

Fulcrum

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integrity and simulation.

In the opening of Baudrillard's seminal philosophical work *Simulacra and Simulation* (which sadly came in and out of fashion in architecture long before its time), the author describes the paradox of truth thus:

An army doctor is presented with a soldier identified as mad, and he must assess if the soldier is truly insane, or merely pretending (presumably in order to be discharged). Under normal circumstances, this question of truth and falsehood is easy to resolve, since the foundation of medicine is that illnesses can be diagnosed independently of patients. Doctors, after all, are able to identify *real* symptoms.

But what if *real* symptoms could be *faked* to such an accurate degree that the truth would be no longer possible? This *if* remains unspoken at the core of medicine all along, and even the possibility that simulations can trump reality leaves the whole nature of reality itself ambiguous.

The solution for the army doctor is as simple as it is odd: he says that if a soldier can fake crazy so well that he can't tell the difference, its because the soldier *actually is crazy* — thus incorporating the simulation into reality once more.

This parable of truth and insanity, of integrity and its simulation, serves as a powerful cautionary tale against a strategy that is gaining popularity amongst the radical political fringe, namely that of the Trojan Horse.

There is a terrific wall surrounding the ruling neoliberal elite, as impenetrable as Troy, and with an exclusion that is absolute. Desperation and lack of opportunity characterise the condition of the populace left outside — one that has largely come of age during the Era of Austerity (and who perhaps also remember the Age of Terror that preceded it). Faced with the very high probability of unemployment, poverty, debt, insecurity and scarcity, one can see why the idea of the Trojan Horse seems attractive: it leaves in tact the moral righteousness of the agent, while allowing them to effectively (and safely) buy into the status quo (or at the very least the lower classes of the elite).

The general idea of the Trojan Horse is that an individual or group presents itself as an entity sympathetic or supportive of some structure, but that in being accepted into that structure it fatally undermines it. Practical applications are fairly limited, for reasons that will be laid out — the dangers of the Trojan Horse strategy are so high that almost no adherents manage to get past the first stage. What are frequently called Trojan Horse strategies are in fact closer to the army doctor's parable than anything else.

In the act of Machiavellian manipulation, of disguise, of simulation (some kind of intensely extreme normcore) the entity loses concentration on their subversive agenda. They become middle-aged, they preen and become proud of their place in the structure (the same one they previously sought to demolish), and with this their political radicality ossifies like their arthritic joints — in short, they become first comfortable and then paralysed.

Imagine if, having secretly entered Troy, the soldiers burst from the horse, rushed to open the city gates, then forgot along the way they were Greek and not Trojans themselves, entered several homes and went peacefully into a deep sleep.

The Forgetful Greek is mostly what happens, mainly because of a lack of honesty on the part of the one wanting to embody the Trojan Horse — they attempt to deceive themselves, and in the process call into question the entire possibility of subversion.

What I am describing is not the sell-out, which is a different category of failure altogether (and which professes no radicality in any case). The failed Trojan Horse continues to insist on their subversiveness even when it is painfully obvious they represent the established order.

Rather than admitting that the drive behind the strategy had been in the first place an acute form of power envy, the phoney professes purity.

Power envy is not intrinsically a bad thing: the general desire to penetrate a sanctum of authority is a basic Darwinian compulsion. Otherwise there would be no elites in the first place. There are, however, two problematic aspects from the perspective of truth: firstly, in cases when power envy itself is dissimulated (this allows the social climber to quite innocently pull the ladder up behind them); secondly, when acceptance into the power structure is mistaken by the agent as the dissolution of that structure (as in the case of the middling sort who, upon being raised in status, no longer recognise their previous class at all).

One claim often heard is that the presence of irony is enough to preserve the distinction of truth and simulation. Yes, they say, I deployed a Trojan Horse for lulz, and now I'm #winning, but ironically. This is the poorest defence, and the most dangerous conclusion — irony as it exists today is a massive generator of ambiguity about truth. It blends and blurs reality, and it allows the speaker to uphold the status quo while at any moment (if attacked) being able to defend themselves as just joking. It leaves statements in a simultaneous quantum state of both (or n/either) zero and one.

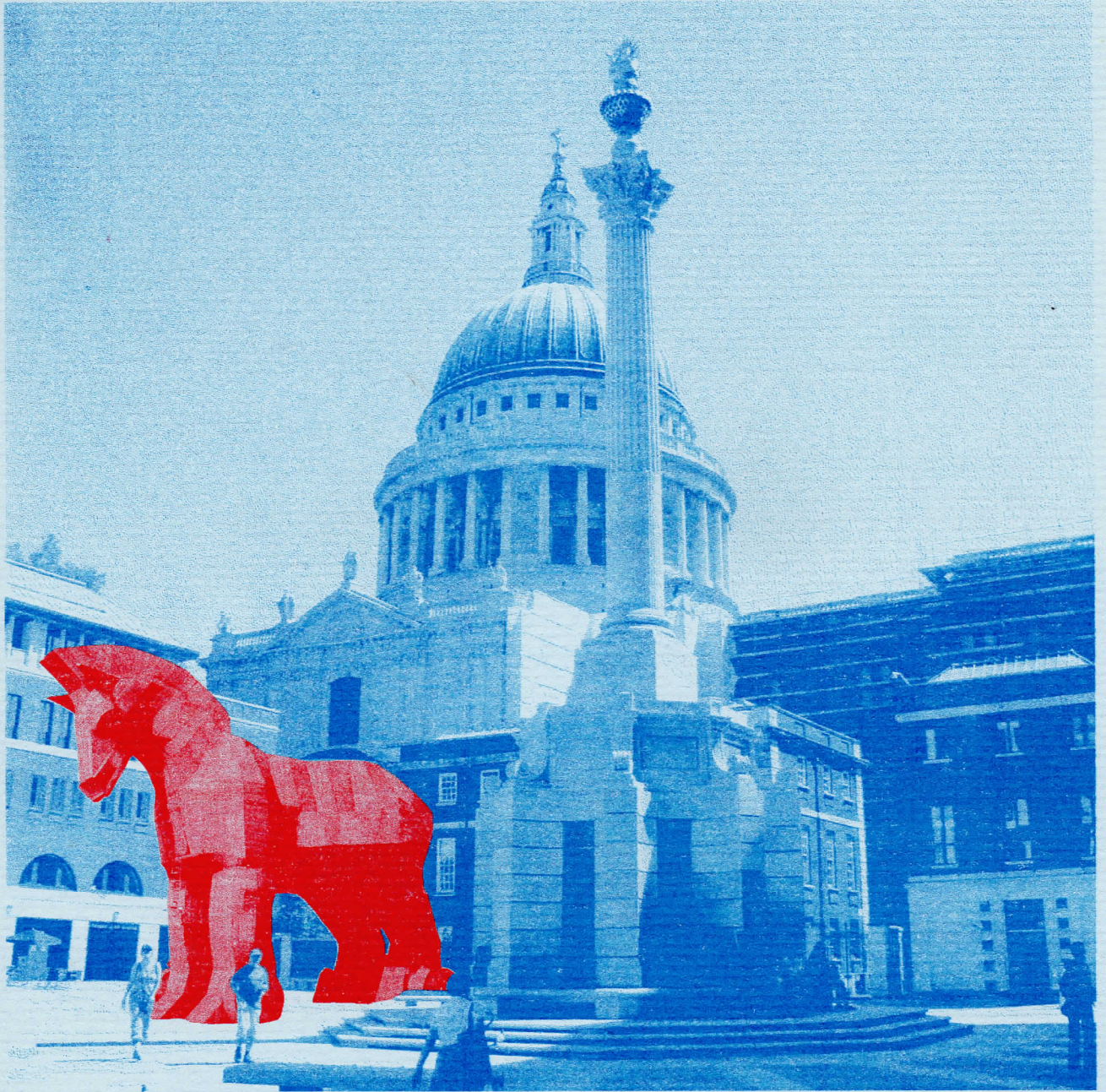
The absence of specificity is uncharacteristic of the Trojan Horse. From the moment the idea was conceived, through its careful development, construction and execution, the final victory was written into each moment. There was never a general desire (as with Darwinian power envy), but only a precise goal. This is how we can discern the Trojan Horse from what will probably become the Sell-Out or the Forgetful Greek. Further, the metrics of that goal are vital: what is the tangible product of your strategy? What do you hope to achieve? If we follow the logic of late-capitalism (neoliberalism), unless an outcome can be measured it cannot have a value — therefore how is a Trojan Horse designed to unfold? What is its timescale, sphere of influence and audience? How can one tell if it has been successful? The absence of these parameters is a straight path to hell, since it is worse to betray your beliefs than struggle honestly against an impossible condition.

A defining memory of our childhoods was the moment the first plane hit the North Tower. It was so shocking precisely because it was a logical impossibility — a transgression of the universe so profound it retrospectively restructured all of human history. Weaponise your intellect like they weaponised those airliners. That is to say, return a violence to the logic of a system until it cracks.

Of course, the scale of the Twin Tower attacks was completely wrong, we do not want to bring down the entire West, but only restructure the way it distributes resources in society. We must condemn actual violence of this scale only because 9/11 was an act of destruction lacking any proposition about an equitable alternative. Nonetheless, the event is without doubt the most powerful Trojan Horse of this century: we see the continued march of ISIS towards Bagdad and across Syria as a direct consequence, which has given the West the impression that wars of the 21st century cannot be won. We are reluctant, introspective and disordered. Our society, economy and politics is broken — possibly irreparable. So. When it comes to our downfall as Caesar said, the die is cast. We can only hope that the society that emerges from this period of intense struggle is a fairer one, and that is what no means certain at this point.

This is the general struggle, but we must be extremely precise about our targets and modus operandi.

Corporatise yourself — if only to, at a stroke, better exploit your commercial potential while divorcing your bureaucratic social-media slave from what remains of your soul. The Sell-Out confuses their image with their self, and sees no distinction between the two. The corporatised individual, however, creates for themselves a false persona, an idol, that can be battered by fortune without damaging the ideology of their core. This act of self-corporatisation, which is the division of the true self from its corporate avatar, is the only means to achieve a Trojan Horse strategy today.



Memories of Occupy (Paternoster Square).