

IN LETTERS OF BLOOD AND FIRE

Work, Machines, and the Crisis of Capitalism

George Caffentzis

Karl Marx wrote that the only way to write about the origins of capitalism in the 16th century is in the letters of blood and fire used to drive workers from the common lands, forests and waters. In this collection of essays, George Caffentzis argues that the same is true for the annals of twenty-first-century capitalism. Information technology, immaterial production, financialization, and globalization have been trumpeted as inaugurating a new phase of capitalism that puts it beyond its violent origins. Instead of being a period of major social and economic novelty, however, the course of recent decades has been a return to the fire and blood of struggles at the advent of capitalism.

Emphasizing class struggles that have proliferated across the social body of global capitalism, Caffentzis shows how a wide range of conflicts and antagonisms in the labor-capital relation express themselves within and against the work process. These struggles are so central to the dynamic of the system that even the most sophisticated machines cannot liberate capitalism from class struggle and the need for labor. Themes of war and crisis permeate the text and are given singular emphasis, documenting the peculiar way in which capital perpetuates violence and proliferates misery on a world scale. This collection draws upon a careful rereading of Marx's thought in order to elucidate political concerns of the day. Originally written to contribute to the debates of the anticapitalist movement over the last thirty years, this book makes Caffentzis's writings readily available as tools for the struggle in this period of transition to a common future.

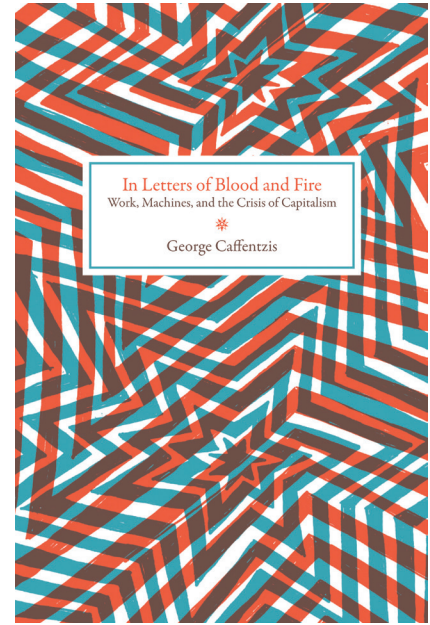
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George Caffentzis is a political philosopher and autonomist Marxist. He is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern Maine and a founding member of the Midnight Notes Collective.

ACCOLADES

"George Caffentzis has been the philosopher of the anti-capitalist movement from the American civil rights movement of the 1960s to the European autonomists of the 1970s, from the Nigerian workers of the oil boom of the 1980s to the encuentros of the Zapatistas in the 1990s, from the feminists of wages-for-housework to the struggle of the precariat for the commons. Trained as both an economist and a physicist he has taken fundamental categories such as money, time, work, energy, and value and re-thought them in relation to both revolutionary Marxism and to the dynamics of our changing movement. An historian of our own times he carries the political wisdom of the 20th into the 21st century. He is a lively and dogged polemicist; he dances circles around the pompous marxologist; with the passing of time his thought has grown in depth and increasingly tends to be expressed with pleasure and humor. The lever by which he overturns the world is light as a feather, and its fulcrum is as down to earth as the housewife, the student, the peasant, the worker. Here is capitalist critique and proletarian reasoning fit for our time."

—Peter Linebaugh, author of *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All*



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