

Selections from Radical Ufology: Manual for Autonomous Contact with Extraterrestrials

Men in Red

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Translator's Note

Here, you will find a selection of excerpts from my English language rendering of *Radical Ufology: Manual for Autonomous Contact with Extraterrestrials*, a 1999 exo-anarcho-theoretical manifesto from the Italian autonomist ufology collective, known as Men In Red (MIR). The text originally appeared with copyleft licensure; however, in the process of completing this translation, I have had the fun of working with MIR members, Cobol Pongide & Baldo Uranio, who are excited to see the Anglophone world's reaction to a thoroughgoing Marxist-oriented text which takes the transformative potentials of interspecies and intergalactic contact seriously. Notably, this text appeared a year after Jodi Dean's *Aliens In America*, which treats the UFO and extraterrestrial more as a postmodern anxiety, metaphor, and absurd conspiracy theory than a really existing phenomenon.

The excerpts presented here are a small fraction of the total work. These six sections construct the Earth, which appears to a UFO's extraterrestrial pilots, and begin to clear the skies of anthropocentric, endoplanetary myths about the beyond of Capital-Earth's atmosphere, enabling a mass sighting of radical transformation aided by our non-human comrades from other worlds.

MIR's *Radical Ufology* is a potent antidote to the spectacular sort found in contemporary Anglophone society, represented, in one part, by institutional ufology, which engages in coverups and disingenuous debunking efforts in order to maintain state control; and, on the other part, by intelligentsia- and/or church- adjacent New Age entities, like Gaia, Inc. The *Radical Ufology* establishes a practice of autonomous contact with extraterrestrials, which predates the CE:5 protocols of Stephen Greer by 15-20 years and directs the ends of that extraterrestrial contact towards human liberation (rather than perpetual engines as in Greer's case).

Myself, I am a poet, translator, educator, horticulturist and several other things, living at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers. I first began work on the *Radical Ufology* in 2017 after the Atlantan avant-garde musician, Antonio Marrone, found the text while searching a web archive for music video content; having experienced contacts with extraterrestrials myself and the correspondent alienation felt when discussing these contacts in academic or political contexts, I felt drawn to begin my largest translation project, having never before worked with modern Italian or theoretical nonfiction.

Men In Red is a (mostly) anonymous anarchist collective from the 90s, motivated by a certain engagement with 1970's Italian autonomism, the psychogeographies of the situationists, and an Italian culture after the savages of Operation Gladio. The text was written by at least four individuals; they have also produced other texts and magazines, which at present remain untranslated.

from the Preface

We have always understood internationalism as the psychic basis for all forms of radicality, and, accordingly, we have witnessed the events of Palestine, Ireland, the Basque countries and South America. In these uprisings, the people have not been interested in making claims to this or that identity, but rather in amassing networks of antagonism and solidarity with that which, for the sake of synthesis, we will continue to call the proletariat. We have been interested in the possibility of a planetary antagonism from the base of society; in considering the other as a fragment on which to build a society, founded on the valorization of difference, as the priceless building block towards an emerging

collective intelligence which resists exploitation in all its forms.

When Subcomandante Marcos called the 1996 “Intergalactic Conference For Humanity Against Neoliberalism” in Chiapas, Mexico, he taught us something. Subcomandante Marcos made it clear that planetary internationalism is the fruit of a historical myopia which imagines capital as only working on the “ground floor” [“piano terra”]; and that, on the contrary, the other is found everywhere in every galaxy; and that, regardless of either, it is necessary that we seize another horizon and always assume a decentralized position.

Capital Acéphale is now investing more and more beyond our atmosphere. Not only with impressive satellite systems, Russo-American spaceships, and public monies spent to the benefit of the European Space Agency (ESA) or the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), but also with impressive investments towards maintaining the endoplanetary spectacle: Spielbergian cinematography, *X-Files* television, false space missions to Mars or scientific debunking programs such as SETI. In this, we can consider the discovery of a hole in the ozone layer not only as the first sign of our failure to integrate our economy into our ecosystem, but also as the opening moment of an extraterrestrial escape channel for pancapitalism.

And, so, it is now necessary to push our confrontation to its most advanced territories. Networking not only on the crust of the earth, but also with those entities, non-faithful to the principle of non-interference, who periodically visit our planet with the intent to effect an evolution in the communist sense of our existent relationships.

If spaceships of the alien dissidence are occasionally shot down by military forces (What is being served by project Star Wars?) and, then, the reports of these crashes must be administered to the base (10-100-1000 Area 51s exist; all occupied and self-managed), without passing through the institutions of bourgeois ufology, it is always aimed at the conversion of the other into technological or spectacular goods. This applies to the exploited Third World (both in their bodies: the low cost of labor; and, in the image of their bodies: resold as immaterial goods in the news) as it applies to extraterrestrials (defrauded of their advanced technology and resold, appropriately refined, in specialist journals or on primetime television).

And, so, as the extraterrestrial was never intended to make contact with

the internationalist network of governments and states, it is now incumbent upon us to make our own self-managed, autonomous contact from the base of society.

Now has come the time to bring the conflict where no terrestrial has ever gone before. Now has come the time to extend our antagonistic networks to the interplanetary level, since, *wherever technology is most advanced in society and wherever the management of relationships on Capital Earth are most uncertain, the greater are the contradictions and the possibility of a radical transformation of existence.*

UFO AL POPOLO!

[UFOS TO THE PEOPLE!]

from the Introduction

We are frequently afforded the opportunity to meet people who ask us how apparently intelligent individuals can waste all of their time, occupying themselves with such stupid things as strange lights in the sky and improbable encounters with extraterrestrial creatures. Even stranger, it seems as though this obsession may have something to do with an anxiety concerning the transformation of the world into something less barbaric than it seems to us today. After all, traditional ufology has always avoided confronting the material realities of planet Earth, and, commonly, a passion for UFOs is interpreted as a convenient escape from the problems and frustrations of everyday life. An argument, not at all alien, at least judging by the discomfort which many ufological researchers experience in identifying it as something other than a neurotic habit and admitting their passions. There are very few in the field of ufology who are capable of conducting business and justifying — with the almighty dollar — the “normality” of their activities. For almost all enthusiasts, ufology remains a hobby for after work; however, for those serious ones among us, this has never been the case: for us, the main thematic of the UFO is, in the first place, an opportunity to reflect upon our planet from decentralized positions. Above all, the very fact that unidentified objects appear already represents an anomaly within an economic-productive system which is capable of identifying everything and, from everything, manages to extract value. In a scenario where control extends over the earthly

globe through a panopticon of satellites, and space exploration becomes a final conquest aimed at new profits, the UFO appears as an obscene, non-integrable element, a destabilizing object in the pacified panorama of globalization.

It is no surprise, then, that around the UFO large and numerous communities have developed with an inclination to attribute the phenomena to extraterrestrials. The hope, here, is namely that there exist — perhaps, at sidereal distances, though still near enough to reach our small, barbarous planet — forms of intelligent life with which we could establish contact. And, in this hope, we implicitly say: “No, we are not alone; there exist other forms of social organization.” There exist worlds where the miseries of Earth have already been overcome, worlds where poverty has been defeated, worlds where one is not forced to breathe in toxic waste, and where, finally, the slavery of labor has been abolished. Only through these considerations can we think we are able to develop such a degree of social cooperation that would allow us to produce adequate technology for interstellar travel. This is a departure from traditional ufology, which is embroiled in the counting and cataloging of lights in the sky, homogenized within the dominant productive system of the planet, and, at best, poetic when lost in some unlikely military conspiracy. No, there is no conspiracy, except for that of a capitalism which has nowadays become one with the planet on which we stand. And, the aliens, we will continue to not see them; the extraterrestrials will never make contact in a public manner as long as we terrestrials are not the first to challenge this model of dominion, as long as we are not the first to unlock an exoplanetary perspective and immediately begin to behave as “extraterrestrials.”

The signals we must send cannot, therefore, be the signals of the extant political order. No platinum discs, engraved with voices of heads of state, fired off into space, but loud signals which say that we terrestrials have had enough of this mode of living life and that we terrestrials are open to other experiments.

Only through this course of action, perhaps, will some extraterrestrial intelligence seriously consider the possibility of contact, judging us culturally ready for such a traumatic event. And, if, instead, this contact never happens, we will have improved the conditions of our existence on this planet anyhow. Then, we would have no shame for our being ufologists.

[...]

Politics of a Phenomenology

In an essay published in 1957, Roland Barthes lamented the reduction of the extraterrestrial fascination to a banal myth. And, it is true, since the UFO appeared, spectacular ufology has been incessantly engaged in the reproduction of a domestic alien, an alien in the image and likeness of Earth, with its own rationality and emotionality: “Mars is implicitly endowed with a historical determinism copied from that of Earth: if the saucers are the vehicles of Martian geographers here to observe Earth’s configuration, as one American scientist ventured to remark, and as many doubtlessly believe, it is because the history of Mars has ripened at the same rhythm as that of our world and produced geographers in the same century in which we have discovered geography and aerial photography.”¹ It is no surprise, then, that in the epoch of biotechnology and invasive body implants, ufology finds itself digging into biological bodies, examining implants inserted by aliens during an *abduction*² or investigating unlikely animal mutilations: behind it, the same physicians and biologists of Earth. Barthes goes on: “Every myth tends fatally towards a narrow anthropomorphism and, worse still, towards what we might call a class anthropomorphism. Mars is not only Earth, it is petit-bourgeois Earth, it is the little district of mentality cultivated (or expressed) by the popular illustrated press. No sooner has it taken form in the sky than Mars is thus *aligned* by the most powerful of appropriations, that of identity.”³ This is a real and proper reterritorialization of the extraterrestrial onto Earth which weakens the subversive charge represented by an encounter with any other culture. The history of cultural anthropology teaches us that it is not enough to turn our gaze towards the other to expand our cognitive horizon; in this sense, contemporary ufology does not differ at all from the position of racist prejudice with which colonial anthropology (Taylor, Frazer, etc.) judged “primitive” and endorsed a forced introduction of European logic (religious, technological, labor) intended to immediately exterminate

1 R. Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* “Martians” trans. Richard Howard, Oakland: University of California Press 1997, p 27.

2 The abduction of terrestrials by extraterrestrials, technically defined as *Close Encounters of the Fourth Type*.

3 Barthes, op. cit.

every culture other than the Western one. As that era was ethnocentric, this one is endoplanetary. By projecting its terracentrism into space, contemporary ufology finds itself epistemologically before the concept of *cultural relativism*, introduced in anthropology in the 1940s. Thus, the encounter with the absolute otherness of the alien is reduced to the game of dual signification, that of the identical.

On the contrary, every contact—at every level—is an occasion to glimpse for ourselves a different other, an occasion to call into question each of our individual, cultural and planetary *brainframes*⁴. Then, the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence and the possibility of glimpsing this other represents, above all else, an occasion for we terrestrials to undertake a radical rethinking of our existence as a living species.

Geography

The extension of the capitalist logic of valorization throughout all parts of the globe has constricted the possibility for any inhabitant to have an experience which radically calls into question their everyday existence. “Globalization” designates nothing other than the definitive deployment of this process. The whole sensory apparatus is preformatted by the codes of economy, obscene codes because they are linked to the principle of equivalent exchange — obscene because it renders every object, every experience as always completely interpretable; obscene because it renders objects of diverse natures as always exchangeable, always comparable, always attributable and interchangeable. The pricing of commodities is the site of all possible objects’ transcription. On Earth, everything has a price.

There no longer exists a site, no matter how exotic, which is capable of satisfying the demand for a radically new experience. The figure of the traveler is replaced in entirety with that of the tourist. All vantages have been chewed up and spit out, in some way, already seen. The experience of exploration is reduced to adhering itself to prefabricated models: something must be acquired, something must be remembered, something must be photographed; there must be a souvenir to come back with. And so, we no longer see other humans, rather actors in some exotic theatre. Often, this is the case: on First People’s

⁴ The concept of the *brainframe* is understood as both the neuronal and cognitive organization of the human brain, as introduced by Derrick de Kerckhove to account for the effects of technology on the human species.

reservations, the only possibility or survival for indigenous people is to imitate their culture of origin for the use and consumption of the white man. Disneyland becomes the common archetype of the Japanese tourist and Aboriginal person of Australia. When everything is exchangeable, diversity is erased. The hidden face of the “global village”: there is no chance of encounter because all encounters are already data in blast off.

Biopolitics

Why does all of this not clearly and simply appear to the minds of the most industrialized terrestrial countries? It does not appear for the same reasons which, also, make possible the appropriation of all social cooperation within the logic of capitalism.

Information society puts an end to the separation between manual labor and intellectual labor, which had given the latter momentum towards its potential subtraction from the logic of capitalist valorization. Mental life was a utopian space of reflection from which one could read and reread the daily barbarity of material labor. The immaterial becoming of labor dissolves that contradiction, produced by the separation of life and work, which previously rendered the factory work immediately revolutionary. And thanks to the experience of a world outside labor, a century of factory struggles has been able to leave us, in inheritance, that dear estate consisting of worker's rights and the welfare state; neither of which has come by chance and both of which are, today, under continuous attack.

The upheaval of that model of capital's functioning through automation and computerization produces a new type of Postfordist worker for whom thought, language, and affect are not terms of opposition to work but the conditions of its actuality. Today, the tools of labor are embodied in the brain, but, at the same time, man is the whole body; the brain makes up part of the body. The instrument is therefore embodied not only in the brain but also in everything that pertains to sensation and perception, to communication, to the relationships between human beings: in short, the whole of life is put to work⁵.

This is why it is easy to recognise the bonds and the boredom of

5 Cf. A. Negri, *Exile*, Parigi: Editions Mille et Une Nuit, 1997.

everyday life, while not so easy to identify a guilty party, a nemesis to fight against. As an ultrabody, Capital has appropriated life itself and the enemy is now within us. How do we rid ourselves of it? How do we harness the powers of creative subjectivities to explode a historical process, accelerating it to the end of guaranteeing all happinesses' possibilities?

At the end of the sixties, when this process of putting-life-to-work began to emerge, Tronti himself, among the first to understand its scope, wrote: "The collective worker (...) must reach the point of having all of Capital as their enemy, therefore, understanding themselves, the labor-power of capital, as their enemy, as commodities. It is on this basis that the capitalist necessity to objectify the subjective powers of labor within capitalism itself can be transformed, on the worker's part, into a superior understanding of capitalist exploitation"⁶. Sure, but how do we provoke this shift in gaze which allows us to see ourselves as the enemy? How, since at this moment, all of humanity is trapped in this yoke? We need something which we can leverage, a kind of biopolitical principle of exteriority, counter to putting-life-to-work. We need a subject that is external to this process, a form of life which can assume the gaze. An animal? A dolphin? Also, but, above all else, a form of intelligent life and one with which we could enter into communication. Seen anything like this on this planet?

[...]

Gaia

When, in the early Sixties, NASA posed the problem of identifying the existence of life forms on the surface of Mars, almost all the proposals involved sending shuttles directly to the surface of the red planet: only in this way would it be possible to gather definitive evidence on the existence of living material. Some proposals such as sending a sort of flea trap appear surreal today. The terracentric conviction being that the Martian deserts had to be populated by camels and that no animal attracts fleas more than camels; then, of course, a Martian flea detector would certainly be an adequate instrument. This anecdote is told by James Lovelock, the researcher who proposed to NASA a decidedly cheaper system. It would be enough to observe the Martian atmosphere with terrestrial, infrared telescopes in order to detect the

6 M. Tronti, *Operai e capitale ("Work and Capital")*, Torino: Einaudi 1971.

dominant presence of CO₂ and, above all, a condition of almost perfect chemical equilibrium. Until 1965, the year in which the Mariner IV probe sent to Earth the first closeup images of the Martian surface, it was common belief that Mars was a planet rich in vegetal life, a hypothesis reinforced by the dominant presence of CO₂. Lovelock was one of the few skeptics and, together with Dian Hitchcock, elaborated a model according to which life on a planet must necessarily use the atmosphere and the oceans to transport raw materials and eliminate metabolic waste, a process that changes the chemical composition of the atmosphere and renders it visibly different from that of a lifeless planet. For Lovelock, the available data were already sufficient to exclude the possibility of Mars being a biologically hospitable planet, and the images of Mariner IV were unequivocal. It was inconceivable to think life had spread across the planet in leopard spots, since every planet functions as a system. So, in fact, that system functions like Earth.

Over the years, Lovelock perfected his model by joining it to the so-called Gaia hypothesis: “The whole gamut of living material on Earth, from whales to viruses, from oaks to algae, all could be considered a single living entity, capable of manipulating the atmosphere of the Earth to satisfy its global needs, and endowed with powers well beyond those of its constituent parts.” The advanced proposal was that of a “geophysiology” able to improve the understanding of coevolutionary processes of matter and life on Earth. This project of analyzing the complex systems of the planet leads to the consideration of earth as a single living being: *Gaia*. A hypothesis of doubtless utility on a scientific level, but one with devastating effects when Lovelock proposes it as an overall vision of the world.

The ideology is thus to place oneself as part of a great transcendental whole. Any human action, whether viewed as passive or active, is in fact explicable on the basis of the will and higher intelligence of the biotic Gaia. Lovelock’s proposal degenerates into absolute trust placed in Gaia, trust which becomes a cult for many New Age groups. The carcinogenic effects of the Ozone Hole? “They are no different from those related to the fact that we breathe oxygen, which is also carcinogenic”⁷. And the dangers represented by nuclear energy? “Prokaryotes, our ancestors, evolved on piles of radioactive waste as

7 J. Lovelock, *Le nuove età di Gaia* (“*The New Age of Gaia*”), Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1991, p. 172.

big as the planet”⁸. In short, Gaia will always succeed in establishing new conditions of life on the planet independently of the human species.

Thus, Gaia becomes a new pacifying ideology, of vaguely ecological tastes, that hides the fact that the conditions of existence on the planet are governed by the economy. If every environmental catastrophe is recorded in terms of impact to gross domestic product, it is because floods, earthquakes, and epidemics have become one with the body of Capital.

They are raw materials in the same sense that biotechnological products are marked by multinational companies with copyrights. When the genetic program which preordains the development of plants and animals becomes the legal property of a private entrepreneur who is free to manipulate it as they see fit, Gaia has no room to exist as an autonomous intelligence. The “global mind” of the planet is now governed by titans of industry: it is they who preordained those same flows of matter in the terrestrial atmosphere, which were used by Lovelock to exclude the possibility of life on Mars. The planet on which we live is now at one with the metaorganism we call Capital-Earth, the same party responsible for the material misery of the Third World and the immaterial misery in the West and the same party responsible for the miasma we breathe and our compulsion to labor.

The identification with Gaia is therefore an identification with Capital-Earth. Gaia is Toyotism extended to the planetary level. The complete adhesion and integration of humans in the functional logic of Capital is complete. The denial of something existing outside of Earth is more and more apparent today. Lovelock is explicit from this point of view telling us clearly that when he looks at Earth from the Moon’s distance, he understands that it is his “homeland”⁹. This reveals how Gaia is nothing but a new “cult of the soil,” a new Nazi myth of authenticity, appropriate to the scene of globalization.

A myth that negates all differences, pretending to instead recognize them only in terms of coevolutionary functionality. The shift from scientific biology to that of political economy is tasked with

⁸ Ibid., p. 180.

⁹ Ibid., p. 201.

concealing, making “natural,” the very mechanisms of circulating goods, the principle of equivalence: with money, everything is equivalent to everything else... Humanity included.