

## **"LANGUAGE AND GESTURES OF OUR OWN DISCOVERIES": Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, Black Mask and the lawless affection to life**

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Ben Morea's answer to the question about art's protest firepower could hardly have been clearer in May 1968. Abandoning art for direct action, the former Black Mask editor founded the militant group Up Against the Wall Motherfucker. "There are no limits to our lawlessness," the group declared in one of the many Up Against the Wall "manifestos" published in Rat, "We defy law and order with our bricks bottles garbage long hair filth obscenity games guns bikes fire fun + fucking."

The lawlessness on its spectral differences meet a singularity on a very tactical need: it needs darkness, some sort of "antirepresentationalism" incarnated on the possibilities that may vary - if it is the colorful masks used by the Zapatists in Chiapas holding the fluctuant motto "covered faces, shown hearts" or the tactical riot movements of masked Black Blocks - there is a conductive creation of a antirepresentational project developed into a militant, collective, fugitive endeavor that imagines an anonymous, common identity, uncatchable to any force of reality, especially the law. This paper aims to gaze the revolutionary project of Up Against the Wall Motherfucker on the dark lights of criminal affection to life, animated by nothing less than the refusal of everything and the engagement (either by approximating or distancing) of art, revolutionary language and protest culture.

"Beware of the werewolves." This is the first call from the initial edition of Black Mask, a 1965 periodical edited by a small group of anarchists raised in a ghetto in the Lower East Side of New York, along with giant rats that own the town. Among the more than two million nocturnal rodents - an animal that later, in 1968, gives its name to another magazine, "Rat: Subterranean News" - were Ben Morea, Ron Hahne, and Aldo Tambellini, together with the poet Dan Georgakas. Restless in the violent vein that fed on what they called "Dark Dada," former Black Mask, the now Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (UATWM from now on) created boycott situations, organized uprisings, wrote theses, painted pictures, made collages, and, above all, declared their absolute movement for the "total revolution," nothing less than that, vibrating "against everything". Amidst so many radicalized groups that blossomed like flowers in the midst of the 1960s, Ben Morea and UATWM burst forth in a synthesis hungry for the total revolution of common life, in all its nuances and layers.

Survival and triumphant life on the streets have always been a fundamental theme of the group, which described itself as a politically radicalized "streetgang with analysis". However, in the broadcast media, they were known as "that group with a name that cannot be printed" (apparently, even the news were granting the group one of the main forces of their rebellious actions, anonymity). Many of their posters were censored, and numerous street actions led to the arrest and persecution of their members – none of which tamed the werewolves who acted as sonic catalysts for refusals of negotiation and reform, breaking the ground with the urgency of total revolution, occupying all avenues of life creation, inflamed with the desire to destroy the stillborn structures of capital and unleash a gang ethic, in a dynamic tactic of occupying desire as it was an institutional building.

This urban guerrilla movement, though small, was very active, and with its autonomous and rapid tactics, aimed to precipitate a state of hypnosis catalyzed by anger and festivity among passersby who also became involved in their actions by being in the midst of the situation. Known as "Mobile Tactics," these situations involve modifying the given conditions in a specific environment so that the dimensions of relationships and spaces become easily attackable, and all those involved in that situation, even unaware of this modification, naturally take part in its prominent revolt. This tactic illustrated, with its refinement and autonomy, how small groups can act with greater security and effectiveness than large militarized masses.

The werewolves never had more than two dozen members at the same time. Among them were retired academics, workers interested in acting on their anger towards labor, and illiterate individuals experiencing homelessness. Among all the movements of the turbulent 60s and 70s, there was no other group like them – due to the fact that their agitators were ex-addicts, people who lived and were born on the streets, ex-(and future) inmates; these pariahs resonated with their proposals and joined the Motherfuckers. On the light of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's concept of *The Undercommons*<sup>1</sup>, these people brought together by affinity and urgency, their core idea pertains to the unruly domain of social existence – the space where we, whether colonized, queer, or otherwise marginalized, create significance through the experimental lives of one another.

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<sup>1</sup> HARNEY, Stefano and MOTEN, Fred. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, (2013).

The group had a tenuous connection with Students for a Democratic Society, the primary political organization of the New Left, but they hesitated in the face of sectarian intellectual debates and considered even the most militant students to be limited and untrustworthy. They met with everyone but belonged to none; the Yippies were too playful, the Black Panthers were fierce enough but too rigid in hierarchical and doctrinal terms. Probably, the group they most resembled was the San Francisco Diggers, a collective with artistic inclination and utopian mindset that advocated for an ethos of maximum freedom and created various "counter-institutions" in Haight-Ashbury.

One of the encounters between the Diggers and the Motherfuckers was undoubtedly the promotion and advocacy for a society against all private property and all forms of buying and selling. The radical tradition of the Diggers with guerrilla theater and underground happenings inspired many of UATWM's actions in terms of emergency performance and autonomous tactics – the actions were rehearsed steps, situations in which the construction of a violent literary plot was present through direct action and the inseparable connection between radical art and the basics of promoting life - shelter, food, and protection.

As it is known in our political bodies, the privation of these three simple yet regimental life demands of survival was the birthplace of a well known misery spread upon the undercommons. The misery politics of exploitation appears to be expressly dedicated to the production of corpses, a sort of political management of the biological life that it is not only characterized as an imposed simple hierarchical order from the top to below, but has a positive and productive dimension capable of not only detaining the subjectivity, but forming it, using the tools of misery to continually convert what is on the realm of common, to private. The group was explicitly inclined to violently attack and destroy the capitalistic conditions of life. Therefore, the quoted violence of capital that strives for mass skeletons-that-work production was the primary movement of sabotage by the UATWM.



It was in 1967, in February, that gigantic papier-maché skulls hanging on spears silently moved on Wall Street, in New York, carried by silent black masked nobodies. It was a dark pilgrimage that was headed with a simple sign: "Wall St. is War St." This theatrical funeral was the second one organized by Black Mask that aimed to attack the inseparable relationship of the violence of the Vietnam war and the violence of the capitalist system. In the leaflet passed down among the passants one could read:

WALL ST. IS WAR ST.

The traders in stocks and bones shriek for New Frontiers - but the coffins return to the Bronx and Harlem. Bull markets of murder deal in a stock exchange of death. Profits rise to the ticker tape of your dead sons. Poison gas RAINS on Vietnam. You cannot plead "WE DIDN'T KNOW." Television brings the flaming villages into the safety of your home. You commit genocide in the name of freedom.

BUT YOU TOO ARE THE VICTIMS!

If unemployment rises, you are given work, murderous work. If education is inferior, you are taught to kill. If the blacks get restless, they are sent to die. This is Wall Street's formula for the great society!<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Wall St. is War St.", *Black Mask*, no. 3, (1967).

Among the many prismatical interests brought to the surface by this picture, there is one in particular that illustrate UATWM criminal sabotage of private life: the skull.

Used largely by groups that positioned themselves against the current exploratory regimes, the skull has been a symbol against misery for long times. The face that is held by the skull in life, terminates when death begins, making room for the skull - the anonymous face we all share. In this context, it seems revealing that except from the moments one stands in front of the hallucinating dimension of a mirror, the face is unseen by us and belongs more to the others than to the one who bears it, it is an exterior. Black Mask's choices of rising against the economy and the laws of death resonates the idea that politics is death specific work<sup>3</sup>, against the image of life reduced by a scarce goods for which humans mortally fight for, proposing an infinite and violent imagination of life translated in a common potency, always mutating of vitality and denying the misery of reproductivity of death, operating through negation and never figuration of a real self, a programmatic resolution or a political agenda.

The skull, as said before is an image of the face we all share and is impregnated with radiant meaning. One of the most known and played Surrealist games is the exquisite corpse - a sort of automatic state of creation that manifests itself through drawings made collectively by a group. The pulse that UATWM shares with this concept is, though symbolic, very interesting: the calling was to join the project of direct action that attacks the notion of private creation (of life, art, language, politics, death...) risen by the impossible coalition of beings: the undercommons — a shared clandestine body of fugitives, refugees and renegades that sustain exquisite life and claim their own, crafting a form of "total revolution" in a new territory of expression, language and aesthetics.

Throughout this journey, the aim is to highlight the marginalization embedded in the language of media dissidence. UATWM's shift towards direct action is profoundly aesthetic in its commitment to creation, sustained by dismantling sensibilities, shared experiences, and cultural substance in the face of material conditions. The group was expressing new formless and experimental ways for their action tensioning its limitations, possibilities and autonomy. Alongside with the endeavor to turn hustling into organized libertarian forms of crime in the name of the absolute destruction, the Motherfuckers also persistently attempted to draft a new

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<sup>3</sup> MBEMBE, Achille. "Necropolítica", *Arte & Ensaios*, PPGAV, EBA, UFRJ, No.32 (2016), p.127.

form of expression, a new revolutionary language. Mustapha Khayati sustains that preparing a true deviation from our linguistic practices, obviously and immediately, result in political practices - though, living an anarchic (without foundation) and disobedient (without hierarchy, division or command) life might mean understanding that there is no vocation or duty to fulfill, no historical destiny to realize and no natural ethics to actualize. There is only the life of potentiality, in which possibilities unfold before being, which does not necessarily have to actualize any of them. It would be fitting here to invoke Khayati once again and, making a slight *détournement*, recognize that it takes no more than a moment to transition from words to actions.

The moment of the language. In Fred Moten's *In the Break*, lies a great indagation regarding a Billie Holiday's song:

What does it mean to surrender to the lyric? It's not only an abstract reaching, this going for, this willingness to fail. Something is reached for, an unprecedented communication (cuts literature, literature is cut and cuts) possible only when language is not reducible to a means of communication, when the sounded word is not reducible to linguistic meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The downfall of linguistic meaning became a movement of sabotage for most of the rebel groups that emerged and appropriated radical media in the 1960s worldwide landscape. Whether gracing the walls of Maoist film enthusiasts' dorm rooms in Paris, decorating the huts of guerrillas in the jungles of Guinea-Bissau, or lining the newsstands of Beirut during civil unrest, experimenting with collage, print, and typography by the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, radical print media played a crucial part in shaping the collective vision of a liberated Third World from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Animated by a similar pulse, UATWM was "looking for people who like to

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<sup>4</sup> MOTEN, Fred. *In The Break: The Aesthetics Of The Black Radical Tradition*, University of Minnesota Press, (2003), p.30.

draw"<sup>5</sup>.



This excerpt from King Mob No. 3 was called "Self Defense". In a page lied a native rebel holding a riffle and a sort of manifesto that said:

"SELF- DEFENSE

SELF-DEFENSE IS THE PREPARATION AGAINST ATTACK.

SELF-DEFENSE IS THE RESPONSE TO ANY ATTACK.

SELF-DEFENSE IS THE REPRISAL FOR AN ATTACK.

WE MUST DEFINE OURSELVES FOR OURSELVES IN THE  
LANGUAGE AND GESTURES OF OUR OWN DISCOVERIES  
WE MUST LEARN TO RECOGNISE EACH OTHER AND TO KNOW  
THAT ANYONE WHO IS NOT WITH US IS THE ENEMY.

WE MUST LEARN TO FIGHT AS WELL AS SEEK TO LOVE  
WE MUST TAKE UP THE GUN AS WELL AS THE JOINT  
WE MUST DEFEND OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR OWN HUMANITY"<sup>6</sup>

This manifesto and the image resonates vividly the tone of the Motherfuckers. During the 1960s, Black Mask's utilization of rhetorical, analytical, and performative strategies elevated the ethical considerations surrounding political violence. In response, the Motherfuckers crafted an extended practice of self-defense, functioning as a form of "total art." - they were not even for a second turning themselves into some esterilized form of proletarian ethics of the artist, but were ballistically calling to another aesthetical possibility of violent abolition of everything, and on top of the everything, the "death culture", sustained by colonialism.. This

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<sup>5</sup> Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, "Self-Defense/Affinity Groups", *Black Mask* No.5, (1968).

<sup>6</sup> "Self Defense", *King Mob* No.3, (1969).

practice gave rise to the collective identity of the Motherfucker through various "martial techniques," such as patrols and occupations, boiling from the ghettos of The Lower East Side and other marginalized territories "occupied" by the State, a global night and fire.

"This convergence is a real process and has expressed itself concretely in the formation of the GHETTO. The ghetto: an ambiguous and dialectical phenomenon par excellence. Negatively it stands for the dissolution of everything. It's no transitional experimental station or enclave: no Tangier, no Big Sur. It's pure hell. One window, one door, four walls. A dead end. The ghetto: the place you go when there's nothing else left to do, when there's nowhere else left to go. The prison without bars. The loony bin so big no one can even see its there. Backrooms and endless night. Neurosis. Inertia. The abyss opens... The horror. The horror...<sup>7</sup>

The manifesto in case shows a clear tension on language, politics and death. Whether it's a biopolitics of populations as described by Foucault<sup>8</sup>, or a biopolitics of death as theorized by Mbembe, or even a hormonal-porn micro-biopolitics similar to Preciado's proposal in "Testo Junkie"<sup>9</sup>, in all cases what is perceived is the primacy of production, whether of docile citizens, corpses, or alternative lifestyles. Even Hardt & Negri's biopolitics<sup>10</sup>, focused on the production of immaterial goods – values, codes, languages, affects, care, services, etc. – enacted by a multitude of unrepresentable singularities, overlooks the dimension of potentiality to focus on work and production. In fact, power, action, production, and work are inseparable; their fruits are constructs fiercely defended yet paradoxically abstract: individuals opposed to things (animals and plants, for example), property rights, the history of winners, tradition, political representation, homeland, morality, God, soul, etc.

Of course, this argument does not intend to defend that the theoretical constructions of the above-mentioned authors lack value or, worse yet, are not critical of the socially widespread scenario of violence and inequality today. It only emphasizes that they fail to reach the

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<sup>7</sup> "Flower Power Won't Stop Fascist Power", *King Mob*, No. 3, (1969).

<sup>8</sup> FOUCAULT, Michael. *Nascimento da Biopolítica*. Edições 70, (2010).

<sup>9</sup> PRECIADO, Paul B. *Testo Junkie: Sexo, drogas e bioopolítica na era farmacopornográfica*, N-1 Edições, (2018).

<sup>10</sup> HARDT, Michael. NEGRI, Antonio. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (2000).



critical dimension characteristic of potentiality, even though many of them flirt with such a possibility. Achieving this dimension of potentiality implies embracing what is rejected by tradition as "ineffective," "subjective," or "utopian." On the contrary, from the perspective of the continuous expansion of potentiality, what is deemed ineffective is everything that is intended to be stable and unchangeable. The basic consequence of such an assumption is that biopolitics transforms into biopotency, abandoning the fundamental concepts that have characterized the traditional dictionary of Western politics, such as representation, city, person, and individual body. As Deleuze & Guattari<sup>11</sup> taught, all of these function like disjunctive syntheses: they separate because they unite and unite by separating. In turn, potentiality corresponds to the realm of the non-separated, the continuous, the boundless universe envisioned by the Stoics and, therefore, is infinite.

Without representation, without subjects, and without rights that can be attributed to them, it is understood that the city, a fundamental term in the dictionary of (bio)politics, becomes unnecessary. One cannot forget that the city constitutes the original site of separation, as it was in the city that the fundamental experience of being divided occurred – and continues to happen today. In the city, free and enslaved individuals were separated, the original sin that permeates all politics, all biopolitics. Not coincidentally, it is in the city that the apex of civilization and the invention of slavery are celebrated simultaneously. According to James C. Scott, the city operates divisions that are, in fact, successive domestications<sup>12</sup> of the undercommons.

Contrary to the myth of progress narrated in verse and prose by Western culture, the first empires that emerged with the large-scale planting of storable cereals – generating not only production but also accumulation and social inequalities – do not correspond to idyllic societies where humans escaped hunger and violence. Instead, they were infected pens full of diseases and the cruelest forms of subjugation. In this sense, various ethnographic and archaeological data demonstrate that in the earliest known cities in the Middle East, the expectation and quality of life plummeted significantly, especially when compared to the rates of "barbarian" nomads who, living outside the cities, refused to be domesticated and "citizenized."

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<sup>11</sup> DELEUZE, Gilles; GUATTARI, Félix. *L'anti-Œdipe: capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, (1972).

<sup>12</sup> SCOTT, James C. *Against the grain: a deep history of the earliest states*. New Haven: Yale University, (2017).

The confrontation between language and death discussed here reveals that biopolitics – the bio-polis, the "life in/of the city" – needs to transform into biopotency. Only in this way can we dismantle the neoliberal forms of life that support the existence of a supposed material scarcity and the consequent need for accumulation, ideological constructs that hinder not only a redeemed humanity, but also a humanity without guilt. In other words, a humanity to which guilt, as a basic metaphysical operator that demands rights, authority, and punishment as counterparts, can no longer be imposed. Therefore, a criminal ethics that supports a violent language, an anticolonial project against the city, against the "colonization of everyday life"<sup>13</sup> in the city. From this critical and deconstructive understanding of biopolitics, it is possible to overcome the lexicon and practices of thanato- and necropolitics that the "civilized" world inherited and dictionarized as if they were insurmountable. Indeed, biopotency can open spaces for a power of life in place of a power over life.

Living an unguilted life means being ready to die. This is precisely what our societies fail to do, as they have been accustomed to vegetate under what many scholars call the long present, a subjective experience of time that, as Guy Debord taught through his notion of spectacle<sup>14</sup>, extends infinitely forward and backward, detached from both the traditions of the past and the projectivity of the future. Neoliberal capitalism constitutes, more than a terrible and inhumane regime of exploitation and expropriation, a set of devices that lead human beings to forget how to die. Accustomed to a bland life, always the same and whose highest ambition is simply to endure at all costs, death appears to us as the great Sphinx that we cannot confront.

It is possible to see the Motherfucker's praxis as counter-dispositives armed to reclaim "real life now". The development of the tactics of patrol and occupation was not an order of reclaiming the possible ways of living in the city, but a rally against the "colonization" of the streets by the "pig america" but also by the reactivities countercultural Yippies. The Motherfucker's were creating another level of dark Dadaism for street gangs by producing a de-instituting form-of-life illuminated by the flammable passion of the Durruti Column and what the Motherfucker's called "Armed Love".

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<sup>13</sup> LEFEBVRE, Henri. *Critique of Everyday Life: The Three-Volume Text*. Verso, (2014)).

<sup>14</sup> DEBORD, Guy. *A sociedade do espetáculo*. Contraponto, (2007).

A de-instituting form-of-life is not immune to history. Having undergone the passage of time, today it can perceive that time has made its mark. Therefore, it is not an abstraction but a life without principles, anarchic, and therefore, umbilically connected to history, which surrounds it with the ring of fire of the indeterminate.



By being founded on a negative – which we can call "non-fascist" or "Dark Dadaist" here – this anarchic life remains without principles, surrendered to an absence that, nevertheless, is full potency: it must live in another way, not simply constituting or de-constituting, but de-instituting. This means carrying the weight of history always in dispute, seeking to escape from given and inherited institutions, denying them due to the ontological fascism present in each of their epochal configurations.

Durruti's *Grupos de Afinidad* mentioned above encounter with the concept of Armed Love manifested the collective endeavour of the group and their tactics to de-instituting life while founding a praxis based on a "total assault on every form of oppression that seeks to limit our existence and our possibilities."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "The Myth Killer", *The Rat: Subterranean News*, (1968).

## The Myth Killer

We must develop our own standard of beauty  
The Hip Community Exists because we have abandoned the institutions of this so-called society:  
home/family, school, job, army, etc  
We are all runaways.

Wherever we are the Hip Community exists: the street, the pad, the park, the subways - all night,  
the pawnshops, the coffee houses, Gem's spa - the place doesn't matter.

Considering the many levels and the tremendous mobility of the hip community, in order to survive,  
and survival is what we are concerned with, there must be link ups. There must be focal points  
within each city where our community can base itself..

What's real to us is the dinner in our stomachs  
What's real to us is music we can dance to  
What's real to us are all those things necessary for a living community, for a fighting community:  
karate classes, bail and defence funds, Anti Pig Militia, communal meals, crashpads, communes...  
WHAT'S REAL TO US IS SPACE TO SURVIVE

What's real to us is to feel, to fuck, to dance, to sing, to take dope, to jump up and down, shaggy  
haired, fan-toothed with everything hanging out.

To survive in Amerika as a total human being is revolutionary.  
Hip is living, really living and to live in Amerika  
IS A CRIME PUNISHABLE BY DEATH

As the threat of our community grows repression becomes greater and the need for survival space  
becomes more urgent we cannot allow the man to define us or our space.  
Everywhere we turn Bullshit Amerika has been defining what we do and who are. We have allowed  
the media, the record companies, the psychedelic merchandisers and the suburban imitators to tell  
us what "Hip Revolution" is all about--- NO MORE

We must now launch a total assault on every form of oppression that seeks to limit our existence and  
our possibilities.  
Controlling our lives means controlling our possibilities.

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.  
We must create the hip revolutionary community  
We must destroy Amerika because it has nothing to offer us, but death.

The INTERNATIONAL WEREWOLF CONSPIRACY is the Hip Revolutionary Community in  
Action. Insanely hungry for the chance to discover how to live, and rabid for the blood and guts of  
the honkies and pigs who infect everything they see with the plague of living death

WEREWOLVES OF THE WORLD, JOIN THE FEAST

Up Against The Wall/Motherfuckers  
Al Paredon Hijo de Puta  
Berkeley Commune  
Boston Freeman  
Church of the New Reality (Southwest)  
October 15 Movement  
Flower Cong  
and You

*Text from a broadsheet that appeared in The Rat in 1968.*

Ben Morea insisted, on the few times he spoke to the media, that their radical community was a "way of existing against death culture"<sup>16</sup> and that potency elaborated the concept of "ARMED LOVE"<sup>17</sup>.

Alana Moraes defends that new forms of struggles as experimental practices cultivate production of autonomy and defy the limits of the capitalistic ways of devastation of life.

"This occurs because, as several researchers point out, the capitalist counter-revolution coincides, and was largely sustained, by a

<sup>16</sup> IDEM.

<sup>17</sup> Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, "Armed Love", (1969).

rationalist scientific revolution whose main outcome was the creation of a funeral feast of dichotomies that separated life from the body and mind, nature from culture, and subjectivity from objectivity. Capitalism was primarily produced with the help of a sniper-like epistemological coup; a new way of dividing the world and extracting value from its divisions."<sup>18</sup>

Armed Love, on contrary, fight for a possibility of life that tensions the extrativist point of view until its destruction: a passionate belonging on a community that transvalues the beings seen by the powerful structures as worthless, filthy, degenerated. *Cacique Babau*, a Tupinambá leader in Brazil, defends that the reclamation of indigenous lands can also be considered "a laboratory, where the rescue of being indigenous takes place."<sup>19</sup>



<sup>18</sup> MORAES, Alana. *Experimentações Baldias, Paixões de Retomada: Vida e luta na cidade-acampamento*. Dissertation (Doctorate of Social Anthropology), UFRJ (2020).

<sup>19</sup> Part of the work of ALARCON, Daniela F. *O retorno da terra: as retomadas na aldeia tupinambá Serra do Padeiro, sul da Bahia*. Thesis (Master of Social Sciences), UnB, (2013).

For that, Armed Love declares to be "everything they say we are and we are proud of it. We are obscene, lawless, hideous, dangerous, dirty, violent and young"<sup>20</sup> and it was exactly that new form of affiliation to life that eclipsed the capacity of revolutionary violence, while valuing the common culture of the "undesired". The Motherfucker's Armed Love profoundly got caught on by the "militant spirit of the blacks"<sup>21</sup>, being the "brothers of Vietnamese people against imperialism" and preaching the Afro-American and Latinx unity.

"Our vision is not merely of a society in which black men have power to rule the lives of other black man. The society we seek to build among black people is not an oppressive capitalist society. It is a society in which the spirit of community and humanistic love will prevail."<sup>22</sup>

"Up against the wall Motherfucker" is a retumbant line that feels violent on the surface of the thong. In every language, tone and vibration, even murmuring, the sentence is a gunpowder poem. The poem was written by Amiri Baraka in 1967:

"You know how to get it, you can  
get it, no money down, no money never, money don't grow on trees no  
way, only whitey's got it, makes it with a machine, to control you  
you can steal nothin from a white man, he's already stole it he owes  
you anything you want, even his life. All the stores will open if you  
will say the magic words. The magic words are: Up against the wall  
mother fucker this is a stick up! Or: Smash the windows at night (these  
are magic actions) smash the windows at daytime, anytime, together,  
lets smash the window drag the shit from it there. No money down. No  
time to pay. Just take what you want. The magic dance in the street."<sup>23</sup>

The magic dance in the street of the Motherfucker's sounded so violently abrasive that it transformed the streets and the refusal of death by losing the fear of it. In the contaminated laboratory of the streets, this place of experimentation that involves hesitation, an

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<sup>20</sup> Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, "The Outlaw Page", *Rat*, (1968).

<sup>21</sup> Black Mask, "Afro-AMERICAN, Puerto Rican Unity", *Black Mask* No. 5, (1967).

<sup>22</sup> IDEM.

<sup>23</sup> BARAKA, Amiri. "Black People!", *Black Magic: Collected Poetry, 1961-1967*, (1969), p. 225.

experimental and investigative way of associating with one another, with the land, substances, a displacement of oneself, a reactivation of our collective intelligence, an invitation to occupy life takes place. If establishing an epistemology – and subsequently, an institutionalization – is always a negotiation of boundaries between what will remain legitimized as meaning and what will be excluded, the Motherfuckers rise against the infinity of subtractions proposed by the institucionalization of death in life, giving back the words to the language, restoring the voice to the throat, returning what has always been aggressively separated...

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### **PICTURES USED:**

(On order of appearance)

1. Photo taken by Laurence B. Fink on the "Wall Sr. is War St." action in 1967.
2. "We are looking for people who like to draw" drawing taken from the Self-Defense leaflet (1968).
3. Painting by Ben Morea, *Red-Eclipse*, 1964.
4. "The Myth Killer" taken from *Rat*, 1968.
5. "The Outlaw page" also taken from *Rat*, 1968.



