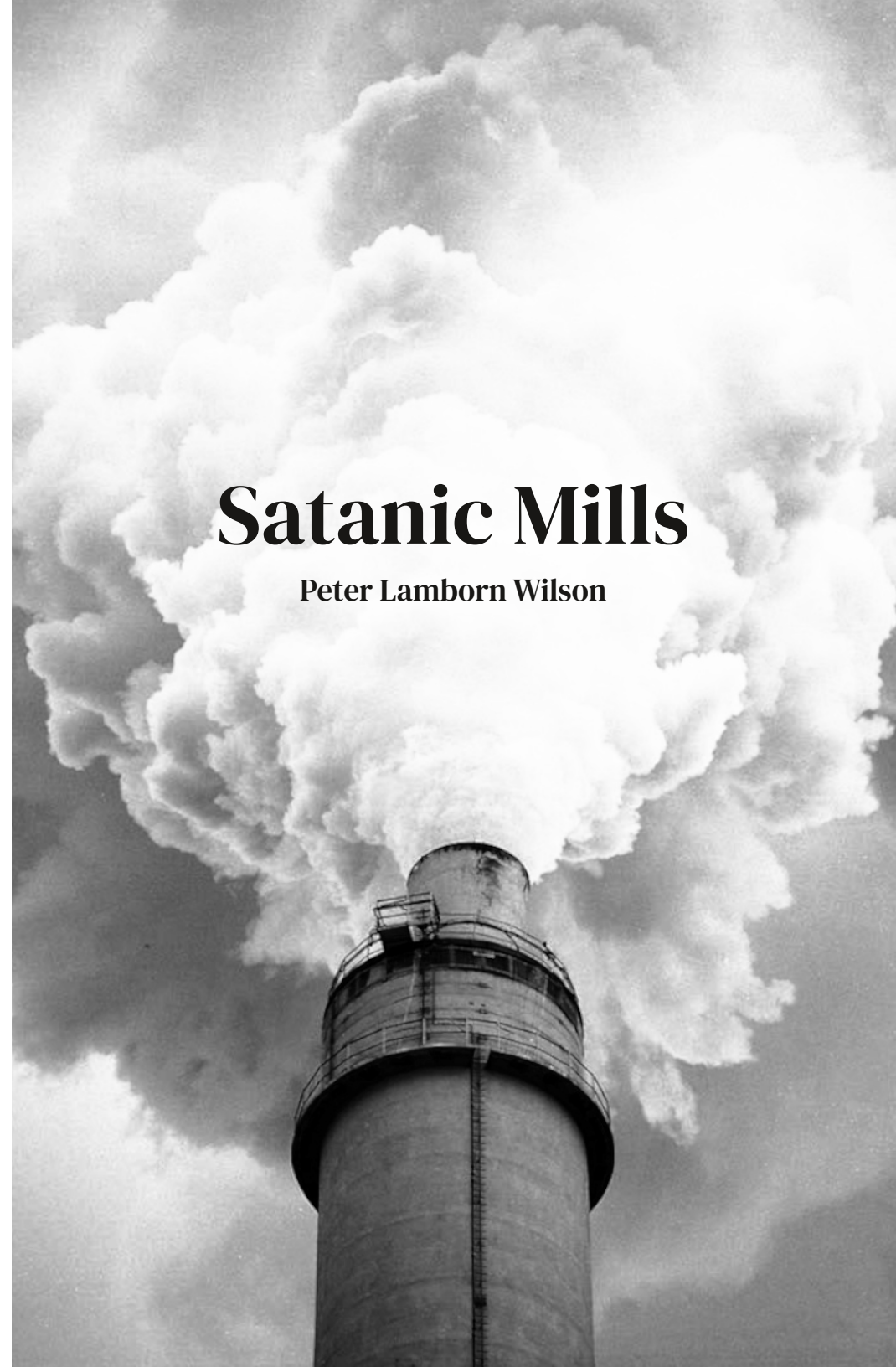


Inventors always fancy their inventions will bring peace to the world — even Alfred Nobel believed this — but in fact all technology tends towards oppression and immiseration. It may increase wealth (for a few at least) but it cannot free the human spirit because in essence it consists of the *opposite* of the free spirit.



Satanic Mills

Peter Lamborn Wilson



**Daisy
Chain
Distro**

The logo consists of the words 'Daisy', 'Chain', and 'Distro' stacked vertically in a bold, serif font. Three daisy flowers are integrated into the text: one to the right of 'Daisy', one to the left of 'Chain', and one to the right of 'Distro'. The flowers are simple line drawings with many small petals.

Designed in Scribus

Printed in my fucking bedroom

Fonts used: Minion Pro, DM Serif Display

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their efforts to a critique of power and hegemony that added depth to the philosophy of opposition to Civilization.

Eventually, a position emerged that I call *anarcho-traditionalism*. Rejecting the Progressivist Left as well as the Reactionary Right, this philosophy calls in equal measure for a *Reversion* or “return” of the Paleolithic (at least on a psychic level) and a “revolution” for an anti-authoritarian utopia.

Obviously such a movement would require the overcoming of 6000 years of bad science. “Appropriate technology” (i.e., luddite *techné*) would replace the Satanic Mills of Information Capitalism with a kind of “Green Hermeticism” based on the experience of an *animate Earth*. “Defeated” paradigms such as alchemy would have to be reconsidered and even revived in new forms.

Is such a consummation, however devoutly desired, in any sense possible? Anarchists like to speak of a “Politics of the Impossible”, but is this simply a nice way of admitting defeat?

From a purely existentialist p.o.v., it seems necessary to refuse to “cease from Mental Flight” even if there’s no reasonable “revolutionary hope” for the utopia of Blake’s earthly Jerusalem in “England’s” — or the whole world’s — “green and pleasant land”. The point is not victory, but the struggle itself, which gives meaning to life.

Is even this attenuated vision simply delusory in the face of the Rule of Pure Money and its technopathocracy? Is there any point to hatred of technology and the “critique of science” other than the sour satisfaction of a few acts of revenge?

This is as far as I can go with this *thought-experiment*. I cannot answer the last question.

June, 2014

may add up to nothing but a bit of “science fiction” — but after the ghastly 20th century and its obvious failure to provide the utopia promised by optimists of the 19th, a critique of science and technology began to emerge not only from a few eccentric scientists, but even from sociologists and historians of science. Thomas Kuhn for example demonstrated that the development of science cannot simply be charted as a unilinear “progress”, but consists of a dialectic series of “paradigms” that are to some extent socially determined. The great Paul Feyerabend [*Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge*] took a similar argument to radical lengths and dared to accuse science of philosophical incoherence and social irresponsibility—unfortunately, however, his work, unlike Kuhn’s, has failed to attain canonical status.

Meanwhile a series of archæologists and anthropologists began to question the dogma of Progress and look more carefully at actual evidence. M. Sahlins, P. Clastres, E. Richard Sorenson, and their colleagues in the 1960s and 70s proposed that hunter/gatherer and horticultural societies, far from living in a condition of “war of all against all”, appear remarkably peaceful compared to Civilization; and that far from endless toil for an inadequate return they were “original leisure societies” blessed with abundance. By projecting this view back on pre-history, it became obvious to these thinkers that the Paleolithic had been misrepresented by apologists for hegemony as a period of violence and penury, whereas it appeared to an unprejudiced view as based on egalitarian “mutual aid” and tribal “original anarchism”.

In this respect, P. Kropotkin and C. Fourier were better social scientists than Spencer or Marx. The Situationists and certain anarchists (such as F. Perlman of “Black & Red”) began to develop a critique of Civilization that owed a great deal to the Romantics and the later (post-Leninist) Surrealists. Thinkers like Benjamin, Breton, Bataille, Bachelard and Corbin carried out a *defense of the Imagination* that provided an aesthetic for the new “primitivism”. Later theorists like Foucault, Debord, Baudrillard and Virilio lent

I

And did these feet in ancient times
Walk upon Englands mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant land.

—William Blake, *Milton*, Preface

Blake’s vision — genuine prophetic vision — of the Industrial Revolution is encapsulated in that one phrase, “dark Satanic Mills”, which always conjures for me a childhood memory of the New Jersey Turnpike somewhere around Secaucus, flat swamps lined with dozens of tall petroleum cracking towers, huge H.G. Wellsian alien structures belching infernal flames into a vast polluted night. In those dear dead days New Jersey was the most toxic state in the Union, an honor that now belongs to Louisiana. (New Jersey is merely number six.) The cracking towers have long since disappeared,

stalked off to Mexico I imagine, leaving the Turnpike a mere ghost of its former evil but massively impressive self. Even most of the “industrial waste” of American post-1950s ironic/romantic landscape has been cleared away and tidied up, almost turned into viable real estate. We live in the Information Economy now, and information is nothing if not *clean*.

Another biblical-level jeremiad-evocation of the Industrial Revolution flowed from the pen of F. Engels, who was himself by profession part of the Problem as much as he yearned to be party of the Solution. He knew the Ugly Spirit of Productive Capitalism from within, and conjured its horrors like a scientific Dickens. Without his intimate embedding in the dark heart of Progress, Marx’s bookish soul could never have achieved its apotheosis. And yet somehow they both failed to see that the *Factory itself* was evil, at a deeper level even than the appropriation of labor value by Capital. The young Marx of the unpublished *Philosophical Notebooks* of 1844 seemed almost to understand and express this evil in his analysis of “alienation”, but later he lost the insight in his fervor for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The people who really grasped this fact — the sheer wickedness of technology — were, of course, the people. The victims of the Industrial Revolution were the workers, and the real rebels against it were not the intellectuals or the economists but the Luddites. Since they were uneducated and inarticulate, they expressed their critique of technology not with printing presses but with sledgehammers. As Kirkpatrick Sale put it, their “rebellion against the Future” was later ignored or disparaged by Marxist historians because it was anti-progress, anti-scientific-technological-rational ideological Enlightenment. The only intellectuals who really understood Luddism were the Romantic poets, Shelley and Byron especially, and even before them Blake. But according to the Marxologists, Romanticism itself constitutes a form of Reaction — and Shelley after all was an anarchist! The Marxist historians so besmirched (and then buried) the memory of the real Luddites that today the term has come to mean simple-minded ignorant backward

science. The shamans might have presided over a body of knowledge devoted to Humanity and Nature rather than power and wealth. Society might have retained its non-authoritarian structure and yet still increased in wisdom — in good medicine — in harmonious reciprocity with forests and animals — in psychological health and spiritual realization. “Progress” was never written into our genes, it was never evolutionarily determined, it was not inevitable. In fact, Progress stopped our real evolution dead in its tracks — it prevented us from *becoming* what we *are* (to paraphrase Nietzsche) and instead reduced us to Masters and Slaves. And science served as the midwife of this abortion. We learned how to build pyramids rather than . . . what? We’ll never know what we might have created, if the State had never emerged. It’s too late.

The hunters and gatherers changed over to an economy based on horticulture and animal domestication. With hindsight we can understand that this was a Big Mistake. Diet degenerated, chronic diseases appeared, freedoms were eroded, Work was invented. Historians and archaeologists call this the Neolithic Revolution and see it as the real beginning of Progress.

Even now however the State does not emerge. The old customs remain strong enough to resist separation and hegemony. The stored surplus is shared, not monopolized. Even Megalithic architecture can be created by egalitarian societies with plenty of leisure and a desire to manifest beauty — no slaves are necessary to build Stonehenge and Newgrange, or even Göbekli Tepe. The unit of society is the village, not the city; the Temple is simply the heart of the village, not the Holy Bank of Sumer, lending silver at 33.333% compounded annually, or planning a war of extermination against its nearest neighbors. Even metallurgy — as Eliade points out — has a holy origin and in fact can be seen as proto-alchemy. Only with the emergence of the State does metal become the technology of death. (All “primitive peoples” reject metallurgy, from the Irish Tuatha Dé Danaan to the North American woodland Indians: metal is seen as blasphemy against Mother Earth.)

Indulging in speculation about a science of the free spirit

IV

What would science be like today if the State had never emerged?

Imagine that 6000 years ago the people of Sumer had successfully resisted the *coup d'état* carried out by evil priests and warriors, resisted hegemony and separation, refused Work and Debt and Slavery and human sacrifice. After all, as P. Clastres pointed out, pre-historic people were neither “good” by nature, nor were they stupid — they always knew that bullies could take over the tribe if they were allowed to, and “old customs” were created to prevent them. Potlach, reciprocity and the “economy of the Gift” were reinforced by tradition. Shamans and war-leaders who threatened to take power were ignored or killed.

But then, circa 4000 BC, something went wrong, very wrong, and the bullies finally prevailed. The Old Stone Age regime of rough egalitarianism and the taboo on tyranny was overthrown by a new elite with a new set of violent patriarchal deities: Moloch and Mammon, War and Wealth. The Shamans (most of them anyway) allowed themselves to be turned into priests, and prostituted their *scientific knowledge* to the newly-emergent State in return for a share of power and riches.

It wasn't the Industrial Revolution yet — it wasn't Capitalism as we know it — but it was a start. Metallurgy and writing were invented as technologies of control. A class of fellahin was created to slog and sweat for the glorious rulers. High Culture (so dear to historians and archæologists) arose on the backs of debt-ridden peons and miserable slaves. In short, the Modern World — *our* world — appeared. Progress appeared. And science was its most loyal servant.

In theory, this debacle of *dégringolade* (“tumble”) need never have occurred. Humans could have remained in a condition of “primeval anarchy” without the State, and yet still possess a true

technophobes, blind to the glories of (say) the iPhone, the kind of futile cranks who dislike the Holy Automobile or the Neutron Bomb or vaccination.

Of course the Luddites never opposed *techné* itself — they themselves were largely loom-worker and stockingers. What they hated was the *mechanized* loom which threatened to “automate their jobs” and put them out of work, or at least force them out of their home (where they worked) and into the soulless factories. It's fascinating to me that the mechanized loom is now recognized as the “ancestor” of the computer. If any machine today represents the “Satanic” principle, it's the computer. The Industrial Revolution is over, and “we” won. Filthy exploitative factories have been evolved out of existence, or anyway out of sight. Nanotechnology will solve all the remaining “problems” of the contemporary world: — air pollution, drunk driving, birth defects, low I.Q.s, melting glaciers, and the totalitarian unending war economy. The world will become green green green, capitalism will be clean, and America once again lean and mean — the Sole Hegemon. And the stock market will just go on rising unto eternity, and all manner of things will be well. And if you believe that, I have a nice bridge in Brooklyn you might want to buy.

Progress comprises not only the historical error of predatory capitalism, it was also the historical error of the Left. “Everyone” fell for the myth of Progress except for a few disgruntled ultra-conservatives and mystical monarchists — and a few luddite/proto-hippy leftists and spiritual anarchists. To this day if you read liberal middlebrow publications like *The New York Review of Books*, you will find, if the question of Progress arises, that anyone who opposes it must by definition be a dark Reactionary. The notion of revolutionary anti-tech Romanticism simply does not exist for these pundits. They cannot even imagine a rebel against the new Social Darwinism who is not a braindead Creationist Christian bigot. Progress has its crisis mode, of course; something must be done to stop global warming before it's too late; perhaps the One Percent should be gently persuaded to give up a few trillion to help prop up

Big Government. But basically, fear not, Science will find a way. Computers will make everyone smarter, and soon no one will ever vote Republican again.

Or so the deluded yuppie bourgeois soi-disant Masters of Reality devoutly believe. Meanwhile the *real* Masters of the Universe are slaves to Pure Money, and Money is “free” to multiply itself unto infinity, and the 6000 CEOs are richly rewarded for their obsequious lickspittle loyalty to Money, and *nothing is going to get “better”*.

“Progress” means bigger parking lots and shopping malls, more gadgets you simply can’t survive without buying, new gadgets next year that make the old gadgets look like horseless carriages, medicine to keep you older and sicker longer and longer so you’ll buy more medicine — and more endless war to stimulate an economy that would otherwise collapse under the burden of universal Debt — the Ponzi Scheme of Speculative High Speed Flash Usury Investment in Death Futures. Capitalism will profit even from the End of the World — in fact it is already doing so. This IS the Future, sucker — hope you like it so far.

Progress is Reaction. Civilization IS its discontents.

**

In the late 18th century a group of brilliant middleclass political radicals and scientists in England founded a sort of informal anti-Royal Society to pursue their own agenda, and called it the *Lunar Society* (because they met once a month, but also because their intentions were perhaps a bit shady). Josiah Wedgwood, the great ceramicist and ardent Abolitionist; James Watt, inventor of the steam engine; Joseph Priestley, radical non-conformist theologian and inventor of many things (including seltzer water!); and Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles and pioneer Linnaean botanist; these geniuses comprised the core Lunar membership. The French Revolution in its early beneficent period (before the Regicide, the Terror and Napoleon) galvanized these men as it did the Romantic poets including Blake (friend of Thomas Paine), Wordsworth,

which obviously will vanish at last according to the Second LAW of thermodynamics — the most evil and depressing scientific idea ever propounded — thankfully now losing its hegemonic and suffocating legal status — at least in certain radical circles. Quantum, Chaos, and Complexity theory once seemed to open up once again the possibility of a Romantic science³ — although the Whigs are still at work debunking all such fond hopes. Chaos they say is a deterministic science — useful perhaps for predicting the stock market. Quantum physics will lead to bigger and better bombs — and as for life, it will be created in a laboratory any day now. (The evil genomist Craig Venter claims ridiculously to have done it already.)

For years I’ve been saying that the true Science Fiction writers who accurately foretold the Future we now inhabit were P.K. Dick and J.G. Ballard. Read *Ubik*. Read *Crash*. I call their insight “Malthusian Gnosticism”. It’s the death of the Social. It’s *Bladerunner*, *The Drowned World* — it’s Frankenstein’s World — it’s Nietzsche’s Terminal Humanity. It’s the End of Theory.

3 The Dancing Wu Li Masters, for instance (1979).

“reactionary Jacobites” are the villains. It’s not so simple, to put it mildly. The Whigs, backed by the British Empire and nascent Capitalism, went on to turn “liberalism” into economic oppression and science into “the cruel instrumentality of Reason”. They eventually abandoned all occultism and Romanticism for a pure Newtonian rationality that would lead, step by step, to Hiroshima and global warming — not to mention WW I, WW II, WW III and the endless war of American neo-liberal neo-imperialism, all based on *Technopathocracy*, the scientific rule of sick machines.

The Jacobites, who in principle were monarchist traditionalists, underwent in practice a strange metamorphosis: they became the underdogs, the old moles, the eternal revolutionary opposition. A weird phenomenon unnoticed by official history gradually took shape. I call it “Leftwing Jacobitism” — a shady conspiratorial underground of feckless cavaliers, Non-Juring Anglicans, Irish and Scots rebels, malcontents, pirates, poets — and alchemists.

When Whigs turn into people like Herbert Spencer, and Jacobites turn into people like Robert Burns, we can say the world’s turned upside down indeed. Paradox? Yes. So what. Is there a “hidden wisdom” to be found on the side of esoteric Jacobitism in the paradigm war for modern science? Yes — and it’s too bad the Jacobites lost the battle.

The “arrows” of desire” and the “chariot of fire” were defeated. Blake was defeated. The anarchist movement was defeated. Alchemy was defeated. Newton won — and he did it by stealing the fire of alchemy.

**

German *Naturphilosophie* and British “Sacred Theory of Earth” — the proposals of Novalis and Goethe, Erasmus Darwin: — once upon a time these ideas seemed to stand a chance of being taken seriously as scientific hypotheses. They were opposed by a Victorian vulgar materialist scientism that spoke of the world as *Nothing But*, as in “nothing but dead matter”, illuminated only by the *Cogito* of the scientist. “Nothing but” sheer accident gave rise to life,

Coleridge, etc. As a result, the “King and Church” reactionaries were outraged and declared war on these would-be revolutionary “leftists”. A mob burned down Priestley’s house and laboratory, and he ended by fleeing to America in 1794, and settling in Pennsylvania. Coleridge and Southey planned to do the same; they were all going to start an intentional community, the *Pantisocracy*, based on egalitarian principles. But only Priestley and his family ever made the move. The others stayed in England. Some of them shifted to the Right as the French debacle descended into World War. A few such as Erasmus Darwin remained loyal to their principles.

Darwin wrote one of the most delightful long poems in English literature, *The Botanic Garden*, an epic about the sexual life of plants, based on Linnaeus, and couched in symbolism derived from Darwin’s deep affection for old-fashioned Hermeticism. The Romantics in general took a passionate interest in occultism and alchemy, pagan neoplatonism and the like. Priestley’s fascination with gases, for instance¹, owed a great deal to alchemist Francis von Helmont, who coined the word “gas” (from *chaos*). We’ll return later to the role of Hermeticism in the emergence of modern science.

**

The tragedy of the Lunar Society consists of the brilliance of its members being subverted by History into the opposite of what they intended. Their idea of Progress, naïve and sentimental perhaps, was nevertheless heart-felt and positive: they wanted peace and plenty for all, freedom and equality, and the reign of creative Imagination. Instead, they gave birth to the Industrial Revolution. The Royal Society devoted itself to coming up with great ideas to nurture British Empire and British Trade — the Lunar Society cherished a very different dream — but in the end both groups contributed to the emergence of Capitalism and colonialist imperialism. Inventors always fancy their inventions will bring peace

1 which was shared by Coleridge’s friend Sir Humphrey Davy, inventor of nitrous oxide — the poets all sampled this, the first “psychedelic drug”.

to the world — even Alfred Nobel believed this — but in fact all technology tends towards oppression and immiseration. It may increase wealth (for a few at least) but it cannot free the human spirit because in essence it consists of the *opposite* of the free spirit.

Thus for instance in Scotland the whole idea of *Improvement*, especially in the rationalization of agriculture, was made to feed into the post-1745 Clearances of the Jacobite Highlands, turning half the country into unpopulated sheep farms and hunting preserves for English aristocrats (the Scottish Whig aristocrats were equally guilty). This explains why the Scottish Romantics, like Robert Burns, were both Jacobites *and* leftist radicals. In England meanwhile a similar ideology of Improvement led to yet more Enclosures; the denial of common right in land to the rural poor, who as a result were transmogrified into the proletariat — including the Luddites — and made to work in factories, move into polluted cities, while the rich and titled landlords consolidated their country demesnes. The excess population could be turned into colonists and soldiers and used to oppress the “natives” of India and China, etc. All the efficiency and technical brilliance led directly to the Satanic Mills — to the Industrial Revolution — and eventually to the marvelous postmodern utopia we call Now — to the rule of wealthian Vampires over wage-slave zombies in the gemütlich grand-guignol of Too-Late Cognitive Kapitalismo — the Anthropocene Extinction.

In this scenario I have to blame even some of my gurus in the anarchist movement of the 19th century such as Prince Peter Kropotkin, who praised the factories of the Future, when the workers would become their own bosses. Kropotkin must be cherished for this critiques of Darwinian or Social Darwinian Evolution (in Part One of *Mutual Aid*) — a question we must return to — but as a “workerist” (not to mention his capitulation to the militarists of WWI) he must be severely criticized. The factory *in itself* is the site of alienation. What must be overcome is “Work” *per se* — whether the factory be seen as industrial or post-industrial, as old-time sweatshop or computer-driven precarious shit-work office of the PoMo “new class” and its epigones. Forget labor unions —

based on desire and pleasure. Darwin believed that flowers could *become* butterflies. In meditating on the “White Cliffs of Dover”, which are vast repositories of sea-shells, he imagined all the *jouissance* involved in so many æons of reproduction, and spoke of evolution as “the survival of the happiest”. His grandson Charles Darwin’s sidekick H. Spencer perverted this charming idea into “*survival of the fittest*” and used it as a pseudo-scientific underpinning for “Social Darwinism” — ideological camouflage for classist/ racist imperialist triumphalism: — the poor are the *unfit*. Charles Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton took this theory a step further and invented *eugenics*, the “science” which proposed eliminating the unfit (and racial mongrels) by preventing them from reproducing. This racism was adopted with terrifying enthusiasm by “scientists” in America and eventually by . . . Hitler.

So — can we say that Hermeticism gave rise to the “modern science” of genetics, which is of course merely a rectified version of eugenics? (Genetics is more accurate than Nazi science, but the social implications are nearly as dire. In the Future only the poor will be ugly and queer.) Yes — Hermeticism deserves some credit — and some blame (for its “Prometheanism”); it’s also possible to imagine a world in which Hermeticism was never stripped of its essential insight, that *the earth itself is alive*. Romantic science could have given rise to a contemporary science based (like Rosicrucianism) on the ethic of service to humanity and preservation of Nature, instead of service to Capitalism at the expense of the environment.

The Royal Society was founded by Whig Freemasons (of the London Grand Lodge) whose idealism was wrapped up in Enlightenment values and Imperialist ambitions. Opposed to them were the Jacobite “Ancient” Masons of the Scottish Rite, and other esoteric lodges devoted to Templar chivalry and Rosicrucian alchemical pursuits².

The few historians who have paid any attention at all to Freemasonry (a dangerous tar baby for any academic reputation) usually assume that the “Liberal Whigs” are the good guys, and the

2 See M. Schuchard’s great book on Swedenborg for the complete story.

revealed that Boyle was also an alchemist, and secretly lifted many of his best ideas from his guru, American alchemist Richard Starkey (“Eugenius Philalethes”). Principe has propounded the idea that alchemy was not only Early Modern Science, but actually uncovered a great many scientific truths. The earlier historians of science had grudgingly admitted that some Hermeticists might have stumbled on a few facts by sheer accident, but Principe has gone so far as to replicate certain “spagyric” experiments with amazing success.

At the same time — i.e., the twentieth century — an opposing school of thought about Hermeticism emerged from a Traditionalist or religious perspective, claiming that alchemy was never meant to be “scientific” in the modern sense — not even “psychological” — but *spiritual*. One of the more intelligent proponents no one however managed to wrap their heads around the possibility that alchemy might be *both* spiritual *and* material, that the laboratory was also the oratory, that work on herbs and metals was precisely and mystically analogous to or *symbolic* of work on the self. Aside from Mircea Eliade, the Historian of Religion, probably the leading exponent of this view, the mysterious Fulcanelli (author of *The Mysteries of the Cathedrals*), was ignored by both the scientists and the Traditionalists. (Recently it has been argued that “Fulcanelli” was in fact a team made up of at least one practicing “operator of metals” — and a theorist, said to have been R. Schwaller de Lubicz, who later took up Egyptology.)

Erasmus Darwin’s Hermetic enthusiasm was not confined simply to the deployment of Paracelsan Nature Elementals as “characters” in *The Botanic Garden*. A true proto-Romantic (and big influence on Percy and Mary Shelley), he sought to integrate a rectified Hermetic worldview with the best contemporary biological science. (His hero Linnaeus did the same, although he’s not usually given credit for it.) Darwin developed what might well be called a Romantic Theory of Evolution, partly Lamarckian but largely original, in which all species “descend” from an original unicellular plant/animal like Hesiod’s Chaos, symbolized in alchemy as an *egg*. *Selection* (though he didn’t use the term) was seen as sexual and

they’re dead. Forget the Keynesian utopia of Leisure for All — it’s stillborn. The real reality is Work — Consume — Die. The only real 19th century critics of this model were the Romantics and the Individualist Anarchists inspired by Stirner and Nietzsche, Nowadays their heirs are the Green Anarchists and neo-nihilists, the Anti-Civilization Primitivists and the Mexican terrorists who are assassinating nanotechnologists.

And you’ve probably never even heard of these people — unless you’re already one of us.

II

The other day I heard of an old Armenian guy in Brooklyn who's still producing beach umbrellas (although he's rented his upstairs loft to an artists collective). He's probably a rapacious sweatshop boss, but he's also probably the last umbrella maker in America. Proper Americans no longer soil themselves in the lowly sarkic fallen realm of mere material production. Umbrellas are made by Taiwanese coolies. Farming is done by agro-industrial GM robots (or by a few neo-hippy CSA organic niche market idealists and struggling permaculturists). The total agricultural work-force in the US today is below .01%. NY State in 1900 was 40% forested, but is now 90% overgrown with useless woodlots and abandoned farms. The big California combines actually ship their produce to Mexico for packaging — and the crops are grown by illegal Mexican immigrants. The small farm has become a hobby for the rich. Agrarian radicalism died because the agrarian economy died. And so on. You've heard it already a hundred times. Entrepreneurial democracy died because small businesses were crushed by Walmart and Amazon. The working-class left and the unions died because factories moved to Hell — and money went to Heaven.

Capitalism declared the End of History (i.e., the end of the Historical Movement of the Social, the *dialectic*) in 1989. The Market was now free, meaning that money is *free* to do what it wants to do, and you're free to choose product A or product B. But you're not free not to choose. Imagine trying to hold down a job in America without owning a car, a computer and a cell phone. You need to buy; resistance is futile. You need to go into debt because your job (if you have one) doesn't pay enough to live on. Capitalism as Ponzi Scheme demands that markets expand. Ergo you must borrow and buy — q.e.d. Only the rich can afford not to consume, to be thin. The American poor are obese.

III

Up till the middle of the twentieth century the official history of science treated alchemy and other Hermetic “arts” simply as failed science, outdated superstition, evidence of a long Dark Age finally dissipated by Newton's “let there be light”, proof of the *ur-dumbheit* of all ancient humans, from the nasty brutish short cavemen to the deluded black magicians of the Renaissance.

The ironic aspect of this perspective was of course that Newton himself practiced alchemy and smuggled the qualitative Hermetic notion of action-at-a-distance into the quantitative theory of gravity. He published nothing of his alchemical or Hermetic work, however, and thus the historians (who never bothered to read his unpublished alchemical works) were free to erect their fantasy of a Scientific Enlightenment, with a giant Newton sweeping away the cobwebby shadows of medieval trumpery and suddenly giving birth to the uneasy marriage between empiricism and rationalism.

At Newton's elbow his trusty sidekicks like Robert Boyle and the savants of the Royal Society all chipped in to the revolutionary effort, and soon the Modern Age was born, and “we” appeared on the scene, blessed by perfect hindsight, with which to denigrate the Past and its foolish avatars — “we”, fully evolved humans, on the verge of discovering the Grand Unified Theory of Everything and inaugurating the scientific heaven on earth — the Great Instauration.

This cozy self-congratulatory haze was however threatened, first by C.G. Jung, who suggested that alchemy might have to be taken seriously as psychology — and then by the brilliant Frances Yates, who first seriously proposed the notion that alchemy was simply *early modern science*, and that the “shoulders” Newton stood on had been those of the Hermeticists.

In 1972 Betty Dobbs published her shocking *Search for the Green Lion*, a study of Newton's alchemical manuscripts. And even more recently the scholars L.M Principe and W.R. Newman have

If the Future has a future, does the End of the World have an end? Some of ye now living may see it come. The Harmonic Convergence. The Mayan Apocalypse (which has been rescheduled from 2012 to 2018). Armageddon. Ragnarék. Or maybe — worst of all — eternity in the form of an infinite on-line shopping mall. No closure. No rapture. Just Facebook and Twitter — forever.

Where I live the economy looks like this: people who used to farm end up paying huge taxes on land that produces no income, so they sell off to developers and move to a doublewide in Florida. People who used to work in cigar factories and ladies' garment ateliers in the County capital are now chronically unemployed, because all production has vanished. If they're lucky they can be Greeters at Walmart. Young people can go to college if they agree to go into debt for life — otherwise they can flip burgers or get into heroin. The only really viable business is selling off our green and pleasant land as real estate to refugees from the Big City. "Environmental activism" around here means protecting the *viewshed* from ghastly blots like cement mines or publicly-owned land. Not in my backyard. Move to Mexico. I want my McMansion, my SUV, my green clean conscience, my locavore gourmet food, my yoga lessons, and fuck you and your *needs* (much less *your* desires).

Not that I don't sympathize with the green middleclass exurbanite artists and retired stockbrokers — heck some of them are my friends. One of them might even be *me*. But I'm not kidding myself that fleeing to "paradise" makes me an angel of light.

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The Post-Fordist Information Economy itself is trumped by an even higher form of Predatory Capitalism — speculative investment — or as it used to be called, USURA. Financial capital can gobble up productive capital like so many hamburgers and shit it out as pure profit. Why *make* anything out of matter when you can make money out of *nothing*? Bankers create money by lending ten times their actual assets — if they're honest. If they're really hip they'll lend a hundred times or more — who can stop them? What's good merely for General Motors can flush itself down the drain — we want what's good for Money itself. "Flash" investments are now carried out in nano-seconds by computer. Humans are no longer involved (except to scoop up the chips.) Money begets money; no midwife is required.

At a conservative estimate, ten times more money “exists” than it would take to buy *everything in the world*. Some say more, much more. What mangy cigar factory can compete with such alchemy? All Money is *fiat* money. Money is the best proof that magic works — it’s pure imagination, pure belief (“credit”), pure bullshit — and yet it has become our highest and indeed our only form of “value”. I call this penumbra of money the Numisphere — it englobes the globe like some malignant weather condition. I call money itself the Sexuality of the Dead, because it’s dead and yet it reproduces itself. Money is cancer.

The Satanic Mill has not vanished — it has merely become an Invisible Empire (like the Ku Klux Klan). You can’t see it, because it went away, far away, and yet it lives *in us*, in each and every one of us, as we use up 70% of the world’s resources to stuff 20% of the world’s population with junk food and cultural pap, while 1% of the population sits on 80% of the world’s money. What do they do with it, one wonders. Croon over it like Uncle Scrooge? Bathe in it?

In this situation all hope of reform becomes sheer nonsense, never mind any talk of utopia. Neo-liberalism, after all, represents the highest type of world evolution — so how can it be reformed? Any talk of change smacks of (gasp) socialism — that dinosaur ideology of yesteryear, the bad old days of welfare and sharing and free healthcare. Or even worse — of anarchy.

In any case, who actually rules us? Whom could we *kill* and thereby reform the world? Lawyers? Bankers? Politicians? Scientists? Educators? Police? Just suggesting it reveals how silly the idea of “revolution” has become. Millions of underemployed and desperate clowns are chomping at the bit, waiting for their chance to replace any dead Masters of the Universe. The French proved that the Terror doesn’t work — you simply cannot cut off enough heads to change reality. There aren’t enough lampposts and not enough priests’ guts with which to string up all the investment bankers. And it doesn’t seem likely they’ll listen to our pleas for peace and justice and quit their jobs and take their savings and move to Costa Rica and lie around on the beach getting a tan while “we” set about re-organizing

Civilization itself — after 6000 years of class warfare, hegemony, usury, human sacrifice (“war”) and slavery (“peace”). And so . . . so much for utopia — for any new “Jerusalem”.

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But wait. The world is going to be saved after all — by nanotechnology. Little molecular machines are going to be injected into trees and frogs and rocks and your bloodstream and even your brain — so in the future all you’ll have to do is *think* of something to buy and it will at once appear before you. Aladdin’s lamp! No more clumsy cellphones — there’ll be *artificial telepathy*. And no more automobile accidents — cars are already intelligent and drive themselves and never drink or do drugs. Everything will appear green because the satanic mills will all be *virtual*. They’ll be *inside* you. Just as Stewart Brand predicted in 1968, the “personal” computer has allowed us all to work at home and have compost toilets. Nuclear power will save us from fossil fuels and global warming — and nanotech will cure Alzheimer’s and cancer and schizophrenia.

But wait. Didn’t I say that we’re already living in the Future? True, we don’t have any leisure (in fact less than in the fucking Dark Ages) and we don’t all have personal ornithopters and robots to mop the floor and scrub the toilet. We’re still sick and sad. But History came to an End so this *must* be the Future. Nevertheless, maybe the Future itself has 4 future, and it’s the final heaven on earth promised by nanotechnology. At last. And not a moment too soon!

Recently I heard that in Mexico, of all places, a terrorist group is now emulating the Unabomber and threatening to kill . . . nanotechnology scientists. They claim to be Anti-Civilization anarchists and call themselves “Individuals Tending Toward The Wild” (or literally “the savage”). They admit that their project will not change the world, but say they want *revenge*. (I guess you could call it pre-emptive revenge.) But don’t fret. So far they’ve only managed to kill one nanotechnologist.