

Dancing on Capitalism's Grave

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We gather today not to praise capitalism, but to bury it. Rejoice, the great god greed is dead! It lived far too long, laying waste to all it touched. Its chains have been broken, its tentacles severed. The world is free to breathe again; to grow, to flourish, no longer weighed down by this voracious monster.

Nobody knows its exact birthday. We know it was sired by mercantilism, midwived by banking, and nurtured by imperialism. From its earliest days, it showed a mighty appetite—gorging itself on the fruits of the labor of others.

Quickly, it grew fat and strong. It surrounded itself with sycophants, side-kicks, bodyguards, and nannies. Like the royalty it emulated, bards were hired to sing its praises, and historians commissioned to chronicle the glory it saw in itself. Capitalism's life was built upon a simple, but powerful, lie. An early acolyte, one Adam Smith, proclaimed that material wealth could be concocted by super-natural forces. Science and history be damned! The economy was not a closed system. Something could, indeed, be made from nothing. No longer did riches need to be stolen, pillaged, spirited away in the night. Now, through an alchemy of hoarding and investing, material wealth could indeed materialize.

Not everyone was thrilled by emergence of this hungry beast. Many saw Mr. Smith's lie for what it was. Even as the monster gestated, signs of discontent emerged. Textile workers went on strike, farmers claimed the land they worked from its lords; even some men of the church inveighed against its excesses.

Although it grew large, it was never very healthy. Insatiable, it required ever more and more just to stay alive. Signs of its fragility came early as well such as the Tulip Mania which collapsed the Dutch economy in 1638.

Responding to each bout of illness with a greater resolve, not to mention increasing appetites, it sent its minions out to find new fields to pluck, new forests to level, new fodder for its machines. It found great success when conquering new lands, subduing or dispatching its inhabitants, taking all it had to give.

Of all of Capitalism's children, Industrialism deserves special note. With its machines and interchangeable labor, it took what was old and made it seem new. Although it filled the air with acrid smoke and soot, poisoned the water and ravaged the soil, it remained unperturbed, caring only for its meals, not for the ingredients which made it, or the cooks who prepared it.

As it grew larger, always acutely aware of the unsteady base it rested on, it developed great skill in the art of distraction. When it faltered in one place, it shifted to another. It was as creative as it was destructive. It gave us our bread and our circuses. It let us eat our cake. It assigned value to things where none existed, made virtue from vice, sacrament from sin.

For a brief moment it faced off against some formidable foes. With names like Marx and Bakunin, Goldman and Luxemburg, groups of fighters emerged, shouted the truth, laid bare the lie, and said we'd all be better off once we put this behemoth down. Too quickly, capitalism used brute force and ingenuity to turn the first of those visions of liberation into a sad, frightening, and sickly junior partner, a side-kick.

But today we can rejoice in Capitalism's demise as it finally succumbed to its own weakness and the strength of its enemies, who are legion. The lie rejected, the workers threw monkey wrenches into the gears. The farmers tended to the fields, nurturing rather than ravaging them.

We all agreed to plunder Capitalism's ill gotten gains, and to share them fairly. We used its machines for our benefit, and dismantled those that couldn't serve us. We knew our health came not from the endless gorging by the few, but by the nurturing sustenance of the whole.

We slew the beast and now we come to dance on its grave.

And, dance we will. We have no reason to mourn, only to celebrate and revel in the joy of possibilities of a world where monsters don't enslave us, don't steal our food, don't kill us when we object too loudly or get in its way.

We have suffered enough, but we know Capitalism's legacy will haunt us. But, ghosts only have the power we give them, and they can be exorcized. Each following generation will benefit more than the last. Our triumph is that we have overcome it; our legacy is a world free of this scourge.

So, let's dance, be merry, celebrate, rejoice! Soon we must get to work to begin rebuilding our new world in the shell of the old. Let us remain ever mindful that the pathogens of capitalism, greed, avarice, and violence, reside within us, and must be kept at bay by the medicine of solidarity, mutual aid, and love of each other and the world from which we came has sustained us, even under Capitalism's relentless attack.

Let our last words to Capitalism be, you won't be missed, nor forgotten. Killing you has made us strong and remembering your avarice will help us avoid our own downfall.

May you rest forever, in our peace, the peace we have made by ensuring your demise. We have felled the beast; let it never rise again!

Rejoice, the great god greed and its monstrous child, capitalism are dead. Let the celebration begin!

Paul Dalton is a writer, activist, one time anarchist publisher who lives in Oakland and dreams of the demise of domination.

FE note: This article was originally written for the Funeral for Capitalism on Leap Day 2012 Occupy Oakland procession. It was scheduled to run in our Summer 2012 edition, but must have slipped off the table. We're pleased to print it even if a little late.

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