

Grant Kester

The Sound of Breaking Glass, Part I: Spontaneity and Consciousness in Revolutionary Theory

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Discipline and Punish

I paint this way because I can't join the shooting in Santo Domingo.

– Ricardo Carreira (1965)¹

In 1968 the Argentine artist Graciela Carnevale presented a new work entitled *Acción del Encierro* (Confinement Action) as part of the Ciclo de Arte Experimental exhibition in Rosario, organized by the Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia de Rosario.² The work was participatory, drawing on the then-emerging genres of performance art, installation, and happenings. Once the audience members had assembled in the gallery space the artist departed, locking the door behind her. In preparing the space beforehand Carnevale had covered the glass wall at the front of the gallery with posters, further isolating and confining the visitors. In a recent interview with historian and critic Fabian Cerejido, Carnevale explained that she had hoped to incite a form of “exemplary violence” among the participants, who would be forced to take action once they realized their plight, by breaking through the gallery’s glass front door. This action would effectively empower the audience members, moving them from a state of passive acquiescence to conscious agency. The act of breaking the glass, and the self-liberation of the audience, had particular significance in Argentina at the time of Carnevale’s work. Less than two years earlier, General Juan Carlos Onganía had taken power in a coup d’etat, overthrowing elected president Arturo Illia. Within a matter of weeks Onganía’s Federal Police had ruthlessly suppressed protests at the University of Buenos Aires, beating and jailing professors and students in the notorious *La Noche de los Bastones Largos* (Night of the Long Batons).³ Shortly after the *Encierro* action, Carnevale herself participated in the famous *Tucuman Arde* project in Rosario, which was closed down by the police.

During periods of political repression the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and between private and public expression, undergoes both erosion and reconsolidation. In the case of Carnevale’s *Acción del Encierro*, the struggle to break free of physical confinement was presumed to exist in a corollary relationship with the struggle against political repression. In the event, none of the participants was willing or able to break the glass from inside the locked gallery. Instead, they required the assistance of a sympathetic passerby who, upon seeing the distressed faces of the participants, managed to break through the glass to free them. At this point, as Cerejido discovered in his interview



Inside view of Graciela Carnevale's 1968 action *Acción del Encierro* from the Cycle of Experimental Art. Rosario, Argentina.



Outside view of Graciela Carnevale's 1968 action *Acción del Encierro* from the Cycle of Experimental Art. Rosario, Argentina.

with Carnevale, one of the artist's friends, who had remained inside with the crowd to monitor their reactions, assaulted the well-meaning passerby with an umbrella. Apparently, he was angry that the good Samaritan had interrupted the performance before the audience members reached the state of desperation necessary to force them into action.⁴ As a result of the ensuing tumult, the police soon arrived and closed the gallery.

From the Vendôme Column to the Futurist Manifesto, and from Gustav Metzger to Survival Research Laboratories, creative destruction has a well-established place in the history of modernism. This gesture is typically performed by the artist for the benefit of a viewer, who might be inspired to emulate or reproduce it at some future point. In Carnevale's case, she withdrew from the creative scene in the hope that the audience itself would take action and destroy the plate glass window of the gallery. What was the significance of this gesture, in that place and at that time? And what sort of risk did it entail to encourage Argentines to "break free" from their confinement at a historical moment when even the most nominal expression of public dissent could be met with arrest, imprisonment, and even disappearance? The decisive gesture in Carnevale's work wasn't the unfulfilled promise of autonomous collective action, but rather the withdrawal of the artist from a scene of transgression that she hoped to precipitate but not share. Instead of the artist acting as a surrogate for the viewer, by engaging in various acts of symbolic destruction, the viewer was to act as a surrogate for the artist's own vision of resistance.

How do we understand the underlying choreography of this project, the *mise-en-scène* of creative action? First, we have the artist, who fabricates an apparatus to be inhabited by the viewer – in this case premised on a model of human psychology in which pressurized confinement is understood to produce a corresponding response (the viewer coming to consciousness of his or her capacity for liberatory action). Then we have the site of the exhibition itself, prepared by the artist beforehand. And finally we have the viewer, who is delivered over to the apparatus of the piece. They arrive only in order to be worked upon by the triggers and mechanisms of the space (the blocked-out windows, the locked door, the disturbed crowding of known and unknown bodies, the confusion and frustration of confinement). Notwithstanding Carnevale's commitment to "exemplary violence," the meaning of this work cannot be reduced to a simple exercise in operant conditioning. Did audiences in Buenos Aires at this time, in the

early days of the Onganía regime, need the experience of Carnevale's confinement piece in order to fully grasp the nature of their oppression at the hands of the Federal Police? Or was their failure to immediately break out on their own an illustration of the hopelessness of their broader political situation? And how do we interpret the response of the passerby who "rescued" the trapped gallery-goers, and whose action was motivated not by an experience of therapeutic suffering, but by empathetic identification?

Carnevale's work demonstrates some of the central themes of post-war avant-garde art practice. Certainly it expresses the movement toward action, performance, and event that was a key component of the period, as well as the belief that insight emerges from a singular moment of crisis. At the same time, *Encierro* retains a behaviorist attitude toward the viewer, who enters the gallery as a passive accomplice to power, only to be provoked into a cathartic recognition of her capacity for resistance and independent action. The gallery space – the very separation between art and the world beyond – becomes a disabling constraint. It is necessary to literally shatter this division, in order to activate the viewer. In Carnevale's work the viewer will come to feel, viscerally, the repression and containment of an authoritarian regime.⁵ In this, her work has much in common with revolutionary political discourse, in which a vanguard party seeks to exaggerate and increase social inequity, and solicit state repression, in order to awaken a previously quiescent working class and precipitate an insurrection that would otherwise be deferred. The model of consciousness in each case is similar, suggesting a deeper continuity between avant-garde art and revolutionary politics during the modern period.

Bourgeois Science

We have said that there could not have been Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness ... The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals.

– Vladimir Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* (1902)⁶

It is frequently contended that the laboring masses are incapable of achieving a revolution for themselves, freely. This

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thesis is particularly dear to the “Communists,” for it permits them to invoke an “objective” situation necessarily leading to repression of the “wicked Utopian Anarchists” ... But this thesis is absolutely gratuitous. Let them furnish proof of such alleged incapacity of the masses. One can search history without finding a single example where the masses were really left to act freely ...

– Voline, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917–1921* (1947)⁷

In *The Unknown Revolution*, the Russian anarchist Voline presents a compelling critique of the Leninist tradition of a vanguard party. For Lenin, meaningful revolution will occur only when the impulsive energies of the proletariat are harnessed and directed by the strategic intelligence of a vanguard party led by professional revolutionaries. As he writes in *What Is to Be Done?*, “the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine ‘class struggle’ until this struggle is led by a strong organization of revolutionaries.” Here, the masses are an active bodily principle, a kind of pure agency grounded in the material immediacy of labor but incapable of abstraction or long-term planning. The professional revolutionary, on the other hand, lacks the collective physical potentia of the masses, but possesses instead a capacity for strategic thinking without which the masses would blunder about blindly, like a body without a head. Within this division of labor, the task of the revolutionary is to “expose” the masses to the truth of their oppression in order to move them from a spontaneous and local consciousness (in which they are concerned only with their immediate circumstances and with forms of resistance intended to achieve short-term goals) to a methodical and global vision of revolution capable of destroying the apparatus of the capitalist system in its entirety.⁸ “It is not enough to explain to the workers that they are politically oppressed,” Lenin writes. “Agitation must be conducted with regard to every concrete example of this oppression.” The workers must be made conscious of the interconnections between their individual experience and a national, and international, mosaic of oppressive practices and constituencies.

While the professional revolutionary must learn from the struggles of the proletariat, the underlying logic of the vanguard party remains that of an advanced consciousness, revealing to the disenfranchised the nature of their own exploitation and guiding their actions. As Lenin notes,

we must make it our concern to *direct* the thoughts of those who are dissatisfied only with conditions at the university, or in the Zemstvo [a form of local self-government initiated by Tsar Alexander II] to the idea that the entire political system is worthless. We must take upon ourselves the task of organizing an all-round political struggle under the leadership of our Party in such a manner as to make it possible for all oppositional strata to render their fullest support to the struggle and to our Party.⁹

Notwithstanding a series of revolutionary uprisings in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, many elements within the working class displayed a frustrating indifference to their historical mission. It was this failure, this indifference, that necessitated the intervention of a force “brought to them from without”: the viral discourse of socialism created by an alienated faction of bourgeois intellectuals.

The political activist is charged with awakening the working class, multitude, or precariat to its revolutionary mission either by revealing the hidden contradictions of capitalist power and the systemic roots of what are otherwise perceived as merely individual or epiphenomenal forms of injustice, or by working to exaggerate suffering or conflict or provoke the authorities into a violent response that will further radicalize those members of the working class who become its target. This suggests a key distinction within revolutionary theory. It isn’t simply that the members of the working class are unaware of their own suffering (or that they don’t fully understand its significance), but that their suffering, in its current form, is not yet sufficient to force them to act in a properly revolutionary manner. We might say, as Lenin does, that they don’t yet know what to do with that awareness, what lessons to draw from it (for Lenin, that is the task of the vanguard leader). As a result, the vanguard leader must actually increase or exacerbate their suffering by provoking the ruling class, setting up an escalating cycle of assault and violent counter-response which will transform working class consciousness (binding them together by creating a characteristic and differentiated class enemy). While these actions and provocations may well increase the suffering of the working class here and now, this suffering is justified because it will ultimately lead to their total emancipation. The retribution of the state becomes the crucible in which their new consciousness will be forged.

Questions of agency and autonomy are central to the concept of the vanguard party (and suggest a broader set of tensions within

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El Lissitzky, *Lenin Tribune*, 1920.

modernity that link the aesthetic and the political). On one side stands the proletariat, a discrete and relatively homogeneous entity with identifiable boundaries, which can be mobilized, educated, and brought to consciousness. On the other side stands the professional revolutionary, a kind of cognitive entrepreneur who comes from the oppressor class but whose capacity for independent thought regarding the conditions of that oppression has led to the creation of a motivational heuristic system (Marxism) that “opens up for him the widest perspectives, and ... places at his disposal the mighty force of many millions of workers ‘spontaneously’ rising for the struggle.”¹⁰ The key difference between the (collective) proletariat and the (individual) revolutionary is the capacity for “consciousness,” which Lenin identifies with a global and strategic understanding of the totality of the capitalist system. This insight can only be achieved through sustained intellectual and theoretical engagement, leading to a “scientific” grasp of political economy. While certain advanced elements within the proletariat might be drafted up into the ranks of the professional revolutionary, by virtue of their exemplary initiative and intelligence, the “science” of socialism remains a uniquely bourgeois innovation. Lenin approvingly cites Karl Kautsky’s formulation here:

Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia: it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously.¹¹

This scientific knowledge is necessary, according to Kautsky, in order to “imbue the proletariat with the consciousness of its position and the consciousness of its task. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle.” The vanguard party, Kautsky

continues, is a “spirit that not only hovers over the spontaneous movement, but also raises this movement to the level of its program.” Here again we encounter the formulation of the proletariat as an independent organism, incapable of self-improvement and dependent on an external influence for growth or liberation.

What Is to Be Done? constitutes an extended polemic against the principle of “free criticism” being advocated at the time by the Rabocheye Dyelo (“Workers’ Cause”) faction, which sought to preserve space for a plurality of tactics within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.¹² The key terms in this debate were *spontaneity* and *consciousness*. Spontaneity, which Lenin associates with both the anarchist and reformist strands of the Russian left, suggests that revolutionary leaders should allow their strategic planning to be guided by the shifting tactical actions of the proletariat in its unfolding struggle against the Russian state.¹³ This is the “organization-as-process” error that Lenin will later deplore in the Mensheviks.¹⁴ It implies that meaningful insight is produced through the experience of political resistance itself, rather than introduced from “without.”

This belief was anathema to Lenin, for whom the correct political path – and true “consciousness” – had to be established a priori, through “scientific” principles that would then guide the actions of the proletariat. It also implies, for Lenin, a willingness to develop tactical alliances with reformist institutions, and therefore a timid backing away from the militancy, discipline, and resolve required for authentic revolution. In *What Is to Be Done?*, Lenin repeatedly warns of the danger posed by this “new trend” in Russian Social Democracy, and chastises activists for variously “bowing to,” “slavishly cringing before,” and “worshipping” spontaneity.¹⁵ While spontaneity might, with proper cultivation, eventually evolve into “consciousness,” (“the ‘spontaneous element,’ in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an embryonic form”), on its own it can only produce “outbursts of desperation” lacking in theoretical rigor. It is therefore essential to maintain a strict hierarchical separation between the two, to prevent spontaneity, in all its physical immediacy, from “overwhelming consciousness.”¹⁶ In this there can be no compromise and no negotiation. The true revolutionary must “combat spontaneity,” and the movement as a whole “must become imbued with intolerance against those who retard its growth by their subservience to spontaneity.”¹⁷

For the Russian anarchist Voline, on the other hand, spontaneity implies a freedom from

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coercion that is essential to political liberation. In *The Unknown Revolution* he argues that the proletariat, if allowed to develop by means of its own “natural and free activity,” possessed the wisdom necessary to create a new political system that would transcend the limitations of the authoritarian state. He cites emblematic moments of spontaneous self-organization (the formation of the Saint Petersburg Soviet in 1905, uprisings in Petrograd, Kaluga, and Kazan in 1917, and the Kronstadt Rebellion in 1921) as evidence of an innate, libertarian tendency among the working class. But while the masses may possess a natural predisposition toward democratic forms of social organization, this capacity has never been allowed to flourish. “One can search history,” Voline writes, “without finding a single example *where the masses were really left to act freely.*” Even the Bolsheviks, who claimed to be fighting on behalf of the working class, immediately sought to consolidate their new-won power in centralized forms of state control. Moreover, they ruthlessly suppressed any efforts to develop non-hierarchical, democratic alternatives within the Russian left.¹⁸

Instead of simply helping the workers to achieve the Revolution and emancipate

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themselves, instead of aiding them in their struggle, the role to which the workers assigned it in their thoughts, the role which, normally, would be that of all revolutionary ideologists, and which never [properly] includes taking and exercising “political power” – instead of performing this role, the Bolshevik party, once in control, installed itself as absolute master.¹⁹

Despite their differences, both Lenin and Voline underestimate the reciprocal relationship or attunement that is possible between thought and action, strategy and resistance, and theory and practice. For Lenin, the masses constitute an unconscious conative power, waiting to be mobilized into conscious, strategically coordinated action by the leaders of the vanguard party. In his rejection of “spontaneity,” Lenin overlooks the possibility that consciousness or insight can be produced through the act of political resistance itself, rather than prescribed from above by an a priori strategy. Here thought is creative and generative while action is merely iterative, marking the application of ideas already perfected in the consciousness of the intellectual or the



Kronstadt Rebellion, 1921.

professional revolutionary.

For Voline, the instinctual democratic sensibility of the working class can only come to fruition in a moment of autonomous political expression, uncontaminated by the actions of organized parties, governments, or leaders. If only the masses “were really left to act freely” (i.e., without the interference of the Bolsheviks), this natural inclination would necessarily assert itself in the formation of a just and equitable social order. But it is precisely in organizing to resist the external force of class oppression, as well as to resolve their own internal contradictions, that the masses come to have an identity and a political orientation capable of coherent expression in the first place. Working class “consciousness” is not a fixed or pre-existing entity, the relative purity of which can be either preserved or contaminated. Rather, it comes into being through a set of social relationships in which “external” and “internal” determinants, antagonism and solidarity, are complexly related. In the act of resistance, the proletariat generates new insights regarding political forms, relationships among and between conflicting class interests, and definitions of justice and freedom. Thus, while Voline wishes to challenge the “alleged

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incapacity of the masses,” he has some difficulty explaining how a revolution involving millions of Russian peasants and workers, rather than a single local Soviet, would proceed without eventually requiring the emergence of (implicitly compromised) forms of political representation, leadership, and hierarchy.

The Descent to the City

If the peasants are skeptical, their confidence in themselves must be restored by imbuing them with revolutionary faith, faith in the revolutionaries that are speaking to them.

– Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution* (1967)²⁰

For Lenin, action in the world must be preceded by, and subordinate to, a coherent revolutionary vision and a hard-nosed assessment of those measures necessary to seize state power. For Voline, on the other hand, action or practice is reduced to the simple liberation of a pre-existing moral or political capacity (the redemptive working class, finally freed from bureaucratic oversight and manipulation). In their own way, each posits



Portrait of Régis Debray.

action as the unfolding of a generative, a priori plan or orientation to the world. Lenin's fear of an improvisational spontaneity that threatens to "overwhelm consciousness" is reiterated over half a century later in the context of revolutionary theory in Latin America. In his pivotal study *Revolution in the Revolution*, Régis Debray draws on his experiences with Che Guevara in the Cuban Revolution and in Bolivia, where he was imprisoned for three years (and where he wrote the book).²¹ Debray's book presents many of the key tenets of Guevarism and Latin American revolutionary theory, and it served as a bible of sorts for revolutionary movements during the late 1960s and early 70s.

Debray contends that the Cuban Revolution introduced an entirely new "problematic" into revolutionary theory. Instead of military action being guided by the political leadership of a vanguard party (as with the Bolsheviks, Maoists, and Viet Cong), in Latin America the guerrilla army itself became the locus of a revolutionary consciousness in which the political and the military were conjoined.²² This consciousness was incubated in a new organizational form: the *foco* ("focus," "center," or "core"). The *foco* was a small guerrilla cell that operated independently. Rather than trying to defend a fixed territory it was mobile and autonomous, freed from any obligation to protect, or even consult with, the peasants and workers on whose behalf it waged "total class war." ("In the initial stage the base of support is in the guerrilla fighter's knapsack," as Debray writes.²³) The *foco* would gather the inchoate energies of the peasants and urban working class into a disciplined and coherent force for change, both an embodiment of, and example to, the incipient Latin American proletariat.

Debray develops his analysis through a contrast between *foquismo* and the discredited strategy of "armed self defense," in which worker cadres defend a specific site (for example, a striking mine or factory or an embattled *barrio*). Armed self-defense is heroic but futile, according to Debray. Only the small, autonomous *foco* has the tactical freedom necessary to engage the forces of class domination in a manner that can lead to the absolute overthrow of the capitalist state. The *foco* succeeds because it isn't distracted by time-consuming negotiations with the government, nor does it attempt to form tactical alliances with class factions of the bourgeoisie or work through the compromised mechanisms of electoral or party politics. In the *foco* all other considerations are secondary to the immediate strategic demands of warfare. We must "cast aside political verbosity," Debray argues.²⁴ "No political front which is basically a deliberative body can

assume leadership of a people's war; only a technically capable executive group, centralized and united ... only a revolutionary general staff."²⁵

Any attempt to win concessions (electoral reform, recognition of unions, etc.) that might soften the "contradictions" of class domination through political engagement will simply delay the onset of true revolution. "In the new context of struggle to the death, there is no place for spurious solutions ... there is no middle way," as Debray insists.²⁶ As noted above, this unforgiving instrumentality, in which everything is sacrificed to military necessity, nonetheless has the capacity to produce genuine political insight among the *foco* cadres. Thus, *foquismo* was not simply a product of military calculation (guerrilla fighters in Cuba initially lacked the heavy weaponry and troop strength necessary to meet Batista's army in massed battle), but also an incipient form of political consciousness.

Under certain conditions, the political and the military are not separate, but form one organic whole, consisting of the people's army, whose nucleus is the guerrilla army. The vanguard party can exist in the form of the guerrilla *foco* itself. The guerrilla force is the party in embryo. This is the staggering novelty introduced by the Cuban Revolution.²⁷

Debray's contrast between armed self-defense and *foquismo* is predicated on a series of spatial and temporal oppositions. Where armed self-defense is based on a principle of "spontaneity," as workers respond to specific challenges at the local or situational level, proper revolution requires discipline and planning. Debray cites Lenin directly on this point:

self-defense is discredited today ... But beware! It tends to appear again in more seductive forms, though naturally without revealing its name. ... In the ideological background of self-defense there are to be found ideologies which Lenin repeatedly described as indigenous to the working class and which he said would again and again come to the fore whenever Marxists and Communists lowered their guard: "economism" and "spontaneity."²⁸

Spontaneity, an ideology "indigenous" to the working class, must be replaced by the clear-headed thinking required for revolution. And the proper locale for the cultivation of this thinking is the remote mountain fastness, among scattered peasant villages. "Power is seized and held in the capital," Debray observes, "but the road that leads the exploited to it must pass through the

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countryside.”²⁹ It is here, far away from the corrupting influence of the city, that authentic revolution is born, as the petty bourgeois intellectuals of the city become hardened guerrillas through shared adversity. “These are the militants of our time,” Debray declares.

Resolute and responsible, each of them knowing the meaning and goal of this armed class struggle through its leaders, fighters like themselves whom they see daily carrying the same packs on their backs, suffering the same blistered feet and the same thirst during a march.³⁰

Debray associates the city with the reviled actions of politicians and the “vice of excessive deliberation.” He writes:

The reconstitution of the Party ... requires an end be put to the plethora of commissions, secretariats, congresses, conferences, plenary sessions, meetings, and assemblies at all levels ... such a mechanism ... hampers executive, centralized, and vertical methods ... demanded in the conduct of military operations.³¹

While the mountains and the countryside are the loci of authentic revolutionary insight, isolated, pure and autonomous, the cities are sites of compromise and temptation, “lukewarm incubators” that “make one infantile and bourgeois.”³² The experience of the mountains is transformative for Debray:

In the first stages of life in the mountains, in the seclusion of the so-called virgin forest, life is simply a daily battle in its smallest detail; especially it is a battle within the *guerrillero* himself to overcome his old habits, to erase the marks left on his body by the incubator – his weakness.³³

In the army, in the mountains, the would-be guerrilla will “shed his skin” and undergo a “resurrection.”³⁴ It is here that “the political word is abruptly made flesh. The revolutionary ideal emerges from the gray shadow of formula and acquires substance in the full light of day. This transubstantiation comes as a surprise.”³⁵ Only military cadres forged in the crucible of armed rebellion can understand the true nature of change, the demands that it makes for violent action rather than talk or negotiation. And only the army “can guarantee that the people’s power will not be perverted after victory.”³⁶ The *focquist* vanguard, in its single-minded commitment to military action, will model a

proper revolutionary discipline for emulation by the peasants and working-class, “imbuing” them with revolutionary fervor.³⁷ The “small motor” of the foco will bring the “big motor” of the masses to political consciousness, and “set them in motion.”³⁸ For this process to succeed, it is necessary that the masses see the foco, the “small motor,” as “their only interpreter and guide, under penalty of dividing and weakening the people’s strength.”³⁹ Debray evokes a kind of revolutionary work ethic in which the exploited, through proximity to the exemplary foco, come to realize both the vulnerability of the powerful and the discipline and self-sacrifice necessary to overthrow the capitalist system as a whole.

As I suggested at the beginning of this essay there are significant parallels between the rhetoric of the vanguard intellectual and the avant-garde artist during the twentieth-century. The exemplary consciousness, and the capacity for decisive, violent, action, displayed by the revolutionary cadre undergoes a process of displacement, as the artist also seeks to serve as the catalyst for a heightened awareness of the political. In the second half of this essay I will explore this transaction in more detail, linking Graciela Carnevale’s work to recent developments in contemporary art theory and practice.

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To be continued in “The Sound of Breaking Glass, Part II: Agonism and the Taming of Dissent.”

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Quoted in Ana Longoni, "'Vanguardia' y 'revolución,' ideas-fuerza en el arte argentino de los 60/70," *Brumaria* 8 (Spring 2007): 66.

2
This work has been listed under several titles, including *Lock-up Action*, *Encierro y Escape* (Entrapment or Confinement and Escape), and *Acción del Encierro*.

3
On July 28, 1968, the Onganía regime revoked the autonomy of Argentina's universities, which had first been granted in the reform of 1918.

4
As Cerejido notes: "It was 1968 and as the Tucuman Arde action was taking shape, [Carnevale] presented *Encierro*, the piece documented in the photograph that I saw in Kassel. For this piece she told me in the interview, it was her intention to induce the people into exemplary 'liberating violence.' The liberating violence was spiked by some elements of screwball comedy. The exterior wall and the door of the gallery were made of glass. Once the people were inside, Carnevale locked the door from outside. The glass was covered with posters that the trapped public (most of them students) proceeded to remove. Then a group attempted to take apart the hinges. A man that was passing by, seeing the desperation in some of the faces inside, broke the glass wall to let them out. At this point an artist friend who was inside as a mole, disappointed by the actions of the rescuer, hit him with an umbrella. There was pushing and shoving, angry insults and the noise of broken glass. It happened to be October ninth, the first anniversary of Che's assassination in Bolivia and the police were particularly alert. Soon a police battalion intervened and closed down the exhibit." Fabian Cerejido, *Assured Pasts or Gambled Futures: Contrasting Approaches to Context in Selected Twentieth Century Mexican and Argentine Art Practices* (UCSD, Ph.D. in Art History, Theory and Criticism, 2010), 67.

5
There is a good reason, I believe, for the persistence of this revelatory modality in both art and revolutionary theory. When confronted by countless instances of human cruelty, there is a sincere desire to believe that this is not due to some intrinsic predisposition, but is instead the result of a lack of knowledge or insight. We want to believe that humanity remains violent, vengeful, passive or complicit only because we have not yet adequately grasped the true nature of our own identity or our relationship to others. This is the utopian kernel, the optimistic humanism, at the heart of avant-garde discourse.

6
Lenin, *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of our Movement* (New York: International Publishers, 1981), 31.

7
Voline, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917–1921* (New York: Free Life Editions, 1974), 190. "Voline" is the pseudonym of Russian anarchist Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eichenbaum.

8
Lenin's account of "exposure literature" in *What Is to Be Done?* focuses on the genre of factory or industrial investigations, then popular in Russia. 9
Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, 85. He writes on page 119, "Our wiseacres, however, at a time when Russian Social-Democracy is passing through a crisis entirely due to the lack of sufficiently trained, developed, and experienced leaders to guide the spontaneously awakening masses, cry out, with the profundity of fools: 'It is a bad business when the movement does not proceed from the rank and file.'"

10
Ibid., 60.

11
Ibid., 48.

12
What Is to Be Done? was written in response to divisions within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) during the early 1900s. The two primary factions within the RSDLP, which would subsequently evolve into the Bolshevik and Menshevik parties, were identified with political journals. The moderate faction, associated with *Rabocheye Dyelo* ("Workers' Cause"), was willing to accept some negotiation with liberal democratic forces in Russia and worked primarily through legal forms of trade unionism. The more radical faction, associated with Lenin and *Iskra* ("Spark"), advocated armed rebellion and sought to overthrow the entire political system of Tsarist Russia.

13
This wouldn't prevent Lenin himself from accusing the Mensheviks of precisely the same fault: underestimating the capacities of the proletariat. For Lenin, the Mensheviks' failure to support the uncompromising *Iskra* plan was evidence of their own lack of faith in the radicalism of the proletariat. See V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works (January–July 1905, Volume 8)*, trans. Bernard Issacs and Isidor Lasker (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 34.

14
"The Congress most emphatically condemns this disruptive conduct and warns all Party-conscious Social-Democrats against the notorious

organization-as-process theory which has been used to justify disorganization and which has debated the theory of revolutionary Marxism in an unheard-of manner." Ibid., 191.

15
"This shows (something *Rabocheye Dyelo* cannot grasp) that all worship of the spontaneity of the working class movement, all belittling of the role of 'the conscious element,' of the role of Social-Democracy, means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers. All those who talk about 'overrating the importance of ideology,' about exaggerating the role of the conscious element, etc., imagine that the labor movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers 'wrest their fate from the hands of the leaders.'" Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, 39. "And so, we have become convinced that the fundamental error committed by the 'new trend' in Russian Social-Democracy is its bowing to spontaneity and its failure to understand that the spontaneity of the masses demands a high degree of consciousness from us Social-Democrats." Ibid., 53. "But what was only part misfortune became full misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim (it was very much alive among the members of the groups mentioned), when there appeared people – and even Social-Democratic organs – that were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a *theoretical* basis for their slavish cringing before spontaneity." Ibid., 63.

16
"Even the primitive revolts expressed the awakening of consciousness to a certain extent. The workers were losing their age-long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them and began... I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, definitely abandoning their slavish submission to the authorities. But this was, nevertheless, more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of struggle." Ibid., 31.

17
"There is no middle course ... to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology ..." Ibid., 40–41.

18
"The Bolshevik idea was to build, on the ruins of the bourgeois

state, a new 'Workers' State' ... The Anarchist idea [was and] is to transform the economic and social bases of society without having recourse to a political state, to a government, or to a dictatorship of any sort. That is, to achieve the Revolution and resolve its problems not by political or statist means, but by means of natural and free activity, economic and social, of the associations of the workers themselves, after having overthrown the last capitalist government." Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 175.

19
Voline continues: "It was quickly corrupted. It organized itself as a privileged caste. And later it flattened and subjected the working class in order to exploit it, under new forms, in its own interest. Because of this the whole Revolution was falsified, misled. For, when the masses of the people became cognizant of their danger, it was too late. After a struggle between them and the new masters, solidly organized and in possession of ample material, administrative, military, and police strength, the people succumbed." Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, 157. Voline himself was criticized by the Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno, who called him a "moralizing intellectual unconnected with social practice." See Paul LeBlanc, *Marx, Lenin, and the Revolutionary Experience: Studies of Communism and Radicalism in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 208.

20
Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 47.

21
Debray was a young philosophy professor from Paris at the time. Despite receiving a thirty-year prison term from the Bolivian government, he was freed in 1970 following an international campaign that featured the efforts of Jean-Paul Sartre, Charles de Gaulle, and Pope Paul VI. Debray went on to become an advisor to François Mitterrand during the 1980s.

22
Debray contends, "The guerrilla force, if it genuinely seeks total political warfare, cannot in the long run tolerate any fundamental duality of functions or powers." He cites Guevara on this point, arguing that, "the military and political leaders" should "be united, if possible, in one person." *Revolution in the Revolution*, 107. 23 Ibid., 65. Debray is paraphrasing Castro here.

24
Ibid., 112.

25
Ibid., 86.

26

Ibid., 28.

27
Ibid., 106.

28
Debray continues, "At bottom Trotskyism is a metaphysics paved with good intentions. It is based on a belief in the natural goodness of the workers, which is always perverted by evil bureaucracies but never destroyed." Ibid., 39.

29
Ibid., 114.

30
"These are the militants of our time, not martyrs, not functionaries, but fighters. Neither creatures of an apparatus nor potentates: at this stage, they themselves are the apparatus." Ibid., 113.

31
Ibid., 102–103.

32
Ibid., 71.

33
Ibid., 71.

34
Ibid., 112.

35
Ibid., 112. In fact, the deliberate disconnect between the *foco* and a larger, urban, party-based structure, as well as the *foco*'s reliance on volunteerism and exemplary violence, was questioned at the time by figures such as Abraham Guillén, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War who criticized *foquismo* in his book *Estrategia de la Guerrilla Urbana* (1966).

36
Ibid., 109.

37
Ibid., 47.

38
Ibid., 84.

39
Ibid., 109. See also page 84.

12/12

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The Sound of Breaking Glass, Part I: Spontaneity and Consciousness in Revolutionary Theory