

*If you're describing a kind of crisis scenario, what should we do?*

I'd say we're doing a lot already. For some years we've been preparing ourselves for crisis and presaging its eventual occurrence by developing a code of crisis in art, fashion and music -- a contemporary form of dark new romanticism; call it neo-goth if you like -- though I don't think I would. Anyway, if that code wasn't already firmly established, I don't believe we'd even be in a position to recognize, describe and experience the current situation of recession as a crisis. We'd simply lack the terms to do so. Naming a crisis as such already demonstrates that we're defining and controlling the moment. To give a name is to sign a contract, and our contract with contemporary culture is now signed in the name of crisis. That's the cipher we've chosen to interpret -- or *encrypt* -- our experience of the present moment. And so I believe we're already proficient in the use of that code. We know it off by heart ... but still rehearse it to initiate ourselves further.

To be honest, as a European I'm always amazed, and even slightly jealous, when I see how *fast* U.S. culture recodes its codes to prefigure and frame the near future. Where I come from people put styles and ideas through the mill for what seems like forever, and whatever survives the grind might be reasonably sound but deeply unattractive -- to the point that there seems to be no reason to even bother immersing yourself in the experience these styles and ideas may have once enabled you to have. Don't get me wrong, I *like* it fast. I admire the agility of U.S. culture to recodify its codes, re-encrypt its ciphers, revisit, recycle and revivify its icons in different incarnations. Just start your tour of the Whitney from the "old" collection on the top floor and you'll see what I mean. It's the image of a country and culture overwritten, reconfigured, recast and recoded ceaselessly, insistently, and most of all, *performatively*. It's a constant performance of recodification. And it's a great performance. The rest of the world lines up at the box office to go and see it.

*Do I sense a trace of irony in what you're saying?*

Um, yeah maybe ... but I think only because the situation is *inherently* ironic -- by which I mean that although I'm aware of producing and consuming a rapidly codified culture while being endlessly attracted to it, I still feel slightly uneasy about its codes. It's not a question of morals, really. I don't mind being corrupted and consumed by ciphers that promise attractive experiences. After all, how else would you learn about what you feel and think? Still, there is a certain discomfort with regard to how that codification works here. Speed is not really the problem. Okay, you might argue that the fast pace at which all this happens is set by the market, because as long as it is still thriving it needs products to circulate -- and that, if people took a bit more time to think about what they are doing and what they actually want, the products that they would eventually put out would be coded differently; or not products at all. Then again, so much of this so-called extra time, or "non-productive" time, taken tends to be consumed by the anxious desire to figure out *the right thing* -- the *legitimate* thing -- to do. AS IF YOU COULD EVER WORK THAT OUT IN ADVANCE -- sanctifying your cause *a priori*, categorically and unassailably. In the end, I think, it's better to get your hands dirty and deal with the challenge of the code.

If there *is* a problem here, though, I think it's more related to the absence of other voices in the process of codification. For sure, there are a fair number of different voices, but most of them speak with familiar accents. Again, don't get me wrong: I *like* American accents; I love it when Americans sing their own songs and, even if I can't make out every line, I've learned to experience my emotions in the key of these songs. It's just that I also long for different voices, or a difference *in the voice*; that is, for a mode of address which is not merely *one*, but differentiated to the point where it is about to disintegrate and become many -- and which consequently does not address *me* as one, as belonging to this one culture, but rather as a subject, citizen and voice of different cultures and languages, a subject committed to UNBELONGING.

So I'm thinking about a MODE OF ADDRESS here -- and I do actually see it very occasionally formulated in certain works -- fractured and improvised and not bothered by the overriding code of certified production value. A mode of address that allows different voices to resonate in its articulations in the raw form of citations cut out or xeroxed and glued to the page, or scanned in to stick out from the flow of scripted speech. Of course, there are and will be codes and ciphers at play in this mode of address as well, but *more than one*, and they perhaps won't interlock to suit the mechanics of the decoder so that the message it spits out is as scrambled as the original transmission was -- and not in order to remain enigmatic, but because the emotional state which it encoded was truly scrambled in the first place.

*And what value would that have?*

Precisely none. For if there is one thing I believe we should be very wary of, it is of using the code of crisis as a tool to generate values we can supposedly bank on. Codes create certified values when they establish themselves, not because the secret at the heart of the cipher would be disclosed but because people agree to share the secret as a secret. This is basically how Marx explained the workings of the symbolic economy of Capitalism. *The value of the value of capital is essentially a secret that cannot be disclosed because, in modern times, the relation between the things we consume and the labour we invest has become abstract.* To become tangible this abstract relation is constantly re-encoded by Capitalist culture as a secret -- as a secret with the power to make us feel that the things we desire to have actually had a value in themselves, independent of the processes of production that create them. So in one sense, the whole operation of encoding is the simply that of a culture sustaining the illusion of THE VALUE OF VALUE by feeding the imagination with ever-new attractive secrets. If the secret today is to codify crisis in a way that makes it feel contemporary, this is precisely how the value of value is generated.

And so in the end -- or for now -- if we want to resist the drive towards the mere reproduction of value, the point is perhaps not to reject the act of codification and passion for the secret as such, but to *perform it differently*, with a different mode of address, one that interrupts itself before it arrives at a workable cipher and engenders the values that