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Communiqué from an Absent Future

on the terminus of student life

We live as a dead civilization. We can no longer imagine the good life except as a series of spectacles preselected for our amusement: a shimmering menu of illusions. Both the full-filled life and our own imaginations have been systematically replaced by a set of images more lavish and inhumane than anything we ourselves would conceive, and equally beyond reach. *No one believes in such outcomes any more.*

The truth of life after the university is mean and petty competition for resources with our friends and strangers: the hustle for a lower-management position that will last (with luck) for a couple years rifted with anxiety, fear, and increasing exploitation — until the firm crumbles and we mutter about "plan B." *But this is an exact description of university life today; that mean and petty life has already arrived.*

Just to survive, we are compelled to adopt various attitudes toward this fissure between bankrupt promises and the actuality on offer. Some take a naïve romantic stance toward education for its own sake, telling themselves they expect nothing further. Some proceed with iron cynicism and scorn, racing through the ludicrous charade toward the last wad of cash in the airless vault of the future. And some remain committed to the antique faith that their ascendingly hard labor will surely be rewarded some day if they just act as one who believes, just show up, take on more degrees and more debt, *work harder.*

Time, the actual material of our being, disappears: the hours of our daily life. The future is seized from us in advance, given over to the servicing of debt and to begging our neighbors. Maybe we will earn the rent on our boredom, more likely not. There will be no 77 virgins, not even a plasma monitor on which to watch the death throes of the United States as a global power. *Capitalism has finally become a true religion, wherein the riches of heaven are everywhere promised and nowhere delivered.* The only difference is that every manner of crassness and cruelty is actively encouraged in the unending meantime. We live as a dead civilization, the last residents of Pompeii.

7 Against Pompeii

Romantic naïvete, iron cynicism, scorn, commitment. The university and the life it reproduces have depended on these things. They have counted on our human capacities to endure, and to prop up that world's catastrophic failure for just a few more years. *But why not hasten its collapse?* The university has rotted itself from the inside: the "human capital" of staff, teachers, and students would now no more defend it than they would defend a city of the dead.

Romantic naïvete, iron cynicism, scorn, commitment: these need not be abandoned. The university forced us to learn them as tools; they will return as weapons. The university that makes us mute and dull instruments of its own reproduction must be destroyed so that we can produce our own lives. Romantic naïvete about possibilities; iron cynicism about methods; scorn for the university's humiliating lies about its situation and its good intentions; commitment to absolute transformation — not of the university, but of our own lives. This is the beginning of imagination's return. We must begin to move again, release ourselves from frozen history, from the igneous frieze of this buried life.

We must live our own time, our own possibilities. These are the only true justifications for the university's existence, though it has never fulfilled them. On its side: bureaucracy, inertia, incompetence. On our side: everything else.

**Like
the
society
to
which
it
has
played
the
faithful
servant,
the
university
is
bankrupt.**

deep bonds, and if there is a lesson to be learned from them it is that we must build dense networks of solidarity based upon the recognition of a shared enemy. These networks not only make us resistant to recuperation and neutralization, but also allow us to establish new kinds of collective bonds. These bonds are the real basis of our struggle.

We'll see you at the barricades.

Research and Destroy

2009