

Julian Murphet\*

## Rosa Plus Emma: Political Pleasure and the Enjoyment of Reason

“With the decline of the ego and its reflexive reason,” wrote Horkheimer in 1941, “human relationships tend to a point wherein the rule of economy over all personal relationships, the universal control of commodities over the totality of life, turns into a new and naked form of command and obedience.”<sup>1</sup> In this grim scenario, the eclipse of reason is simultaneously the termination of all pleasure taken in the field of social relationships. Today both aspects of this diagnosis look wrong. Today, indeed, it would appear that the autonomous rationality of the system (in which algorithms manage the lion’s share of stock-market trading without any human intervention) and the compulsion to enjoy (the happiness industry and its obscene pornographic underbelly) are precisely the Alpha and Omega of senile capitalism’s *modus operandi*.

In itself and on its own terms, capital is nothing more or less than *ratio*. It has no mimetic component, inherits no sacred values, but thrives on the conversion of qualities to quantities, and the ceaseless, eminently predictable transformation of the fluctuating market value of labor power into accumulating surplus value. Rationality is its core, and calculation is its technique. But in the end its lack of subjectivity marks its limit and the cause of its innermost self-negation. The capitalist firm thinks (i.e., it employs mathematically trained accountants and analysts) in order not to think (about anything but its own returns). The rationalization of means under capitalism is put to work on behalf of an end that, socially and philosophically speaking, is the antithesis of reasonable. Profit is only possible in a situation where nobody knows or cares for what ends commodities are produced. The rationality of the profit motive is thus always framed by the generalized irrationality of planned obsolescence, overproduction, periodic liquidation of stock, crises of accumulation, capital flight, chronic underemployment, environmental degradation, and finally the depletion of the

201

---

<sup>1</sup> Max Horkheimer, “The End of Reason,” in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Continuum, New York 1993, p. 39.

\* School of the Arts and Media, UNSW

biosphere. Capitalism excels in the proliferation of rationalizations for this very state of affairs; but as Adorno observes, “Rationalizations are the scars of reason in a state of unreason.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this wholesale subordination of local rationality to a larger irrationality should be characterized by the term “unreason.” What justifies such unreason? How is our daily complicity with it extorted from us? The obvious answer to that question today, at least in Leftist circles, is simple: *enjoyment*. What Žižek calls the “superego injunction to enjoy” saturates our contemporary ideological space, sinking below the horizon of discourse into the very pores of our micro-acts of consumption.<sup>3</sup> So, while capitalism continues to thrive on the basis of a progressive rise in the degree of rationalization, it offsets that with an obscenely irrational compulsion to enjoy, a collective self-sacrificial ritual of unfulfillable pleasure at the altar of a ubiquitous pornography. “As long as economic rationality remains partial and the rationality of the whole problematic,” notes Adorno, “irrational forces will be harnessed to perpetuate it.”<sup>4</sup> None more so than the tsunami of orgiastic enjoyment that our bodies willingly propagate through the empty space where substantial values once stood.

In the search for alternatives to this contradictory economy of *unreasonable enjoyment*, one privileged antagonist has historically commanded political centre-stage, and that is the supreme rationality of the Bolshevik party: the planned economy, “scientific socialism,” the forcible suppression of capitalist unreason through party-led proletarian dictatorship, and strict orthodoxies of theory. In contradistinction to the capitalist injunction to enjoy, however, the ideological supplement to this hardline rationalism tended to be a radical suspicion of the pleasure principle and the erotic drives. In his critique of Plekhanov’s “intellectually anarchist” advocacy of a little opportunism to protect the Party from division, Lenin mused: “Comrade Plekhanov’s supposedly novel idea amounts to no more than the not very novel piece of commonplace wisdom that little annoyances should not be allowed to stand in the way of a big pleasure.”<sup>5</sup> Charac-

202

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Adorno, “Sociology and Psychology (Part II),” trans. Irving N. Wohlfarth, *New Left Review* 1/47 (January/February, 1968), p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Verso, London & New York 1999, p. 390.

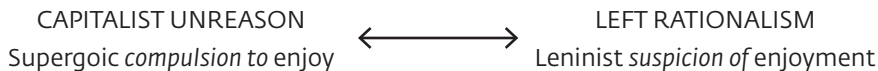
<sup>4</sup> Adorno, “Sociology and Psychology (Part I),” trans. Irving N. Wohlfarth, *New Left Review* 1/46 (November/December, 1967), p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back” (c.1904), *Marxist Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/onestep/p.htm>, accessed on 19/8/16.

terizing the ideal of Party unity as a “big pleasure” was a scathing put-down. An infamous anecdote crystallizes this long-standing aversion. Maxim Gorky recalls an evening with Lenin, listening to some Beethoven piano sonatas.

Lenin cried out, “I know the Appassionata inside out and yet I am willing to listen to it every day. It is wonderful, ethereal music. On hearing it I proudly, maybe somewhat naively, think: See! people are able to produce such marvels!” He then winked, laughed and added sadly: “I’m often unable to listen to music, it gets on my nerves, I would like to stroke my fellow beings and whisper sweet nothings in their ears for being able to produce such beautiful things in spite of the abominable hell they are living in. However, today one shouldn’t caress anybody – for people will only bite off your hand; strike, without pity...!”<sup>6</sup>

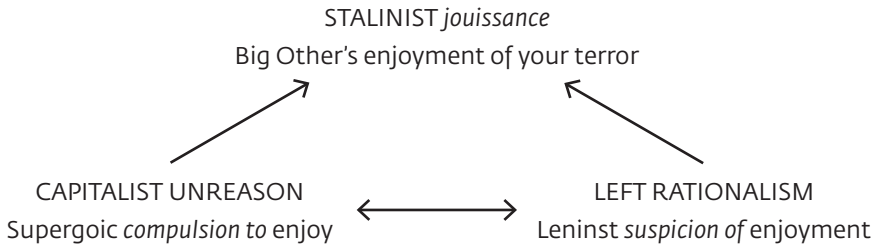
This recoil from enjoyment dovetails with a long history of Left puritanism, whose salient features we recognize again in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the anti-aesthetics of the Left avant-garde, the feminist war on the “beauty myth” and visual pleasure, and so on. In this dominant strand of opposition to capitalist unreason, pleasure (at least in its currently available forms) is taken to be beyond rehabilitation, and irreconcilable with the pitiless rationality of Marxist critique. After Marcuse’s account of capitalist “repressive desublimation,”<sup>7</sup> pleasure emerged in the postmodern era as perhaps the thorniest political problem of them all – as witness Adorno’s notorious broadsides against jazz, or Tafuri’s architecture of unpleasure.



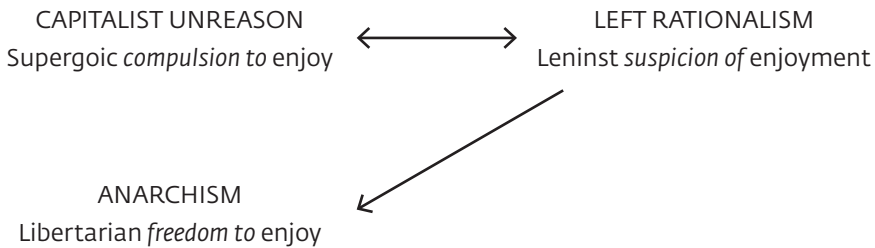
I am further tempted to speculate, if this is indeed one of the critical binary oppositions between reason and enjoyment in the modern period, whether we mightn’t understand Stalinism as a kind of contradictory synthesis of its terms; so that elements of both are fused into an hysterical hybrid political form, where enjoyment is displaced onto the Big Other, whose *jouissance* is purchased rationally at the price of your own limitless terror.

<sup>6</sup> Recounted in Georg Lukács, “Lenin – Theoretician of Practice,” *Marxist Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/xxxx/lenin.htm>, accessed 19/8/16.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Beacon Press, Boston 1964.



But the larger issue is surely how to construct a full semiotic square out of these original terms and so make better sense of the full array of political options in the opposition to capitalist unreason. In the first place, we can delineate a position whose logic is the *negation* of Bolshevik left puritanism: that is, which reverses those polarities of reason and enjoyment without turning back into the original thing, capitalism, that the Leninist position had taken as its point of departure. And this position is of course Anarchism, of whose ideological complexion two things are perfectly clear: rationality is subservient to the romantic will, and pleasure is extolled as a means to the end of liberation, rather than the other way around.



204

Anarchism has been Marxism's relatively simple-minded and fun-filled political sibling from the beginning, of course, but nowhere was the determinate negation of its terms so clear as in the work and writings of Emma Goldman. Goldman survives in our collective unconscious first and foremost as something like a "subject supposed to enjoy," as E. L. Doctorow made notorious in his novel *Ragtime*, where the character of Emma Goldman gives Evelyn Nesbitt an erotic massage, producing one of literature's most exorbitant orgasms.<sup>8</sup> (It may not be irrelevant to note that one of her many lovers, Almeda Sperry, commended

<sup>8</sup> See E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*, Picador, London 1985, pp. 52-5.

Emma Goldman on the “rhythmic spurt of [her] love juices,” in a letter of 1918.<sup>9</sup> And Goldman herself relished the role she had invented for herself in Left circles as the fearless prophet of free love, scourge of patriarchal Leninism, and pariah of Puritans everywhere. An incendiary agitator for freely available contraception, and against the evils of marriage and the benightedness of monogamy, Goldman enjoyed the public scandals of libidinal insurgency as much as she did the ruthless critique of militarism and capitalist profiteering. Bewailing the lot of the “overwrought and undersexed middle-class girl, hedged in her narrow confines [by] Morality, which is daily shutting out love, light, and joy from the lives of innumerable victims,” Emma preferred the lot of “the young men and women of the people [who] are not so hide-bound by externalities, and often follow the call of love and passion regardless of ceremony and tradition.”<sup>10</sup> She befriended prostitutes and took up their cause. She fought hard as a union organizer to win working women enough extra income to be able to afford roses, books, tickets to the theatre, and so to pursue sexual pleasure for its own sake in their few spare hours. Free love and free motherhood, free from the sanction of church and state – which is to say unconfined enjoyment – was her credo. “If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution,” as a thousand undergraduate posters quote her as saying. Against Lenin, she advocated a principled indulgence of all life’s pleasures, here and now:

I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal ... should demand the denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to become a nun and that the movement should not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. “I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody’s right to beautiful radiant things.”<sup>11</sup>

Before we complete the semiotic square with a fourth quadrant, it is worth contemplating the persistence of the mind-body dualism within this problematic. Leninism tends to over-value the resources of pure reason, and repudiate the chaos of the body; and Anarchism proceeds from a liberationist vision of the body, animated by the will to satisfy its own pleasures, while disavowing the

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Marjorie Garber, *Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life*, Routledge, New York & London 2000, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, edited by Alix Kates Schulman, Humanity Books, New York 1996, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, Penguin, London 2006, p. 42.

hold of abstract rationality over the corps. Goldman's advocacy of the spontaneous genius of the Soviets as against the theoretical prerogatives of the Bolsheviks can be taken as a "materialist" insistence on the rights of the body over the disembodied imperatives of reason;<sup>12</sup> and there is much that will resonate with the post-contemporary present in Goldman's intuitive preference for bodily immediacy and immanence over mental abstraction and dicta. For we have not yet escaped the clutches of what Fredric Jameson, paraphrasing Roland Barthes, Lyotard, and Deleuze, described as "the libidinal body."<sup>13</sup> The rise and rise of affect theory in recent years, and the collapse in the stocks of old-fashioned Theory, would seem to confirm one's apprehension that this libidinal body is very much still with us, and still awaiting its satisfactory political inscription.

If I now hastily conscript Rosa Luxemburg to this cause today, it is because no other thinker has so perfectly answered to the logical necessity implied by our unfinished semiotic square: an antagonist of Anarchism who is further still from the centralizing tendencies of Leninism, while somehow effecting in her own position the very negation of capitalist immanence itself. This last point first. While we noted the persistence of a mind-body split in the tensions between Bolshevism and Anarchism, the same could not be said about capitalism itself, whose genius, we remarked, was precisely to have "fleshed out" its remorseless campaign of rationalization through a thoroughgoing "turn to the body" – flattening the mind-body distinction in a secular plane of immanence where your pleasure is the form taken by your unfreedom, and where nothing escapes the withering equivalence of exchange value. The unique solution proposed by Rosa Luxemburg to the vexed problem of enjoyment in the resistance to capitalism is that she neither privileges the pleasures of the individual body (à la Emma Goldman), nor suppresses the pleasure principle altogether in the name of strict

<sup>12</sup> "At the first dawn which illuminated Russia in February, 1917, the Soviets revived again and came into bloom in a very short time. To the people the Soviets by no means represented a curtailment of the Revolution. On the contrary, the Revolution was to find its highest, freest practical expression through the Soviets"; though the Bolsheviks were quickly to put an end to this: "The Soviets of peasants and workers were castrated and transformed into obedient committees." Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks*, p. 389, p. 413. Of her visit in 1921, she wrote: "The Soviet institutions presented little interest. They were running true to type, managed in conformity with the established one-track idea and according to the Moscow formula." Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 462.

<sup>13</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Pleasure, a Political Issue," in *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986; Volume 2: Syntax of History*, Routledge, London 1988, p. 69.

party discipline (a la Lenin), but adumbrates a dialectical materialist plane of immanence as a negation of the presiding one. Here reason is simply another name for enjoyment, in the collective dimension of class struggle itself.

For Luxemburg, Anarchism was a romantic folly, characterized by good will, imagination, and no little courage, but ultimately explicable only as an excrescence of the libertarian left that will be historically liquidated during the course of revolution. Leninism, meanwhile, was deplored for its centralizing tendencies, and the resultant “mechanistic” view of class warfare that it harbored: socialism, she wrote, “cannot be based either on blind obedience or on the mechanical submission of the party’s militants to [a] central authority.”<sup>14</sup> And the reason for that was that “there is no ready-made predetermined and detailed tactic of struggle that the Central Committee could drill into the social democratic membership” (252); rather, the only school for revolutionary tactics is the vast, distributed, dynamic web of classes, institutions, events, and technologies that comprises the horizon of the revolution itself. As she loved to refute the old wisdom of divine right – which stipulated that “The public is not mature enough to exercise the right to vote” – “As if there were some other school of political maturity for members of the public than simply *exercising* these rights themselves!”<sup>15</sup> The same went for the working masses in the revolution. “In the mass strikes in Russia the element of spontaneity plays such a predominant part, not because the Russian proletariat are ‘uneducated’,” she once twitted Lenin, “but because revolutions do not allow anyone to play the schoolmaster with them.”<sup>16</sup> The relationship between Party and class is not one of master and pupil, mind and body. On the contrary, there is a dialectical to and fro in which no moment stands still, and the old distinctions between reason, experience, and enjoyment, break down. “Organization, enlightenment, and struggle [she writes] are here not separate moments mechanically divided in time [...] they are merely different facets of the same process.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, “Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy,” in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, eds. Peter Hudis & Kevin B. Anderson, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2004, p. 252.

<sup>15</sup> Luxemburg, “Writings on Women,” *Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, p. 235.

<sup>16</sup> Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike,” *Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, p. 198.

<sup>17</sup> Luxemburg, “Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy,” *Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, p. 252.

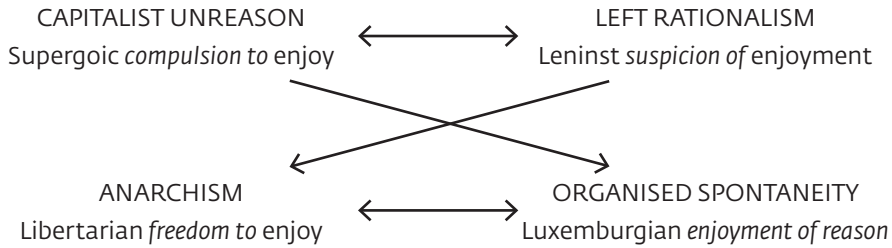
Luxemburg's full vision of this dialectical plane of revolutionary immanence was staggeringly beautiful.

It flows now like a broad billow over the whole kingdom, and now divides into a gigantic network of narrow streams; now it bubbles forth from under the ground like a fresh spring and now is completely lost under the earth. Political and economic strikes, mass strikes and partial strikes, demonstrative strikes and fighting strikes, general strikes of individual branches of industry and general strikes in individual towns, peaceful wage struggles and street massacres, barricade fighting – all these run through one another, run side by side, cross one another, flow in and over one another – it is a ceaselessly moving, changing sea of phenomena.<sup>18</sup>

But this is simultaneously a sea of organic fluids and plasma. “Instead of the rigid and hollow scheme of an arid political action carried out by the decision of the highest committees and furnished with a plan and panorama, we see a bit of pulsating life of flesh and blood, which cannot be cut out of the large frame of the revolution but is connected with all parts of the revolution by a thousand veins” (191). In view of such a panorama, enmeshed in such a pulsing sea of immanence, reason must not be reduced to a pettifogging logic of cause-and-effect; instead, it must be grasped as a living “sediment” of the embodied process itself, with the capacity to feed a degree of rationality back into it. “The most precious, lasting, thing in the rapid ebb and flow of the wave is its mental sediment: the intellectual, cultural growth of the proletariat, which proceeds by fits and starts, and which offers an inviolable guarantee of their further irresistible progress in the economic as in the political struggle” (185). Rational organization, thus, does not descend from above, it emerges from within, like a new organ of sense perception on the self-pleasuring body of the working people: “from the whirlwind and the storm, out of the fire and glow of the mass strike and the street fighting rise again, like Venus from the foam, fresh, young, powerful, buoyant trade unions” (186). Reason, organization, and enlightenment are engendered within the body of the masses in movement: struggle gives birth to them, moments of painful enjoyment in the dialectical growth of communism.

<sup>18</sup> Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike,” *Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, p. 191.





If this is how her political theory reconciled the usual contradictions between rationality and pleasure in Left thought (as a practical synthesis in the march of liberation), it remains to specify the dynamic interanimation of the two elements “reason” and “enjoyment” in the overarching structure of Luxemburg’s own work. And here, regrettably but perhaps inevitably, a certain “division of labor” comes to affect the theoretical apparatus. On the one hand, we have the imposing edifice of her economic writings as such, her doctoral thesis on Poland’s industrial development, the splendid *Introduction to Political Economy* which she wrote out of her lecture notes for the SDP’s party school in Berlin (1909-10), her lengthy disquisitions upon feudalism, Marx’s *Capital* Vols. 2 and 3, her “History of Crises,” and towering above all of it, the magnificent *Accumulation of Capital* (1913), her masterpiece. Of this vast component of her life’s work, it must be said that it is imposingly “scholarly” in method and exposition (though written, generally, in a language that might be accessible to any intelligent working person), and builds upon a massive amount of reading, annotation, accumulation of evidence, and judicious synoptic “abstractions” of the material. It is, in a word, comparable with Marx’s own scholarly work in *Das Kapital*, and was fully intended to take a place beside it on the bookshelves of radicals the world over. It is the work of *reason* in the most august Enlightenment sense: fiercely combative with superannuated scholarship, patiently summative of the good new work, painstakingly scrupulous with facts and figures, logical in its construction, and polemical as regards first principles and theory. Graphs, formulae, extensive footnotes, and a tone of dispassionate reasonableness bind together the formidable learning on display in an apparatus of scholarship in the venerable academic tradition. *The Accumulation of Capital*, in particular, marks a breakthrough in the global or “holistic” critique of political economy on its new imperial footing, its astonishing synthesis of evidence coming from the colonial peripheries demonstrating the power of reason to disambiguate the tendency of what she calls “the struggle against natural economy” to result in

“reckless speculation in land, thriving usury and the economic ruin of the natives.”<sup>19</sup> But there is, alas, all too little pleasure in it; her own in its production seems to have been sublimated into the apparatus with little residue. Assuming the persona of “scholar” tended to dispel the often delirious pleasures of her political writings and speeches, which resound with the militant joy of intellectual and political combat, the plentiful satisfactions of having the better argument, the winning voice, and the clearer articulations with mass political praxis. And here, in the more polemical, occasional work, the dictates of reason tend, too, to be transcended in the heat of a collective intuition or sudden swerve in the movement itself; as if the imposing apparatus of the economic writings were secretly held to be provisional and circumstantial all along, quite capable of being surpassed – like the “sediment” she always claimed intellectual forms to be – by a new turn in the course of a mass movement.

The search for a proper theory of pleasure in Luxemburg’s writings, however, should be undertaken neither in the economic nor the political writings, but in her voluminous correspondence, where it rises to the surface as the innermost truth of the entire oeuvre. What she envisaged on the largest stage of revolutionary activity (i.e., the pleasurable dialectical interfusion of political struggle and intellectual attainment), she also intuited as a lived disposition of the affective body. Her letters are full of the most remarkable testimonies of what we might call a “libidinal body” attuned to the world in the sublime key of *jouissance*. Nothing was too small, too humble to fail to stimulate her hypersensitive sensory and affective apparatus with intensities almost impossible existentially to manage. As she wrote to Sophie Liebknecht near the end of her 4-year prison term, a tiny lark chick tweeting for food outside her cell window could work her up into a frantic state:

It is no use for me to tell myself not to be silly, seeing that I am not responsible for all the hungry little larks in the world, and that I cannot shed tears over all the thrashed buffaloes in the world.... Logic does not help in the matter, and it makes me ill to see suffering. ... Thus passing out of my cell in all directions are fine threads connecting me with thousands of creatures great and small, whose doings react upon me to arouse disquiet, pain, and self-reproach. You yourself,

<sup>19</sup> Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild, Routledge, London and New York 2003, p. 364.

too, belong to this company of birds and beasts to which my nature throbs responsive.<sup>20</sup>

It is remarkable how well this image of “fine threads” connecting the libidinal body to all of creation resonates with her theory of political spontaneity: “a bit of pulsating life of flesh and blood, which cannot be cut out of the large frame of the revolution but is connected with all parts of the revolution by a thousand veins.”<sup>21</sup> Shades, too, of Septimus Warren Smith, of whom Virginia Woolf writes that the “trees were alive ... the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body.”<sup>22</sup> It is virtually the same image as Rosa’s “fine threads” and her “thousand veins.” This space of immanence where everything is connected, where everything acts and reacts upon everything else, this unified field of dialectical transformation, is shot through with the most intense and vibrating *jouissance*. Here, enjoyment is scarcely a big enough word.

Duck quacks at 2 a.m. become “something irrevocable, something that has held true since the beginning of the world,” causing intense anxiety and wonder.<sup>23</sup> Standing in the prison yard at Wronke, looking skyward and feeling “a tremendous yearning to dive up into that damp, shimmering blueness, to bathe in it, to splash around, to let myself dissolve completely in that dew, and disappear” (425), she watches the swallows: “The swallows had already begun their evening’s flight in full company strength, and with their sharp, pointy wings snipped the blue silk of space into little bits...” (425). From the yard of that same prison, she writes “I shouldn’t be enjoying so much beauty **all by myself**. I want to shout out loud over the walls: Oh please, pay attention to this marvelous day!”<sup>24</sup> Life was one uninterrupted state of shattering aesthetic rapture, minute after minute, for Rosa Luxemburg: even in the depths of prison far from everybody she loved, as her nearest and dearest died or collapsed in grief, and as Europe was engulfed in the worst mass slaughter of its long history. She called

211

<sup>20</sup> Letter to Sophie Liebknecht, May 12, 1918, *Marxist Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/05/12.htm>, accessed 19/8/16.

<sup>21</sup> Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike,” *Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, p. 191.

<sup>22</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1953, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to Hans Diefenbach, June 29, 1917, in *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, eds. Georg Adler, Peter Hudis, and Annelies Laschitza, trans. George Shriver, Verso, London & New York 2011, p. 422.

<sup>24</sup> Letter to Hans Diefenbach, July 6, 1917, in *Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 429.

it her “inexhaustible inner cheerfulness,” and it seemed to her “a magical secret that gives the lie to everything evil and sad and changes it into pure light and happiness.”<sup>25</sup> And that goes for the appreciation of “reason,” too. She notes “a wonderful book on botany that affects me like a series of pure fairy stories, and yet it is a basic text and a strictly scientific work.”<sup>26</sup> The life of the mind is merely a moment of the life of an ecstatic body embowered in immanence.

The “personal” and the “political” are thus never really in opposition in Rosa’s writings. They are the recto and verso of a single document, constantly folded over onto itself, looping like an Escher etching, the one upon the many, the inside upon the outside, reason upon enjoyment, all undecidably and infinitely, forever. The “living pulse-beat of the revolution” is finally indistinguishable from the living pulse-beat of a woman in prison contemplating her apparently miserable circumstances in a condition of constant exaltation. “I lie there [in Breslau prison] quietly, alone, wrapped in these many-layered black veils of darkness, boredom, lack of freedom, and winter – and at the same time, my heart is racing with an incomprehensible, unfamiliar inner joy as though I were walking across a flowering meadow in radiant sunshine. ... And all the while I’m searching within myself for some reason for this joy, I find nothing and must smile to myself again – and laugh at myself.”<sup>27</sup> She called this her “sweet intoxication” (455) and I am wondering whether it might become, for us, more than just another resource of hope, as Raymond Williams liked to say; whether, indeed, we might be able to convert it into a mode of political being-in-the-world. I am convinced that Rosa’s “sweet intoxication” was a product of her political ontology; of her libidinal sense of the dialectical interdependence of all phenomena. Given that ontology, revolutionary consciousness *just is* this intoxication, this limitless capacity to transform the wretched into the wonderful. It engenders an absolute faith in the comic potential of the human collective as such, the proletariat as a self-educating, self-delighting body in movement, reasoning their way together out of the tragic snares of capitalist unreason that degrade their most precious powers into mere value; and faith in oneself as a thinking reed responsive to that struggle, which goes on everywhere, all the time.

212

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Sophie Liebknecht, before December 24, 1917, in *Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 455.

<sup>26</sup> Letter to Sophie Liebknecht, September 12, 1918, in *Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, pp. 471-2.

<sup>27</sup> Letter to Sophie Liebknecht, before December 24, 1917, in *Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 455.