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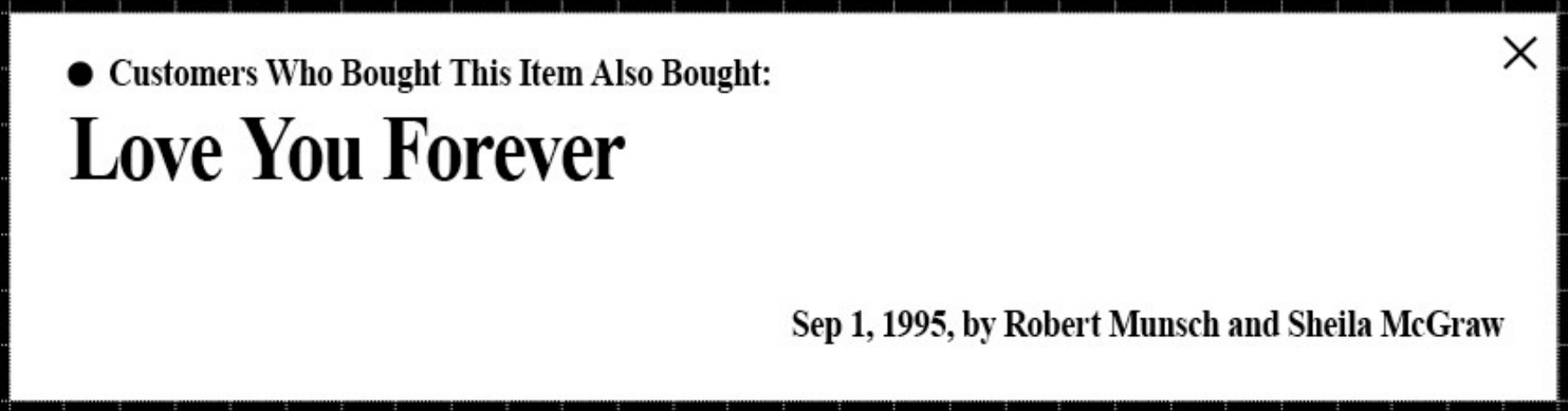
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LOVE'S JOY IS NOT TO BE FOUND

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Is It Love?

And pairs that cannot absorb one another in meaning effects
Go backward and forward and there is no place
—Lisa Robertson, *"Palinodes"*

No one lives in the future. No one lives in the past.
The men who own the city make more sense than we do.
Their actions are clear, their lives are their own.
But you, went behind glass.
—Gang of Four, *"Is It Love?"*

Over the past few decades, it has often been said that we no longer have an addressee for our political demands. But that's not true. We have each other. What we can no longer get from the state, the party, the union, the boss, we ask for from one another. And we provide. Lacan famously defined love as giving something you don't have to someone who doesn't want it.[1] But love is more than a YouTube link or a URL. This beautiful negative flip of what is commonly considered the most positive force in the universe helps us begin to see love's fullness and endless bounty, as based in emptiness and lack—in mutual loss. Love's joy is not to be found in fulfillment, but in recognition: even though I can never return what was taken away from you, I may be the only person alive who knows what it is. I don't have what it is you're missing, but knowing its shape already makes a world where you can live without it.

Now it becomes easy to see how love translates to economic terms as a union based in mutual debt. When the debt is paid off or called in, the union dissolves. And now that pretty much everyone is in debt, love abounds! Professionals are moving back in with their parents, people are returning home to their countries to depend on their extended families, contracts are increasingly backed by personal relationships, and even the values of goods and currencies are backed less by bonds and legal tender and more by the trust and intimacy that gives them their character. Shared associations and affinities expressed over communication lines produce pockets of enormous value in an otherwise lonely

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ocean of random data streams. Musicians record reams of songs without ever thinking about wanting a record contract from major labels that are still struggling to understand how to make money off computer files.

Musicians produce music for pure communication now. Information and communication turn immaterial economy into superstition and affective projections. Capital defers down to pure communication, and what used to be an idea of the collective has become a force of conviviality in the absolute. Information-driven overstimulation and actual impoverishment may have fallen in love with each other as well, and they shack up together on an unemployed person's Facebook page. Now that we live a constant slump, what used to be called biopolitics has been accelerated to the degree that it starts to line up with older precapitalist and premercantile means of stabilizing exchanges. Why, after all, do you think there is so much talk about feudalism these days? And how did you suddenly get so many friends that you don't even like? Where do you think we got all the bromance films—Hollywood romantic comedies on platonic love between immature men with nothing in common who are nonetheless forced to improve difficult circumstances by forming bonds of intimacy and solidarity? Neighborhood currencies appear, not only in places like Greece, to keep goods and services moving when the money system breaks down. It gives language its spin. It is what turns symbolic capital back into something you can use to pay the rent. The currency could be a stone or a handshake—it doesn't matter and doesn't even have to be material when it's backed by bonds of trust, by family love, or by friendship. All that is capital melts into love.

Love is the most recently introduced member in the family of inflation and bloat. It is a burst of fresh air fed straight into the bubble. It gives the Ponzi scheme at least another decade before people start to think about cashing out. Remember when you would run out of time and replace that with energy? Push a little harder and move a little faster and you can trick time, because darling you're a superhero. Speed favors the generic. When things move faster, decision-making processes stop looking at concrete conditions and scan instead for the interchangeability of already existing options. We look for temporary solutions that can be assembled out of what already exists. We don't have time to consider the full

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overhaul. Taylorism and standardization enter as the aerodynamic version of the way things have always been and always must only be. We learn to not fathom building anything from scratch because there isn't the time for it. We learn to know that if we were to try, the project could never be finished. We would have to feed it into another deadline. Google will come and buy us out before it gets finished and plug it into their own machine.

And yet, when you run out of time and energy alike, you run into a problem. You need help. You need support. You need love and a bit of tenderness. Now, with the help of others, you can feed the machine again.

Without time and energy of your own, love is the conduit through which you extract the time and energy of others. You then start to take the shape of that loving conduit. But you have also become a professional lover—or a diabolically good flirt. You are a kind of Marilyn Monroe or Don Juan in the labor of other Marilyns and Dons. This arrangement actually makes for a beautifully collective endeavor, so long as you can stay beautiful, tender, and kind to your lovers, and so long as they stay that way to you. This tenderness is a force of resynchronization. Maybe it is a new kind of force altogether. Maybe it is love time. Let's inhale and exhale together.

Love is in this sense not an elevated romantic phenomenon but the economization of empathy. Love is immaterial capital in the absolute in a sphere of value relations where capital and labor are no longer the main operators or arbiters of value. As unfixed capital summons higher and higher symbolic registers in the arena of exchange, its increasing abstraction puts it constantly on the prowl for a lower base to peg value to. But we now find ourselves in a moment where the situation has taken hold to the point where we are no longer really talking about value in an economic sense, but rather about how to sustain meaning in its most fundamental semantic and ontological sense. And this meaning is provided by the base-level foundations for life and for identification, for solidarity or for support, in reproductive and affective relations, from childbirth to friendship.

There is also an idea that solidarities between people within the sphere of capital are capable of compensating for the inequities produced by capital, and that this constitutes a kind of exception

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to the economy within it. But in fact these solidarities are the very essence of what regulates the flows of value and compensate for its inconsistencies through promises, favors—the handshake or the handjob. Kisses and compliments cost nothing and mean everything, like the phrase "sweet nothings" to describe lovers' whispers to each other. It is not through the "nothing" but the "sweet" that semiotics becomes material when plucking the strings of the heart. Love abounds on information networks—like a home, every inbox is a cacophony of emotions, of simple pleasures, seething frustrations, of unconditional support and permanent disavowals, of silent treatments and gushing confessions. It is through bonds of solidarity that all the things that cannot be registered and accounted for—because they are irrational and errant and ill-defined suspended interactions—find their place, either due to tolerance or an ability to codify or both. In this sense, what I am talking about is a bloat in the sphere of mutual solidarities, a bubble that is no longer economic but will only burst as an aneurism or an uprising—its effects will not be registered according to any language so far understood as being within the realm of economy. Even if Marx did give us a premonition in his closing lines of "The Power of Money":

> *Let us assume* man *to be* man, *and his relation to the world to be a human one. Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust, etc. If you wish to enjoy art you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you wish to influence other people you must be a person who really has a stimulating and encouraging effect upon others. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a* specific expression, *corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual* life. *If you love without evoking love in return, i.e., if you are not able, by the* manifestation *of yourself as a loving person, to make yourself a* beloved person, *then your love is impotent and a misfortune.*[2]

When in love, giving and receiving have no calculus; they have infinite supply and demand. Just as in lovemaking, giving pleasure and receiving pleasure are indistinguishable from each other to the extent that they are in fact no different. Meanwhile, care labor, raising children, and all of these so-called labors of love make public service and private interests swirl around and mesh, giving and receiving pleasure and love. The question of love is

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the phantom that hangs over the question of work. It is both a radicalization of the concept of work by way of mashing it with life (with or without the creative class promises) but also what comes after work—at the end of the workday on the one hand, but also when there are no jobs and people have to make do by sharing their skills with each other. The unemployed member of the family is usually expected to care for sick relatives or babysit. Their occupation is to love, and it is always a lot of work. Here, love becomes a figure of total depletion, even a catholic figure of giving oneself away to the point of exhaustion and humiliating defeat. We look a mess because we have given our love in the absolute, to the Absolute. To have nothing left to give is to start looking like Christ on the cross—after the passion. To help someone walk when they are not related to you is social love. Many people remark on how teaching is a joy in itself.[3] The shifting of labor into the private and domestic spheres is on the one hand a reallocation of resources from state or workplace into the private and personal sphere of the home. But, with self-managed and free-floating labor, it is also marked by a sliding of troubles from the office or factory to the home, the marriage, the partner, the mind, the children. Every day is bring-your-kid-to-work day, as well as never-take-a-shower-or-change-out-of-your-fucking-pajamas day. Under the auspices of love, a generalized generosity form has emerged within the private and public sphere alike. Through the family, the lover, the market, the street, a machine of reciprocity now stretches horizontally from horizon to distant horizon across a flat landscape converting labor into love and love back into labor. Love is a promise converted to a curse converted back to a promise.

Essentially, both blur into an expressive force with seemingly no addressee in established political structures or aesthetic regimes, and whose underside is a depletion so cruel that we can only cry ourselves to sleep at night. It is a perverse advancement of the Romantic project as a concretization of romance. The Romantic era was a surge of energy released by the potential of an era of revolutions in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today we live in a similar era, but now the energy has no addressee and is extracted under the auspices of a liberation that no one really believes in.

As capital cancels itself, differences in value do not just go away. The management and regulation of those differences don't go

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away either. Negotiations within those differences assume the terms of exchange, which is to say they reflect them and reinforce them, producing and reproducing them. We start to personalize relations that are structural and structure relations that are personal. We are really in a time of hyper-paradox, where sign-value and use-value converge and split and converge again too fast for money to even make sense. Every price mechanism is faulted. Marx or Debord's darkest warnings about capital and spectacle and price speculation are a decent but ultimately gloomy manual for understanding the way things are. Even if the neoliberal economists of the Chicago School are the architects of this condition, they themselves have a hard time explaining what is happening without the help of an astrologist or meteorologist or shaman. If this means the eventual and complete death of economics, only to be replaced by love, the transition might be bumpy at first but it won't be such a bad thing in the long run. Of course, this regime change will be disastrous for many relationships, but how can you complain when you are witnessing the phasing out of work and its replacement by friends? Maybe you thought you were still looking at contemporary art—but actually art left the building quite a while ago and the artist is mostly using the real estate to work a gigantic production job of stabilizing an image of career trajectory in the absence of any social or art-historical one.

We find ourselves in a situation where it becomes impossible to map your desires in time enough to be able to sustain commitments or stabilize an ethical framework. It is how finance works on the one hand, but also burrows into intimate relations that cannot be any logic accountable to other people.

This makes even the most libertarian open-ended and contingent forms of relating to one another subjected to and superseded by a higher contingent illogic because at any moment the open-ended form can close into a form of commitment that betrays any contract based in openness.

In this situation any sequence of events cannot be stabilized in any sensible way and this draws into its vortex things like weather and insane broken forms of causality. Madness starts to rule, or more precisely a terrifying sense of vulnerability sets in that makes everything a possible threat. Scales of importance and urgency cannot be stabilized. Maybe we just need a long vacation

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but we start to think instead about insurance. About mitigating risk. About a roof over our head to keep out the weather. About running away.

Cause and effect decouple. Hierarchies dissolve. People enter the streets in the millions. Facebook becomes a planetary dementia machine. We become like the wind but also not ourselves. And the foundation on which art objects have been produced and exhibited shatters, because that foundation was always pegged to a modern project that, like financial speculation, took for granted that the future would always be better. Faced with an empty lot, it sees an apartment complex. Faced with a poor person, it sees a rich person. Faced with rocks it sees sculpture. Faced with nature it sees civilization. And when the bubble bursts, all these emotional projections draw back to expose the material substrate of our dreams. But this is the moment we also see artworks, as well as each other, for the first time not as carriers of value or as heroic gestures, but as fragile, beautiful, awful singers making a desperate go at karaoke. We see straight through humanistic fantasies about sculpting the world in our own image and start hearing the weather telling us that it is the world that sculpts us.

Weather also forces us to remember that its destructive forces are often a social equalizer. The storm hits everyone. And for those with little to lose, destruction can be a new start. There are even certain life-giving forces in disasters, and they offer new modes of representation for those who know how to pick through the wreckage and reconstitute themselves. As a force beyond our control, the weather offers some relief; it's not our fault. And that's probably why we talk about weather to avoid talking about other things. But is it only that? In fact, weather fails as a metaphor. It is a ferocious mood swing that can destroy your home or make you fall in love or both, and that makes it far too real to merely describe something else. Because over the past few years something else happened. We don't know exactly what yet. But we do know that a series of storms came through. Political events and economic collapses arrive just as the weather does, without explanation.

As a figure of decay, the weather tells us the spectacle of contemporary art has become unsustainable. It front-loaded all its projective potential with financial futures on the one hand, but

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also with the errant messianism of dashed social desires on the other. Art spaces were never the cathedrals or offsite server farms for economic and social-political bloat. And I will not give myself a heart attack trying to convince myself they can be.

Today it has become disturbingly easy to confuse stress and exhaustion with love. This can be attributed to the sheer amount of energies being exchanged that prey upon emotional responses.[4] And only in recent years have we learned that we are no longer talking about work or labor-capture but about the distribution of vital energies that surpass the calculus of both. While some of these energies are politically beneficial, or monetize in ancillary or surprising ways, the physics of application doesn't really account for how much energy is poured into forms of political or lyrical expression out of love or fun or idleness or pathological commitment—that is, without asking for anything in return.

There may be a whole other side to the situation that we have only started to ascertain through the political uprisings of recent years, where a form of political commitment gets displaced to the expressive sphere. Much has been written about the role of images and blogging in these movements, while most of us know what a poor user interface these forms are for negotiating the common, which has changed so radically that the very location of the common itself has probably shifted elsewhere. While there is a great deal to look forward to in this fact alone—the dislocation in terms of site and objective have left so many people vulnerable to forms of pathological commitment that the risk of coming unhinged from political objectives might ultimately consume the people themselves before any actual political prospect comes to pass. We are forced into these situations, and forced to consider how solidarity works to surpass structural limits with bonds of trust and reciprocity; but we are also forced to consider the stresses placed back on those very solidarities when a structure is so bankrupt that it can only permanently rely upon informal generosities for its basic vital functions. This is to say that love is both the problem and the solution to an emerging form of hyperactive, super-committed self-application that surpasses logics of exploitation and labor extraction because no one is really benefitting from the added value when it evaporates under the auspices of love or dedication. Of course Facebook is probably the most advanced capture mechanism in this case for how it continuously works to engineer affective

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responses and register emotional feedback and mood swings. It was, after all, in *Enter the Dragon* that Bruce Lee said: "What is this, an exhibition? You need: emotional content."

We might also be looking in the wrong places, because things do not only evaporate when they enter the expressive sphere, but are also catalogued and archived by the NSA, by museums, any other infra-structure dedicated to historical memory and surveillance alike. A pathological commitment that defers to the expressive sphere when it hits a political impasse has to then contend with the politics of artistic form in order for it to hold together. The language of that form is increasingly being defined by its ability to access emotional registers. This is probably why we are finding so many people in the arts who are essentially activists continuing their work in the absence of any concrete political horizon, but who also become in the meantime the most beautiful singers in the tradition of a Baez or Om Kalthoum. Put simply, expressions of the fullness of being have moved from the structural to the symbolic and emotional registers. One of the most widely read texts speaking to this is not coincidentally by Plato, who brought us divine and rational love. But Plato's *Phaedrus* is all about using wordplay to seduce a lover, and it is also about using seduction to inspire wordplay—which leads to a semiotically inspired madness. You master a text not by solidifying its internal logical structure, but by knowing and loving your audience, even to the point where, as in *Phaedrus*, you can convince them to want to sleep with you. Rock'n'roll figured this one out a long time ago.

But rock stars also die young. Or they become fat, they become bloated, they become depressed with age. On the one hand, the scale of amplification of their symbolic output is nearly impossible to reverse, and on the other they are tied to a form of symbolic production structured around youth and vitalism and libidinal surplus that is impossible to sustain with age. The human heart is the most banal metaphor for love, but is also a physiological timekeeper. Many athletes suffer from a condition where the heart swells to become too large as a result of overexertion.[5] Essentially, even if you are a marathon runner fully endowed with the endurance and stamina to run enormously long distances with ease each day, your body will nevertheless collapse after some time.[6] And yet, it remains extremely hard for athletes and trainers to identify when the limit of exertion has been reached, as the tearing of muscle tissue is likewise the prompt for the muscle to grow and become stronger.

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Because the liberal form par excellence has become flexibility. What we never quite realized in the postmodern promises of constant change and modification was that change always demands a certain strength. And this strength demands a certain power whereby flexibility entails an ability to always bend without absolutely breaking. Where integrity might be attributed to morals, tensegrity exists fully in the realm of economic stresses. It would be nice to give it an expressionistic outlet, but its main expression can only be strategic, because it is reliant on extrinsic forces and not on intrinsic ones. Its only intrinsic forces can be made of the strength and resilience to maintain the sensitivity to the expressions that take place between people, and the power and strength that these expressions demand to emerge.

The endurance and strength to withstand the emotional pain of miscommunication and the physical pain of freak accidents and malpractice can line up with the instincts of the hunter. It requires physical fitness but also the emotional sensitivity of a gazelle who can perceive possible threats coming from any direction at any moment. It is the opposite of paranoia; it is simply alertness. It is not only the readiness to work, or to respond to a flood of emails. However, those emails may be full of threats and insults, and the gazelle must not only be able to run faster, but also stop, shape-shift or reprogram itself to become a lion, turn around, and consume its own startled predator with merciless savagery. And Instagram the carcass.

It is in this sense—where security can be exchanged for control and back again—that affective relations are simultaneously the last remaining hope of maintaining any kind of bonding exchange between people at the same time as they are also the first wave and the core thrust behind financial speculation and branding schemes. The stuff of desperation merges with the stuff of territorial expansion and you really can't figure out whether you're living in a favela or an off-grid gated community with private schools and private security contractors. You would think that restoring the tension between the public and the private or the state and the people would provide some kind of Rosetta stone for delaminating class relations but it really can't, since the only tension you can find comes from the speed by which the symbolic registers of difference and distinction are being scrambled. And yet, the fact that poverty and finance alike seize upon affect as their main carrier

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does not make the two registers merge into anything more than a schizophrenic frequency-hopping moiré of incommensurable overlay and paradox, of bubble and rubble swapping places constantly, of sign-switching and turnover and replacement as new norm.

Many thinkers today are fond of reminding us that, in spite of information technology's implicit claims to immateriality and free-floating copy-paste generosity and all-around deterritorialized accessibility, the internet has a material base that makes it subject to scarcity, national boundary policing, traditional state surveillance, etc. It's totally true. But don't be misled into a Marxist-materialist line of thinking that the materiality of the internet fully accounts for what it is doing to us. Other thinkers (Bifo, Geert Lovink) have at moments suggested that it is in the emotional content traveling over the lines that the stresses and limits to information exchange are to be found. Badly written emails, trigger-happy responses, and breakneck turnaround times lead to a kind of psychotic swamp of affect and emotional feedback loops, and this is where the apparent immateriality of information finds its final form—not in infrastructural bonds but in the melting and reforming of personal and loving bonds. And what it seizes upon most ferociously are people who can absorb and mediate the burdens of the people around them, and the emotional baggage that is the secondary infrastructure of the information economy. These are the real high financiers, the fat cats of the affect economy—nurses, single mothers, good listeners, generous thinkers, party organizers, dinner hosts. The internet is only a metaphor for this much larger atmospheric superhighway of emotional dementia. They are the mesh. You thought they were only making potato salad and cookies for the picnic, but actually they are the central nodes and the real server farms in a telepathic meta-network and probably our last hope.

So, it looks like we are entering an era of profound love. The construction of the modern subject from the Western Enlightenment on through the Scientific Revolution advocated a mechanistic view of the world that inadvertently sought a kind of stabilization of life and causal relationships through a natural order. Peace and prosperity follow. Infrastructure would be built accordingly. Labor would be specialized, the train would arrive on time and take you where you want to go, the garbage man would keep coming on behalf of a large organization that does not want to have

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you living surrounded by your own waste. Yet, when infrastructure breaks down, we start to develop special powers—such as telepathy. The evil eye returns; envy becomes a material force. God returns because faith becomes necessary. Not only the starving peasant finds comfort in the cross or in the face of Jesus Christ. We all start to look up to the stars and planets and feverishly read our horoscopes hoping no one notices, or interrupts.

If you thought free education was a class leveler, try telepathy. Telepathy is an expanded notion of street smarts, what people who know the streets understand intuitively and empirically about the informal infrastructure that compensated for the shortfalls and shortcomings of the formal structure. Telepathy extends that notion to a street smarts that takes for granted the long planetary lines of what used to be called the information superhighway, and of course as street smarts go, the superhighway demands a lot more from you. Telepathy is what takes for granted that, when infrastructure breaks down, it also takes with it a realm of the sensible on a deep level even of physics where causality itself warps and twists around itself and stops making sense. Think of a metro line where you always know what the next stop will be. When you don't know where you're going, you need to look into the eyes of the people around you and try your best to understand the situation. You are already in the jungle.

But to think about disaster and representation at the same time reverses a polarity where representation is not so much about the registration of differences in an ethical sense—by the state, for instance—but actually about revealing processes of power that evade any kind of immediate form. Representation starts to line up with revelation, with messianic truth, and the greatest hopes come not from positivism but actually a kind of apocalypticism whereby the worse the thing being represented is, the closer we seem to come to a kind of clarity.

In a symbolic economy that abstracts everything by converting it into relative language and subjects it to a technological apparatus that determines the distinction between life and death, truth can only arrive as horror. We do not have ethics arriving as policy. This places us in between two distinct regimes of rationality that have been so profoundly conflated that they become indecipherable. And the thrill of the end arriving may actually be another way of

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asking for a way to resolve this confusion. Unfortunately, the only names we have for it are poor—positivist liberal humanism and the neoliberal variety of economic rationality. The clarification regime of idealism and the flat realism of computational algorithmic commodity exchange.

But the universe works differently. The universe where physics functions according to emphathic relations and identification is actually the universe created by narration. By literature, by Hollywood films. In order for one event to follow another sensibly, there must bs a relation, a relation which does not reach out for an absolute figure but relies simply on an ability to sense that one thing could follow the previous one—a sensible succession, but not in terms of any governing logic that gives a determinate meaning to parts and events as a whole. It is a bit like a soap opera on the one hand, but also like language on the other. This is Narration as empathy and super-causality. This seems to ask for a whole new reboot of a kind of Warburgian pathos formulae built as a functional metro line that will actually move you across the city from your home to your workplace.

Why are you using yourself as a testing site for the most detrimental effects of economy? Because when we are subjected to a brutal economic realism we begin clutching around madly, scrambling to bring in other resources that we can use to protect ourselves and loved ones from the oncoming storm. And the choices we make, and the solidarities we form, decide the world we will inhabit in this new stage of economy that arrives like bad weather, liquidating and annihilating everything in its path. Some of us will take refuge in complaining about the way capital seizes upon affective and emotional solidarities as captivation and capture, as if standing outside of the storm looking onto it like a figure in a Caspar David Friedrich painting contemplating a Kantian sublime. But this is also a choice, and it is the choice made by many thinkers who are considering the speculative and post-human or antihuman terrain, or the infinite expanses of geological or postplanetary space and time. But even these science fiction scenarios of a world that is inhospitable to human life are based in the positing of a fictional outside that upholds the tradition of philosophical idealism and positivism, when in fact this indifference to human life is more precisely the core functioning of an economic rationality that supersedes human needs.

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The science fiction scenario of a planetary robot takeover is something we are already completely inside of, through our smartphones, through our industrial production of energy and its waste disposal and disaster management, through the logistical organization of the movement of goods and services across the planet.

The fact that emotionemotemotion's detrimental effects arrive in our lives in much the same way as a kind of fatalistic atmospheric weather, forces us to recognize that the real question concerns the way we choose to respond to forces we cannot ever know and cannot ever hope to master and what kinds of shelter we build to sustain human life as such, and protect ourselves and our families in the meantime. We must accept that this is already constituting a totally new kind of identity formation because not everyone constructs a shelter in the same way. Many people respond to the mandate to planetary spread by seeking shelter in origin myths. Which is of course why the strongest political clarities come to us from sectarian groups, from Hezbollah and the like, who seek to protect an identitarian family from a corrosive outside. We can extend this to the rise of right-wing groups but also to friends in urban cosmopolitan milieux who begin to become nostalgic for an original and essential relation of blood to soil that can stabilize the disorienting effects of travel or of being surrounded by immigrants and migrants and hipsters with strange customs and languages that are not easy to understand or learn. In fact the education system even at the center of the empire was really not that great to begin with. Faced with immigrants and migrant workers who can speak my language quite well and their native one and probably another one on top of that, it would seem that we are just not so smart at the end of the day. In the end it seems that one of the big problems with humanism—and let's just add modern education to the mix—was that it wanted us to be better than we were, to be more sophisticated, more aware, more informed. Now we can delegate issues of improvement and speed to the economy, to the internet, while we nestle ourselves back into a little Bilbo Baggins hobbit life of what we think we must always have wanted to be before we wanted to be better as people.

But on the other side of this there are many strange ways of materializing affective relations across long distances. While some try to hide from the storm, there are pathways being forged that are profoundly indifferent to precisely these myths of origin.

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And while these are the routes being traveled by both immigrants and cosmopolitan milieux alike—naturally the terms for class struggle become very blurry here—we can identify many material carriers that allow us to identify and create a language for these movements. I think it is through these carriers that any sense of a new and sophisticated commons is being developed against the notion of an originary mythical one of extended family love that is essentially fascist in its composition. But how do we identify these new forms in such a way that we might affirm them? One of these forms is of course contemporary art, even in its most economically determined form, but I would even look lower down at something that is packed more with affect and emotional energy than art, to the point that it bends around economic capture, and for this I like to think of pop songs really. Because pop songs already come out of a music economy that is in shambles after file sharing not only made scarcity obsolete, but also scrambled the entire logic of revenue distribution for publishers and artists alike. Likewise the computational tools of reception became the same as the tools of production. In some sense any music today is computer music. So music flows from computer to computer, from bedroom to bedroom, with or without revenue, with or without a name and a face attached. It is not very utopian but it also doesn't follow much of a structure. Without assurances we are cast into a world of lyricism and of speech acts for which pop songs are the only thing that stand, both metaphorically and materially, to describe the scale and spread of the planet of contradictions that our emotions are being tasked with resolving.

But what is love in this context?

Love becomes a society without the state, to paraphrase Pierre Clastres. Love within strong and well-managed infrastructural conditions is explained in transcendental and highly personal terms—we are meant to be together, we are made for each other. We have so much in common. We are a private commons within the society. Love is allowed to be platonic and never opportunistic, and only the most wretched or destitute people marry the child of a factory owner for that reason, for a passport, etc. But when the trash man stops showing up, everything starts to marble and flip. Infrastructure turns to love and love becomes infrastructure. The son becomes the trash man. True love becomes a healthy family

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business, with children as its labor force. The economic mobilization of love might explain how love can be used to territorialize close communities. It doesn't explain how much power these communities actually hold through those very bonds, through their ability to dissolve the apparent necessity of making alliances with power structures that don't offer any immediate form of reciprocal support simply because they are already there.

Loving bonds today can no longer be expressed in terms of nature and individual characteristics but in the actual practice of how life is lived and what choices are made. A contemporary love does not think about absolute being but applied practice—how to deal with stress together, how to deal with overlapping and conflicting interests. The strongest loving bonds today are forged in the fires of contingency and instability. A contemporary love doesn't have time to think about my nature or your nature, my star sign or yours, because we simply do not have time to indulge in these conversations, which are anyhow rather silly to begin with. Rather we are scrambling to prevent disasters from getting worse, whether in our personal, professional, political, economic, or planetary lives. And the practices we use to deal with disaster, to take care of each other, to survive, to have a dinner and a drink and laugh and cry even when the building is on fire, with not knowing what will happen tomorrow.

None of this is new. In fact, it's incredibly old. For peasants and farmers the world over this is and has always been completely basic. And in areas that supersede or evade infrastructure, whether politics or organized crime, family bonds always translate into strategic interests, but also into the relations of trust that sustain society.[7] Love never claims to be unbiased, because it is a highly subjective affair. Why anyhow should I love someone out of some universal principle when my own family is suffering? This is the question that Mao set out to answer when he launched a campaign against Confucianism as part of the Cultural Revolution. In order to build a free society, the authority of Confucianism had to be smashed and replaced with a moral code that included the state as the primary arbiter of relations between people. This was the only way to even begin thinking of resolving the severe class differences that plagued China's history. Confucianism was a kind of Mafia family code locking China into the feudal system that blocked the kind of clarity and administration needed to transition the country into the modern world.[8]

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Surely this is what Zhou Enlai, Mao's second in command, was thinking when he so beautifully proclaimed that "it's too soon to tell" whether the French Revolution had succeedet. We must see love as a radicalization of the integration and confusing of the public and private spheres. On the one hand, when Thatcher proclaimed that there is no such thing as society, that there are only people, she was making an argument for true love—not the state-subsidized universal love driven by some ethical idea of equality. Families and friends, a true conservative love. But to return to Lacan's formulation, when the stakes are lowered even further—say, following Thatcher—there is very little to be given or received other than affection and emotional support, promises and white lies, and maybe even some personal ethics to hold it all together in the meantime. Thatcherite savage realism knew that the state-administered public sphere is something no one really had and no one really wanted that much anyways. But like the falling or fallen tyrants everywhere are being forced to discover, a tyrant called love is coming.

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Notes

1 Jan Verwoert has often adapted this to the best definition of art I've ever come across.

2 Karl Marx, "The Power of Money," *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, marxists.org.

3 Is there on the contrary a logic that subtracts mutually? See Envy, Extreme Jealousy, Evil Eye, Evil, Misery, Satan.

4 See Franco "Bifo" Berardi, "The Future After the End of Economy," *e-flux journal* 30 (December 2011).

5 Thanks to Evgeny Shkaraburov for informing me of this after a jog.

6 See the report published by the *New England Journal of Medicine* on the increase in cases of sudden cardiac arrest following long-distance running races in the US between 2000 and 2010: "Cardiac Arrest during Long-Distance Running Races," January 12, 2012, nejm.org.

7 Confucianism in China is probably the best example of how family love can function as an organizing principle strong enough to sustain society without central command or mediation by state bodies. Because Confucianism in a nutshell implements a command structure within the private space of family relations, the social order is doubly protected from instabilities outside by basic solidarities backed by blood, love, and seniority. On this level Confucianism is essentially a moral code based in absolute unwavering obedience to one's own family elders, and to one's self by juniors in the family. And while many cite Confucianism as the popular belief system that sustained Chinese civilization for millennia in spite of wars and regime changes, its stabilizing effects come at the expense of social inequities between various clans and families, between women and men, between young and old. Confucianism is not egalitarian and does not aim to be. Powerful families stay strong, and the weak families stay weak.

8 The universal cosmic love declared by nineteenth-century utopians like Charles Fourier was always an attempt to formulate how love could be socialized, transitioned from the sphere of family and sensual attraction to an ethical, universal human responsibility between people. And the more bizarre and extreme aspects of Fourier's thinking, which were in his time attributed to his personal eccentricity, should also be understood as a tacit recognition of how difficult and projective and even phantasmagorical the idea of universal love always must be, and the idea of equality by extension.

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