



TRACT Nº 001

FEB 2014

Olive Blackburn

Communism is  
up there and  
we are down  
here but it is  
happening  
now

OAK / CA



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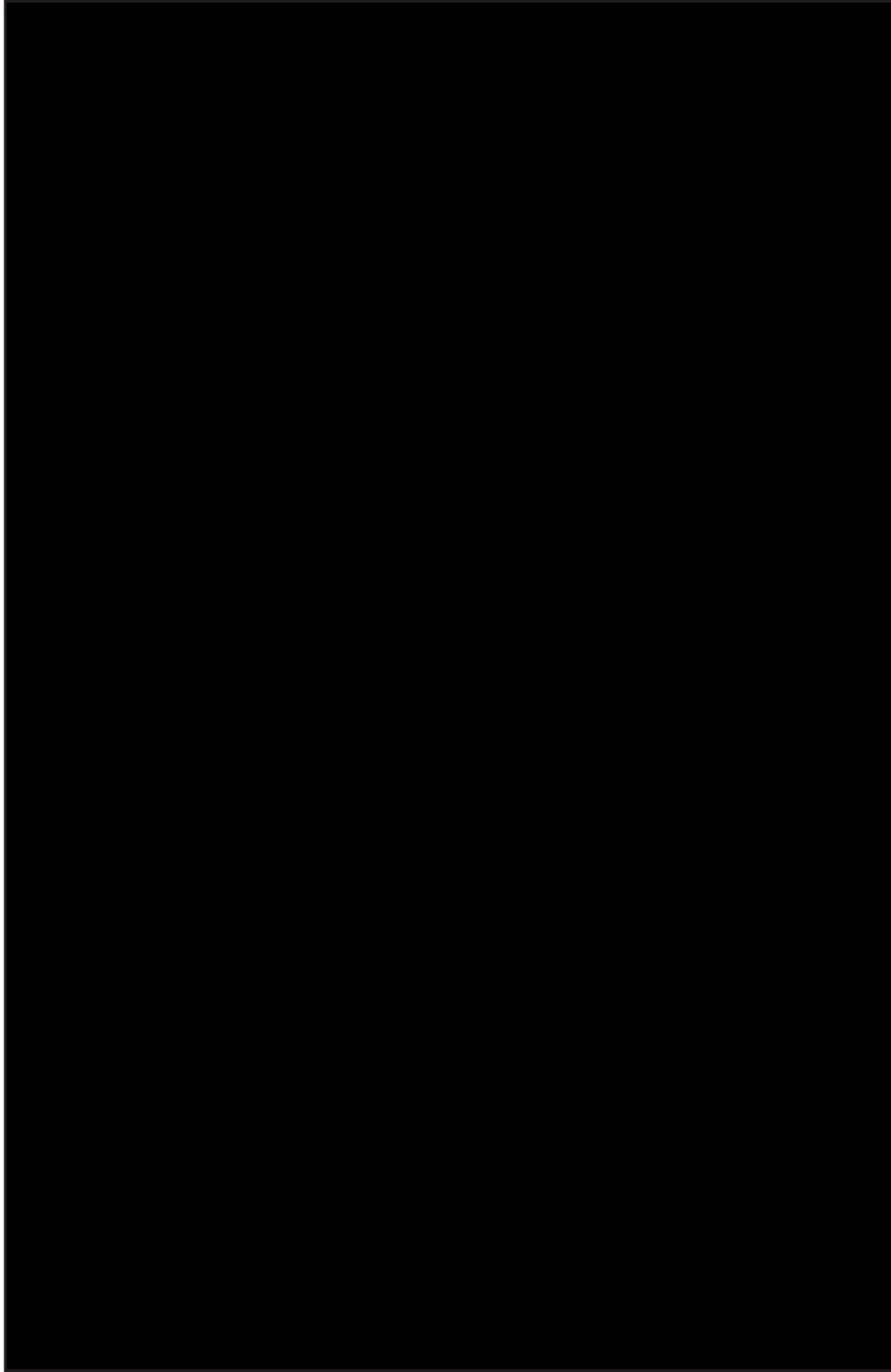


In memory of Victor Wolfenstein  
(1940-2010)

with a stiff cup of coffee



Communism is  
up there and  
we are down  
here but it is  
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## THIS IS ABOUT COMMUNISM

and about the way it feels when I wake up in the  
morning, groggy

and the devastating things that happen all the time  
about structures that function by collapsing

and the impossibility and inescapability of a  
communist present



wait for it...



wait for it...



Pam!

muffled voices  
muffled curses  
muffled footsteps

fiercely polemical  
shot through with hesitancy  
the group  
now impassioned now faltering  
betrays the pressures of having to state its case  
against formidable opposition

the wolves are awake  
the sharks are snapping

A commented that 'Everything has failed, Long live communism!' is just what one thinks when one gets out of bed in the morning.

This morning for breakfast I had a poached egg, kale sautéed with garlic, black beans, and a cup of coffee.

It's like the world is a peach and it's rotting.

a mammoth sign that says 'EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY' in neon colors

so we were thinking about drinking forties all day and  
waiting for the rapture

the way in which communism is and is not like a  
never ending recognition scene

that is not confirmed because motherfuckers have  
been in the street and not in a meeting

a string of crimes

dotted like notes on a score

a confused melody

a disorderly song

a low rumbling

do you want to feel how it feels?

taking an axe to everything we might have known  
about ourselves

blotting our own eyes

come quick

we managed to push through  
and be damned, the portal is open

In other major cities, violent acts are singular  
and isolated

The violence in *L* has become collective and focused

But the primary conditions are the same

As soon as the kids figure that out, we're in trouble

the consummation of the party will be its demise

When reading the Bible, every time you see the word 'Jesus,' cross it out and write 'communism.'

we are met by the archangel, a being of the eighth order of the ninefold communist mandate

rules created by others that one disagrees with  
rules created by others that one does not know  
rules created by oneself that one cannot follow  
rules created by oneself that one has forgotten

We never change out of our costumes.  
Character breaking has become obsolete.

a militant in a wizard's hat  
a communist in a magician's cloak

communist ecstasy for recovering defeatists

this is what some undergrads sitting in a circle looks like  
this is what eating a slice of pizza looks like  
this is what liberals appropriating the symbols of  
radicals looks like

a blackness seeping up through allegedly liberal politics

the usual evening activity of talking incessantly about  
buildings and the assorted attempts to steal or burn them  
spaces intensely under-fucked

our city is burning  
it makes me feel like a soaring newborn crow  
plumage black as all hell

Praxis is not some easy, calm, matter-of-fact task  
for her, either.

**Q:** How do we understand the relationship between the base and superstructure today? Does ideology critique still have an ongoing usefulness?

**A:** Please, the days of ideology critique are long expired! Today, we carry two kinds of torches, one for the value-form and one for your Stalinist models.

Not your bullshit art openings with an open bar  
and no fucking name tags. Where are the name tags  
you fuckers?

art-cum-work  
we-are-really-serious

Communism represented is communism tamed.

The relation between aesthetic risk and militant praxis:  
Artists who argue for challenging experimentation, risky  
choices, doing what is not allowed or permitted must  
face a turn towards criminality. Those who take such an  
aesthetic project seriously can end up in prison or dead.  
If you are not ready for such consequences, admit that  
you want to make normal art.

On your right, you will notice one of the latest additions to the collection. We had it recently commissioned. A large hole in the room was created through the use of an incendiary device. You will notice the expansive horizon to the exterior of the building.

the ungraspable border between communism  
and aesthetics

crimes against art are more interesting than art works  
by themselves

what is not so obvious is that almost all militants, are—  
I don't really know which—failed or successful artists.

Charles Simic said 'beauty is about the improbable  
coming true suddenly,' who by 'beauty' actually means  
'communism'

'DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE IT WAS A SUICIDE?' (*on right*)  
paint, oil, tar, adhesive shelf-liner on mirrored acrylic,  
duct tape on wood, nails, gasoline, dirt, cotton swabs,  
highway flares, unidentified powder, contact paper on  
contact paper, menstrual blood, charcoal, ash.  
*9ft x 3ft x 2ft (2011)*

Marxism is a vicious insect that bites you and ever after you will no longer be able to see artisanal cheeses and hand spun yarn in an aura of authenticity and wholesomeness. They remind you of a fabled moment before capitalist social relations, pre-spectacle, pre-commodity-form. Primitive communism is a fierce illusion we must unwaveringly smash with Stalinist might. Every herb spiral and half-knit sock must burn.

come prepared for the conflict you wish to see  
be there at 11pm, wear black, and come alone

Be there or be done

Be there or be had

Be there or be sublimated

Be there or be rectangular

Be there or be merely ontic

Be there or be slain

Be there or be closer to death

Be there or be more hollowly alive

Be there or be sprayed with semen

Be there or be bitten by thousands of invisible fleas

Be there or be holed up in your phantasm of an existence

Be there or be trapped under a pile of rubble that  
escaped from your nightmare and landed full force on  
your feeble skeleton

Be there or be devoured by mosquito-shaped blood-  
extraction machines that suck what is decent and  
hopeful about life into cold vials

Be there or be fore your time, we did all of this  
except faster and harder

Be there or be rotten to the absent core

Be there or be a sad pass for a prodigal daughter

Be there or be confirmed as a member of the  
regressive faction

Be there or be non-being

Be there or be what you have always have been

Be there or be tossed onto the scrap pile of history

Be there or be *persona non grata* in the fullest sense  
of the term

Be there or be cooked in a thick broth

Be there or be Steve's administrative assistant

Never to stop the war, but to immerse ourselves more fully within it

Open up a second front!

So-called 'non-violence' is a work of performance art

One needs an audience

Without an audience, it is nothing more than suicide

A 17-year-old student died after setting himself alight in southeastern Turkey in protest at the detention of Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Öcalan. A suicide note was found next to his body in which he demanded the release of Öcalan, the leader of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) who has been serving a life sentence for treason since 1999.

basically, everything is on the table

take possession of the utopian kernel

the black pearl

the booty

We will engage in combat. Long, probably boring, endless war, more like a dog circling to make a bed than an armed offensive.

You can be the Military Commissar of the Bad Left

let us specify: savage, ineffective, unconcerned  
ask me why and i'll spit in your eye  
ask me why and i'll die

the drive to be approachable, compassionate, and  
welcoming is the first misstep of any vanguard

nobody talks, everybody walks  
once you cooperate with the feds, we will renounce  
and disown you

With Friends Like the ISO, Who Needs Enemies?

learning how to run backwards while shooting forwards  
one of the few tactics to prevent back stabbing

ways of being together that are not about knowing  
what we are doing

the break down, corruption, obsolesce, or exhaustion  
of the available modes for generating bonds

how to begin to trust one another

the unpredictable relation of trust and time

Next Level security culture: none of us know anything about each other or about anything that is happening

her obsessively clandestine habits kept her living in rabbit holes and gnawing on roots indefinitely

the undergoing, experiencing, and acting that takes place in 'real' or 'virtual' proximity to others

taking control of this small battleground that the group has become

sniffing each other

meeting our match

too much to want and too much to despise

if i forgive you, you will shoot me in the head

the deepest secrets we will engrave onto our own femurs

to be deciphered after the flesh has decayed off

our bones

at times, at times, you approach, swift and fervent  
an attack, a jolt of fidelity

you are not a comrade  
you are a priest-in-waiting  
a bride ready to enter the church  
and wed the counter-revolution

the situation is pushing towards a crisis  
the inevitable moment has come: pick sides or perish  
loyalty oaths for one and all

inventing one's use-value for the cell  
or finding out what it was retroactively

what a great, metered militant she is  
measured, thoughtful, preeminently respectful  
of feelings  
a sharp tactician and a diligent researcher

Only one person heckled him in an audience full of self-described lunatic communists. Some lunacy!  
Some communism!

Everyone's undone deed is brilliant

And the more undone it is, the more brilliant it is

We have all met those glib radicals, at their most dangerous holding a beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other in some bar. They have all the answers. They can tell you just what is to be done. Years pass, and they still have the same pat 200-word answer. It never changes, because they are not actually doing anything except that one narrative act. They can practice this pat little answer endlessly, through hundreds of beers and thousands of cigarettes. Don't be fooled. You, on the other hand, are trying things, and they keep changing. You didn't like that last attempt, and you are not sure what will happen next. When someone asks, 'what is to be done?' you stumble, because it is hard to explain.

*M's* contribution to proceedings thus far has been to sit in complete silence, even when it was his turn to speak.

the closed loop of 'political debate'

the farce of an exchange

repeating our own points to ourselves

pretending that we speak to someone, anyone else

capitalism as a non-system:

against thinking about it as machinic logic

capturing everything

the ruling class does not know what the fuck it is doing

stevie nicks is a witch who hates reason and  
loves passion

with the looters and against the left!

speaking as president of the union, he kept his eyes  
on the ceiling the whole time, never looked at the  
audience and never blinked really, sort of like talking  
to the angels

a genial, old-style member of the party  
a quiet, dapper, worldly bachelor  
kind to children and exceedingly polite  
ready to strike at any moment, always armed

*Mani sauvage.* Hundreds of students pushed through the barriers, and flares were lit. As darkness fell, gangs of teenage vandals, some brandishing hammers, formed among the protesters.

for any confused, this is what we mean by  
communism

being on the front then feeling like I am the front  
then feeling like too much of the front

apart, which is to say the most together we  
have ever been

## The Theory and Practice of Melancholia and Alienation in Small Groups

a dull and aloof conversation about a  
hypothetical communism

a few people mentioned continuing the discussion  
later but never did

hypothetical sex with a hypothetical lover

No one is on our side, even if they don't know it yet

as we retreat into the darker months

into our own shadows

into the black masks behind black masks

to be frank, self-protection is no more than an illusion.

nothing in fact will protect you.

the thin line between earnestness and self-  
undermining transparency

Censor that. Free speech is repressive tolerance.

It is much easier to forgive your own transgressions than the transgressions of others.

I thought about those I have wronged. I concluded I am not sorry.

the path towards unconditional renouncement

inevitably in these things, there is a split  
a deal gone wrong

my love is expansive and it is mostly for the filthiest  
of comrades

the intimate circumstances of violence  
the violent circumstances of intimacy

to love communism to the extent that when you  
are in its presence you can feel nothing except  
disappointment

the saddest political party in the world

young love murders,  
oh communism, i am already dead

use your arms like a gate  
the dialectic lives!

to be a communist  
the tragic hex of understanding ourselves this way  
as possessing a hypothetical site for our  
ever-deferred dreams  
to remain communists even when we are doing  
mundane, worldly things  
that deplorable ennoblement of ourselves  
living as others do except for a few full throttle  
moments  
spending most of our lives in a weary hibernation  
dispossessing the world of the beauty and dynamism  
that could have been if only we had pushed through  
and kept on

to abolish communist virtuosity,  
which homogenizes and maintains a norm  
feeding on techne and exclusion  
against excellence in communism

Enter the It Gets Crazier Faction.

what is a nice girl like you doing eating a CFO's  
heart raw?

the running dogs of the revolution  
showed up and were like, 'we will be your vanguard'

not striking per say but going to work and then doing  
everything other than what you are paid to do

the waltz of class struggle  
the lyricism of workplace wrath  
the ceremony of sabotage

lest we forget, communism will be convulsive or will  
not be at all

do not let this be about a self-flagellating  
process of 'hard work'

communism is more like a spa or the chill room at a rave

History will grind you to a fine pulp  
take you out without flinching  
who run this motherf...?

videos of world leaders crying

we decided to make a leaflet and while working on it, we decided it should be written in fire across the city discernible only to someone looking down from on high

I write about Poetry (capital P), periodized Eternity, and its relation to Politics (capital P), by which I mean Marxism, and Philosophy (capital P), by which I mean Dialectical Materialism.

on the word 'jargon' and the way it gets intellectually and politically mobilized by people who do not know what the fuck they are talking about and want to get everything already

I think of you whenever I write text messages, because once I sent you a sms and the words were all weird and you said 'I love this message.'

we looked at each other and knew we would have  
nothing but disgust for one another

a presiding anger

What is to be done?

What is to be undone?

blocked out with saltcellars at the kitchen table

Eliminate scales!

Communism exceeds methodological perspectivalism

sham-milieu  
sham-reverence  
sham-rationale  
sham-operation  
sham-demand  
sham-contradiction  
sham-heaven  
sham-mastery  
sham-importance  
sham-emancipation  
sham-mutiny  
sham-sequence  
sham-analysis  
sham-contest  
sham-faction  
sham-terrain  
sham-proles  
sham-feeling  
sham-consciousness  
sham-materialism  
sham-comeback  
You, though, get a pass.

those bellowing mistakes

their deafening echo

we have no illusions about what happened

we do not have any precise feelings about it

These developments are no mere hubristic/cultish  
mistake, however.

with crisis after crisis, it's all bad news

the headlines are thick stripes of black

the usual pragmatism will prove ineffectual

These are the final days of the capitalist mode of production and we are happy to have a seat at the table.

When stepping out of an ironic relationship to 'current events' by being fired or fucked with, one thought we are left with is 'oh, I can do things'

on the eve of the revolution, we will prepare the finest banquet imaginable

our favorite food is reception food

an insurrection so slow you lose interest while watching it play out

as evasive a finale as one could expect

Conclusions I've Come To—  
This Week's Edition:

Communism could be established more immediately.  
O is the best fucking vowel.

it's not happening the way we want it to or the way  
we thought it would, but it is happening





Thank you:

Emma Heaney, Sam Solomon, David  
Brazil, editors







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OAKLAND CA

COMMUNISM IS UP THERE AND WE ARE DOWN HERE... stages the playing out of that old adage and historical tragedy: Communism is better than communists. This friction, this incommensurability, constitutes it and wears us down. Blackburn writes of the necessary demand for partisanship and its uncomfortable relation to aesthetic norms. Her negative humor refuses to tip easily into despair, however close to the edge it approaches. What renews us, then, but it and poetry and each other, sometimes. Here is "communist ecstasy for recovering defeatists." If you swap the word feminism, it's still true and different. It's the same.

Sam Solomon & Emma Heaney

OLIVE BLACKBURN is a dancer, writer, and communist from Northern California. She is a doctoral candidate at UCLA in dance history. She lives between Oakland and Los Angeles.

TIMELESS, INFINITE LIGHT provides access to mediate dialogue for human experiences new reality spectrums content digestion poetry and environs

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