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is an episode whose subject is  
the great lamenting public"*

# death of John Lennon

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implicitly, turns against him.

## death of the walrus

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*"Theory is for the critic of the audience."*



**photo of Lennon as a kid**

"The idea is not to comfort people ~ not to make them feel better, but to make  
them feel worse."

It is said that the end of alienation is only reached by the path of alienation itself. On the morning of December 9th 1980 I was particularly struck by the rapture in the eyes of newspaper readers, by their concentrated frowns, their inquisitive peeking. They were all reading about the same thing. About Lennon's death. Everyone was riveted. Me, I felt nothing, nothing at all. Whatever it was that these people were sharing I was not sharing it with them.

Lennon's death is an episode that headlines the relationship between appearance and reality in a society where the illusion of community is preferred to the critique of the kind of society that needs such illusions. How many would rather dream than to know why they sleep? Lennon's death provided millions of people with a rare opportunity. It gave them the chance to share a sense of togetherness they don't usually have. Private grief isolates, collective grief binds people together. Everybody shared their experiences on the day the news broke. There was shock and surprise; disbelief and fascination; a sense of loss and a desire to communicate; there was discussion and estimation, and judgement and adoration. Most people reacted identically and simultaneously. In a society where normal human relationships are characterized by feelings of alienation and separation the chance to join in a wave of emotion is both a straw grasped by the lonesome and the drowning of the individual self.

Lennon's death is an episode whose subject is neither victim, nor widow, nor killer. It is the great lamenting public. A subject that reduced the victim to an object because they could never know him as a person.

Most people made a peculiar discovery when the shock of Lennon's death sank in. They discovered a feeling of loss and a sense of sadness. And the reason they felt this is that gradually over the last two decades people have convinced themselves that Lennon really was what his image said he was: a good guy, a genius, a friend. Their wholehearted emotional response was accorded to an image, a thing, a hollow representation of reality. I mean, how many people actually knew Lennon? How many had ever met him? Or talked with him face to face? Most people knew Lennon only through his public image. To them he was a voice or a record, a photo on a poster, a tiny figure on a floodlit stage. Only this, yet so much more. Look, while he was alive he was just one of many heroes that strut the boards of modern music. Yet the moment he was shot his loss became the most important experience in the world, that which everyone was talking about. While he was in retirement few people missed him; the minute he was dead everyone felt they'd lost him. The experience of Lennon's loss is at one and the same time the expression of a real need and the perversion of that need. The desire for community is one that is always created by society. Under capitalism it's the only need that cannot be fulfilled. The stronger the desire, the more powerful the self-deception. Where the production and consumption of commodities fills all of social space there is room only for illusions. We want so much to share experience that all we end up having in common is the illusion of shared experience.

All the drama of a spectacular death both distracts the man in the street from his misery and restates that misery. The sad only feel sorry for themselves. Modern conditions of life are so bad, so empty, so banal, that everyone jumps at the chance to react to a drama. Even if their sole contact with the event is as bloodless and shallow as the newspaper that brought home the tidings. Real grief is cathartic. Grief accorded to an image can only be unfulfilling.

The tearful crowds that gathered outside the Lennon home soon after the shooting offered up their emotions at the altar of their idol. The insignificant suck significance

from the ritual of mourning. They appropriate the 'historic' moment for themselves. "I get a sense of growing old," said one mourner. Like sheep they all start singing His songs. A contagion of senility passes across them. How could anyone sprinkle the pavement with tears for the election to glory of a star whose sole reason for existing was to get fans to buy commodities and hum along to tunes? At least these worshippers were on the spot. For the rest, grief was purely spectacular.

The spectacle is at the heart of a heartless world and in the soul of soulless conditions. Where the commodity has achieved total occupation of all social life there reigns the spectacle. Separation is its alpha and omega. It is the soma of the people. And it insists on its pound of flesh. The unliveable demands to be lived. For the spectacle is not just something that is passively consumed; it must needs be acted out. When the spectacle solicits an emotional response conformity becomes a social imperative. Since all we have in common is our desire to be together and our misery at failing to be together what seems to be a sharing of experience is actually the imposition of experience.

Everything is said about the spectacle except what it fundamentally is: the manipulation of the emotions of the individual by those of the collectivity.

I don't give a shit about John Lennon. The death on the other side of the planet of a bloke I've never met is too commonplace to move me.<sup>[2]</sup> I feel no sadness, no shock at his departure. The stream of my consciousness remains untroubled by the realization that an era has departed with him. On the other hand, I do think it bizarre that people accord emotions to an image. By coming together in the experience of grief for a person in the shape of a star people create an inhuman, a counterfeit form of community. One that only exists through mediation.

In our capitalist society, as in any society, people are brought together by the common essence of their species <sup>[3]</sup>. Under capital however, what is immediately experienced is not this common essence but all the things that separate people. So although the qualities of the common essence are experienced as real they pertain to something other than humanity. They are projected onto a super being. In the past this was god. Nowadays it's a star, a person as distant as the sun yet as close as your ear. When Lennon pointed out that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus he was just stating the obvious.

Part of the spectacle is the decisive modernization of religion. Gone are all the local gods and unitary myths and in their stead strides a global power and a general alienation. What is permitted is so much less than what is possible. The spectacle is religion made banal and banality made sacred. Its creed is the price-tag, its hymns are cultural and its cathedral is urbanism.

In the past, people wept at the death of gods and kings because their passing brought changes that affected everyone. Nowadays they bemoan the death of the man behind the image. When you buy a record you not only buy a recording of someone but you also buy the way they choose to represent themselves to you. The fan needs to know that there's a real person behind the commodity. A human who guarantees the authenticity of the product; a person to make credible the incredible, to make public their privacy, to dominate your life in the guise of revealing theirs'. But once the reality has been rubbed out all you're left with are the bare objects, the records and books and posters. Not that this sudden unmasking puts anybody off. Oh no, nostalgia jumps in to take the place of authenticity. An instant swap. And record sales leap. In the topsy-turvy

world of the spectacle, to die is to live again.

All those who reckoned that Lennon's death was almost as shocking as Kennedy's erred on the side of caution. It was more so. Precisely because it was less expected. Because it was unprecedented. Americans have been looking forward to the assassination of another Kennedy for years. No one expected the murder of a Beatle. Yet in this anaesthetised society the unexpected is necessary. It's the trigger that fires the emotions. Political killing is too tame; the people need a stronger dish.

Random death in the city street is strong meat indeed. The meaningless death and motiveless mugging are dreaded by one and all. Police spokesman Ed Burns: "We do not have any acceptable motive...Only god knows why he did it." Previously, rock stars burnt themselves out in a blaze of drugs and sex and wild living. This gave spectators a choice of reactions. From vicarious appreciation through imitation to moral condemnation. In Lennon's case the reaction was unanimous. Despite everything the star comes across as vulnerable, as a victim. Just like you and me.

In our society the sudden demise of a man of fame and money, the one in a million with the chance to really live, to survive without working and have anything they desire (or so it appears) is seen as a tragic waste. Yet isn't it galling to think that people who habitually write off so much of their time and potential as a loss and do nothing about it should recognize the loss of something they barely knew was happening: the colonisation of their minds and desires by a culture built on commodities.

In the deathly hush that follows the rise of capital, its dominion over our daily lives and its animosity to any real form of community one point is clear: the greater the silence the more records sold. The news of Lennon's death dominated the media completely. In the gaze of the news machines the mundane becomes portentous and the human banal. The victim signs an album cover - it becomes his "death warrant". His last words were poignant - they made them into headlines [\[4\]](#). Soon after the shooting television stations reshuffled their programmes to screen tributes and archival footage. They had a captive audience - and viewers had a good excuse to stay glued to their sets.

The media people realize that an idol's death is positively their last chance to project his image. Indeed the heat of the competition to interpret his career should have stimulated their imaginations. Instead, because they understood so little, they had nothing to say. Caught with their pants down, the best they could do was to fart banalities.

The more articulate the readership, the worse the reporting. The best the commentators could do was to bray about the end of an era. Lennon's death matters. So it must be 'historic'. In so far as people's memories are soaked in music and evoked by music the death of the musician means the end of a groove in their own personal history. Unable to see the death that is their own they elevate the episode to 'historic' status. The one thing that everyone appreciates about death, namely its finality, turns into an imperative: He's dead, it's too late, now look at what has been. Thus no one escapes nostalgia. The necessarily retrospective interest in the life of the victim becomes transposed onto the lives of the spectators while nostalgic sentiment justifies the current emptiness of life by fond remembrance of the opportunities and choices of the past. Today becomes an exile from opportunity. Today, the very moment when one can grasp one's history, is turned into the moment of untruth when the bemused stare

sees only what once was. When The Times declares that Lennon's death "commits to history the decade that so utterly changed British society" it is obvious how safe our rulers think such sentiments are. In the artificial community of spectacular grief each individual is called on to make a judgement. And each makes the same one. Okay, so Lennon's dead. It's a tragedy. A historic moment. Safe cliché, safe sadness. Why not sleep until the next sensation?

Then after the mumblings and the exclamations of the mass media come the plodding pallbearers, the considered opinions and weighty judgements of the weekly magazines and the monthly reviews. These scribblers of mediocrity had at least the advantage of time over the preceding hacks. It made no difference. Convincing proof that the most ridiculous trivialities spring fully fledged into minds carefully prepared by years of journalism. Unable to think, they resorted to necrocuisine. Each worm just had to have its bite and Lennon's corpse was pulled this way and that in a horrible tug of war as Lefties and Liberals tried to claim him for themselves. They all wanted Lennon to be their hero. Since the vile grubs had once dressed up his living body they assumed they could now possess his death mask.

It is obvious that the Lennon phenomenon is a very remarkable one. His unholy alliances with the music business did succeed in creating legions of fans who never knew him personally yet who felt his death intimately. Not, after all, such a common experience.

Pop music is both the most obvious and the most insidious form of the colonization of everyday life. How often do people say "I can't get this stupid tune out of my head"? Music delineates one social space where the commodity contemplates itself in a world of its own manufacture. The proud boast of the Jesuits as to their ability to bring up fanatical religionists pales besides capital's ability to train up slave consumers, people willing to buy what they think a product represents as well as what it actually is. And it's music that catches them young. That sense of loss experienced by Lennon fans does after all have a grain of lucidity: you didn't realize just how far the Beatles had been crammed into your skull until one of them was wiped off the earth.

Lennon grew up in the fifties. He grew up cocky and discontented. At fifteen he first heard Elvis and his subjective rebellion discovered its objective expression. So he got into rock & roll. At that time there was enough genuine revolt in rock & roll to obscure the inherent tendency of the music business to recuperate, nullify, and return this revolt to the consumer in the shape of an image, a representation of reality. At first the Beatles were one of the best live bands ever. There was enough that was raw and harsh and earthy about the Liverpool clubs and Hamburg dives to make rock music seem the vehicle for expressing revolt against authority, conformity, and blandness. Then their manager invented Beatlemania, the first and most fatal compromise with their real desires: "We began to sell-out when we let Brian Epstein manage us. He put us into uniforms - suits, and we would go on and smile and do twenty-minute acts of our hits. By the time we got to London all the rough edges were being knocked off us. I knew what we were doing, and I knew the game. So I let it happen. We were selling out all right, right from the moment we began to get really big." Lennon's first mistake was to put fame and fortune before personal satisfaction.

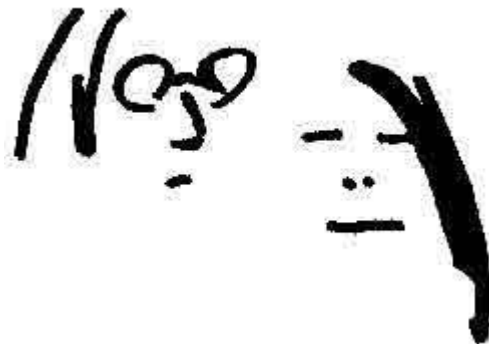
By the mid-sixties a society that was changing by making everything seem possible needed a vanguard for whom everything was possible. Enter the Beatles. Never before in history had any group of people such freedom from constraint. Never before was anyone so famous yet so lonely. Freed from the hassles of survival they quickly became

trapped by the very image that guaranteed their success. As anti-authoritarian wit became fashionable Lennon's subjective attitude discovered the objective conditions for it to flourish. At the same time, the logic of popularity brought with it censorship. Lennon in particular was not allowed to say anything that might tarnish their image as lovable mop-tops. Never before had anyone been loved by so many people whilst being so isolated from society. The Beatles escaped pop culture by getting into the drug scene. In order to get out of one kind of image they rushed into another. Lennon became one of the Pied Pipers of acid. The result was a confused and divided public. This was exacerbated when Yoko replaced the Beatles as Lennon's love object. The Two Virgins turned on John's past public image and destroyed it. This itself was a public performance. Then they got into avant-garde art. Only to encourage widespread hatred. Since Yoko's advent meant the end of the Beatles Lennon was free to become the Clown Prince of Peace. By 1971 they'd had enough of being misunderstood by their British public. So they fucked off to New York.

The experience of public adoration and public hatred gave Lennon a partial critique of pop stardom: "One had to completely humiliate oneself to be what the Beatles were, and that's what I resent. I didn't know, I didn't foresee. It happened bit by bit, gradually, until this complete craziness is surrounding you, and you're doing exactly what you don't want to do with people you can't stand - the people you hated when you were ten." Lennon had tried to use the spectacle to communicate his ideas but only succeeded in getting his fingers burnt. What he and the thought of the times had in common was that they were critical of society without being critical enough. No one can understand the society of the spectacle unless they are determined to fight it.

So what did Lennon and the Beatles represent? What of our own past died with him? The promise, the hopes, the excitement of the sixties, adolescent grievance and political idealism, the revolt against authority and boredom, the search for truth, the desire for freedom, the longing for mystical experience... Perhaps. One thing is sure. John Lennon was many different things to different people at different times for different reasons. To the degree that you identify your personal history with his public history, to that degree will you feel his loss. Look to thyself.

What made Lennon such a superstar was that he had enough intelligence and cynicism to communicate his intelligence and cynicism to the public. What made him attractive was his honesty [\[5\]](#) and cleverness. Because he really was honest and clever he was able both to understand what was happening and to use the very qualities that made such understanding possible for the construction of his image. Hence he also appeared both honest and simple, cynical and intelligent.



*In the early 70s Lennon and Yoko Ono had an exhibition in the West End of such*

*intricately executed line drawings as this, selling for Bond Street prices. A few party poopers had the sacreligious idea of copying these drawings and selling them outside the exhibition for half a penny. The cops threatened to arrest them - and they were forced to move on. And quite rightly so.*

The Lennons spent the seventies posing in art, trying out therapy, playing politics, and role-swapping. A couple of bad records and some pretentious political propagandizing helped Lennon once again break with his outworn image. But the superstar remained isolated: "The king is always killed by his courtiers, not by his enemies. The king is overfed, overdressed, overindulged, anything to keep the king tied to his throne. Most people in that position never wake up. They either die mentally or physically or both." New York and Yoko soon woke Lennon up. He began to use his qualities to make his image human. To make the unreal realistic. Every stunt and every hype was now geared to communicate his growing humanity.

Lennon was more than just another star. He was an ultra superstar. Most stars settle for being super, the ultra wants to be human again. Since being a star necessarily means that people don't believe in you, can't take you completely literally, know that you're an image and an actor, they manage to maintain a certain crucial distance. In most cases this distance is vital because without it the whole imposture would stand revealed. Only the ultra dares to try and bridge this gap. After years of hard slog Lennon managed to carve out a free space for himself. Only to find that this real freedom confirmed his separation from the rest of our unfree society. His hotel was another prison. From it he aspired to full credibility. He wanted to communicate, to make friends, but all he could do was to propagate strangers.

The genuine community is the place where private needs become visible. Lennon's belief in music as the popular means of self-expression, as a means of real communication, made him make his private life public by singing about it. This publicity of privacy helped people imagine that they knew what he was really like and helped him imagine he was communicating directly. He appeared to have bridged the gap of separation. In reality, the opposite was true. For although the content of his music was personal the form in which it was conveyed remained spectacular and therefore alien. Because his communication was unilateral and because it was his subjectivity that dominated all that happened was an increase in separation. The fake community is a place where the visible needs of the few colonize the invisible public, who are glimpsed only when they pay at the cashdesks.



*Lennon giving the IRA and Trotskyism a chance  
("Red Mole" was a well-known Trot paper of the early 70s)*

If Lennon ever had socialist ideas they were in complete contradiction to what he did in practice. The practical effect of the form in which he communicated his ideas was often



the very opposite of those ideas. The net result of his activities was perfection of the art of selling art. And to boost his income. The working class hero who makes it sells the idea of 'making it' in this sick society.

The Lennons were astute business people as well as charity revolutionaries. They understood about money making and they knew very well about their role in the production and distribution of dreams and images. Since their critique of the spectacle was partial not total they spread ideas like Peace and Love in a way that ensured that they were more often consumed rather than acted on. Idealistic slogans are easy to sell because they appeal to millions who want social change without the trouble of struggling for it. For them, the end of separation and loneliness can be achieved simply by buying a record player. Being surrounded by voices chanting All You Need Is Love or Give Peace A Chance becomes the surrogate that prevents you from experiencing either peace or love. Having successfully smashed his previous self-images Lennon was able to savour some of the real freedom available to the rich anti-hero. So he retired to enjoy his good fortune. And to start a family. Eventually however the lure of the limelight proved too strong. He wanted public vengeance on the scoffers of the early seventies. So he mobilized all the usual media manipulations to launch his new album. At the start of the eighties he pip pip and toot tooted his way to make a comeback and to meet his comeuppance.

Spectacular death tends to throw up an obligation for us to think that the dead man was a great guy. Remember how difficult it was to criticise Churchill when he snuffed it? Or Kennedy? Yet how is it possible to respect a guy naive enough to think World Peace could simply be wished into existence? How is it possible to be impressed by a guy who wasted so much of his time and energy in creating images of himself for sale to an audience of gullible consumers? Yoko Ono summed up the utter vacuity of the whole business in a statement issued soon after the shooting: "John loved and prayed for the human race. Please do the same for him." Nice advice from the water baby who dishes out charity money to the wives and widows of New York pigs. Meanwhile, the idol becomes transformed into a martyr. Saint John of the Commodity. As record sales rocket religion creeps in to ease the transaction, to lull the senses.

Not one voice in the babble dares prick the bubble. No one says what a pop star actually is. Pop stars are people who exist not for themselves but for others. To whom they always appear as images. They thrive in this society because they are star commodities, and they help sell a whole culture. As celebrities they show off various types of life-style. They are valued in terms of the quantity of their spectators and the quality of their imitators. They are agents of the spectacle and their social effect is to reinforce as well as to distract people from the miseries and alienations of capitalism. Modern music creates slaves with smiles on their faces. Harold Wilson was being disarmingly candid when he pointed out that Lennon was given the MBE for "getting the kids off the streets." Make no mistake: music is an open prison. The pop star is a cop star.

"If you stay in this business long enough it will get you in the end." As so often happened Lennon said better than he knew. The irony of his extraordinary death arose from the victim's active contribution to his killer's motiveless motivation.

It is said that Mark Chapman is insane. He appears to have believed that he was John Lennon. This is everywhere regarded as an aberration. Yet isn't the entire music business, the whole of modern culture, built on precisely this kind of identification?



Doesn't the fan want so much to be a star? And isn't it exactly this need and the fantasies it inspires that lie at the root of the sense of loss felt by millions of fans? Chapman simply took things to extremes. He shot down the albatross because he believed he could fly. Lennon's fame took years to fabricate, Chapman's was instantaneous. Not content to consume Lennon at a distance, he wanted to be him. Those who take the spectacle literally smash its literal illusions. Lennon was shot by a member of his own society. The society that never took his dream of World Peace seriously spawned a man who took its illusions for real. The difference between Lennon's acorn and Chapman's bullet is that between the idealistic and the practical. Lennon had imagination but no method, Chapman was practical but stupid. Lennon's aim was vague and fuzzy, Chapman's we know about.

The international community that discovered itself in the wake of Lennon's death was both a real community and the illusion of one. It was real in so far as real emotions, needs and reactions were shared, felt, and talked about in common. It was illusory in that it was temporary and it was temporary because it had no social basis. Or rather, its social base was one which precludes genuine community. Capitalism creates separation and spectacle every single day; just occasionally it dishes up a counterfeit community [\[6\]](#). In their certainty that everyone shared the shock of Lennon's death people manufactured a delusion. Life seemed suddenly to have changed. The next minute/ hour/day they realized that life was as alienated as usual. Nothing had changed.

After the blood comes the spilling of ink. No one who interpreted the episode, whether they wrote for The Sun or for Marxism Today, could afford to reach the clearest and firmest point of view. They were not harsh enough about Lennon just as Lennon was not harsh enough on himself. All chose merely to reform the spectacle. The same social system that used Lennon's talents also uses theirs. And for one purpose: to perpetuate itself by inverting the truth. This single fact makes all the obituaries profane. My contempt for the heartless experience of spectacular mourning is at once a demand for the re-creation of real community and face to face experience. Are the times really so bad that people's innermost needs are engaged by the shameful show of spectacular death? To tear away the veil of mystification is to expose the moment of truth in this episode. Persuading people to give up their illusions about their illusions is the same as urging them to fight those conditions that require illusion. People should strive to seek their true reality, to abandon the consumption of appearances, and the worship of non-persons who seem so personable. People must learn to bury Lennon not to praise him. It is not just a question of "Imagine no possessions" but one of imagining (and living) without mass produced music. The songs of capitalism must one day be drowned in the roar of its enemies, those who desire to live not merely to consume. In order to make the world dance one must first turn off the music [\[7\]](#).

*"I like the Walrus best," said Alice, "because he was a little sorry for the poor oysters." "He ate more than the Carpenter, though," said Tweedledee."\**

\*Lewis Carroll's *Through The Looking Glass*. When Lennon sang "I Am The Walrus" he was sadly unaware that in Carroll's allegory the Walrus was capitalism and the oysters slave consumers. (Footnote in original text).

**Postscript to "Death of the Walrus", January 2004**

John Lennon was killed at the beginning of December 1980, and the first draft of this text was completed in the following 8 weeks. We have decided to put it out on the website because it's the best and most concrete critique of the dialectic of star and fans that we've ever seen, and was read by fairly few people. It's a great example of the dialectic of the analysis of the personal, the specific and the social applied to an attack on a precise recent global event. And, without wishing to detract from its specificity and timeliness, some of it was lucid and general enough to be applicable to the death of Princess Diana, almost 17 years later.

Obviously the text has its faults. In particular it's sometimes irritatingly over-stylised to the point where, on occasion, the way the author writes gets in the way of what he wants to say, distracting from its content (on the other hand, occasionally the florid style illuminates the content). We also have a few disagreements with some of this content, which we have criticised in the form of numbered footnotes throughout the text. The photo of John Lennon as a kid was in the original text; the other photos, along with their captions, are ours'. The two quotes at the beginning are from John Lennon, which the author, implicitly, turns against him.

## **SAMOTNAF FOOTNOTES (2005)**

[1.] *The implication here is that if we know someone face to face then we have good reason to feel grief, whereas it really depends on who they are and our relation to them, not whether we know' them or not. Much face to face contact is alienated, role-bound and hierarchical anyway. And people can have good communication, through writing for example, with people they've never met.*

[2.] *Whilst we have no concern for rich strangers on the other side of the planet who die, the killing of someone in an uprising, for example, does move us. Generally their names and most of what they've done are completely unknown to us, but we recognise them in their class antagonism, whereas the death of someone who fundamentally reinforces and upholds this society leaves us cold. Likewise, we may well be touched by the death of someone whose life and ideas inspired us, even though we never knew them personally. Or even of a child starved to death by this sick world.*

[3] *This is a pretty dubious abstraction and doesn't really mean anything. In fact, what brings people together are common interests, needs and desires: whether these interests, needs and desires are imposed hierarchically and/or haphazardly or are consciously chosen (within a world that has not been chosen, of course) is the more essential question when looking at any particular situation.*

[4.] *His stunningly revealing last words were "I've been shot".*

[5] *Honesty' in this society means recognising one's contradictions without struggling to oppose their basis in this society, which, in the case of celebrities, would mean undermining their super economic hierarchical security within this shit world, unlikely outside of a massive social movement showing up the stupidity of their role; without this, such honesty is inevitably self-contradictory and hypocritical.*

[6] *Capitalism constantly throws up counterfeit communities (ethnic, religious and national identities, families, cults, communication based on common consumption tastes, etc., etc.) and entices people into them the more the struggle for the creation of a permanent socially based community is repressed. Looking back, it seems that those communities of struggle developing at about the time this text was written (e.g. the riots and strikes in the UK, Poland, South Africa*

and elsewhere) were indeed just temporary, even though they were for something which would have a real social basis., a struggle which many believed could be sustained. Communication/community can be genuine, even if temporary.

[7.] Doubtless this is pedantic, as are many of these footnotes, but if we take this literally, it implies a very ascetic, purist rejection of forms of expression simply because they have been transformed into commodities. On this basis one could reject all reading and writing because most "writing is pig-swill" (Artaud). Or refuse to talk or listen because chat shows are numbing deformations of genuine conversation.

### John Lennon in bed with Jimmy Carter



The working class hero with one of the niggers of the world(\*) giving today's Nobel peace prize winner a chance at the post-inauguration gala of President Jimmy Carter, January 1977. Strange bedfellows. Carter went on to arm the Indonesian government which insured that War is over - along with everything else - for hundreds of thousands of East Timores, and later helped set up the precursors of the Taliban - the Mohajadeen, whose most famously pacifist fighter was that other working class hero Osama Bin

Laden. In those days it was easy to imagine there's no possessions or countries and no need for greed or hunger because a global confident working class was, not so easily, putting its life where its mouth was and attacking the material basis of possessions, countries, greed and hunger. Merely imagining or singing about it was a cop out, a way of avoiding all practical power to the people, a way of feeling a part of some vague movement without risking anything, and indeed supporting the world of politics and hierarchical power through passively pretending that merely imagining and hoping the world will live as one could absolve you from recognising the fundamental divisions of this world. Like Lennon, those pacifists who believed, and still do, that there's nothing to kill for (and maybe risk dying for) always end up supporting the forces that then go on to kill and force others to die for them. And didn't Dylan play at the inauguration of Clinton, the guy who invaded Somalia, bombed Yugoslavia and Kosovo and made several sorties into Iraq? It's obvious that anyone in such a position of power would become the world's biggest mass murderer; pleading ignorance merely shows up how intelligent these so-called intelligent celebrities are. We just want you to know we can see through your masks.

[↓](#)\*"Woman is the nigger of the world" is an old Lennon song from 1972.