of her own accord once she has borne you across, for she would not wish to be parted from us."

So the poet crossed the river. And when he was safely across, the beautiful white horse gave a whinny, nuzzled his ear in farewell, and returned across the river to her people.

The poet tried to make his way forward on his one leg. But it was hard, so hard, and the ground was so stoney, and after an hour or so he could do no more. Fortunately he was passing through a forest, so he broke branches from a young tree to use as crutches. But even with the help of crutches, progress was so slow and painful that he was crying with frustration, until, at the end of the third hour, he found himself emerging from the forest at the open gates of a city.

He was pleased to note, from a distance, that there were people in the city. He was pleased to note, also, that they had two legs and seemed of a pleasant aspect. But he was puzzled to note that they were using their two legs to run away and hide as soon as they saw him approach. By the time he reached the main square there was not a soul to be seen.

So he called out: "Oh people... I am but a humble poet. I have been to the War to see what war was, and now I am returning home. I was cast up on the shores of your neighbouring countrymen, and they rescued me and cared for me and set me on the road to my home. My dearest wish is to return to my own land, and I swear I wish you no harm."

There was a long silence. Until, at last, a young girl who was too young to have known fear, and an old woman who was too old to fear fear, stepped from the shadow of a house and walked towards him.

And as they walked, in their flowing robes, they walked with much grace, except that, as he suddenly saw, they only had one arm, a right arm.

"Stranger," said the old woman, "you are welcome in our country. The laws of hospitality say that we should welcome you in our homes, and share with you what we have, which is plentiful, for this is a rich and fertile land and gives its fruits in abundance. But our fellow citizens are scared, and that is why they cower in their homes. Scared of you. For we are ruled by a more or less benevolent tyrant, who allows us to enjoy the fruits of our land, but..."

You see, when our king was a baby prince, he was left for a moment in the nursery, unattended, by his nurse, and a great bear, which had come into town from the forest, seized him and tore off his left arm. When the prince became king, he could not bear to feel strange in his own country, so he ordained that all citizens, upon pain of death, were to have their left arms severed.

"This is a terrible thing to hear, but it is done by skilled surgeons and the pain is little. If you wish to share in our company, if you wish us to guide you on your way through our land, then you too must have your arm severed, for the penalty for not so doing is instant death at the hands of the King's guards, and death for us too if a two-armed man is caught in our company. The only other choice is that you travel on by yourself and find your own way. Or you would have to stay with us and fight and kill the king."

"Oh no," said the poet. "My arm is as dear to me as my life. How could I embrace my children with just one arm? How could I row my boat on the lake? How could I knead the dough to make my bread or dig the soil to plant my vines? No, it cannot be. I shall go on alone."

"And as for killing your king, I am but a humble poet unused to the ways of killing."

So the people showed him where he had to go – over a plain and across a range of mountains whose peaks towered so high that they were lost in cloud. They mounted him on a pack mule which would take him as far as the foothills, and gave him food and drink to see him on his way.

At the foothills he left the mule and began to climb. But with his one leg and his crutches it was desperately hard. And the first day passed, and then the second, and by the third day he had reached so high that he fell prey to mountain sickness, as is the way in mountains, a dizziness that made his head spin, and he reeled a little with every step that he took, a little to the right... a little to the right... and after three days he crossed one ridge, and after four he crossed another, but he had lost his bearings, and the end of the sixth day found him exhausted and delirious at the gates of the selfsame city from which he had started. His clothes were torn, his leg was gashed and bleeding, and his hands were a mass of scratches from where he'd had to scabble up the rocks.

He wept great wet tears of desperation, and when the people came cautiously from their homes to welcome him – watching all the while for the King's guards – he said: "Oh people, the poet returns to you in all humility. You were right and I was wrong. If my arm is to be cut off, then so be it. It doesn't matter... I'm a poet, and I write with my right hand, so I can do without my left..."

So saying he collapsed in a faint. And the people called surgeons, and his arm was amputated, and they found him a quiet place where he could recover, and at the end of a week, or maybe two, they came bringing him clothes – two fine silk shirts with only one arm, and two fine, leather, right-handed gloves. And they took him back to the mountain slopes, where they mounted him in a white wooden seat that was borne by four golden eagles, which would carry him over the mountains and onwards towards his home in the West.

And so it was that our poet continued his journey. Only to find that in the land beyond the mountains, all the people only had one eye.

Their right eye. Because, as a child, their king had gone to get an egg from under a chicken, and she had pecked out his left eye.

So when he came of age, the king had decreed, well, you know the rest. In short, the poet would have to have his left eye put out, or he would have to find his way on his own, or he would have to fight and kill the king.

His eye, he said, was as dear to him as his life. He would find his own way. So they showed him the way to the mighty ocean that he would have to cross to reach his home.

Search as he might, he found no town or village, no sailing ship, no fishermen, no boat of any kind to bear him across the wild ocean. All he found was a log of a tree, and the broad, firm leaves of a banana palm. So he jostled and heaved the log into the water, and took a

palm leaf as a paddle, and somehow, with his one arm and his one leg, got aboard the log and struck out towards the West.

But he could travel no more than a few yards. A wind was blowing.

He rode the waves in turn – one, two, three – and he struck out with his paddle – four, five, six – but each seventh wave was bigger than the rest and dumped him, one-armed and one-legged, right back on the rocks, and he had to hang on with his right hand just to survive.

When at last the people came to rescue him, he said: “Oh people, do what must be done. If my left eye must be put out, then so be it.”

They warned him that he would never again see the same as before – that with one eye he would not be able to judge distances, would have no sense of perspective...

“But that,” he said, “does not matter to me – for I am a poet – and after all, what is poetry but flat words on a flat page...”

So they put out his left eye – which is very easy really, like a big gooseberry which comes out with a plop – and they brought him a splendid white boat which was pulled by four grey-blue dolphins in silvery harnesses, with a sharp-eyed hawk perched at the mast-head to act as look-out.

And he sailed away, heedless of care and mindless of danger, until his dolphin-boat brought him to the shores of his long-lost country.

And there on the shore he was met by his own people. When they asked how he had come there, he told his story – how he had travelled from land to land, and the sufferings he had endured. He said:

“They cut off my left leg, because the only alternative was to be killed by the king's guards, or to fight and kill the king.

“They cut off my left arm, because the only alternative was to be killed by the king's guards, or to fight and kill the king.

“They put out my left eye, because the only alternative was to be killed by the king's guards, or to fight and kill the king.”

And the people gathered round him – both young and old, men and women, boys and girls – who had both their legs and both their arms and both their eyes and who lived in a land free of kings, a land of music and freedom and laughter – and they looked at the poet, and they said:

“You poor fish... you poor soul... You have wished this on yourself,

You poor, truncated, one-sided specimen of a thing

Why did you not fight and kill the king?!”

And as he sat there, the poet

crossed his leg
and folded his arm
and as tears filled his eye
he said, in a very small voice,

"Yes, I suppose it would have been better to have fought and killed the king..."

**London
1 January 1993**

New Year. The first person I meet on the street is a gypsy. We shake hands. I hope this proves an omen of luck for the year to come.

He – being Peter Lee – tells me that his mother was Italian. Came to England before the war, around the age of thirty. Married a Scotsman.

She from a peasant family from the South. Where the Mafia are. Her father had his hand hacked off at the wrist with a sickle because he refused to pay taxes to the Mafia.

When the war came, she was interned. Italian shopkeepers and cafe-owners had their windows broken by the mobs.

My man goes, sometimes, to visit his relations. At the Catholic church on Saffron Hill. The quality of the preaching has gone downhill in recent years. Ever since the Irish arrived. The priest was an Irishman. He was drunk while taking service.

Every now and then my man tells himself that he is going to midnight mass at Saffron Hill. He never quite makes it. Something always gets in the way to stop him.

One year, he and his wife went first to a pub down by the Gluepot in Shoreditch. It was time to leave, to go to midnight mass. His wife was on the microphone, singing. He couldn't get her off the microphone. He hit her over the head with a shovel. The police came and arrested him. They confiscated his van. He missed midnight mass.

He has "Italia" and "Gypsy" tattooed on his right hand. And rings galore.

He complains that he has Vietnamese boat people living below his flat. In contravention of Council rules they are doing outworking for the rag trade. Industrial sewing machines. He says the noise comes through the floor like a buzz saw. And when he settles down to watch television, the sewing machines give off electrical interference which destroys his picture.

We spent yesterday at the Science Museum, coming to terms with time. (This, after having heard Stephen Hawking on "Desert Island Discs", which was the most wonderful piece of radio ever.) Time is in the forefront of our minds. Hence, rose at crack of dawn, saluted the birds in the back yard (two bright-eyed blackbirds, one young thrush with feathers all ruffed up, a couple of high-flying gulls and a magpie) and settled to transcribing my translation of TN's *Prolegomena on Time*. Towards a communist conception of time.

Paris
3 April 1993

For once I allow myself to operate by Italian time. I arrive at the conference one hour late for the morning start, only to find that I am, for all my lateness, the only one in the hall (out of a full complement of about 80). This, by way of observation.

Introduction by Toni Negri; Beppo Cocomero on the general economic context; Maurizio Lazzarato on a bit of summing-up; Paolo Virno on general intellect; Toni with a comeback on Virno's view, proposing that the "virtuosismo" be seen more as an antagonist, more as armed – "call it, rather, ..*condottiere*" (standing army... one person, one weapon etc). Have recorded the entire proceedings. Also some excitement today – Padova comrades arrive hotfoot from Italy with a new magazine – *Riff-Raff*, emerging from *Autonomia* (title inspired by the UK film of the same name).

Time that I stop travelling by the Paris night train. Miserable and over-wearing and degrading; still, after all these years, we are treated like cattle at Newhaven. The ritual British humiliation of the traveller. The train guard tells me that this line will not survive privatisation: the person who is planning to buy it only wants it for the value of the land. However, the soul uplifted, as ever, by a stroll in the Luxembourg. Bright sun, the population exercising themselves in various corners, and the wonderment at seeing, for the first time, the selection of apple trees – every apple tree imaginable – behind secure fences, turned and trained from the moment they emerge from the earth and forced to climb pillars and posts, strangled and corseted into an upward-standing order. This small plantation speaks volumes about the French psyche; I shall leave it to others to decipher what precisely it says.

Had to pursue a cheque for a large amount of money. The story of this cheque could be a political thriller in itself. I shall write it one day. It is emblematic of a particular nexus in which the British state is trying to get a grip on hidden processes of self-valorisation. The search for the cheque takes me to a nice man in a third-floor office in a more or less seedy part of town. From there my homeward route takes me down Rue St Denis, with its proliferation of Turkish food shops and its wall slogans calling for armed struggle in Turkey and Kurdistan alike. There are prostitutes in every other doorway, and a strange fall of heavy snowflakes in the broad sunlight brings out their parasols.

Belle Epoque and lace seems the style, the parasols prevailing over the black plastic and leather. One lady in particular was parading her breasts piled high and more or less naked in the upper reaches of a tight bodice – displaying them with as much art and enticement as the gorgeous aubergines and tomatoes of the Turkish greengrocer two doors down. A man in his forties, with the look of a comedian and a bag of shopping in each hand, was examining her breasts from six inches distance, with his glasses perched on the end of his nose, and was proclaiming them to be the wonder of the street – whereupon he was ushered indoors by the lady in question, to be serviced as per requirement. A fine moment. A walk down St Denis tells you more about life than a walk down twenty other streets.

Curious to measure this public arena – where female sexuality holds pride of place – with the closed confines of our conference, where women are conspicuous by their absence. It is essentially a male gathering – and a gathering of heavy smokers too. The "historic leadership", in particular, smokes and smokes. This fact of smoking does not much diminish the validity of the politics; the absence of women does.

This notwithstanding, what is happening here is enormously exciting.

It is a definition of political possibilities in the new, post- Fordist, post-modern, post-Welfare era. And it is constructed, not in the airy-fairy world of academia, but in the concrete realities of struggle and action and locally-based initiatives. What comes clear is that there is developing an Italy-wide network of local bases, local magazines and networked computers operating via modem, all engaged in an activity of "seminars" and "workers' inquiry", trying to identify the new protagonists of struggle, to dig out the progressive contents of their needs and struggles, and to develop a project of horizontal, non-hierarchical communication and organisation. The conceptual and political framework of this project is exciting.

It is given a new edge by the collapse of the Italian state machine, as the magistrates hand out arrest warrants to left and right alike.

The comrades of the "diaspora" – those in exile and those in prison – have a sense of being the only ones "with clean hands" – those who have maintained an intransigence in the face of Italy's corrupt political system. One speaker went so far as to define "us" as "the only real governing class of this country". This because we have kept our morals intact...because we have fought for a political ideal... because we have been through the trenches of mud and blood like the governing class of the First Republic... and now, with the planned foundation of the Second Republic, we are first in-line with a claim for legitimacy. A legitimacy of representation.

So the argument goes.

Incidentally, his reference to "this country" made no concession to the fact that he was speaking on French soil – thus indicating the radically Italo-centric nature of this organisational project.

In the meantime, and not entirely by-the-by, a hundred MSI fascists blockaded the Italian parliament yesterday and spat at MPs – unprecedented in recent French history; French fishermen commandeered a British naval vessel and burned its flag as the fisheries war escalates; American anti-abortionists are blockading British abortion clinics; and the British government is about to fund the mines closure programme with £500 million leached from the miners' own pension fund!! *Ladri! Bastardi!*

Fig 00: My BSA M-20. 500cc single side-valve, solid rear suspension.

Fig 00: The first of the Lockdown oak seedlings

London
12 September 1993

It was an average afternoon.

The girl was in the back garden. She had various of her furry animals parked on the planks under the clothes line. There was Giant Panda, and the pink knitted rabbit, and the bear with blue fur and blue eyes, and Fuzzy Bear, and the squashy little Elephant from Berlin. She was having a picnic for them. She talked to them, and asked their opinion about this and that, but the dumb little creatures didn't say a lot in reply.

Father was just about to have a shave. But his shaving things were missing. He looked out of the back door and was just about to say "Has either of you got my shaving things..." when he saw the boy. The boy was standing in the yard with not a stitch of clothing on. He had his father's shaving brush and shaving soap, and with the aid of the outside tap he had whisked up a lather which he had painted all over his body with the brush. He had just reached his lower parts, and was applying shaving cream to his willy.

"WHAT do you think you're doing??!"

"I'm covering myself with shaving cream,"

(He pulled his appendage forward and continued daubing it with my shaving brush.)

"WHY are you covering yourself with shaving cream?"

"I like it. I've never covered myself in shaving cream before."

"Boys do not usually lather their willies with their father's shaving brushes! Did you ask me if you could use it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because you would have said No..."

What more to say. He was happy. I left him to it.

**Devon
26 July 1994**

FLYING TO AFRICA

One of my pleasures in life is to sit by an airfield and watch jets taking off. Big ones. I love the way they sit on the runway, fire up a charge of power, begin their run, and then, when the nosewheel lifts off the ground, the way they climb at a steep angle to get fully airborne, with all the passengers pressed back into their seats by the force of the lift-off.

My favourites were always the Boeing 707s. I used to imagine that they were called Boeings because their wings seem to go "boing--boing", with their engine pods going ever so slightly up and down, and the wings almost seeming to be *flapping* as the plane trundles down the runway. Like big birds.

The Boeing 707 has four separate jet engines. Two on the left wing, two on the right. You probably haven't, but one day you might have wondered what would happen if one of these engines fell off. Well, this is a story about not one, but *two* of these engines falling off, and how, by a small and man-made miracle, this wasn't the disaster that it might have been.

The morning in question was pretty miserable. In order to be in the air by seven o'clock, the captain, the co-pilot and the 3-man crew had to be up at four in the morning, when it was still dark. At four in the morning you don't feel like doing *anything*, let alone flying a jumbo jet with 100 tons of oil drilling equipment halfway round the world. The plane's point of departure was Luxembourg airport, up between France and Belgium. From there it would be flying to Africa. First to Lagos in Nigeria. Then onwards to Accra and Timbuktoo. It wouldn't be a fun ride, with passengers and air stewards to talk to. No, it would be solid slog all the way. Not least because the plane was loaded almost to the maximum limit of what it was allowed to carry.

Was there any reason for the crew to feel nervous about flying on an aircraft like this? Maybe, maybe not. The jet had been flying for over thirty years. It was getting old. At first it had been used by an American airline for transporting passengers. Then it was owned by various other passenger airlines, until, finally, it got too tatty for carrying passengers, and was sold to companies that specialised in carrying large heavy loads of goods and things across long distances. When it wasn't flying, it spent a good part of its time sitting out in wind and weather at little airports all round South-east England.

But this wasn't a reason for worry. After all, planes like this are supposed to be checked regularly by engineers and flight mechanics. And all the crew were very experienced, because between them they'd each done thousands of hours of flying in this kind of aircraft.

Shortly before seven in the morning, the captain manoeuvred the plane into position at the end of the runway, ready for take-off. The crew went through all the pre-flight checks, making sure that all the dials, instruments and mechanisms were in working order. Then the brakes were off, the great turbo-fan engines began roaring as they built up their power, and the Boeing began to lumber down the airport runway.

It's a long runway at Luxembourg – 4,000 metres – but the jet needed every bit of it to get airborne, since it had all that weight of machinery on board. Luckily there was a valley at the end of the runway, and not hills, so the plane didn't have to climb steeply to get clear.

It wouldn't be long, though, before the plane would be approaching mountains. Large mountains. Sharp, jaggy mountains. Long chains of them. Because the route from Luxembourg to Africa involves flying over Switzerland, and this means flying over the Alps.

The captain had taken the plane up to Flight Level 290, which is another way of saying 29,000 feet – which is very high, and perfectly high enough to get over the Alps. But mountains are curious things. They produce their own kinds of waves. Not waves in water, but waves in the air. Let's suppose that a wind sweeps up from the South; it hits the Alps. and because it can't blow through the mountains, it blows upwards – and the air above the mountains becomes as stormy and choppy as if you were out on a stormy sea. Pilots call this stormy air "turbulence" – and if you're in a plane, the turbulence makes it rock and shake rather alarmingly.

And so it was on this particular day. At 29,000 feet, the Boeing was flying through dark layers of stratiform cloud, and the turbulence was bumping it about all over the place. The captain and the crew had full 5-strap seat-belts on, to hold them in their seats, and they were waiting and watching.

Now, at this point the co-pilot comes into the picture. On a large jet like this, there are two pilots – the captain, who is in charge of the plane, and the co-pilot, who shares the work of flying it. Seeing that the flying was so rough at this level, the co-pilot turned to the radio and asked the French air traffic controllers for permission to climb another 4,000 feet to Flight Level 330, to get out of the turbulence. Permission was granted, and the aircraft began to climb through the cloud.

Pilots are like sailors. After years of experience, any pilot knows the *sound* that the aircraft makes, in all kinds of different conditions. And the *feel* of the aircraft in the air, too. A jet aircraft is not a solid, rigid thing. It is built to be flexible, to *move* in the air and wind, because if it didn't move and flex, it would simply crack apart with the pressure.

The co-pilot, sitting high in his seat in the nose of the plane, was feeling the movements of the plane and listening to its sounds. The wings were flexing, the nose of the plane was nodding, the engine pods were flailing to and fro on their struts. As if the plane were some great bird, wrestling with the wind. And the sound of the air flow around the plane was constantly changing.

Having climbed to 32,300 feet, they were within reach of the flight level they wanted. Only another seven hundred feet to go. The dark cloud through which they were flying was becoming thinner, there were signs of blue sky up ahead, and they were approaching that wonderful moment when you break out of cloud into clear blue sky and sunshine.

But they never got there. All of a sudden, shaking itself like a wet dog, the big jet jolted and staggered. Something had happened. At almost exactly the same moment, there was a sound like two separate hammer blows – dull, muffled thuds, that came from somewhere way back in the aircraft behind them.

Something had gone radically wrong. What's more, the aircraft was not flying properly. It felt as if it was leaning over to one side. There was no point in looking out of the window to know if they were flying level or not, because there was only dark cloud outside, and they could have been flying upside down for all they knew. The co-pilot looked at the artificial horizon instrument on the plane's instrument panel in front of him. It told him that the plane was tilted at an angle of 55 degrees. Aircraft of this kind are not allowed to fly at that sort of angle. It is extremely dangerous.

Now everything on board seemed to happen in seconds. Hardly even time to think. The captain switched off the automatic pilot device that keeps the aircraft on course. He wrestled with the aircraft controls – the rudder stick and the ailerons – to get the plane back onto the level. The tiny flight cabin was filled with the sound of ringing alarm bells and warning sirens making a terrible, deafening din, that added to the groaning noises coming from the aircraft's structure.

The plane had stopped climbing. It was going down-and going down fast. It was slipping down to the right – and the speed was fast approaching the speed at which it would be impossible to operate any of the controls. Not only this – but one of the alarms was also signalling that there was a fire in one of the engines.

In this situation, there are several things that you do. You pull the lever and hope that it cuts off the fuel supply to the engine concerned. You try to begin procedures to bring the fire under control. And as well as checking the instruments, you take a look out of the window, at the engine.

And this is what the co-pilot did. While the captain continued wrestling and heaving on the aircraft's controls, and managed to get it back to flying level, the co-pilot looked back from his tiny window up in the cockpit. What he saw was a sight that no pilot will easily forget. Out on the left wing, where there should have been a turbofan jet engine,

there was absolutely nothing at all. Just a large, gaping hole. The engine was not there. The co-pilot turned to the captain and said:

"Number One engine is missing."

Then he had a sudden thought that maybe this wasn't the only problem. So he looked out of the window a second time. He had to press his cheek hard against the glass on the right-hand side of the cockpit, because it's almost impossible to see a 707's inner engine from the cockpit – and once again, where an engine should have been, there was just a gaping hole. Again he turned to the captain. He said:

"*Both* starboard engines have *gone*." And the flight engineer said:

"Oh come on, don't muck about... Things are bad enough already...!"

But it was true. Both engines had been torn away from the righthand wing. And just in case you're wondering why, the answer is that there are two particular bolts that hold the engines in place, and because the planes were so old, and those bolts hadn't been checked properly for years and years, they broke.

So, when you're faced with a situation like that what do you do next?

The first thing you do is to send out a Mayday message. So the co-pilot got onto the radio again and transmitted "Mayday, Mayday", which is like an SOS at sea, and he asked the air traffic controllers on the ground where they might find a place to land the plane – and quickly, because they couldn't go on flying like this for much longer.

First the air traffic controllers wanted to know where they were positioned, in the sky. The co-pilot replied that he didn't know, because the plane's instruments were up the spout, and he was hoping to find out from *them* where the plane was.

It was at about this moment that the co-pilot thought, well, we could all die here, and maybe nobody will ever know why. So he pulled out his camera and took a picture out of the cockpit, of the damaged starboard wing.

The French air traffic controllers were still not giving a lot of help -but by now the plane had flown downwards so far (down to 22,000 feet) that it came out *underneath* one level of clouds, but *above* another level. They were in a kind of cloud sandwich, one layer above and one below. They could see the jagged peaks of the mountains sticking out of the clouds below them, so they carefully steered the plane away from the mountains, and towards lower-lying ground – because nobody really likes the idea of crashing into a mountain.

Up in the cockpit of the plane, the crew were doing their calculations, looking at maps of the area. Checking where the radio beacons were, that might guide them to safety. Trying to decide where on earth they could possibly land their crippled plane. The captain began pulling levers to jettison some of the plane's engine fuel – pouring it out into the clouds, to make the aircraft lighter. They had a radio call from

Marseilles airport, down to the south of them, saying that they could land there – but there was a thunderstorm over the route into Marseilles, and turbulence that might have broken up the aircraft even more. Then they thought of landing at Palma – but Palma was much too far, they'd never have made it.

At this point the co-pilot remembered that in this part of France there were a number of military airfields. He'd seen them once when he was on his holidays, in a little plane of his own that he kept for running around. As the crippled aircraft headed for Marseilles, by a small miracle the co-pilot looked across through the captain's window, and there, over to the left of the plane, was a gap in the clouds. Through the gap in the clouds he could see a long, straight runway, right beneath them. He recognised the runway. He called to the captain:

"That would be better – land there!"

The captain made noises like he would prefer to carry on to Marseilles, but once again the co-pilot said:

"Land *there!*"

And the captain agreed.

Now it happened, by the most extraordinary luck, that this landing strip was the French air force's emergency landing strip for space shuttles. The perfect place to land – if only they could get the plane down in one piece.

But that, as they say, is easier said than done. Imagine it – a hundred and fifty tons of jet aircraft thundering along on just two engines – and because the two remaining engines were driving the plane round to the right, the captain was having to haul on the rudder with all his might. He was exhausted with the effort. He was panting for breath. 'I hey knew that they would have to turn the aircraft before they could land. Aircraft have to land *into* the wind, because if they land with the wind it's far, far harder to keep control, and it's very difficult to slow the plane's speed.

So the co-pilot called for a turn to the left. But the captain was near to the end of his strength. He called back that he *couldn't* turn the plane. And what is more, as they slowed the plane's speed to prepare for landing, there was a sudden explosion out on the right-hand wing. *Bang!* Engine fuel had been pouring out of the broken fuel pipes feeding the non-existent engines, and the fuel had been lit by a spark from one of the electrical cables. The starboard wing was now on fire. and the fire was eating away at the wing.

Now there was absolutely no chance of landing into the wind. They knew that they only had one chance- they'd have to land with the wind behind them. So they pulled the plane – somehow – into a correct landing position, and brought it in ready to land.

Down below them, the airport fire engines and emergency services were on red alert, all ready for the horrific crash that might happen at any moment. And now everything happened in split seconds.

The aircraft touched down. Its wheels hit the runway. The co-pilot operated the spoilers in an attempt to slow the plane. The flight engineer very carefully put the Number Two port-side engine into full reverse – to act as a brake – and since the plane's ordinary brakes were completely out of action, the captain leaned over and pulled on the red emergency brake handle down to his right.

The plane had come in to land at a terrifying two hundred miles an hour. They had no idea if they'd be able to bring it safely to a stop. In the end, although the captain, by superb skill, had managed to keep the plane almost perfectly straight during the landing, the plane stewed off across the grass before it eventually came to a halt-just in front of a large metal sign that said "Do Not Pass This Sign"!

They were safe. But only for a moment. Because the wing was still a blazing inferno of flame and smoke – they were alive at the moment, but the plane could very easily explode, and they might not stay alive for very long if they didn't get out of the aircraft *fast*. The co-pilot realised that the rest of the crew hadn't seen the fire, so he shouted out for the engineer to switch off the fuel. Then he opened the cockpit window, threw out the escape strap, and slid down it, shouting:

"Evacuate, evacuate – get out now!"

The captain, the flight engineer and the other two crew members dived out of the plane to safety, and as they hit the ground the co-pilot shouted:

"Come on you lot, bloody well run!"

And they *did* run. They ran from that plane, ran from the fire, ran from the smoke, and ran towards the safety of the airport buildings, while the fire engines raced up to douse the fire with water and layers *of* foam.

And that is just about the end of the story. On the ground, more or less safe and sound, with the plane more or less in one piece and their cargo intact. The co-pilot says that his proudest moment was when the French airfield authorities invited them to lunch the next day, complete with wine and brandy galore, and the airport commander and his assembled test pilots stood up and saluted the 707's crew as they came through the door into the dining room.

And for their especial skill and courage in getting the plane down safely, the whole crew were given a ceremonial award last year at the Lord Mayor's Mansion House in London.

And this story, just like last week's, is totally and absolutely true, and the reason why I know that is because the co-pilot in question just happens to be my brother.

Fig. 00: With Martin Emery. Flying Tiger Moth, out of Biggin Hill.

**Devon
10 November 1994**

RUB-A-DUB-DUB

Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub...

About three men in a boat, and how, at first, the boat didn't sink, and then, in the end, it did, washed out to sea, never to be seen again.

Some stories only just make it onto the printed page by the skin of their teeth. This is one such. It was almost (but in the end was not) blown away by the wind. The same could be said of the three heroes of our tale.

I suppose you could say that Mr Wood is the presiding spirit of our stretch of the river. Not that he's a ghost or fairy or sprite. Far from it. A substantial man. What I mean is that he's been on our river for years, going up and down, doing a bit of fishing, buying a boat or two, and working on them, and generally keeping an eye on everything that happens on the water. Every river needs someone like that to keep an eye on it, and in our case that someone is Mr Wood.

Nowadays people are always complaining about our river being polluted. But that doesn't worry Mr Wood. He's seen worse than this. He says the river's a lot cleaner than it used to be. He tells how he and his schoolmates used to swim in the river. The men who worked at the china-clay works further up-river didn't have a toilet, so every time they needed to do a plop they'd just stick their bottoms over the edge of the wall and do it in the river. At that point the boys would shout "Look out, here comes another one...", and they'd scramble out of the water and onto the bank. Then, the offending object having floated past, they'd dive back into the water and carry on swimming.

It happened that Mr Wood turned up yesterday morning as I was going about my business.

Unusual sort of business, it was. The tide was well out by the time I got up. I washed my face in a pan of water and came out to take a look up the river. The tide was out and the river was a great stretch of bare sand bank. Everything looked more or less the same as it had looked the night before – except that there was a "something" right in the middle of the river-bed, about a quarter of a mile away. With the aid of binoculars I could see that this "something" was in fact a large, green, wheeled plastic dustbin. Treasure! Obviously floated up there from somewhere, and got stuck in the mud. Far too good to leave it in the mud. Invaluable for filling with water and testing outboard motors. So off I went. Hauled on my boots and schloop-schloop-schloop across the muddy river-bed.

It took some mighty heaving to get the bin moving across the mud (not least because I kept sinking knee-deep into the mudholes made by the worm-diggers who come to dig for bait.. why can't they just tiss off and dig somewhere else...), but I was managing well. There was a breeze on the river, and the morning was pleasant. I listened to the sounds of the river birds all around me. Wrestling in mud and listening to birdsong. Until I heard – or rather half-heard, because the sound was faint and was almost carried away by the wind – a most unusual bird call. I stopped and listened. Again I heard it. I looked round to hear where it was coming from, and realised that it was coming from the beach in front of my front door. It wasn't a bird call at all. It was Mr Wood, walking along the beach with his son. He was trying to attract my attention.

If the wind had been just a mite stronger, I wouldn't have heard his whistle, he would have carried on walking, and this story might never have reached the page.

Anyway, schloop-schloop, off I went again, across the mud. After what seemed an age of hauling through mud I reached the beach. Mr Wood was amused by my efforts, and passed comment on the pointlessness of having a dustbin in a place where the dustmen never arrive. More importantly, though, he had a tale to tell, and this is the tale that he told.

He had bought a boat. Bought it from an advert in the local free ads paper. Bought it from a man in Plymouth. Nice boat. Wooden boat. Inboard diesel engine. Catch the tides right and he could drive it round the coast from Plymouth to Teignmouth with no problem at all. Or so he thought. So they went to Plymouth in the morning – "they" being Mr Wood, Mr Wood's son, and Mr Wood's brother-in-law. All ready for a pleasant day's boating. They had reckoned that if they left Plymouth by nine in the morning, they'd be at Teignmouth by five in the evening.

But then there was the problem of the wind.

The weather forecast was predicting "freshening winds". These winds were forecast for later in the day. And "freshening winds" does not mean howling gale, now does it!

When our friends left Plymouth, three men in a tub, the weather was fine and calm. They were looking forward to the trip. Nice flask of hot coffee and sandwiches. "But we never had time for coffee, because the minute we came round that first headland, we hit the wind. You know what," he said, "I've never seen anything like it. We were struggling. Struggling every inch of the way..."

He continued his story: "The sea was just like you see it in the news pictures on winter time TV. Huge waves, crashing up the rocks and sending spray right up into the air. We came round that first headland and towards Bigbury Bay, and I swear we were going absolutely nowhere at all. Standing still, we were. Partly because of the wind blowing up from the East, but also because there's two currents in

Bigbury Bay, coming round from the back of Burgh Island. We were just not moving.

"And to add to our troubles, one of the planks in the bottom of the boat had sprung. It was loose. So we were taking in water from below. My boy was baling out water for all he was worth. Baling and baling. Nearly worn out, he was. But no matter how fast he kept baling, the water still kept coming in.

"And of course, the sea water was coming over the top too. Now you might think that we should just have turned round and gone back to Plymouth. But we couldn't. If I'd turned that boat round, the waves would have come straight over the back and they'd have swamped us. We'd have sunk for sure. So I had to keep going, keeping the head of the boat into the wind. There was no way I could relax, not even for a minute – I had to keep my hand on that tiller, you see, and the power full on. I'd see a big wave coming, and I'd watch it running along just below the edge of the gunwales, and I'd ask myself 'will it come over or won't it?' Because I was expecting one of these waves to swamp us at any moment.

"And because of the waves, the boat was going up and down like a diving duck – up on a wave, and then down into the trough. And this meant that we had to keep the engine on full throttle, because every time the boat heaved up in the air the fuel supply to the engine got cut off and the engine started going 'putt... putt... putt...'. Like it was going to cut out. Driving at full power like this was a big worry, because we only had three-quarters of a can of fuel with us, and we might have run out.

"Like I say, I kept the head of the boat into wind, and then, at one moment, I tucked the boat round a bit, and we were free, we were moving again. On our way again. At last.

"Well, we motored on, round past Bolt Tail, and Bolt Head, and Prawle Point, and on past Slapton Sands.

"At one point we thought that maybe we should have headed for the shore and tried to swim to safety. But we couldn't even have done that, because the waves at Slapton Sands were rolling and crashing right up on the beach. The boat would have been smashed about, and there's no way we'd ever have made it up the beach – the undertow of the water would have pulled us back into the water, and we'd have been killed for sure."

At this point Mr Wood's son chips in:

"You know what I was thinking? I was thinking: 'If we sink, there's no way I'm going to stop and try to save those two silly buggers,' (referring to his father and father-in-law). 'They had no bloody life-jackets, you see. I thought, 'I've got a life jacket. If we sink, I'll swim for it – there's no point in all of us drowning together...'"

"Well," said Mr Wood, "in the end we were lucky. We made it up as far as Dartmouth in the end. Someone had spotted us out at sea, and

they'd phoned the coastguard at Start Point to say that we seemed to be in trouble. So the coastguard arranged a mooring for us at Dartmouth – they'd even sent a helicopter over to take a look at us and make sure we were OK (we didn't have a radio on board, so we couldn't have radioed for help even if we'd wanted to). I say we were 'lucky', because there was another bloke, about a mile further out to sea, in a yacht, a 33-foot yacht, and his keel got broken off with the storm, and he sank. So we were very happy to have made it as far as Dartmouth."

So far, so good! They'd travelled upwards of thirty miles, and still had another twelve to go. They'd survived the wind and water, and they'd made it safe to land. They hadn't sunk, and they were alive to tell the tale. For the moment – and for the next day or two – they left the boat on the mooring at Dartmouth.

And what did our three-men-in-a-tub think of this adventure?

Well, I can't tell you what Mr Wood's brother-in-law thought, because we don't know much about him – except that he was wearing a rather nice seaman's cap, and a particularly strong gust of wind blew it right off his head and into the waves, and there he was, hatless...

As for Mr Wood himself, I asked him if he had been scared. "Didn't have time to be scared, boy," he said. "I just had to keep going. I've lived a long life, but I've never seen anything like that. I'm glad I saw it. I like the idea of mankind mastering the elements and all that, and coming through safe. I like to think that we got the better of the wind and the weather..."

Mind you, I couldn't help thinking to myself: Here's a man who knows all about boats. He knows how vicious the sea can be. Even on our little river he tells me that he's seen twenty-foot waves blowing up when an outgoing tide met a strong easterly wind. But despite that, he never bothered putting on a life jacket, not even when he knew he was facing an eight-hour boat trip on the open sea, into freshening winds. It's almost as if he was daring the sea to take him – as if he's prepared to gamble with whether he lives or dies. (He did once tell me that he wants to be buried at sea when he dies... but that's another story for another time...)

And what about Mr Wood's son? Unusual to hear a son say (in front of his father, as he stood on the bank of our stirring little river) that if his father had been drowning he would have swum to the shore rather than trying to save him. And I wonder what I would have done in a circumstance like that.

However, my friends, the adventure does not stop there. There is more to be told.

They decided that instead of sailing the boat round the final twelve-or-so miles to Teignmouth, they would load it onto a lorry and have it carried there overland. So this they did.

Mr Wood continues the story:

"We brought the boat on a low-loader from Dartmouth to Coombe Cellars, and we were going to launch it there and take it across to my mooring on the other side of the river.

"The first problem came when the lorry crane tried to lift the boat off the platform. The lifting hook in the bottom of the boat must have been rusted away, so it snapped right off.

"So we put a strap round the boat and lifted it into the water with that.

"The second problem was that the mooring they'd given us at Dartmouth was a hard-bottom mooring, so the boat had been knocking on the bottom while it was moored there. I heard the boat creaking a bit as we lifted it in, and I thought maybe the loose plank had come a bit looser, but I didn't think it'd have got much worse.

"So we got the boat into the water, all ready to go to the other side. We couldn't start the inboard diesel engine, so we fixed a Seagull outboard motor onto the outboard bracket at the hack. The tide was up and we were all ready to cross the river. I was going to join my boy for the trip – but it was just as well that I didn't."

Now Mr Wood's son takes up the story:

"That's right. So what happened then? More planks had come loose in the bottom of the boat. This meant that when I pushed off from the bank, the water just started flooding in. There I was, baling water again, to keep the boat afloat. Baling away, and the water still coming in. And then what happens? Bang! The bracket holding the outboard motor onto the back of the boat snapped off. And splash! my engine disappeared to the bottom of the river. Goodbye engine. And of course, I didn't have any oars or paddles either.

"So there I was – stuck on a boat, in the middle of the river, with water flooding in from underneath, with my engine sitting on the river bottom, and the tide starting to run out, and me with no paddles or anything. Put bluntly, I was sinking. And this time I didn't have a lifejacket either..."

Oh what a woeful scene! A wet scene! And cold, too!

It was indeed lucky that Mr Wood hadn't come along for the ride. From where he was standing on the bank he'd seen the engine break off the boat, and he saw that the boat was sinking, so he rushed to the phone at Ashton's garage by the bridge and dialled 999 to call out the Teignmouth lifeboat.

In the meantime, his son was sitting on the wooden hatch of the engine compartment, watching the boat sinking around him. He decided that if he was going to sink, he might as well enjoy a last cigarette, so he took out his rolling tobacco, rolled a cigarette, and began smoking it. The boat sank more and more, until in the end everything in it was floating – the floorboards, the petrol can, bits of rope etc – and the gunwales were coming closer and closer to water

level. He was just beginning to think: "Oh well, that's it. Goodbye world" when suddenly he saw a boat racing up the river towards him. He looked again and realised that it was the large inflatable boat of the Teignmouth lifeboat, because he could see the white helmets of the lifeboatmen on board.

The lifeboat arrived just as the boat had sunk below the water, and the crew rescued him. They told him afterwards that the river was so cold on that particular day that if he'd been in the water for even five minutes he would have died from the cold...

And so the adventure comes to an end. The boat had sunk, but since it was sitting on the bottom of the river, they were able to retrieve it when the tide went out. They patched it up and brought it across to Mr Wood's moorings at Luxton's Steps. They stripped the diesel engine out of the craft – it had cost them £400, but it was a good engine and worth the money. Then they left the boat tied to a mooring.

But the next day, with the winds and storms that blew up, the boat was gone! It had broken loose from its moorings. On its way to freedom. On its way to its final resting place at who-knows-where.

Mr Wood explained:

"I walked down the river to see if I could find the boat. I found where it was. On the other side of the river. But by the time I could get myself across the river to fetch it, the tide had washed it away again. And I'm bugged if I know where it's gone now! I suppose that's the last I'll ever see of it. Probably finished up on some rock somewhere..."

"Anyway," he said, by way of a conclusion, "it's been nice talking to you... But before that old tide comes in too far I want to go down and collect some oysters for my tea." (Mr Wood keeps a sack of oysters breeding and growing on the foreshore next to where he moors his boats, and, when the fancy takes him, he likes to eat a few for his tea.)

And that, for the moment, is the end of another day's doings on our river. If you ever run short of a story or two, you can generally count on the river. Sit by it for a while and a story will wash up on the tide sooner or later. That's the way it is with rivers...

Fig. 00: Hector Wood, River Teign, Devon.

London
17 December 1994

THE TREASURE TRAIL

By now it's become a tradition that I give the twins their main birthday presents a few days before their birthday.

This started a couple of years ago. Since I think that children might as well work for their birthday presents, I decided to organise a treasure trail for them. If they followed a set of clues, they got their birthday presents at the end of the final clue.

At first the treasure trail was very simple, because the twins were only babies and they didn't know much about anything at all, really... Their presents were hidden under the kitchen table, behind the piano, in the cat basket... that sort of thing... and that's where they had to find them.

But then it all started to get more complicated.

Firstly because the trail of clues started to walk out of the front door and down the road and right into the centre of London. The city itself became our treasure trail.

And secondly because I decided to write most of the clues in Latin. Just to make it a little harder. And anyway, how else will the twins get to learn a little Latin, these days?

Now, you might protest, the children were only five when this nonsense started, so surely they didn't *know* any Latin. This is true. But there are ways of teaching. Very simple, really.

For example, this was how we did it last year: on the Friday night, after school, the twins invited their friends over to stay the night at my house. The next morning (which was Saturday, so there was no school) the postman rang at the door. "Parcel for the twins," he said. In fact it was two parcels. They contained two small Latin dictionaries, and the first set of clues for the treasure trail.

So, while they were eating their cornflakes and dropping their toast and jam all over the carpet, the twins and their friends took pencils and paper and started to work out the first clues.

And this year we did just the same, on Saturday 17th December 1994.

Allow me to describe the scene. By nine o'clock in the morning the downstairs room already looked as if a bomb had hit it. K. and J. had slept on the sofa, Y. had slept on a mattress under the long dining-room table, and A. had insisted on tucking himself up in a small but cosy space underneath the doll's house. Re. and Ri. came over early in the morning, and in no time at all there were toys and clothes and musical instruments and sleeping bags and things spread all over the floor.

The postman knocked shortly after nine, and this was the first clue that he brought:

INDICIUM PRIMUM

*Mea littera prima est in KING sed non est in SIX
Mea littera secunda est in GIRLS sed non est in GIRL
Mea littera tertia non est in HAND sed est in WIZARD*

*Mea littera quarta non est in COIL sed est in THORN
Mea littera quinta est in SNOW sed non est in NIGHT
Mea littera sexta est in COCK sed non est in BAD*

*O liberi optimi..! Sed nunc est pars difficilis.
Invenire responsum, necesse est legere litteras retro.*

Quis est? Amicus noster est – Equus!

The answer to this was arrived at after much arguing and some tears, with the boys claiming that Father was helping the girls, and the girls saying that the boys were doing all the easiest clues. The answer, arrived at with the help of the aforementioned Latin dictionaries, was: GINGER.

Who, you may ask, is Ginger? Ginger is a horse. But he is not just any old horse. He is our favourite horse. Ginger lives in a shop on the Mile End Road. "A horse living in a shop?" you might say. "Ridiculous!" But it is true. Ginger lives in the back of the second-hand furniture shop next to the railway arch, opposite the Little Driver pub.

So the twins and their friends hurried to get dressed. They said good morning to the Cat. And they rushed upstairs to say good morning to Brian. He, however, was still in bed, and hid under the blankets and refused to come out. "Go away," he grumbled, "Leave me alone." Ri. wanted to know why he was such a grouch. After all, it was well past getting-up time...

The children then brushed their teeth, packed some food, did a wee in the outside toilet, put their coats on, and off they went.

And do not think that this was a quiet start to the day. Oh no! Not a bit of it. As they strode through the council flats at the end of the street (where most people were probably still in bed asleep) they began chanting at the tops of their voices:

"Everywhere we go... Everywhere we go... People always ask us...
People always ask us... Who we are... Who we are... And where we
come from... And where we come from... So we tell them... So we
tell them..."

We are from 'Ackney... We are from 'Ackney... Mighty, mighty
'Ackney... Mighty, mighty 'Ackney... And if they don't hear us... And
if they don't hear us... We shout a little LOUDER... We shout a little
LOUDER..."

And so on, getting louder and louder, and stamping their feet as they marched along, and making a terrible din.

And now spare a thought for our friend Mickey Fenn. It was unlucky for poor Mickey that he happens to live on the street leading to Ginger's shop, because the kids all decided to stop outside his house. They rang his doorbell and jumped up and down and shouted. After a while Mickey came to the door in his dressing gown, looking definitely rough, because he'd been to a party the night before. He asked me to come

inside for a moment, so that he could go upstairs and find the twins some money. But the children all decided that *they* were going in too. So they all rushed upstairs behind Mickey – stamp, stamp, clatter, clatter, shout, shout – and into the bedroom, where Denise was still in bed. Luckily she was in a good mood, and wished the twins a happy birthday.

After much shooing and pushing and shoving, the kids were finally ejected from the house, and off we went again, down the road to Ginger's shop.

As I say, Ginger lives in the back of a shop. The front of the shop is filled with old gas cookers, bits of furniture, several large boxes of plastic toys, and some bird cages containing various live birds. Then you come through to the back office – which was well heated, on account of it being a winter's morning. Three gentlemen sat round the desk talking over the day's business, and they had a little yappy dog. The yappy dog barked at us, but it was happy enough to let us pass through a second door which led into the stable.

You would never imagine, from the outside, that this stable is here. It has two cubicles for horses, made of rough-sawn timber and iron bars. The floor is stone. On one side is an ancient horse cart, and on the other side a gig for trotting-races. Bales of hay and tubs containing carrots. Ginger does like a carrot. In fact we fed him a few while we looked for the next clue. It wasn't hard to find – it was pinned to Ginger's door. Next to the large wrought-iron horse-shoe that decorates the door of his little cubicle.

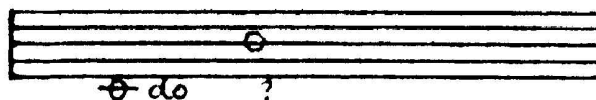
This was the next clue:

INDICIUM SECUNDUM

1. What do you say to make a horse go?
2. If I borrow money, what do I do with it?
3. Satellites travel in it.
4. What does the old man drink with his afternoon biscuits?
5. Father Christmas sings to his reindeer: "... deer, what can the matter be?"
6. Rockets travel in it too.
7. I went to get a book from the library, but it had already been

.....

8.



9. Who is incredibly good-looking, me or you?
10. Who will you find at the buzz stop?
11. I you she it we you they were all at the party. Who was missing?

If you know anything about anything, you will realise that this clue means "Go to Bow Road tube". In other words, to the station. So off we went again.

We stopped at the ticket office to pay our fares, seeing that these days you get fined ten pounds or end up arrested if you don't have a ticket. It was not obvious where the next clue was to be found. So the children asked the ticket man: "Have you got a clue for us?" (Truth to tell, they shouted at him, because they were in a shouting sort of mood.)

And the ticket man handed them a large brown envelope, which just happened to contain the next clue.

The clue said the following:

INDICIUM TERTIUM

O liberi fatui!

Nunc necesse est procedere

non ad

MILLE PASSUS FINIS

et non ad

GRADUS GENU VIRIDIS

et non ad

CAPELLA BLANCA

sed ad

IECUR STAGNUM PLATEA

By now the children were getting into their stride. In between trying to vandalise the chocolate machine, and pushing each other off their seats, and arguing over who had a pencil and who didn't, they worked out what it meant. They had to go to Liverpool Street station, via Mile End, Stepney Green and Whitechapel.

Yinka was in a very bad mood, because nobody would help her with her clues, so she ran off and hid round the corner. Sometimes I wish that she wouldn't do this.

Liverpool Street is only three stops down the line. One of the bright new Central Line trains took us there, and we all spilled out onto the platform.

Where was the next clue?

The only place where a clue might have been hidden was the chocolate machine, so the children started attacking it, and looking in its return-money slot to see what they could find. They found nothing.

At that moment a voice boomed out of a loudspeaker on the platform. "Will the children on the Westbound Central Line platform please stop misbehaving themselves. Children, you are to report to the Station Supervisor's office at once!"

The children went mad. They rushed along the platform – which is a long platform – with me rushing along behind telling them not to run because running on stations is dangerous. At the bottom of the escalator was a busker playing a recorder. He played them a tune or two, and offered to let them play his instrument. They put some coppers in his hat, and rushed up the escalator – once again with me rushing along behind. We were quite out of breath by the time we got to the top.

Now, if you have ever been to Liverpool Street station you will know that it has a special room at the top of the escalator. Inside that room is a long bank of video display monitors. Colour TV. The station supervisor sits there and watches everything that goes on in the station, through the closed-circuit television cameras down on the platforms.

We peered in through his glass window, where he was sitting in the dark. He turned round, saw us, and gestured for us to come in through the door. This we did. All the children crowded round him and watched the screens. You could see people on the platforms, and sweet machines, and trains coming and going.

The supervisor asked A. to press the figures 021 on the keyboard in front of him. The picture on one of the screens began to change, because the camera was moving round by remote control. All of a sudden K. yelled: "It's Jana!" Sure enough, there on the screen was a picture of our friend Jana. And she was holding a large piece of paper. There was a message written on the paper. The supervisor pressed a button to zoom the camera in closer. The message read: "This Is the Next Clue!"

The children were off like a shot – just about remembering to pause to thank the station supervisor for his help. Then they thundered down the escalator again, because they had recognised the spot where Jana was standing.

"Where's the clue?" they shouted. And Jana, rather ill-advisedly, said: "It's in my pocket." I say "ill-advisedly" because she had forgotten that she had rather a large number of pockets that day, what with her coat and her trousers and so on. So the children more or less tore her apart trying to find the clue. In fact two members of the station staff almost came to rescue her because they thought she was being robbed by a gang of hooligans.

In the end K. found the clue. This clue was in English. It said:

INDICIUM QUARTUM

1. I am perfectly round.
2. I am the shortest distance between two points.
3. Take me.
4. I am tall and skinny and my head is on fire.
5. Come and see me.

As anyone can see, this means "Take the Circle Line and go to the Monument".

So we did, with much eating and drinking and general fussing and fighting on the way.

And not only did we go *to* the Monument, we also went *up* the Monument, because it was obvious that the clue wasn't going to be at the *bottom* of the Monument, but at the *top*.

So up the stairs we went. And up and up. And up and up. All three--hundred-and-something stairs, all the way to the top, round and round in a tight little spiral that made you feel rather dizzy, and then, at last, out onto the platform at the top, where all London was spread below us. The Tower of London to the East, St Paul's to the West, and the Thames flowing to the South of us. We looked at this and that. We shouted rude comments at the ant-like people down on the pavement below. We discussed what it would be like to fall from this enormous height. And we looked for clues. But there were no clues!

So down the stairs we went again. Re. let the others go on ahead, because he wanted to come down fast. And somehow, by magic, there was an envelope taped to one of the window grilles halfway down. And another envelope a few steps further on. The envelopes were duly taken, and we all spilled out of the bottom of the Monument and into the street. Now followed an argument about who *had* opened clues so far, and who had *not* opened clues, because everyone wanted to be sure of getting a turn.

Anyway, the first clue was opened. It said:

"Ha Ha! Fooled you! This isn't a clue at all!" And the children said: "Ha ha, not amused!" So the second clue was opened. This clue said:

INDICIUM QUINTUM

*Hoc indicium facile est.
Repetitio est indicii primi.
Tamen, in loco "MUTUUS",
necesse est "AGGER" scribere.*

I shall save you the effort of straining your brain, by explaining that this meant: "Go to Embankment Station".

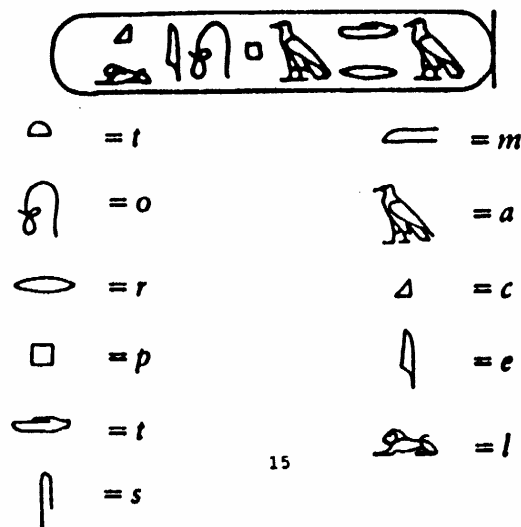
First, though, there were a few things to be done. More food had to be eaten, to shovel new energy into the children. Then we had to walk to our secret spot under London Bridge (where the children stood in the square windows of the Health Club making letters with their bodies, and the grown-ups had to guess what the letters spelt, and they spelt "Willies" and "Fannies" and "Wee-Wee", and all the children giggled and cackled like lunatics). And finally we had to find a toilet, because some of us were bursting for a wee. Fortunately we were able to do this by invading a private drinking club on a boat moored by London Bridge, much to the manager's alarm.

Then we took the District Line and in no time at all we arrived at Embankment, where we found the station staff collecting money for the intensive care baby unit at St Thomas's Hospital. Already they had raised three thousand pounds from the travelling public, so we gave them money too, and in return they gave each of the children a gas-filled balloon on a string. I remembered how the twins had been put into intensive care when they were first born – little squidgy things not even the length of a 12-inch ruler, because they were born six weeks early. And now look at them – great big children!

Unfortunately there were no signs of any clues here. However, I had been promising the children that they could have ice creams, so we walked through the Embankment Gardens, past the Camel Corps memorial with its little camel, and to the cafe.

Various arguments ensued about who was going to eat what, but we settled for chocolate biscuits of various sorts, and drinks. I had a small conversation with the cafe owner in Italian – always a useful language to know – and after a minute or two he appeared from behind the counter with an envelope. "Is there an A. and a K. here?" he asked. What he was carrying was the next clue. The envelope had four separate envelopes inside it.

As I say, languages are useful to know. The first clue wasn't in Latin. It was in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Luckily, at the bottom of the page there was a small translation of the Egyptian alphabet. As follows:



The clue, as is obvious, spelt "Cleopatra". The second envelope contained the following words:

"Ha, ha! So you think you're very clever, eh? Now see if you can find what's in the other envelope."

And since the third envelope contained a needle stitched into a piece of card, it was obvious that we had to go to Cleopatra's Needle, which was just down the road, next to the Thames.

However, the needle had a footnote. It said:

"Before we go any further, there's a 10 pence prize for anyone who can make it float on water."

"That's easy," the children said. So the cafe owner brought a saucer of water, and all the children tried to make the needle float. They tried all kinds of tricks, but the needle just sank.

So, just to prove that it can be done, and that iron can float, I opened the fourth envelope and took out a pair of tweezers. Using the tweezers I lowered the needle very gently onto the water – and it floated. This saved me paying ten pence to anyone – I just paid it to myself!

By now the kids were halfway out of the door on their way to Cleopatra's Needle. Jana had disappeared somewhere, but then we saw her standing down by the river's edge. So we went to join her.

Just behind the Needle was a large bundle of carpet, laid flat on the paving stones. Jadine was going to jump on it. Just as well that she didn't, because it was a homeless person fast asleep!

We looked around. No sign of any clues. However there were eight balloons tied to the railings down by the water. The children went to investigate the balloons, probably reckoning that maybe they could snitch them. But then they realised, there was something *inside* the balloons. Small pieces of rolled-up card. "It's the clues," they shouted. And sure enough, so it was.

The only problem was, how to get the clues out? The answer was simple: jump on the balloons. So the children each took a balloon and jumped on it to burst it. This probably woke the homeless person, but the carpet bundle didn't move. Out came the pieces of card. And each card had a word written on it. We looked at them and tried to make sense of them by putting them in the right order. Finally we worked out that they meant:

"Go to Level Five at the Royal Festival Hall."

This was very convenient, since the Royal Festival Hall was only just on the other side of the river, so we could cross by Hungerford Bridge.

On the other hand, wouldn't it have been nice if we could have crossed the river by boat – a boat just for us? But things like that don't happen in real life. I mean, boats don't just turn up out of the blue, do they!

As it happened, Cleopatra's Needle sits next to Charing Cross Pier. And various boats come and go from the pier during the day – we saw them as we watched the river. So we decided to go and ask the pier manager if maybe, perhaps, just possibly, he might find us a boat that could ferry us across the river.

The pier master was a lovely man, with a small grey beard and laughing eyes. When we asked him about a boat he said: "Well, you're

veeery lucky... If you're very quick, there's a friend of mine coming in with a boat at this very moment. I shall ask him to take you across."

As he was speaking, a party-cruise boat pulled in to the pier. It was the "*Suerita*". The pier master called up to the captain, and the captain opened his little window. "Do you think you could take these friends of mine across the river?" he shouted. And the captain shouted back "Yes, certainly". So, while one of the crew members tied the boat to a pier bollard with a rope, we all went on board.

Off went the boat. Upstream. Moving up under Hungerford Bridge, with the trains moving overhead, and then downstream again to the Festival Pier. A beautiful view of the Thames at the heart of the city. And seagulls flying in the wind. And then, at the Festival Pier, we disembarked. Arriving like royalty from our own royal barge.

The children rampaged round the inner workings of the Festival Hall. We passed through an exhibition of statues by an Indian artist, made out of hemp. One of the figures was an Indian god who had a knitted willy – you don't see one of those every day! And finally we reached Level Five.

There wasn't much happening on Level Five. However, down at one end stands the Poetry Library. So we went to ask if there were any clues in there. The children, in their usual vulgar manner, rushed in and demanded of the staff: "Excuse me, did a tall man with whiskers come in last week, asking you to hide some clues?"

"Oh *no*," said the staff. "*We* haven't seen any clues."

But just at that moment somebody appeared from an office at the back. When the children saw her they let out a little gasp. "It's Miss Leedham!" they said.

And so it was. It was the teacher who had taught some of them in their early years in their Infant School. And now here she was, as the librarian at Level Five of the Royal Festival Hall!

I told the twins that, seeing we were here, I wanted them to fill in the forms so that they could join the Poetry Library. Always useful to be able to borrow poetry books. So we began to fill in the forms. And once the forms were filled and their membership cards were issued, the children were able to choose books. By a remarkable coincidence, one of the books on the bookshelves had lettering down its spine. It said "*My Book: by A.*". In fact it was a small packet tucked in among the library books. The packet turned out to contain "Uncle Albert and the Quantum Quest", by Russell Stannard. And further along was "*MyBook: by K.*", and this turned out to be "I Saw Esau", by Iona and Peter Opie. Birthday presents for the twins.

And then the children realised that we were coming to the end of the trail. More or less with one voice they said: "Is that *all*? Isn't anything else going to happen?"

And I said: "Well, I don't know. I can't see any more clues. I suppose that must be the end. So maybe we'd better be on our way, back over the river and home again..."

And the children said: "That's not *fair*... We don't *want* to go home yet. We want something *else* to happen.

And I said: "Well, I can't just *make* things happen... Come along, we've got to go..."

And so we went. Down from Level Five. And the children were grumbling all the way. We reached the Ground Floor. We were just about to go out of the door when the man at the Information Desk called after us: "Excuse me... I say, *excuse me*... I think you've left something behind..."

And the children said: "We haven't left anything behind...! Oh... Wait a minute... It must be a Clue...!" So they rushed over to the poor man's desk and started shouting at him and climbing all over his counter and making a terrible display of very bad manners, until in the end one of them spotted a parcel under his counter.

"That's it," they shouted. "That's the next clue...!"

And after more argumentation, during which the children looked likely to tear him limb from limb, the man finally agreed to give them the package.

It turned out to contain several things. A china drinking mug for each of the children, decorated with faces of Hyenas, and called "Uglee Mugs". Small chocolate Christmas Puddings. And a radio cassette player for the twins, with a tape of Bob Marley all ready to play.

And that was just about the end of our treasure trail. Yinka ran away again, but then we found her. We all went and watched the skateboarders doing their skating under the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

And then off home again, across the river.

Halfway across Hungerford Bridge, there we were, stepping out, with Bob Marley singing:

"One Love, One Heart,
Let's get together, and feel alright...
Hear the children cryin'
One Love, One heart..."

And us feeling terrific, with wicked little whirlpools swirling in the water below. And there was a black man playing a clarinet on the bridge. And he stopped us and said: "*Classical* music, *that* is what the children should be listening to. Bob Marley, he's no good. Corruption. Smoked the weed. Smoked a pound of ganja a day. That's no good... Bad man, bad music..."

And so saying he played us a little tune on his clarinet. Very classical. We thanked him, put some money in his hat, and moved on.

And so back home for tea, before going out to the children's show at the Half Moon Theatre.

And still Bob Marley was singing:

"One Love, One Heart,
Let's get together, and feel alright..."

And it all felt good, very good indeed. A good day's doings!

Istanbul
13 October 1995

Another Venice. How could I not love it? The Bosphorus and its boats. I rest my case. I could happily stay here for months.

On the other hand, the main problem is in leaving. My friend at the bookshop tells me that I'm not the only one with this problem. Ten million Istanbulites are also trying to leave, and they don't succeed either.

Having finally got my bearings as between the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, I reached the Sirkeci railway station with something of a sigh of relief. I'd found my bearings by the usual hard method of deliberately losing myself and then walking for hours, criss-crossing terrain, to establish a kind of psychic grid into which I can then slot new elements. However my relief was short-lived. So far from being able to book a train ticket for Izmir tomorrow, I was met by a large sign saying "Grev". Turkish railways have been on strike for 22 days – a huge public sector strike, and apparently the biggest strike in the history of Turkey.

In the street outside the British Consulate, a moment of poetry. The broken pavement has been repaired with sand and cement. The sand is full of fragments of sea shell. The sea in the city, in the very ground on which we walk – I find this poetic. Not so the man to whom I spoke. He cursed the feckless builders. They are supposed, by law, to bring sand from rivers – from freshwater beds – not from the sea. Sea sand contains salt. When used for housing, it attracts damp. This is one reason why so many people suffer from rheumatism. But the sea is so close to hand in this city, so the temptation to use sea sand is great.

Another small moment of poetry. In a secondhand bookshop near the Tünel I found Petropoulos's book *Rebetika Tragoudhia*, No way I can afford it. Price 125 dollars. But what a thing of beauty. On page 206, the dying man's last song – "I am dying, mother... bury me deep... and when I am buried, bring my two brothers to my graveside... and let them, then, kill the one who killed me..."

In the heat of conversation with a Turk recently arrived from Berlin, a man much like myself, I was complaining of how nobody sings any more... I mentioned the book. "Ha! I saw that book too! Wonderful book!" A moment of communion with a total stranger, over deep things of the heart. My faith in books, and in the preservation of memory, renewed.

And then a small corner, a home-from-home, the kind of place where I am truly happy. The small alleys of chandlers shops just upstream of the Galata Bridge. All huddled together, a last remnant of the old Galata as was, caught between the thundering roadway and the quayside of the Bosphorus.

Here are the sellers of ship things. Each with their own detail specialisation. Each with their own acute knowledge. Each able to supply – or make – the smallest part for the innermost workings of the engines buried in the bowels of the smokiest old ferryboat. Shops that display their wares on the sidewalk of the narrow streets. Pulleys. Cleats. Stays. Chain in every dimension. Steel cable on large wooden drums. Steel wire and plate. Bronze and brass in sheet or rod – sectioned square, round or hexagonal. Paints. Varnishes. Old rags. Ropes. Valves. Taps. Nails. Screws. Buoys. Life jackets. Sou'westers.

At the heart of the huddle is a small, dilapidated mosque. Next to it, an ablution area. The men of this enclave are observing Muslims. Nearby, a tea stall and a seller of grilled lamb.

What is extraordinary is to watch the men at work.

On a patch of black, oil-stained earth, with wooden cable drums all around, a small thickset man with a green skullcap is wrestling with a multi-core steel cable almost the thickness of a man's wrist. He is splicing an eye into the end of it. Hard, brute steel being bent to the will of man. He has a four-foot metal marlin spike which he uses to part the strands of cable. He hammers the cable onto the spike, and then takes a strand in both hands and forces it down through the opened hole. The beauty is in the neat lie of the cable as it follows the twist of the cable and snugs down against it. That is splicing – an act of forcing, running seemingly counter to nature, but resulting in a harmonious consonance.

At a small workshop, housing two lathes and a vertical drill, a small queue of men is gathered at the door. Some hold pieces of paper, with design specifications of a component part. The others hold items of metalwork that they want drilled, finished, or created wholly anew as a copy of what they already have. The lathe-turner is a master of his craft. You come to him, you tell him what you want, and he makes it for you, out of metal, on the spot. Carefully measuring – calipers, vernier guage. Filing rough edges, lovingly running a blackened thumb over the finished product to ensure its smoothness. And at the door the men stand and watch, or sit on low chairs on the pavement, fingering beads and talking of this and that.

I walk to the quayside. In higgledy-piggledy array, a cluster of

medium-sized freight lorries, tarpaulins roped down behind. Drivers snooze in the afternoon sun. A seller of nicknacks, even poorer than the drivers themselves, tries to interest them in his small wares. From the opposite shore of the Horn tug boats arrive and moor alongside. They are then loaded with goods from the lorries – human chains of men tossing boxes to each other across the gap. Seems to be boxes of toiletries. And carton drinks. Nearby, waiting to be trans-shipped, large drums of Shell oil. Quadruple-size sacks of potatoes. Ditto onions. A group of men are sprawled on the onion sacks, chaffing and chatting and whiling the time away. Their leader calls me over, as I pass. While I try to ascertain the purpose and the destination of all this freight (I imagine that is it for the big liners moored downstream of the Galata Bridge), he musters up a sufficiency of English to tell me the following: "I have friend in London. Look – his address. Jon. In Chelsea. My friend gay. He likes to fuck. You like to fuck? Fuck good, eh?" The rest of the company concurred that fuck was indeed good, and fell into a contented musing as I went on my way.

A man tells me that this is the very spot where Lord Byron, freshly arrived from England, stepped ashore in the uniform of an admiral – borrowed from his uncle – in order to impress the locals. Possibly so.

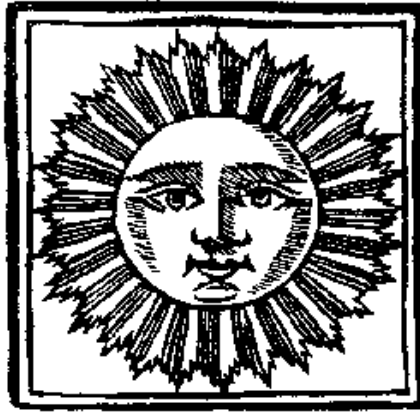


Fig 00: Mustafa Aydemir. Playing zourna. Istanbul.

No Politics Without Inquiry!

A Proposal for a Class Composition Inquiry Project 1996-7

Ed Emery



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This article is a direct appeal for like-minded people to come together in a project of shared political work.

The idea is: to muster all available forces to work on a militant class-composition study project. This is to inform, and to be the basis of, possible future political organisation.

Prelude

A small group of friends. We celebrate Mayday each year. We look forward to the day when everyone makes May 1st a day-off-work-day, to celebrate struggles past and present – to meet, to eat and drink, to sing and dance...

[Incidentally, Mayday 1996 is a Wednesday. Don't just let it pass. Celebrate it.]

Mayday as a time for reflection. Look at the past. Plan for the future. So what happened this year?

Mayday 1995: Friends reported that the TGWU branch at the Ford-Dagenham Assembly Plant voted explicitly against taking the day off work on Mayday. For fear of being "in breach of contract". That is how things have changed.

Mayday 1995: A hundred thousand workers marched in Turkey to celebrate Mayday, despite the massive presence of armed Turkish police, who had killed people on previous marches. That is how things have changed.

Mayday 1995: For our part, we ran up the red flag in the back yard. We marched with the Turks and Kurds (as usual, just about the only people marching in London). A few friends round for supper in the evening. And we sang the old songs of struggle and resistance. But absolutely, categorically not enough. Some of us feeling an urgency. A drive for a particular kind of work. A deepseated wanting. A need to know what is happening. Because something is stirring, all around.

Twenty years, perhaps, since class power was last winning. We've lived the years of defeat. Years of impotence. Years of anger. The rich getting richer and life's been shit for the rest of us. The foundations of working class power systematically destroyed. No doubt. We've been on the losing side.

But in some vaguely definable way, class power is on the move again. We're picking ourselves up out of the wreckage. And the question is: how do we regroup, gather strength, mobilise social forces for a project of winning rather than losing?

A Small Proposition

The old class forces have been taken apart. World-wide. "Decomposed". New class forces are emerging. New configurations. This is what we call a "new class composition". Nick Witheford offers definitions, and their history, elsewhere in this issue of *Common Sense*.

The new class composition is more or less a mystery to us (and to capital, and to itself) because it is still in the process of formation. Eternally in flux, of course, but periodically consolidating nodes of class power.

Before we can make politics, we have to understand that class composition. This requires us to study it. Analyse it. We do this through a process of inquiry. Hence: *No Politics Without Inquiry*.

The Proposition Stated in Other Terms

Relations between capital and labour have been radically restructured during the past two decades, in favour of capital. Labour is being recomposed into new circuits, cycles and patterns of production. A new class composition is being formed, world-wide. In time, this class composition will begin to assert its interests – in its own new circuits, cycles and patterns – of opposition, of struggle. At that point, mere technical class composition turns into political class composition. It becomes real power, political power.

The enemy constantly studies class composition in order to fracture it, break it, disperse it, permanently dissipate its strength. We, for our part, study class composition in order to strengthen it, consolidate it, turn it into a real basis of power.

The old compositions and their associated bastions of class power (miners, auto workers, dockers, steel workers etc) have been broken down. New class compositions (information industries, services etc) are being built up.

Before we can be active in building the class power of these new compositions, we have to know who they are, where they are, what are their conditions of work and life, and around what issues, slogans, struggles they will mobilise during the coming years.

And at the moment we know just about fuck-all.

So: an invitation to comrades far and wide to join in a process of INQUIRY.

The Conference of Socialist Economists as a Possible Base

After the 1994 Conference a group of us in the CSE set up a "Working Group on Work". Our interest has been in the changes taking place in work, and struggles arising from these developments. Similar work has developed previously in CSE.

For example, in the lead-up to the 1976 "Labour Process" conference. This analytical work was particularly strong around the motor industry, and led to useful organising activity in that industry.

CSE Conference provides one useful forum for mobilising these kinds of collective energies. There are people who could build a base for a serious project of class composition analysis. Each contributing some small part of the overall inquiry.

Thus part of my purpose is to propose a "class composition" theme for a future CSE Conference. Perhaps for 1996. Left to find a title for it, I would propose:

"Class composition: Studies of changing relations between capital and labour. Global restructuring and the rebuilding of class power."

We might all, each in our own way, undertake to make small contributions of insights, towards building a pool of knowledge in these areas.

Need for a Network of Research and Action

However, the project needs a far wider base.

I could pretend to speak for a group, an organisation, a world political perspective. I am none of these things. I speak merely for myself, and for the particular baggage of historical and political experience that I carry with me.

I am convinced that serious revolutionary politics is impossible without a committed, detailed, daily work of analysing and understanding class composition, in all its varied and changing forms. This work needs to be undertaken by large numbers of people, and its methods and results need to be coordinated by a process of regular bulletins and regular meetings. It is only lack of political imagination, a sense of defeatism, and basic human laziness that stand in the way of our doing it.

A Momentary Diversion: My Envy of the Scientists

In recent months I've been reading physics books. Atoms, particles, astronomy, cosmology, that sort of thing. A new wave of popularisation in science. Exhilarating to ride this wave. Huge and wonderful discoveries. Old ways of thought turned on their heads. A lot of nonsense thrown out of the window. The whole essence of "being human" is being challenged, redefined.

I watch these scientists working. They have teams of researchers. Networks of international contact and cooperation. Extraordinary machines for observation and analysis. Confidence and enthusiasm. Reaching out to audiences that are not familiar with their language. Creating new public languages. And in the process you find them celebrating and documenting the development of the intellectual history of their discipline.

I am deeply envious.

Once there used to be a "science of class struggle". After all, class struggle is as available to scientific analysis as any area of the physical world. But the science of class struggle got itself a very bad name when it transmuted into "scientific socialism" and Stalinism.

The science of class struggle never recovered from that. It had a brief and glorious resurgence in the Italian revolutionary Left, as *scienza operaia* ("working-class science"), but the prevailing anti-scientism of the post-1968 Left sank any notion that the class struggle could be approached scientifically.

I hold to that idea of a scientific approach.

Another Momentary Diversion: The Rhetoric of War

The miserable debacle of state socialism in the "communist" world has deprived us of great chunks of our language. Who are we? What are we? How do we describe ourselves? What is our politics?

Where do we choose the words with which to name our politics. Communism? Socialism? Revolution? Redistribution of wealth? Social reform? Working-class autonomy? Class war? There is a problem here. These names are all variously tainted by previous associations.

So at this time I prefer to give the project no name.

Except that I believe that we must see it in terms of war.

War is being waged on us. Class war. (Sometimes literally, by military means.) We would do well to respond in the language of war. The rhetoric of earlier communist and anarchist movements always had a strong military flavour to it. But the notion of war is less than fashionable nowadays.

When I say "respond in the language of war", of course I don't mean rushing round killing people. I mean that we begin to speak (once again) the language of tactics, strategy, fields of battle, mobilising of forces, application of technologies, and a theory of war.

I find that the joining of these elements provides me with the bones of an operating system. On the one hand, a notion of a "science" of the class struggle. And on the other, a notion of the class struggle as a "war" within which we have a part to play. Plus, as a basic foundation, the conviction that if you're not part of the solution then you're part of the problem.

Moments of Crisis and Dislocation: No Politics Without Inquiry

You might object to the notion of a somehow "objective" science.

You might object to the notion of "war" and its associations of militarism.

You might object to the notion of disembodied intervention in the body politic.

You might say that the very notion of an "Inquiry" is a nonsense without a prior questioning of the self-stance of the "Inquirer".

I agree. All these notions are deeply problematic.

In answer to the objections, I say let us take these notions and problematise them. Frankly. Enthusiastically. Without fear. Then see where we go from there.

So this article proposes an Inquiry, in the hopes of generating small amounts of discussion, and perhaps also generating practical activity. To this end, we might look briefly at earlier instances of the Inquiry, to see whether they offer insights regarding method, content, ways of approaching knowledge etc.

A note, here. We are not starting from a basis of nothing at all. Even a minimal glance at the literature makes it clear that the Inquiry has a strong and substantive intellectual pedigree.

For example: Marx... Lenin... Luxemburg... Mao... Not to mention the US National Commission on Civil Disorders (1968).

Over the years I have done amounts of work on class composition analysis. Some of this work has appeared in Common Sense [Sergio Bologna on "*The Historiography of the Mass Worker*" in CS 11 and 12, and his work on "*Nazism and the Working Class*", CS 16]. During this period books and pamphlets have accumulated on my shelves. During the years of defeat my view of my books and pamphlets has oscillated (daily) between seeing them as a precious historical resource for the furtherance of struggle, and as useless mounds of paper taking up space.

Anyway, in preparing this article I went fishing in my library. I pulled down volumes fat and thin. Dusted them off. To see what they had to offer, as regards class composition analysis and the possibilities of a new communist project.

What I found was that, at each major point of crisis and dislocation in the development of capitalist society, various kinds of people have instituted mass social inquiries. Their intention has been to document and research the attitudes and conditions of life of the oppressed masses. As a political project.

Studies that ranged from Chinese peasants labouring under feudal despotism to the Black proletariat of the racist ghettos of Newark and

Detroit. Studies of various kinds. London housewives. FIAT car workers. The shifting masses of migrant labour toiling across whole continents. The collective flux of intellectual labour energies concentrated on the Internet.

In short, at certain points in history people have felt the urge to ask: Who are we? What is happening? How have things changed? Hence the Inquiry.

It is generally at points of fracture, crisis, restructuring, dislocation of capitalist development etc that these Inquiries come about. And the Inquiries see themselves as a prelude, a precursor and a precondition of politics.

We are living such a period right now. And the need for an Inquiry is urgent. It is not an optional extra. It is fundamental. In short: *No Politics Without Inquiry*.

Contained Excitement

I offer below a small list of some of the material I found on my shelves. The list is not comprehensive. It is indicative. It indicates the kinds of treasures that are in store when one begins researching previous exemplars of the Inquiry. Source materials for a science of class struggle. Method. Content. Theoretical framework. Epistemological basis.

The class struggle Inquiry is a scientific discipline unto itself. Related to other disciplines, but with a peculiar fire all its own. Extraordinarily exciting. Ill-considered trifles, a marginal field of human knowledge, lost and buried chapters from forgotten books, but at the same time the very basis of a political project. An incitement to action.

It would be good to produce an annotated bibliography of the Inquiry, together with a commentary on its intellectual history. The antecedents, the past practices, reflecting on future possibilities. Given time and energy, I might do this during the coming year. For the moment I shall contain the excitement sparked by these texts. I offer a few bits and pieces from examples of the Inquiry as conducted in the past 150 years. Very brief.

Some Previous Examples of "THE INQUIRY"

The Inquiry has its own typology. It has varieties of genres, varieties of intention. Some are produced by the state. Others are produced by political organisations, by way of external intervention. Others are produced from within the ranks of organised labour. Yet others are the product of people's observation of their own condition. Earlier examples include:

Karl Marx: The Workers' Inquiry

In the later years of his life, Marx prepared a comprehensive questionnaire designed to elicit the conditions of life and work of the labouring classes. [It was republished in Detroit in the early 1970s, with a view to promoting this kind of militant research in the auto

industry. And again, only last year, in Italy.] Here Marx outlines the project:

"Not a single government... has yet ventured to undertake a serious inquiry into the position of the French working class. But what a number of investigations have been undertaken into crises – agricultural, financial, industrial, commercial, political!

"We (shall organise) a far-reaching investigation into facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation; we shall attempt to initiate an inquiry of this kind with those poor resources which are now at our disposal.

"We hope to meet in this work with the support of all workers in town and country who understand that they alone can describe with full knowledge the misfortunes from which they suffer, and that only they, and not saviours sent by Providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies from the social ills to which they are a prey.

"We also rely upon socialists of all schools who, being wishful for social reform, must wish for an exact and positive knowledge of the conditions in which the working class – the class to whom the future belongs – works and moves." (Marx 1973, p. 4)

Inevitably this brings to mind the fifteen pages at the start of *The Communist Manifesto* that provide the classic statement of the class-composition analysis ("Bourgeois and Proletarians") that led into the organising project of communism:

"The essential condition for the existence and for the sway of the bourgeois class is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage labour. Wage labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

And, in among all this, we also have to consider Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844, the precursor of Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1902) and Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861). Not to mention, in our own time, Gareth Stedman Jones' *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (1971).

Lenin and Luxemburg

Lenin. *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1898). A huge work – the bibliography alone runs to some 500 titles, begged, borrowed and perused both in prison and on the road into exile. Three years of work to provide the analytical grounding of the Bolshevik project. Detailed work on the composition of the labouring classes in Russia. And the potential for politics:

"The increase in the number of peasants thrown into the ranks of the industrial and rural proletariat... The population of this 'corner' – ie the proletariat, is, in the literal sense of the word, the vanguard of the whole mass of toilers and exploited."

Rosa Luxemburg. *The Mass Strike, the Party and the Trade Unions*.

Rosa, released from prison and recuperating in Finland. Extending the analysis of the proletariat and its real movements and interests.

"We have attempted... to sketch the history of the mass strike in Russia in a few strokes. Even a fleeting glance at this history shows us a picture... Instead of the rigid and hollow scheme of an arid political action carried out by the decision of the highest committees and furnished with a plan and panorama, we see a bit of pulsating life of flesh and blood, which cannot be cut out of the large frame of the revolution but is connected with all parts of the revolution by a thousand veins." (Luxemburg 1970, p. 43)

US Riot Commission Report

An example of a state-sponsored class composition analysis. In 1967, in the wake of the riots in Newark, Detroit and other cities, President Johnson instituted a commission of social inquiry, whose report was published under the title "What Happened? Why Did It Happen? What Can Be Done?" This documented in large detail the experience of the Black proletariat living in the urban ghettos. A comprehensive analysis of the newly-formed class composition that had rioted in the streets. A state initiative. Framed in a rhetoric of social reform and repressive control. Over 600 pages, in the popular edition.

Its Introduction reads:

"...An extraordinary document. We are not likely to get a better view of socially directed violence – what underlies it, what sets it off, how it runs its course, what follows. There are novels here, hidden in the Commission's understated prose; there are a thousand doctoral theses germinating in its statistics, its interviews, its anecdotes and 'profiles'." The report represents a beginning "on a task that beggars any other planned social evolution known to human history". (National Advisory Commission 1978, p. ix)

[From our side, the Report had its counterpart in the seminal *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* by Fox Piven and Cloward, which uses a similar class composition approach to document the imposition of social control in both the New Deal (1930s) and the Great Society Programme (1960s). The state project unmasked.]

Mao Tse Tung

And Mao, too. A huge work of wide-ranging class Inquiry. And hints as to method. For instance, the article "Oppose Book Worship", of May 1930. Uneasy with the authoritarian tone, but the man has a point. "No Investigation, No Right to Speak. Unless you have investigated a problem, you will be deprived of the right to speak on it. Isn't that too harsh? Not in the least. When you have not probed into a problem, into the present facts and its past history, and know nothing of its essentials, whatever you say about it will undoubtedly be nonsense.

Talking nonsense solves no problems, as everyone knows, so why is it unjust to deprive you of the right to speak? Quite a few comrades always keep their eyes shut and talk nonsense, and for a Communist that is disgraceful. How can a Communist keep his eyes shut and talk nonsense?

It won't do!
It won't do!
You must investigate!
You must not talk nonsense!"

The Italians

To all this we have to add the mass of documentation produced by the Italian revolutionary Left movement throughout the period of the 1960s-80s. Detailed, committed, militant research and analysis of the everyday conditions of living labour. And here was a departure. This is not the "denunciatory" style of Marx's "far-reaching investigation into facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation". Rather, the analysis is part and parcel of an everyday, capillary process of militant intervention and organisation. Leafletting, meeting, discussion, reworking of analysis, consolidation at new levels. Here we have the work of *Quaderni Rossi*, *Potere Operaio*, *Autonomia*, *Lotta Continua* etc. Buried, for the most part, in Italian-language texts that are too rarely translated.

Photography... Song...

And while we're at it, why stop at the printed word? We could include song. Woody Guthrie, singing the lives and times of the migrant workers of Dust Bowl USA. Alan Lomax, collecting blues and prison work songs. Pete Seeger and Bob Reiser with their *Carry It On: A History in Song and Picture of the Working Men and Women of America*:

"Beware! This is a book of history. With songs and pictures, we try to tell how the working people of this country – women and men; old and young; people of various skin shades, various religions, languages, and national backgrounds – have tried to better their own lives and work towards a world of peace, freedom, jobs, and justice for all." And photography. For example, Sebastiao Salgado's incredible *Workers: An Archaeology of the Industrial Age*, which he defines as a work of "militant photography".

And Jo Spence, in *Putting Myself in the Picture*, where, among other things, she charts the process (a labour process, in the arena of reproduction) of her own death from cancer. Bringing the Inquiry right home into the front room, into the family:

"Photography can only attempt certain things compared with other media, but its radicality lies in the fact that we can produce, possess and circulate snapshots by ourselves, for ourselves and among ourselves. It is there... that the future of photography lies for me. If we truly want to democratise how meanings are produced in images... we could start by telling our stories in different ways..."

We are in Good Company

Elsewhere in the world there are active examples of this kind of militant Inquiry activity.

In Germany, for instance, there is a network of militants in various cities, connected by computer links, and producing a monthly national bulletin, *Wildcat-Zirkular*, which gives detailed reports on struggles in the various localities.

In Italy, in November last year, the group Collegamenti organised a conference in Turin, under the title "*Inchiesta, conricerca, comunicazione diretta ieri e oggi. Per una coscienza sociale e un intervento politico di base*" ("Inquiry, Co-Research and Direct Communication. For Social Awareness and Grassroots Political Intervention"). This conference dealt with the history and present practice of the Inquiry in Italy and Germany.

In France, a group of comrades around the journal *Futur Antérieur* have been holding regular seminars and producing materials on the changing class realities in France and Italy (see my paper for CSE Conference 1994).

In the USA, *Collective Action Notes*, published out of Maryland, documents struggles worldwide, and aims to build an international network of contacts.

And in Britain there are the regular bulletins produced by *Counter Information* and others, drawing together class struggle information from across the board.

All of these provide useful pointers. For us the project would probably be along the lines of what Wildcat is doing in Germany: To set up an intercommunicating network of militants doing more or less detailed work on class composition in their local areas; to meet as and when appropriate; and to circulate the results of our collective work.

I am happy to act as coordinator in the initial stages of any such project. At some point a national meeting should be called. If you would like to be involved in developing the idea, write to me:

Ed Emery, c/o Common Sense, P.O. Box 311,
Southern District Office, Edinburgh EH9 1SF.

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**Teignmouth
20 April 1998**

Yesterday afternoon, when the tide was out, men with sledge hammers came. Sent by the moorings master. On the heavy-sanded foreshore at Polly Steps lay a red clinker sailing boat. The *Teign*. Over the years it has lapsed into decline. The planks were rotten. The men stove in the wood with easy strokes of their hammers. They piled the wood and fired it. The boat burned away. All that is left now is the few rusted bits of iron that were aboard her – a cleat, the mast step, and a length of chain.

From the top edge of the foreshore, an old man watched. She had once been his boat. Before he sold her on, that is. He had taken good care of her. But now she was ready to die.

And he feels his own years slipping away as he watches her burn.

There is another boat on the foreshore too. The moorings master would have fired this one also, except that it has just been sold to a new owner, and this fact stayed his hand.

She's a black-hulled carvel-built wooden boat. And the old man on the shore told me her story.

The boat used to belong to Mr Westlake – "One-Eyed Westlake" as he is known along the river. He's still around these parts, though he no longer has boats. He owned this boat for a good few years, having bought it from Alfie D., who had it as a hire boat. Now, Mr Westlake liked his beer. And on the day in question he was drinking in The Ship. His daughter came in and asked him if she could take the boat, to do some fishing. She was only ten years old, but she knew how to handle the boat, for all its size. She took it out often, so he was happy to let her go. She was going mackerel fishing. Anyway, they changed their minds and decided to try flounder fishing instead, because in those days we had plenty of flounder around these parts. So the girl went to drop anchor. She threw the iron anchor over the side. The rope from the anchor caught around her leg. It pulled her overboard and down into the sea. She was held down by the weight of the anchor. She drowned.

And Mr Westlake has had to live with that, from that day to this. The memory of the girl has haunted him as he moved up and down the river, with his various boats.

He named that black-hulled boat *Rosie*, in memory of his daughter, whose name that was. And hence, I suppose, the black-painted hull.

The boat as a living memory of the little girl who died.

And this is the boat which, all unknowing, I bought from a man last week.

All unknowing, and now I have this history to live with.

Today I have begun sanding her, cleaning her, preparing her, as a prelude to bringing her up the river for repair. For the moment she is safe from the boat-wreckers, safe from burning.

Curious how you forget to write about the important things.

When the old man finished telling me the tale of the *Rosie*, he paused from the business of strapping down the tarpaulins on his boat. He turned his face up-river to where a strong and gusting wind was chopping up the water, and he said:

"You know, it's strange. Whenever I think about life, I only ever seem to remember the bad things."

He paused. He looked at the ground at his feet. There was a weight of sadness in his voice, as if this had been a burden long-borne.

"Yes," he said, "that's really true, that is. I only ever seem to remember the bad things..."

Fig 00: May Day. Red geranium.

**Teignmouth
30 June 1998**

I heard the sound of his digging-fork trailing up the beach behind him. He was signalling his presence by its sound.

He came and sat on my river wall, with a small plastic bucket containing his afternoon's haul, the product of a couple of hours' digging.

Lugworms. Of various colours and sizes. Up to about eight inches in length.

When a man sits on your wall, he wants to talk. So I went out to him. He talked.

First, of the secrets of the lugworm.

Tonight he goes sole fishing. At Chesil Beach. A fair step from here. At the top of the high tide, that's the best time. Sole only feed at night, you see. Unlike plaice, which feed in the day. For sole you should have it as dark as maybe, no lights.

The blobby red worms – the blow worms – quite useful. But by the time you get them home, they've blown out all their water, and they're no size at all.

They squirmed and writhed in the bottom of his bucket. He pulled them out one by one and ran them through his fingers to get the sand off them.

The blacks. They're the ones you want. They'll last for up to a week, if you store them in newspaper. You take them in your hand, give them a nick just here (up by what I presumed was the creature's head) and then squeeze them like this so's their guts and innards squirt out (and so saying, he did so), and you've got a lovely bit of bait...

Better to dig them yourself than pay the price in the shops – £12 per pound they're charging. And there's a lot of blokes doing it commercially. To supplement their unemployment benefit. £50-60 a day, they can make.

But the best ones are the yellow-tails. They've got iodine in their tails, and it squirts out. You get your hands all yellow from digging them. And the fish go crazy for them.

He described his night fishing. Alone. On a deserted beach. With cliffs rising behind you, dark, and the tide rising, and you standing in the water in your waders. And the best is when it comes to four in the morning, and you see the sun rising over the sea. The dawn comes. And when the birds start to sing, then it's time to go home.

"Lovely," he said. "And it beats being stuck in a hole-in-the-ground at Goose Green..."

Goose Green? Where does Goose Green come into anything? That was the Falklands War. War with Argentina. Mrs Thatcher's War. The war, incidentally, which will be relived tonight when England play Argentina in the World Cup...

Our man goes on. He pulls out a pipe, stuffs it with tobacco, lights it, and draws deeply.

"Yes," he said. "You end up there, and you shit yourself. I don't care who you are, when the stuff and the shrapnel starts flying round your head, you shit yourself. I've never pressed my face so hard into the mud as I did in that hole in the ground, when the stuff was coming over..."

"I won't be watching the football tonight. I'll be fishing. To get as far away from the football as possible. 'Cos I get all emotional, you see. Full of Argentine shrapnel, I am. All up my legs, and in my back. That accounts for the limp, d'ye see..."

He did indeed have a limp. And a ginger beard, too, though that is neither here nor there.

"And then, what do they say to you? 'Out you go!' is what they say. You've been wounded, so out you go. No chance of a nice little desk job for an invalided soldier, no way. They want you out. £37.50 of an Army pension, at the age of 45, with a wife and two kids, and that's all they give you..."

I suppose he sounded bitter. But more than that, he sounded resigned. With the Welsh Guards, he was, on account of he came from North Wales.

"I can't pretend it was anything heroic, either. Not the sort of stuff you win medals for. No, I woke up at four in the morning, I went to go for a piss, and I stood on an Argentinian land mine. In an area that was supposed to have been cleared..."

Twelve years of service, he had. "You take the Queen's Shilling, and then one day your times comes, and you have to go out and earn it..."

And Mrs Thatcher's War?

"It was sick. I was completely sickened by it. Kids. No more than fifteen years old, some of them. And they didn't even have proper gear. We had all this Arctic kit, but you were still freezing your bollocks off, but half these kids were wearing summer gear... gym shoes with holes in... they were more afraid of their officers than they were of us... 'Cos if they didn't fight, they'd have been shot."

And there you are, in your hole in the ground, and it's the middle of the night, and out there in front of you, you think you see something moving. So you blast off a few rounds at it – could be a sheep, could be an Argentinian, you don't know. And then in the morning you go and you look, and there's these two blokes lying dead in a hole.

And you think "poor bastards... poor fucking bastards..."

And like I say, they were kids. And there's Mrs Thatcher banging her big bloody drum, like it was some famous victory – but they were just kids.

Sick it was. Sick.

"But then, like I always say, nothing ever changes, does it...?!"

And so saying, off he went, away down the beach, trailing his fork behind him.

Fig 00: Breakfast tray, *comme d'habitude*

**Teignmouth
17 December 1998**

Sole. Lone. One. On the own.

Me. Dark. One candle. Dark. Three logs on fire. Dark. Violin. Lightly held. Dark. Light and. Dark. Wood and. Dark. Mozart, "Se vuol ballare..." Dark. Trippingness across the strings. Dark. Fire, hot against my leg. Dark. Call of a lone curlew, out on the river. Dark.

A small pool of light, warmth and music, which is all mine in its intensity.

My neighbour died.

Up by the road bridge, just as far as the eye can see. It was he who had his sailing boat on the trailer at the Town Quay. A ladder up the side. Boat on dry land, and himself living in it. Small light at his window when you went past. A solitary candle. Small whiffs of smoke from his crooked chimney. Living a quiet life, the man. Passed the occasional time of day with him. Like all of us on the river, sometimes he had reason to talk. And sometimes he did not. And in the quiet way of all things – and humans and wooden boats in particular – he was

returning himself to nature. Becoming one, in his small way, with the river. He launched from the Town Quay, to live on the river. At its shallows, by the Passage House Inn. On the river...

With its tides and its winds and its rains and its muds and its spates and its reeds and its birds and all the comings and goings that it is.

And there they found him, dead on his boat. Nobody knowing who he is, or from where he comes. Only his age they know. He was sixty-seven. And he could have been dead for some weeks, or months, or so they say.

And I suppose there is something small and precious in the manner of his passing.

**Church of St Edward Martyr
Cambridge
29 April 2000**

NOTES ON THE SUPPRESSION OF THEATRE IN ENGLAND

Dates: Elizabeth. Became queen 1558. 1559 established Protestant religion by law. At first not hard on Catholics, but then got harder.

Executed Mary Queen of Scots in 1587

1588 Spanish Armada defeated.

1601 Earl of Essex executed

1603 died, at age 70, after reign of 45 years.

+++++

I have an abiding interest in the history of popular theatre in England – how the popular manifestations of theatricality were controlled and put down by church and state. In the ways that Fo describes, with the fate of his jongleurs, or travelling players. Can we make parallels with the scenarios that Fo describes, for instance, in his *Mistero Buffo*.

Incidentally, before we start, a bit of history as regards Cambridge.

540 years ago the college statutes of Peterhouse specified that fellows of the college were to refrain, specifically, from *ludis theatralibus ludibriorum spectaculis publicis in Ecclesiis, teatro, vel Stadiis*. In other words, they were barred from theatrical spectacles and plays in churches and theatres. Peterhouse being a conservative college, I imagine that these regulations are still in force, so would any fellows of Peterhouse please leave the premises at once.

Not all Cambridge colleges were so disapproving of theatre. In fact the spirit of Carnival seems to have flourished for a while in the sixteenth century. Henry VIII's statutes required – required, if you please – the

annual appointment of a "lord of the players" (*a dominus ludorum*) to oversee the Christmas festivities, with six dialogues to be written each year. Comedies and tragedies were to be acted between Epiphany and Lent. And students were to occupy their four short vacations with literary pursuits or the acting of dialogues, comedies or tragedies. Such a fostering of drama by the state is surely to be encouraged.

The statutes of Queen's College (1546) specify penalties for students who fail to attend comedies and tragedies one of which was the Italian commedia *Gli Ingannati*, performed in 1546. And an inventory of stage props at Queen's College produces costumes for a Devil, and for Death, while a similar inventory for St John's produces costumes for a Fool, a Devil, Death, a Peasant, a Pander, a Knight, a Shipman and a Woman, this latter suggesting that the young men occasionally performed in drag.

In 1549, however, by Royal Injunction (and here we are in the short-lived reign of Edward VI – since he died at the age of 16, perhaps we can suggest that other hands were behind the injunction), the popular Christmas tradition of Lord of the Players was banned. And instead of being lectured on the comedies of Terence, the students were to be schooled in the rules of Rhetoric. Dry stuff.

At the level of the state, Elizabeth ran a tight ship.

In the first year of her reign (December 28 1558) she gave orders banning all preaching, and especially in London. Posters were put up all round the city. Preaching – and listening to preachers – was banned. The only things allowed to be heard in church were "the Epistle and the Gospel for the day, and the Ten Commandments in the Vulgar Tongue, but without any manner of Exposition, or Addition of the Sense or Meaning thereof".

[Tearing down of roods and crosses in 1559 – page 169.]

In that first year (1558) she also issued orders that banned popular festivals and fairs on holy days. All proper citizens were to attend church. The order of service was laid down in precise detail (here everyone should read the preface of the Book of Common Prayer, a spectacularly authoritarian imposition of royal decree over the spirit of freedom and self-expression, where the Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church is spelled out).

Ever conscious that theatre is the forum where the vanities of those in Power are best ridiculed, her majesty specifies that:

It is ordained and enacted that "if any person or persons... shall, in any Enterludes, Plays, Songs, Rhymes, or by other open Words, declare or speak any Thing in the Derogation, Depraving of Despising of the [*Book of Common Prayer*], or [...] any Part thereof [...] they shall forfeit to the Queen [...] one Hundred Marks". For a third offence, all your possessions would be confiscated by the state.

If we then move from the *Book of Common Prayer* to the diary of Royal Proclamations, we find that in April 1559 a ban was imposed on

travelling actors. "A Proclamation was also made against Players, that they should play no more till a certain time, to whomsoever they belonged. And if they did, the Mayor, Sheriffs, Bailiffs, Constables or other Officers were to apprehend them and carry them to Prison."

By 1565 the students of Cambridge had other matters to exercise them. Perhaps infected by an excess of rhetoric, they were developing a taste for the argumentative. To be specific, the students of St John's College decided that they were no longer going to wear gowns and hoods for the celebration of divine service in the college chapel. In direct contravention of Queen Elizabeth's orders for observance of religion. There was a mighty upheaval over this. The Chancellor of the University, advisor to Queen Elizabeth, did not dare spell out the full facts to her, but tried to smooth matters over by threatening the students with being sent down, and with trial for perjury. The spirit of argumentation was abroad in Cambridge. And not a little levity. One student, when upbraided for not wearing his gown, informed the college authorities that "he had pawned his surplice to a Cook with whom he had run into debt for the feeding of his belly". Peterhouse, incidentally, was commended by the Bishop of Ely for its eagerness to distance itself from these insubordinations.

Corsica
2 November 2000

A thirteen-room house, my man. With acres of land. Central heating, so warm. A big log fire in a granite hearth that reaches to the ceiling. A noble space. Rattling around in it are a young dog, that shits and pisses everywhere; a fine tabby cat, that sprays everywhere; his baby boy and child daughter, who rough and tumble like the cat and dog, and who have a bare few words of language, rendered variously in English, Mongolian, French, Russian and Hebrew; and the children's young aunt who doubles as housekeeper; and a young Corsican who is a thief. My man laments having brought these children into the world, to face the black wretchedness of the world. His lament would have been more in order prior to the spawning in which he scattered his seed, but never mind that... It is an odd scene of love and mindless anomic desperation. All set in the frame of an island that is off-season, in the rain and wind.

He explains to me deep inner truths about Judaism, what it means as a creed and as a way of being, what it is to be a Jew, and the superiority of the Jew to the Arab.

He lived his life in the notion that he could make for a betterment of the human condition – though he knew in his heart the impossibility of that. He erected project after project – squats in Holland, commune in Crete, house in Israel, coup d'état in Mongolia, and now the house in Corsica – and time after time, he says, his friends let him down and he has become sickened by the black ugliness of the world. He is happy here, now, with his view across the valley and the mountain. He feels no need to move again. It is here that he will build his last project. Of that last project I shall speak another time – bringing friends,

intellectuals, those who know, to come and sit in his basement studio to be interviewed... We discuss the setting up of websites. We may or may not do that.

My man is tired of life. He half hopes to die in the operation tomorrow. If not, he will kill himself. The plan involves a boat, a gun, a suitcase with a large rock in it. A rope which will attach to himself. And an explanatory note left in the cabin. He likes the way Debord killed himself. He agreed, after all these years of silence, to do a long interview. He demanded in advance a payment of two million. And he made a contract with Liebowich the publisher. Then what did he do? He published the contract. And paid the money round to all his friends. And then killed himself.

My man was waiting for his mother to die before he kills himself. But she is living for a long time, and he is getting impatient.

Myself, I am happy to be a passive receptacle for all his talk. We career madly around the coast roads on this island, up and down mountain sideroads, with Captain Beefheart booming in my ears and this morning's breakfast sitting heavy in my belly. But as I hear it I also let it go. In one ear and more or less out of the other. As I did in times previous, with my mother in the phases of her depression. Answer simply yes, no, yes, and let them talk. My only regret is that my elder children, who have been embraced into the world of Judaism on their mother's side, are not here to hear him talk. They would have gathered deeply thought thoughts from this man, on what it is to be a Jew. They would have learned much that was worth learning. But life is short – I do not have the time to be the medium for all that.

The Arabs, he describes as feudal. In all their thinking and all their doing.

In his self-willed naivety (believing in the improvability of the human condition), he had a Palestinian Arab, an ex-prisoner, as his best friend. He has in the past sung the Arab's praises to me. Recently he discovered that the man, Saleh, had been sexually assaulting my man's daughter, and threatened to kill her with a knife if she ever told anyone. Add to that, when my man's business was taken to court, all the Arabs who had been his friends went to court to testify against him.

We drive past a petrol station in Propiano. It is closed. Shut down. The authorities were telling the owner to conform to certain regulations. He was not inclined to conform. He attached a rocket-propelled grenade to his rifle, and went down and fired it at the front of the prefecture. He is now in prison.

The economy of the island? Some agri-produce – cheeses, wines. Some tourism – walking horse-riding, diving. Apart from that, more or less a disaster. The Citadel of Bastia – high on the rock, a fortified village within the town – is beautiful, with lovely buildings, a dream for artistic communities, music, restaurants... Instead, nothing, just empty houses. Those that are not empty are poor. Wretchedness. A lot of suicides in Corsica. Fuck-all for the kids to do. Except small-time

gangsterism. Hence the Corsican presence in Marseilles criminality. "Pimps," he says, "a nation of pimps." And nobody trusts any other person to let them do anything. And that's why there is no development on the island, no industry. You don't find big hotels here. You don't find globalised American culture. McDonalds? No way, they'd blow it up. A lot of things get blown up here. And a lot of people get shot. The recent French governor – shot – and his killer living up in the mountains somewhere. There's a lot of forest here... a lot of *maquis*... Like at Camponovo, where it sweeps down to the sea. You could hide yourself for a lifetime in all that. And the policing arm of the French state is a weak presence ehre. Banking – doesn't work in this island... imagine sending in the bailiffs to take a man's house if he defaulted on a loan... the Corsicans would kill him...

My man lives in Levi. Funny that, for a Jew. He thinks that there is no connection between the name and Judaism. But the village is a strategic point on routes that cross the island. The villagers held out, in armed resistance against the Nazis. The Germans were never able to take it. For that, the village was awarded a collective medal for heroism.

My man tells a story. Two wise men travelled together. They sat for many years, and wondered what is the meaning of life. In the end they travelled to see a very wise old man. They asked him: "What is life?" And he stroked his beard and thought. And he said: "Life is a fish." So they went away, and they thought, and after five years they came to the conclusion that life is *not* a fish. So they went back to the old man. They said: "You told us that life is a fish, but we have thought about it a lot, and we have decided that life is not a fish. What to you have to say about that?"

To which he replied: "Not a fish? So, *not* a fish."

Here follow notes some note. He says:

Judaism – *mensch* – to be humans – to become human. And when you arrive at being human, then you are a Jew.

The Jews have no temples, no churches. There was one temple, on the Mount, but that was to do with power.

The Jews accept no graven images, no statues made out of perishable materials, of God.

Jews don't talk about God – if people start to talk about God, the real Jew gets up and walks away.

The Jew is the negative. Always looking to the negative.

What makes the Jews what they are is because, in education, right from the start, they are taught scepticism. Taught to doubt. Taught to question.

The history of the Jews is that, when it begins, Moses killed a policeman.

Tacitus tells how the Arabs have always hated the Jews.

Court of Kublai Khan, emperor of China. A very important Muslim came to visit. Do you believe in the *Qu'ran*? Yes. Do you believe in the bit where it says that all non-Muslims should be killed? Yes. Then why don't you do it? Because we are not ready yet. Well, I am ready. And for nine years he went on, killing and killing, and he left pyramids of skulls wherever he went. And that is what I would do with the Arabs.

My man tells his stories. But he will not permit me to tape record them. I could probably force him. But, to be honest, I can't be bothered.

Fig. 00: With Ilan Rammel, revolutionary Jew. Berlin.

Venice
30 November 2000

Today the configuration of the skies is such that a bright Venus lies in the arms of a recumbent crescent moon.

An erotic potential. But also a salutary reminder of the Turk – the old enemy but an enemy with whom the Venetians were happy to trade. This most oriental of cities...

A day well spent in the Biblioteca Marciana. Sweet pleasure. Quiet hum, polished wood, the lapping of water at the back windows.

In the *Journal of Arab Studies*, published by the oriental department of Venice University, a neat set of articles about the founding of a School for Translators (c. 1705) by the Serenissima. Under the auspices of a Greek (and presumably a Jew) from Damascus, by name of Solomon Negri. Founded in order to teach Venetians Turkish.

More to the point, two volumes of the correspondence of the Sicilian Michele Amari.

Several things delicious here. First, Amari was a revolutionary. Second, Amari was an Arabist of the first order, and was self-taught. Third, he maintained a correspondence with Panizzi of the British Museum Library, reprinted here.

Michele Amari: revolution, exile and Arabism

"When the revolution (of 1820) ended, he collected and preserved all the documents of the *Giunta* which had been the governing body; and, almost as presage of his future vocation, he thought of writing a history of it.

"Amari says: 'One day I returned home to find Austrian soldiers at the door and police inspectors searching through the cupboards. They found neither papers nor guns, because my

father had burned the former, and I had, in the preceding days, hidden, on the rooftops, both the guns and the complete collection of the posters of the 1820 movement."

His father, who was one of the leaders of the conspiracy, was arrested. At the age of 17 Amari found himself head of a family, with a mother, two brothers and two sisters to support. They had very little food or money, and what little they had went to feed their father, in prison.

Of the 14 accused of conspiracy, 9 were sentenced to death and executed. Their heads were exhibited in an iron cage hung at the door of St George's in Palermo, where they stayed for many years, with plants and flowers growing out of them. At first Amari did not know whether his father had been one of those executed. Thirty years later he recalled:

"Ricordo bene l'odio al despotismo e ai tedeschi, e il desiderio della vendetta, vinceano di gran lunga il cordoglio..."

["I well remember that my grief was far overtaken by a hatred of despotism and for the Germans, and a desire for revenge."]

In the event, his father was sentenced to death but the sentence was commuted.

In August 1842 he is still in Palermo:

"Io sto facendo castelli, anzi cittadelle in aria. Voglio studiare tanto di greco, che possa leggere gli scritti bizantini e qualche diploma dei primi tempi normanni. Voglio provarmi all'arabo, e se la via non mi è troppo spinosa, camminarci quanto potrò."

["I am building castles – or rather, citadels – in the air. I want to study enough Greek so to be able to read the Byzantine writings and a few documents of the early Norman period. I want to give it a go with Arabic, and if it's not too thorny, to follow that path as far as I can." (Palermo, 10.viii.1842, *Carteggio Inedito*, vol. i, p. 53)]

By January of 1843 he is in Paris. In a couple of letters he makes much of the fact that he's been to firing ranges – presumably training, as a good revolutionary should – practising shooting:

"L'inaspettata mia bravura al tiro della pistola in Francia... Non posso esercitare troppo, perchè 20 colpi costano quasi un franco e mezzo..."

["My unexpected skills in pistol-shooting in France... I can't practise too much, because 20 bullets cost one and a half francs" (Paris, 19.i.1843, vol. i, p. 81)]

Then, by March 1843, he's writing to A. Panizzi, at the British Museum Library in London. Partly the matter is bibliographical. Partly it is personal.

"Questa lettera è affidata a una posta che non la darà certo nelle mani delle spie del re di Napoli, pria che pervenga a quelle del signor Panizzi."

["This letter is entrusted to a post which can be counted on not to deliver it into the hands of the spies of the king of Naples before it reaches the hands of signor Panizzi." (10.iii.1843, vol. I, p. 88)]

By July 1843, though, Amari is low on money. He's fed up with France. He inquires of Panizzi whether it might be possible to find a job in England:

"Se potrei avere una scuola di lettere italiane in qualche Collegio d'Inghilterra... I costumi inglesi mi vanno più a sangue, che questo perpetuo *étalage* e questa vita *regolamentaria* della Francia... Anche mi basterebbe una situazione temporanea che mi desse da vivere con quattro o cinque ore al giorno di travaglio, perch'io saprei impiegare il resto nei miei dilette studi..."

["If I could find a position teaching Italian literature in some English College... The English way of life is more to my taste than this perpetual *étalage* and this over-regulated life in France... I would be happy with a temporary situation that would give me enough money to live on with four or five hours a day, so that I could spend the rest of my time on my beloved studies... (Paris, July 1843, vol. I, p. 111)]

As it happened, Panizzi was not able to wave a magic wand. Amari was to remain in Paris for many more years. Almost 40 years later the fruits of his studies on Arab Sicily were published. Printed at the expense of the Oriental Society of Germany. This was the:

"Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula ossia Raccolta di Testi Arabici che toccano la Geografia, la Storia, la Biografia e la Bibliografia della Sicilia, raccolti e tradotti in Italiano da Michele Amari, pub. Ermanno Loescher, Torino e Roma, 1880 (2 voll.)"

They are lovely volumes. I have them on the desk even as I write.

London
18 December 2000

Ten days gone by. No word of "pyrata ille famosus".

The last I heard was a phone message:

"I am in a virtual reality. I am strong. I know I'm going to win this one."

He left a phone number. The prefix says Germany: 0049 89 215 78914.

This may or may not be the elderly gentleman who saved him in the ghetto, when his mother and grandmother were loaded onto a lorry, and the little boy

was abandoned on his own.

Fig. 00: The blackbird in my larder.

London
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GENERAL INTELLECT VERSUS THE INTIFADA:

Israel's collocation within the global knowledge economy

by Naxos

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December 2001. At one end of London's Oxford Street the Palestine Solidarity Campaign mounted a picket on Selfridge's department store, to persuade the management to stop selling produce from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories.

A similar boycott campaign has been organised [March 2002] by the Ya Basta group in Italy (<http://www.yabasta.it>).

In this article I take these actions as the starting point for a discussion of the radical transformations that have taken place in the Israeli economy during the past decade, and Israel's very specific location within the global knowledge economy.

To summarise:

I would argue that Israeli capitalism of today offers a precious microcosmic possibility for the study of immaterial labour in action. It is also crucial that we understand this economy, because in a real "world war" sense our futures depend on what is happening here.

In recent years the Israeli economy has undergone fundamental changes. An entirely new class composition was created by the ex-Soviet migrations of the 1990s. Markets for traditional Israeli produce became more restricted. The Internet created the conditions for transnational exports of high-value immaterial labour (knowledge) products to replace previous low-value products with high transit costs. And the nature of the new knowledge economies opened new interstitial possibilities for insertion. A new and technically skilled workforce proves capable of creating the flows of innovation that are the precondition for the survival of the large capitalist firms of this and the preceding era (head-hunting of promising new start-ups). Among other things, Israeli companies are particularly well-suited to meet the new demand for biomedical products. They also have a powerhouse of R&D represented by the Israeli Defence Force's high-tech academies. And they have a guaranteed point of entry into the US military-

industrial complex by virtue of lines of communication between "Silicon Valley" and the "Silicon Wadi" of Northern Israel. More than this, Israel also exports models of behaviour – biopower – in the form of knowledges of how to limit, constrain and eventually crush dissident behaviours. This is marketed as "methods for defeating terrorism", but is in fact a set of methods for the creation and freezing of an adversarial "other".

I shall deal with each of these aspects in turn. In passing I would say that this conjunctural shift in the Israeli economy, this radical change in the composition of both class and capital in Israel, have been the necessary precondition for – and partial explanation of- the Israelis' radical break with the Palestinian labour-power which had served previous phases of production (notable in agriculture and construction). Put briefly, the inflow of Soviet ("Russian") Jews made possible the break with Palestinian labour power. And simultaneously the Soviet Jews have turned out to be the electoral bedrock of the Israeli government's "final solution" for the Palestinians.

Thus the political and economic precondition for Israel's radical break with Palestinian labour-power was the shift from traditional forms of agriculture and manufacture into the arena of immaterial labour which took place in the 1990s.

But more than that, I would argue that the Israelis' war with the Palestinians operates as a "factory of immaterial labour export possibilities". This war is, in a real sense, *productive* for the Israeli economy.

Calls for boycotts of Israeli produce are symbolically significant and completely worthwhile. A necessary element of ethical hygiene. They should be supported. But the way in which the campaign is framed is simple-minded to the point of naivety. We are not talking a few packets of pretzels, a crate of Jaffa oranges and a face-pack of cosmetics. Two things need to be said. First, Israel's new immaterial economy and its immaterial-labour products are organically integrated into the very highest levels of the globalised high-tech communications, military and security economy. Second, and perhaps more importantly it appears that the trade-mark Israeli model of suppression of opponents has been exported and projected onto the world stage, to become the dominant paradigm of US foreign policy.

The characteristics of this model are (a) radical negation of the Other (for several decades, in Israeli discourse the Palestinians have always and only been "the terrorists"; (b) Preventive security strikes, extending increasingly to assassination; (c) micro-level capillary monitoring of populations at all levels, and installation of administrative and technological means to that end; (d) intransigent and defiant unilateralism.

We are at a crucial turning point. After the first phase of the Afghan war world opinion seemed to be expecting a *Powellisation of Israeli policy* (towards negotiation). Instead we have seen a *Sharonisation of American policy* [Note 1],

1. The necessity of leaving the *old* economy.

A large part of Israel's "old economy" consisted of agricultural products. Citrus fruits in particular. "Twenty years ago Israel's main industry was oranges."

By the early 1950's, fuelled by mass immigration and large capital investments, the citrus subsector grew rapidly. Hectarage rose from 14,000 to over 40,000 hectares. With the well respected "Jaffa" label Israeli oranges and grapefruit dominated many markets. However, by the late 1970's stiff competition from Spain, Morocco and Cyprus and changing consumer tastes led to a levelling off of demand. The 1980's saw a major decline in international competitiveness and profitability with more than 20% of its planted citrus area uprooted, packing houses mothballed and volume levels falling to 1930's levels. Several factors led to Israel's decline. These included: - (a) rapid cost inflation in the mid 1980's; (b) the strength of the \$US vis à vis European currencies; (c) a rise in international shipping costs in the early 1980's; d) financial crisis within Israel's agricultural settlements. [Note 2] We may also adduce the resulting dependence on Palestinian or foreign migrant labour; the use of agricultural land for housing (eg in Jaffa); susceptibility to international trade boycotts; and the fact that water is a military resource in the Middle East. Exporting oranges is to export water.

I shall not deal here with the question of the diamond trade, except to note that it lies at the heart of some of the warmongering which is destroying a good part of Africa. For example the gangster economy in Sierra Leone, and in Liberia "a major centre for massive diamond-related criminal activity, with connections to guns, drugs and money-laundering throughout Africa and considerably further afield. Diamonds are a key part of Israel's economy. [Note 3]

2. The material precondition for a new economy

The first precondition for the "new economy" is highly skilled technical labour-power. That was provided by the mass arrival of the "Russian" Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union. Coming in two distinct waves, with the second in the 1990s. Upwards of 600,000 arrived, and many of them were highly skilled personnel – doctors, lawyers, musicians, scientists and computer programmers. More than 13,000 doctors arrived in Israel, more than half of them women. The health service could only absorb 20%, leaving the rest excess to requirements and needing to be redeployed elsewhere. The "Russians" constituted 15% of the 4.5 million electorate, had their own political parties, and were notoriously hostile to any negotiation with the Palestinians.

A further 600,000 went to the USA and settled in the Los Angeles area. In 1999 an article in the *Los Angeles Magazine* spoke of an emerging Russian underworld in the LA region: "They come from a dog-eat-dog 'democracy' where the shortest books in the library are the ones on business ethics and criminal justice, they're not only tougher and slyer, but their crooks, according to our cops, are the smoothest thing since iced vodka." [Note 4] In LA there was talk of a Russian mafia, with organised gangs involved in kidnappings, financial fraud and Internet crime. Some of this talk has since been denounced

as racist. However the newly emerging transnational diasporic Israelo-American nexus constituted by "the Russians" clearly invites analysis. A job for another time.

3. *Conjunctural* factors in the promotion of high-tech sectors

The global "knowledge economy" took off in the 1990s. Special factors applied in Israel, assuring the rapid growth of a networked society. During the Gulf War the threat of Iraqi rockets and gas/biological weapons set in place "national emergency planning", whereby communities used Internet and related technologies as a means of civil defence, thereby turning Israel into one of the world's most wired societies.

By law, all Israeli houses built since the Gulf War are required to have a secure room that can function as a shelter against terrorist attack. Israel is also dotted with "neighbourhood response centres" "Located in the basement of a community center, the command room is staffed by citizen volunteers and army conscripts. Radios and ubiquitous cell phone links, as well as homing beacons and microphones built into settlers' cars, allow travellers to be closely tracked, and let authorities know right away when trouble is developing." [Note 5]

The presence of excesses of skilled and unemployed immigrant labour was a pressure in the direction of innovation. By its nature the emerging immaterial sector of the Internet and communications was a huge, lumbering thing, open to experimentation, but most of all subject to the pressures of its own growth. In growing very big very fast it opened interstitial possibilities for small start-up companies. There was a huge need for innovation. Small start-up companies could get big very fast. And intelligent applications were required in order to clear the blockages imposed by the scale of the sector's growth.

"With revenue growth for PC chips slowing, communication chips have become the hottest growth area in the semiconductor market [...] 'The driving force is the increased demand for bandwidth in every aspect of communications, whether it's home users accessing the Internet, providing a corporation, or the emerging demand in the third world. The demand is literally everywhere.'" [Note 6] This sector has a strong presence of start-up companies in Israel. The US-based giant Intel, suffering from the drop in demand for PC chips, moved to buy up communication-chip companies. By 2002 Intel-Israel, with 5,000 employees in Jerusalem, Haifa and Kirya Gat, had exports of \$2 billion, compared with \$810m the previous year, a growth deriving from the opening of a new plant at Kiryat Gat. [Note 7] The Israeli government provided favourable terms and conditions for high-tech start-up companies, creating "technological incubators" in areas such as Yokneam. The Israeli company DSP, which has developed chips used in wireless and mobile phone communications, was recently sold to Intel for \$1.6 billion. [Note 8]

At this point a large part of Israeli intervention in the high-tech sector was *interstitial* – seeking emerging niche possibilities within the overall growth of the sector:

For instance when "Year 2000" (Y2K) emerged internationally as a

problem area, Israeli company Sapiens International [Note 9] built a Year 2000 remediation niche and staffed it almost entirely with immigrant Russian programmers. These were people who had worked for Soviet governments building computer systems for the railway, oil and auto industries. About 70 of Sapiens's 100-strong staff were émigré Soviet Jews. The firm also applied itself to another window of conjunctural opportunity – Europe's changeover to the euro currency. And it built a specialisation in converting computer systems from old languages into new languages (converting assembler code into C code). [Note 10] Remediation was a key word at this stage – upgrading and problem-solving in older computer systems.

This new Israeli high-tech sector operated through the extended networks of the Jewish diaspora, seeking opportunities for fleet-footed action and innovation. In a sense the diaspora offers a metaphor for the new realities of the cybertariat within immaterial labour. Networks and connections meant that the "Silicon Wadi" which emerged in Israel became a fundamental, necessary and integrated part of the "Silicon Valley" operating in the USA.

The technology park at Yokneam, for instance, has a twinning relationship with St Louis. The American-Israel Chamber of Commerce organises trade visits of small Israeli companies to St Louis, where future trade relations are developed with the likes of Boeing. Similar trips were organised by the AICC of Minnesota, which has the four largest medical devices companies in the world (and the Israeli immaterial labour sector is developing a strong presence in biomedical and high-tech healthcare – see below) [Note 11],

4. Israel as a military economy

Israel is a highly militarised society. Decades of war (against the British, against the Arabs, and internal war against the Palestinians) has created a powerhouse of military techniques and technologies. These include hardware (rockets, bombs, guns and ammunitions) and systems (integrated battlefield computer systems), and also the "bio-power" spin-off of the production of mindsets, philosophies and ways of being in the world.

Israel Military Industries was founded in 1933, producing munitions to fight the British. In 1990 it became a government owned corporation. A 4,000 workforce, of whom over half are engineers, scientists and technology experts. It recruits top-level skilled personnel, the product of Israel's prestige military academies. As well as traditional armaments, it also has a telecomms subdivision, IMI Telecom, which "specialises in the field of telecommunications and electronic commerce". [12] Capitalising on its unique experience as a wired society geared to daily disaster mitigation and capillary counterinsurgency, it was well placed to exploit the niche offered by America's vulnerability to the attacks of September 11. On 5 February 2002 it organised an international "National Emergency Management" seminar for foreign local and national governments and private companies. In a real sense this is an Israeli export of imaterial labour. As is the output of another of its "factories" – the IMI Academy for Advanced Security and Anti-Terror Training, a large campus with an interdisciplinary team of instructors who are "all former commanders

from elite Israeli security units". [Note 13]

To this extent we can say that the Israelis' war against the Palestinians is effectively a productive sector, a factory of expertises and techniques which are then marketed worldwide.

Another case in point is *Krav Maga*. This is a self-defence martial arts technique. Created and developed by the Israeli Army, Krav Maga is not only the official combat system of the Israeli Army, but is also taught in Israeli schools as part of the curriculum. It has a characteristically Israeli vocation of democracy: "It is our belief that everybody, no matter what age, weight, gender or body type, has the right to defend themselves and their loved ones." The method was developed to suit everyone – men, women, children, old people – as a way of saving their own lives or minimising harm from attack. It developed originally in the 1940s, in training elite units of the Hagana and Palmach, and embodies "preventive self-defence". It is a stance, a whole way of being in the world, based on objective paranoia and pre-emptive preparedness. Ariel Sharon (formerly of the Hagana) is of this school. I suggest that as well as being exported to the world as a martial arts technique, this stance is being marketed as a geopolitical product. [Note 14]

5. Israel's integration into the US military-industrial complex

The Gulf War provided moments of both tension and cooperation between Israel and the US military-industrial complex. As the price for Israeli restraint and inactivity in the face of incoming Iraqi missiles, the US and Israeli military collaborated in the production of antimissile devices. One of these (designed to combat Katyusha missiles incoming from S.

Lebanon) was the Tactical High-Energy Laser (THEL). However there are also tensions. Ehud Barak was forced by Bill Clinton to renege on a contract with China, already signed, for supply of Phalcon AWACS surveillance systems. [Note 15]

The business opportunities accruing to Israel from the September 11 attacks includes interest in a "revolutionary explosives sniffer device" – again a spin-off from Israel's war with the Palestinians. The MS-Tech company developed the "Mini-Nose for Detection" with 80% of the funding being provided by the US Department of Defense and the Ministry of Defense. Company founder Moses Shalom is also negotiating with Ion Track Instruments, which provides security systems for the perimeters of jails. [Note 16]

What is more interesting than these public manifestations of collaboration is what happens behind the scenes in universities and research institutes.

One of the new paradigms of military thinking is C3I – command, control, communications and intelligence – operating in cyberspace. "The rapid progress in computer power and miniaturization in the 1980s and 1990s made it possible to think of introducing computers and computerized systems into every element of combat, including the complex and often incoherent environment of ground battles... Every

component of US military forces is now being designed and rebuilt around computerized weapons, systems, and C3I". [Note 17]

It is no surprise that the Israeli military plays a role in the development of these US military systems. *Intelligence Online* reported in 2000 that "The US concern Mercury Computersystems, a leading manufacturer of computers able to gather and analyse signal intelligence, has just signed a \$1.2 million contract with Israel's defence ministry" for research collaboration. [Note 18]

Israel is known for its military academies which provide advanced research bases for the cream of the country's high-tech personnel. However this "national" personnel operates within the global context of the diaspora, and is equally at home in the military-industrial complex of the USA. A detailed search through lists of US university personnel would throw up many people who trained initially in Israel and then moved to the US to pursue further studies. One person whose research has both an Israeli and a US dimension is Professor Ouri Wolfson of the University of Chicago at Illinois. His project funding ranges between the US Air Force Office of Scientific Research and the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He has developed a DOMINO software, designed for tracking cars and aircraft, which was developed with the US Army Research Laboratories. Wolfson's early research was in computer science at the Technion University of Haifa. (In a civilian spin-off from this, a company has been set to provide systems for lorry freight companies to track their vehicles).

I suggest that this would be a good time to return to the 1960s US radical methodology of charting interlinking directorships between companies in order to establish the true nature of Israel's involvement in this newly-emerging global military-industrial economy. Some of this information can be gleaned from NASDAQ share flotation documents. [Note 19]

6. A medieval model

The history of intellectual and scientific development of the medieval West cannot be written without acknowledging the key contribution of the Jewish intellectual diaspora in Andalus, Provence and elsewhere. The Ibn Tibbon family, with their translations of Greek scientific texts mediated through the Arabs, and the school of Jewish mathematicians, c. 1250-1350. Their contribution the productive and military techniques and technologies of their time was immense. The Prophanian Quadrant (a remodelling of the complex Arab astrolabe onto a device that was simply a piece of card and a bit of string) is one example, as theorised by Jakob ben Mahir Ibn Tibbon. [Note 20]

There are tantalising parallels with the globalised diasporic intelligentsia of today. One observer has suggested that the medieval Jews, with the daily realities of commercial life in the diaspora, were in a real sense the precursors of globalisation. As I suggest above, the Israeli capitalism of today – the extent of its global reach, the deterritorialised space in which it operates and the merceological nature of the commodities it produces – offers a precious microcosmic possibility for the study of immaterial labour in action within globalisation.

7. Visionics Inc – Biometrics as a growth sector

The unexpected domestic vulnerability of the US revealed by September 11 meant that fast responses were needed at the level of security. Paranoia, xenophobia and the fear of dying provided a massive market opportunity. The Airport Security Improvement Act (2001) was passed, requiring a dramatic upgrading of security systems. Into the picture steps Visionics Inc. This company produces face-recognition and fingerprint recognition equipment, based on the new science of "biometrics".

The chairman of Visionics Inc., Joseph Atick, lived in Israel (on the West Bank) till he was 15. He dropped out of high-school and set about writing a large textbook on physics – in Arabic. He was accepted into the Maths programme of Stanford University in the US. And moved on from there to become professor at the Rockefeller University. The elements of diaspora, movement, Arabic, mathematics, university, radical conceptual innovation leading to new technologies are strikingly reminiscent of the medieval predecessors. [Note 21]

Here science and mathematics are used to generate a police-state technology. The software and technology involved in these products have a strongly Israeli dimension. Biometrics is one of the fields being explored by Israeli software companies, and these in turn have a symbiotic relation with the Israeli military. One of the earliest uses of Visionics face recognition technology was to monitor the faces of commuting Palestinian day labourers at Israeli army checkpoints.

An article describing this Israeli-American productive node as it operates in Minnesota speaks of "high-tech companies joining in a mad dash to develop and market a dazzling new generation of security devices". It is worth noting the extent, the depth of intellectual labour that has gone into this venture. We are just now at the point where our entire picture of the physical composition of the universe is being revised way from particles to superstrings. This is frontier science. Atick's work on biometrics and facial recognition derives precisely from his earlier work as a physicist at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton, where he researched superstrings and the related theories of supersymmetry. [Note 22]

8. Loosening up the lumbering monster

I referred above to the success of Israeli companies in the "increased growth in the demand for bandwidth in every aspect of communications". Characteristically, the boom new-technology economy has internal problems created by the very speed of its growth. A large, lumbering monster creates for itself blockages and restrictions which need to be overcome. This has proved a characteristic area of intervention by small Israeli start-up companies monitoring and removing problems of blockages of delivery, bottlenecks, restrictions of bandwidth etc. Speeding up the flow of information-as-capital. The following is a small list of such ventures:

Foxcom Wireless. Makes an RFiber optic-fibre product, which enables wireless technologies to operate in hard-to-reach urban and shadow

areas such as railway stations, tunnels etc.

Chiaro Networks: Uses the scalability of optic fibre to remove capacity bottlenecks from intersections of optical carrier backbones. Unique optical switching technology. These expand the availability of bandwidth.

Xact Technologies: of Ramat Gan and Santa Clara: "A Santa Clara start-up" which monitors Internet customers' usage of the network on the basis of how much bandwidth they use. Like estimating a gas bill. The crucial aspect of Xact software is that it enables Internet usage to be *monetised*.

Mavix: Produces a multimedia streaming system for monitoring and security. It routes all security inputs into one control unit. Can be used for surveillance of football stadiums, metros, ferries, prisons etc.

Mercado Software: A product entitled Intuifind which adds more refined searchability to e-commerce search engines. Integrated search and browse facilities.

Sapiens International: Specialises in programmes that gather discrete packets of information and shuttle them around at speed. For instance, remediation of insurance quotation systems, where installation of new systems would be hugely expensive. Operates via internetted cyberspace conferencing for its global marketing. [23]

9. Biomedical production

As we know, the concept of immaterial labour extends far into the fields of the *caring* and the *corporal*, and here too Israeli companies have made major interventions. This development is driven in part by commercial spin-out interests of teaching-hospitals in Israel, and in part by the excesses of medical skilled labour-power in-migrating from the Soviet Union in the 1990s. [Note 24]

"The evolution of new medical device companies in Israel continues its unabated growth, spurred by the influx of highly trained immigrants in the physical, biological and engineering sciences, and expanding sources of capital from venture firms in Israel and the US, as well as from corporate strategic partners." [Note 25]

This growth is so marked that the multinational pharmaceutical giant Johnson and Johnson maintains a permanent office in Israel to search for start-up companies in which to invest. The following is a small list of such ventures. As is the case with the companies cited above, most of these companies have one foot in Israel and the other in the USA, clearly catering to the massively emerging US market for health products.

Applied Spectral Imaging: Techniques for treating retinal eye diseases that otherwise might lead to blindness.

Biocontrol: An electronic device to control urinary incontinence.

Vision Cure: Implantable telescopic lenses for treatment of macular

degeneration.

Or Sense: A non-invasive technology to measure cholesterol levels and blood viscosity.

Novamed: Clinical diagnostic tests.

Transdermics: Through-the-skin non-invasive drug delivery technology.

Advanced Monitoring Systems: Home-use salivai testing techniques, to monitor safe levels of drug administration.

It is important to stress that in no sense are these "caring and sharing" technologies separate from the military industrial complex outlined above. For instance:

Given Imaging has delivered a pill-sized capsule for transmitting pictures as it passes through the patient's intestine. This is a spin-off from a CMOS device developed by NASA.

Galil Medical: Cryosurgery techniques which enable minimally invasive treatment of prostate cancers. This is an outgrowth of the Rafael Development Corporation, the largest R&D organisation in Israel, which seeks commercial applications of defence technologies.

We should also be in no doubt about the *radicality* of some of these interventions. They will affect our lives fundamentally. For instance, I have spoken of Israeli start-up projects involving the monitoring and resolution of problems of blockage and delivery. In this vein, *Labour Control Systems* of Nesher, Israel, has produced a vaginal electronic monitor which will reduce the need for frequent examination of dilation during child-birth. Such a process is likely to contribute immensely to the ongoing factoryisation of the birth process.

10. Back to the start

In a moment it will be time to return to Oxford Street, December 2001.

But first we should look at the case of one of the most famous Israeli new-technology start-ups. *Mirabilis*, founded by "legendary high-tech entrepreneur Yassi Vardi" produced an internet messaging system which identifies which of your Internet correspondents are on-line at any given time, and enables you to exchange messages with them. [Note 26] I imagine that this is a direct spin-off of Israeli electronic battlefield technology. The product was known as ICQ ("I-see-you"). In a very short time *Mirabilis* built a community of users of over 50 million, covering most of Western Europe. In 1998 *Mirabilis* was bought by AOL.com, and the system became an industry standard in messaging technology. It is now part of the operating system of AOL, the world's biggest Internet, e-mail and chatroom operator.

The most notable political characteristic of this Israeli export-product is that it disappears, it becomes invisible, it becomes grafted into the very flesh and bone of the operating systems of today's capitalism. In

short, it is more or less immune from being boycotted. And that characteristic is shared by many of the products described above.

Which brings us to *Mercado Software*, a company with Israeli roots and a Palo Alto headquarters. Mercado produces the Intuifind software system. This product is the outcome of advanced studies in psycholinguistics combined with new search-engine technologies. It provides an "intuitive and easy to navigate on-line shopping experience". Put briefly, on-line shopping is developing very fast. But the systems are stupid, monolithic and lumbering. A shop's catalogue may have many "lamps" in store, but if you search online for a "light" you will get no result. Therefore, teaming up with technology from Backweb.com (Ramat Gan and San Jose), Intuifind has built a system "utilising more than 50 powerful linguistic knowledge banks, including stemming, spelling and thesauri, which help customers define requests in their own words." A truly immaterial labour product. This system has been installed at Macy's, Caterpillar, Sears, Blockbuster Video etc.

And now the irony. At the same moment that the Palestine Solidarity Campaign was picketing Selfridges Store against the sale of Israeli goods, at the other end of Oxford Street the John Lewis store (much frequented by Britain's liberal middle classes) was installing a new Israeli export product – Mercado's "Intuifind" search-and-shop technology – as a central part of its operating system. Grafted, invisible, immune to boycott.

11. A note on Jaffa Oranges

To end, I would merely add that many people in the Internet community have had the experience of using the opportunities for anonymity which the Internet affords. Israeli capitalist companies are no exception. They begin their life as small locally-based Israeli start-ups. In no time at all they set up their websites. They provide themselves with a nominal HQ in the leafier high-tech glades of the USA and UK. They market their produce on-line, often by offering on-line cyberspace teleconferencing facilities which transcend national border problems. Then, very quickly, these companies merge, blend, are bought up by bigger non-Israeli companies. There is a tendency to conceal their "Israeli-ness", which anyway becomes effaced in the merger process. Thus they become a neutral capitalist product, free of the taint of association with the country in which they were produced.

Incidentally, those among us who are boycotters of Jaffa oranges might note the following. On 27 December 2001 the *Jerusalem Post* reported that the Chinese government is negotiating "to market its own fruit under the Jaffa brand name and purchase the rights" from the Israeli Citrus Marketing Board. Jaffa is now playing the logo-game. So it could turn out to be a Chinese orange that you are boycotting... [Note 27]

NOTES [CHECK NUMBERING]

1. Interview with Alain Joxe, *Multitudes* No. 7, Paris, December 2001.
2. S. Carter, *Global Agricultural Marketing Management*, FAO, Rome, 1997. Available online at <http://www.fao.org>.

3. "Criminal diamond trade fuels African war, UN is told", by Victoria Brittain, *Guardian* online edition, 13 January 2000. I cannot say whether Israeli companies are involved in the dirty side of this trade, but in 2000 the American Drug Enforcement Administration sent a team to train Israeli police in how to detect and seize money from drug dealing. Article in *Intelligence Online*, at www.indigo-net.com/intel.html. See also Note 19 below.
 4. Thomas Cornay, in *Los Angeles Magazine* Internet edition, March 1999.
 5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_defense_in_Israel
 6. Eli Lehrer, in *The American Enterprise Online*, December 2001, p. 2.
 7. "Specialty chips find their niche", by Wylie Wong, <http://news.cnet.com>, 5 April 1999.
 8. Article at <http://www.start-ups.co.il>, 12 February 2002. 8. *ibid*.
 8. The name itself suggests a vocation for globalised immaterial labour. <http://www.sapiens.com>
 9. Article at <http://www.cnn.com>, 19 September 1999.
 10. <http://www.aiccmn.org>
 11. <http://www.imi-israel.com> 13. *ibid*.
 12. <http://www.krav-maga.com>. We recall a similar export of "stance" in Britain's global marketing of Margaret Thatcher's privatisation agenda in the 1990s.
 13. Articles in *Pravda On-line*, 20 December 2001 and *Arabicnews.com*, 14 May 1999. 16. Dror Marom. "US Cos interested in Israel's MS-Tech explosives sniffer", <http://new.globes.co.il>, 18 December 2001.
 14. Rochlin, *Trapped in the Net*, Princeton University Press, 1997. Online summary.
 15. Article at *Intelligence Online*, at www.indigo-net.com/intel.html.
 16. Where are they now? For instance, Tamir Segal, whose "Truster" technology featured in the *Guardian On-line* on 21 January 1998: "How much would you pay to know when people are lying to you? How about \$149? Because that's what Israeli based Makh-Shevet is asking for a software package that turns your multimedia PC into a lie detector." The technology was "originally envisaged for the security forces at entry points into Israel (a military version is undergoing tests)", <http://www.truster.com>.
- And "Danny Yatom, who was forced to resign as head of Mossad last April following an abortive attempt by Israeli agents to assassinate Khaled Meshal, the political boss of Hamas, in Amman in September 1997, has switched to making a living in business." Yatom, "infamous for his creative torturing techniques and well known to many Palestinians who were tortured under his supervision" (Ghazi Saudi, article at <http://star.arabia.com>, November 2000) is cited in an exemplary article by Christian Dietrich, in connection with the firm Strategic Consulting Group, and its involvement in Kazakhstan, Algeria and "a large security project in Angola". Angola, significantly, is diamond country. Christian Dietrich, "Blood Diamonds: Effective African-based monopolies", in *African Security Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3,

2001, available at
<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/10No3/Dietrich.html>.

17. <http://www.astrolabes.QUADRANT.HTM> 21. *International Herald Tribune*, 23 January 2002. 22. Superstrings – <http://www.sciam.com>

18. Other Israeli high-tech companies which can be search-researched via the Internet include Opticom (integration of biometric technology), Shonut- Probabilistic Solutions Ltd (voice recognition, fingerprint analysis), TeKey (biometrics and human recognition simulation), Tadiran Co. ("over 40 years experience in military communications technology"), Proneuron, Net2Wireless, Batm Advanced Communications, Luz industries, Mercury Interactive, Team Computers, and SAFe-Maii..

The strength of the Israelo-American diasporic nexus in military-security technologies can be gauged from the following. On 27 November 2001, BIO-key International (formerly the Israeli company SAC Technologies, optical fingerprint scanning, founded 1993) announced from its US headquarters in Minnesota that it was taking on former prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu as its Senior Strategy Advisor. "The current addition [sic] of his book "Fighting Terrorism" is a terrific example of the insights he possesses to combat terrorism and secure freedom for us all". Article at http://biz.yahoo.com/bw011127/272262_I.html.

19. See Note 10 above.

20. Jeffrey Berg, in *The BBI (Biomedical Business International) Newsletter*, September 2000.

21. Article at <http://www.malibutel.com/mobilemediaworld/features/israeli.html>. The AOL buy-out of Mirabilis was "an event which spurred Israel's high-tech frenzy".

22. *Jerusalem Post* Internet edition, 27 December 2001.

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En route / Paris
11 March 2003

Circularity. Has been on my mind. One key, among many, to the conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis. The Israelis with a certain linear idea of progress, now Westernised. Seen as they roll out their acres of concrete across the soft brown hills of Palestine. The Arabs with a rhythmic, repetitional social way of being, doing the same thing again and again. Forward drive, with its associated hysteria, versus circularity.

Circularity was exemplified, unexpectedly, in Monk. At the very start of the film he gets up from the piano and begins to walk round it. And he begins to circle. He turns round on the spot. Rhythmically. Turning on himself, a slow-motion dervish. Later in the film – he does it many times – he even comments on it. “Sometimes I do it in the street.” He sees it, I think, as a sign of his sickness.

It puts me in mind of my mother. At a point, with her legs cut off and her oppression come heavy upon her, I found her in the downstairs front room where her bed lay alongside the street window with its pretty little objects on the sill. She was on the floor next to her bed, next to the country-style plain front door where she spent her time in the summer watching the street pass. On her stumps, on her knees. And she was going round. Turning round on the spot. Round and round on herself. The motion of a person trapped in herself. With no way of exit. Trapped in her truncated physicality. trapped in the impossibilities of her wonderfully expansive, loving and womanly Greekness. Blocked inside the impossibility of being. And so circularity. Round and round.

Circularity, too, at Chatelet. Last Sunday’s Women’s Day march was a linear affair. It assembled at Place de la Republique and made its way along Boulevard Voltaire to Nation, the whole route of the march having previously been postered by Act-Up as part of their AIDS/HIV campaign. *Very* linear. At Chatelet, on the other hand, there is a demonstration by black immigrants calling for residence permits and civil rights. These are the “sans-papiers”. They are about 50 in total. All men, all black, some Muslim. With a couple of elderly white women supporters. The form of their protest is circular. For at least an hour they walk in slow procession around the monumental column at the centre of the roundabout. With a long white sheet carried chest-high in front of them, calling for their rights. Several of them have loud-hailers. They call out their slogan in one long, rhythmic chant, which has no end, no spaces in between. One caller picks up from the other, to create a continuous choral chain of chant. The effect is extraordinary. It is a circular repetitive chant. It is the effect of circular breathing. It takes on the quality of trance. The circularity recalls the circulation of the Ka’aba at Mecca. Also the circular turning-on-the-spot of persons radically trapped in an impossibility of being...

Athens
24 April 2003

Coming up, last evening, past the junction of Aioulou and Mitropoleos, I passed a little shop on the corner which sells and hires Greek national costume. In its dusty windows were ancient dusty country costumes. Ancient necklaces of dusty coins. Crudely made and equally dusty shepherds’ crooks and walking sticks. I ask myself how can anything be so old and dusty and traditional and survive in this wicked world.

The answer came in short order. Abruptly. Harshly.

Today I came past the shop and the windows were empty. Men were carrying away the costumes in boxes. The debris of what was once a

shop – and which I remember from all the years I have been coming to this street – was scattered across the floor. At a small desk in the midst of this nothingness sat the owner. Mr Papas. An old man. Old like the years weighed on him like lead. Old like ninety-something. Rheumy old eyes, gazing balefully into the middle distance, tired fleshy pendants of his jowls.

The shop has closed, after all these years.

I ask the owner – who has fostered Greek traditional dress in this corner, after all – what was the reason for the closure.

He sighed, deeply, but with no obvious passion – indeed, as if the passion were spent – “*Ta geramata.*” Just that. “Old age.” He has nobody who can take on the shop for him, no sons, no daughters who could succeed him, and nothing left for him now but to die.

A rusty hand-painted iron sign leans against the door. I ask if I might take it as a memento. “Take it,” he says. “Take it. Maybe you can put it into some museum.”

It reads:

ΕΝΟΙΚΙΑΖΟΝΤΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΠΩΛΟΥΝΤΑΙ ΕΘΝΙΚΑΙ ΕΝΔΥΜΑΣΙΑΙ.

Fig 00: “National Costumes to Buy or Hire”, Athens, 2003

**Cambridge
14 June 2003**

Some months ago the Fellows of King’s voted against giving Edward Said an honorary fellowship. Nasty, nasty. Not least because it is said that he is dying of cancer. And some months ago professors at, variously, St John’s and Caius, contrived to get our solidarity with Palestine meeting banned. So today it was most pleasant to join with others, to take to the water, and to rattle their academical windows with loud and militant drumming. “Drumming for Palestine”.

We gathered at Scudamores. We went aboard our sundry punts – hired, begged and borrowed from various places. The sky was blue and the sun was bright and the day was the most perfect it could possibly be. We brought a dozen Palestinian flags and a score of rainbow peace flags, which were mounted on bamboo poles and shipped aboard. And thereupon we proceeded, in raggedly line-astern, down the Cam, along the Backs to Magdalene Bridge. A floating demonstration. Slogans. Posters too. Some elegant punting. And the *doum-tekka-tekka* of our drums. It was a wonderful, wonderful sight, the flags flying in the light breeze, and people gathering on stone bridges and leaning out of old windows to see us pass.

All in all, it was just as it should have been. And my little ones, sprawled on the grass, idling in the sun for the picnic that came later.

She reading a life of Marx. He reading J.S. Mill "*On Liberty*". Myself not reading at all, just enjoying the pleasure of the moment.

Hydra
15 October 2003

"In Memoriam Elias Petropoulos: Les Juifs de Salonique..." *

If you'll permit me, I shall start with a song:

"Panathemá, -themá to ermano
Pou skotos' ólo, olo to tzidhio
Kai to 'steile na paei sti Krakovia
Na pethá-, na petháni nistikó"

Elias Petropoulos, the father of rebetiko studies in Greece, died in Paris last month. He was cremated on 13 September 2003.

This paper is not a homage to Petropoulos. On your way to this conference hall you may have passed an elderly gentleman sitting at one of the harbourside cafes. This gentleman, Yannis Karamitsos, has written (among other things) two *Lexicons of the Language of Hydra*, which can be bought on the island. [1] One of them has a preface by Elias Petropoulos, who was his friend. I asked Mr Karamitsos whether he would be prepared to join us to say a few words about Petropoulos. He declined. He rightly says that Petropoulos would have been against such a thing. It would have been against his wishes. Therefore what follows is not a homage, it is an anti-homage. It is a practical pointer to a few areas for future research. [2]

First, though, practical details. The funeral, just past and gone. If I may quote from a letter I received after his funeral:

Sacrée journée en l'honneur d'un sacré bonhomme ! Sacrée journée à son image.

"En ce qui concerne Petropoulos, je dois vous dire que j'étais parmi les privilégiés à avoir assisté à sa crémation au Père Lachaise, samedi 13. Ce fut un moment intense où ses amis pendant 2 heures durant lui ont rendu hommage avec des textes, des poèmes et des rebetika, joués par Nicolas Syros (parmi ceux que préférait Petropoulos). Son chapeau et son komboloï avait été placés sur une table ainsi que la quasi totalité de ses œuvres que nous avons pu compulsier (80 livres apportés de Grèce par son éditeur Néfèli). Le soir après que l'on ait dispersé ses cendres selon ses vœux et ils étaient très particuliers (reflets parfait du personnage!), nous sommes allés dans une taverne grecque près de chez lui rue de la "Mouffe". Et là Nicolas Syros, jusqu'à 3 heures du matin à encore animé le repas funèbre de chants rébétiques, accompagnés de nos voix." [3]

He was, as you may know, buried in the sewers of Paris.

Even after his death his anarchic presence continues to leave its stamp on my house. Until his output was taken in hand by his current editor (Nefeli) and standardised, virtually every book he produced had its own shape and size. This means that they are piled higgledy-piggledy on my bookshelves. Thoroughly resistant to any attempt at neat and orderly shelving. Typical of the man.

When he died there was a small flurry of correspondence and articles in Greece. Trying to assess Petropoulos and his contribution to Greek culture in general, and to Rebetiko studies in particular. Some of them less than complimentary. For instance, on the Rebetiko Forum, in a discussion initiated by Costas Ferris (who, incidentally, announces that he has an unedited 5-hour interview with Petropoulos: a project for future work). [4]

At the most minimum level (and in among some markedly erroneous statements) Ferris suggests that Petropoulos was important in that he “pushed” the other people who were interested in rebetiko (Schorelis, Kounadhis, Damianakos etc) to systematise their thoughts, organise their archives, put pen to paper, and reach out to the outside world. At a more general level, it suffices to look at Petropoulos’s output of books, which are an extraordinary treasure trove of facts and information about Greek culture. Upwards of eighty books, including translations, many of which were virtually self-published. [This fact is important. He was a man who treasured his financial independence – earning his living by the articles that he wrote, and not from sources of external financing which more often than not turn out to be dubious.] I attach a notional bibliography of his works below.

What concerns me in this article is a very distinctive contribution made by Petropoulos: to the understanding of the Jewish community in Greece, with its largest manifestation in the northern city of Thessaloniki – and its annihilation by the Nazis with the deportations of 1943.

PETROPOULOS: THE JEWS OF SALONICA

Petropoulos wrote a number of texts about the Jews of Greece. Including various articles on Jewish issues that were published in Greece, Belgium and France. One notable contribution was a volume entitled *Les Juifs de Salonique/In Memoriam*, with two illustrations by Topor. Published in Paris in 1983. This was a limited edition volume about the history of Salonikan Jewry and its annihilation in the Holocaust. From what I know, he paid for the printing out of his own pocket. The 200 were distributed to libraries around the world, for free. This was his attempt to set the historical record straight. It was an important moment – in the run-up to the big celebrations of the anniversary of the founding of Thessaloniki 2,300 years previously

He also produced a book entitled *A Macabre Song: Testimony of the Goy Elias Petropoulos Concerning Anti-Jewish Sentiment in Greece*, published in Paris in 1985.

Again, this book was published at the author’s own expense. Printed on the finest of paper – a handsome volume. He tells, briefly, the story

of the Jews of Thessaloniki. As he points out, "Salonica was for nearly five centuries a Jewish city". He points also to the onset of racist measures in that city, which led nearly 50,000 Greek Jews to leave Salonica, many of them settling in Haifa, where they worked in organising the new port, under the British. Those who remained faced the Holocaust and deportations of 1943 in which the Jews of Greece were effectively wiped out.

The Greeks, he says, did not rejoice in the tragic suffering of the Jews. "But it is also true that most Greeks, on the slightest pretext, bantered Jews sarcastically." Carefully chosen words, these. And this, he maintains, was clearly asserted in a little song in fashion back then. "We used to sing it aloud, we Greeks, especially when teasing Jewish kids. It was a simple march which in 1942 spread like wildfire through Salonika."

"Panathemá, -themá to ermano
Pou skotos' ólo, olo to tzidhio
Kai to 'steile na paei sti Krakovia
Na pethá-, na petháni nistikó"

A curse, a curse upon the Germans
Who killed all the Jews
And sent them to die in Krakow,
To die, to die of hunger.

He himself remembered singing it himself, imitating the Sefardi Jewish Greek accent. He remembered how he sang it to his friend Samiko Howell. Samiko was one of those who went to his death.

Petropoulos published this book as his distinctive and provocative contribution to the "fanfare" surrounding the 2,300th anniversary of the founding of Salonica. "The song," he wrote, "has been forgotten by the Thessalonians. I will force them to recall it."

And he adds: "As for me, I am writing this text with profound melancholy and remorse..."

In a sense the value of the text is more poetic than historiographic. For instance, Michael Molho (of the family that runs the Molho Bookshop in Thessaloniki) had already documented the history of the Jews in Salonica. Writing from Buenos Aires in 1956 (and with a surprisingly light pen, considering the annihilation of his community a bare 13 years previously), [5] he had written eloquently of Thessaloniki as a Jewish city – and this work was subsequently taken up by Rena Molho in a doctoral thesis which has since been published as a book. [6]

REBETIKO

Now the question is, what does this have to do with rebetiko?

Habitually rebetology suggests that there is no "politics" in rebetiko. With the additional implication that political criteria can somehow be abandoned in our analysis of it. This is manifestly not the case. Panayiotis Kounadhis, for instance, in three recently published

volumes, [7] adopts a clearly class-based analysis in his approach to the music. And among rebetiko players and singers there are clearly those (both historically and in the present day) who are of the Left and those who are of the Right.

As a measure of a class-based approach I am concerned to take another look at the relation of rebetiko to Thessaloniki, and in particular to the presence of the Jews in that city. This is a small point, but one which might open a way towards a future understanding of rebetiko in terms of class composition analysis.

The history of the Jewish working class and its organisations has been documented in recent studies. [8] "A unique cluster of factors came together in Salonica in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that pushed up wages and created labour militancy and a degree of labour organisation unparalleled in the Ottoman Empire. Salonica workers, without question, formed the most politically aware working-class group in the empire." [9] This political awareness was associated with trade unions, socialist newspapers and socialist organisations in the city, including *La Fédération socialiste ouvrière de Salonique*, founded in 1909 [Note the French name, which is symbolic of the cosmopolitan identity of the city at that time]. [10] Salonica, in short, was a beacon of socialist working-class consciousness, organisation and culture. Within a very short period – 30 years from the incorporation of Salonica into the Greek state and the 1943 mass deportation of the Jews – that political class composition was utterly destroyed.

I would say that the crucial thing here is the interface between the Jewish population of Thessaloniki and the incoming migrants from Asia Minor, who arrived in the port in large numbers after the population transfers of 1923. The interface must be simple and concrete. Labour – and especially organised labour – in Thessaloniki was predominantly Jewish. The arrival of the migrants made a huge reserve of cheap labour power available to the employers. The arrival of the migrants undercut the position of Jewish labour. This coincided with increasing anti-Semitism among the Greek and Orthodox population. Measures were taken against Jews in Salonica, which led to the emigration of 50,000 (fully one half of the Jewish population as it had stood in 1912). [11]

Now we know that in Salonica there was a thriving cultural life. We know that there were many manifestations of music – and this included a Jewish musical tradition that drew on Balkan influences but also extended back to its Sefardic roots in the Arabo-Judaic musical life of pre-deportation al-Andalus, and of course had music-making associated with its religious life. The question is, what was the relationship between, let us call it, the "incoming" music that arrived with the Greeks of Anatolia, and the existing local musical traditions of the Jews in Thessaloniki. This is a simplistic equation, offered simply to get a discussion started. I have no answers, except to say that the topic deserves to be examined. [12]

SHADOW THEATRE

Returning to "bantering the Jews":

Three years ago, together with director Richard Fredman of Cambridge, I wrote a play entitled *Les Juifs de Salonique...*. It takes its inspiration from the racist portrayal of the Jew in the Greek Karaghiozis shadow theatre tradition, and particularly a scene in *Liga ap' Ola* by Mollas. It looks at the history of Thessaloniki as a Jewish city, from the times of St Paul up to the deportations of 1943. [13]

In 2004 I intend to take that work further, in a joint project provisionally entitled "*The Portrayal of Jews in the Greek Karaghiozis Shadow Theatre*" with the Athens-based Karaghiozis player Jason Melissinos, which we shall tour in Britain. [14]

During the course of this work I have discovered a vital text which sheds light on the origins of the Karaghiozis shadow theatre. I offer that here as a small present to you the reader. In the plays of Muhammad Ibn Daniyal – which are remarkably fully formed dramatic plays, cognate with the Arabic *maqamat* form – there is a character who is precisely the prototype of the Greek Karaghiozis. [15] His name is Tayf al-Khayal, and he is a hump-backed folk moraliser and joker (in fact a whole section of the play takes the form of a eulogy to his hump back... likening it to a lute, a camel, a pomegranate etc). The derivation of Karaghiozis from the Ottomans is well known, but the connection back to Cairo is not.

[It is also worth noting that the editor of these plays, Paul Kahle, produced a fine edition of another Egyptian shadow play *The Lighthouse of Alexandria* which includes, among other things, a comic and historically interesting dialogue between Arab soldiers and a Greek prisoner of war, based on bawdy (and very Karaghiozis-style) misunderstanding of language. [16]]

For the purposes of our present article I would point to a footnote where Kahle mentions that in medieval times there is known to have been an Arabic shadow play entitled "The Jew", which was presumably a play on racial stereotypes. This is particularly interesting for us, because in the Greek Karaghiozis theatre there are scenes involving Jews (Sefardis), which have a clearly anti-Semitic content. To such an extent that the Jew is the only figure that has a separately jointed head, so that he can be made to grovel and bow in a comic manner, as we saw in Melissinos's eloquent Hydra performance in 2002. Hence it appears that the shadow theatre depiction of "The Jew" may go back many hundreds of years.

What is also intriguing is that we also have evidence that in its earliest manifestations in Egypt shadow theatre was performed for Jews. Goitein, in his magisterial work based on the contents of the Cairo Geniza, says:

"It is noteworthy that shadow plays, marionette theaters [...] appear as the first item disapproved by the Jewish authorities in Egypt as early as the beginning of the eleventh century, far earlier than the introduction of this Indian pastime into Islamic countries is generally assumed. It was probably then, as later, of a bawdy nature, bordering on the pornographic, which made it undesirable,

especially in a place of pilgrimage". Specifically, this prohibition related to the environment of the synagogue of Dammuh, south of Fustat, in the time probably of the caliph al-Hakim (996-1021), where shadow plays were banned along with beer brewing, chess playing, clapping hands, instrumental music, dancing, and mixing between men and women. [17]

O EVRAIOS...

So returning now to the world of music...

A couple of weeks ago I came across a copy of Columbia Records catalogue published in 1925, including their entire output of Greek and Turkish songs up to February of that year. [18]

Those were cosmopolitan days. The days of Kyria Koula, and Madame Papagika, when Greek and Turkish songs sat together side by side in the catalogue next to Bulgarian and Albanian tunes. But they were also days when, as Petropoulos puts it, Greeks "on the slightest pretext, bantered Jews sarcastically".

The catalogue includes includes in its "Comic Talking" section a record, number E5244, which is entitled "O Evraios eis to Xenodocheion tou Karaghiozi" . Which translates as "The Jew in Karaghiozis's Hotel".

This is a record that we have to find. I have no idea of its content. I assume that it will feature "sarcastic banter" and racial stereotypes. And, historically speaking, it would be interesting to know whether this title survived in the catalogue with the arrival of Panayiotis Toundas into Columbia management.

NOTES

1. Yannis Karamitsos, *Hydras Lexilogion and Hydras Lexilogion to Deuteron*, pub. Euagis o Hydreatis, Hydra, 1999.
2. Last month I circulated an obituary for Petropoulos, this being the Preface to my translation of his *Rebetologia*. Since EP himself considered this a splendid account, it can fairly be taken as a final and authorised homage to the man and his works.
3. "A hell of a good day in memory of a hell of a good man: As regards Petropoulos, I should tell you that I was one of the privileged people able to attend his cremation at the Père Lachaise cemetery on Saturday 13 September. It was an intense moment, in which his friends rendered homage to him for two hours, with pieces of prose and poetry, and rebetiko song, played by Nicolas Syros (one of Petropoulos's preferred artists). His hat and his komboloi were placed on a table, alongside as many of his books as we managed to bring together (80 books were brought by his Greek editors, Nefeli). The evening after, once we had scattered his ashes (according to his wishes, which were very precise, a perfect reflection the man himself), we went to a Greek taverna near where he lived on Rue Mouffetard. And there Nicolas Syros played at the funeral supper, where we sang rebetiko song until three in the morning..." [EC, personal communication]
4. <http://users.forthnet.gr/bb/ath/physiart/forum/>

5. Michael Molho, "Le Judaïsme grec en général et la communauté juive de Salonique en particulier entre les deux guerres mondiales", in *Homenaje a Millás-Vallicrosa*, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Barcelona, 1956, Vol. II, pp. 73-107 [Library: Hebrew University of Jerusalem]

6. Rena Molho, *Oi Evraioi tis Thessalonikis 1856-1919: Mia idiaiteri koinotita*, pub. Themelio, 2001. I have translated her Preface to the book at: http://www.geocities.com/lesjuifs_salonique/molho.html

7. Panayiotis Kounadhis, *Eis anamnisin stigmon elkystikon: Keimena gyro apo to rempetiko*, vols. 1 and 2, Katarti, Athens, 2000; and *Geia sou perifani kai athanati ergatia*, GSEE Archeio Istorias Syndikaton, Athens, 2000.

8. Donald Quataert and Erik Jan Zürcher, *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: 1839-1950*, I.B. Tauris, London 1995..

9. *ibid.* p. 71.

10. *ibid.*, p. 74.

11. Petropoulos, *A Macabre Song*, p. 12. Many other factors worked to the detriment of the Jewish working class. For instance, the employers' need for continuous all-week production in some factories clashed with the Jewish workers' observance of the Sabbath and reportedly led to a preference for non-Jewish labour.

12. It is Petropoulos who makes the observation (obvious, when you consider her family name) that Roza Eskenazi was a Jew. Curiously, in the Israeli adaptation of Costas Ferris's *Rebetiko Mysterio* which played in Tel Aviv in 2002, Roza's Jewishness was not alluded to.

13. Some of the materials from this project, including the script of our Edinburgh Festival edition of the text, are contained at www.geocities.com/lesjuifs_salonique.

145 This will tour in October 2004, in connection with The Muwashshahaat Conference: An international weekend conference on Arabic and Hebrew strophic poetry and its Romance parallels to be held at SOAS, London, on 8-10 October 2004. Details and registration at www.geocities.com/muwashshah.

14. Paul Kahle, *Three Shadow Plays by Muhammad Ibn Daniyal*, with a critical apparatus by Derek Hopwood, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, Cambridge, 1992. [Oriental Faculty Library, Cambridge]

16. Paul Kahle, *Der Leuchtturm von Alexandria: ein arabisches Schattenspiel aus dem mittelalterlichen Ägypten*, W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1930 [University Library, Cambridge]

17. S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988, Vol. 5, pp. 43-4. [Hebrew University of Jerusalem Library; University Library, Cambridge]

18. *Katalogo Ellinikon kai Tourkikon Diplon Diskon Fonografou, Including Records up to February, 1925*, Columbia Phonograph Company, New York 1925, p. 12. Issued as a reprint with the journal *Laiko Tragoudhi*, Athens, No. 4, July 2003.

* Paper presented at the Hydra Rebetiko Conference, 15 October 2003

The Oyster March – Page 1 of 1

The Oyster March



WAVE-PARTICLE DUALITY IN 6/8 TIME

Tune type: 48-bar jig [*A Night on the Gin*]

Difficulty Medium

Author: Ed Emery

Sets of 8 couples longways, all facing the band, separated by a small gap at the half-way point (thus two 4-couple sets). Ladies on the left, gents on the right.

A1: All face the band. The top couple face away from the band. They move down the line, weaving in and out of their respective lines until they reach the end of all 8 couples. May pat hands each time they meet in the middle. The other dancers clap them through.

A2: Ditto, with second top couple

B1: and B2: All couples make arches across the line ("Oranges and Lemons") to make a tunnel. The "third top couple" hold hands and pass through the tunnel of arches until they reach the end of all 8 couples,

where they also make an arch. They are followed by each couple in turn, with the arches being maintained throughout this action, as a long moving tunnel. Everyone shuffles along towards the top, to make space. This phase ends when the "third top couple" find themselves back at the top.

C1: . Dropping the arches, each of the two sets join hands along the set, and across the end of their set in horseshoe shape (i.e. four couples in each set). The first two gents raise arms in an arch; the ladies pass through and circle round, returning to starting positions in line (i.e. "thread the needle").

C2: Ditto - first two ladies raise arms in an arch, the gents pass through and circle round, returning to starting positions in line. All couples face top, but the top couple face down the line. Ready to begin again.

**Teignmouth
23 March 2005**

Worm ecology, and worm economy.

The worm-digger arrives early this morning, before the falling tide has uncovered the mudflats where he will dig. So we fall into conversation on the foreshore.

He is pursued by Harry Murphy. Harry Murphy, having resolved to live as a squatter in my neighbour's shack, is more or less lonely and hence permanently in need of conversation. So he habitually follows the worm-digger, dog-like, out onto the flats. The worm-digger says: "Look, fuck off you old twat... I've only got a couple of hours digging, and you're walking around disturbing all the worm casts and I'm not goin' to get anything..."

People are always shouting at the worm-digger. One day a group of bird-spotters – complete with yellow anoraks and binoculars and Labrador dogs – complained that his presence was frightening away the birds. He soon put them right on that.

"The birds love it when I arrive. When I dig I uncover the cockles and clams, and about an hour after I arrive you see all the birds – jackdaws and rooks and gulls – coming to feed on them."

One day, he said, he was on the flats in the middle of the river, and upwards of 200 geese flew down-river, circled a couple of times over his head, and then came and landed right next to him, to feed in his trail.

He is concerned for the welfare of the river's worms. They are, after all, how he earns his living. So he works to re-establish worm colonies. Over on the other side the banks have been more or less stripped of worms by over-zealous diggers. So one day he was down at Arch Brook. He dug a pailful of worms, and brought them up-river, where

he released them onto the barren banks. Now there are worms galore on those banks – only small at present, but they will grow.

Thus is established a wormly ecological balance on our river.

And it is needed – because these days there are wormers galore trying this as a means to supplement their living.

Let it be said loud and clear – the worm's best friend is Her Majesty's Inspector of Taxes. Why that?

The ghastly rattling cattle trucks that pass for buses in this part of the world recently had an addition to their internal décor. Alarming black and white posters showing the figure of a skulking man ringed by a bright circle, and the words: "Wherever you are, we know how to find you." The poster is directed against those poor souls, the unemployed who seek to supplement their pitiful dole by illegally working in the black economy. The good burghers of Devon are given a phone number which they can ring to report their fellow countrymen to the tax authorities. Most unpleasant.

As the worm-digger tells me: "You can always tell the ones (worm-diggers) who are on the rock and roll (dole), because they never dig regularly in the same place, always shift from one place to another."

In fact during these weeks the river has been empty of bait diggers. For why? Because a couple of men with cameras were seen photographing the mudflats. They were probably bird-sporters, but the fear is that they were tax men.

And in this war of dog eats dog, the amateur worm diggers (who sell their worm catches to the two bait shops in Teignmouth) err onto dangerous terrain. Sometimes they dig around Mr Wood's boat, disturbing his mooring and giving him cause to come out and growl at them. And sometimes they dig down by Flow Point, where the crabbers have serried ranks of roof tiles half buried in the mud to catch baby crabs for bait. And the crabbers have put the word around that if they catch these worm-diggers they'll "smash their fuckin' heads in".

Fig 00: Mike Smith, worm man

London
15 April 2008

SHEIKH IMAM OF CAIRO:
INVISIBILITY, SUPPRESSION, VISIBILITY AND RESURGENCE



Sheikh Imam 'Isa of Cairo [1918-95], sometimes known as the “Red Sheikh”, was a voice of political resistance in Egypt and the Arab world from the mid-1960s to the 1980s, and his legacy persists to the present day. In this article, after noting the Sheikh’s absence from academic accounts of Egyptian music, I examine the reasons for his popularity in his time, and then explore ways in which his œuvre continues to be disseminated today.

Blind musicians

Blind from an early age, Sheikh Imam was educated in a Qur’anic school, where he learned the art of recitation.¹ Ejected from that school, he earned a small living singing at weddings and circumcision rituals, and later taught himself to play the ‘ud. In 1962 he teamed up with the revolutionary socialist poet Ahmed Fuad Negm, who had been radicalised by a spell in prison, and together this duo created upwards of 200 songs which they performed in political contexts both in Egypt and abroad during the 1970-80s. Their performances earned them regular spells of imprisonment. They worked together until the mid-1980’s, when they split for personal motives, a split which became final in 1993 when Negm attacked Sheikh Imam personally in his published memoirs. Imam died, poor and bed-ridden, in 1995. At the time of writing, Negm is still alive and satirically active.² His early poetry is examined in a monograph by Kamel Abdel-Malek published in 1990.³

During their working partnership Negm and Imam faced a problem of how to reach audiences. In general their popularity was “big enough to land him and Shaykh Imām in jail time and time again”.⁴ On the other hand, written publications of his poetry did not reach beyond “the circle of the literates and the intellectuals who are a small minority in present-day Egypt”,⁵ and even the songs circulating via cassette tape-recordings were limited to “those of the middle class who listen to our ballads because they can afford to own recording machines”.⁶ As a result of this Imam and Negm became known for guerrilla-style raids in which they “would barge into theatres and public halls during performances and wedding ceremonies, climb onto the stage and

before the officials realized what was going on, they would have managed to sing one revolutionary *chanson* or two.⁷ This scenario prompts curiosity as to how far Imam's performance capacities were conditioned by his blindness, and also questions about blind musicians in general.

In Egypt blind musicians have been an integral part of musical culture – in fact for over 3,000 years. Tomb paintings show pictures of the blind harpists of the pharaohs.⁸ Islamic schools train blind men in the art of Qur'anic recitation.⁹ And a recent Egyptian newspaper article listed 41 blind people as having contributed significantly to the development of music in Egypt.¹⁰ In respect of his blindness Sheikh Imam is therefore part of a cultural continuity. Although this is not the principal focus¹¹ of the present essay, I suggest that the Sheikh provides one among many instances of a general "invisibility" of blind musicians within musicological studies.¹²

Invisibility and suppression

Specifically, the work of Sheikh Imam has been especially popular amongst Leftists and intellectuals, and is also well-known to Egyptians in general and throughout the Arab world. However it is noteworthy that this substantial musical oeuvre appears to be invisible to Western musicological discourse. The Sheikh features nowhere in the major writings of Danielson,¹³ Frishkopf¹⁴ and Marcus¹⁵. In Armbrust¹⁶ he surfaces momentarily – but only as a "folk singer" in a secondary footnote cited from Abdel-Malek. Insofar as Sheikh Imam's story has been reviewed at all, it has been in the pages of human rights organisations such as Index on Censorship and Amnesty International, on account of the bouts of imprisonments that he and Negm endured.¹⁷ The reasons for this absence from academic discourse would be worth exploring.

In Egypt itself, the Sheikh's invisibility operated partly through his being banned from the airwaves of what were, in those days, the largely state-controlled media of radio, television and recording. It is worth recalling that for a long period the singer Umm Kulthum "dominated" the airwaves, and also sat on the Listening Committee which censored radio output.¹⁸ Danielson's account of Umm Kulthum describes her as *the* "voice and face of Egypt" (a pre-eminence achieved by the singer's two-fold compact with the rich businessmen who controlled the media and with the state).¹⁹ This mono-vocal view of Egyptian musical culture is disturbed from the Left, in humorous vein, precisely by the Imam/Negm duo. In their song "Kalb al-sitt"²⁰ a young man, walking near the Umm Kulthum's house in Zamalik, is bitten by her dog, and is then taken to the police station and beaten for his pains.²¹ This subaltern and alternative reading reminds us that Egypt has other voices – in this instance the critical voices of Imam and Negm – and also provides a useful antidote to the prevailing hagiography of Umm Kulthum.²²

There are other senses in which the work of Sheikh Imam and Negm has been invisible. For instance the Imam/Negm oeuvre embraces a great variety of poetic and song inputs: "The *zajal*, which is a popular literary form of long standing in Arab Muslim literary history, proves to be greatly effective in conveying his revolutionary/socialist message.

Other effective popular forms [include] the *mawwāl*, *fawāzīr* (riddles), children's songs, wedding songs, proverbs, and the cries of street peddlers.²³ Paradoxically, this calculated choice of *popular* forms worked against wider circulation of Negm's poems, because for significant sections of Arab literary society they were simply not literature. "Compositions expressed in the colloquial and regional dialects [...] have remained outside the pale of the formal, elitist literature" and such literature "has suffered much neglect if not outright contempt".²⁴ "More often than not the text went unrecorded, the artist unrecognized, the author unremembered."²⁵

Popularity

Any understanding of the popularity of the Imam/Negm oeuvre requires a threefold reading of the songs: as text; as music; and also as live performance (which survives posthumously principally in listeners' memories and pirate/samizdat video footage). To this end I now examine three popular songs in the Imam/Negm repertoire.

[a] "Ya falastiniya" ["O Palestinians" – 1968]

The popularity of "Ya falastiniya" is explained by its iconic invocation of Palestine, Vietnam and armed national liberation struggle. It marks a shift from Negm's Gandhian "passive resistance" position pre-1967, as expressed in the song "Satyagraha",²⁶ to a position of armed struggle, and should be read against the backdrop of national liberation struggles in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere. As well as invoking the rhetoric of anti-Zionism it affirms the revolutionary power of the little people – for instance the Vietnamese, emerging from their tunnels after the "hundred thousand bombings"²⁷ effected by America's B52 bombers. David against Goliath.

The song is a *zajal*, constructed with a one-line header (*matla*), followed by strophes with the rhyme format BBBA, CCCA etc. It is composed in the sober Sabah al-Shadi *maqam*, and in the Sufi Ayyubite *iqā'*.²⁸

This was a time of guns. It was a time when Umm Kulthum was singing her (sole) song for Palestine, in which she "proclaims her desire to join the revolutionaries in 1969 with 'Asbaha al-ana 'indi bunduqiyyah' (I have now got me a rifle)".²⁹ The sentiment of Imam/Negm's "Ya falastiniya" is similarly explicit – "By the gun we shall impose our new life". Its historical specificity lies in the emergence of an armed Palestinian guerrilla movement in the wake of Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank.

Here the imagined Palestine serves a dual function. It becomes a vehicle for dreamers, but metaphorically it also becomes (and to this day remains) a symbol of the change that Leftists want to effect in their own countries. In Egypt a particular appeal of the song would have been its evocation of the peasantry as the bedrock of that revolution: "The earth calls its peasants". This is a moment when the predominant Soviet proletarian model of socialism (perceived backwardness of the peasantry) gives way to Maoist and Guevarist models in which the peasant comes to the fore. This would have

resonated particularly strongly in Egypt, where the peasant (*fellah*) is a social subject of long historical standing.

The shame of Egypt's 1967 defeat in the war with Israel is rhetorically alleviated by the reference in verse 1 – “the law of Hulagu will die” – referring to the grandson of Genghis Khan, who was defeated by an Egyptian army in 1260.³⁰ Here Egypt is assigned a key role in effecting the liberation of Palestine from Zionism: “My hand with yours will strike on the head of the serpent”.

In live performance the song becomes a trance-like incantation, with the verses reprised and overlapping like rippling waves.³¹ It is reminiscent of the chanting of a sheikh working the crowd at a *moulid* in any Egyptian city. The performance can be understood in terms of the performance techniques of *tarab* (for instance expansion and repetition of textual segments).¹³²

For obvious reasons the song was particularly popular with Palestinians. When future Palestinian president Yasser Arafat visited Cairo in August 1968 “he insisted on meeting the shaykh, who sang it for him”.³³ With the spread of cassette culture, “these [Palestinian resistance] songs could be heard in most camp households in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria”.³⁴

[b] “Nixon Baba” [“Papa Nixon” – 1974]

One of Sheikh Imam's most popular songs, it commemorates the visit to Cairo by US president Richard Nixon in 1974. Part of the Imam/Negm style was to satirise political figures of note. “Nixon Baba” is a case in point; elsewhere the *ad hominem* treatment is also given to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and domestically to Egyptian minister Issawi Bey.

Again, this is a *zajal*. It starts with a header rhyming ABAB and continues with triplets and a final refrain to give the overall structure ABABCCCA, plus an additional descending rhythmic refrain “*Mā huwa mawlīd sāyir dāyir shī lilah* [alternative reading *shobash*³⁵] *ya s'hāb al-beit*”. The versification is complex, the language is street language, and the style is raucous and boisterous.

This is a “laughing song”, with a similar appeal to laughing songs in the European repertoire.³⁶ However here the laughter comes together with a sting, a bite of political and social criticism. It reinforces another aspect of Sheikh Imam's appeal, namely his techniques for deconstructing his own songs during performance. In this song such techniques include the ironic interjections of the word “*tab'an*” (“naturally”, one of the Sheikh's trademarks); introduction of heterophonic vocal phrasings; the overlapping of one singer over another; the scat nonsense-words that are interspersed here and there; and inventiveness of rhythm and syncopation; such as the “*há-há-há*” vocals on the off-beat, designed to stir the audience.

The constitutive elements of meaning in the text are invective against the rich and powerful, and the invocation of the values of the common people – “Egyptian flesh is corrosive for whatever it touches” – an invocation also to be found in the famous and anthemic “Ya'iish ahl

baladi" ("Awake my people"). The song pulls no punches – in the recordings the phrase "I spit in your face" (referring to Nixon) raises a great applause.³⁷ The popularity of "Nixon Baba" in Egypt is evidenced by the fact that author Ahdaf Soeif chose to subject the song to a line-by-line examination in her novel *In the Eye of the Sun* [2000].³⁸

(c) Al-bahri bi-yedhak leih ["The river is smiling?"]

This song, written by Najib Srour, is light in tone but loaded with political import. The river is laughing as the girl goes to fetch water. The river is like a running wound, and the wound is poverty and suffering. The poor live in eternal desperate hope. The water that they carry supplies only the rich, not themselves. But love can overcome the suffering and the desperation. Seen as text on the page, the poem is intricately woven, angry and dry. Seeing it in the form of song, as performed by Sheikh Imam,³⁹ it becomes something else. Already in his voice you hear a laughter. He treats the song as a laughing complicity between singer and audience. The irony is actively enjoyed. From beginning to end an impish half smile plays around his lips. And at every point he embellishes the text with scat improvisations, heterophonic digressions, syncopation and para-textual interjections such as the ironic "*tab'an*" ["naturally"]. Here, as in "Nixon Baba" and elsewhere, laughter is used as a weapon to deflate the rich and powerful.

The style of performance has a popular touch, and evidences Sheikh Imam's location in both the tradition of Egyptian popular music, and the styles of cantillation absorbed from the Qur'anic schooling of his youth. Other notable Egyptian singer-songwriters were also sheikhs who emerged from within the Qur'anic tradition. For the earlier generation Sayyid Darwish and Zakariyyah Ahmad come to mind, as well as Sayyid Mikawy, one of Sheikh Imam's contemporaries. From listening to Mikawy (who, incidentally, was also blind) one has the sense that Sheikh Imam's ornamental techniques and vocal texture were part of a musical *lingua franca* held in common with other singers of his time.⁴⁰

There is also a touching element of self-ironising in this song: he sings "and I am neither a giant nor a sparrow" to be able to get over the endless fences. On the word "sparrow" he takes off into a flight of extemporised vocal flutterings, like a little bird in flight, and on the word "giant" we realise that this frail little man is actually not much larger than the *'ud* that he holds. Here it is easy to see why the Sheikh is regarded with a respect that borders on love.

Looking at this song in terms of "why it works" takes us onto a new terrain.⁴¹ Interviewing Lebanese *'ud*-player Najib Coutya about Sheikh Imam, I asked specifically about this song.⁴² He waxed lyrical about its unique qualities. Textually he finds it to be a sublime combination of both hope and despair – as summarised in the image of the rooster that is still laughing even though it sees the hand coming down with the knife that is about to kill it. Srour knew that combination – for a period in the 1940s he was exiled from Egypt to Russia. But musically, he says, it is unique. The music – composed by Sheikh Imam himself – is in maqam Acem Asheyrān. "In other words B-major. From Acem Asheyrān you can do a lot of other modes like Farahfaza and Saba. In

fact there is hardly any taksim in Saba that doesn't have an Asheylan 'twist' in it." Unlike C-major, which Coutya experiences as "too constraining", B-major "invites and incites the vocalist into freedom of improvisation, particularly in the *qafila* end-sections." He instances the ornamentation in another recording of the song, done by Sheikh Al Qadi. (Having heard this latter recording he commented euphorically: "I have died and gone to heaven...!") What is indicative of Sheikh Imam's originality is that the musical treatment of these verses appears to be reminiscent of no other existing Egyptian song; created *ex novo*, it is unique.⁴³

And this, perhaps, is a further element of the invisibility of Sheikh Imam's oeuvre. Insofar as his songs have been examined critically, they are generally addressed in terms of their written text and their politics, with the musical aspects left out of account. The fact that the development of his music drew on both the sacred and popular traditions was an important element in its public appeal. Having learned Qur'anic recitation with Sayyid Al Ghouri, an authority on recitation, in 1945 the Sheikh met with a leading Egyptian musician, Sheikh Darwish El Hariri, who taught him the fundamentals of music and *muwashshah*. This enabled him to develop both his singing and his playing (as a hobby), while earning his living with Qur'anic recitation. Meanwhile, he used to attend Sufi rites, to listen and sometimes to participate in the singing. At this time he also taught himself to play the 'ud, and soon began to perform at weddings and birthday events. "He then began to diversify his music by singing Muhammad Uthman, Abduh Hamouli and the legendary Sayyid Darwish, and later joined a religious chanters group, led by the well known religious broadcaster Abed Al Sami Bayoumi. [...] As a young man, Sheikh Imam became acquainted with an important artist, Sheikh Zakariyya Ahmad, whom he befriended for more than 30 years."⁴⁴ Unfortunately the recordings of the Sheikh which are available in bootleg form on the Internet are very poor in quality and give no sense of his musicality. However musicians are impressed with his capabilities in *maqam* and rhythm,⁴⁵ and this is an area that invites further research.

Visibility and resurgence

Summarising what has been said thus far, the following elements can be said to have contributed to the popularity of the Imam/Negm oeuvre in its time:

The calls for social justice, the "bitter cynicism"⁴⁶ and invective against hypocrisy and corruption, and the invocation of the "common people" all combined to create a populist discourse which fitted well with the spirit of the times. These songs provided an antidote to (and a reaction against) the perceived shame of Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war with Israel. In geopolitical terms, they engaged with an underpinning rhetoric of anti-imperialist solidarity (Vietnam, Palestine) and a rhetoric of (Tricontinental and Arab-nationalist) armed struggle (in which, incidentally, victory is always perceived as certain: *hatta al-nasr*). The songs were attractive for their use of street language and colloquial verse-forms (including children's chants, wedding song etc) and the employment of irony, sarcasm, humour and laughter. Their rhythmic inventiveness and proficiency in *maqam* maintained a continuity with Qur'anic and Sufi musical traditions. Undoubtedly their

public also appreciated the clandestinity and dangerousness of the listening experience,⁴⁷ and the fact that both Imam and Negm lived lives of material poverty, never having the chance to become rich through their dissenting art.

For intellectuals and activists Sheikh Imam was far from invisible. His revolutionary songs were sung by Arab students and workers during strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations. Many remember the Sheikh's song "Raja'u el-talimidha" ("The students returned"), which he composed during the student uprising in 1972, and other favourites included "Misr ya bahia" ("Pretty Egypt"), "Shayid qsurak" ("Build your palaces"), "El fallahin" ["The peasants"], "Mur el-kalam" ("Bitter Talk") and the anthem to Che Guevara.⁴⁸

During the 1970s, running counter to their invisibility at the official levels of society, the songs of Imam and Negm circulated via the new mass medium of cassette tapes, copied from hand to hand.⁴⁹ This was how their politics found its place in the hearts of the older generation of progressive Arabs, as instanced in an interview with the Egyptian actress Fardous Abdel-Hamid:

"How could I believe in anything other than what I do? I would see my father [a middle-class factory owner] close the door to listen to secret tapes which I was to find out were the lyrics and songs of Ahmed Fouad Negm and Sheikh Imam."⁵⁰

Imam and Negm were also supported from abroad. Two vinyl recordings were issued in Europe in the 1970s, one by the prestigious label Le Chant du Monde.⁵¹ Human rights organisations publicised the circumstances of their various arrests. And in the mid-1980s they were able to tour in Tunisia, the Gulf, Paris and the UK (with one concert in London).⁵²

Now, twenty years later, the songs of Imam/Negm seem to be enjoying a new life, providing inspiration to young people engaged in political struggle. Examples are to be found, for instance, in these two 2005 accounts of street demonstrations in Cairo:

"After the [anti-torture] protest dispersed... [...] Dunno who started this but we suddenly began singing kefaia kefaia kefaia, and singing sheikh imam songs, I got the big Egypt flag out and started waving it, we distributed leaflets."⁵³

"The [women-for-democracy] meeting concluded with a performance [of] the old ever inspiring and mobilizing songs of the leftist poet Ahmed Fouad Negm and the late singer and composer Sheikh Imam. [...] *Songs that have never been officially available, yet are at the heart and recorded music collection of every activist or even politically interested Egyptian* [emphasis added]."⁵⁴

A typical posting from the Sheikh Imam fan club at <http://chaykh.imam.free.fr/>, evidently written by a young Moroccan, is similarly indicative of the great affection in which the Sheikh is held.

je suis très heureux de trouver enfin un site consacré au duo révolutionnaire (imam et najm) j'appartient a une association progressiste qui aime beaucoup les chansons de sheikh imam et surtout HAHA et GUEVARA MAT ces deux chansons étaient parmi les préférés avec celles de marsel khalifa et le groupe 3chikin pendant notre camping d'été dans les montagnes de l'atlas...⁵⁵

From a discographic point of view there is a striking gap: on the one hand the popularity of Sheikh Imam's songs; on the other their non-availability through the normal channels of commerce. The old records are out of print. The cassette tapes are increasingly unfindable.⁵⁶ Even ten years after his death there are very few research articles available. However the durability of the Sheikh's presence in the Arab world is manifested in a number of bootleg websites⁵⁷ that have been created on the Internet, in .mp3 download sites and in file-sharing by e-mail. This samizdat activity partly replaces the previous channels of clandestine circulation via cassette tapes.

It is also increasingly common today to find the songs of Sheikh Imam being revived in performance. In North America, for example, in 2005 they were performed in concert on the occasion of a tour by *Al-Awda*, an 8-piece band from Palestine. An Arab student from the University of Toronto spoke about what they meant for him:

"He was imprisoned for 17 years for writing dissident artwork against the government. These songs are songs that we grew up listening to. The only thing that can compete with the glory of a revolutionary act is the glory of an artistic act. To combine both is something that leaves me speechless every time I experience it."⁵⁸

In Paris, Checkpoint 303, who describe their output as "electronica, trip-hop, drum'n'bass and downtempo", gave a concert entirely devoted to Sheikh Imam in 2006.⁵⁹ In Egypt itself there was a concert of Sheikh Imam songs in August 2007 and there are reports of a Sheikh Imam choir having been formed.⁶⁰

It is in Palestine, however, that the Imam/Negm oeuvre has enjoyed its greatest visibility. The nascent Palestinian state, like other newly-independent states before it, is seeking to define the elements of a distinctively "Palestinian" musical culture. The music department of Bir Zeit University and the National Conservatoire of Music have been working tirelessly, and against great odds, to this end. During the past six years the songs of Sheikh Imam have been fundamental in establishing a repertoire of Palestinian culture – indeed they played a foundational role in the politics of the Palestinian *Intifada*.⁶¹ For instance, the *Awj Choral Group* consists of students from within the University, together with teachers and musical guests. The year 2002 saw the birth of a musical programme in which they presented the songs of Sheikh Imam during the Jerusalem Songs of Freedom festival. This programme proved to be tremendously popular, and continued in action for two years, touring the towns and universities of Palestine.⁶²

Elsewhere⁶³ I have argued for the existence of a new social figure, namely the "diasporic musicating subject of resistance". During the

months-long 2002 Israeli bombardment of President Arafat's presidential compound in Ramallah there was a period when his Foreign Office operated solely through the external website of the Electronic Intifada.⁶⁴ In musical matters too the national endeavours of Palestine have been particularly helped by what I term this "exo-skeleton" of electronic support and solidarity. It has been precisely these diasporic musicating subjects of resistance, empowered by the Internet, who have kept the songs and the memory of Sheikh Imam alive.

However experience tells us that such amateur websites are dangerously ephemeral and liable to disappear forever from one week to the next. With that in mind, in 2007 the present author took the decision to construct a Sheikh Imam archive in London. I have collected every photograph and item of film footage that I could find, and these are now recorded in DVD format.⁶⁵ I have also created a songbook of Sheikh Imam songs, containing 60 songs in Arabic, with some in translation. The resulting Sheikh Imam Archive has been accepted for storage in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS].

Here, however, the latest irony in the Sheikh's catalogue of invisibilities comes into play. Since much of this material is inescapably bootleg (i.e. of dubious copyright provenance) I have been informed by the Librarian that the public perhaps should not be permitted to access it, for legal reasons.

NOTES

1. Details of the Sheikh's life are outlined in the e-journal *Al Jadid*, at <http://almashriq.hiof.no/egypt/700/780/sheikh-imam/aljadid-sheikh.html>. [Accessed 10.iii.08]
2. Michael Slackman, "A poet whose political incorrectness is a crime", *New York Times*, 13 May 2006. In a 2007 YouTube film clip Negm appears at ease before a television audience as he satirises the Egyptian ruling classes. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUvCt6Uxrno>> [Accessed 10.iii.08]
3. Kamal Abdel-Malek, *A Study of the Vernacular Poetry of Ah.med Fu'ād Nigm*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1990.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 23. Imprisonment was frequent between 1972 and 1972; the foreign travel ban on the Sheikh was lifted in 1984. See *Al Jadid*, *op. cit.*
5. Abdel-Malek, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
6. Ahmed Fuad Negm, cited in Abdel-Malek, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
7. Abdel-Malek, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
8. For instance wall paintings in the tomb of Rameses III, in the Valley of the Kings. <www.touregypt.net/featurestories/ramesses3t.htm> [Accessed 10.iii.08]
9. See <www.disabilityworld.org/11-12_03/resources/bookreviews.shtml> [Accessed 10.iii.08]
10. Mohamed Antar of the Cairo Group for Sufi Singing and Chant, personal communication.

11. It is a curious fact that Western discourse on knowledge-production habitually engages metaphorical vocabularies based on *sight* ("perspective", "point of view", "focus" etc). Strikingly, this is particularly marked in authors who write about blind people. For a critique, see R. Murray Schafer, *Our Sonic Environment and the Soundscape: The Tuning of the World*, Destiny Books, Rochester, Vermont, 1994.
12. Remarkably, it is only in 2008 that we shall see publication of a study of blindness among Afro-American blues singers – Joseph Havranek, *Visions of Blind Blues Musicians*, forthcoming.
13. Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997.
14. Various writings on Sufi culture.
15. For instance, Scott L. Marcus, *Music in Egypt: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.
16. Walter Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. The more or less complete absence of Sheikh Imam from Anglo-American academic discourse has been confirmed by Dr Armbrust, personal communication.
17. "Sheikh Imam the Singer" in *Index on Censorship*, no. 14, June 1985, p. 3; and "A call to democratic forces, artists and intellectuals all over the world, from the popular Egyptian poet Ahmed Fuad Negm", in *MERIP Reports*, no. 65 (1978), pp. 8-9.
18. Danielson, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
19. *Ibidem*.
20. Song no. 14 in *The Sheikh Imam Songbook*, lodged with the SOAS Library, London.
21. Abdel-Malek, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-5.
22. One critical reading among several speaks of her film appearances as "opium cinema [...] promoting socially pacifying pseudo-moralistic values". Qussai Samak, "The Politics of Egyptian Cinema", *MERIP Reports*, no. 56 (April 1977), p. 12.
23. Abdel-Malek, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.
24. Abdel-Malek, *op. cit.*, p.1.
25. Pierre Cachia, cited in Abdel-Malek, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
26. Song no. 17 in *The Sheikh Imam Songbook*, *op. cit.*
27. See translation in Appendix 1.
28. Joseph Massad, "Liberating songs: Palestine put to music", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2003, p. 30.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
30. Liner notes, *Le Cheikh Imam Chante Negm*, ed. Omar el Moustapha. Le Nouveau Chansonnier / Le Chant du Monde, LDX 74543
31. Sheikh Imam Archive DVD lodged with the SOAS Library, London.

32. Among many other sources, see Wendy Dunleavy, *Munshidat: Female Sufi performers in Egypt*, PhD dissertation, University of London, 2006.
33. Massad, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
34. Massad, *op. cit.*, p. 31
35. Ahdaf Soueif, *In the Eye of the Sun*, Anchor Books, New York, 2000, pp. 495-9, cited in Amin Malak, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* No. 20, 2000, see p. 174.
36. Charles Penrose's "The Laughing Policeman" is a case in point.
37. Sheikh Imam Archive DVD lodged with the SOAS Library, London. This song, along with "Ya'iish", "Guivara maat" and "Iza esh-Shams", can be heard at <<http://www.ece.mcgill.ca/~elotay//nixon.mp3>> [Accessed 10.iii.08]
38. Ahdaf Soueif, *op. cit.*
39. Sheikh Imam Archive DVD lodged with the SOAS Library, London.
40. A song from the musical *El layla el kabirah*, composed by Sayyid Mikawy, features in *El Moulid*, a film by Fadwa al Guindi, Los Angeles, 1990.
41. Here the analytical terms proposed by Steve Feld are inviting: in his view, evaluation of the music "can't be done from a text; it must be based in performative, improvised, emergent, processual structure". Charlie Keil and Steve Feld, *Music Grooves*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, p. 152.
42. Interview with Najib Coutya, London, April 2008.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Al Jadid, *op. cit.*
45. *Ibid.*; and Mohamed Antar, personal communication.
46. Al Jadid, *op. cit.*
47. People could be imprisoned for having Sheikh Imam tapes; one of my informants recalls the thrill of going to a closed-doors singing session in Cairo, where the singing of these clandestine songs went on through the night. Sami Zubaida, *op. cit.*
48. Al Jadid, *op. cit.*
49. Cassette culture has proved durable in the Arab world. It was an enabling factor in developing the Palestinian musical culture of resistance (Joseph Massad, "Liberating songs: Palestine put to music", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2003, p. 31).
50. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 7-13 October 1999, archived at <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1999/450/profile.htm>>. [Accessed 10.iii.08]
51. *Le Cheikh Imam Chante Negm*, *op. cit.*; *Reveille-toi l'Egypte: Sheikh Imam and Ahmed Fuad Negm*, APIA AP 018.
52. Interview with Sami Zubaida, London, April 2008. See also note 17 above.

53. Dated 01/07/2005
<http://www.manalaa.net/zeitun_church_protest_account.> Original orthography. [Accessed 10.iii.08]
54. Mailing by Nora,
<http://www.manalaa.net/streets_ours_nora_report> [Accessed 10.iii.08]
55. Guest book at <http://perso0.free.fr/cgi-bin/guestbook.pl?login=chaykh.imam>. Original orthography. [Accessed 10.iii.08]
56. Tapes owned by two of my informants have long since been consigned to the dustbin.
57. These websites operate outside notions of copyright.
58. <<http://www.eljawqa.blogspot.com/>> [Accessed 10.iii.08]
59. Soirée hommage à Cheikh Imam, Rue Voltaire, Paris 11, 7 June 2007. Personal communication, MoCha of Checkpoint 303.
60. Personal communication, Mohamed Antar.
61. David McDonald, PhD thesis, University of Illinois. [Not seen]
62. Brochure, Palestinian National Conservatoire of Music, Ramallah, 2004.
63. Fieldwork project, "SOAS Ad Hoc Rebetiko Band – Tour to Istanbul-Athens, October 2008". I use the term "musicating subject" to define that worldwide mass of people who have been musically enabled by music-related computer and communications technologies since the late 1980s. They are the subsequent generation to the "cassette culture" generation. Without necessarily having formal musical training, they are able to collect, archive, transcribe, hybridise, compose and distribute musical *materiel* through distributional networks that operate globally and instantaneously.
64. <<http://electronicintifada.net/>> [Accessed 10.iii.08]
65. Some of the archive material was provided by Mohamed Antar (see note 10, above), a "musicating subject" of the 21st century, who is blind. In a long e-mail correspondence we have discussed our Sheikh Imam research interests. Coming to London in October 2007, he brought several important video films about the blind Sheikh Imam, some provided by his brother in Beirut, who is also blind.

Cambridge
5 February 2009

This is perhaps as close as Peterhouse will ever get to social revolt.

The whole country is in the grip of a great freeze, icy conditions, and snow blowing in from Russia. As is our wont, we humble scholars take our breakfast in Hall. The doors are, as usual, open, and the inside is thus as cold as the outside. So we wear our overcoats at breakfast. Hall also has its customary pervasive gloom, since college is

chronically strapped for cash on account of the global economic crisis and cannot afford electricity.

So my fellow scholars amassed, from High Table, silver candlesticks to the number of fourteen, set them in line down the middle of our table, and lit every one of them. Whereupon a jovial bonhomie ensues and we chatted about this and that – principally the art of building snowmen.

I am working on my paper “Notes on the One-String Fiddle”. This offers a fine opportunity to peruse the multiple volumes of D’Erlanger’s history of Arabic music – notably Safi al-Din al-Urmawi’s *Kitab al-Adwar* [“Book of Cycles”] – and to snooze by the radiators in the Mohammedan subsection of North Wing Floor 6, a veritable haven of snoozefulness.

Subtly refreshed I opened a page of Safi al-Din at random, and out pops a paragraph on the difficulty of playing the *monochord* artistically. It happens that I have just completed a note on a man who did precisely that – and to not inconsiderable profit. The surf-music guitarist Dick Dale (and the Del Tones), who created a major hit in 1962 with his version of “Misirlou” played as a guitar riff on one string, in Hijaz mode, which he learnt from his Lebanese uncle, who played it on one string of the ‘ud.

Meantime word arrives from our Greek comrades that radical musicians have occupied the Opera House in Athens, in a protest against elite culture. And word arrives from our Italian comrades that universities all over Italy are occupied against the new law privatising education. Cambridge too had its occupation – a take-over of the Law Faculty on Burns Night, complete with a ceillidh played by our comrades – but it seems that it fell too easily prey to hostile forces, and was eventually evicted.

Fig 00: The kitchen table. And santur

Athens
18 April 2009

A delirium of numbers.

The first number is 10. The original scheduled date for my return was 19 April. No seats on that day, so the Olympic Airways manager does one of his clever internal date transfers, booking me on a flight for the 10th. But then, in his hysteria, he forgets to complete the transaction. So I find myself marooned in Athens with a misbooking.

The second number is 117, which is the quantity of euros that his mistake has cost me.

The third number is 4. The walls of the rooms in the Sparta Hotel are plywood-thin. A senile septuagenarian has the room next to mine. He has a lady of the street as his night-time companion. She has a catalogue of woes to relate, which she does in a whinging monotone. Periodically he makes physical advances to her, which she repels with a high-pitched screech. Four o'clock is the time of morning when they finally succumb to sleep.

The fourth set of numbers is 204, 90, 114 and 24. Being unable to sleep in the early hours, I continued with Prof. Wright's account of the derivation of Arabo-Islamic musical modes from the ratios calculated by the Pythagoreans. Respectively, whole tone, *limma*, *apotome* and *comma*. Fractional ratios such as 81:64 (the Pythagorean major third) dance before my eyes. By dawn I am not much the wiser, and I have to say that I blame the teacher. The blank and vacant gaze of his students these past two years tells it all – "*Alles klar?*" he asks, and they gaze hopelessly past him and out of the window.

Finally the number 12. I have some hours before my flight. I spend time reading and thinking on the quayside at Piraeus. In front of me is the m/v *Nefeli*. A ship curtailed. Once it proudly declared its route as Aegina – Methana – Poros – Hydra. Now – by order of the boss of Hellenic Seaways – Hydra has been struck from the list. The ships no longer serve our island – and this despite the islanders' port blockade of 14 November last. The flag on the poop deck is flying at half-mast. At 12 noon a seaman unties the halyard and hoists the flag to full mast. Signifying that Christ is risen this Easter Saturday. Possibly a touch early, but never mind.

Fig 00: Front steps of SOAS. With *tzoura*

London
12 June 2009

Text for my solo *baglama* performance, SOAS, 12 June 2009.

My name is Ed Emery. My mother was Greek. Her surname was Bostanjoglu. A Turkish name. Hyphenated identities.

This is my *baglama*.

It too has mixed Greek-Turkish antecedents. The instrument is quintessentially Greek, but the name is Turkish. From the word *bağlama* meaning "tied". That refers to the frets, which were once tied frets made of gut – and therefore movable in order to fit with the different intervals of Middle Eastern *maqamic* music.

The *baglama* does not exist outside of *rebetiko*. But what is its status in *rebetiko*?

In one of its manifestations it is the penetrating chinky-chinky sound in the back of the band.

But the baglama also plays as a solo instrument. In two senses. It is an instrument on which a Greek man (yes, usually a man) can pour out his troubles to himself. It is also a beggar's instrument. The shrill piercing tone that you can hear way down the street.

Tonight I am performing solo, without my band. You may think of me as a beggar who has come in off the street.

Rebetiko as a genre is a soulful song form, a Greek urban blues of the first half of the 20th century. It emerges forcefully out of the miseries of forced deportations of Anatolian Greeks associated with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

Since we live in the present as well as some imagined and remembered historical past, I want to dedicate this evening's programme to the 9 Latin American cleaners who were arrested during the police raid on SOAS at 8.00 this morning, and who have been threatened with deportation back to Latin America. My opinion is that we should take action to support them.

My first song is a drug song from the late 1920s. Called "FERTE PREZA", "Bring me heroin".

A couple of drug songs in my programme? Why is that? First, because these were precisely the songs that were being recorded and issued by the big record companies in the 1930s – the predecessors of Columbia, HMV, EMI and the like. And secondly because the rebetiko singers really did smoke a lot of dope.

Continuing in that vein, my next song is called "TO VAPORI AP' TIN PERSIA".

A ship carrying 11 tons of hashish, arrested in the Gulf of Corinth. The mysterious thing is that AFTER the ship was arrested by police, the 11 tons of hashish apparently went missing. True story, so they say.

That brings us to "CHARI KLAKI "

One of the interesting things about Rebetiko is the way that the "maqam" content of EARLY Rebetiko music – the presence of so-called "oriental" scales such as Hijaz, Saba, etc – becomes progressively diminished, discouraged, and lost to view.

In a nutshell, under the combined pressures of fascism, censorship and Westernisation, they started rubbing out the half-flat signs. This song, Chariklaki, originated in Rast maqam. These days we play it in the major mode. A lively tavern song made popular by the great woman rebetiko singer Roza Eskenazi.

OK. The next song. "TRATA" – the Tramp Steamer.

I have nothing in particular to say about this song. It is a seafaring song from Asia Minor, around Izmir. Rather endearingly, the words were in fact first sent to me by a Turkish colleague, Ali Fuat Aydin of Izmir.

He learned it at an evening class where he is learning Greek.

This song really does need a band of jolly Greek sailors in the chorus. IF you feel inclined, you could actually give me a hand.

Where it says "*Kai i kourelou – Giosa!*" you could join in on the "*Giosa*".

Ends

Fig 00: Ed Emery, his instruments. James Joyce Bar, Istanbul.

Fig 00: The bones. Hobgoblin music store, London.

**Cambridge
21 November 2009**

They're about the same height and build. The same dark hair. Glasses. Light beards. A certain intensity of gaze. Deep in conversation, facing each other. I caught them in profile, outlined against the coarse brickwork of the wall of the bar where we took a moment's break for a beer before the evening concert. Their profileness freezes momentarily in my mind's eye.

The Turk – our violinist – had a small notebook on the table. I watched as he drew out stave lines, added a treble clef, and began writing on the stave a sequence of notes. He was embarked on an exposition of Hijaz mode as it is theorised, but also as it is experience and played, in Turkish music. His interlocutor is a Greek. From Boston. He is an academic, working in Byzantine music. I have brought him into our band. He sings Greek Orthodox chant. He too addresses himself to the notebook on the bar table, but this time outlining the "modes" of Orthodox music. He refines and defines the microtonal intervals on the stave according to his own practice. And they sing fragments of scales, up and down, as they sit there So there they are, a Turk and a Greek, lost in the joys of *maqam*.

The moment is exquisite.

But not as exquisite as what then follows, in the church.

Tonight is our "*Anathema se Thalassa*" concert in Little St Mary's. Father Greany popped in, en route from a diocesan meeting in Ely. He gave us a free hand to do what we wish with the church, so we stacked chairs on benches, created a small platform for the instrumentalists, and gave of our best. Upon a whim and a notion I has decided to put together the Greek and the Turk to see what

happened. Midway through the concert the Greek came forward and gave a rendition of the hymn "*Pasa pne*". Extraordinary richness of microtonal inflections and unaccustomed sequences of intervals. All this in E-hijaz. As he concluded his text, the Turk brought to the fore the sound of his violin, which had been providing the *ison* drone in the background, and played an improvised *taksim* in the same mode. The sounds of both these men, reaching high into the rafters of this church, with its architecture of love, making themselves one with the universe.

**London
February 2011**

THE BEST RECIPE FOR ORANGE MARMALADE

In February 2011 the SOAS Revolutionary Marmalade Society held a marmalade session, at which marmalade was made. It was based on a recipe given to me by Mary John, late of Mousehole, Cornwall. It is possible that we shall repeat the experience – and if not, you may wish to try the recipe at home. It is very good indeed.

Ingredients: 10 Seville oranges; 2 lemons; 2kg sugar; two and a half pints of water

Wash the fruit to remove any grit. Place in a steel or enamel pan with two and a half pints of water. [I always filter town water.] Under no circumstances use an aluminium pot because the metal transfers into the marmalade. Bring to the boil and simmer for at least 2 hours with the lid on. Until soft. Set the fruit to one side until cool enough to handle. Take two basins and a chopping board. Cut the fruits in half. Scoop out the flesh of the fruit, remove with your thumb. Put all the skin and the juice into one basin. The pips and pith go into the other basin. Then comes separating the pips from the pith. A long job, but it has to be done. Take out all the pips and set them to one side.

Cut the skins into whatever size suits your purpose – long slivers, big chunks, whatever takes your fancy. Place all the cut peel, the pith and the juice back into the boiling pan. Tie the pips securely into a muslin net and pop them into the boiling pan. [Myself, I prefer to boil the pips separately, in some of the juices, which I then return to the main mixture before the final boil.]

Add the sugar and bring to the boil. [I sometimes use part Demerara sugar, to a proportion of about one fifth.] Boil rapidly for 20 minutes. [My latest batch, made with 40 oranges, took about 90 minutes of boiling.] Stir all the time, with a wooden spoon, because otherwise the marmalade sticks to the bottom of the pan and burns. As the mixture is stirring and boiling, after a while the magic happens. It forms a different kind of surface, and boils with a kind of a "roll". Discard the bag with the pips.

Drop a drop or two onto a cold plate (best taken from the fridge). Let the marmalade go cold. After 2-3 minutes it should wrinkle slightly. If it doesn't run, the marmalade is ready.

If you wish, you may give the marmalade a much longer boil, which will give it a darker colour, even verging on black.

Your jars should be thoroughly washed and clean. Preferably screw-top variety. Place them on a tray in the oven and heat them (so that they don't crack when you add hot marmalade).

Using a ladle or a Pyrex jug scoop out the marmalade and pour into the waiting jars. Avoid spillages, because they make a sticky mess. And remember that splashes of hot marmalade are dangerous. As soon as your jars are full, put the screw-top lids on, tightly. As the marmalade cools it will create a vacuum seal which keeps the marmalade in good condition for the year ahead.

10 oranges makes about 6 jars of marmalade. In England early February is a good time to buy the Sevilles. Ask around the markets. If you wait long enough the price drops, but you run the risk of not finding any.

Fig 00: My orange marmalade, shining in the sun.

Padova
6 March 2011

"No," he shouted. "Stop!" The doctor was already in a bad mood. He prides himself on knowing his wines, and had brought two bottles of a fine vintage to the supper table. But disaster struck – one of them turned out corked and undrinkable. And now someone had mentioned prime minister Berlusconi's alleged sex romps with under-age girls. Some Italian intellectuals are so shamed by the presence of "this clown" in their body politic that they refuse to talk about him.

So instead we talked of canals, and the pleasures of gondoliering, which they call *voga veneta*. But instantly this water talk became a metaphor for the rot in Italian society as a whole. Last November the area between Padova and Vicenza was badly flooded. When the state failed them, people had to rely on volunteer and charity support from their neighbouring communities. Why did this flooding happen? With some bitterness the doctor explains. The fault lies with the degradation of civic structures. "In the old days," he says, "the power of the Venetian state was its canals and waterways. There was a special magistracy – the *magistrato della acque* – responsible for their maintenance. And the magistracy had draconian powers. If you dug an illegal well, or diverted waters from a canal, the penalty was death, because it was an act of treason against the state. I remember my grandparents living in fear of the annual waterways inspection."

Fig 00: Gondola oar rests, Arzanà, Venice.

Then came motor cars, fascism, futurism and socialist dreams of modernity, and the waterways were seen as a thing of the past. Indeed Padova, in its folly, filled in its canals and turned them into roads. It happens that this week I am in town to interview Toni Negri on communism and the commons. During the interview we talk of waterways as a prime example of a commons, and the perversion thereof:

"My childhood was spent in Padova. In those days the city was all canals. I remember I had to cross a bridge to go to school. And we did our homework sitting on a little wall overlooking the canal. Some canals were dirty, but on some you could go boating. Padova was such a beautiful city, all canals and porticos. But then, in the 1950s, came the new town plan. I was with the left socialists in those days, as a city councillor. The plan was to fill in the canals, and it was carried out by a socialist – Piccinato. So now there is only one left, the Piovego. And over the years they have filled it with rubbish, and you see what has happened? The floods!"

At the supper table the doctor describes the parlous state of the region's remaining waterways. The magistracy was abolished, its powers were semi-privatised, the new bodies were starved of money, and the rot began. Wooden piling at the water's edge was abandoned, the banks fell in, dredging was more or less abandoned, the waterways silted up, dykes were not maintained, and when the rains came the floodwaters broke through – with the damage intensified because greed and stupidity has led people to build in the flood plains.

The metaphor implies that yes, you can run your society on blather and glitz and spectacle, but if you ignore the patient daily work of cure and care, then mother nature will take her revenge.

Well dug, old mole.

All of which takes us to a patch of fresh-dug earth at the foot of a magnificent brick-built Venetian bastion at the point where the city of Padova fronts onto the River Piovego. An elderly gentleman in a knitted woolly hat and wellyboots is digging, steadily and rhythmically with a long-handled shovel known as a *badile*. He greets me cordially as the "damned Englishman" and continues shovelling. We have met him before. He is Elio Franzin, honorary president of the local boating club *Gli amissi del Piovego*.

Fig 00: Elio Franzin. "*Ben scavato, vecchia talpa.*"

Our man was once a member of the once great but now non-existent Communist Party of Italy. In the morass of corruption and civic degradation engulfing Italy in the post-political quagmire of *Berlusconismo* it is hard for a citizen to know what to do. Franzin has no doubts. "The state," he says, "has failed. The intellectuals have given up. Others talk, make opinion polls, and pass resolutions. Myself, I dig. "*Gli altri parlano – io scavo.*"

Momentarily he pauses from his labours. He has cut his thumb. He licks the blood to clean the wound. Then he half-knots it in a spotless white handkerchief, which begins to stain red. Down below, the milky green waters of the River Piovego are a light yellow where the mud has been disturbed. Historically this was the city's rubbish tip, and for generations the waters were poisoned by the outflow of blood and offal from the city's abattoir nearby. Poor women, he explains, would sort the rags, the metal and the bones, and the rest would be composted and taken by boat to fertilise the fields of Chioggia and Mestre. He leans on the long-handled shovel. It is a badge of pride – the manuality of it all, the physicality of the soil, the stones...

Why would he dig? Because he is in a battle with Padova's mayor Zannonato. The mayor is allied to the construction industry, a nexus that Padovans call "*il partito del cemento*" – "the cement party". His prestige projects include building a mega auditorium plus car park just down the road from the diminutive and delicate Giotto chapel. Local environmentalists and cultural activists are campaigning against it. They are also fighting to preserve Padova's magnificent walls and bastions, inherited from the Venetians and woefully mistreated over the years. "Italy has very many fine monuments," says Franzin. "But some of them are lost and buried after centuries of neglect. This monument is buried under earth and rubbish. I am digging to uncover it. The law says that I cannot touch or damage a monument. But I'm not touching or damaging it – I am bringing it to light. It is the citizen's right to see these monuments. Indeed anyone who *prevents* citizens from seeing their monuments is acting against the law. When the mayor sends the police to arrest me, I explain this to them."

When he says police he is not joking. The mayor has sent police to arrest him for his digging activities. But he continues undaunted. His successes have been notable. As well as uncovering two marble landing stages on the riverbank, which now provide the setting for the city's Portello River Festival, he has excavated the tunnel which brought riverborne boats into the Venetian bastion. And this week he has dug down and found a cannon emplacement at a depth that shows the true footings of the walls. His plan is to restore the river to its rightful place. He is a radical riverist. "The problem is how to get rid of all this earth, so that once again the river runs beneath the city walls. We work with method, patience, and determination. Viva Lenin!"

Most of all, though, he digs because the totalitarian combination of *Berlusconismo*, corruption and bureaucracy has created a stalemate of normal political action in Italy. Digging is Franzin's mode of civic and political action. His friends call him the "mole man" – *l'uomo talpa*. He likes this, because it recalls the words of Karl Marx: "The revolution works with method. Well dug, old mole!" When Franzin digs he lays bare the political and social problems of the city. Those problems require action. The city council blocks action. "So I bring people here to see the problems. The more people I bring, the bigger the circle of people to join our campaign. I create aggregations of people. *Creo aggregazioni*. And then, through e-mail, I write about what I am doing, and I send out the photographs, and I say: 'Here I am. Come and help me dig.'"

Arsenal – Darsenale - Arzaná

In 1054 the citizens of Pisa and Genoa, irritated by continuous pirate raids from North Africa decided to sail over and give the Arabs a thrashing. Off went their fleet. They captured treasures, which they loaded onto Arab ships and brought back to Pisa. The cathedral at Pisa was partly built with this booty. But the biggest treasure was what they saw of the Arabs' science of organised boat-building. At the cathedral entrance a Latin inscription tells that their expedition had found a "*portum mirabiliter factum*" ["a port most wondrously made"]. They brought back the designs of that port. They reproduced it in Italy. Pretty soon the idea spread to Venice, and instead of making their boats on the sandy beaches of the lagoon they built the Arsenale, which soon became the world's first assembly line. A magnificent manufactory of which Venetians are justly proud. Indeed they like to quote Dante's memorable description In the Divine Comedy – *Inferno* Canto XXI:

Restammo per veder l'altra fessura
di Malebolge e li altri pianti vani;
e vidila mirabilmente oscura.

Quale ne l'arzanà de' Viniziani
bolle l'inverno la tenace pece
a rimpalmare i legni lor non sani,

ché navicar non ponno - in quella vece
chi fa suo legno novo e chi ristoppa
le coste a quel che più viaggi fece;

chi ribatte da proda e chi da poppa;
altri fa remi e altri volge sarte;
chi terzeruolo e artimon rintoppa.

Fig 00: Arzanà, Venice. Front gate.

[I am in the process of translating the Pisans' song of war against Mahdia, the *Carmen Pisanorum*. For those who wish to try their hand at the Latin, here are some of the verses.

51. Sic irrumpunt omnes portas et Madiam penetrant
et accurrunt illuc prope quo stat fera pessima,
que turbabat omnes gentes de sua perfidia:
modo latet circumclusa in muris altissima.

52. Alii petunt meschitam pretiosam scemate,
mille truncant sacerdotes qui erant Machumate,
qui fuit heresiarcha potentior Arrio,
cuius error iam permansit longo mundi spatio.

53. Alii confundunt portum factum mirabiliter,
darsanas et omnes turres perfringunt similiter,
mille naves traunt inde que cremantur litore,
quarum incendium Troie fuit vere simile.]

A *squero* is a boat-builder's yard. I have come to visit one, which lies at the end of a long, thin alley behind the beautiful Teatro Italia (long since closed by budget cuts). The yard has been here since the fifteenth century, and over the years it has seen a lot – not least, the closing and sacking of the Servite Convent just across the way, by Napoleonic troops. The wooden wicket gate bears the yard's name: *Arzanà*, meaning "arsenal", a word which the Pisans brought from the Arabs of North Africa (from *dar sina'*, a place of manufacture). It is now a boating association run by local people – "true Venetians", as they describe themselves.

The mention of pitch is apposite. This is one of the reasons why gondolas are black. Because historically their hulls were tarred with pitch to make them waterproof. The *Arzanà* has one such – an 18th-century *gondola da fresco*, the last in the world, built for lightness and speed. The clubhouse is a treasurehouse of bits and pieces either salvaged from old boats and gondolas or donated by local boatowners. Oars, rudders, sails, ropes, lanterns, decorative ironwork and the distinctive wooden oarpost known as the *forcola*. Wooden barrels, old woodworking tools, anchors, a veritable museum of chandlery and trimmings.

Fig 00: Arzanà, Venice. Germano da Preda and his paraphernalia.

I had suggested to Germano da Preda, the proprietor, that boats and water were the last refuge of a possible civility in our vile postmodern times. To this he replied directly and forthrightly: "*Le barche sono estinte.... Le acque sono molto agitate.... La civiltà proprio non c'è più*". If you want to study the sad fate of Venice, that is as good a place as any to begin.

Why does he say that boats are "extinct"? Because the gondoliering association which occupies this historic yard has built up a collection of the small wooden boats which once populated the waterways of Venice. Lovingly collected and stored nearby. Then, one day in 2009, the city council sent out word – eviction! The 22 boats were plucked from their abode and ferried across the lagoon to the Lido. There, for the past two years, they have been left in a field. With no cover and destined to rot. This is, as he points out, a minor tragedy. Venice once had around a hundred different kinds of small wooden boats, and some of them are now extinct. In desperation the association has begged the council for covered space to store the boats – in the nearby Arsenale – but thus far it has been refused. Meanwhile – by the inexorable laws of entropy, cost and cultural degradation – the wooden boats are becoming extinct, replaced by fibreglass speedboats with oversized outboard motors, in line with the dominant aesthetic of big and fast and motorised.

And that brings us to the "very agitated waters". I thought that he was speaking metaphorically of the travails of Italian society, but concrete reality suddenly broke into our peace as a motorboat laden with beer crates came driving down the narrow channel. It put up a substantial wake, which set the Arzana's two moored boats chafing against each other. With palpable irritation in his voice, mine host explained that this constant wear and tear of motorboat wakes is eating away at the

foundations of the city. Venice may look solid, with the delectable red and ochre of its brickwork, but the city is built on sand, and after a while the sand washes away, and things collapse. Venetians have a word for this – *moto ondoso* – and the more civic-minded of its citizens are fighting to stop it.

Which brings us to Signor da Preda's final point that in Venice, "civilisation no longer exists". Here his colleague Marina, the other stalwart who keeps this association alive, takes up the theme. Why does she think that the Arzanà is important? Partly because she has a passion for wooden boats and waterways. But it is also because she sees it as a means to a minimum of decency in this degraded polity which calls itself Italy. A capable, determined and coherent woman, what is immediately apparent is her sense of her own powerlessness as a private citizen. She chose her words carefully. They are strong words. "In Italy," she says, "we are living a sad period of degradation and desolation." There is, she says, corruption on every hand and at every level. Blatant, in-your-face corruption. It blocks every attempt at social action, and the situation is made even worse by the all-pervading cynicism and the stifling effects of bureaucracies, piled one upon the other. As a result, associations such as Arzanà have zero possibilities of municipal and regional funding, and live hand-to-mouth, forever chasing after private funds in order to survive. But through the patient daily work of civic action, education projects in the local schools, publicity and historical research, private citizens come to feel that they *can* make a difference in stopping the rot and making for a better future.

A silent boating protest

The Right has dreams of taking the City Council. Venice has been leftwing for years, because of the presence of industrial working class at Porto Marghera – but industry is now disappearing and the class composition is changing. Property speculators see the prospect of big killings. There is talk of building a subway to link Venice to the mainland, to the Lido and to the airport. Already half the houses in Venice are empty, owned by foreigners and absentee landlords. True Venetians are appalled by the Disneyfication of their city – the kitsch of a Carnival that has become mass spectacle and commodity, the endless flows of tourists. There is even talk of constructing a "London Eye" which would dwarf the city. Paralysed by political impossibility, cynical and alienated from their own city, Venetians see little possibility of civic action.

Except that this year somebody had a wonderful idea. The word went round the gondoliering associations. From the Arzanà people come aboard, with wine and snacks. Just before midnight they went aboard their gondolas and went to the Rialto bridge. As the great bell of San Marco struck midnight, signalling the end of Carnival, the lights along the Grand Canal were turned off. Motorised boats were banned. Instead the people of the city set off in a procession of small wooden boats and gondolas, under oars and in silence. Lit only by the light of thousands of candles. A *vogata in silenzio*. From Rialto Bridge to San Marco. It mattered not that this sweet occasion was immediately pounced upon by the professional gondoliers charging £80 apiece for a view of the procession. What mattered was that this was people's way

of taking back.

Civic action for a decent human environment. Take back the quiet, take back the dark, turn out the lights. With coat and mufflers against the bitter north wind and doubly chilled by the damp of the canals. They feel that this is the only moment in the year when they can truly take back the city for their own.

Fig 00: Warming the drums round the fire. Calais, Northern France.

Müncheberg
13 November 2016

"Don't walk through the cattle field," she said. "The cows don't have much of a sense of humour." And indeed they were long-horned and they looked mean. Best avoided.

"Go round to the left," she said. "You'll find the wood crew working in the forest."

So off we went. Across the thick lush grassland, through the little mounds of rich dark soil that had been thrown up by moles. And, all the way, we sang. Because it is in our nature to sing. Much of the time we sang rounds, because they are compulsive and well suited to the road.

Search as we could, no woodcutters could we find. All gone home for tea, we supposed. And rightly so, on this chilly afternoon.

But we did find a kind of grassy glade, with a bank of dense forest running down its opposite side. Somebody said something, and I realised that the words had come back to us in an echo. I shouted short phrases into the trees, and they came echoing back to me.

So I proposed that we should sing into the trees.

We grouped ourselves against large rolled hay bales, cold in the frost but warm in the sun. Our song was "Colours", as done by The Men They Couldn't Hang. A song of naval mutiny. Our voices rose and swelled, and we delivered the phrases staccato, leaving the trees time to echo and join our song. We were, for precious moments, utterly at one with the universe. This was a sacred act, and I think we knew it.

Then back to the farmhouse, delighting in the pleasure of being us in the rich countryside, us walking together, us singing.

The kitchen stove is fired by wood. We stoke it with small billets and begin the preparations for supper. The plan is to make a huge pot of soup. The ingredients are immediately to hand – the potatoes, swedes, onions, carrots that are grown on the farm. Our penny whistle player disappears into the garden and returns with bundles of nettles to add to the brew. Our musicians settle around the table, cutting, chopping

and peeling. Separately we prepare a casserole of aubergines, red peppers and garlic. And all the while, as we busy ourselves, we are singing. Dragging up the songs from the inner recesses of memory and sharing them with our fellow musicians. When one person forgets a verse, the others supply the words.

We live a blessed life – and even more so when we set to table and our hosts bring out goat's-milk cheeses wrapped in paper – of their own manufacture – and a special creamy cheese with chilli, and farm-made bread, and home-pressed apple juice, and their own honey, and fruit compote.

We eat, we make merry, and of course we sing.

And when the meal is done, we fetch out our instruments and we make tunes...

Fig. 00: The kitchen at the collective farm, Münchberg.

London
15 January 2018

Ed Emery – Radical printer interview – January 2018

The story starts in 1967, with the Florence floods. I was studying at Cambridge, doing Latin and Greek, and then switching to Italian and Modern Greek, because that seemed more sensible. Then we heard the news of the floods in Florence, and a friend and I decided that we would travel down there in the holidays in order to do what we could do to assist. That was my first connection with several things. First connection with Italy in a direct and immediate sense, although I had travelled there previously during school holidays, hitchhiking, as one did in those days. It was a connection also to books, because they put us to work on rescuing books from the National Library in Florence, old antiquarian books which we had to take apart systematically, piece by piece, unstitch them, wash them to get the oil out of them (central heating oil which spread everywhere on the flood waters) and hang them on lines to dry. And that brings me to another connection – namely that the particular place where we were doing this was the *centrale termica* – the steam generating plant – of the Florence Central Station. This involved walking down the railway lines at the station every morning and falling in love with railways in general and Italian railways in particular. And also eating in the railway workers' canteen, where I was introduced for the first time to *acqua minerale frizzante* – fizzy bottled spring water, which I had never tasted before and which was a revelation.

So there you have a lot of things – you have Italianism, you have a kind of political commitment (although it was pre-political, to be honest), you had the connection with the railways and with railway workers, and the connection with books. So that was the distant backdrop to the story of myself as a printer and publisher.

As I say, I was at Cambridge. They were the hot years. The years of May '68 in France. And we were pamphleteers. There was a group of us, perhaps twenty people, of the non-party Left, with a more or less coherent and shared political perspective which ranged across various fields. At the time Situationism in France was strong, so we were translating Raoul Vaneigem (*Revolution of Everyday Life*) and Guy Debord (*Society of the Spectacle*), plus the pamphlet on the Misery of Student Life. These texts were in circulation. To cut a long story short, we finished our time in Cambridge, having done political activity (occupations, setting up of the early Student Union, Grosvenor Square demo, anti-exams campaign, etc) and some of us having torn up our finals papers (because we decided we preferred to go out into the world without that privilege of a Cambridge degree behind us). Going out into the world as "bare humans" to see what could be done.

One of the first things that I was involved in was the printing of a pamphlet which was Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. [*Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations*] I worked on the translation with Chris Whitbread, and we spent hours – endless, endless hours – translating the finer points of detail, and although I say so myself it was a damn good translation. Has been complimented, over the years. The pamphlet never went anywhere, really – it was barely distributed... That has always been my personal weak point. My weak point is distribution; my strong point is production. So we produced this... The front cover was printed black on black card, which was a kind of style statement, but which also posed various technical problems about how you actually print black on black, a topic to which I shall return in a moment.

The group of friends that I referred to, from Cambridge, we decided that we would set up a commune. We were going to start communal living, and we would be politically active. The commune – a house which we bought... somehow... I have no idea quite how we got the money, but we bought it – was in Islington, Grosvenor Avenue, number 29. A house of ill-repute...

[Transcribed from sound recording filed in my "SOUNDS" archive. The transcription is far from complete. If anyone feels like completing it, that would be grand. It is a good story.]

PS: A few people to come to mind as I edit this volume. Steve Schwartz, who printed along Balls Pond Road, London, in the 1970s. He did my Vaneigem. Micky Chiswick of the Hatfield Paper Company, of Lower Ground, London, who sold me, at a good price, my favourite paper for printing – blue Dartford Bond. Mr Marks, jewellery importer of St John's Steet, Islington, who first taught me to print. The Hungarian colleague who let me put my Multilith 1250 in his rented warehouse in St Katherine's Dock. The comrades at Little @, the anarchist press, who let me house my machine on the first floor of Metropolitan Wharf, right above the plater with his vats of sulphuric acid. Dave the Father of the Chapel at the printery which was my first union job, in Bethnal Green. My friend Jeremy who let me operate the

press in his bathroom when it was homeless. And Peter the gypsy who finally, sadly, took it away for scrap.

London
20 January 2018

Ed's RECIPE FOR ALEXANDRIAN FISH SOUP

It was decided that today would be fish soup day.

Summoned the musicians. Gathered round the wood fire in my back room. Flute player fresh in from Mashshad and about to head to Istanbul. Bodhran player about to depart for a three-week secondment in Baghdad. Plus cello, fiddles, mandolin and myself on this and that. And all of us ready to sing a song or two (notably "General Taylor" and "Greenland Whale Fisheries").

Here is a partial inventory for my Alexandrian Fish Soup.

This recipe fed 6 people (who had second helpings, of course).:

Fish stock, from the boiling of two small sea bream (or, preferably, the heads and bones of numbers of sea bream previously eaten...)

1 largeish pack of prawns (fresh would be better).

6 scallops

1 octopus. Or squid. Or cuttlefish.

3 smoked mackerel fillets

6 carrots sliced.

6 potatoes diced

3 red onions

2 red pepper

8 cloves of garlic, fatter the better.

Generous quantity of fresh ginger, chopped in largeish pieces

Olive oil, in generous quantities

Cumin, plentiful but not overdone

Moroccan spice mix (from Morrisons, slightly cheating, but very nice)

Chile, ground – careful not to overdo it.

8 pods of cardamom seeds

Juice of 3 lemons

1 x 300ml pot of single cream

Water to fill two thirds of the stockpot

Salt and pepper to taste.

Generous bunch of coriander, chopped, to garnish.

Basically, gently fry onions, garlic, red pepper, ginger. Mix in chopped fish pieces, lightly fry (octopus may require separate treatment), tip it all into the pot. Add water and chopped vegetables. Once the potatoes are cooked, it is ready. Near to the end of cooking add the cream. Service in bowls with toasted bread. Garnish liberally with coriander.

We followed this with cooked fish and sweet potatoes:

Take one sea bream per person. Wash it and clean out its innards. Slightly salt it, and add a touch of freshly ground black pepper. Put two cloves of garlic inside the fish, and two slices of lemon on top. Sprinkle with oregano. Wrap in (thick) aluminium baking foil, to keep the juices in. Bake in a hot oven till done. Murmurs of contentment all round.

After eating, do not jettison the leftovers. Use them to make the next batch of stock.

CHECK DATE AND PLACE 2018

TOWARDS A RADICAL POLITICS OF MUSICAL FREESPACE:

A brief travel note :: Venice, Lesbos, Lebanon

Ed Emery [SOAS]

[This article offers an account of a series of journeys in Autumn 2018 to explore the theory and practice of Musical Freespace and the Music Room. A shortened version of the piece appears in the December 2018 English edition of *Le Monde diplomatique*. Hence its compressed and journalistic style.]

MUSICAL FREESPACE vs. THE CRISIS OF MUSICAL SPACES

In mid-September I found myself with a bunch of SOAS musicians [School of Oriental and African Studies, London] aboard a traditional *bragozzo* of the Veneto, circumnavigating the perimeter of the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale at the historic site of the Arsenale. We played music as went. Our intention was to protest at the pavilions represented at this year's Biennale – the exposition had the initially attractive title of "Freespace" as its theme, but it had nothing to offer as regards the crisis of live music, song and dance in our cities.

Fig. 00: The Band at the Venice Biennale.

These musician-activists were in Venice for the conference “*Towards a Radical Politics of Musical Spaces and Musical Citizenship*”.¹ Worldwide, there has been a tectonic shift in urban culture and a dramatic shrinkage of spaces for free musical expression. In Britain, pub culture is replaced by the imperialist culture of coffee houses where you sit in isolation with your laptop and social media, listening to pre-recorded music on headphones. You can't sing in a Starbucks! In London the playing of street music is now controlled by stark regime of licensing, often limited to solo performers. Unlicensed buskers can be fined £1,000 and their instruments may be confiscated. A pitiful and impoverished spectacle of music encaged. Yesterday's religiosity in British cities was Christian and choral. Today the church is in decline, the community singing is gone, and the city's new religiosity is Islam, in which music, song and dance are generally regarded as *haram* (banned). Communal cultures are further hit by privatisation and enclosure. A small people's choir in Cambridge, a phenomenally wealthy university city, can't even find a space for their weekly rehearsal.

Landing at the *imbarcadero*, we went and posted a large printed manifesto on the front door of the Arsenale. It was a “Manifesto for Musical Freespace”. Included in its theses was a novel proposition. Addressing the world's architects, urbanists and planners, it proposed that in these times of migration crisis, there should be provision of planned, safe and serviced spaces for music, song and dance for migrants and refugees. This is summed up in our concept of the “Music Room”, a concept that we are developing because music, song and dance are vital areas of empowerment – a bedrock of personhood – and we propose that they should be brought into the arena of internationally recognised human rights.

THE “HOME FOR ALL” PROJECT – LESBOS, GREECE

As we know, huge numbers of refugees are currently blocked in the Greek island of Lesbos because of the collective unwillingness of the European Community to fulfil its humanitarian obligations. The Moria camp has become a prison and a byword for horror and violence, as charted in a recent BBC documentary.²

A few miles from Moria, the road does a dog-leg turn at the water's edge. A suitable place for a little harbour to have established itself. Across the road is a fish shop, in blue and white, displaying its wares. The owner is Nikos Katsouris, a former fisherman, whose little boat still sits in the harbour. Next-door is a small warehouse packed to the ceiling with donated goods for the refugees who are still arriving in their hundreds from the Turkish mainland. We sort gloves, scarves, socks, coats and hygiene items into special winter bundles for distribution at the camp.

Across the road is a restaurant, where Katerina, his wife, explains to volunteers that the principle of this place – which calls itself “Home for All” – is to invite people from the Moria camp (here they are known as “guests”, not “refugees”) into the peace and tranquillity of a Greek home.³ Long tables are neatly laid, with white table cloths, plates, glasses and cutlery, and good food is cooked by volunteers in the kitchen at the rear. Twice a day – at 1.00 and 5.00 – a minibus travels

to Moria to bring the guests. On the day that I arrived the selected groups were Afghans – families with young children – and a group of Eritrean women dressed in colourful traditional costumes.

Nikos used to play bouzouki, playing *rebetiko*, the urban blues music of Greece. He hasn't touched his instrument for 15 years. But crucially, at "Home for All", a space has been created where the guests are now able to make music, away from the madness and violence of the camp. A local music teacher now works with young Afghan musicians making music. They compose their own songs, and make basic tracks. Via WhatsApp the tracks are then sent back to friends who have a studio in Afghanistan, to be mixed down into a finished product. Equally importantly, time is set aside for women guests from the Moria camp to come and relax, and to sing and dance, in a safe women-only environment. This is the "Music Room" in action.

Fig. 00: Nikos Katsouris plays my baglama.

BAGPIPES IN PALESTINE

Kassim Aine's office was on fire when our team arrived to meet him in Beirut. Literally so, with an electrical short-circuit, a fire engine and billowing smoke. Fortunately we had been able to talk the previous day, and he had organised a programme of activities for us at the school for Palestinian children that his national welfare organisation [*Beit Atfal as-Sumoud*] runs in the nearby Shatila camp. This camp was the scene of the massacre of 2,000 Palestinians by right-wing Lebanese Christian forces in connivance with the Israeli army in September 1982, so these would be the children and grandchildren of the survivors of that massacre.⁴ On this particular morning the schoolchildren were gathered in the hall with their instruments (*ney*, *'ud*, violins, *qanun*) to give a little concert. They sang a medley of Palestinian and Lebanese songs. Then the dance teacher brought a troupe of boys and girls onto the dance floor, and they danced energetic and enthusiastic *debka*. The surprising fact was that their teacher's pulsing music was played on a set of Scottish bagpipes.

My purpose in Lebanon was partly to carry a set of bagpipes to the Bourj al-Shamali Palestinian refugee camp in the south. These were purchased as a solidarity donation by students at the School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS, London]. I had known that there was a Palestinian bagpipe band in Bethlehem (part of a century-long scouting tradition in Palestine, dating back to World War I), but had no idea of the wider significance of the pipes in Palestinian musical culture.

The Bourj al-Shamali camp is effectively an open prison, with Lebanese military strictly controlling entry of foreigners. At the camp's checkpoint I was met by Abu Maher who took me to meet Abu Wassim, an amazing and endlessly inventive driving force of educational activism in the camp. We sat in the camp's community hall, together with a number of the camp's elders, drinking small cups of bitter Arab coffee. He explained the musical life of the camp. Among the young, he said, with unemployment and a high rate of drop-out from schooling, there is the ever-present danger that children will drift

into drugs, into violence, or into the arms of the fundamentalist organisations. For him, music is the key. Music creates a unifying sense of discipline and community among young people. And since bagpipes are part of the cultural heritage of Palestine, some years ago he set his heart on creating a bagpipe band in Bourj al-Shamali. Against great opposing odds, it has to be said:

“At first it was really, really hard. We bought one practice chanter. But we had a problem for the reeds. We asked Beit Atfal [in Beirut] to get us some reeds. But they said no, because the reeds are expensive, and we have to get them from abroad. So what did we do? We took plastic drinking straws, and we cut them with scissors, and we made our own chanter reeds. The sound was not what the sound should be, but at least it was some kind of sound. When the Beirut people heard us playing, they laughed at us, but we didn’t care! We were making music in our own way.

“Then, as time went on, we got more bagpipes. Four bagpipes, of three different kinds. But the problem was that we had only one reed between four bagpipes. And we were supposed to be doing a public performance. So I told the children, take some paper and block the tubes of the drones. Then fill your pipes with air, and you will pretend that you are actually playing, even though you only have one reed between you.”

The opposition also came from fundamentalist Islamic organisations that oppose music, song and dance – and particularly oppose the idea of boys and girls making music together. Preachers in the local mosques condemn this musical activism as the work of Satan.

As to how the pipes arrived in Lebanon, this was after Black September in 1970-71, when the Jordanian state turned against the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). The Jordanian army had a pipe band trained by the British. Palestinian pipers quit the army and came over onto the side of the Palestinian revolution. And as the musicians say, from that point the pipes became the sound of the Palestinian revolution.

Makeshift piping in Bourj al-Shamali is now a thing of the past, and the camp now has a strong group of 50 boys and girls, with pipers and drummers of both sexes. They have toured Italy and France, including the international bagpipe festival in L’Orient, where the town’s mayor presented them with 12 sets of pipes at €2,000 apiece. The struggle has been long and hard, but as Abu Wassim says: “If you believe in music and musical education, then you have to fight for it.” Once again, the “Music Room” in action.

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Fig. 00: The bagpipe band on tour in Italy.

THE FAYHA’ CHOIR

Since we have committed to creating an Arabic Choir in London, it was a particular pleasure to go for a fish supper with Barkev Taslakian the director of the truly amazing Fayha’ choir in Tripoli.⁵ He explained that this internationally celebrated troupe is the only Arab choir doing a

capella four-part harmony in Arabic music. And for the past decade they have been creating choirs, working massively with young people in refugee camps in Lebanon, where one quarter of the country's population are refugees.⁶

In the Bekaa Valley they have a project working with Syrian refugee children. At first, says the Maestro, the newly arriving Syrian children were very well behaved. Now, as the new generation grows up in the camps, they are much more troublesome and hard to handle. He tells of knife fights and blood in the intervals during choir practice. Indeed, he says, all of the children carry knives.

Mr Taslakian has his secret ways of dealing with this violence. When he sets about forming the choir, his policy is deliberately to pick out the "bad boys". The most troublesome ones, including potential suicide bombers (of whom there are apparently many, boys and girls alike). These he brings into the choir even if they have no capacity for singing. And so, slowly, the choir is formed, and the children have a choice of something other than anomie and violence. A textbook example of how the "Music Room" can work in practice.

The choir is also musically innovative. They harmonise Arabic song. Unusual and challenging, and traditionalists would perhaps demur. This tension between eastern and western ways of doing things is ever present in Lebanon. Not least for Mustapha Dakhloul, a 20-year old bagpipe player in Bourj al-Shamali. He learned the standard pipe repertoire through the Boy Scouts, but felt increasingly constrained by the Scouts' westernised repertoires. When I mentioned by chance that I study 'maqam' music,⁷ the ancient and intricate art of Middle Eastern modal music as first expounded by Al Farabi, he instantly begged me to stay in the camp for a week to teach him what I know. There are many musical scales in Arabic music – *rast*, *saba*, *ussak*,⁸ etc –but he is starved of this Arabic heritage. He feels sad that the only one he recognises "in his ear" is *hijaz*, because that is the mode of the camp muezzin's daily calls to prayer. Mustapha is something of a musical revolutionary and believes in "breaking the rules of the bagpipes".⁹ In addition to piping with beat-boxers and rappers, he and a friend are now redesigning their bagpipe chanters to produce Arabic quarter-tones so that they can play the *maqam* repertoire. This opens the prospect of a minor revolution in Palestinian music.

Fig. 00: The Fayha choir, Tripoli.

NOTES

1. Conference :: *Musical Freespace: Towards a Radical Politics of Musical Spaces and Musical Citizenship* :: www.geocities.ws/musicalfreespace2018
2. BBC report on Moria camp :: <https://youtu.be/8v-OHi3iGQI>
3. Video of "Home for All" :: www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/1120396604768512

4. Journal of Palestine Studies 2018 report on new evidence for the Shatila massacre: <https://palestinesquare.com/2018/09/25/the-sabra-and-shatila-massacre-new-evidence/>
 5. The website of the Fayha Choir: www.fayhachoir.org/
 6. The choir have published four books on this aspect of their practice, including a book of repertoire.
 7. Maqam Project @ SOAS :: www.youtube.com/user/MaqamProject
 8. Useful website for *maqam* theory :: www.maqamworld.com
 9. Mustapha Dakhloul's channel :: https://youtu.be/BC_5cZgXskk
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Paris
17 February 2019

There's a frost on the river as I wake, and the moon is fat and yellow as it descends to the horizon. Still dark, and up betimes for the early train. Today will be an encounter with one of my first lovers, from the days of youth. The heart beats pit-a-pat.

The French still shit in their rivers. Mine host is an *expert fluvial*. In that capacity he has been called in to assist the French government in rationalising the national regulations relating to the governance of boats on inland waterways. Already the *dossier* is enormous, involving a wide range of actors and "stakeholders", but it has become even more complex now that the European Union has begun to codify its own set of practices and principles. A veritable mountain of paperwork. He explains that the consultancy Cap-Gemini has been brought in to assist the process. In the various office sessions you have large tables and huge computer screens, where people sit and cogitate and shuffle data and attempt syntheses. I take a cursory glance at the massive volume that he dumps on the breakfast table. I am struck by the paragraphs on the breaking strain of mooring ropes (*charge de rupture des cables*). But more particularly, the section on *eaux usés* – waste water. For which it is specified that all boats shall have an inboard container for their waste waters.

Last night we had a wild party on board. Fifteen of us musicians, plus friends and family of our hosts. We love to play here, because the wooden floors and walls of the *peniche* resonate viscerally with our instruments. And the potted palm in the corner bows and bobs with the rhythm of dancing feet (we are afloat, so *tout bouge*). There was food galore. I bought oysters and gilt-head bream at Bastille, and we fired up a brazier on deck. The lady of the house cooked up *choucroute à l'Alsacienne*. And the beer and wine flowed. And all through the evening the guests had occasion to mount the six wooden steps that lead to the boat's diminutive and cosy toilet. Once there, they read the illustrated instructions which tell that the discharge is effected by operating a hand bilge-pump that is bolted to the wall. Fifteen pulls for piss, and twenty-five for anything more substantial. And then, *hopla*, you flush into the river below.

Our friends are conscious that *ça ne peut pas durer à longue*. Sooner or later the long arm of the law will exercise itself in the manner of their shitting, and things will have to change. It is for this reason that they are attracted by my discourse regarding sponges. Notably, the capacity of these little creatures to filter water and eat the shit therein. Mine fluvial host takes a notion to propose to the authorities a project for the planting of freshwater sponge beds at riverside boat moorings. A bio-solution to the basic problem – that he and his wife would like to be left to shit in peace.

London
14 November 2019

ED EMERY FORD ARCHIVE

Origins of the Ford Archive (1969-1989)

A personal note

I studied at Cambridge (Classics, Italian, Modern Greek, 1967-70). In 1970 I travelled to Italy to study at first-hand the experiences of revolutionary organisation in and around Turin, notably in the motor industry (Lotta Continua, Potere Operaio, FIAT). Simultaneously I was preparing two Italian pamphlets – one, my translation of articles by Antonio Gramsci, on the Factory Councils movement of the 1920s; the other, a series of accounts from Italy's "Hot Autumn" of 1969-69.

Having joined with a number of comrades living in a revolutionary commune in Islington, I had trained myself to become a printer. I had bought my own offset litho press – a Multilith1250 – and a forged iron hand-rotary guillotine. I printed and published those pamphlets myself. Both pamphlets contained chronologies of their respective labour struggles, and I became interested in the idea of documenting labour struggles in the UK and elsewhere. That interest led me to create the major work which was "*A Dossier of Class Struggles in Britain and Abroad – 1974*", a huge undertaking, published under my Red Notes rubric. The year of 1974 was a year of revolution in the UK, with the working class moving against capital in big ways.

I became a hard-working chronologist. I clipped newspapers and journals. In that period we had determined that we were going to organise around the Ford plant at Dagenham, East London. Other comrades were organising around the Ford plant in Halewood, Liverpool. Our model was the Italian experience of factory organisation which became known as "*operaismo*" and "*autonomia*". During this period I produced a "*Chronology of Strikes at Ford UK – 1969-71*", which I published in Issue No. 1 of my class struggle journal *Factfolder*.

Organising at Ford

That work of organisation and documentation continued through the next ten years. We spent time gathering information in and around the

Ford plants in the UK and elsewhere. Together with Ford workers we wrote and printed agitational leaflets which fed into the plants and helped to develop independent worker organisation. I wrote regular reports encapsulating the information that we gathered. The high points of this activity were the Ford lay-off strikes in 1977 (of which I produced a detailed account, published as a Red Notes pamphlet), and the national Ford strike in 1979.

The period post-1980 was the advent of Thatcherism, the incremental destruction of the British trade union movement, the introduction of new technologies to weaken the class, and a defeat of the politics of revolutionary factory organising. Eventually Ford closed the various plants of its factory at Dagenham, leaving only the highly automated Engine Plant in operation, as of the time of writing.

The outcome of these organising activities was several large boxes of paperwork, which remained locked in a dreamless sleep under the stairs until 2019. In that year my artist daughter won an arts residency at the White House cultural centre in Becontree, a couple of miles from the Ford-Dagenham plant. The administrators showed interest in my Ford Archive, so it was brought out of its boxes and put on display for a few weeks, with a view to somehow embodying it into the artistic and political life of the local community.

The act of displaying it now allowed the archive to assert its own needs. It needed to be properly housed (in purpose-designed wooden boxes). It needed to be sorted and filed into good order. It needed to be indexed in some fashion. The world needed to be informed of its existence. And it was critically important that it should be digitised for future access by a researching public. There was also the question of where it would be stored for the future.

Our comrades at May Day Rooms on Fleet Street made a most generous offer, that they would enable the photographing and digitising of the material. Matthew Gonzalez-Noda spent day after day at the camera bench, photographing the archive page by page, and we now have a digital record of its contents.

I also asked the comrades if they would be prepared to house the archive as part of their collection of social history materials. They replied that they would be more than happy to take it on board. So, as of this date, I have begun transferring materials to May Day Rooms.

It had been my plan to initiate a public campaign to contact the Black and Asian workers who worked at Dagenham during that period, in order to gather their memories and experiences of that particularly hot period of labour struggles. The current social history of that period excludes their voice. However, thus far it has not been possible to initiate this project.

The contents of the Ford Archive

The archive contains a series of folders containing materials organised by year (1969 through to 1989). Each folder contains a variety of materials. Leaflets, newsclippings, company documents, my own personal plant reports, etc.

There are also a few folders containing general trade union materials, and another containing a copy of the invaluable 1919 book on Ford production methods in the USA.

There are also folders of relevant news clippings, detailing struggles not only in Ford, but also in other parts of the British motor industry and overseas.

Access to the Ford Archive

Access to the printed archive is free and open to the general public. Opening hours of May Day Rooms are available online, and access can be arranged by phoning the office.

Access to the digital library has not yet been initiated. It is expected that it will be housed on the servers of the May Day Rooms in Fleet Street.

We are in the process of producing a more detailed archive listing for public consultation.

If anyone wishes to discuss the archive, or to develop it further, I can be contacted at:

ed.emery@soas.ac.uk

At this time I am also creating a number of other archives of my written and printed materials, notably the Red Notes Italian Archive, a substantial archive of books, leaflets and newspapers of the Italian autonomist movement in the period 1969-89, and an archive of my personal writings. These materials are housed variously at the LSE Library, the Peterhouse Library in Cambridge, and the University of Cambridge Library. For further information, see the listings available online.

*Red Notes is a publisher of radical political texts based in London, largely based on radical movements in the UK and Italy in the 1970s.

Fig 00: *The Folders: Archive of Ford workers' struggles at Dagenham 1971-89*

Fig 00: Red Notes Italian Archive, May Day Rooms, Fleet Street, London.

**Cambridge
September 2022**

A shitological stream of consciousness for Peter Linebaugh on his 80th birthday

Ed Emery

You think they smear the walls of Mecca with your shit? I'd rather kiss a jakes farmer after midnight. Take the lid off your cesspit and your clothes will stink for days. A turd in your teeth, sir. The chicken on the top perch shits on the chickens below.

shit (v.) Old English scitan, from Proto-Germanic *skit- (source also of North Frisian skitj, Dutch schijten, German scheissen), from Proto-Indo-European root *skei "to cut, split." The notion is of "separation" from the body.

Poop-phobia: The first she is twenty something, she will only shit in her own home or the home of someone she really trusts. The second she is 46, she has not sat on a toilet seat for two years and possibly more. Let us talk poop liberation. Untie the chains that bind. The tyranny of *pootere* gives way to the liberation of *pootenza*. A cabman who drove in Biarritz, once frightened a fare into fits; When reprov'd for a fart, he said, "God bless my heart, when I break wind I usually shits." As grandma said, "Where'er you be, let your wind blow free."

By means of an artificially hidden sewer system, all the lavatories of London spew their physical filth into the River Thames [Marx]. Metabolic rift, the central issue of our times. No mussels in our river now, they piped all the shit two miles out to sea, nothing for the shellfish to eat. But then storms hit, sewage wells up in the drains, so they discharge into our rivers and onto our foreshore. Grand scandal, and shame upon this septic isle – high summer and the kids are banned from the beaches. The French are up in arms. Shit wars across the channel. *Merde alors! Plus on la remue plus ça pue.*

Heuristics of shit. Liberation in shit, through shit, and by means of shit. *El Mierdazo* protest action undertaken by Argentinian errorists. A lady hoists her skirts and lowers her drawers. Dumping at the National Assembly, hurling at HSBC.

Proverb: One man's shit is another's factory of bliss [Morocco]. Père Ubu: *Eh bien, capitaine, avez-vous bien diné?* Capitaine Bordure: *Fort bien, monsieur, sauf la merdre.* Père Ubu: *Eh! la merdre n'était pas mauvaise.* Mère Ubu: *Chacun son goût.* The summer show at this year's Royal Academy, a veritable poo-stink, elephant dung, sanitised,

artfully crafted and piled high. Shit, they say, floats to the top. *À bas le poovoir! Steck deinen Scheiß Kopf da rein.* Alright lads, tea break's over, back on your heads... *Σκατοκέφαλος.*

Shit and fear. An Iranian film, sticks in the mind, woman in prison being dragged off to be hanged... leaves streaks of fear shit trailing on the floor behind her. In Italy, a militant strike at Vetrococo in the 1970s... glass furnaces... a manager passed hand over hand by the workers towards the flaming front of the furnace and he shat himself en route. The stock in trade of parcour teenagers. Badge of honour. Video of a kid on a particularly dangerous routine, dumps on the floor, joyously, damn, I've pooped myself...

Martin Luther, straining his bowels in the tower latrine, gave us the Protestant ethic. And then, as he felt death approaching: "I am like a ripe shit, and the world is a gigantic asshole. We will both probably let go of each other soon." He defends himself from sin by throwing shit at the Devil.

And of course Freud – money – shit – accumulation – capitalism.

Charles Sale, *The Specialist*, a book that is curiously ubiquitous in antiquaria. The building of the outside toilet. How uncivilised to shit in your house! Shit in the garden the pigs and dogs will eat it. Each week the shit lorry arrives to empty the *fosse*. The children sing: *Pompons la merde, et pompons la gaiment, histoire d'emmerder tous ceux qui nous emmerdent...* Off goes the driver. On the back of the truck it is written: "This vehicle is full of politicians' promises". We eat 4kg of nitrogen per year; it goes in one end and comes out the other and is disposed of, pointlessly. "Please don't burn out shithouse down, times is fucking hard... and if you burn our shithouse down, we'll all have to shit in the yard."

I sing the praises of the Lloyds Bank Turd, a Viking coprolite of magnificent proportions. In the York Jorvik museum an animatronic Viking strains his bowels, grunts, and farts.

The ancient Egyptians rightly worshipped the dung beetle. The god Ra is seen to roll the sun across the sky each day, transforming bodies and souls. In a symbolically similar action dung beetles roll dung into a ball. So the scarab as a reflection of the heavenly cycle, represents rebirth or regeneration. The dung beetle can move one thousand times its own weight in shit.

Gulliver on his travels, up against the filthy, feces-flinging bodies of the Yahoos. In Lilliput, Gulliver shits on the floor of his Lilliputian home and pisses on the Lilliputians' burning palace; in Brobdingnag, flies shit on Gulliver's food and maids piss in front of him; in Laputia, the projectors attempt to transform human feces back into food. Swift's Celia shits – what a discovery! Burroughs' simopaths swing from the chandeliers and shit on the people. Likewise and *ibidem*: "A coprophage calls for a plate, shits on it and eats the shit, exclaiming: 'Mmmm, that's my rich substance.'" Baby elephants lack the gut bacteria necessary for digesting food, so they eat their parents' shit. As indeed do pandas, koalas and hippos.

The 13th century mystic Iacopone da Todi, ferocious critic of the pope, *imprisoned for his verses*, hands together and feet *tied*, for five years, *chained* on top of *his own faeces*. Irish Republican prisoners, naked except for their blankets, smearing the walls of their cells with shit, in their proud and fighting claim for political status. *De stercore quaero*.

The rooster crows on a pile of shit (ce qui symbolise la France). Those who are extravagant in their power are taken and flung on the dung heap. Black Cat White Cat. He is tipped into the village cesspit. Emerging, he wipes himself clean with the wing of a live goose. And this, it appears, has a history. Yes, yes, my lord the king, answered Gargantua, I can rhyme gallantly, and rhyme till I become hoarse with rheum. Hark, what our privy says to the skiters: Shittard, Squirtard, Crackard, Turdous, Thy bung Hath flung Some dung On us: Filthard, Cackard, Stinkard, Saint Antony's fire seize on thy bone, If thy Dirty Dounby Thou do not wipe, ere thou be gone.

And notre bon Gargantua offers this advice: The heroes and demigods in the Elysian fields wipe their tails with the neck of a goose, holding her head betwixt their legs, and such is the opinion of Master John of Scotland, alias Scotus.

Amen.

**Cambridge
28 December 2023**

A Couple of Notes for Toni

Caro Prof,

Ha ha, *finalmente sei scappato...*

I would say, as the poet says: "A valediction forbidding mourning".

A note on translation

Because anyway, there is work to be done, and the work is ongoing. Specifically, the translation of your *Storia di un comunista*. All 900 pages of it. A labour of love (especially because, at the start, no publisher would touch it). For the translator, who happens to be me, you are as alive today as you were six months ago. It is a strange sensation. You are not gone. Hour after hour of my working day toying with the resonances of your voice as I translate your thoughts and your history into English.

As a translator I am lucky still to have recordings that you made at various international meetings where I was present. More than the words on the page (which, true to your intellectual formation, often come across more as Latin or German than Italian), what is important to me is to have your vocality in my ear. Negri on the page is sometimes incomprehensible, but *viva voce* the meanings have a

shining translucence. The rotundity of the discourse, the considered searching for just the right word, the rising urgency of your perorations – all this is a pleasure to have close to one's ear.

What is strange is that since your death people keep phoning me – your humble *amanuensis* – to offer condolences for your passing. To such an extent that the words of the old song (Florrie Forde, 1908) have come to ring insistently in my ears

Oh oh, Antonio, he's gone away
Left me alone-io, all for to moan-io...

And in a certain sense I most certainly am bereft. *Dicevo, sei scappato*. Why do I say escaped? Because, as you know, for years now I have been e-mailing you with pepperings of inquiry regarding the dozens of unsourced quotations that are scattered throughout your writings. When finally you wrote to say that you had been in hospital for weeks on end, I took the decision that I would no longer chase you. So you obtained release from that obligation which good editing requires. And now, with your departure, that licence has become definitive – unless perchance you are moved to reply to me from beyond the Acheron where I imagine you now roam the Elysian fields.

The text of *Pipeline* was a case in point. The letters contained in the book were composed in prison, under trying circumstances. The text was very dense – “shorthand” and “baroque” as you yourself admitted. Full of translational difficulties that kept me awake at night, arising from your extreme, prison-induced shorthand. *Lo stuzzichino giapponese* in Letter 19 is one phrase that stands out for its impenetrability. Where necessary I now paraphrase, and I shall always be grateful to you for the permission that you gave me, to jettison anything that was truly incomprehensible.

Leaving aside the perennial problem of translating *potere* and *potenza* (since both words translate into English as “power”, and hence require verbal gymnastics to distinguish them), there was, as I say, the perennial problem of your citations. In the prison writings you gave no page references or bibliographic sources for the quotations that you used. Fine, if you happen to quote the *Communist Manifesto* – but not so funny when you quote two lines from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the diligent translator has to hunt through all 516 pages of that volume to find them.

As you explained, many of the citations were unsourced because they were taken from books that arrived in your prison cell more or less by happenstance, and then would pass to other prisoners, or perhaps were trashed by prison guards. Regarding one instance in *Pipeline* you commented:

“The Hofmannsthal play. Which one was it? Maybe it was *Elektra*. How do you expect me to remember? This was thirty years ago, and I was in prison, and I don't have the manuscript. You can tell them that in the Preface.”

And who knows, perhaps some of the translational difficulties are simply mistakes that nobody has noticed. For this we have to take account of the fact that the editorial process of writing this book was somewhat unusual. As you explained in the interview that we did in 2013, in Rebibbia there were four of you in the prison cell – yourself, Franco Tommei, and two other comrades (varying according to the vagaries of prisoners being moved between cells). You would write the text by hand, to provide the basic manuscript; Tommei would then type the text on a manual typewriter, chapter by chapter; and then it would be sent to the outside world. Inevitably there were scribal errors – some we have discovered only today, others perhaps will never be discovered – but the book was eventually completed for publication. And, what is more, it emerged wreathed in tobacco smoke. As you recalled: “In the cells we were all of us smokers. We smoked all the time. That was what destroyed my lungs, with the effects that I feel today.”

Fig. 00: Toni Negri's library, Venice, DATE

A note on bibliography

In September 2013 Toni was set to move out of the apartment in Venice, to make the transfer to Paris. It was an important day for me. I was there to fulfil a specific task that I had set myself. Namely to photograph the entire contents of his library at that point in time.

It had occurred to me that this would be an invaluable assistance for researchers in the future who were trying to understand the development of his thinking and his concerns in that period. This would be the best of bibliographies, because the books, their titles, and their editions, would be right there and ready for exploration.

I was lucky to arrive at all. On my way to 5508 Cannaregio, I became hopelessly lost. I walked in several circles. In the end, in desperation, I stopped at the only shop where I was certain that they would know how to find the address. It was the *Pompe Funebre* – the undertaker's shop, whose business is to collect bodies, and who are expert geographers. They explained the route to take, and eventually I arrived. Rang the door bell, Toni let me in, and we shook hands. But when I told him the story of the undertaker, he jumped a full yard away from me and made vigorous Italian hand gestures of the kind that ward off evil spirits. I found this strange in a materialist and a communist.

[It was only later that I discovered that the street numbering in Venice goes in concentric circles... Sigh...]

Luckily, although our appointment had been postponed because Toni had toothache, I arrived before the removal men started putting everything into boxes. (The books were to be transferred to Paris by canal and riverboat... how poetic was that!) I photographed the books on their shelves, and Toni gave me a running account, which I still have as a recorded sound file somewhere.

Looking at the photographs – all 140 of them – confirms the usefulness of this bibliographic adventure, this materialist "*inchiesta*".

For anyone interested in pursuing the matter further, I have posted the photos on a dedicated web page that you will find here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/199811950@N08/>

Posted *In memoriam*, so to speak.

And so the work goes on.

E.

PS: Caro Prof, I am sorry that we didn't manage to get *Storia* published into English before you went. I know that this meant a lot to you, but of necessity the wheels of publishing move slowly, and I can only say that we are doing our best.

Ends

Back cover: Take Over the Streets – Fiddling at the Royal Exchange