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By Brian Dillon

Brian Dillon reviews *Hatred of Capitalism*

'How do you talk about the past without it seeming like an epitaph?' asks Chris Kraus in the introduction to this selection from four decades of Semiotext(e)'s covert operations. There was a time when the svelte volumes of its 'Foreign Agents' series functioned like passports to a cultural territory that was barely mapped by the institutionalised guardians of theoretical enquiry. These were talismanic texts, reports from the outskirts of academic orthodoxy that acquired mythic status for those on the fringes of institutional acceptance: a mobile army of the underfunded who passed the latest Baudrillard or Virilio around like contraband.

Hatred of Capitalism is dedicated 'To the Memory of an Era (1974-2002)': years spent tracking the infiltration of a 'French Intelligence' beneath the radar of Anglo-American cultural critique. If that time seems irretrievably past (absorbed into the academic star-system, accommodated by the canny marketeers of university presses), the question now is how to speak of its history: how to collect 28 years of writing, translating, publishing and provoking in a way that amounts to something more than 'a first class funeral.'

What remains? What to do with this inheritance? Far from monumentalising its moment, giving in to both nostalgia and a 'post-theoretical' milieu in which theory is everywhere and thought nowhere, this book stands as a testament to a host of thinkers whose allegiance was to the absolute openness of that instance. Here are Deleuze and Guattari, appaled by the mixture of nostalgia and regret that fixes May '68 as definitively over. Instead, they speak of the revolutionary event as ripping open chronology, 'a generalised May '68, amplified bifurcation or fluctuation.' Here is Baudrillard exhorting theory 'to seduce, to wrest things from their condition' – a rigorous challenge to the real, which is not to say a disavowal of reality.

The truly impressive, even inspirational, thing about this collection is the sense of communal becoming. From Foucault's reflections on friendship as endless invention and aspiration, to the creative/confessional writers Kraus collects under the 'Native Agents' rubric, there is a real effort here to foster a frayed community, in the face of the calcification of complex identities into mere academic specialisms, career opportunities. Semiotext(e) suggests ways of being together that still matter today for any cultural collective with an eye to the future.

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