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*"Phloriano Cursero, Kalio de Zeeshal, Makro par Fumer and Shut la Worth  
ISolate themselves for 120 days to violate and torture 46 virgin Ubuntu  
systems. The earlier lifes of Linux libertines and their secret perversions  
depicted in detail through those gory and bootable disk images."*

Excerpt from IRC-chat in #ubuntu-developers, December 2010

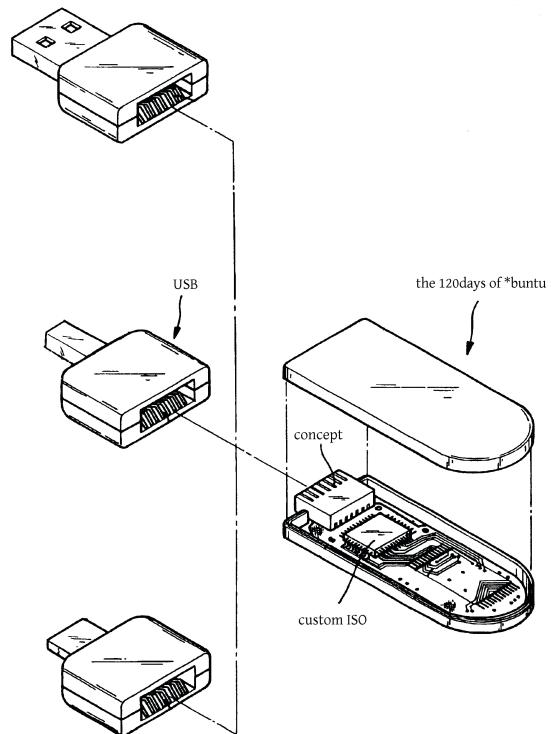


foreword

The 120days of \*buntu follows a DIY approach not necessarily towards one goal, but towards many OS (operating system) interpretations. It works from one source, namely the distribution code of the popular Linux/GNU distribution Ubuntu, and redistributes modified versions through the Internet and beyond. By cross-fertilizing, remixing and shamelessly making use of prejudices we create a collection of 120 essentially dadaistic yet humorous and at the same time useless but bootable Linux-like distributions.

The operating system in a modern computer represents an intimate interface for any user. Default systems are imposing so many rules and dogmas onto the user which make those systems very similar to our control-driven social environment. By breaking and modifying those rules, one can liberate himself and discover new facets of pre-determined paths, similar to strategies practiced in Situationism within urban environments. We envision the operating system as a contemporary replacement of urban space. Ubuntu, the most popular Linux distribution worldwide, has been chosen for its ubiquitous use and for its pre-configured nature, just alike Windows and OSX. However, what differs is that Ubuntu is open-source, meaning that any protagonist can adjust the system to her own visions and conceptual thoughts related to.

The 120days of \*buntu is an OS intervention.



notes

## Notes on 120days of \*buntu

Geoff Cox, 2011

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What kind of transgressions are imagined in the naming of this project? The 120 Days of Sodom, or the School of Libertinism, written by Donatien Alphonse François (aka Marquis de Sade) in 1785, famously depicts scenes of sexual violence and cruelty.<sup>1</sup> If operating systems act on the user as a form of violence, then are user interfaces similarly sadistic?<sup>2</sup> Are the alternatives offered here transgressive in line with de Sade's sense of the liberation of desire?<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the operative violence needs explaining a little more before engaging with how libertarian attitudes might exceed the longings of free/libre software development. Software, like language, is bound to the constitution of subjectivity,<sup>4</sup> and as such the user is necessarily defined by the operating system (OS) they use.

With the choice of Ubuntu, released as FLOSS (free libre open source software), the OS can be seen to tread a fine line between usability and the replication of proprietary forms, and thereby arguably misses the point.<sup>5</sup> This partly identifies one of the problems of free software development more generally, and its ready recuperation; that its very success is part of its problem. Moreover, radical sharing communities that have emerged through projects like GNU/Linux are not alternatives to capitalism but new forms that express its ability to absorb social innovation and pervert it<sup>6</sup> (capturing social imagination and desire<sup>7</sup>). Perhaps this is also what happened when Ars Electronica decided, in 1999, to award its Golden Nica not to an artwork but to the Linux operating system.<sup>8</sup> So what is the intervention here in terms of operating systems more broadly (of art, of politics, of the body, and so on)?<sup>9</sup>

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The point (if one is to follow the line of argument of Benjamin's "The Author as Producer"<sup>10</sup>) is that the producer should reflect upon their position within the production process like a technician, working at the level of the apparatus in order to transform it (and thereby transform social relations).<sup>11</sup> But has this become an orthodoxy these days, when alternative technical systems and creative activities seem to be released, then soon after effectively absorbed by free market ideology?<sup>12</sup> Taking de Sade as inspiration, the political struggle can be still characterised as between systems for liberating desire and mechanisms of control over the imaginary.<sup>13</sup> 120 days of \*buntu combines desire and imagination in this way, to open up new possibilities for socio-technical transgression.

1 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_120\\_Days\\_of\\_Sodom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_120_Days_of_Sodom)

2 Is our use of standard computer operating systems an example of masochistic desire, like organs without a body (making reference to Deleuze and Guattari, and their reference to Antonin Artaud)?

3 See Angela Carter's *The Sadeian Woman* for a libertarian feminist perspective on de Sade.

4 As Louis Althusser has described in his articulation of 'interpellation'.

5 See <http://distrowatch.com/table.php?distribution=ubuntu>

6 If the development of the Linux kernel challenges normative social relations, then the recognition of its recuperation is crucial.

7 Deleuze and Guattari might be further introduced here.

8 "Linux Torvalds Wins Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica", Linux Today, [http://www.linuxtoday.com/news\\_story.php3?ltsn=1999-05-29-003-05-PS](http://www.linuxtoday.com/news_story.php3?ltsn=1999-05-29-003-05-PS)

9 See Wizards of OS conferences, <http://wizards-of-os.org/>

10 Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" (1934). His "Critique of Violence" might also be a useful reference.

11 There's an essay by Josie Berry-Slater that makes similar connections.

12 For instance, social media largely appropriated free software development. Commons-based peer production should be also mentioned here.

13 Here I am also paraphrasing Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the pathologies of the post-alpha generation* (2009).



distributions