

# Letters to the *Fifth Estate*

Various Authors

1978

## Lire Needed

To The Fifth Estate:

The latest issue of *Invariance* (in French) is at the printers in Milan, but to pay for the printing we need one million Italian lire (FE note: about \$1,350). So we're wondering if among people interested in *Invariance* in the U.S. there might be some who could help us financially. Please excuse this request, but we are really at an impasse.

*Invariance*  
c/o J. Camatte  
B.P. 133  
83170 Brignoles  
France

## Violence & Rape I

Dear FE:

This is an open letter to the Lower Depths and Amelia Jones, ["Comments on Revolutionary Violence," FE #287, October 28, 1977] who wrote attacking John and Paula Zerzan's "New York, New York" [FE #285, August, 1977] and other *Fifth Estate* articles on the general topic of violence.

First, to the Lower Depths: You attack both male aggression and female passivity, recognizing both as ingrained sex roles. But what is your solution? You seem to be saying to men, "You have to stop being so aggressive, so we can stop being so passive." This is a very passive way to overcome your passivity!

Instead of huddling inside during the Blackout, bemoaning the violence around you during the one time when it was aimed at its rightful target, why didn't you get together with 20 or 30 of your negatively defined group of women friends—"all those who don't live with men"—and go out? But of course it's always easier to sit back and complain about the role society has given you than it is to do something about it.

To Amelia Jones: You also attack aggressiveness, not only because you're a woman, but because you're a mother. You want peaceful anti-nuclear demonstrations so you can take the kids along. What is the goal: to find effective ways of fighting nuclear power or to save getting a baby sitter? Both, you might say, but in your letter you addressed yourself exclusively to the latter. If you're really worried about your children, why aren't you more worried about the institutional violence society subjects them to everyday—for instance, nuclear energy.

You tell the *Fifth Estate* it should balance its articles on violence with articles on "the creation of communities in which we can begin to grow and express love, as in the communes of the Anticrats you barely mentioned." This is a very passive posture. If you have information on the Anticrats' communes (as the FE obviously did not) why don't you write an article on them and send it in?

Or better yet, go out and create your own community, then if you still feel the need, write an article on that and send it in. Of course, the *Fifth Estate* may not print it, since the staff isn't interested in "balance," but only in getting across its own ideas. But then you can always start your own paper and print the article.

My point to both the Lower Depths and Amelia Jones is: You can't end violence by passively wishing others would stop being violent. Neither can you argue violence out of existence by labeling it a male sex role, any more than the Fifth Estate can create violence by labeling it revolutionary. Violence is a fact of our lives; it is the natural, physical manifestation of our anger. It cannot be eliminated, only re-directed. If it is not directed toward the cause of the anger, then it will be misdirected toward a scapegoat, or masochistically turned inward.

Violence per se is not the problem. The problems are institutional violence, misdirected violence, and the passivity which both types prey on.

Again to the Lower Depths: In your cautious appraisal of the New York Blackout, it seems to me you missed the true lesson of the event. Of course people took the things consumer society told them they needed, but they didn't take them in the way society-told them they should. This showed that the work ethic is no longer in force and that the society it supported is now hanging, not, as we might have expected, by a thread, but by an extension cord.

Hobart M. Cable

Note to the Fifth Estate: If you must edit this letter, please do so for length only. Above all, do not infer from any of my comments that I am disgusted or might as well be disgusted or that I find anything even remotely disgusting. I have lived under capitalism for too long to find anything disgusting.

I admit that I am amazed and even a little envious of the apparent depth of your own disgust. How you can be disgusted by, say, the media's role in supporting capital, and still have disgust left over for "another disgusting media blitz of gross falsification" is beyond me.

I'm envious of your disgust, but remember, envy of disgust is not the same as disgust! So don't edit my letter to say that I am filled with disgust or that I find anything disgusting or anyone disgusting. Frankly, if you did that, I would be disgusted.

—H.M.C.

## Violence & Rape II

To The Fifth Estate:

Paula Zerzan's answer to the Lower Depths regarding the subject of rape during the New York Blackout ["Comments on Revolutionary Violence," FE #288, December 1977] was good as far as it went, but it seems somewhat mechanical to think that assaults on women will end as soon as attacks on property begin. On the other hand rape should be seen as intra-victim activity (a stronger category of slaves forcing their will on a weaker section) and once access to the master opens up, hopefully the aggression involved will go to its proper target.

I agree with Zerzan that there is no reason to think rape increased during the Blackout and, in fact, if it was like other incidents of general risings by minority population, it—along with "crime" in general—probably dropped off considerably.

However, what is most disturbing in the exchange was the whole tenor of the Lower Depths' letter (see Oct.-Nov. '77) which, if stripped to its core, becomes a plea for the continued mediation of the State. LD seems to feel that rape is the paramount feature of social upheavals—sort of a libertarian adaptation of Susan Brown-miller's reactionary thesis that rape is inherent in men—and if this is the case it leaves women desiring (if not begging) for the continuing existence of the State as the only protector of women. This is a familiar enough argument, but from libertarians?

On the question of urban guerrilla warfare—it seems only to be debated in terms of its efficacy; does it bring us closer to a revolution or is it just used as a justification for the further extension of the police apparatus? We know for certain it does the latter and whether it serves the former function can only be determined after the fact. Part of the attraction of armed struggle must be that it moves concretely from "the arm of criticism to the criticism of arms"—you act on your critique; you become an outlaw; you strike forthrightly at authority; and no one confuses you with the model citizens who reproduce capitalism.

Then it simply becomes a choice between perhaps four months of guerrilla activity in fidelity with your view of the world until you are eliminated by the State repressive mechanism or 40 more years of survival trying to eat as little shit as possible and hoping the revolution will come along. Well, consider it—I do.

All or Nothing,  
Dora Kaplan

## **Affinity Groups**

Folks:

On June 24<sup>th</sup> there is a planned re-occupation of the Seabrook nuclear plant site. There are also other planned actions involving civil disobedience in opposition to nuclear power and nuclear weapons from California and Oregon to New York and New Hampshire.

For this reason I would like to form an Anarchist Black Flag (or something like that) affinity group(s) to participate in one, some or many of these actions. If you are at all interested in this idea, please write:

Steven Belling  
112 Peyton St.  
Santa Cruz CA 95060

## **Scratch Punk**

Dear FE:

A. Punk's essay [FE #288, December 1977] was good though it merely scratched the surface. It remains to be seen whether there is more there than just a surface, to be scratched, of course. I have totally mixed and contradictory feelings about the whole Punk thing.

First, being that it is (in S.F. at least) seemingly a scene largely involving people in their 20s—not some thrust from teenage roots. Second, that form has such priority over content that most likely the whole thing will degenerate into yet one more “style” feeding the fodder of fashion. And third, Talking Heads are not a punk band and don't claim to be, but are, nevertheless, the most interesting and honest of the bands to come from the New Wave, in my subjective opinion. However, I wouldn't look for any sort of revolutionary kernel in their stuff.

As things stand now the whole thing may be so malleable that whatever the media (including the FE) decides the Punk scene is about will shape it in that direction.

Jay Kinney  
San Francisco

## **From The Dog**

To the FE

Comrades. Your timely publication of General Cudd's declaration concerning the revolt of the menagerie brought howls of delight from all the locked-down brothers and sisters here at the City Pound. (The screws actually thought they were getting one over on you when they lined our cells with your December issue!) The domination and domestication of nature forms so integral a part of Western Rationalism (of civilization!)—in particular among so many humans who consider themselves “revolutionaries”—that we had begun to despair of humanity's capacity to realize how inextricably its life is bound up with all the life around it.

Alas and alack. No sooner had we discovered some humans who were awake to this reality (in the heart of the industrial behemoth, no less!), than we were once again confronted with the same old denigration of non-humans by those same people! We refer of course to the paragraph on the immediately following page under the headline

“Our Rave Reviews.” Now, we’re well aware that part of being civilized human beings is a certain weirdness in relation to such natural functions as defecating, but really, “mystical horseshit?” “seeping sacks of parrot droppings?” We expected something more from you.

But your fecal hang-ups aside, what was most surprising was your use of such epithets as “pig-ignorant” and “slithering slugs” to describe the justly-reviled publishers of Newsweek magazine. Please. Ignorance is a human quality; there may well be ignorant humans (you place yourselves suspiciously close to this category with the use of terms like pig-ignorant), but there are no ignorant pigs. And slugs slither because that’s the way they get about, no more, no less. In the non-human world it is no insult to be called a “walking human,” though, given the way most humans have treated most animals, it is no compliment either.

Anyway, it’s not our intention to become the language police, but as our translator and comrade, George Orwell, has so eloquently pointed out elsewhere, the forms of domination in modern society are intimately bound up with the language we all use to know the world and to communicate our knowledge of it.

‘Nuff said. We’ll be looking forward to the next issue when they change the paper around here, and looking forward even more to a time when none of us will live in cells. See you on the barricades!

Yours for the revolution of life against death,  
High Barkin’ Dog  
Detroit City Pound

# fifth Estate

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