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# 'Communism ... is the affirmation of a new community': Notes on Jacques Camatte

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## Abstract

This article explores the work of the primitivist communist Jacques Camatte. Camatte emerges from the Bordigist current of Marxism, and the article begins with an examination of the major emphases in Amadeo Bordiga's thought: the central role of the party as 'social brain'; the critique of democracy and electoral activity; the rejection of individualism, and the insistence on the social, community-centred character of communism. This background is crucial to Camatte's early work, but also to his later break from Bordigism and Marxism. This break occurred at the end of the 1960s, and the second part of the article follows Camatte's primitivist writings. Here, Camatte continues to think of communism as community/Gemeinwesen, but fundamentally re-orientes his thinking on class, organisation, and communist transformation, in light of an extension of his initial focus on capital's 'running away', its establishment as material community. The concluding note critically draws together Camatte's thinking and later English-language primitivist work, suggesting that despite major problems, his work remains of interest.

## Keywords

Marxism, Camatte, Bordiga, anarchism, primitivism, social and political theory

## Introduction

It is unlikely that the thought of French communist Jacques Camatte is widely known to those working in the field of social and political thought. Nevertheless, it contains plenty

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that is of interest, beyond what might be delivered by a distanced history-of-ideas treatment of intellectual novelties or oddities. For a start, Camatte's distinctive later work was built from a platform provided by a fascinating, but relatively neglected (even in Italy) wing of Italian communism – the Bordigist line. Second, the development of Camatte's thinking in the direction of what has commonly been referred to as primitivism is both unusual (because of his Bordigist roots), and is one of a number of important resources for English-speaking primitivist intellectuals and collective projects. Furthermore, while this current appears to have peaked and subsequently declined in influence from the middle of the 1990s, it contains plenty to chew on, and its emphases and impulses continue to have at least a subterranean life within the broad field of anarchist thought, which has, moreover, been reinvigorated since the close of the 1990s in alternative-globalisation currents. At a higher level of generality still, the apparent return of interest in Marx and socialism, and the re-appearance of a harder left of contestation in both formal and informal political life, which have followed the onset of the current financial crisis, makes an exploration of this surprising, unique thinker of some relevance, raising, as he does, questions of capitalism and communism that remain meaningful and resonant.

In this article, I will seek to touch on these issues, drawing on the work by Camatte currently available in English. I will begin by providing a background to his thought by exploring the work of Bordiga at some length – such is the continuity of themes between Camatte's early work within the International Communist Party and his later primitivist phase. I will then specifically examine the movement of Camatte's thought, from the early Bordigist writings to the primitivist trajectory taken after 1968. Here, Camatte re-orientates his thinking around community, organisation, and the character of contemporary capitalism, breaking from Marxism, and presenting an impassioned plea for humanity to end its 'wandering' – rejecting domestication, technological development, and domination, in the name of the re-establishment of '*Gemeinwesen*'. In a concluding note, I draw Camatte's later work together with more contemporary Anglo-American primitivist currents, considering in broad strokes what might be alive and dead in such work. While much of this formation of thought appears today to be naively romantic, worryingly irrationalist, and inadequately political, there are, I suggest, certain aspects that still have significance – in particular, the questioning of growth and the human consequences of new technological developments, the existentialist note sometimes struck in response to capital's 'running away', and the impassioned utopian demand for another way of being and being together.

## The Bordigist inheritance

In a review of a Cristina Corradi's (2005) *Storia dei marxismi in Italia*, Peter Thomas (2009: 129) notes the significant absence of Amadeo Bordiga: 'the mention of his name, revealingly, still has the capacity to prompt a Wittgensteinian silence in some areas of the Italian left'. Thus, nearly 60 years prior to Corradi's story, the editors of the first edition of Gramsci's letters from prison had seen it as necessary to erase references to the continuing and warm connection between Gramsci and Bordiga, and, very often, Bordiga is only mentioned as a dogmatic and one-dimensional vulgar Marxist foil to Gramsci's subtle and rich explorations in the philosophy of praxis.<sup>1</sup> Yet within the history of

Marxism, Bordiga is a fascinating figure in his own right, whose thought is indispensable in approaching the work of Jacques Camatte.<sup>2</sup>

Amadeo Bordiga was born in 1889, and became politically active as a young man within the dynamic milieu of the Italian Socialist Party's (PSI) youth section, opposing the colonial war in Tripoli in 1911 and founding 'the Karl Marx circle' in Naples in 1912 (Camatte 1972; Craver 1996). Already, at this point, Bordiga's very clear stance on knowledge, culture, and revolution was evident, a position that was in marked contrast with that a young Antonio Gramsci would soon take up. In a widely influential clash from 1912 with Angelo Tasca and the Turin 'culturalists' (Craver 1996; Fiori 1970), Bordiga declared, 'The need for study should be proclaimed in a congress of school teachers, not socialists. You don't become a socialist through instruction but through experiencing the real needs of the class to which you belong' (in Davidson 1977: 88).

Bordiga's impressive early radicalism was also clear during the First World War, where he and the youthful 'intransigents' around him rejected the PSI line 'neither adherence nor sabotage', taking a decided anti-militarist position, together with a more Leninist view on the imperative of transforming war into civil war (Camatte 1972; Craver 1996). At around this time, too, Bordiga had been expressing deep-seated scepticism about the democratic (read as the negation of socialism) and electoral orientation of Italian socialism, a posture that was to become a distinguishing and unrelenting focus of his later activity (Camatte 1972; Craver 1996; ICC 1992).<sup>3</sup>

It was in this moment, in 1917 at a conference in Florence, that Gramsci and Bordiga encountered each other for the first time (Davidson 1977). Both men, in their own ways, were increasingly struggling with the compromises of the PSI, in the turbulent context of major social change and proletarian militancy in Italy, war, and revolution in Russia. From December 1918, Bordiga's *Il Soviet*<sup>4</sup> was pushing an abstentionist line (Cammett 1967), captured in the slogan, 'Not one socialist at the polls' (Fiori 1970: 131). On the other hand, for Gramsci, the immediate point of rethinking and re-evaluation was growing Italian suffering towards the end of the war, expressing itself in the engineering city of Turin in growing working-class unrest and, ultimately, the factory councils experience of 1919-20. The differences between the two men, here, are significant, with Gramsci moving in a more syndicalist and councilist direction under the influence of the events in Turin, seeing these new forms of proletarian organisation as the leading edge of revolutionary action; and Bordiga, meanwhile, insisting that control over production was a question to follow from the capture of political power, the immediate task being the formation of a strong and unified party that might conquer state power (Bordiga 1977; Camatte 1972; Cammett 1967; Davidson 1977). Bordiga's position was that, at this point in Italy (in contrast to Russia), the political dimension was primary; that the party must take precedence over the councils; that, in any case, the factory councils were more limited than soviets (which would certainly be important after the conquest of power); and that to underscore councils/soviets too heavily was mistakenly to 'emphasize a form over a force' (Bordiga 1977: 219): 'Those who can represent the proletariat *today*, before it takes power *tomorrow*, are workers who are conscious of this historical eventuality; in other words, the workers who are *members of the Communist Party*' (Bordiga 1977: 205); and 'there are no organs which are revolutionary by virtue of their form; there are only social forces that are revolutionary on account of their orientation' (Bordiga 1977: 220).

On the other hand, Gramsci was to find the abstentionists too restrictive in their view of the party, ignoring the urgent need for 'wide contact with the masses' (in Fiori 1970: 131), and he refused the idea of a party that tended towards 'a collection of dogmatists or little Machiavellis ... which makes use of the masses for its own heroic attempts to imitate the French Jacobins' (in Adamson 1980: 58).

Nevertheless, after the defeat of the Turin movement, and influenced by the failure of the Hungarian Revolution, we see Gramsci drawing closer to Bordiga's positions, and a new attention to the question of the party in his work (Davidson 1977; ICC 1992; Piccone 1983: 136). As Davidson (1977: 158) glosses this, after 1920, Gramsci is forced to confront the question, 'Why can men not make their own destinies?', rather than the question of how they can. This convergence builds towards a split from the PSI.<sup>5</sup> And it was at the January 1921 PSI Congress at Livorno that the communist group left and reconvened, coming to constitute the Italian Communist Party (PCd'I), a party dominated in its initial phase by Bordiga (Fiori 1970).

However, rather soon afterwards, as the prospects for revolution began to dim and as fascism strengthened its hold in Italy, Bordiga's contentions were increasingly assailed, and he progressively lost control of the party from 1923 (Fiori 1970). Foreshadowing some of the issues that were to arise, Lenin (1966: 113) himself famously entered into the debates around some of the further left positions with his '*Left-Wing Communism – An Infantile Disorder*' of 1920, commending Bordiga's criticism of 'Turati and company', but rejecting the conclusion that 'parliament is harmful in principle'. Lenin's argument was that communists needed to be involved in every sphere of proletarian life, rather than fencing themselves off from difficult but inevitable problems. Bordiga's (1977) unrelenting stand, on the other hand, was that participation in parliament necessarily entailed a contradiction with the imperative of constituting a strong communist party capable of seizing power.

This stance is tightly threaded together with Bordiga's resolutely anti-democratic politics. For Bordiga (1922: 56), there was absolutely no intrinsic value to the principle of democracy, based as it was on the 'simple and crude arithmetical presumption that the majority is right and the minority is wrong'. Centrally, democracy relied upon an individualism alien to the conceptions of historical materialism: democracy 'considers each individual to be a perfect "unit" within a system made up of many potentially equivalent units, and instead of appraising the value of the individual's opinion in the light of his manifold condition of existence, that is, his relations with others, it postulates this value *a priori* with the hypothesis of the "sovereignty of the individual"' (1922: 50). In contrast, the properly Marxian position was that, 'The collectivity is born from relations and groupings in which the status and activity of each individual do not derive from an individual function but from a collective one determined by the multiple influences of the social milieu' (1922: 52).

This is a central emphasis for Bordiga, and one that was to be constantly rearticulated. In a 1946 piece, for instance, Bordiga insists that the dialectic focuses upon 'collective phenomena', against the 'myth of the individual' and its associated language of personality, dignity, duties, and liberties. We must always start with a properly materialist focus on needs, which are, above all, social. So opposed was he to bourgeois personalisation, so convinced that all work was collectively and historically produced, and so intent on

avoiding a party of passive followers of leaders (in contrast to a party centred on a rigorous and consistent political programme), that Bordiga refused to allow the individualised identification of his own theoretical contributions, insisting on revolutionary anonymity (ICC 1992) – something that has made precise identification of his contributions somewhat difficult in certain cases. From early on, then, we have a strong sense of communism for Bordiga as the ‘affirmation of social man’ (Bordiga 1950), ‘the joyous harmony of social man’ (Bordiga 1965), a focus that is rather more troublingly linked to the vision of the communist party as future ‘social brain’ (Buick 1987: 128).

In my discussion of Camatte, I will return to a number of these points – anti-individualism, the community-centred vision of communism, the anti-democratic stance. Resuming a more chronological account, here, growing tensions between Bordiga’s positions on elections and the response to fascism and those taken by the Comintern rose to an initial peak around 1923 (the year of Bordiga’s first arrest) (Davidson 1977). As Davidson (1977) notes, already by 1921 there are divergences between Gramsci and Bordiga over the interpretation of fascism, with Gramsci taking a more culturalist position, and coming to a more lucid recognition of the cross-class support it had succeeded in marshalling. Here, Bordiga’s ‘immovability’ and long-remarked-upon determinism were seen as problems by a part of the movement, Bordiga tending to lump the fascists and social democrats together (Fiori 1970), in a formula that equated both democracy and dictatorship as simple, ultimately indistinguishable forms of the rule of capital. As Bordiga was to put this in 1946–8, ‘Democracy is class collaboration through lots of talk, fascism is plain class collaboration’. At the time, this equation, fascism=social democracy, was out of favour in the International, and behind the scenes, attempts were being made to displace Bordiga.<sup>6</sup>

The opposition between Bordiga and Gramsci on such issues only grew over time, the two engaging in an extraordinary 14-hour debate in 1924 at a Congress in Naples (Davidson 1977). A series of events and encounters in 1926 proved decisive in effecting a scission. At the PCd’I Congress of Lyons in January 1926, Gramsci’s theses rejected historical determinism and put forward a novel analysis of the Italian situation, of fascism, and of the tasks ahead (Cammatt 1967). Here, very notably, Gramsci – articulating a more dialectical understanding of class and party – argued as follows: ‘Bordiga has said that he is favourable to the winning over of the masses in the period immediately preceding the revolution. But how do we know when we are in this period? It depends precisely on the work which we know how to develop among the masses whether this period begins or not. Only if we work and achieve some success in the winning over of the masses will we arrive at a pre-revolutionary period’ (in Showstack-Sassoon 1980: 102). In response, Bordiga reiterated his position on the necessary purity of the party, on liberalism and fascism as but two methods of essentially identical class rule, and criticised Gramsci’s ‘ordinovist’ positions as ‘derived from philosophical conceptions of a bourgeois and idealist nature partly inherited from Benedetto Croce’, which led in the direction of reformism (Bordiga 1926a). Of particular issue were the questions of the united front and the process of Bolshevisation (Bordiga 1926a).

On 23 February in that same year, at the Sixth Enlarged Executive Meeting of the Communist International, Bordiga strongly voiced some of the same objections, here notably distinguishing himself as the last Western communist to confront Stalin in

person, as the gravedigger of the revolution (Goldner 1991; Piccone 1983).<sup>7</sup> In his speech, Bordiga (1926b) emphasised the specificity of the Russian path to communism, and criticised the emerging 'regime of terror', stating that 'the spectacle of this session of the plenum has filled me with dark forebodings'.<sup>8</sup> Bordiga's provocative suggestion was that, given that communism was a truly internationalist movement, all the communist parties of the world should jointly rule the Russian communist state (Goldner 1991).

Contacted in that same year by Karl Korsch about the possibility of breaking away and forming a counter-international, Bordiga (1926c) thought it too early, rejecting Korsch's suggestion that the revolution was bourgeois, but also raising concerns about the future degeneration of Russia in the absence of other revolutions.<sup>9</sup> From almost the beginning, Bordiga had maintained few illusions about Russia's backwardness and the implications of such underdevelopment: 'The historical conditions within which the Russian revolution has developed do not resemble the conditions within which the proletarian revolution will develop in the democratic countries of Western Europe and America ... The tactical experience of the Russian revolution cannot be integrally transposed to other countries' (in Piccone 1983: 157). It was, though, only after the war that Bordiga was to develop his distinctive reading of the character of the regime in the USSR (Camatte 1974) – a reading that has certain connections with those developed by the non-Leninist Left (Pannekoek, Mattick, Rühle, for instance), although he came to designate the USSR (an early type of) 'capitalism' rather than 'state capitalism' (Fernandez 1997; van der Linden 2007). While 1917 did see a proletarian political revolution, for Bordiga, the important real content was its bourgeois, anti-feudal side (Goldner 1991; ICC 1992; van der Linden 2007). According to Bordiga, capitalism is *the agrarian revolution* (Goldner 1991). The Russian socialists' capitalisation of agriculture and the development of the forces of production were *capitalist, not communist, tasks*: 'One does not *build* communism' (in Goldner 1991); one only destroys obstacles to its development (Camatte 1974). The absence of a capitalist class was beside the point, for Bordiga (1953), as the Russian economy 'is founded upon wage-labour and internal and external market exchange': 'where there is money, there is neither socialism nor communism, as there isn't, and by a long way, in Russia' (in Buick 1987:139); 'to define communism by "state property" is a nonsense because the idea of "social property" is itself one: when society as a whole becomes the master of its conditions of existence because it has ceased to be torn by internal antagonisms, it is not at all "social property" that comes into being but the abolition of property as a fact and so as an idea. For how is property to be defined if not by the exclusion of the other from the use and enjoyment of the object of property? When there is no longer anyone to be excluded there is no longer any property nor any possible property-owners, "society" less than any other' (in Buick 1987: 134).

1926 was also the year in which Bordiga and Gramsci were arrested.<sup>10</sup> Bordiga was to remain in prison until 1930 – the year he was expelled from the PCd'I for supporting the Trotskyist opposition – after which time he withdrew from politics until 1943, and was accompanied constantly by two police agents (Bourrinet n.d.; Bourrinet 1998; ICC 1991).<sup>11</sup> The Bordigist Internationalist Communist Party was formed in 1943, growing fairly rapidly, and producing the journal *Prometeo* from November that year (Buick 1987; ICC 1992). While politically active from 1943, Bordiga only joined the party in 1949,<sup>12</sup> after which time a split in 1952 saw Bordiga and his followers leaving to form

the International Communist Party (Buick 1987; ICC 1992). In this post-war period, Bordiga continued to reaffirm his fundamental arguments: the ‘invariance’ of the communist doctrine formulated by Marx in 1848; the priority of the party in the establishment of communism,<sup>13</sup> and the need for the party, in unfavourable circumstances, to ‘survive and hand down the flame, along the historical “thread of time”’; anti-democracy and anti-individualism, with communism’s content given by its community-centred premises; criticism of anti-fascism, and the equation of social democracy and fascism; analysis and critique of the USSR; a radically materialist reading of the link between material conditions and consciousness<sup>14</sup> (Bordiga 1946; Bordiga 1946-8; Bordiga 1950; Bordiga 1965; Buick, 1987). Interestingly, from the 1950s, Bordiga also wrote a number of rather striking early pieces on the connection between capitalism and environmental degradation (Bordiga 1951a and b; 1952; 1953; 1963).<sup>15</sup>

## From Bordiga to Camatte

This rather lengthy treatment of the main lines of Bordiga’s political thought is, I think, an indispensable prefatory note to a consideration of the work of Jacques Camatte. Camatte was born near Marseille in 1935, and first corresponded with Bordiga in 1954, meeting the latter for the first time the following year in Naples.<sup>16</sup> Bordiga’s influence, as we will see, is direct in Camatte’s early work, Camatte consulting with Bordiga (who lived until 1970) on a number of those texts.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, even when Camatte breaks with the International Communist Party and Marxism, his distinctive new communist trajectory is written both against and in continuity with these Bordigist roots, with his emphases on communal being, the despotism of capital, and the environmental consequences of capitalism indicative of strong continuing affinities.<sup>18</sup>

Camatte’s work during the majority of the 1960s is, then, firmly placed within the Bordigist current. His ‘Origin and function of the party form’ (co-written with Roger Dangeville in 1961), for instance, involves detailed Marxian exegesis on the question of organisation, reading very much as an internal International Communist Party text – with, for instance, prominent reference to the Rome Theses of 1922 and the Lyon Theses of 1926 as central documents.<sup>19</sup> Already notable, here, is the great emphasis placed upon Marx’s usage of the term ‘Gemeinwesen’,<sup>20</sup> which proves to be a consistent preoccupation across the entirety of Camatte’s work and is entirely consistent with Bordiga’s central emphasis on the anti-individualist and social, collectivist premises of Marxism. ‘Gemeinwesen’ carries connotations of ‘common essence’, ‘commonwealth’, ‘common system’, ‘common being’, ‘communal being’, and is thus not translatable simply as ‘community’ understood in a restrictively spatial sense (Nicolaus 1993; O’Malley 1970). Further, its use cannot be read as a straightforwardly communitarian moment in Marx’s work – the term indicating a transformation of the human being, an ethical revolution, beyond a bourgeois commonsense that opposes individual and society/community (Brenkert 1983; Marx 1994; Ollman 1976). As O’Malley (1970: xlv) explains this, ‘Man is essentially social, and society is precisely the actualization of his social nature. The being of society is not to be distinguished from the being of its members; nor is the essence of man in its actuality to be distinguished from the ensemble of social relationships of which he is the focus and subject, and which, taken as a whole constitute the

matrix of his life as an individual. In his individual existence he embodies society. ... the individual and society are one in essence and being'. This notion is tightly connected to Marx's critiques of state and private property, of illusory community and illusions about sovereign individuality, of the dualism individual-society, and, furthermore, for Marx, at this point, one could see, in the proletariat, a glimpse of this *Gemeinwesen* (O'Malley 1970; Thomas 1983). Alongside and connected to this, we find in Camatte's early work the expected emphases of Bordigist thinking on organisation: capitalism can only be surpassed if a party of the proletariat is organised; this party is a representative of the proletariat, and is, in its invariant programme and existence, 'the prefiguration of communist society' (Camatte 1961: 4), 'an organ of foresight' (p. 7); the party, rejecting democracy (in favour of 'organic centralism'<sup>21</sup>), is to seize power, setting itself up as a ruling class, as the social brain, the social state; the communist revolution must ultimately be international – it knows neither nations nor individuals (the revolution will be anonymous [p. 5]). Similarly, 'The democratic mystification', begun in 1962 (also with the support of Bordiga) and published in Camatte's journal *Invariance* in 1969, is largely a work of Bordigist orthodoxy. Democracy is, here, defined as 'the organization of those who have lost their original organic unity with the community'. Implying division, individualism, and a reconciliation between classes, democracy is merely a mechanism used by the ruling class to attain domination over society,<sup>22</sup> Camatte equating social democracy with fascism.

Despite this apparent orthodoxy, there are already emphases here that foreshadow the break Camatte makes towards the end of the 1960s from the Bordigist current. In particular, the exegetical references to Marx's *Grundrisse* (which includes reference to the fall of ancient *Gemeinwesen* and money establishing itself as 'real community' [Marx 1994: 223-226]) and mention of 'formal domination' are indications of potential shifts in emphasis that become more apparent in Camatte's major work *Capital and Community* (1964-72). This again heavily exegetical work is a long intervention on the significance of a number of then non-canonical works by Marx, the most important being the so-called unpublished sixth chapter of *Capital*, 'Results of the direct production process'. In this text, Marx (1994) analyses the capitalist production process, and, importantly for Camatte, distinguishes between the formal subsumption of labour under capital (linked to absolute surplus value) and real subsumption (linked to relative surplus value). In the moment of real subsumption, says Marx (1994: 429), the mystification in the capital-relation 'is now much more developed', the social character of labour appearing as something entirely autonomous, 'as a *mode of capital's existence*' (p. 457). Here, the products of labour 'stand on their hind legs vis-à-vis the worker and confront him as 'capital' – but also the social forms of labour appear as *forms of the development of capital*, and therefore the productive powers of social labour, thus developed, appear as *productive powers of capital* (pp. 457-8). What we have, here, in essence, is a critique of the growing penetration of capital into human existence, a reformulation of the notion of ideology, away from those found in *The German Ideology*, and reflections on alienation and human essence, underscoring the loss of communal being.

Occurring at a moment of a number of returns to Marx in search of renewal,<sup>23</sup> Camatte's (1964-72: 22) interpretation is that this chapter 'articulates' the whole corpus of Marx's work. More closely, Camatte (10) suggests that the draft brings together the

four different ways in which Marx had confronted the critique of political economy: 1) in terms of alienation in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*; 2) in beginning with the commodity, in *Capital*; 3) in Marx's consideration of the autonomy of value in the original version of the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*; and 4) in his assessment of the obstacles to capitalist development in the *Grundrisse*. This articulation is glossed by Camatte as the study of the domestication of men by capital, the autonomisation of the non-living, the progressive 'capitalization of everything' (pp. 40-42). In this process, capital becomes social, 'an animated monster', seizing 'all the materiality of man' (p. 106). In short, capital 'has become the material community of man' (p. 107). As this is summarised in a text included from 1971, 'Apropos capital', 'Men are reduced to pure spirits who now receive their substance from capital, which, as the material community, has also become nature' (p. 177).

Sometimes repetitive, dense, and difficult, the value of *Capital and Community* is partly in its collection of a number of texts written over such a long stretch. The main body of the work was begun in 1964 and published in 1968. In 1966, Camatte broke from the International Communist Party over questions of organisation and over divergences caused by the particular direction taken by Camatte's otherwise Bordigist emphasis on communism as equal to communal being. On the one hand, then, there are a number of rather straightforward Bordigist characteristics within the text: social democracy as 'the fitting resolution of fascism' (1964-72: 69); communism as defeated in 1926-8, with the 'socialism in one country' line of the Russian Party and the Third International, and the subsequent triumph of capital in Stalinist Russia; democracy as 'founded on the illusory sovereignty of man as an isolated individual' (p. 108); the party as social brain, instrument of socialism.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, within the main text, and in appended texts written after 1968, we find some fundamental departures – for example, in terms of the issue of communist organisation, and class analysis (most notably, an apparent widening and de-proletarianisation of communism's agent); or in terms of questions of community, history, and emancipation ('all human history is that of the loss of its community' [p. 182]). I want to turn now to this post-1968 break.

One of the texts additional to the main body of *Capital and Community* is 'On organization', a letter of 1969, which, Camatte (1995: 19) notes, 'led to the dissolution of the group that had begun to form on the basis of the positions set forth in *Invariance*'.<sup>25</sup> Here, we see a major shift from a left communism of the party to one more in line with the sponaneist and anti-substitutionist stances found among councilists and some anarchists, which gained greater prominence around 1968. Camatte's (p. 25) contention is that, just as the state is a 'gang' that mediates between particular capitals and between total and particular capitals, so too all parties, including the International Communist Party, have evolved into gangs. In fact, all forms of working-class political organisation have disappeared and have been replaced by various 'rackets', competing with each other for theoretical and organisational prestige. Constituting an 'illusory community' (p. 31), the gang merely 'replaces all natural or human presuppositions with presuppositions determined by capital' (pp. 26-7). This process is linked by Camatte (p. 26) to capital's achievement of real domination. Rejecting all political representation as a 'screen' and an 'obstacle to a fusion of forces' (p. 20), and insistent that emancipation must be self-emancipation based on materialist premises (consciousness follows action),

Camatte (pp. 32-3) looks to Marx's reflections on the Communist League, insisting that, at this moment, one can only recognise the party in the *historic* (as opposed to formal) sense: 'The revolutionary must not identify himself with a group but recognize himself in a theory that does not depend on a group or on a review, because it is the expression of an existing class struggle ... the desire for theoretical development must realize itself in an autonomous and personal fashion and not by way of a group that sets itself up as a kind of diaphragm between the individual and the theory'.

Camatte (1995: 19) rejects that this is any sort of retreat to a 'Stirnerian individualism', and the piece is still replete with references to Marx and attached to the notion of the proletarian movement. However, very soon, we see some further important shifts that entail a decisive move away from Marxism. These shifts are clear in two pieces from 1973 – 'The wandering of humanity' and 'Against domestication' – and one from the following year – 'This world we must leave'. Pivotal to these pieces, again, is the notion that capital has now achieved real domination over society and established itself as the material community. The perhaps logical endpoint of this assessment, though, comes more clearly into view here. For Camatte (1995: 40), that is, in our period of the 'despotism of capital', we see 'the integration of human beings in the process of capital and the integration of capital in the minds of human beings' – or, to reformulate, the autonomisation of capital and the 'domestication' of the human being.

As noted, in these texts, we see some major departures from orthodox Marxian presuppositions.<sup>26</sup> Camatte (1995: 39-40, 54) charges that, in 'running away', capitalism has now overcome the law of value, has been able to absorb crises, and, in a Debordian formulation, he contends that capital is today representation.<sup>27</sup> Here, against the thesis of contemporary capitalism's 'decadence', Camatte argues that the productive forces have not at all stopped growing and that, in truth, it is human beings who are decaying. Centrally, capital has finally negated classes through the 'universalization of wage labour', creating a 'collection of slaves of capital' (p. 41). It is, then, 'humanity that is exploited' (p. 40). At another point, Camatte approaches this negation of class somewhat differently, although, again, by looking back to Marx's unpublished sixth chapter: 'We have reached the end of the historical cycle during which humanity ... moved within class societies. Capital has realized the negation of classes – by means of mystification' (p. 60).

In fact, Camatte (1995: 58-9) now suggests the inherently reformist character of the working class: 'Doesn't Lenin's discredited statement that the proletariat, left to itself, can only attain trade-union consciousness, describe the truth about the class bound to capital? That is, the proletariat outside of society is, through struggle, progressively integrated: 'It succeeds, with the German Socialist Party, in forming a countersociety that is finally absorbed by the society of capital, and the negating movement of the proletariat is over' (p. 59). Here, any appeal to parties, councils, or other forms of working-class organisation as leading the way to communism are jettisoned as mere 'coagulations of despotic consciousness' (p. 57). The 'revolutionary reformism' of the period 1913-1945 is also indicative of a decisive dimension of Marxism's failure – its implication in, even glorification of, a mid-19th-century-onward 'wandering of humanity': that is, the notion of 'growth of productive forces as the condition *sine qua non* for liberation' (p. 54). Given this, 'it becomes increasingly imbecilic to proclaim oneself a Marxist' (p. 70). This lament about the folding together of the proletarian movement with the presuppositions of

capital is later expanded upon as follows: 'the dichotomy of interior/exterior; the vision of progress; the exaltation of science; the necessity of distinguishing human from the animal, with the latter being considered in every case inferior; the idea of the exploitation of nature' (Camatte 1995: 199-200).

(As a parenthetical note, I would raise the issue, here, of Camatte's dating of this domestication and the despotism of capital. For a start, the periodisation of the despotism of capital appears to be connected by Camatte [1995: 183] to the emergence of the new middle classes and what might be called the period of organised capitalism – social democracy, communism, fascism.<sup>28</sup> However, Camatte traces the tendency to the autonomisation of capital much further back, in a cycle beginning with the Greek polis and ending with the fall of the Roman Empire [p. 184]. Even further than this, though, Camatte [pp. 237-8] evidently locates critical negative facets of the present much further back, pinpointing the advent of animal husbandry<sup>29</sup> with the Neolithic Revolution as the historic founding point of science [the treatment of other as object], patriarchy,<sup>30</sup> and capital.)

What, then, replaces the Marxian vision of and politics towards an emancipated life? Once again, the broad answer, for Camatte (1995: 71), is to be found in the notion of *Gemeinwesen*: 'Our revolution as a project to re-establish community was necessary from the moment when ancient communities were destroyed'. This means a break from present domestication and is not at all, insists Camatte, in contradiction to reaffirming individuality (p. 69).<sup>31</sup> This re-establishment of community necessitates a break with both Humanism and scientism (p. 88), as well as the transformation of technique<sup>32</sup> – Camatte arguing that technology is not neutral but determined by the mode of production (p. 67). It entails, too, crucially, a new relationship to nature: from domination over nature to reconciliation with and regeneration of nature – 'The naturalization of man and the humanization of nature' (p. 66). This further implies the 'destruction of urbanization' in favour of multiple communities; the transformation (diminishment) of the transportation system; a changed division of labour and 'the suppression of monoculture'; the end to the 'mad' growth of population (p. 66); and a 'new active and unfixed life', which will cure the 'somatic and psychological illnesses of present-day human beings' (p. 67).

Anticipating objections, Camatte (1995: 88) maintains that his position does not lead to fatalism. And yet, I think it is clear that Camatte's own question – 'How can destroyed human beings rebel?' (p. 85) – remains tricky for him. Here, Camatte is clearly looking to some of the content of the new revolutionary cycle that opens with 1968 (p. 98). Obviously, though, those modern leftist currents reinvigorated in that period are not what he has in mind, and, instead, he mentions youth, who are not yet fully domesticated (p. 109), as well as elements of the (third) world that 'have not yet fully succumbed to the despotism of capital' (p. 128).<sup>33</sup> In terms of further materialist groundings for his revolutionary hopes, we have perhaps the pressures of environmental destruction – 'overpopulation, pollution, and the exhaustion of natural resources' – along with 'the monetary crisis' (p. 92). However, the major underlying footing for communism appears to be an existential hope and appeal to a notion of human essence and refusal. Communism, here, is viewed as a 'necessity that extends to all people' (p. 124),<sup>34</sup> and we have, above all, a moral appeal, a call or desire for a 'fracture through which, a new

feeling, etc. all surge' (p. 179): 'We must abandon this world dominated by capital, which has become a spectacle of beings and things' (p. 170). This appeal is, for Camatte (p. 179), grounded in an invariant:<sup>35</sup> 'What is invariant is the desire to rediscover the lost community, which will not be realized by the recreation of the past but as an act of creation'.

## Concluding comments

As a concluding note, I want now to make a number of interpretative and evaluative suggestions. Here, I feel that it is best to proceed by placing Camatte's later work within a tradition of thought that has come to be known as primitivism or sometimes anarcho-primitivism – even if those grouped under the heading would often reject the label.<sup>36</sup> Primitivism becomes a fairly widely known and frequently controversial sub-tradition within what might be called the left communist field of discussion and debate, from around the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, after which time it is progressively overtaken and eclipsed by the anarchist-leaning alternative-globalisation current, wherein some of its themes continue to be visible. The English-speaking wing of this current includes figures such as Fredy Perlman,<sup>37</sup> John Zerzan,<sup>38</sup> John Moore and David Watson,<sup>39</sup> and the leading papers/journals associated with primitivist positions include *Fifth Estate*, *Green Anarchy*, *Species Traitor*, *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, and *Green Anarchist*. For those involved, Jacques Camatte's pioneering work appears to be significant and influential,<sup>40</sup> as are elements found in the work of a variety of other thinkers – for instance, Lewis Mumford, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Ellul, Ivan Illich, the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, and the Situationists.

There are a wealth of different emphases to be found across what might plausibly be described as primitivism, and this makes it difficult to summarise tightly and without provoking objections, but it is worth making some generalisations in terms of key idea clusters/themes. Primitivists tend to erect a multi-stranded critique of hierarchical, domination-ridden civilisation – private property, class and caste divisions, the state, patriarchy. We have, in a sense, fallen from the grace of hunter-gatherer existence,<sup>41</sup> which is often looked back on in admiring accounts, drawn from anthropological work – these 'primitive' social orders characterised by community, equality, mutuality/connectedness with the natural world, and psychological and physical well-being. This fall is often dated to the time of the agricultural revolution – the foundational moment for private property, patriarchy, and the state. Central in this fall is a transformed epistemological and practical orientation to the now *other* natural world – separation, instrumentalism, abstraction. Tied up with this are questions of science and the development of technique, which are seen as far from neutral and as tending to become autonomous and enchainning of human beings. In turn, this technique problem is linked to the fragmenting division of labour and to a generalised disempowerment, as human beings come to be more and more infantilised and dependent. The advent of private property, patriarchy and the state are also linked to militarism, conquest, and genocide, and, less drastically, but also destructively, homogenisation/mass cultural conformity. The ill-effects of this civilisation, megamachine, or Leviathan apparently worsen as modernity moves forward, leaving damaged, controlled, spiritless, and aggressive human material in its wake;

generating mass murder and ecological devastation; multiplying unfreedoms, deadening conformity, and dominations.<sup>42</sup> The alternative to current civilisation is the construction of 'future primitive' social configurations – reconnection with the natural world, decentralisation, self-sufficiency, autarchy; a simpler, less technologically-mediated form of life; a spiritual-intellectual re-enchantment aligned with the natural world (Davidson 2009; Millett 2004; Williams 2007); a tiger's leap away from the 'interlocking armoured juggernaut' – capital, technology, state (Bradford 1989: 50).

The affinities between this primitivism and the post-1968 development of Camatte's thought should here be clear. Undoubtedly, for the reader newly encountering these ideas, a number of problems, common to Camatte and primitivists more widely, will also be quick to hand. And, indeed, right from the start, critics leapt upon the deficiencies of primitivist thinking – the quickest response being the question, 'We are to return to the caves, then?' (Gordon 2008: 127). It is interesting to note in passing that some of the retorts,<sup>43</sup> here, echoed certain much earlier clashes between Marxism and anarchism.<sup>44</sup> What are the main lines of this critical response? One major objection is the a-political character of primitivism, which offers a one-sided portrait of humanity's long and deep fall into decadence, but provides only moral convictions and nostalgia as a means of addressing the predicament. In Camatte and a number of English-speaking primitivists, we get a picture of a world of total domination, of humanity at large imprisoned by the powerful machine of capital, which is the only remaining agent in the story – a version of the 'capitalocentrism' found among some Marxist thinkers, where only a miraculous leap backwards or catastrophe provide any hope towards a remaking of the world. Perhaps, some critics have suggested, primitivists simply leave us with faith in the individualised, rebellious, purely ethical gestures of *l'homme révolté*, given that there is no clear subject here materially propelled to become agent of a transformatory movement. This, I would suggest, seems a not illogical conclusion when faced with Camatte's (1995: 62) contention that capital has now run away, even conquering the very last, intimate bastion of the imagination. What we seem to be offered, then, is a quite violent oscillation between complete despair, residency in a new 'grand hotel abyss' (the 'ruin of the contending classes?'), together with the most incredible optimism required to sustain commitment to the enormous tasks of leaving this world. Bey's (1995) and Smith's (2010) astute readings, here, point to the distinctly purifying impulse within a strand of thought so often inattentive to the many possibilities in the present, which is read so one-sidedly as a time of absolute contamination.

Unsurprisingly, the anti-science, anti-Enlightenment mood of primitivism has come in for a fair amount of searching critique – often in line with Marxian critiques of post-modern thought. Thus, from the later part of the 1980s, Murray Bookchin (1995a) was involved in heated polemics with deep ecological and 'lifestyle' anarchism, charging primitivists with a wrong-headed blame of technology *per se*, an apolitical withdrawal inwards, and a retreat to anti-rationalist, personalist, mystical and even fascistic, misanthropic positions.<sup>45</sup> Here, in a debate that seems likely to return in some form, Bookchin sought to play the Habermas to primitivism's Foucault, urging a completion rather than an abandonment of the Modern project.

One might be tempted to view the primitivist current through the lens of Jonathan Friedman's (1995) analysis of the identity consequences of the systemic

crisis of the world-system after the 1970s – with multipolarity and global turbulence generating a range of new dominating identity impulses, including traditionalist re-rootings (ethnos, nation, doctrine, place) and primitivism (the revolt against rational civilisation, championing of the natural, the libido, creative energy).<sup>46</sup> Perhaps this is more tempting still in the light of the shedding of more conventional left communist commitments by some of these authors, after the dispersal of hopes that followed the political and counter-cultural surges of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>47</sup> Here, Camatte's starting point, Bordigism, begins to look as if it may have travelled better with time, in view of the current revival of interest in Marx, the apparent return of history and the resonant critique of democracy mounted, say, by Alain Badiou (2003, 2005, 2007).

And yet, despite the melancholic, un-dialectical tics one finds within primitivism, combined with an undeveloped secret optimism (Jacoby 1981), there might be some elements worth salvaging or at least meditating upon within this 'maximalist' critique of current technological civilisation (Gordon 2008). I think we could safely say that there remains a strong popular current of ambivalence about technological development – not only with respect to the uncertain and risky ecological consequences of such development, but also with regard to the suspicion that it might be bound up with waning solidarity, disconnection, infantilisation, weakening authenticity, and the like.

In particular, the existentialist and communal being-centred notes sounded by primitivism are, I think, due something of a comeback – in opposition to the widespread dissatisfactions with the predominant liberal suspicions of commonality, obsessions with growth, profit, competition, and an individuality wholly conditioned by the market; and it appears that here, a primitivist thinker such as Jacques Camatte may still have something to offer us after the prohibitions of the anti-essentialist and triumphant liberal moments. Before consigning this singular wing of left contestation to the dustbin of history, we should perhaps pause and remember that, after all, we can't be sure which of the seeds of time might grow.

## Endnotes

1. Another more minor variety of acknowledgment of Bordiga and Bordigism is a scandal-mongering one. For instance, Bordigist fundamentalism has been viewed as illustrative of a supposed meeting between ultra-left and ultra-right, in the small ruckus around the text 'Auschwitz, the big alibi', published by a French Bordigist group in 1960. Its later republication by French ultra-leftists, some of whom subsequently became connected to *negationisme* (denial/down-playing of Nazi crimes against Jews during the Second World War), has been, for some, evidence enough of the direction in which Bordiga's ideas lead us.
2. For a good account of Bordiga and Gramsci, see Hoare and Smith (1998). For writings by Bordiga, see the following websites: International Library of the Communist Left; Amadeo Bordiga Archive; N + 1 Historical Archives of the 'Italian' Communist Left.
3. For a detailed account of the young socialists in this period, see Craver (1996).
4. Which was to publish writings by Lukacs, Pannekoek, Gorter, and Pankhurst (Camatte 1972).
5. As Bordiga expressed this in 1920, 'In our view, nothing does so much good as a split ... A good split clears the air. Communists to one side, reformists of all persuasions and gradations to the other' (in Davidson 1977: 134).

6. To his credit, Gramsci refused to participate in such maneuvering, stating that 'for general capability, and for work, he [Bordiga] is worth at least three' (in Cammett, 1967: 156).
7. Zinoviev had unsuccessfully attempted to buy Bordiga off by offering him the vice-presidency of the International (Fiori 1970).
8. 'Lately, within the parties, a sport is practiced which consists in hitting, intervening, break, attack: and in these cases those who are hit are often excellent revolutionaries. I find this sport of terror within the party as having nothing in common with our work ... Unity is judged by facts and not by a regime of threats and terror ... We absolutely need a more healthy regime in the party; it is absolutely necessary to give the party the possibility to construct its opinion ... Factions do not represent the illness; they are nothing but a symptom of the illness, and if you want to cure the illness, you must first discover and understand it' (Bordiga, in Piccone 1983: 158).
9. See also the exchange of letters between Bordiga (1926d) and Trotsky in March that year.
10. The pair end up imprisoned together for a period on the island of Ustica and, despite everything that had happened, were evidently close to one another, sharing meals, co-organising classes, playing cards (Fiori 1970; Gramsci 1994). Bordiga and Gramsci also met a number of times between 1934-5, near the end of Gramsci's life (Bourrinet 1998).
11. In a letter to his brother-in-law, Bordiga speaks of his political isolation during this period: 'It's necessary to distance oneself and wait ... wait not for this generation but for future generations ... I maintain my faith I am happy in my isolation' (in ICC 1992: 29). For a detailed account of the activities of the Bordigists from 1926-1945, see ICC (1992).
12. The Bordigist groups were quite variegated at this point, with significant differences over a range of questions – relations with the PCI, ties with Trotskyist groups, and stances towards the Soviet Union, the unions, and the notion of a transitional state. Bordiga's late membership can be attributed to his uneasiness about some of these variations (Bourrinet 1998).
13. The party would evolve after the revolution into a simple organisation for social research and study (Bordiga 1946-8).
14. For Bordiga (1946-8), the stomach must be emancipated before the brain can be. The workers are subject, under the weight of their living conditions, to the 'whole traditional consensual ideology of the capitalist world', and communist consciousness is only to be found initially in organisations, among restricted sectors of the population.
15. In these texts, Bordiga makes critical remarks on the obsession with science, technology, and production, considers the disasters and chain reactions (for instance, deforestation) provoked by the 'convulsive dynamic' of 'super-capitalism' (1951b), laments the consequences of urbanisation, 'agglomerated monsters' (1952) and the impact of machines on human beings, and rejects the general capitalist lack of thought for future generations.
16. Personal communication with Jacques Camatte, July 2013.
17. See, for instance, Camatte's 1965 letter to Bordiga.
18. Camatte (1977, 1995) continuing to cite Marx and Bordiga extensively, both in a critical vein and in support of his later primitivist positions. See, in particular, the four texts by Bordiga, as yet not translated into English, collected by Camatte in his 1972 book, *Bordiga et la passion du communisme* – that is, a selection and prefatory reading of Bordiga made after Camatte's break from the International Communist Party.
19. The Rome Theses were drawn up by Bordiga and Umberto Terracini and contended that, with the disintegration of capitalism, communists needed to prepare for revolutionary struggle, most importantly, by developing a unitary, disciplined party equipped with a tight programme, involved in all aspects of working class life, and clearly differentiating itself from all other parties. The *Draft Theses of the Left* presented at Lyons rejected social-democratic reformism and all forms of class collaboration (including electoral participation and the ideas

- of the United Front and a workers' government), insisting on the equal critique of fascism and liberal democracy, arguing for organic centralism and opposing bolshevisation, and critical of the orientation of those who had been involved in L'Ordine Nuovo. See Bordiga (1926a).
20. In works such as the *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, *On the Jewish Question*, the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *On James Mill*, and the *Grundrisse*.
  21. This notion has its origins in the Lyons Theses Presented by the Left, emphasising the organic and unified development of the communist party, and opposed, therefore, to bolshevisation, as well as to what the Bordigists considered the misleading and potentially damaging emphasis on democratic centralism.
  22. Camatte similarly rejects the direct democracy arguments of the council communists.
  23. That of Althusser and his associates being, of course, the best known, but also including, a little later, Antonio Negri. On the latter, see, for instance, the use Negri (1996) makes of 'subsumption'. See also Negri (2010) for the continuing importance of this notion in his thought. In contrast to Camatte, though, Negri couples this with the Italian workerist emphasis on the priority of class contestation in the transformations in capitalism. Arguably, this protects Negri against the pessimistic direction in which the focus on subsumption might lead.
  24. There is also some interesting discussion of the transition to socialism within *Capital and Community* – for instance, a 1972 note engaging with the Dutch council communist text of 1930, 'Fundamental principles of communist production and distribution'.
  25. Details on Camatte are scant, even in French, but it seems clear that the events of 1968 in France were important in his break from Marxism. See, for example, Camatte (1977).
  26. Even though, as noted, Camatte continues to draw extensively from Marx. For instance, in his text on Russia from 1974, Camatte is still deploying work from the early Marx in favour of his enthusiasms for communism as *Gemeinwesen*.
  27. Clearly, in his break from Marxism, here and in other emphases – for example, proletarian failure and integration, the new workings of ideology and wider consideration of cultural questions, skepticism about progress – Camatte is drawing close to ideas found within Western Marxism and the New Left – say Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) or Marcuse (1966, 1973). We can see this, for instance, in Camatte's (1977, 1995) explicit references to the ideas of Castoriadis, the Situationist International, Italian workerism, Norman O Brown, and the influence of Wilhelm Reich.
  28. In Camatte's (1974) work on community and communism in Russia, he dates the real domination of capital to around 1945, with the impact of two World Wars, fascism, the New Deal, Peronism.
  29. Camatte (1995: 236-7) suggests that we return animals to a state of nature, and he also argues for more natural behaviour on a number of fronts – abandoning meat-eating, even a fruitarian diet, natural childbirth, greater amounts of touching between people as 'psychogenetically important'.
  30. Camatte (1995: 205) credits the feminist movement with drawing attention to the shortcomings of the revolutionary movement – the way it had become 'infested with notions of power and domination'.
  31. Here, Camatte (1995: 176) insists on the need to break with Bordigist revolutionary anonymity, which apparently now coincides too much with the suppression of genuine individuality under the domination of capital.
  32. See Ellul (1965).
  33. Which, again, appears very close to Marcuse (1965).
  34. And, here, Camatte (1995) absolutely rejects any violence against people, say, the police: 'The revolutionary struggle is a human struggle, and it must recognize in every person the possibility of humanity' (p. 118); 'the communist revolution is the triumph of life, it cannot in any

- way glorify death, or seek to exploit it, since this would be putting itself on the terrain of class society' (p. 122).
35. Again, we see Camatte drawing on his Bordigist inheritance, using but diverting Bordiga's emphasis on the 'invariance' of the communist doctrine.
  36. Fredy Perlman (1983), for instance, dismisses the term, suggesting that it is those in the wealthy capitalist nations who are living out primitive lives.
  37. See, for instance, Perlman (1983), and Lorraine Perlman (1989).
  38. See, for instance, Zerzan (1994), and Zerzan (ed.) (2005).
  39. See Watson (1981-85/1997).
  40. The key carrier of this influence is likely to have been Fredy Perlman, who encountered Camatte's work in the early 1970s and translated the latter's 'The Wandering of Humanity' in 1975 (Perlman 1989). The importance of Camatte's work is underscored in the early part of Perlman's (1983) primitivist masterpiece, *Against HisStory, Against Leviathan!*, and Perlman's connection with *Fifth Estate* and other radical groups in Detroit and beyond was likely pivotal in the spread of Camatte's influence outwards. We see Camatte mentioned early on by a number of key primitivist thinkers: for instance – by Peter Werbe in 1977; in an exchange of letters between John and Paula Zerzan and *Fifth Estate* in 1978; by George Bradford (David Watson) in an essay of 1981 (see Various authors 2012). And, more recently, his work has featured in journals such as *Green Anarchy*, and has been cited by Bob Black (1997) as an important influence in primitivist/green anarchist thinking about organisation. See also the discussion by Millet (2004) of *Fifth Estate*.
  41. A 'community of freedoms', in Perlman's (1983: 7) estimation. Sometimes, too, contemporary indigenous cultures provide stark positive contrasts to elements of life in advanced civilisation.
  42. For the above account, I am freely drawing from the following: Davidson (2009); Gordon (2008); Millett (2004); Moore (n.d.); Perlman (1983); Smith (2010); Watson (1981-85/1997); Williams (2007); and Zerzan (1995).
  43. Made not only by Marxists but also by anarchists such as Bookchin (1995a and b) and Booth (2001), and by other left communists.
  44. One finds these emphases and impulses in some late-19th-century and earlier-20th-century anarchist strands – the anti-progressivism, the critique of science, the desire for simplicity, the gestures to nature and the past – strands that were lambasted by anarchism's Marxist critics, who often unfairly generalised these emphases to the entirety of anarchism. Gustav Landauer (1978) is, for instance, a thinker in whose work we can find some elements congruent with contemporary primitivism.
  45. Bookchin (1995b) feared a 'regression of rationality into intuitionism, of naturalism into supernaturalism, of realism into mysticism, of humanism into parochialism, and of social theory into psychology'. See also David Watson's – as George Bradford (1989) – critique of elements of primitivism. For a recent close analysis of these debates, and a defence of Bookchin's positions, see Price (2012).
  46. For somewhat congruent themes and emphases, see Maffesoli (1996).
  47. For instance, Perlman had been associated with Glaberman's *Facing Reality* and Dunayevskaya's News and Letters (Perlman 1989), and Zerzan was involved in union then ultra-left politics in the 1960s and 1970s.

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