

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?// **The**

**Barbarians** are due

1/2013

Anarcho-Tourist Review

here today.// Why isn't

anything happening in the senate?/

Why do the senators sit there with

out legislating?// Be

cause the barbarians are coming today./

What laws can the senators make now?/



## **The Barbarian 1/2013**

*πᾶς μὴ Ἕλληνα βάρβαρος*  
*Whoever is not Greek is a barbarian*

- an old Greek saying

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Cover poem: C. P. Cavafy, *Waiting for the barbarians*

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Contact, feedback and articles

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**<http://thebarbarianreview.wordpress.com/>**

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## Foreword

Why a journal in English, in Athens, from non-Greeks? Not from any Anglophilia, or even any respect for the woefully vulgar modern English language, but as a consideration that in our times English has become the universal language. On the other hand, the events in Greece have a universal significance, and deserve to be communicated universally. Something which in fact is difficult to do, given the general lack of knowledge of the Greek tongue, and a certain charming modesty or taciturnity among the Greek revolutionists themselves, which forms such an admirable contrast to the endless French verbiage concerning the beautiful non-event of Mai 68, or the Anglo-American sub-marxism that fills the books of today. So it is no surprise that we have chosen to write in English, to better communicate the experience we have of being in, but not of, the Greek radical milieu, and it is to be hoped that this will be as rewarding for the Greek and non-Greek to read, as it has been for us to collect and write down our views.

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Cavafy's poem speaks to us today: are we not all "waiting for the barbarians" and finding in them, "a kind of solution"? Are we not at the end of a type of civilization, too? And do not all secretly regret that the inevitable end has not already come, and are not all hearts secretly wishing and longing for the irreversible wreck of this decadent society in which we live?

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The Barbarian Review is collection of thoughts written down by various foreign people in Athens: a few persons passing through a brief period of time, in a very special city. Life here has a dissolving temporality punctuated by clear moments, and what follows is a product of one of those moments. Specifically, the idea for this review occurred in front of Villa Amalias on the day of the infamous eviction on the 20th of December, 2012.

*The Barbarians*



## Philosophers of the Future

A theory proving that the earth is spinning around the sun, not vice versa – better known as the heliocentric theory of Copernicus – is understood as a breakthrough for the modern scientific world view.

From the 15th century and the days of Copernicus, rapidly developing natural science started slowly to replace God's authority over ontology and pragmatic truth that was exercised by kings and priests on His command. The scientific revolution led to secularism and all heretic ideas: enlightenment, modernism, mass society, capitalism and the ethos of bourgeois revolutions: freedom, fraternity and equality – and finally to post-modernity, economic crises and even to most predictable futures imaginable.

What if the essence of the thing we pompously call modernity is just about energy? Or even more provoking, if the philosophy of history should be replaced by the philosophy of energy? What if major historical dynamics – wars, power struggles and creativity – are based solely on energies and the technologies that make them possible? Let me be more precise: what if the medieval turned into modernity when black coal started to become more widely used as a fuel, and even the expeditions of Columbus – that are often seen as a start of modernity – are just a result of the beginning of fossil energy era? And the modern knowledge: science, civilization, Protestantism, enlightenment – so called western thought – has spread because of oil and coal?

Well, if the answer is yes or even perhaps, what does it then mean for western ethics, knowledge or culture? Maybe they have less substance than we suppose? Maybe it is primarily energy itself and a blind belief in its eternal power, and only secondarily the quality of the European spirit and all material forms it has taken in culture, econom-



ics and technologies? Let's at least give it a thought.

Many philosophers during last two hundred years have argued quite well that the experience of reality is not quite equal for every one. However, most of the arguments say that either there is no objective truth at all or there is/might be, but different kinds of alienation – psychological, social or political (if they can even be separated from each other) – are keeping us away from it.

The essential question is how subjective and separated experience can form something that one could call unity? Some might say that actually they can't – our individual thoughts are just forced to blend into imaginary unity we are supposed to share – languages, cultures, laws, nations and so on. There are some vague images of unity but they are based on imagination that is dominated and manipulated by power.

If it all comes down to power as Michel Foucault said, I guess there must be a source of it. Could it be energy? At least Foucault suddenly starts to sound like a proper philosopher.

These kinds of questions are constantly rising up while reading the essay *Oil and the Regime of Capitalism: Questions to Philosophers of the Future* written by Finnish philosopher Tere Vadén.

First let's start from the peripheral subarctic forest, near the Russian border in North-Karelia, Finland, where Lasse Nordlund moved in the beginning of the 1990's to test his ideas of self-sufficient life.

## **Lasse Nordlund**

For more than 10 years Nordlund was living alone in a small hut growing vegetables, fishing and getting his food from the forests around. He built most of the everyday tools he needed and made even most of his clothes himself – he started farming flax for fiber, making thread, thread to cloth and sewed the cloth to clothes with a needle whittled from bone.

During those years Nordlund spent approximately 50 € per year, mainly for bicycle tires and the dentist – after trying to pull off a tooth by himself. A few times he went to the village to buy milk, eggs and flour for pancakes, that he said helped him to go over the hardest times: “there is something very therapeutic about them!” But after learning to produce good and reliable harvests those bad days became more rare. Life became much easier than one would think. It took approximately 4 hours per day to keep his basic needs satisfied. However, there was enough time for socializing and all kinds of other activities as well. Once in a while Nordlund hitchhiked across the country to give lectures about his practice.

Ideological similarities of Nordlund’s one man self-sufficiency can be seen in Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, anarcho-primitivist thoughts as well as Protestant Kantian ethics. “I wanted to take responsibility for my actions and stay away from things I can not take responsibility for”, he told. “Not back to nature, rather back to the cave!”

With his own example Nordlund wanted to prove his hypothesis that materially and spiritually bearable, self-sufficient, and sustainable life was possible for modern man, even in a subarctic climate. And indeed that’s what he did with very few compromises.

In 2008 Nordlund published a pamphlet *Foundations of our life – Reflections about Human labour, Money and Energy from a Self-sufficiency Standpoint*, where he summarize his experiences and presents some more theoretical thoughts about the foundations of life.

What is the relationship between [...] used energy and the energy that is collected using it? Why is a remarkable part of the energy of imported (i.e. primary) energy expended in agriculture and forestry – areas that were supposed to provide us with energy?

Nordlund’s main argument says that so called efficient modern production is, as a matter of fact, decadent consumption and waste of resources. For example, most of food production that is supposed to give

us energy consumes way more energy than it gives back as nutrition. This imbalance – or more precisely – fundamental unsustainability of this production is currently leading to an ecological (and social) dead end that can be avoided only by living in a way where the production produces at least the same amount of energy it consumes, without injecting foreign and non-renewable energy in to the process. To keep it simple: material sustainability is based on the balance between consumption and production of energy and the positive energy efficiency of the technology that is used on production.

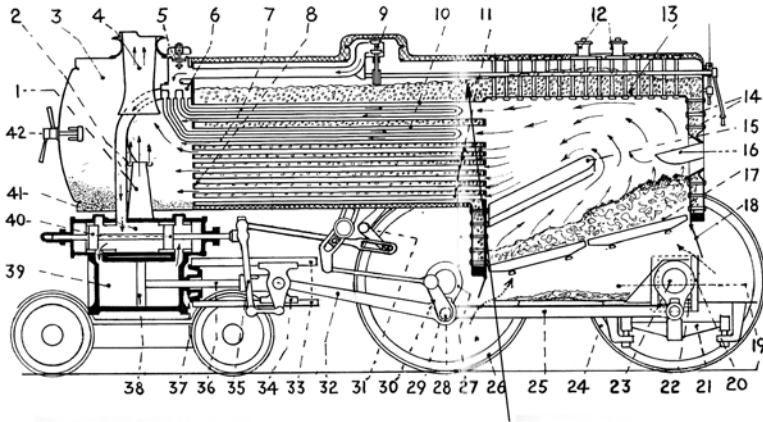
The implicit origin of production – and all energy calculations – is the body that each of us is bound to since birth. This body “is in a technical sense a very efficient machine, special thanks to its versatility. We do not need roads to move and we can climb a tree without special equipment. A human can perform physical work equivalent to that used by an incandescent lamp. We can manage about 60 watts. At that level we can work throughout the day and stay in good health. For short periods we can bring ourselves to work at a rate as high as 500 watts. After a heavy day of work, we will have performed about 1 kWh. To keep performing at this level, we have to eat food containing about 4 kWh of energy.”

Back in the good old days, when all work was manual work and done by human labour with the help of a few animals, energy profit of production – invested energy compared to produced energy – was generally low, and energy investments of labour came back directly as a form of food, clothes, heat, buildings and culture with very little surplus. In other words the profit was barely positive, but positive enough to keep people busy producing more generations. If the energy profit was negative, the person, family, community or society was not sustainable. This meant either a need to compensate the energy loss – usually by expanding the living or income area peacefully or violently – or slip into material shortage, misery, famine and death. This is more or less the history of pre-modern human kind in a nutshell. This logic changed radically starting from medieval times.

Coal burning was limited the first time by anti-pollution legislation in London already in the 13th century, declared by King Edward I. Most medieval and Renaissance individuals and industries simply needed heat for brewing and dyeing, glass-making and salt-boiling, for burning lime for plaster, cement and quicklime, for heating homes and domestic ovens or they needed timber for building houses, mills, and factories, carts and ships. This led to the first proper energy crisis, following rapidly expanded deforestation that was a problem almost everywhere in Europe by the 17th century. Next century coal was the world's most dominant energy source. The first oil tower was built in Pennsylvania in 1859 and the rest is history.

As the brief history of fossil fuel shows, throughout the so-called development of technology, more and more time and energy was invested to create more efficient ways to satisfy basic needs and everything else. More people started to work outside basic production and more often the energy that was invested in building new technology and maintaining labour was much greater than any of those innovations were able to give back. To give some perspective for technological development I would like to quote Nordlund's book once again. Nordlund has calculated that real energy "efficiency", "is only achievable by relatively simple technical equipment, such as an old-fashioned spinning-wheel or a (wooden) shovel. The less iron they contain, the better".

How could all this happen if the energy consumption was negative? Obviously the forests were not cut for the wooden shovels. The energy consumption of more advanced technology was only possible either with some foreign source of energy or constant expansion of exploited area – fossil fuel or colonialism, one could say, both of them were used and often side by side. However, since industrialization the gap between invested energy and produced energy started to grow dramatically. If the difference in the beginning of 19th century was 2/1, in the end of the 20th invested energy was 15 times larger, even though the gain of energy of production has only tripled. The waste is enor-



mous.

A tractor pulling a seven-bladed plough may look efficient, but it collects food energy a lot less efficiently than a person working by hand in a garden – when we take into account the energy and working time inputs more broadly than just for the individual farmer[...]

[E]ach tractor farmer in Finland supports 50 people, but it is done with an energy input that corresponds to 1,500 people working the fields manually. In comparison, a single Stone Age person could sustain one to two people in addition to himself[...]

If energy collection was less efficient by modern technology it also removed lots of human labour from primary production. Those workers, however, needed to be sustained too.

In 1940 half of Finland's population worked in primary production. By the year 1988, their number had gone down to eight per cent.

## Fossil Capitalism

Another angle to energy discussion is provided by philosopher Tere Vadén, who widens Nordlund's analysis into a context of social theories and philosophy. Vadén claims that growth is not a natural attribute of economics at all. Economical growth is a rather new phenomenon that started in Europe around 1820 – around same time when the coal-powered steam engine was invented.

The beginning of economical growth could be seen as a beginning of capitalism as well – not the theory or abstract socio-economical relation itself, but the real capitalism that has concrete material forms: black coal and steam engine, electric engine and combustion engine, oil and natural gas that are active in concrete reality.

Vadén says that when we are talking or theorizing about capitalism we are actually always talking about this concrete capitalism, fossil capitalism – not an abstract or ideal capitalism – and all analysis of capitalism should be read again with this consciousness.

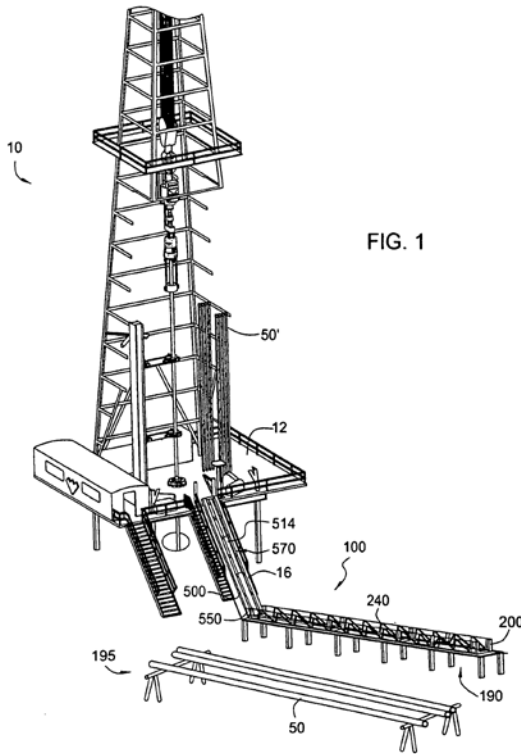
For example, when Marx and Engels in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) characterize capitalism as a system where “all that is solid melts into air and all that is holy is profaned” the question then is about this concrete capitalism based on economic growth that has been fed with cheap fossil fuel energy. [...] These metamorphoses are not the platonic phenomena of abstract capitalism but are instead directly attached to the movements of black raw materials.[...]

Both Marxists and anti-Marxists have had much to say about how a new labour force is created by turning people into paid labour. Yet surprisingly little has been said precisely about the increase of non-human labour, and its morphological effects. Oil is not, of course, “produced”, even though the term is generally in use. Oil is not “man-made”. It is discovered, extracted and then used.

## Oil peak

To be able to function, modern capitalism needs cheap oil. Because oil is non-renewable, it will run out when one is using it. Vadén states that for contemporary capitalism the question – when oil will run out completely, is not as important as: when cheap oil gets too expensive to be cheap anymore.

The global production of oil has been decreasing since 2005. The price has tripled in the last 10 years. Oil mines in USA peaked already in the 1970's and since then the USA has been importing oil from foreign countries to balance the continuously growing gap between oil production and consumption.



The discovery of new oil reserves have decreased for decades and a large number of oil producing nations have already passed their oil producing peak. A good example is the UK, which thanks to the oil discovered in the North Sea in the 1970s became an important oil exporter in the 1980s, passed its peak in 1999, and after that slid into an oil importing country at the beginning of the 21st century.

If oil is getting too expensive for capitalistic economies to grow, can it be replaced then? Vadén says no – or at least there is nothing yet that could work.

21st century global consumption of oil has been about 85 million barrels per day. This would mean 2500 nuclear plants more or 5200 new coal-fired power plants. Burning that much coal creates enormous amounts of carbon-dioxide that would dramatically hasten climate change. The trend of building nuclear power has been decreasing in the last 20 years. It seems to be too expensive to be profitable – and would there even be enough steel, concrete, uranium, time, money and so on?

Here is a view into the cruel beauty of oil: a cubic mile is, after all, not an impossibly large mass, but the energy it creates is virtually stellar. Only the sun exceeds oil in energy amounts, and oil is, of course, “preserved sun”.

Other alternative sources of energy – wind mills or solar panels – are not able to do it either, since now planning, construction and maintenance of alternative energy requires considerable amounts of cheap fossil fuels, and their energy profit is much lower than fossil fuels.

It looks like only a technological miracle can save continuous economical growth. But the history of miracles doesn't give much hope. Most of the energy innovations we see as alternatives have been invented long ago. The first versions of solar panels are from the end of the 1800s, the modern versions from the 1940s and nuclear power



from roughly the same decade. After that nothing really has happened. This doesn't promise any fast breakthroughs. And even if someone would come out with one, is there enough cheap energy to change the infrastructure: all factories, transportation systems and machines to adapt the new energy form? The oil dependent system took 150 years to be built up and it was done by energy-efficient coal. Is it possible to do it again? The conclusion is self-evident.

If economic growth is based on more work (in terms of either amount or productivity) and if [...] all known energy sources are considerably weaker than the oil fields that have already been used up or are now in production, then the future possibilities for an economy that continuously has to grow (in other words this existing capitalism) seem weak.

## **Questions to Philosophers of the Future**

My point in introducing views about energy and publishing it in this review is obviously not to propose that the social reality should be organized based on strict energy calculations. This is not a new historical materialism that one should turn into an ideology.

I'm rather tempted or even amused by the idea that we – as a human nation, Europeans or what-ever-americans – will never get further than the Moon – or if we want to get there we have to swim. All the complex calculations about The Truth shall wither by the death of the highly energy-intense digital industry! All those copper cables under the oceans and soil will turn green when cross continental networks will get silent! Lived experience can soon descend from the heaven of the bungee tower down to earth, to learn to run and jump on its own!

To be more philosophical and less romantic, it seems that the miserable western thought of science, technology, modernism, all of its ideologies and even the subjectivity (that was supposed to be objective) – all those ideas that have been lubricated with the fully-indoctrinated naturalistic idea of the endless opportunities of never ending oil – are

going to lose their ontological foundation and die. This might be an interesting question for the majority of anarchistic thought as well – as the whole ism has its roots deep in modernism, enlightenment and individualism and/or criticism of all of them.

If many generally applicable observations of the science of political economy are concerned not with abstract capitalism (or socialism) but rather the uniquely oil-injected capitalism, then could the same categorical error be evident also in some critiques of modernism, technology or the Western lifestyle? What if the hegemony of the West was not, after all, defined by modern natural science and technology, enlightenment and individualism but by a one-time offering of coal, gas and oil? As is well known, natural science and technology, enlightenment and individualism cannot be exported -- and have not once been exported -- without also exporting and using coal, gas and oil. The Catholic faith needed only coal and wind. [...]

If many socio-philosophical ideas have unknowingly been based on the assumption that a unique and in some sense arbitrary phenomenon [...] is universal, and have incorporated this blind spot into almost all our thinking concerning modern economy, politics and technology, then our glass is both half empty and half full. Half empty in that not many philosophers, economists, critics of modernism or social thinkers have said a rational word about the future where the economy shrinks year after year. We have arrived in an uncharted region, where the unknown is fully equivocal. Half full: talk about the end of history and other cultural saturation should be forgotten. Even a large part of philosophy can be started again from the beginning.

### **Back to the forest?**

At the moment Lasse Nordlund is building a new house for his family out of big pine logs that he is carving with his own hands, still on the

same land where he moved in 1992. His way of living – as well as yearly expenses – has continued more or less as it developed during his strict self-sufficient period, though now the house economy is shared with his partner Maria, who is having a part time job as a teacher in a village school, and their child.

Nordlund sees that the shrinking resources combined with the imperative of economical growth will definitely take more totalitarian forms on the social level. Against this he makes a provoking demand: every one should have a right to be poor. For him this means one's right to step out of society and follow an Indian law where people have the right to use nature but never to own it.

The alternative could happen through a “scattering and dispersion”. The ideal would be a network of autonomous and self-sufficient economical units, small enough to not form big energy or labour resources, so the possibility of violent repression would be minimal.

Even though Nordlund seems to have a general idea of organizing social life, his thought is not so one-sided.

Disagreement protects nature. People who are heading in opposite directions can not have such a massive impact than people who co-operate and build a Great Wall of China, pyramids or dam the rivers.

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### **Quotations and read more:**

Lasse Nordlund: Foundations of our life, 2008, [http://rihmasto.fi/sites/default/files/FoundationsOfOurLife\\_3\\_2010.pdf](http://rihmasto.fi/sites/default/files/FoundationsOfOurLife_3_2010.pdf)

Tere Vadén: Oil and the Regime of Capitalism: Questions to Philosophers of the Future, 2010, <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=658>

## Editorial postscript

The simple immediate sensation of “nuisances” and dangers that become more oppressive as the months go by, and that initially and principally assault the great majority of people (the poor, in other words), already constitutes a major factor in revolt, a vital demand of the exploited that is just as materialistic as was the struggle of the workers in the 19th century for the possibility of eating. Already the remedies for the totality of the sickness that production creates are too expensive for it at this stage of commodity richness. The relations between production and the productive forces have finally reached a point of radical incompatibility, because the existing social system has bound its fate to the pursuit of a literally unbearable deterioration of all the conditions of life.

### - Guy Debord (Theses on the Situationist International and its Time)

The novelty of the coming politics is that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-state (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization.

### - Giorgio Agamben (The Coming Community)

In line with the last article, one can not help but notice the immense wave of environmental struggles which mark our contemporary era: Halkidiki is by now known internationally since the daring arson attack on the mining vehicles, Val de Susa has much the same recognition as one bright spot amidst the sad decadence of Italy. Similarly we have the ZAD in France and their struggle against the airport, Indonesian peasants struggling against another neoliberal mining project, and even in staid Finland there is a developing struggle against the Talvivaara mine.

All these contemporary struggles point to a new form of struggle emerging, even a new historical period into which we are entering, in which the anti-austerity struggles of the present are the last act of the workers’ movement, and the environmental struggles the birth pangs of a new era. All of the old assumptions of the workers’ movement, with their historically unprecedented claims, are in their turn being dissolved by the same history whose end they claimed to be. So that

in all these movements we do not have a fight over the management of the means of production, but a fight against *the implementation* of the means of production. And it is not a fight over different interpretations of the economy (Marx's life work remaining only a 'critique of political economy', after all) but rather the reality of the economy and its logic is being contested. This also is revealing that there is nothing 'natural' about the capitalist economy, it is really a spiritual belief system imposed by the state. So that in place of the famous, supposedly eternal logic of the economy we have only the armed force of the state, enforcing certain actions for the masses, and permitting robbery by a tiny elite, which has been what has passed for a logical system from the very beginning.

Clearly, capitalism is not so much a system that has mastered nature yet is unable to master human society, as in the classical Marxist theory. It is instead the lack of control over society, with its frequent crises and disasters, that runs parallel to its disastrous relation with nature. What if there was, in fact, never any "good side" to capitalism, that its so-called advances are merely progress towards further disasters following more disasters? And even further back, if they are the result of the unique Judeo-Christian religious heritage of separation from nature, with the concomitant result that nature is viewed as a separated "other" to dominate and despoil? Truly, history knows of no other civilization that has become so universal as capitalism, nor one that has so devastated the planet. As a result the period we are entering sees the contest against the economy in defence of the environment and the local community play an increasing role, replacing that of political or previously religious issues. Concordantly neither Liberalism, nor Marxism, realized in 1917, can assume a role of explaining this new era that is outside of their field of vision, so to speak. The bourgeoisie and proletariat, now largely liquefied by the corporate and union bureaucracy, are united in their mutual incomprehension of a third force taking shape outside their tortured mutual relation, and thus neoliberal America and Marxist China are appropriately in charge of the global disaster-economy, despite all their differences.

To close: if the past few centuries have seen a civilization of natural resource exploitation take shape, now that the resources end, does this not evidently point to a new mode of society being forced to emerge, and similarly, does not this prove that there was something finite and limited in the ideas that inspired the frenzy of natural exploitation in the first place? Is not everything to be reconsidered?

## **The mines of Halkidiki are a golden opportunity that should not go wasted**

**11.000.000** euro: The price that Hellas Gold paid to obtain the mining rights of an area of 317.000 acres in northern Halkidiki (also Chalkidike). The contract was signed with the Greek State after the intervention of Mr. Pachtas, the then under-secretary of Finance and now mayor of Aristoteles municipality. There was no competition prior to the contract. There was a direct commission instead to a company that had only been established two days before (a company with a stock capital of 60.000 euro!). Moreover, according to the terms of the contract, the company was exempt from any obligation regarding the reparations that were due because of the ecological damage that the Canadian TVX Gold had caused in the area (the latter company disappeared one night into thin air leaving 472 workers without pay; in total the company's debt towards workers was 17 million euro).

95.700.000 euro: The profit that Leonidas Bobolas, Dimitrios Koutras and Frank Timiş (the main stockholders of Hellas Gold) made after they gradually broke the company in fragments and then sold them to the mother multinational European Goldfields.

408.000.000 euro: The market value of the mines according to the estimate that a global financial services firm gave six months after their signing over by the Greek State, which means that the value grew 37 times higher than the price paid. This did not stop the then government to subsidize Hellas Gold with 15.000.000 euro.

2.300.000.000 euro: Today's value of the mines in the Toronto Stock Exchange, after the takeover of European Goldfields by Eldorado Gold Corporation, which now controls 95% of Hellas Gold shares. Eldorado Gold is a Canada-based multinational corporation and its main

investors are funds and banks like J. P. Morgan and Goldman Sachs.

15.436.000.000 (!) euro: The value of the minerals that lie in the mines of Halkidiki.

0 euro: The profit of the Greek State. According to the Mining Code, the ore resources and deposits of mines belong exclusively to the companies that exploit them, and there is no clause of rendering any mining rights to the State due to their exploitation. This is reason why the IMF/ECB/EU Troika refused to accept the proposal of the Greek government, which offered the Halkidiki mines as a guaranty during negotiations for the loan agreement.

### **Those who react are provocateurs and stand against progress**

Many people probably think that Eldorado Gold intends to construct underground mines with shafts, digging tunnels, etc. But this is not the case. The mega-project is going to focus on a process of extraction of the gold, a surface pit, which involves the extensive use of toxic cyanide. The cyanide concentration will turn the soil into garbage leaving behind toxic waste, mainly cyanide, arsenic and sulphuric acid.

0.8 grams: This is the amount of gold they can extract per ton in this area.

18 tons: That's how many tons of waste rock will be excavated to yield one gold ring.

2 km: This is the length that the open pit is going to have in diameter, plus the waste lakes (pools of poison) where the toxic fluids are going to be 'contained'.

3.000 acres of forest are going to be destroyed before the mining project can commence.

200 million tons: According to the company's plan, this is the number of tons that are going to be extracted in the next few years. In the 2.500 years that mines have been operational in Halkidiki, only 30 million tons were mined; out of this number, the 20 million tons were extracted since 1927 by the businessman Bodossakis.

15.000.000 cubic meters of water is now pumped out in the mining area per year, the equivalent of a year's water consumption for the entire Halkidiki Peninsula.

691.000 liters: The average consumption of water for one kilo of extracted gold. It is not however only the waste of water resources that is incalculable but also the danger and the consequences of an accident. In a gold mine of the Baia Mare region, Romania, in the year 2000 there was a leakage of 100.000 cubic meters of water with high concentrations of cyanide and other heavy metals. This contaminated water reached the Tesla River and then the Danube, causing pollution beyond Romania, Hungary and Serbia, poisoning drinking water resources, killing dozens of thousands of fish and inflicting the death of the neighbouring ecosystems. This environmental accident in Baia Mare is considered the most catastrophic one in the history of the European continent, second only to the Chernobyl disaster. Thus, the destructiveness of the mines in the Skouries region in Halkidiki is not something that should concern only the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages but the Halkidiki Peninsula as whole (since the groundwater supplies will inevitably be contaminated). In case of an accident it will definitely affect the densely populated area of Thessaloniki, too, and there is no telling where such a disaster will end...

Soil, water and air are priceless, and belong to all of us. Gold, on the other hand, is an abstract concept that, especially today, acquires value when it functions as 'money', when it is used as an effort to counterbalance the 'over-the-top money', money invented out of thin air, that came into being three decades ago through bank lending and the stock exchanges' system of speculation and gambling. We have to point out the fact that only the 10% of the world's extracted gold deposits are actually put to some tangible use. At the same time, the quantity of gold that is being used as 'money' in stock exchanges and in the international monetary system is seven times more than the real quantity of gold which can be found in the planet.

'Development and progress' is the echo following the an-



nouncements concerning the gold mines, as well as the wind turbines on Lesvos and Limnos islands, and elsewhere, the waste incineration factories; all these plus innumerable other such crimes are presented as the antidote to the crisis, the same crisis that the development itself created. The case of the gold mines is the most extreme one, out of all these ‘developing crimes in the name of progress’, due to the fact that no one even dares to oppose the destruction that they are about to cause, but also because—as we all know by now—the multinationals will draw all the profit, apart from a short-term small portion that will go to a few hundred workers. Furthermore, it is not coincidental that this scandalous transaction scam of the northern-eastern Halkidiki mines took place during a period of affluence, at a time when no one paid any attention, while the realization of the mega-project, the actual construction of the mines, is pushed forward now, amidst the crisis. Here, we are faced with blunt blackmail: we have to either accept such a plainly and straightforward destructive proposition, or else we will not manage to survive.

The whole problem with capitalistic growth is not simply that there are some businesspeople and politicians who are squeezing exorbitant profits out of everybody else, and in order to do so—always in the name of the profit—they will destroy the environment, but the plain fact that our lives are being governed by an international money mafia that kills humans, animals and the Earth. The true face of progress is one of a vicious circle that will constantly dictate even harsher terms in order to exploit more each time. Development manages to achieve this through the breaking up of communities and the weakening of individuals, bonding them tighter and tighter to the chariot of this mechanism of death and destruction called capitalism. Consequently, this ongoing collapse gives birth to certain types of people who fall prey to the blackmail—because they are so desperately looking for single-handed solutions that seem to be in their own self-interest—and eventually believe that their interests are the same ones with those of multinational corporations. They do not care about the impact that

their choices have on the whole of society, the consequences of which will soon knock also on their door.

The system wishes to incapacitate us so that we are in no position to decide for ourselves. Its whole existence depends on whether we choose to bind ourselves to the dynamic engine of capitalism, in order to survive or even enjoy a share of the profits of the capitalistic growth. If we want to stand against this dictatorship of money, if we want to build another world, we cannot succumb to this blackmail of crisis that is offering further disasters and is driving us towards the desperate pursuit of a personal bailout while threatening entire communities with mass destruction. We can neither hand over our future to any sort of saviours. On the contrary, we must fight to defend common goods and resources. We must fight to put an end to the activities of these megacompanies and of all the politicians who are in their payroll. We must struggle to prevent the destruction of people's communities.

Social solidarity, collective consciousness and human values are our weaponry.

We must meet and discuss. Which goods are necessary? Which are the values that we should fight for? How do we take decisions? How can we, ourselves, organize and take charge of our lives?

Whoever is silent is an accomplice to the crime...

*- Open Coordination of Thessaloniki against the gold mines*

\* \* \*

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## A Kaleidoscope of Memory-Images

Not a theoretical directive from a bureau pretending to direct affairs, but rather another voice added to a chorus, another emanation in addition to all the others.

\*

We are sitting in the Parko, drinking beer as usual.

– Yeah, I know what you mean, he says – Like starting from here we can change the world.

Exarcheia comes from the heart.

\*

Rakomelo in the cafe to celebrate the end of the world in 2012.

– Maybe it really will end, we confide with half-hope to one another, almost coughing over the warmed-up liquor. The barman calls back to us our claim about the end of the world in yet another toast.

– No, no, interrupts an old customer in the back, clacking his worry beads as he slowly rises with effort and shuffles over to pay. – No, it is the end of paradise, he says somewhat cryptically. With good humour, the barman tries to correct him, but he is adamant: it is the end of paradise, not the world. And with that, he somewhat unsteadily goes out the door into the night. Yes, we reflect, he is in the right: the end

of the working class paradise, the neoliberal paradise, the middle class social-democrat paradise, the scientific progress paradise, all the variations of the Christian heaven come down to earth. We are here at the vanishing of paradise: the social contract, the welfare state, democracy and all that. A new toast:

– Goodbye paradise, hello disaster! little glasses go up – To the catastrophe!

Yes, let us have a toast to this, our new era of storm clouds!

\*

Merkel comes to visit. Athens is waiting. The sky is gray and apocalyptic: not the apocalypse of imagination, thunder and lightning, but the gray mournful waning of the world in its own banality. There is besieged Syntagma surrounded by its riot police, the shops all shuttered and closed, the walls covered with graffiti, and a hateful, angry feeling in the air. The surveillance camera on its gigantic concrete pole is watching the events with silent malevolence. There is something universally ugly, almost frightfully shabby about the scene: Athens is not a beautiful city any more, the riot police are standing there with tear gas at the ready representing the governmental views and projects, the shoppers have all retreated for a brief time, the leftists are chanting their meaningless slogans while slowly trying to filter away from the fighting, and meantime we are collecting chunks of marble and stones. All together now: the riot police are forced back away under a hail of projectiles, hoots, and derision. More tear gas is the response. Clashes start to spread around the big mob in the center of the square.

It was not even such a big riot, so far as Athens is concerned, and yet anywhere else in Europe it would be sensational. Even so, it was special for the vision it distilled: here is the contemporary world, the modern era, that of a barely functioning coalition government de-

terminated to end the hedonistic apathy that was its only real support. When materialistic doctrines underlie a society, as they have only just done for the past two centuries in the West, there is no love possible between ruler and ruled, no organic connection in the society. This emptiness was especially evident on that day: this is what is left of all the fantastic promises of the past two centuries- a young mob throwing rocks at the universally despised police forces on streets littered with debris and ever-renewed tear gas, the leftists desperately trying to call an uncaring elite to old promises extorted from them under threat of civil war, and this same elite determined to annihilate its own society to save itself. And above all the vacant surveillance camera watching over the fray, the promise and practice of a new totalitarianism but one that is finding its pretensions and power everywhere falling short of its own mad desires, that finds everywhere only a lack of respect and consideration. Empty streets and running rioters, police hurriedly tramping along, Maalox and stun grenades, leaving behind them deserted, smashed storefronts surrounded by chunks of rubble: Welcome to the 21st century.

\* \* \*

## The Bridge

I was born and raised in the very center of Berlin, in Kreuzberg. There was a little beautiful olive-green steel bridge in front of my house from where you could see a nice sunset over the canal. I crossed this bridge every day when I went to kindergarten and to school. From my perspective it was a grey area and my first memories with this bridge were when I had to escape across it from the bullies in my school, or later going there to buy some grass from people around or beer from the little shop next to it, where a very nice Turkish guy was making his living. So the years passed and once, in the summer of 2002 or 2003 maybe, there were some people on this bridge whom I had never seen before, mysterious people with long hair and even guitars and sometimes with a big backpack drinking beer, making music and speaking southern European languages like Italian or Spanish, which for me was quite exotic.



I only knew the sound of Turkish and Berliner German which are both quite rude languages compared to the musical birdlike Mediterranean chattering. I loved these people, and sometimes I sat down and listened. At some point my friends and I were also more often sitting on the bridge, and the bridge was becoming popular. In the next summer even more people arrived and in the next one even more and then about four summers after the first encounter with the long-haired, long-bearded strangers this bridge was packed with people. I mean packed: natives, adventurous travellers and also less adventurous tourists were all sitting there together. Even fully equipped electric bands started to play there in the evening. And one day I heard from some tourist people that they read about my bridge, my good old bridge in a tourist-guide from America... from America, I couldn't believe it. Obviously it was "the place to be" in the world for all the first-world kids around the globe. What a coincidence the wind of the world was blowing into my face so strongly that I could lean against it.

Now the Turkish shop had become a castle and everything was new and shiny. He added another room to the back with huge fridges with beer and from now on he was dressed like a millionaire and I think he was more cold now, at least he pretended not to remember me when I asked him. But this global wind didn't blow for very long, the neighbouring people were soon complaining about the noise at night. When noise and silence have a fight in Germany the silence always wins, so next summer there were police coming every evening at 10 pm to clean the bridge, not with teargas but with friendly words, yet with quite the same result that people were gone. People were still coming but the peak was reached by now, it all goes down the hill as Berlin's general popularity goes down the hill. The New York Times even wrote a crushing article about Berlin and that Berlin is "over" or something like that, and this article is right I think, like with my bridge, all Berlin slowly becomes more expensive, more cold and more silent than it was and than it should be. So I took off and moved to Athens with my long hair, my beard, and my guitar.



## Phenomenology of Greek Anarchy

*Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our ideas instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place.*

-Hegel, *Aesthetics*

I begin this analysis by trying to answer a question the attentive observer will no doubt ask, namely, why is there no new intellectual theory emanating from the Greek revolt, no new artistic movement, no new analyses or manifestoes, none of the things with which we typically associate a great social change? Why is this Greek ferment of today blessed, or perhaps cursed, with a strange type of silence, almost an invisibility? In the last great revolt of the West, Italy's movement of '77, *Autonomia*, there was not only a lively, relatively orthodox Marxist culture with contributions from Negri, Tronti, Feltrinelli, and the armed groups, but more notable for us was the anarchic wing inspired by Situationism, the writings of Deleuze, Foucault, and Cesarano, the counter culture of punks and hippies, etc. Whereas in contemporary Greece there is only an ugly rage, and a static theory of Anarchy, no more elaborated in its foundations than the hasty writings of Bakunin over a century ago. And it should be noted, that every day the global society decays ever further away from the 19th century model of society in which Anarchism was formed. So it does not surprise us overmuch that the Greek Anarchist movement in its very existence and social relevance, has an analogue only in Spain, the historic homeland of Anarchy, and is very much a peculiarity in post-modern Europe.

The only real novelty in the situation, but one that in its undeveloped obscurity still fits within our previous general observations, is

the section of Greek Anarchy espousing nihilism as its doctrine, which is only the development of a conscious, wilful, non-aesthetic creed. In which, it is probably the clearest expression of what is actually at stake in Greece: the fervent act-ivism, the propaganda by deed, as the only deed left, shows us something of where modern civilization has gone. *Nota bene*, it is not that Greece is behind other lands, as if by itself it had no new spiritual expressions-more astonishing, it is that everything metaphysical has died off everywhere, and the only ray of hope left comes from Greek insurrectionism. In other words, all that is left of what once expressed itself in isolated security in the realms of art, religion, and philosophy, now can only find a mutilated expression in the project of an overthrow of the existing conditions of society. Metaphysics is no longer carrying on a feeble existence in its previous sphere, it is now totally subsumed under materialism. It has "gone under", so to speak. Today, there is far more thought put into a guerilla action than into any works of so-called modern art (most of which, after the example of Duchamp that was vulgarized by Warhol, openly flout their lack of charm and mercenary desire to be purchased at an immoderate price) or the feeble remains of critical theory that only internally dissects its own impotence. And this thought-full character of resistance is not only relative to the times, where the government of Greece becomes more and more an enhanced version of the older fascism and as the Sino-American world shows more and more its overt totalitarianism, but is also related to the internal development of the spiritual sphere itself.

Something has happened to the metaphysical condition, which was previously the sphere of divinity in human affairs, in which art, religion and philosophy held sway over baser affairs like manual labour and the transactions of commerce. German Idealist philosophy, which formulated and contributed so much to these terms, also provides proof of their passing away. If these realms of the human spirit have passed away from common life and are only used to adorn the empty triumph of the modern State, then this State, Empire, is equally

the guarantor and custodian of their passing into oblivion. Empire has realized metaphysics without abolishing it, in its bland universality; while the radical movement has abolished metaphysics as a mere materialistically-conceived “illusion” without realizing metaphysics. The contradiction we live today is that the spuriously substantial world, the Spectacle, now presents not only the totality of physical wealth under an alienated form, but also the greatest riches of all, metaphysical values, have also been included, “brought together, but as separated” in the inoffensive form of museum artefacts and petrified thought. There are the incomprehensible dictates from the secular heaven of the economy, Troika memorandums coming like the thundering decrees of the Christian God and his rulers, equally incapable of being opposed. Against this is a pure individuality, atomized masses, an empty subjectivity bereft of all possible content. We are simply living out the contradictions of Western thought: Empire, as the “one” that has assimilated everything to it, and the “many”, the last possible content of non-content, that tries to refute the totality of the modern system. That is to say that quality is here opposed to quantity, positive to negative, and being to non-being. This is no doubt why the immense meaning attached to the deaths of Alexandros and Lambros by Greek Anarchy, and objectively the import of their deaths, seems incomprehensible to the official world. Since Empire is one-sided quality, being, it has only the one-sided view that negation is simply a termination, and an end. Thus this ever-growing human agglomeration it has designated as outside of itself and of no human value, seems really to be nothing, it really is nothing, being deprived of the everything that is synonymous with the wealth of the Spectacle. But here we have the two opposites locked in combat, and the mutual collapse of the positions: out of nothingness is in fact coming precisely what it was not supposed to have, substantiality, and the bourgeois world of today is in fact collapsing into nothingness. That sacrificing a life for an idea might lead to a new type of life is incomprehensible to capitalism, but rather obvious for anyone who thinks about the implications of December 2008, to name one

example.

What does all this signify, practically? It means that Greek Anarchy today is now the purest historical negation: no longer negation possessed of specific material qualities, this class, this party, this organization, this ideology, but rather negation itself. Marx's "class that is the dissolution of classes", his proletariat, was always conceived too materialistically. It was Bakunin, in his praise of idealistic, aristocratic youth, the lumpenproletariat, and rebellious peasants, in his love of liberty, who was much closer to where we stand today. Anarchy is a philosophical position, not a class position; this is more appropriate since the workers' movement was concerned not so much with workers as with philosophy. The proletariat did not inherit philosophy, rather philosophy inherited the proletariat, and we live in the moment when it is casting away this outer materialistic shell. Negation, not the proletariat, moves negation; the proof is that today negation waxes, while the proletariat wanes. In our historical moment, negation itself, not the proletariat, is abolishing the proletariat. We no longer have a class that represents negation, we have really-lived negation, that can only manifest its negative character in the destructive act. But this is only a purely negative essence, a phenomenological, ephemeral appearance, not having a proper existence. Yet nothingness is also a positive acquisition: metaphysics is no longer alienated from its alienation, but rather, totally foreign to itself. Metaphysics knows itself as this "nothing that should be everything", and on the other hand, Empire, the modern State, is pure positivity, an everything that fears its own disguised nothingness.

Incidentally, this is also why the world of today seems covered with a thin veil of melancholic aesthetic sentiment that serves to protect it. This is obvious with the non-violent Christianity of peaceful civil disobedience, and philosophy itself has been drawn into the defence of the *American Way of Life* by Fukuyama. The realm of art is the most insidious, because while the masses easily dismiss spiritual conceptions of religion or philosophy, aesthetics, as the most materialistic form of

spiritualism, can go unsuspected. Yet this last, too, is called into the ranks to protect this fundamentally empty, dying world. Because Athens is so unabashedly an ugly city, wrecked in the past half-century by the respectable classes, it gives the lie to this defensive manoeuvre; while elsewhere in Western Europe, one could certainly imagine social contestation opposed by humane considerations of culture, in some museum-city like Venice, for example. At any rate, this feeble defensive use of faded spirituality was certainly attempted by Empire after some of the few remaining neoclassical buildings were burnt on February 12, 2012.

As an aside, none of this study is a moral judgement, either for or against the current state of affairs, both in our world and in Greek anarchy. It is simply the historical epoch grasped in itself. It would be quite pointless to demand a re-aesthetization of these black-clad crowds. We should acknowledge this world-historical character of pure negation: something like what once was the aesthetic moment as the Molotov strikes home, a riot cop is lit aflame, and the barricades begin to burn with black smoke while white tear gas lingers in the air, and the chants begin to echo in the narrow Athens streets. It does have a sublime, or more-than-real character to the event, in a quotidian sense. Because the secret longing of this world quite clearly is bringing the objective world back into unity with the subjective one, by abolishing this unmediated contradiction. The world today that opposes revolution has everything, but only in a pale and empty form, somewhat like a man who claimed that he owned all the animals of the world, but on closer inspection they were only stuffed specimens behind glass in exhibits. One would say such a man has all the forms in the world, but not the spirit; and this is the world of Empire, forms voided of life, metaphysics that was once really lived.

So there is nothing really that a phenomenological analysis gives us, other than knowledge of a contradiction reduced to its purest form. We return to our initial question: Greek Anarchy has nothing visible about its revolt because it forms a special period in the history of the West. Negation which previously was qualified with a material shell,

now is wholly negative. This pure negative is invisible, so it is the perfect form for the metaphysical, which to the common understanding also seems invisible and non-existent. So philosophy has not dissolved into the real world, as many have thought; it is rather the supposedly real, material world, that in the knowledge of its forms of appearance (*φαινομενολογια*) dissolves into philosophical categories. Metaphysics is now universally present, but as absence. This promises a return to plenitude like the sun is born anew after a storm, the world covered with raindrops glistening like diamonds and anointed with a rainbow.

So perhaps, we arrive at this promise, that when this shop-window world is smashed in a durable manner, then the re-appropriation will be far less of commodities, which are a very feeble expression of human essence, than the re-appropriation of the metaphysical condition, as the true essence of humanity. Only negation can provide a return out of negation, so negation is the only thing left to us today. And in truth, all we negate, is negation itself: this world is already ruined, and now it must become, visibly, what it already is, essentially. A promise, meaning a faith in an event to arrive. Perhaps not too far from now, when the fire of the all-consuming negative sparks a new blaze, the conflagration will astound the world, not only as heat to warm the hearts of this glacial, frozen world, but most of all as light, as illumination, as “the sunrise that, in a flash and in a single stroke, brings to view the form and structure of the new world.”

This is why we can say in closing, with the Young Hegelian Bakunin,

*...the Geist, that old mole, has brought its underground work to completion and will soon come again to pass judgment...All people and all men are filled with a kind of premonition, and everyone whose vital organs are not paralysed faces with shuddering expectation the approaching future which will utter the redeeming word. Let us therefore trust the eternal Geist which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of life. The passion for destruction is also a creative passion!*



## Walking

The grip of reality and the vague idea of the made up route is disappearing now lost and all of a sudden alone an anonymous shadow constantly changing position through unknown territories there is no one in sight and the mind is drifting out of control while the body flows further away quickly led across the street into an arcade a new path or an impasse turn the corner and the light at the end of the tunnel is showing the way by small shops offering small objects leading to an unknown street the movement stops trying to get some directions in the quick pause offered they are gathered on the corner six armed creatures dressed in their soulless suits occupying the street sudden interest in looking down the body makes a fast move keeping calm while new directions are given not looking back just walking looking down walking away fueled by this encounter





with the servants of power moving fast straight forward constantly observing the ground looking for new ways to move walking fast finding a rhythm turning corners and crossing streets down a narrow passage paying no attention to which way it goes passing an old restaurant with pink walls drawn to this place the movement is forced to stop its full of chairs with no seats tables pushed to the side the floor is covered with plastic and a view of minarets fills the back wall the cats like it here being fed at the door its changing breathing lost life and disappearing into the mist of decay like many others before it is a picture of deserted beauty dissolving in now an imaginative present with an unknown future free and captured at the same time the moment moves on and people pass while losing more and more what was before known places are no where to be found lost in what already has been mapped looking for paths to anywhere but everything is getting blurred and things are getting too familiar recalling thoughts but everything is gone wiped clean and it is all new again - the grip of reality and the vague idea of the made up route is disappearing now lost and all of a sudden alone an anonymous shadow constantly changing position through unknown territories there is no one in sight and the mind is drifting out of control while the body flows further away quickly led across the street into an arcade a new path or an impasse turn the corner and the light at the end of the tunnel is showing the way by small shops offering small objects leading to an unknown street the movement stops trying to get some directions in the quick pause offered they are gathered on the corner six armed creatures dressed in their soulless suits occupying the street sudden interest in looking down the body makes a fast move keeping calm while new directions are given not looking back just walking looking down walking away fueled by this encounter with the servants of power moving fast straight forward constantly observing the ground looking for new ways to move walking fast finding a rhythm turning corners and crossing streets down a narrow passage paying no attention to which way it goes passing an old restaurant with pink walls drawn to this place the movement is forced to stop its full of chairs with no seats tables pushed to the side the floor is covered with plastic and a view of minarets fills the back wall the cats like it here being fed at the door its changing breathing lost life and disappearing into the mist of decay like many others before this palace is a picture a deserted beauty dissolving in now an imaginative present with an unknown future free and captured at the same time the moment moves on and people pass while losing more and more what was before known places are no where to

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Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.//Why did our emperor get up so early,/and why is he sitting at the city's main gate/on his throne, in state, wearing the crown?//Because the barbarians are coming today/and the emperor is waiting to receive their leader./He has even prepared a scroll to give him,/replete with titles, with imposing names.//Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today/wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?/Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,/and rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds? Why are they carrying elegant canes/beautifully worked in silver and gold?//Because the barbarians are coming today/and things like that dazzle the barbarians.//Why don't our distinguished orators come forward as usual/to make their speeches, say what they have to say?//Because the barbarians are coming today/and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.//Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?/(How serious people's faces have become.)//Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,/everyone going home so lost in thought?//Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come./And some who have just returned from the border say/there are no barbarians any longer.//And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?/They were, those people, a kind of solution.