

# RETURN FIRE

*wide-ranging anarchist anthologies, submissions, translations & editorials since 2013, from the British Isles & beyond*

**'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping At All"'**  
(social reproduction, COVID-19, cybernetics)

**An Update from the No TAV Campaign & Thoughts on its Relevance for Stop HS2**  
(a comparative study for total resistance)

**'Everything is Sanitised, But We are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands'**  
& demolition, not abolition

**How the Left is Handing Over Protest to Fascism**  
& 'We Haven't Been Staying at Home These Days'

**A New Luddite Rebellion**  
(mythic predecessors, the gig economy & goading reaction to the 'interface revolution')

**The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis**  
(tactical analysis of the crowd in motion)

**The 5G Net**  
(the lynchpin of the new ("eco-")industrial expansion)

**The Garden Path**  
(re-enchanted forest & the post-agricultural mind)

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**Memory as a Weapon**  
(where has the personal been in the program of the Left?)

**'All That Wildness Names'**  
(to 'queer' this most popular of anarchic notions)

...and more!

## VOLUME 6, CHAPTER II

## WINTER 2020-2021



Rage

against

every

cage



# 'THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "JUST COPING" & "NOT COPING AT ALL"'



[ed. – Come the capacity, come the crisis. Whatever else can be said about the world-wide restrictions that a huge part of the global population has been subject to for as much as a year now, it seems clear that such restrictions can only be viable due to the extensive system of cybernetics (see the supplement to **Return**

**Fire vol.3; Caught in the Net**) that the current form of capitalism has been shifting its weight upon. The nexus of techno-sciences and research projects bringing life to the supposed Fourth (and even Fifth) Industrial Revolutions is being announced, by both its advocates and its critics, as seizing the greatest leap forward imaginable under the guise of problem-solving for a population terrified by the invisible virus. But where does the hype over the dystopian surveillance, profit-harvesting and stupefaction capacities actually meet with their ability to solve the problems facing the system?

Here we publish words received in late autumn from a correspondent, revising their predictions that they made in the grip of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic as it was announced here in Britain in early spring. To be clear, this does not attempt to brush such concerns aside: though elites don't seem seriously worried about revolution, the most intelligent capitalists see the need for what's described below as a "new Fordism" to save their murderous system (and for those who associate the automobile magnate who gave that era its name with a more benign and socially-inclusive phase, let's remember he wasn't a saviour but efficient exploiter and Nazi sympathiser whose improved productivity gave rise to some of the more famous atrocities of the 20th century – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg98**). However, this piece reminds us of the nuanced relation between capitalists and the State; though clearly entities joined at the hip since capitalism was first widely adopted – as a State-subsidised activity on terrains and populations captured by the State – they do not always move as a unified block.

We're tired of being treated like 'conspiracy theorists' (even by those who we once thought understood that the State does not exist to keep us safe...) when we decry the unprecedented sociocidal policies of the lockdown regime, but we're also tired of premature claims that what we are facing is already a unified totalitarianism or fascism in the outmoded 20th century sense. Certain States – the US, for example – clearly passed up opportunities to seize more centralised executive power during the outbreak but instead allowed systematically-oppressed parts of the population to sicken and die off, compared to the centralised deployment of National Guard and other federal agencies during the uprising later in 2020 (see **The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis**). Clearly there are more complicated dynamics and histories at play. Our reading of this piece highlights the drastic need to intensify existing networks of mutual aid (decontaminated of the political appropriation of the term that the last 12 months have seen rise to) so as to rely on each other and not the system as – in symphony – we try to weaken and eventually bring it down with our attacks, blockades and subversion.]

My first reaction to lockdown was, this is it, the state will not give up the power it's grabbed, as that's the pattern from 9/11 and so on. But, we do have precedent for states going hardcore authoritarian (military rule etc.) then "democratising", such as when Britain later repealed some of the Second World War emergency restriction crap [ed. – introduced by the leftist Labour Party immediately upon entering government, awarding themselves "full power to control all persons and property"]. In retrospect it seems the scenarios I was expecting to unfold were a little over-pessimistic; I hope I'm not tempting fate here. I think there's some kind of dynamic between the capitalists and the state where the capitalists are sometimes fine with repression (especially to keep power) but other times are worried the state is getting too big a share of the pie or interfering with their own interests. The trouble is, this won't happen if the measures are part of the new regime of accumulation (cybernetic control as profit) or if the crisis is so deep that the capitalists are panicky and more afraid of revolution.

It's hard to see what the agenda is now – if the plan was to shock us with lockdown then introduce a less drastic "new normal" which people will celebrate even though it's worse than the "old normal", if it was a trial-run to experiment how people would respond to counterinsurgency measures [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg5**] and what systemic strains there'd be, or if it was just a massive fuck-up coming from too much securitisation (i.e., the impulse to use pigs to solve medical problems) combined with legitimisation-by-panic.

What I think happened later is that cracks started to show in the lockdowns, "compliance" went down and political resistance started to recompose. People stopped long-running movements for a month or so, then started again (in Chile, Lebanon, Hong Kong). The *banlieues* [ed. – *French suburban ghettos, often predominantly housing racialised people from former colonies*] exploded, then Mayday was marked in several countries, with very successful bike demos in Slovenia and flash-mob actions in Germany. Then there was the big anti-lockdown protests (US, Germany, Brazil) – my impression from articles and people I know is that they're organised by conspiracy theorists and libertarian rightists, pick up loads of fascists, but also attract anarcho/leftie types, Bernie Sanders voters, black people fed-up of pig stops and so on [ed. – see ***How the Left is Handing Over Protest to Fascism***]. There's also (ironically) a left-wing conspiracy theory going around which has the Koch brothers as masterminds behind the anti-lockdown protests and government back-to-work programs... worryingly similar to how the right uses George Soros, though nobody who's into it seems to see the parallel. Although it might be challenging for some to admit, I think that these protests paved the way for the anti-police rebellions after the murder of George Floyd [ed. – see ***The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis***] by showing that street-level resistance was still possible.

During the first wave of early 2020, governments *said* that they would worsen lockdowns in response to protests and "non-compliance" – but the reality is, every government has dropped or loosened the lockdown within a fortnight or so of revolts. In Britain there doesn't seem to have been much organised protest against it but the police were overwhelmed and at some point people were just ignoring non-compliance – on VE day<sup>1</sup> there were parties and raves everywhere, and pigs ignored them. They were in the media afterwards whining that it was a "losing battle". Then the government went down this new tack of loosening the rules but increasing fines – pigs

1 ed. – Victory Day in Europe; the end of World War Two on that subcontinent. In the UK, while media lauding those out with the Union Jack bunting at the official celebrations, little attention was on the actual elderly survivors of that capitalist war. As ruling-party politicians and social engineers in their service (such as Dominic Cummings) openly talked of what a waste of money it was protecting such economically-unproductive people, do-not-resuscitate orders blanket-allocated to many care home residents early in the pandemic without their knowledge; 25,060 patients were sent back to their care homes from hospitals between 17th March and 15th April, many of them already with COVID and a political decision like that in most of Europe placing care homes last on the list for medical aid; amounting to a government-endorsed euthanasia program.

redirected from checking motorways and day-trip spot to attacking parties and the like.

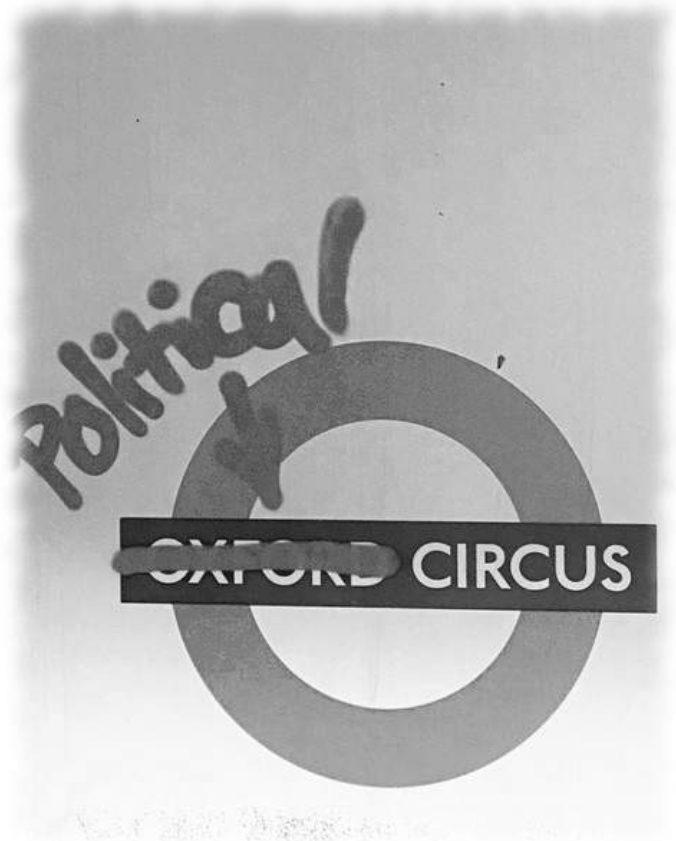
**My big fear is a new cybernetic totalitarianism,<sup>2</sup> kinda like permanent lockdown, but for some reason I feel the lockdown has backfired in certain ways, the system isn't ready for this kind of transition, because it can't sustain (social and ecological) reproduction by itself.** I think the reasons I'm feeling this, are the lockdown has not been extended indefinitely, it has not "beaten" the

2 I've not pinned down exactly what the difference is between totalitarian and other statist models. There's a few things which seem to come together in regimes of this type: attempts to deny all political space to (radical) opponents, to absorb everything into a single social machine, to reduce the autonomy of different social subsystems to a minimum or zero, to monopolise the production of emotions, and to close open spaces and shut down the "social principle" as Kropotkin calls it. This is different both from the democratic/liberal approach of trying to contain, exploit and recuperate social processes, and the cruder authoritarian approach which centralises political power and neglects social power. I've been witnessing a slippage towards a totalitarian model over the last 15-20 years, corresponding to the loss of space for creating open spaces and autonomous zones (even non-political ones), the corrosion of non-incorporated social connections, the intensive regulation of public space, the growth of a police-state and surveillance-state, the reduction in the range of permitted dissent, and a creeping "inwards" of counterinsurgency/criminalisation towards less and less "extreme" tactics and beliefs, and also the penetration of these kinds of authoritarian ways of being into everyday life at a deeper and deeper level (people snitching each other for petty stuff for example, and behaviourist pop-psychology). The way I'm thinking about it at the moment is: statist societies contain some percentage of anarchy/"social principle", and the percentage relates to the difference between normal statism and totalitarianism (and as a continuum, of course there's also slippage, slow transitions, borderline cases). It's hard to pin down, but I really feel there's been an enormous loss of spaces either of "permitted difference", places power can't reach, and "margins" *inside* the system. Anyone who wants to work with/inside the system is straightaway forced into compromises which reduce them to cogs, and anyone who doesn't is treated as an enemy or a criminal. To a degree that's always going on, but it seems to be drastically sharpened now. In relation to historic varieties of totalitarianism, I think those involved heavy elements of Fordism, including a very strong state role in the economy, whereas current variants leave a lot more space for a cronyist/oligopolistic style of market economy (i.e., where private businesses are allowed to operate but the state chooses which ones get opportunities, meaning the private businesses are run by the "cronies" of the people at the top of the state). There's also a move from "hard control" to "soft control", heavy use of cybernetic nudging which is more sophisticated and less blatantly controlling. I think China is the most extreme form and other states are moving towards their model.

disease,<sup>3</sup> it has sped-up and worsened an economic crash, and protests – Black Lives Matter (BLM) and anti-lockdown – have resurfaced.

Here's three obvious problems the systems faces to any such transition – economic collapse (*unlike* WW2 which caused a boom) suggests they can't run a war/crisis economy with any degree of effectiveness; psychological collapse (around 50% in the North suffering severe problems) suggests they don't have ways to buck up the population and keep it functioning in isolation; and political backlash/fraying

- <sup>3</sup> I don't trust the infection statistics because they're too dependent on levels of testing and there's too many perverse incentives. Death figures are harder to fake though there's a lot of tweaking in both directions, but I expect they're more reliable over time. The mainstream messaging has been so focused on cybernetic signalling, full of U-turns and fast and loose with the truth, that it's really fuelled skepticism. However, in response to those who think it's all a big hoax, I find it quite unlikely it doesn't exist at all because there's so many surplus deaths. Sure, they could classify lots of flu/pneumonia/COPD [*ed. – another respiratory disease with symptoms similar to COVID*]/old age deaths as COVID and invent a pandemic that way but there should be a corresponding decline in those categories of death. I can't see the *cui bono*, the person who stands to gain. The main winner from the crisis would be China, but it seems perverse that they would release it on their own population. I also don't see the point in a bioweapon (another popular theory as to what COVID is) that kills a bunch of elderly and sick people and leaves military-age youths mostly alone. Also if it was intentional then the fallout has been badly mismanaged. If the point is to justify continual lockdown then the disease would be designed so that lockdowns work. This does not necessarily seem to be the case; Cuba brought in limited lockdown measures in April but no stay-at-home order. Tanzania – another country with a leader who refused lockdowns – claims to have defeated the virus "with prayer" (mass religious gatherings were encouraged); the infection rate is supposedly declining and there are only 412 deaths reported in the capital by opposition activists. Ghana focused on testing and has had 320 deaths. Kenya, which has a curfew, gathering ban and other measures, has had 1093 deaths; this includes a second wave worse than the first (which has not happened in Tanzania or Ghana). Of course we have to be a bit careful as these governments might lie about figures (but so do most of them: Washington state recorded several shooting deaths as COVID deaths recently). Sweden has higher deaths per capita than Norway, Finland or Denmark which some people are using to say lockdowns work; however, they also have fewer than UK, Italy, France, Spain etc. and at least half their deaths are in care homes (which were semi-locked-down); also none of the Scandinavian countries had full lockdowns. [*ed. – Note that these figures were as of early November 2020, so do not account for the current winter.*] Another article – called "Staying at Home" on eFlux – suggests there's a redistribution of risk going in a lockdown of the type we mostly saw. A big proportion of the workforce are still working, and these people are at increased risk of being



(BLM, anti-lockdown, intensified left/right violence) suggests they can't maintain the the sudden moment of Spectacular unity around this particular crisis for more than a few months. I think there's a lot of smaller problems as well: the ways various aspects of the social support system haven't adapted to lockdown and left massive gaps, the distrust/low legitimacy of governments, etc. And the ways particular local economies are collapsing because they were too dependent on particular markets, like tourism. I think the COVID crisis has partly tested the current state of cybernetic/4th-5th Industrial Revolution technologies in the same way WW2 tested Fordist<sup>4</sup> production, and whereas WW2 stimulated economic booms despite massive destruction and disruption of existing sectors (because of the new technologies and their rapid development and immense mobiliation), the COVID crisis has instead shown the limits of current technology in substituting

- infected before herd immunity is reached, because they're still active when everyone else isn't. So basically lockdowns displace part of the death figures from middle-class people onto working-class, black and precarious groups.
- <sup>4</sup> Fordism was the historical period of mass production and consumption based on a small but well-paid core group of assembly-line workers producing mass-market consumer goods; can be dated roughly 1930-1973. Keynesianism is a corresponding government economic policy which involves tax-and-spend to stimulate consumer demand, and interventions to offset "imperfections" in markets (eg. nationalising natural monopolies). The New Deal was America's transition to Fordism; a new "Green New Deal" might initiate a kind of neo-Fordism.

for in-person activities (economic and non-economic) and becoming the driving force in the economy. I have a certain fear that China might leverage cybernetic control systems such as social credit<sup>5</sup> as the new cutting edge, but they aren't exactly *productive* technologies. The ecological stuff is not so obvious with COVID but there's the same strains in terms of heavily relying on things which are quite precarious and likely to run out or go into crisis. **The system thinks it's prepared for what to do if transport is disrupted or there's extreme weather events or particular resources are temporarily unavailable, but actually it's a false sense of security based on PR-based market fixes which collapse when they're actually needed.**

The system (capitalism/state) has always relied on exploitation of things outside it (but part-captured or plundered) on various different levels: reliance on natural ecosystems, reliance on subsistence economies or non-capitalist modes of production to underpin low wages, reliance on unremunerated labour (i.e. house-work and care-work under patriarchy), reliance on the "social principle" (mutual aid etc.) to provide meaning in life and meet everyday needs, (in Fordism) reliance on decommodified welfare systems to support the general functioning of the economy, reliance on informal economies to fill gaps in the formal system, etc; its reliance on "labour"

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5 ed. – "In China there is already a system in place that acts as a laboratory for the automatic management of behaviour: the social credit system, Alibaba's Sesame Credit. This is aimed at almost everyone - with the exception of people with criminal records - and is based on the scientific assessment of behaviour, providing you with an initial score that decreases following different daily actions you undertake. People with higher scores get benefits like being able to rent a car without a security deposit or having greater access to the healthcare. Those who end up on the "non-compliance list" can be banned from buying a plane ticket, building a house and enrolling their children in private school. Sesame Credit uses an algorithm to analyse things like the purchases you make, your level of education and the quality of your friends. People can only guess how to improve their individual scores and get rid of friends with low scores. In only two years, Sesame Credit had recruited 400 million people, taking over every aspect of their lives. For the company's CEO, the rating system "will ensure that the bad people in society don't have a place to go". In an interview, the Social Sciences Academy researcher who invented the social credit system states: "*It's the best way to manage society, it allows us to control financial risks and reinstate moral education [...] We need peace and stability and for everyone to live well, only then can we talk about rights. It's an excellent technological method. France should adopt our system to deal with social unrest, with social credit they wouldn't have had the Gilet Jaunes, they would have been identified from the start and there would not have been unrest*" " (Cybernetic Society & its World).

and "desire/use-value" might fall in the same box. It's always in a weird position of simultaneously depleting these other sources because it wants to eat up the whole world and make it capitalist, while also depending on them to not collapse from its own short-sightedness and unsustainability. Neoliberalism in particular (as theorised by Baudrillard, Virilio...) is particularly reluctant to admit this other level it depends on and prone to deplete it willy-nilly. If you look at the ideologies involved, there's a certain faith in the ability of the market to magically solve everything because of a bunch of quasi-theological axioms, and a certain faith in people's capacity to cope ("resilience") and find/make their own solutions. And so neoliberalism has actually been pushing harder and harder at people's emotional and economic absorption capacity, which is actually leading to more and more reliance on non- or semi-neoliberal everyday stuff that isn't generated by the system.

*So for example, let's say: working-class single mum who would have been on benefits 20 years back, now has to work three jobs and manages it because granny and her friends take the kids when they aren't at school. She also makes sure granny has food and isn't lonely. They're all gig economy jobs [ed. – see **A New Luddite Rebellion**], she also gets money from her boyfriend who's off-radar (in the 'shadow economy') and relies on her to get medicines; now suddenly there's lockdown and kids aren't at school, granny and boyfriend can't visit, two of the jobs are gone and the last she's struggling to work with kids around, granny can't take care of herself but daren't see anyone because of the virus, boyfriend's meds run out... **It's pretty clear how the informal social support networks, plus precarious market stuff, are actually the difference between "just coping" and "not coping at all".***

And all the energy which might otherwise have been put into the collective mobilisation has already been burned-up surviving day-to-day. If WW2 is an analogous situation then it seems there was a lot more reserve capacity to draw on in terms of family, social relations, state, environment. The big *economic* problem then (factoring out for now the horrors of the war itself, the death toll, and the attacks on civil liberties) was that workers had been conscripted and factories taken over for the "war effort", and also there was destruction resulting from the war itself, and food shortages because trade is disrupted. And it's at this point that the relative stability of social/ecological reproduction systems really saved the state. Women substitute for men in the labour force, the impact of rationing is mitigated by subsistence farming, children are sent to the countryside which back then was less overexploited,

local shopkeepers (who knew their customers) also became mediators in the rationing system and probably mitigated the harm it did, community groups become in effect the base level of the state, a whole “wartime spirit” is generated (no doubt exaggerated in propaganda, but still). Anything that’s not working, either the state steps in (eg. health) or communities solve themselves. I’m probably exaggerating how effective this all was, but I’m not sure there was the same kind of crisis of reproduction to the same depth as now.

People were already talking about “reproductive crisis” before 2020 and this COVID crash has been called a *massive* crisis of reproduction... partly this is about pre-existing depletion of the “public sector” (healthcare etc.) but also about what happens when the “social principle” – the everyday connections – are cut. First off the ways people are subsisting are mostly lost, the government has to pay furloughs or people won’t stay home. The food production system goes into crisis. Farms are short of temporary labour; processing plants keep operating, but everyone’s getting sick; distribution centres have shortages and don’t have the capacity to handle the sudden surge in online orders. The emotional support networks collapse, and the underlying psychological fragility is laid bare. And they’re struggling with really basic things, like the whole crisis in care homes, the difficulty getting enough tests, even the shortage of masks in the first months. It isn’t difficult to mass-produce masks but there just isn’t the organising force there to do it, particularly without popular input because of isolation.<sup>6</sup> **And the fact that the Leviathan now doesn’t have the power to make sure even its useful conformists are fed, housed, educated, healthcare-d, entertained, and kept sane<sup>7</sup> (it also can’t make sure there’s enough clean water or electricity, or that people are protected from natural disasters to some minimal degree) blows wide open the extent to which it was relying on a load of subsidiary systems it was depleting in the first place.** The state doesn’t have the capacity (partly) because everything’s been marketised and it doesn’t know how to do anything except repression any more, and the market doesn’t have the capacity because it’s short-termist and itself reliant on reproduction of labour-power and “resources” outside its own mechanisms.

6 ed. – In the end it came out that North Korean slave labour was behind the eventual influx of masks to the UK.

7 ed. – From Japan to India, suicide rates are soaring, while in the UK an October report found that eight in ten young people reported that the pandemic had made their mental health worse.

**I suspect the hope in the lockdown was for something like the WW2 effect where the combination of mass mobilisation with new technologies would turn it into a system-reviving wave of creative destruction, and all these new marketised cybernetic systems would step into the void and substitute for all the things which had been banned or which people were scared to do. People would pull together to transition to work-from-home; corporate distribution systems would step up to the block; people would use self-help techniques and home entertainment to boost their mood; the family or household would revive as a support focus; the government could then keep running the economy through indirect cybernetic nudges directed to corporate cronies who were satisfactorily meeting social needs. It didn’t happen because everyone’s burnt-out and the connections through which they’d otherwise craft their own responses were disrupted by the lockdown, and because corporations are built around indirect reliance on a bunch of other stuff.**

This is also a problem with a (current) recomposition of capitalism around surveillance and information technologies: the difficulty at that stage is that the cybernetic way of organising (including all these self-



Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire, during February 2020 floods

help things like CBET, CBT – competency-based education and training and cognitive behavioural therapy – etc.) is not actually able to handle wide spheres of social reproduction – it doesn’t protect scarce resources or the ecosystem, it’s not very good at health or education or agriculture, its social-control systems lack (perceived) legitimacy, etc. This *might*



mean no recovery along these lines, and/or no recovery at all; or it *might* mean something similar to Fordism: the state takes on the sectors cybernetics can't handle, and runs them in a decommodified way so as to sustain profitable activity in the other sectors cybernetics *can* handle (similar to mass production in Fordism: for all the radical rhetoric that schools or hospitals are mass-production facilities, nobody seriously tried to run them exactly like a factory, with deskilled labour and homogeneous turnaround, etc).<sup>8</sup>

*Partly the way it works:* the state, when it's pared back to its core functions (repression, military, policing), is an anti-production machine; it operates to freeze or break down life, to block and disrupt activity and energy, *not to generate it*. **A**

**certain**

**amount of this “devivification” stabilises capitalism by attacking social movements and slowing down change; too much kills the vital sources of capitalist exploitation.** Capital has a slightly different logic: it activates energy in controlled forms (work, consumption, Spectacle) then

<sup>8</sup> ed. – “Anticapitalists will often insist that the purpose of public education is to prepare workers. This is balderdash, a perfect example of dogma obviating reality. The vast majority of the lesson plan, once a pupil is literate and knows the most basic maths, is irrelevant to the tasks of the future worker, unless we count the abilities to follow orders, accept confinement, and complete meaningless tasks; however, those skills are required of all citizens, employed or unemployed, prole or petty-bourgeoisie. A typical worker has absolutely no need to know about ancient Egypt, William Shakespeare, or basic chemistry. No, the fundamental purpose of education is to civilize children, and a large part of this means filling their heads with the lies that are necessary to make them always view history and society from the perspective that privileges state power” (Worshiping Power: An Anarchist View of Early State Formation).



vampirises it. Too much devivification and there's not enough left to exploit; too little and the forces become unexploitable. This is why capital is constantly torn as to whether it wants to empower the state or views it as a threat *a la* Jefferson etc., and whether it would rather make concessions or repress. Capital will temporarily side with a strong state out of fear or weakness, but will often also try to claw back power which it has lost in the process. A complication: usually the concessions also come via the state, but

not via the antiproduction machine itself. Hence the constant dynamic of incorporating an included stratum who are incorporated in the state (directly or as insider NGOs, unions etc.) but which aren't pure antiproduction machines (they're more about trying to “harmonise” the state's functioning with the social

principle in particular manifestations, or to exploit the latter for the former).

When back-to-work started in May, economic effects of the lockdown were becoming clearer: 3% GDP drop in Germany, 13% industrial production drop in China (both figures as of that time). However, certain companies – the richest ones already, particularly tech and pharma giants – are profiting massively. I suspect there is a wealth redistribution going on, from some capitalist sections to others, and this may be why the political class (eg. in the US) are also so strongly split.

The elite seem particularly reluctant to make any concessions at all now. I think it's partly about faith in cybernetic and counterinsurgency techniques as well as repression, and also there's no way neoliberalism can continue but they're refusing to give it up. One of the reasons they can rely on repression is that we're in a long downturn of resistance since about the '70s, so on the one hand they aren't all that worried about repressing the workforce, and on the other, our



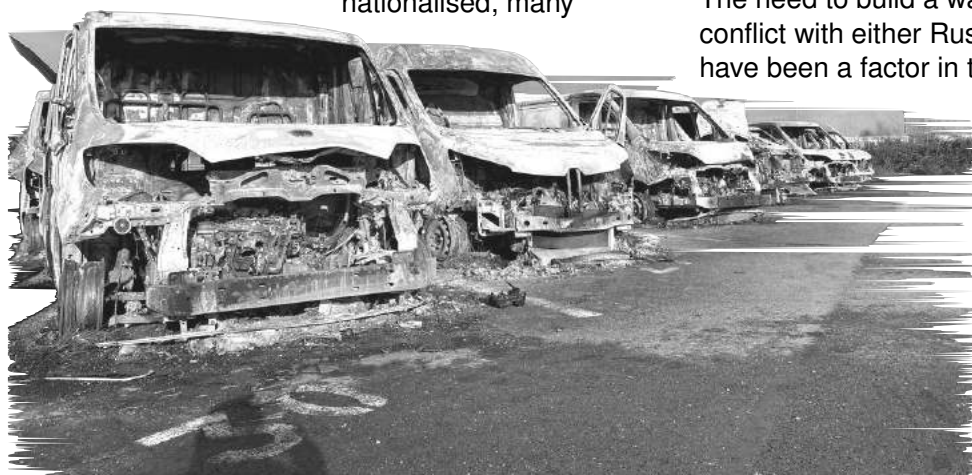
capacity to disrupt infrastructure is not so powerful.<sup>9</sup> What's partly shifted is that in the past states would give concessions in terms of *material/economic* provision (wages, benefits), *social rights* (legal squatting, university asylum), or *cooperation with movement leaders* (tripartite governance); today they mainly look to give *symbolic* concessions in terms of politics of representation, or what I think of as "negative patronage" – banning things they don't like, repressing people they don't like. They're relying on the pervasiveness of the cybernetic numisphere to make these mostly-illusory concessions effective, and to some extent it's worked.

We'll see post-COVID how economic rebuilding is attempted. It looks like governments are planning neoliberal business-as-usual but with a slow economic "reopening" so as to maintain control. A New Deal seems to be needed to get the system out of the crisis but there's a huge difficulty with states being unable/unwilling to grab the needed resources from transnational capitalists – I think that's another factor in the preference for repression. There's potential solutions (e.g. Tobin Tax; nationalising banks) but they would work better with global cooperation which at the moment seems unlikely. What *might* happen is that China develop a New Deal (which in some ways they already have: banks are nationalised, many

companies are state-owned, the state actively promotes certain companies, the currency is controlled) and outcompete everyone else until everyone starts copying. Alternatively the elites might just prove incapable of handling the crisis and the system will start to fall apart.

In this moment they seem reluctant to (maybe unable to) jettison neoliberal policies and launch a New Deal. This may involve stuff I said above about footloose financial capital etc., and may also relate to changes in the composition of the state itself (again, anarchists might not notice that the state itself changes in form while remaining in some ways the same; today the old bureaucrats, development technocrats and professional "experts" have been replaced by economists, spin-doctors and cyberneticians, and this compromises the state's *ability* to go the New Deal route). I think the New Deal and the rise of Fordism/Keynesianism was also tied-up with the power of socialist ideology in both its social-democratic and state-communist forms: basically the West had contained socialism through either recuperation (social-democrat betrayals in WW1) or repression, but the Soviets found their way out of the economic crisis via a planned economy, then the Nazis copied them, and finally the liberal regimes copied an approach which seemed to "work". The need to build a war economy in anticipation of conflict with either Russia or Germany might also have been a factor in the '30s, but I think in Britain

the reform trend only really kicked in during the war itself. The neoliberals spent the '80s-2000s trying to systematically close all the openings through which a quasi-socialist solution was possible "last time" (as a result of nearly losing power in the '60s/'70s I suspect), for example the various World Trade Organisation-type treaties (NAFTA, Trans-Pacific Partnership, etc.), the replacement of old-type technocrats with new-type, the Third Way<sup>10</sup> power-grab in the



Some of the twenty-seven Amazon vans burned the night before Christmas Eve 2020 near Bordeaux, France, disrupting their sensitive delivery chain; the same night in Italy an Amazon Locker for self-service point is smashed in Cremona ("You trade life, but aren't you dead?" reads the graffiti on the scene), and shortly afterwards anarchists damage van tyres at an Amazon depot in Philadelphia, USA, with the parking bay also left spiked (as is that of the local police headquarters)

<sup>9</sup> ed. - Perhaps a qualifying statement to make in this regard would be that capitalist infrastructure is in fact within almost everyone's grasp, spread out around the territory of urban or rural areas, running on always-on/just-in-time production and surprisingly open to sabotage (see *The 5G Net*); however, as well as lacking concentrations of antagonistic workers self-organising on the same scale that capitalism of previous centuries faced, disruptions to these infrastructures are very rarely tied in with attempts to reclaim the spaces left open with activities that actually meet our tangible needs in a non-capitalist sense.

<sup>10</sup> Third Way is a generic term for parties/regimes starting from left or centre-left parties, which claim to offer a "third way" between socialism and capitalism but in fact largely abandon socialist and social-democratic policies. Instead they embrace neoliberalism almost completely but try to combine it (rhetorically and with varying degrees of concrete policy input) with a wide range of progressive goals such as "equity", poverty alleviation, healthcare, gender equality, environmental protection, participatory governance, expansion of education, etc. As well as Blair

social-democrat parties, the marginalising of Marxism in universities, etc. etc.... Now, it does seem again this time that the countries which took vaguely socialistic approaches (Sweden, Venezuela, Belarus, Cuba, Iceland...) were more successful in handling COVID than the usual neoliberal regimes, but it hasn't attracted much coverage and doesn't seem to be causing a rethink. A big conflict with China or Russia (who have much more interventionist economies) might change things though.

**I think lockdown may have the same role in our time as war in the last Kondratiev-wave; if there's another international surge of revolt like that of 1968 it will be the anti-lockdown age the same way the '60s/'70s was partly driven by draft-dodging and anti-war sentiment.**

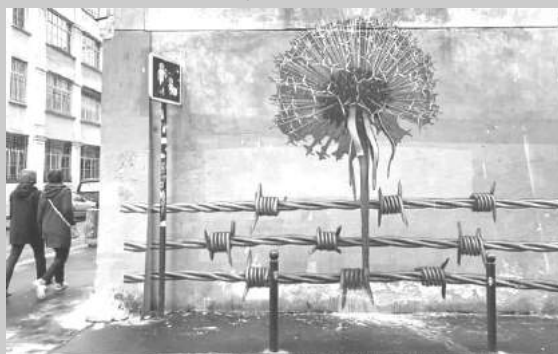


New 'Fresher' students at University of Manchester's Fallowfield campus, England, rebel in early November after being told to travel to begin the term's studies and promised in-person lectures, only to be confined to their halls to study online and fenced in without warning; the same day it was erected, all had been torn down by the young people tired of being policed, threatened and scapegoated for the crisis - followed by 200 going on rent strike (following the lead of 1,400 in Bristol, spreading to Brighton and Newcastle universities) and some occupying a disused accommodation block

and the Blairites, the Clinton regime in America and the right-wing of the Democrats are Third Way, as was the Hawke government in Australia in the 1980s, arguably the PSOE governments in Spain, and arguably Schroeder in Germany. The difference between the Third Way and the right-wing of social-democracy is mainly that social-democrats still pursue redistribution, job creation, nationalisation, demand-side stimulation and the rest of the Fordist-Keynesian toolkit, whereas the Third Way completely renounce these kinds of policies. In most cases the Third Way had to effectively steal the social-democratic parties from the social-democrats to get into power.

And now Britain's in a new national lockdown, just coinciding with the likely unrest following the US election. Supposed excuse is a rapidly increasing infection rate (NOT death rate – that's going up but slowly) which is probably caused by increased testing using tests with lots of false positives, plus massive infections at schools and universities when they went back (c.f. Freshers Flu). Not as strict as March (eg. support bubbles stay) but it's very blatantly hypocritical. Schools and universities stay open, so does non-essential work if it can't be done from home, but all kinds of everyday activities and most fun stuff are banned, no non-essential travel, etc etc. Presumably no protests. So two workers walking

“Distance has personhood, is as animate as the things it separates or draws near. Ask practitioners of the plastic arts, especially those who paint landscapes, and they will assure you that Distance has its own colour. By daylight, from far enough away, all things fade to a faint greyish blue. Or by night, to black, to umber. Many languages have precise words for this very colour, have concepts to express that person who emerges when the distant sea cannot be fathomed as distinct from the sky. Distance itself is the bluish-grey veil that substantiates the erotic pull and push of physics, the tension between form and force. It is the veil of separation that makes communion impossible, while at the same time it gives communion a further depth of intimacy. It is the darkness that gathers around the faintest candle, that its tiny flame glitter all the more brightly. The animate qualities of Distance have perhaps never been made so apparent as in the present age, in which social distancing, cloth masks, the gasping for air of oppressed humanity and suffocated nature, presage the unfolding of a new masque of anarchy. In old growth forests, immense trees come crashing down, branches splinter, and the whole canopy of things is shaken. From this instability, from this ruin, saplings, shrubs and all the mossy creeping creatures of the forest floor may achieve the conditions for their mutual thriving, and stretch in the sunlight now pooling out of gaps just opened in a sky of leaves.”



– *The Kiss of Infamy*

together to a non-essential factory job are breaking the law, but then once they're there, they might be working without proper protection in close proximity all day. Very clear that "essential" means capitalist. I'm worried about the cybernetic totalitarianism scenario again because it's very clear the system is rerunning the scenario but has learned from the first time round. The scenario they want to perfect is one where capitalist activity goes on as normal, but everything that can move online does move online, necessary reproductive labour continues, but all other social contact is eliminated. I don't think it will work because (among other things) public support for lockdowns is fraying and "compliance" is now very low. Plus the incompetence of the state is becoming more and more obvious to everyone. But we'll see.

## TORIES ARE LIVING IN FEAR OF DIRECT ACTION'S RISE

*[ed. – Originally published on the blog of long-standing anarchist paper (now online) Freedom News. Relating to the below author's critical commentary on Extinction Rebellion (see **Stop HS2 & Extinction Rebellion**), we must however note that Freedom News themselves have hassled, derided and blocked other anarchists on social media as "conspiracy theorists" for similar statements (see **Rebellion Extinction**); sadly playing along with the cybernetic 'nudging'-style horizontal policing that has come into its own in the era of COVID-19, confusing valid analysis and criticism with blanket labels of 'misinformation' or 'irresponsibility', and confirming their own irrelevancy in the disorders that this particular writer predicts (see **How the Left is Handing Over Protest to Fascism**).]*

*It took nearly two years but just one action for Extinction Rebellion to make it onto the Tories' prestigious "so dangerous they should be illegal" list – not co-incidentally it was the first time they'd truly challenged the elites.*

Freedom has tried to support XR when it's on the wrong end of a police stick, but we haven't always been kind to them, especially their self-declared "leadership", which has all too often made bafflingly silly decisions and statements running directly counter to the experiences which many activists have built up over years of struggle.

When news broke that XR activists had successfully shut down the Murdoch Press on Saturday [5th September 2020] however the general response was "XR did that? Good on them!" Their blockade had all the hallmarks of the best of direct action. Pick a ruling class target that counts, in a place where they're weak, and seriously disrupt business as usual.

This is a completely different beast from gluing yourself to a bank branch for the afternoon, or even sitting on a bridge getting yourself arrested to "fill the jails." It's a direct challenge to the operations of one of the most powerful and hegemonic media tycoons in Britain – and the proof can be found in wall-to-wall coverage wailing about "threats to a free press" (as though these bloated hegemonies who destroyed or bought out all diversity in the media decades ago have a leg to stand on). **And what's more it lays out a possibility which the ruling classes are absolutely desperate to keep off the table – that similar could happen anywhere, and may be impossible to keep a lid on.**

The reason that the Tories are considering criminalising membership of XR in the wake of the blockade is the same one that powered their U-turns on A-levels [*ed. – secondary school exams*] and evictions in August [*ed. – both due to the pandemic*] and historically, their repression of green and animal rights activism in the 1990s (See *Black Flag* 237, p16). They are absolutely terrified of a situation where effective direct action loses its mystique and lodges as a possibility in the public mind, in a situation where they have few economic levers left to pull and far less police muscle than they'd like to admit.

## Reigning with funhouse mirrors

Repression, and the management of an unhappy populace in a time of crisis in such a way as to avoid serious unrest, relies heavily on the theory of critical mass, more specifically on how to avoid it happening.

**Let's take the example of a beach, locked down due to Covid.** Ten thousand people might want to go there on a weekend, and perhaps the government is trying to make sure they don't. Your police presence wouldn't be nearly enough on a long stretch of beach to stop these people en masse, especially once they're sat down and unwilling to be moved. You'd have an uncontrollable angry mob on your hands, and a big mess to clean up.

So how do you ensure compliance? First, you put out a loud warning that the beach is very much closed. Second you post officers at common entrances before people arrive and turn the first people away as they show up. Third, if anyone tries to be brave and flout the new rule you make an example out of them. This turns a massed crowd into isolated groups, discourages any attempt at heroics and makes the mass much easier to control with your handful of cops.

**Britain as a whole works in a very similar fashion.** There are less than 124,000 officers in Britain today,



many of which are either at a desk or on holiday at any one time. Their functional operating force in the event of mass unrest, and especially dispersed unrest (ie. not tied to plodding around central London in an easily-corralled setting), is likely to be well below 100,000, or a ratio of one cop to 660 people.

Those numbers have been enough to guard the gates to the beach for decades, bar a wobble in 2011 when the riots over Mark Duggan [ed – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg61*] highlighted exactly how vulnerable to mass unrest the state was (and similarly, led to some outrageous exemplary sentencing). What the Tories' policies have all been about this summer is avoiding the nightmare scenario of beachgoers realising that there's not enough cops to keep them all out.

### The bottom line is riots

There was a certain amount of talk in anarchist circles, in the early days of Covid, about the probabilities of Summer riots breaking out as a result of the horror show that was about to unfold.

Given events in the US [ed. – see *The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis*] these weren't unfounded ideas and the elements seemed to be there for Britain as well. Mass enforced unemployment and a landlord class desperate to keep putting their hands in other people's rapidly-emptying pockets. Intense stresses placed on working people being forced to stay in cramped apartments. Police brandishing *carte blanche* while young people watched already dim prospects recede into over the horizon. A ruling elite that was exposed for hypocrisy via Dominic Cummings in the most blatant case of double standards imaginable. And then weeks of unbearable heat, the sort of heat that accompanied the 2011 riots.

Via Rishi Sunak the government's immediate, quite canny reaction was a flurry of policies worthy of a new social compact – not an uncommon tactic for crisis Chancellors (though unlike in the 1940s he has no legacy of empire to power long-term social spending, and is now in an intractable bind of low income, high outlay). After an initial session of showing off their new powers and making fools of themselves the police meanwhile simply stopped enforcing half of the rules, focusing instead on the boundaries where they thought they could look tough and get away with it like going after new wave rave. Not wearing facemasks on public transport and in shops is still technically illegal, but you'd never know it from what the police are choosing to enforce. And the media is doing its best to loyally leap on any distraction possible to divert public anger, from the "threat" of a dozen migrants in a dinghy to obsessing



March 2020, as soon as COVID was announced in the UK, London's Metropolitan Police declared they were looking to buy more heavily-armoured personnel carriers (of the type already deployed in the wake of 2011's riots), as well as "tactical intervention, and public order and firearm patrol vehicles"

over singing Land of Hope and Glory at the BBC Proms [ed. – *despite controversy over its clearly imperial overtones*].

**All of this is fuelled by the fear. They all know how high the pressure is in this cooker we call Britain, and there's precious few release valves available. No mass sporting events, no concerts or holidays abroad. An entire generation of young people who have no place to go and no jobs to begin. Bringing back the football, getting the economy "back on track", getting kids back to school, they're walking a tightrope between the looming, economically devastating threat of a full Covid outbreak, rising distrust in their capabilities, a dawning realisation that this isn't all just going to end. And above all, a stalled economy that is unlikely to get back even to the anaemic business as usual that characterised 2008-2019 (not to mention an economy-squelching Brexit at the end of the year).**

Anything which could provide the sort of challenge and spark that causes an explosion must be neutralised in this scenario, either by letting it happen (policy U-turns, mask non-enforcement, allowing non-essential travel, looking the other way on gatherings where intervention would be counterproductive, etc) or by using those beach cordon tactics (£10,000 fines for the organisers of protests, criminalising direct actions which make you look weak and suchlike).

XR's action was, when all's said and done, still relatively small potatoes. They stopped a few shipments of a tabloid for half a day using non-violent tactics, something which would barely have raised an eyebrow in 1986 during the printers' Wapping Strike. But it points to something far greater. The media panic that greeted their shift in targets, alongside all those new laws ready to hammer anyone who steps out of line, says everything about this Wizard of Oz government.

# AN UPDATE FROM THE NO TAV CAMPAIGN & THOUGHTS ON ITS RELEVANCE FOR STOP HS2

*[ed. – We welcomed the contribution of this piece, hosted initially by the website Autonomy News, because sometimes it feels like anarchist and anti-capitalists movements in the UK are not always well connected to struggles in other locations which have clear ramifications or lessons for us to take from them. It compares and contrasts the resistances to two railway mega-projects; one which should already be known to our UK readership, and the second (connecting Italy and France) we have covered before in these pages in passing – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg91**. It must be said though that one could think from reading the following article that some populist ideal of the "will of the people" has united opponents to the European project; the truth is that bitter divisions over tactics and strategy have accompanied that struggle over the decades, including the anarchist comrades Sole and Baleno committing suicide in prison and while awaiting trial for sabotage actions (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg62**) after being denounced by other parts of the movement. These hard experiences must also be part of how we learn, not just the allure of more combative and persistent movements overseas, and it is one that UK anarchists would do well not to emulate, as has been the case with repression here in the past; for example, as chronicled in the pamphlet 'Dining with Vultures', available online.]*

beautiful Val di Susa (Susa Valley), which stretches from Turin to the Alps for fifty kilometres. In summer, the valley is bright with colours, the blue sky and green grass bisected by the snow on the mountains. It has a unique environment, since one side sees the sun and the other does not. The train line would rip straight through it before entering a tunnel of 57.5 kilometres to France. This tunnel would be longer than the Chunnel *[ed. – connecting England and France under the sea]* and in fact would just squeeze in as the longest rail tunnel in the world, if it ever gets built. Local people are concerned that drilling into the mountains will disturb uranium and asbestos deposits, that mafia construction will lead to health hazards and that

The No TAV campaign in northern Italy has been fighting an expensive, unneeded and corrupt high speed railway link for over three decades. The proposed mafia-linked freight train service from Turin to Lyon has been repeatedly exposed for its fantastical predictions and is slated by local people who see no reason to leave their homes for a white elephant. If you are already thinking about the similarities to HS2 here in

England then you are in the right place. I will start by giving a very brief history of No TAV, then an update on recent events. In the second half, I will concentrate on what the Stop HS2 movement can learn from No TAV.

For those who have never heard of the No TAV movement, it is a campaign born thirty odd years ago to resist the construction of a 270 kilometre long high speed railway (*Treno di Alta Velocita*) between Turin (in Italy) and Lyon (in France). There is widespread opposition on both French and Italian soil, since the railway is a corrupt scheme proposing to transport freight based on fantasy figures and the people who live along the route see no benefit (the train won't be stopping there). They argue that the already existing railway infrastructure should be improved instead.

**The resistance is greatest in the breathtakingly**



the overall economic case for TAV no longer stands up.

The political situation is bad. After gaining power with halting the TAV as one of the very planks of its campaign, the populist Five Star party was unable to stop it; founder Beppe Grillo had been arrested at a No TAV

protest in 2010, yet in 2019 Five Star could not prevent Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte from gaining parliamentary approval for the scheme. Combined with the EU promise to fund 55% of the TAV costs, it now appears unlikely the line will be stopped at the level of mainstream politics. Naturally, there is still the grassroots opposition, which prizes the will of the people over the will of corporations. Over the years the No TAV campaign has fought on many different levels; it has organised countless events, marches, demos, lectures and acts of sabotage. The Free Republic of Maddalena *[see below]* was set up and brutally repressed. Valley shutdowns have occurred with thousands of people on the streets. From the beginning, activists have waged a long war against the construction sites, slowing down progress considerably.

Despite a mainstream media blackout, the protests continue into the present. In what was perhaps the highlight of the campaign so far, activists set up the Free Republic of Maddalena in May 2011 on land near to the town of Chiomonte, where TAV planned to build an exploratory tunnel. For a brief period, the autonomous zone flourished, with concerts and assemblies and another way of life seemed possible as archaeologists visited, philosophers lectured, actions happened and everyone ate communally. Unfortunately the republic was then brutally evicted by 2,000 agents of the state on 27 June 2011, using teargas and bulldozers against non-violent activists. Over a hundred people were injured on each side and in nearby Venaria, an elderly woman was run over and killed by a riot van.

In 2015, committing a massive public relations blunder, the construction firm and former leader of the project

Lyon Turin Ferroviaria sued well-known Italian author Erri De Luca when he commented that in his view acts of sabotage were justified. Unsurprisingly, they lost the case and helped publicise the cause far and wide.



Defence of the anti-TAV occupation in Piedmont, Italy, 27.06.11, while an arson of the Tiburtina TAV control room simultaneously blocks national rail traffic

## Recent Updates

The latest wave of repression took place in December 2019, when the DIGOS [*ed. – political/anti-terrorist/mafia police units*] arrested people in assorted raids across the Piedmont region. Squatted social centres in Modena (Guernica) and Vincenza (Bocciodromo) were attacked. Askatasuna social centre in Turin has been associated with the No TAV struggle since the beginning and was raided again.

This state harassment was nothing new, for example in 2012 over 30 people were arrested following a day of action when hundreds of demonstrators had laid siege to a construction site, with police raiding addresses on a fruitless search for weapons and explosives. To show the diversity of opposition, those arrested included local councillors, former Red Brigade militants and people involved in Askatasuna.

Prosecutors attempted without much success to brand the activists as terrorists, using laws designed to combat Al-Qaeda!

**In June 2020, reports of renewed construction activity resulted in the occupation of the old mills at Val Clarea, buildings that are scheduled to be demolished to make way for the TAV. The new occupation became known as Presidio Mulini (*presidio* meaning a physical space where activists live and monitor construction). In the following weeks there were skirmishes with police around the edges of the construction works at Chiomonte; cop cars encountered nails on the road and street surveillance cameras were removed.**

The festive nature of the No TAV movement was also on display, although sadly the annual Alta Felicità festival was cancelled due to coronavirus. However, the Critical Wine festival in Bussoleno and the political ecology camp in Venaus both went ahead as planned. Most recently,

the Mulini Presidio organised a weekend of events at the end of August.

## Compared to HS2

The similarities to the Stop HS2 campaign in the UK are surely obvious, yet still worth spelling out. Just like in Italy, the mainstream media blackout on the resistance here is also quite noticeable, recently a Stop HS2 camp popped up at Euston Square Gardens but you'd have to be following @HS2Rebellion to hear about it [*ed. – as we go to press, the attempted eviction of this site is in process; eventual media coverage they did get backfired after TV crews occupants unwisely allowed into the tunnel defences released the sensitive footage of their layout*], whilst we have heard a lot of blabla on TV and radio about construction works starting. As regards ballooning costs, well nobody now thinks HS2 will cost under £100 billion. The TAV was



reckoned to cost 15 billion euros in 2011 and that was a conservative estimate back then! Nowadays estimates range from 20 to 100 billion euros.

There is clearly massive corruption in the TAV project, which is Italy's largest infrastructure enterprise in recent times. The 'Ndrangheta family have deep links to construction companies in Piedmont and a 2014 investigation led to 20 arrests whilst wiretaps revealed the mafia planning to take over the Chiomonte construction zone. By 2016, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) was involved, probing cost overruns and mafia links in Italy and conflicts of interest in France. Roberto Saviano, author of 'Gomorrah' has commented: *"Everybody is speaking about the TAV, but first of all we should consider mere facts: in the last twenty years the high speed railway has become a tool for widespread corruption and organized crime, a successful model of business."*

Whilst critics like to characterise people opposing the TAV as NIMBYs [*ed. – advocates of 'Not In My Back-Yard' rather than opposing projects per se*], just as with HS2, in Piedmont the resistance comes from all walks of life, yes of course from people living in Val di Susa who will lose their land but also from the wider northern Italian area. As a No TAV activist puts it: *"we became a united community looking for an alternative model of development, careful of the needs of the people living here"*. For the mayor of Villarodin-Bourget, a small French village on the proposed route of the line, *"after we started looking at the project in details, we soon arrived at a position of complete opposition. We thought that it had been well-thought out by some super-intelligent people who knew their stuff, but we soon realised that what it has been forecast for 2020 was the opposite of what it became reality"*. These views sound pretty similar to what people have been saying about HS2.

**Regarding alliance building, there is much to learn for Stop HS2 from No TAV. The campaign is fortunate to have a base in long-lasting squatted projects, something which the UK lacks but which we can of course create, especially as we sink into an economic downturn and derelict buildings proliferate.** It's a shame that current lockdown restrictions have stemmed the usual flow of people and experience between radical projects and protest sites like the ZAD [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg81*] and Hambach Forest [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg91*], but the HS2 camps are springing up all along the route. And we should remember that No TAV has been going for thirty years and so it is an example of where Stop HS2 is heading.

Pro-active moves such as setting up "free state" zones and *presidios* on areas about to be demolished by have served No TAV well. **Alongside the amazing tree protection camps, these other forms of occupation might become an important part of the Stop HS2 struggle**, since surely by now farmers and house owners further along the proposed route have seen the terrible compulsory purchase treatment of people in Buckinghamshire and Denham, and they might be thinking it's better to let Stop HS2 activists onto their land sooner rather than later to save the trees. I know that's what I'd be thinking! We only have to look to France to see how various ZADs have been influential in stopping megaprojects such as airports and dams.

The level of militancy in Italy always seems to be a few notches higher than in the UK **but there's no reason why that has to be the case in future.** Certainly mass mobilisation and support in Piedmont means more tactics are available and No TAV can call on thousands of people in a short time period. Simply give HS2 Limited a few more years to threaten a few more beloved local habitats and we'll see **how things are looking for Stop HS2 in the UK.**

## STOP HS2 & EXTINCTION REBELLION

Extinction Rebellion [*ed. – see Rebellion Extinction*] have finally decided to refrain from trying to take over control of the STOP HS2 protection camps between London and Birmingham, and instead they are offering to HELP the front line activists who actually live there, and to LEARN direct action from them, according to unconfirmed reports from the camps.

Some of the eco-warriors at the Harvil road and Denham camps in Colne Valley near Uxbridge invited Extinction Rebellion to join them at the protest sites last year, and HS2 Rebellion was the name that was eventually chosen to be used by the new recruits. **Unfortunately a power struggle developed fairly soon, with HS2 Rebellion apparently insisting that they controlled some kind of hierarchy** and were in fact the "leaders" of the climate movement, and all the protesters were obliged to take orders from them.

Extinction Rebellion released a statement about how HS2 Rebellion was becoming the umbrella organisation for all the protection camps and they listed their "criteria and values" which they claimed all the activists had to agree to and abide by. This was

regardless of the fact that the eco-warriors had originally started the camps with the Green Party four years before XR came along to attempt to take them over and control them.

HS2 Rebellion started their own fundraiser with £32,000 being donated for the Colne Valley protest by more than 1000 people. **The fundraiser stated that the money would be distributed to all the protection camps, but HS2 Rebellion refused to share anything with camps that did not agree to join Extinction Rebellion and obey their rules.**

Two camps which agreed to join Extinction Rebellion and obey them were given £16,000 between them, but the Harvil road and Denham camps at Colne Valley near Uxbridge which remained autonomous and independent got absolutely nothing.

The STOP HS2 organisation which started the local residents protest campaign in their own local communities against the high speed rail link 13 years ago asked for financial support but HS2 Rebellion did not want to help them so they also received nothing.

**Some activists objected that HS2 Rebellion was crowd funding off the back of a 12 year protest campaign and saying to the public who were donating that the money was going to actions and legal fees for all the camps, yet the activists were having to start a crowd fund for their own legal fees.**

Activists at the camps were being told they needed to meet the XR “criteria” to be able to get access to the money raised, and they said they never had this problem for three years “until the XR control freak fascists who wanted to cause disruption and bullying came along”.

Eventually HS2 Rebellion produced the receipts for the money that was allocated and spent, and they showed that two camps got a total of £16,000 but the Colne Valley camps got nothing.

Some activists accused HS2 Rebellion of illegally obtaining money by false pretences or even fraud, since the fund raiser page had made it clear that the money donated would be distributed to all the camps without any terms and conditions involving joining Extinction Rebellion and obeying their rules. Extinction Rebellion originally came to a protest march that they tried to get the Harvil road activists banned from, and then they started HS2 Rebellion in May 2020 which failed in their attempt to monopolise the campaign.

Extinction Rebellion tried to impose a great deal of authority and control and to police other people’s behaviour according to their “values and principles” which were designed to dominate, control, and ostracise those activists who think for themselves.

Extinction Rebellion gathered a lot of “intelligence” and expected everything to be run past them, and once the protest started building momentum with direct action HS2 Rebellion attempted to move into the camps, creating camp agreements which were rules the eco-warriors had to live by and which were policed by XR members.

They then tried to kick off any activists who were not living by their rules, which pretty quickly failed especially as all the camps were started by local residents and eco-warriors who lived full time at the camps, and HS2 Rebellion would have made them homeless, so that did not succeed either.

Extinction Rebellion tried to police everything that anyone who wasn’t a member of XR did, whilst controlling the behaviour of all those who call themselves XR, giving the impression that Extinction Rebellion may well have been infiltrated by undercover police and agents working for corporations (like HS2) and the oil companies.

Some eco-warriors believe that if Extinction Rebellion had it their own way everyone would just wave flags and sing songs whilst being escorted by the police, and the sooner the genuine activists become autonomous the better.

However the biggest concern for a lot of climate activists is that XR is fake astroturfing controlled opposition being funded by banks, hedge funds, and oil companies to negotiate with the government and promote the false solution of “net” zero emissions which would allow fossil fuel industries to continue to pollute the Earth and kill humanity.



22.09.20: Eviction of another anti-HS2 protest site at Calvert Jubilee Nature Reserve

One of the Harvil road and Denham activists at Colne Valley reported that she had spoken to journalists that she knew when XR would not show them the receipts for the money they had raised in the name of the eco-warriors' protection camps.

*"HS2 Rebellion tried to have a monopoly on the fund raising and the media.*

*"We have never needed people's money.*

*"It just makes things safer in trees and tunnels when we have A grade equipment.*

*"We are all doing dangerous things and that makes us all family".*

Another eco-warrior said *"each camp has its own set of rules and very different sets of people, it's a very wide cross section that needs to be catered for without judgement or favour, all come from different places with a common aim which is to stop HS2 and the destruction of the environment"*.

The eco-warriors at the Harvil road and Denham protection camps sent a message to HS2 Rebellion in May 2020 as a result of the claim by Extinction Rebellion that all the STOP HS2 activists were members of HS2 Rebellion and were under the control of XR.

What actually happened subsequently at the STOP HS2 camps was exactly what the front line activists had predicted would happen. **Following is the message the eco-warriors sent to HS2 Rebellion in May 2020:**

*"We feel any response, in the interests of openness and collectivism is best made in the open forums rather than to any specific individuals.*

*"We have a statement we wish to put out, which isn't responding just specifically to the individual 'Rebel Action Agreements and Principles Values' etc, but a broader statement.*

*"At the point of writing this message there are ten people sat around a camp fire on the front line of resistance, living in occupation, with several concerns and criticisms to raise about what is developing around us.*

*"Firstly, we feel like we are being spoken on behalf of.*

*"We believe these parameters aim to homogenise this movement.*

*"We believe that this struggle's strength lies in its diversity and creativity.*

*"The parameters set out in this document aim to homogenise the movement under the banner of HS2 Rebellion – we must ask, who are you?"*

*"The persons involved in making these decisions are unknown to many of us – even some who have been on the front line for more than a year now.*

*"Who are you speaking for when you create these parameters within which those who oppose HS2 are being told to act?"*

*"We welcome HS2 Rebellion as an affinity group in the same way that we see ourselves as an affinity group within the movement – but reject what feels like an attempt for HS2 Rebellion to become the movement itself.*

*"We will not stand for the co-option of this movement and for its monopolisation by a single ideology.*

*"We are concerned as to how these rules and expectations will play out – namely the allocation of capital, both social and financial.*

*"If HS2 Rebellion continues to monopolise the movement, funds, and media, the security and safety that these bring will be consolidated to the groups branded as HS2 Rebellion and reduced in others.*

*"There are certain things in the parameters set out which feel oppressive and disempowering, replicating the very state that we are fighting against, such as:*

*– Limitations to who is and isn't allowed to talk to media (citing the select group contacted to be 'spokespersons') – this is inherently exclusionary and runs the risk of preserving and furthering class division. We do not identify as 'Rebels' or 'Tree Protectors' – we find those labels dehumanizing and limiting.*

*– Ignoring the deeper and broader intentions of people in this fight the reason the emphasis on the correct media/language is effective for this specific campaign is that it is respected within the eyes of the law/current capitalist/patriarchal/imperialist paradigm. We do not want to be reduced to winning only this particular campaign. We are focused on building a long term movement for social change, that does not and cannot rely on receiving the system's respect due to its oppressive nature.*

*– Decisions about asking people to leave camps or actions are serious decisions made with potentially huge implications for the individuals targeted – this is exclusionary and counter to creating reformative systems.*

*"This is not an exhaustive list, but simply a reaction and critique in the moment.*

*"We do not wish for this campaign to be fractured into factions, but equally we cannot allow the whole movement to be co-opted into a homogenized package.*

*"One group will not win this alone, HS2 is one*



*symptom of the many ailments of our society, there is not one single way that this fight will be won – if and when this fight is won, the struggle will not end there”.*

*– Crispy of the Jibley family, Desmond, Elrack, Fairyflax, Jack, Lykos, Night-quimble, Quercus, Reg, Stitch.*

### UPDATE ON RECENT DIRECT ACTION AGAINST THE COASTAL GASLINK PIPELINE

So-called British Columbia [in 'Canada']. Resistance is a living practice that spans across time and space. Interwoven webs connect peoples and communities – spreading fire from one space to the next. In its most subversive forms resistance will evade the capture of rationalization or quantification. Attempts to relay what is happening in any specific location will at best be incomplete stories, riddled by the storyteller's bias.

What follows is a story of recent moments of resistance to the construction of the Coastal GasLink [CGL] Pipeline. This is just one story and makes no attempt to speak for the wide variety of individuals involved in this struggle. We share these stories in attempt to add fuel to the fire. We hope this contribution fans the flames and helps to one day engulf the contractors involved in the project's construction. To learn more about the contractors involved see [seedsofresistance.noblogs.org](http://seedsofresistance.noblogs.org)

Earlier this November, pre-drilling under the Wedzin Kwa (morce river) was scheduled to begin. While CGL workers prepared to build the pads which host the drill, they were harassed, survey flags were pulled down, and a two-kilometer blockade was built on the road. Dozens of trees were felled on the road, barricades erected, barbed wire strung throughout, and a ditch was dug through the road. Once the pads were built and the drill arrived, a tree was felled onto the drill – which resulted in the drill being removed from the territory.

Simultaneously survey flags were being pulled, works sites trashed, and a hunter's blind or tree sit is being occupied in the project's right of way (ROW). With sub-zero temperatures long-term tree occupation is not easy – yet a 40ft tall fortified tree occupation surrounded by barricades is, for the time being, standing defiantly. Additionally, to stop access to the project's right of way, barricades were erected and lit aflame with banners atop which read: shut down canada, solidarity with Six Nations, Mi'kmaq fishers and Secwepemc land defenders [ed. – indigenous nations].

Most recently, 3-4 kilometers of wooden barricades were built, stopping workers from accessing the ROW for days. To make things more difficult heavy machinery was used to dig up the road and destroy a bridge.

One day we hope to find ourselves sitting with friends and relatives resting and warming our hands on a large fire. A fire made up of all the projects which seek to destroy the land and the ones we care about – two things which we know are inseparable. Until that day comes we will continue to ignite smaller flames even if they just keep us warm for the night. We hope that the heat of these embers reaches you and warms your heart.

### 'EVERYTHING IS SANITISED, BUT WE ARE CONSTANTLY WRINGING OUR TIRED HANDS'

[ed. – An interview taken from the website of the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) prisoner support group in London, along with their introductory note. This was conducted off the back of a text brought out after the 2019 debacle of many UK anarchists advocating voting for Labour (and even canvassing for them) under then-leader Jeremy Corbyn, fulfilling the tragic role that has dogged certain anarchist tendencies of drone for the Left that will later imprison them.

*It touches on many topics related to the current pandemic, but first a word on the analogies with the prison system so richly enumerated below. Though the interviewee might object to a more thoughtless use of the term 'Prison Island' for the UK, not just here but across much of the world a shift has already been underway for decades in which the population (with various degrees of intensity, and certainly not as equivalent to actual prisoners) are subject to increasing control – taking over from discipline, Michel Foucault's "work begun elsewhere, which the whole of society pursues on each individual through innumerable mechanisms", as the paradigm for governance – that blurs the distinctions between 'inside' and 'outside' those walls despite our many (largely illusory) 'freedoms'. COVID-19 has shown rapidly how contingent those so-called freedoms were to the State that could decide to enforce their denial; tellingly, the UK government description of certain lockdown restrictions as 'enhanced' as opposed to 'basic' is language directly from UK prisoners' allocated status and 'privileges'.*

*Another of the themes excellently addressed below is that of 'abolition' of the prison system; a stance that is so ultimately un-radical that it has comfortably fit into the mouths even of prison directors themselves in recent years. It feels woefully ironic that the term (a triumphalist direct reference to the liberation struggle of African-descended slaves in North America, when their fight is clearly far from over) coexists in the United States, the largest exporter of abolitionist discourse, with the notorious exemption of prisoners from the ban on slavery: leading us to a present described in 'Learning from Ferguson' as pairing "precarious labor market on the outside and booming prison industries on the inside".*

*Here in Britain too the 'abolitionist' term has tainted history, without the sometimes-militancy (if otherwise problematic) of the movement of white abolitionists on the other side of the Atlantic: basically, it was adopted by statesmen concerned overall with how to keep chattel slaves in the Caribbean colonies working (under the same masters) once "emancipated", so as the continue along the supposed path of civilisation they had been prescribed before they could allegedly be seen as human. There was a large overlap with the utilitarian thinkers of the time (of whom, Jeremy Bentham is remembered more for his 'Panopticon' contribution to prison surveillance architecture than for his philanthropic projects; see **Return Fire vol.4 pg9**), who, like Benjamin Franklin had, complained of the terrible "inefficiency" of slavery as a productive system compared to wage labour that could compete better in the sugar plantations compared to the slaves in Cuba, Brazil, or the United States. In public*

statescrafters wore the benevolent and enlightened face of abolition; in confidential colonial office memos, those such as Sir James Stephen (architect of Britain's 1833 Slavery Abolition Act) assured elites that "the Planter [will incur] no other loss than that of finding his whips, stocks and manacles deprived of their use & value". Some of the same abolitionists were at the same time already praising Britain's surging complex of prisons, asylums and workhouses: for their morally 'civilising' lower-class influence, of course...

Well before the current hellish US racial nightmare of imprisonment, the British Empire (which Stephen virtually ruled 1789 – 1847) shipped Indian convict-slaves to prison islands; today, recent UK governments have proposed jointly building prisons they could deport to with governments of Nigeria (where building a maximum security prison was one of the last programs of the colonial regime in the 1950s before independence – the first British-built prison being burned down in 1882 by anti-colonial rebels before being rebuilt) and Jamaica (which recently introduced the requirement of biometric driving licenses). Cynically, here in the UK the 'Track and Trace' scheme was initially managed by NHSX (the tech wing of the National Health Service that anarchists justified voting to 'save') precisely due to the public's trust in the institution, which from the start (before handing over the scheme to Google, Apple, et al.) linked it to the eventual creation of biometric immunity passports.

COVID-19 digital solutions marketed by a rising number of firms are also, as with Trust Stamp (a biometric digital identity program brought to "remote, low-income communities" in West Africa in a private-public partnership together with and Mastercard and the Bill Gates-backed vaccine cartel GAVI), offered explicitly to interested parties in prison administrations to provide probation with contactless identification "without making them pay for the expensive ankle bracelets that monitor their every move". Again, drawing together a nexus of remote (or even, via artificial intelligence, predictive) policing, bio-security and control over access, and the planned elimination of cash; in short, the impossible Panoptican fantasy of a totally controlled and transparent society.

In such a context, abolition of the prison walls themselves loses its proclaimed meaning; especially when self-described abolitionists, such as those in Cleveland after unrest over police murder of young Tamir Rice, join the cops and Department of Justice at the table to gain legitimacy over those in the streets rioting. At the risk of sounding naïve, the atrocity of prison is not in itself the worst thing than can befall us (see **Notes on "The Criminal Child"**); Peter Gelderloos once observed after his time inside in different countries that if school is the prison for the submissive, "prison is the school for the defiant." Now, the prospect of time behind bars could in the future potentially be reserved for those most intractable or rebellious already, while the rest will be re-inserted into a docile and (self-)policed society where the bars blend with the barcodes. Our solidarity must be with any being contained by social mores, physical cages, concrete jungles or electronic leashes, subjected by what ASBO aptly describes below as "an extension of the logic that prison promotes and aggressively enforces". Let the abolitionists keep their place at the table; for our part, we'll be taking aim once again from the shadows. Thanks to prison demolitionist London ABC for proposing and conducting this interview.]



London ABC was due to participate in the London Tattoo Circus 2020 [ed. – an internationally-emerging tradition of tattoo events with all proceeds going to prisoner support/anti-prison projects]. For obvious reasons, the tattoo circus didn't go ahead. Radio Outbreak (a 'sideshow' to the Tattoo Circus) is going online from 3pm-9pm on Saturday 23rd May instead. As our contribution, we will be reading from the text of an interview conducted earlier this month with ASBO, someone we greatly admire and whose writings have been inspiring, informative and thought provoking to us.

ASBO is the author of the seminal text *Bang-Up and Smash: Women's Prisons, Bail Hostels and Probation*, partly an account and analysis of systems she was held captive by. She is also part of the collective responsible for 'The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions: Covid-19, Corbyn and 'Crisis'', which addresses Corbyn, voting and Covid-19.

In early May, members of London ABC sent her some questions on these topics. Her answers are bold, generous, heartfelt and insightful, with a depth of personal reflections and a breadth of analysis grappling with the world we find ourselves in.

We hoped to bring about some encounters and discussions like this at London Tattoo Circus. In the absence of a physical space for connection we hope you enjoy this interview. We include the full text below pending the creation of a zine.

More info about Radio Outbreak:  
[londontattoocircus.noblogs.org/radio-outbreak](http://londontattoocircus.noblogs.org/radio-outbreak)

**DISCLAIMER:** This is the first time I have ever done an interview like this, and I am definitely out of my comfort zone! Also, it is important to note that while I wrote 'Bang-Up and Smash: Women's Prisons, Bail Hostels and Probation' as an individual (supported by many patient friends), 'The Road to Hell Is Paved with Good Intentions: Covid-19, Corbyn and 'Crisis' was a collective project. Any comments here on the text are entirely my own random thoughts, and not representative of our whole crew. Also, as I said in 'Bang-Up'; I am humbly aware that I only had a relatively short sentence with amazing support... so my experience of prison, bail hostels and probation, is very specific, from a (relatively) privileged position. I don't want my clumsy words to be read as being representative, or imply that I am making assumptions about other people engaging with the prison system.

**London ABC:** In Bang Up and Smash you talk about the drugs rehabilitation programme for state-hostages RAPT, you described it as:  
*"You are not allowed to talk to other prisoners outside the unit (and therefore also have significantly reduced time you are allowed outside). The first few weeks of life on the RAPT unit are called 'seeking safety' this establishes you on the wing and programme. Prisoners do not engage with group therapy during this time but do have to attend workshops, and 'emotional check-ins'. After four weeks, you then start your primary care; which consists of group 'meditation', and one and a half hours of group 'therapy' every morning, and workshops all together in the afternoon."*  
 'Meditation', 'emotional check-ins', 'occasional exercise', it seems to me that this may seem all-too-familiar to those on the outside during these days. Do you think the techniques of control which the state employs on incarcerated populations has been employed on the general population of prison island UK? How, if at all, do you think the pandemic 'emergency measures' accelerated this tendency?

**ASBO:** This is a very good question. The first point I would like to make, relates to the term you use: "prison island UK". I must say, that I find this label problematic. It has been kicking around for a while, and has always made me bristle, but it seems especially prevalent in these coronal times. I am not implying that the level of police repression and control is not full on. But the phrase "prison island" is problematic to me because it implies some kind of universal and generalised experience of prison (ie. that everyone in the UK is in a prison – which is not the case) and also is very disempowering (I think it enables people to feel defeated and give up in the face of unprecedented levels of repression).

I can see the logic in the phrase "prison island" but, personally, I think it does a massive disservice to all those incarcerated people who are not only dealing

"The question of the Spanish prisons (from what I read in Extremera) is worrying... I know well the power that these murderers have accumulated historically, and with the excuse of 'corona-virus' (and with no visits) nor anyone to control the controllers, it's scary... the same as when at the beginning of the F.I.E.S. Regime [ed. – *Spanish isolation regimes in prison*] they had *carte blanche* to do whatever they liked... [But on the outside] they know that if they don't want widespread 'revolts', they have to give sectorial 'permits' and 'conditional promises'. They are applying the same prison regime to the citizen as they are to the prisoners. Instead of guards and jailers in the exercise yard, they have soldiers and police in the underground stations, in the streets and in the factories. From home to work and from work to home; an hour to take your dog to shit or to go shopping. Locking of doors and sharing the cell with others... I only hope they are lucky enough to be in a cage with someone nice. [...] In Spain the jailers are dehumanized and are this way because society accepts it... now 'incarcerated-society' is receiving some of the same medicine that it has allowed to be given to its prisoners... now it will know what it means to suffer in silence, to suffer anxiety, nostalgia, all sorts of loss... it will learn to appreciate the courage of disobedience, the value of freedom, the emotion of embracing a loved one again... Now it will also feel the 'effects' of isolation, authoritarianism and of arrogance in uniform... when my father died they didn't allow me to go to the funeral (they said I was dangerous)... and without Covid-19. I know well what it feels when your loved ones are buried without your being able to say your last goodbye. Now they say this is inhuman... of course with me they were in-human but, as I was a F.I.E.S. prisoner, they could allow themselves to be in-human... The citizen without 'Rights' is the same shit as a prisoner... the government in the form of Prison Institution. The prison system is been applied outside. Citizens in 1st Grade, 2nd Grade or on bail. Citizens on leave, in temporary and conditional freedom. Who would ever have said that a virus would finally unveil 'society' as being panoptic-society more than a hundred or a thousand conferences or documentaries on the subject?"

– Gabriel Pombo da Silva (see *Return Fire vol.4 pg58*), April/May 2020; in 2017 after some months in hiding he was recaptured by Spanish police near his family home in Galicia, in an operation (aided by a snitch) in search of an arms cache, before disappearing again until a combined Spanish, Italian and Portuguese operation located him this January just over the Portuguese border and deported him to Spanish prison



with the general restrictions of lockdown life and the Coronavirus Act, but also the added restrictions specifically related to prisons. Whilst screws “working” during lockdown are to get a £1,700 bonus on top of overtime, people in prison are facing a period of no visits, increased bang up, and no access to things that keep people sane, like exercise. Who knows when this will end. It is certainly not a priority of the Tory government to address this.

Your question highlights an important point, about how techniques and tools used in prisons (and their related institutions: ‘detention centres’/‘Immigration Removal Centres’, bail hostels, probation, social services etc) are then often rolled out into wider society (and, as we have seen time and time again, often tools developed within the UK are then copied in other places). This point I think is critical to remember; as many people have no lived experience, or connection to, incarcerated people, so they are often unaware of how many of these strategies of control are being refined behind closed doors.

*“Prison, a microcosm inserted into our world but that is denied the possibility to speak” – Juan Jose Garfia, Adios Prison*

As an ex-prisoner, what was particularly problematic to me last year was the lack of critical engagement that voting anarchists had in relation to Corbyn’s (and the Labour parties) policies and dogma around police and prisons. This is something that was very important for me to address in ‘The Road’. I think you could say that at times in the text we sounded judgmental (one dear comrade even said arrogant). That certainly wasn’t my intention, and it is a shame if that is the case. If it was spikey, it was from a specific place of rage and hurt, fuelled largely by my personal experiences with the state.

As we highlighted in ‘The Road’, in the run up to the 2019 election, Labour wanted to expand the police force (and the prison system) even more than the Tories. Various Labour members, including Corbyn, publicly called them out on this on numerous occasions. To have many close comrades supporting this implicitly, or willfully ignoring it (trying to blindsides me with arguments about the NHS) was particularly challenging. As a side note, it is also interesting that when the ‘Coronavirus Act’ was bought in extending police powers (in the twilight period of Corbyn’s leadership and when Starmer was getting warmed up) the Labour party were calling for a kind of unity coalition with the Tories. I am mentioning this here because I think it relates to a kind of patronising attitude I have felt coming from several friends and comrades, who think that I am maybe too hung up on specifics; or that I am ‘nit picking’ in an unhelpful way in the face of such a catastrophe as Covid-19. I am not an uncaring person, but I am also critical.

To return to your question, it is interesting to reflect specifically on the RAPT (Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust) programme that I outlined in ‘Bang-Up’ because, like many ‘recovery’ programmes that follow the ‘12 steps’, it used the language of “disease” (and “safety”) explicitly, (and extensively) as a way to divide the prison population where I was. In the current context of Covid-19 it is both terrifying and fascinating to see how quickly people adopt this dangerous rhetoric. In the mainstream press, when covering the pilot of the NHSX app on the Isle of Wight, there were various anecdotes and quotes of people saying; “it’s ok, we have the app now”; breathing out a sigh of relief that they no longer have to think for themselves about how they relate to the virus... I think this is an extension of the logic that prison promotes and aggressively enforces... to get people to mindlessly comply; whilst simultaneously



offering things like 'group meditation' and 'therapeutic interventions' as supposedly positive "options" (that are in reality compulsory) to reflect and grow, to become "safe" and "clean".

*"Caring for ourselves doesn't mean pacifying ourselves. We should be suspicious of any understanding of self-care that identifies well-being with placidity or asks us to perform "health" for others. Can we imagine instead a form of care that would equip each of us to establish an intentional relationship to her dark side, enabling us to draw strength from the swirling chaos within? This kind of care cannot be described in platitudes. It is not a convenient agenda item to add to the program of the average non-profit organization. It demands measures that will interrupt our current roles, bringing us into conflict with society at large and even some of the people who profess to be trying to change it."*  
—'Don't Tell Me to Calm down!'  
Crimethinc, 2013 'Self Care'

I think this point is especially important today, when we are told constantly to "stay safe", "do our duty" and the most obnoxious of all "we are all in this together". It feels recently like people have been drowning in a toxic tide of data; greedily drinking the information fed to us by the government, forgetting that the concept of 'health' is just as political as 'prison'. One pertinent example of the current situation is for example the suspension of the so-called 'Care Act' 2014 (and the related development of the 'Coronavirus Act 2020'.) The combination of these two forms of repression mean that what is classed as a 'mental health' condition (and who can 'diagnose' it) has been massively broadened, whilst at the same time, people have no legal recourse to challenging these decisions. This is a new phenomenon to many people, but anyone who has spent time inside will know that within the prison system (and its related infrastructures), it is the psychologists who wield the ultimate power.

*"'Health' is a cultural fact in the broadest sense of the word, a fact that is political, economic, and social as well, a fact that is tied to a certain state of individual and collective consciousness. Every era outlines a 'normal' profile of health."* — Michel Foucault

Fuck the new 'normal'! This doesn't mean that I want people to die. Nor does it mean that I don't take Covid-19 seriously. But the state has been sharpening its teeth on prisoners (and many others) for quite some time in preparation for this, and now is the time to fight back...

**London ABC:** You also discuss the juridical-repressive apparatuses' attempts to separate you from those inside after your probation;  
*"As a final note, it is interesting that as soon as my girlfriend disclosed our relationship to her offender manager in jail, she was then interviewed by external probation officers and the 'Domestic Extremist/Counter Terrorism Unit' about me and our relationship. As with all the aspects of social control and surveillance during my sentence, this has only made me hate the authorities more."*  
You seem to identify a connection between fidelity to your relationship and holding fast to your ideas. More generally, what do you think the connection is today between loving and fighting? Do the practices of social control in prison reveal a wider conspiracy between the intensities of love and social war?

**ASBO:** This is a really difficult question to answer because my relationship in prison is beyond anything I have words for (both good and bad). It took me several years for me to recover from it, and I am painfully aware that many people are currently locked down with partners who are abusive, or in relationships that are coercive, so in some ways my musings on this point may be unhelpful and irrelevant.

I absolutely do not want to imply that my relationship was inherently negative (this is how the state always positions sex in prison)... I wouldn't change it for the world. But it is interesting to reflect on in the context of Covid-19. The process of writing this interview has made me see that I have been unconsciously "triggered" a few times during the pandemic because of issues around "loving and fighting" in a controlled environment. In prison I was also 'locked down' (in a slightly different way) with an abusive partner, unable to touch or see my friends, or connect with the outside world.

As with most of my anecdotes, I included my relationship in 'Bang-Up' as an illustration of a particular point. In terms of the connection between loving and fighting, it's interesting to reflect on this in relation social distancing measures. Even when I was in prison, I had great sex, and also the comfort of a lot of physical contact with many different friends





across the prison. While “women’s prisons” can be rife with bitchiness, gossip and physical fights, at least they can be very tactile places. In my limited experience of visiting and supporting comrades in “men’s prisons”, and “Youth Offenders Institutions” this is not the case across the prison system.

Part of the reason why my relationship in prison fuels my hatred of the prison system and probation so much was that they poisoned her against me. I won’t bore people with the details (see ‘Bang-Up’ for that) but after I was released we were not allowed to communicate with each other, and the state went to great lengths to ensure it was pretty much impossible. They threatened to give my ex extra time if they found out we were in contact, and brought in the ‘Counter Terrorism Lead Senior Probation Officer’ and ‘Extremism Unit’ to discredit me. Never has my heart been broken so completely. As this is a text for the tattoo circus, I will say this, I immediately used my JSA [*ed. – Job Seekers Allowance, state benefit*] to get a huge tattoo for her, so that I would never forget the repression I had experienced. It puts fire in my belly every time I look at it : ) It is worth noting that they also attempted a similar strategy of alienation with my family. Finally, over three years after I have been released, (and after much tongue biting and hard work on my part), I finally feel like the relationship I have to them is more balanced. The reason why this might be interesting or relevant to others is that I (bitterly) feel like it illustrates the toxic farce that words such as “rehabilitation” hide... and why I get so grumpy about them!

In relation to the connection today between loving and fighting, I feel like maybe that is worthy of a thesis, but I think it’s fair to say that separation is a key form of social control, and as I highlighted in ‘Bang-Up’; the prison system employs a wide range of tools to monitor the development of any kinds of sexual activity or relationships. The language of the prison system positions relationships as a “distraction” from what people “should” be doing (reflecting on what a terrible human they are). The prison system uses a wide range of tools to do this: overtly (such as instantly separating, often by ‘ghosting’ someone to another prison unexpectedly) or snide, more subtle ways (such as denying people access to resources around sex, or encouraging other prisoners to snitch on people in relationships). Despite all this, in the prison environment, falling in love can happen fast, and hard... and it does feel like one of the most beautiful ways you can have to resist their sterile attempts at control.

Once again, the petri dish of prison has been used as a laboratory for wider social control. I don’t have a

smart phone and have never been on social media, so I am (blissfully) unaware of the extent of anxiety and snitching, but I am painfully aware of a few friends who have definitely followed the government “guidelines” to the letter without thinking about how it might impact on other people, or thinking of creative ways to get around the very real dangers of corona virus while enabling people to see their partners etc. Trying to navigate things like consent and consensus in these lockdown times sometimes feels like you are in a poly [*ed. – polyamorous, see **Comments on ‘Polyamory?’***] relationship with everyone you know (from comrades to colleagues). Apart from when I was in prison I have never felt like I had so much communication about how to navigate physical contact with other humans, nor felt under such close scrutiny in terms of touching other people. I feel lucky for my experiences in prison, to be prepared for, and used to, socially distant methods of engagement: finding ways to let comrades and loved ones know I care about them on the down-low, covert meet ups, etc. Touch has become a criminal act, to be avoided at all cost. I am trying to view at as some kind of kink; massively delayed gratification : ) It feels important now more than ever, to remember that we are not alone... to revel in the joy of meeting someone’s gaze while we are masked up... leaving hidden messages and silly things.... putting passion in to our rebellious actions. I am not alone or special in this, it warms my heart thinking of people all over the world I have never met but who are used to this.



Japan, November 2020: a shopfloor robot using lasers to measure compliance with social distancing, before politely confronting deviants or those it senses are without masks

“Each and every one of us has been turned into a ticking time bomb, a disgusting, diseased, infectious, monstrous, creature who should hate itself and others like it – and keep away from them as much as possible. For those of us already deemed disgusting by society (queers, trans, sexworkers, junkies, HIV positive people etc) this feeling may not be so new; but now the stigma of the ‘diseased’ is engulfing us all.” – ‘It’s The End Of The World As We Know It....’ (And people applaud, quarantined at their windows)  
Down and Out distro

**London ABC:** *"The beast now turns on the zeks in its entrails... Having eliminated the communities of outsiders, the Technological Wonder proceeds to generate outsiders inside its own entrails, to expunge human zeks and replace them with machines, with things made of its own substance... The new outsiders are not radicals. They are people who happened to animate springs and gears which can now be automated, namely artificialized... It is also not known if the technological detritus that crowds and poisons the world leaves human beings any room to dance."* *Against His-story! Against Leviathan!*

What do you make of prison society in terms of the cadaverous process of civilisation which Fredy is describing? Do you believe that we can discover 'room to dance'?

**ASBO:** We quoted Perlman in 'The Road' because the leviathan is definitely lurching now. In my optimistic moments I imagine it is in its death throes..... but I doubt it!

Perlman said: *"As civilisation grows, the domain of death grows, while the individuals living within it die."* This definitely feels pertinent now. The domain of death has never felt more immediate, global, and also willfully embraced. People all too often unquestioningly cling to the Leviathan, desperately keeping its mechanisms going in a tired dance of compliance, addicted to the poison that it excretes.

*"And all but lust is turned to dust, in humanities machine"* – Oscar Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*

It was really frustrating to me how much hope and authority people put on the Tories announcement about easing the lockdown, only to be met (unsurprisingly) with a garbled and contradictory mess of arbitrary allocated activities. 'Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy' has left even the most ardent of Tory supporters confused about what is and isn't permitted under the guise of public health. The 60 page document said a lot, and nothing at all... This kind of puff piece will be all too familiar to anyone trying to make sense of the many new 'initiatives' that the state trials in prisons. Anyone having trouble sleeping should try to make sense of the sea of acronyms I included at the end of 'Bang-Up' in the Glossary and Appendices to highlight this point.

In the disease of civilization we must find 'room to dance'. As many others have highlighted, we are in a process of stagnation, of decomposition, and, like Covid-19, the rate at which this is being transmitted feels brutally fast. We may well all die, soon, but I hope we will go out dancing... (and not in a hippy way, but in a glorious, fierce and bloody mess).

*"Domesticated humans are defined by their adornment with masks over their faces and armor over their bodies. These masks and armors are the ways in which the individual internalizes the constraint of Leviathan and acclimates themselves to life within it. These are necessary for surviving the everyday domination and humiliation which is life in this society. They protect individuals from their own emotions, perception and estrangement from being."* – Baeden *'Against the Gendered Nightmare'*.

Thinking about Perlman's Leviathan and the context of Covid-19 made me revisit this quote from Baeden. Just to be clear, I am not saying that it is not important to be careful. Face masks are obviously important in the current climate. However, before corona, I always felt powerful when I masked up. It was a physical way of saying 'fuck you', and to prepare for battle. Now it all too often feels like people are scurrying away from each other, desperate to avoid contact, cowering behind various forms of PPE [*ed. – personal protective equipment*]... It can definitely feel like 'everyday domination and humiliation', however useful they are.

As Perlman outlined, Leviathan has no life of its own, and thus can only function by capturing living beings within itself. It is interesting to position snitching, mutual aid etc (and the NHSX app) within this context: We are all the Leviathan, we give it life: through the virus that is social media, when we comply with government dogma unquestioningly... when we judge others for resisting lockdown.



London: Actually, we get both

**London ABC:** As the world experiences another economic shock, likely to push municipal authorities to farm out contracts to tech-creeps on a large scale, coupled with the obvious repressive applications of 'contact tracing' – which in the UK is already contracted to infamous blood-sucker Peter Thiel's company 'Palantir' – what do you think the dimensions of the new, 'smart', world are? What do

you make of the fact that undeniable recognition of and resistance to these developments in the form of an extensive campaign of 5g sabotage [ed. – see *The 5G Net*] has received such extensive media coverage but exclusively in the mode of alleged ‘conspiracy theory’?



Surveillance drone flights: used by at least half UK police forces, now also confirmed to be present at demonstrations, raves, and against saboteurs of badger culls, and which Avon & Somerset Constabulary doubled their use of during the first UK lockdown to almost daily deployment (in Derbyshire they shamed dog-walkers in the Peak District)

**ASBO:** There is so much new language around Covid-19, and this phrase “contact tracing” is to me, one of the most deadly, as it neatly obscures a huge arsenal of surveillance measures and unprecedented levels of control in this country. We covered a lot of detail around social media in ‘The Road’, so I won’t go into that here, but it is interesting to relate these recent experiences back to life in prison. Every prisoner has a ‘security file’ and this is updated every day. Who you talked to, where, and when are just as important as what was said. Other prisoners are encouraged to provide screws with ‘data’ and conjecture and opinion becomes ‘fact’ in the stroke of a key board or pen. Does this sound familiar today?

One of Boris Johnson’s recent announcement was the creation of a ‘Biosecurity Centre’ using the ‘Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre’. This uses a five tier system of ‘ratings’, combined with the language/legislation around “terrorism” to create a strategy for “easing the lockdown”. It is interesting to note that the new message from the Tories is

“stay alert”. This seems very fitting in the context of mass scale snitching. It will be interesting also to see if the concept of a health status (or vaccine passport) becomes reality. Once again, this is reminiscent of methods of control in prison; for example, the ‘Incentives and Earned Privileges’ (IEP) scheme I discuss in ‘Bang-Up’, which controls by dividing the prison population into categories of “status” based on behaviour and compliance.

“We think that it’s in the passing, from the biological moment (the eruption of a virus), to the political answer given to it, that a whole architecture of fear is built. If in the past this construction was based on an external enemy, that in a way, was perceived as tangible (ie. “the terrorist”), nowadays it is based on an invisible and unpredictable enemy, that due to its biological characteristics, permits management based on physical imprisonment. Without wanting to debate the existence of the virus here, or its higher or lower levels of danger (we are not scientists and we don’t think that is the main issue anyway), it seems to us to be of extreme importance to discuss the political effects that arise from the response of the State and society, their immediate consequences in day-to-day life, and the changes that these will provoke in the way life is perceived and on the way social space is inhabited in the future. Since the very beginning of the so-called Covid-19 crisis, one could witness the use of war-like speeches by the authorities, in the manner of a war that is created by the simple fact that is declared by alarmist speeches. This bellicosity of the speech seems to serve several, more or less obvious, functions besides the creation of fear in society. First of all this speech justifies the adoption of extraordinary measures that, in a so-called normal situation, would hardly be accepted. All the practice of confinement and restriction of life is justified by that exceptional moment of being at war with the virus. On the other hand, the perception of being at war leads society to congregate around the State and consequently around governments as the only pillars that can guarantee life on earth and protect the individual. It seems to us that this fact exists even when national health services collapse as was the case in Italy or Spain. Besides the catastrophic management of the situation, the State keeps on being the only cardinal point which society turns to. At last, the socialization of the warlike speech collectivized in the sentence “we are at war against the virus”, also allows the perception of the one who revolts against the state of exception (lockdown) to be transformed and seen not as enemy of the State (by breaking its laws) but as an enemy of society and as a potential infectious agent. It is at this point that one can see the creation of a new internal enemy, not anymore as an enemy of the State but as an enemy of society and potentially of Life itself.”

– *Some Thoughts on Covid & Anarchists*

*“Over the past month, the Coronavirus Act has been applied by police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and magistrates disastrously... These Regulations, despite accounting for the greatest loss of liberty ever imposed on the British public, have not benefited from full parliamentary scrutiny, oversight, or approval... However, this wave of excessive policing is likely to have a lasting impact on policing practices and public attitudes.” – ‘Big Brother Watch: April 2020: Emergency Powers and Civil Liberties’*

When I read this quote it really brought home to me what a strange (and terrifying) situation we are operating in. Of course, it is important to be aware of the myriad of ways in which the state is capitalising on corona to sharpen its teeth, and rapidly expand into new areas of tech (and the public psyche). But we have already lost if we get caught up in concepts such as “excessive policing” or calling for “parliamentary scrutiny”. This is of no interest to me... It is like logging which way the Leviathan lurches, and thinking that will bring it crashing down.

*“This is an unprecedented public health emergency, with an unprecedented national effort to fight this virus. We’re all in this together and each and every one of us has a role to play by following the government advice.” – Chief Cons. Rhodes, Lancashire police*

The ‘Coronavirus Act’, and related tech (such as Lancashire Police’s snitching website, outlined above) is an insidious extension of many methodologies that will be common to people who have served time in prison. For example, ‘MDT’s’ (Mandatory Drug Tests) are common in jail. As I outlined in ‘Bang-Up’ I was subjected to a high number of these, because everyone knew that I am ‘straight-edge’ (prisons frequently skew their data; normally ‘randomly’ selecting people they know are ‘clean’ to try and report low rates of drug use to HMIP – ‘Her Majesties Inspectorate of Prisons’.) For me, as I was always negative, the worst part of this process was pissing in front of a screw. But, those who test positive on an MDT (and there are many false-positives) are immediately locked behind their cell door, put on ‘basic’, and possibly have to face an adjudication (often resulting in extra time). A prison version of ‘contract tracing’ ensues, where their ‘security reports’ are scrutinised; and people who they may have come into contact with are questioned or highlighted as possibly contaminated; even if they have no connection to drug use.

In relation to tech here, as you have outlined, Palantir have made a big splash in the corona related tech world by only charging ‘NHSX’ (the branch of the NHS behind the app, as outlined in ‘The Road’) £1 for

their involvement in the project (providing 45 engineers to NHS England’s technical teams, who are using Microsoft’s Azure cloud platform, Google’s G-Suite tools and G-cloud data processing contract). Nothing comes for free in this world... For anyone optimistically looking forward to a halcyon day when Fortress Europe might reopen in some limited way, it is worth noting that Palantir has its roots in ‘counter-terrorism’ and has contracts with both ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement in America) and the CIA.

Palantir have carefully emphasised that they are “data processors” not “data controllers”, stating that their tech behind the app (the ‘Foundry’ project): “enables disparate data to be integrated, cleaned, and harmonised in order to develop the single source of truth that will support decision-making”. Covid-19 enables tech giants to use concepts such as “truth”, “harmony” and “cleanliness” to create a monolithic structure which hides an invasive, and unprecedented level of social control. As we argued in ‘The Road’, ‘contact tracing’ is a terrifying extension of the logic employed by social media and its users; the idea that if you are inherently suspicious (or indeed, in the case of Covid-19, actively want people to die) if you don’t want to be transparent, or participate.

“As we have seen countless times in the last few weeks, a national effort is required to limit the impact of Covid-19, whether that means asking car manufacturers to build ventilators, private hospitals to aid the NHS, or technology firms to provide software to power the response... We believe that the support provided by these partners will enable the Government to respond more effectively to the crisis.”  
– Matthew Gould, NHSX Chief Executive

What this quote outlines is that, like Covid-19, capitalism is both adaptable and quick to mutate. I am no expert, and I cannot begin to conceive the unfettered leaps that technology will make in this new world. Tech corporations have mutated; forging uneasy alliances to further themselves, spreading an invisible but far-reaching coronal smear behind the facade of “public good” or “health”. Who knows where we will be by the time we get to the next ladder or snake in the game of the ‘Five Tier Corona Virus Alert System’.

A final note on my tech tangent : ) you asked about the 5G masts and conspiracy theories. I am painfully aware that I am no expert on this, and I also do not want to fall into the dangerous trap of condemning actions by people attacking the state when I do not fully understand the context. I will say that I think we need to find a middle ground: between apologising



for our own existence and the possibility of being 'spreaders'; and the gun-toting 'Pro-Liberty' (anti-lockdown) protestors in America. Between a form of mutual-aid that is devoid of any form of 'politics' (afraid of it's own shadow in case it alienates the people that it is desperately trying to build a so-called 'movement' with); and the alleged crack-pot conspiracy theorists in the anti-5G movement.

In relation to 5G, I can think of many, many clear and valid reasons to hate it. Its possible links to corona virus do not really interest me. As many people have highlighted, the coronavirus pandemic is clearly caused by the fucked up nature of "normal" life today: destroying, consuming and exploiting other species, the systemic issues around class and race that have created conditions for the virus to kill thousands of people in the last few months. Speculation between Covid-19 and 5G is possibly a distraction from other more tangible aspects of the social war. However, I also do not trust the lens of the mainstream press, and can also see that these actions may well have been autonomous: done with a multitude of different motivations, conveniently tarred with the brush of 'corona' as a way for Facebook and other platforms to legitimise developing its tools and systems of control.

In April Facebook announced a new level of censorship, to "connect people who may have interacted with harmful misinformation about the virus with the truth from authoritative sources, in case they see or hear these claims again off of Facebook".

Once again the language of "truth" is being used by tech corporations to create a monolithic, unarguable front fuelled by the concept of 'health'. For as long as people have been attacking the state, the state has attempted to discredit them, to encourage others to jeer, and to divide so-called public opinion on tired dichotomies such as "violence" and "non-violence" or "good" and "bad" actions. Covid-19 creates a whole new arena for this tedious and divisive discussion. Social media creates an endless distraction; simultaneously providing a wealth of information sources, whilst ensuring that people are only able to look at what is presented by Facebook as "the truth from authoritative sources".

We are living in a messy time. Everything is sanitised, but we are constantly wringing our tired hands. We are all confused. I am confused... but even in my most muddled moments I can see that the concept of "truth" is possibly more dangerous in this context than corona virus itself. Let's see what is around the corner...

**London ABC:** You say in the conclusion to Bang Up and Smash:

*"In the relentless power struggle between the state and those who refuse to conform to its violent logic and domination, there is no space for complacency or reform.*

*Abolition is not enough. We are all part of a social war."*

How has 'prison abolition' become co-opted into an 'activist vocabulary' bound up with 'complacency and reform'? How, in your view, might we begin to wrest back an idea and practise of freedom which refuses capitulation and negotiation at every level?

**ASBO:** I have no intention of re-writing or updating 'Bang-Up' but if I was going to, I'd like to develop the section on abolition. It felt really important to critically engage with it as a concept, but I think I was too vague, and I pulled a few punches, as I was slightly nervous about how the critique would be received. So, thank you for this opportunity to expand on the topic : )

Firstly, I don't think that 'prison abolition' has been co-opted into an 'activist vocabulary'. I think it is inherently situated in this (and campaigns often explicitly self-identify with this sphere of activity.) In reflecting on this question, I picked up an overview of prison abolition created by the 'CR10 Collective'. This is part of the abolitionist network 'Critical Resistance'. They have published various "tool-kits", media projects looking at the 'PIC' (prison industrial complex) and "dialogues". I am going to use two sentences from them to highlight the tension between an abolitionist perspective, and my own...

*"Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal."*

*"Abolition Now! Reminds us that there was abolition, there is abolition, and there will be more abolition."*

The concept of 'abolition' is tied to the language of the state. As many more knowledgeable and gifted writers than me have shown, when slavery was "abolished", it was only in name, and many, many slaves were forced to continue to work in order to pay off a variety of supposed 'debts'.

In 1864, America "abolished" slavery (and involuntary servitude) except as "a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted". This is still enshrined in law (the famous and controversial 'Amendment XIII' to the United States Constitution). The use of incarcerated workers and prison labour are just one example of how slavery has mutated in so-called 'late-stage capitalism', but is still very much prevalent within the prison system. Most prisons across the world are dependent on some form of prison labour, and I talk about this much more in 'Bang-Up'.



*"The most difficult and urgent challenge today is that of creatively exploring new terrains of justice, where the prison no longer serves as our major anchor." – Angela Davis, 'Are Prisons Obsolete'.*

To me, this sentence encapsulates where my conception of struggle diverges from that of an abolitionist perspective. To put it bluntly, I am not interested in "creatively exploring new terrains of justice". Don't get me wrong, I think there is space (and a real need) for a diversity of tactics, and a multitude of approaches in attacking the prison system. But where abolitionism talks of tool-kits, I want an arsenal. The whole brutal and messy annihilation, right now, of the prison regime, not a discussion about "rights" and "justice".

*"Today, abolition is on the table, a goal that was not really on the agenda in 1998. A prerequisite to seeking any social change is the naming of it. In other words, even though the goal we seek may be far away, unless we name it and fight for it today, it will never come." – Rose Braz, 'Perspectives on Critical Resistance'.*

I am not interested in eating at their table, or engaging with it in any way. I am not trying to sound super judgmental or arrogant. Many people I respect and call comrades are involved in projects broadly associated with 'prison abolition'. But, for me, this 'long term goal' will never materialise, and what I am more interested in, now, is a messy attempt to attack the prison system and all the institutions that feed it. To use Perlman's Leviathan analogy again, I think abolition relies on the idea that the people inside the Leviathan will somehow slow down, and become more aware of what they are doing. I don't believe this will be the case, and I don't think it's possible to try and tinker within the worm while it is still flailing.

The language of abolition is one of hope, of long-term planning, of "community"... I think this idea of the future is the stumbling block to me in a lot of abolitionist theory. I view it as a sort of apologetic pacifier; one that tries to explain itself and legitimise its position (for example, often getting caught up in demonstrating community responses to sexual violence...). Prison is a violent system right now, that needs destroying today.

There is a time for talking, and I am not so head-strong that I cannot see the importance of having processes for dealing with accountability processes and community responses. But I do not believe we can dismantle capitalism. I am not interested in this as a project. I want to destroy it, and all the myriad of ways it will reinvent itself in its death throes. There are many practical examples of projects based

around prison abolition which are quite interesting, but they are always open to co-option by the state. In his text 'Punishment and Prisons: Power and the Carceral State' Joe Sim situates prison abolition as "a radical policy solution": *"Abolitionists have been deeply involved in activist interventions across the penal spectrum which attempted to make prison 'more effective, responsive and accountable'."* As with the concept of "voting anarchists" we outlined in 'The Road', I find any concept of abolition which can "make prison 'more effective, responsive and accountable'" a hideous oxymoron.

Sim uses a Gramscian model to highlight project of abolition, arguing that it attempts to replace 'common sense' with 'good sense'. To me, this will always be the failing and limitations of abolition, because it is still trying to make sense of a system which – for most people – makes no sense (and I mean this in the most brutal of all ways; with many people dying behind bars, or from the virus and related issues, as it relentlessly grinds on).

The concept of prison abolition was ground breaking because instead of looking inside prisons to reform them, it situated the prison in a much broader context of control, discrimination and division. However, as I outlined in 'Bang-Up'; a lot of the language around abolition is about "building" (as in, that beloved phrase of activists "movement building"). CR10 (and many other abolitionist collectives) have 3 main aspects to their concept of abolition: "dismantle, change, build". But the examples they give of "dismantling" are exactly the same as "changing" and "building": those of discussion and collaboration. The task of "dismantling" implies (to me at least) a process that involves some level of care, and is slow (or takes at least time consuming and deliberate). I am not so arrogant to say I have all the answers, and I think (hope) this is a point that was made in both 'Bang-Up' and 'The Road'. However, that doesn't mean that I cannot be critical. There are some projects related to the goal of prison abolition that to me seem valid and important. But it is all too often explicitly tied to building alternatives as it grows, or looks forward to (or works towards) a time when certain conditions will align (community resources, resilience, alternatives etc) to enable it. If we live in fear of "alienating people" (some patronising concept of "people" anyway), and always have our hands tied by the restraints of "movement building" then we are embarking on a hopeless endeavour. I think this is important to reflect on today with the various "mutual-aid" projects which have sprung up, which pertain to anarchist ideals like "solidarity" but are in essence basically charitable projects. This issue is explored more in 'The Road'.

This final question relates to the first question you asked I think. As I tried to outline in 'Bang-Up', the concept of 'rehabilitation' is used as a bitter pill by the state in prisons (and their related institutions). All manner of interventions and methods of control are used in the name of this amorphous concept. Anyone who has spent time in prison (or even just visited) will be aware of the passive yet brutally controlling way a lot of "progressive" sounding language obscures a litany of pain. I won't go into it in detail because I use several concrete examples in 'Bang-Up' of so-called "therapeutic environments" and "initiatives" that manipulate, re-traumatise and control prisoners (and encourage snitching). I think this language is why I often have a strong response to a lot of abolitionist texts; because so much of it sounds like jargon co-opted by the state. That doesn't mean it isn't potentially useful. But it is not my struggle.

I wonder what the UK's 'prison estate' look like in the time of Covid-19, and how will abolitionist projects relate to it? There was much discussion early on in the lock down about releasing a lot of prisoners, to decrease the chances of transmission inside. The right wing press were beside themselves as they predicted 4,000 prisoners being released in mid-April. In reality, the 'Ministry of Justice' "paused" this initiative. Right now, all prison visits have been suspended, indefinitely. Many prisoners are currently banged up for 23 hours a day (this includes at least three young offender institutions holding children aged 15 to 17 – Cookham Wood, Wetherby and Parc).

Prisons are on a knife edge in the face of the pandemic, and prisoners (and those held in detention or without papers) are at the sharp end of it. There is no sign of when the situation might change, or what repressive measures might take place in the name of Covid-19. Will the government herald a new wave of prison expansion in order to make more socially distant prisons? Perhaps they will try to legitimise this

as a way to boost the economy and construction industry in what is sure to be a crippling recession post-peak? When we say the virus has "peaked" who has it peaked for? What will happen to the huge number of people held without trial as part of the 'Coronavirus Act'? Or locked in psychiatric institutions having been diagnosed and disappeared?

I finished 'Bang-Up' with a random quote from Roddy Doyle which I really like, and I am including it here: *"We cannot win, and winning is not our intention. We do what we have to do, all we can do, is keep at them until it becomes unbearable. To provoke them, and make them mad"* – Roddy Doyle, *A Star Called Henry*

I don't want to win. I am not interested in truth, or facts. I want to poke (from a distance), to prod. To find cracks. To stare down. To keep on... And to provoke.

Always anti-social...

*ASBO*. 11/05/20 X

## DEMOLITION, NOT ABOLITION

**03.11.20, Hamburg, Germany:** *A utility vehicle is torched belonging to Strabag, "involved in the construction of the A49 motorway[...]"* The Dannenröder forest has been occupied since October 1, 2019, the occupants want to prevent the approximately 300-year-old forest from giving way to a new highway. More recently, the people there have also gone on the offensive and attacked the cop patrols from the forest. Elsewhere, its Züblin subsidiary enriches itself with jails by planning and erecting the walls behind which are notably locked up those who oppose themselves to all this shit."

**24.10.20, Cypress, USA:** *Fire set to a Johnson Controls vehicle at their facility.* "Johnson Controls – along with their division Tyco Integrated Security – produces surveillance technologies for jails, prisons, and ICE detention centers. The technology developed by Johnson Controls facilitates the policies of mass incarceration and deportation that are integral to the everyday functioning of the carceral state."



**12.11.20:** Gran Vía (one of the biggest entrances to the centre of Barcelona) is cut off for an hour by burning tyre barricade at 7am accompanied by a banner in support of prisoners on rotating hunger strike in the Spanish State

**14.04.19, Montreal, Canada:** *Headquarters of architects Lema, involved in construction of a proposed new migrant prison, are visited.* "We shut off access to the building by gluing all the locks, smashing the electronic sensors that permit access to the building by key cards, and u-locking door handles together at multiple entrances. The garage doors were blocked by a combination of spike strips and smoke bombs, which were rigged to go off if the garage doors opened. We assume that employees and company clients had a hard time accessing the building the next day, and hope they will continue to feel the effects of escalating actions against them and others involved in the project."

**26.12.18, Berlin, Germany:** "We would like to believe that courthouses catch fire on their own, but it wasn't so in this case... [W]e poured fifteen liters of flammable



liquid combined with styrofoam into the basement where files were stored and set it on fire. [F]lames to the jailers and their justice!"

**16.09.17, Cork, Ireland:** *A prison officer's car, parked outside their house, has the windscreen smashed and a molotov tossed inside. The attack on the screws is the third to occur in two years: in May 2015, a pipe bomb was thrown into another's car overnight but failed to explode; two weeks later, another pipe bomb destroyed the vehicle.*

**04.01.16, Athens, Greece:** *Samsung lose a company car to the flames. "Although there are many reasons to burn all vehicles, the choice for this one was easy as the Samsung company are directly involved in the development of control technologies such as cameras with facial recognition and identification of individuals via telephone calls."*

**17.05.15, Thessaloniki, Greece:** *A prosecutor's residence is identified, an incendiary device (low-powered so as not to risk the neighbours) is left in solidarity with anarchists struggling in prison.*

**21.02.15, Lamia, Greece:** *The chief warden of Domokos' notorious Type C high security prison is gunned down by unknown assailants (during times of fierce struggle against jail conditions) as he leaves his house, and is killed on the spot.*

**14.01.15, Brussels, Belgium:** *Agitation and sabotage against the proposed prison construction. "An uncontrollable demonstration warmed the streets of Anderlecht (Brussels) a little. At around 6pm, a flare is lit, some tags are quickly made, and around thirty people take the street behind banners against the maxi-prison, identity controls and police raids. Leaflets are distributed along the route. At Clemenceau metro station, the cash machine of a bank is broken. At the intersection of the streets Clémenceau and Clinique, dozens of windows of the VK Engineering office are attacked; who are involved in the construction of the new prison in Beveren, collaborating in the planned construction of the maxi-prison in Haren, as well as the new prison in Dendermonde."*

**August 2013, San Luis Obispo, USA:** *Parole vehicle burned in solidarity with the Californian prisoners on hunger-strike for 60 days. "Like prisoners, we are all kept under constant surveillance. Like prisoners, we must do out work and keep our mouths shut. Like prisoners, our homes no longer belong to us (if we're lucky enough to have one, that is). However, the reality of the situation is that while prison breaks are very difficult and dangerous, they are not impossible. Any type of prisoner in any type of terrain can choose to go on strike, to fight back, and to attack..."*

**16.02.13, Italy:** *Around seventy "enemies of every prison" gather outside Saluzzo prison, site of a prisoners mobilisation over terrible conditions, and shoot fireworks against the watchtowers, break a hole in the fence, and exchange cries and laughter with the prisoners at their windows. Before retreating under tear-gas fire from the cops, "an inscription about three meters high and ten meters long, made out of welded metal rods and cloth soaked in gasoline, was set on fire so that the prisoners could read a simple message: FREEDOM."*

**06.01.12, Santiago, Chile:** *A 'salida', that is to say a sortie where rioters use the occupied university (or high schools since the student movement of 2011 in Chile) to take the street, blockade, and molotov the State vehicles that pass within range. Targeted this time are a prison special services van (forcing a flaming screw from his van), another transporting money, and a tax office. From the text released a while after: "A thought for the prisoners murdered following their attempted escape during the earthquake of 27th February 2010, the 81 prisoners who died in the San Miguel prison in December 8th, 2011, the two injured and murdered for having attempted to escape from the prison of Talagante January 29th, 2012, the 361 prisoners who died in the Comayagua jail in Honduras February 14th, and that is only a few of the massacres produced by the prison society. A thought also for the comrades who are in the jails of the enemy, they are not alone." This sortie corresponded to the fourth anniversary of the assassination of anarchist Matías Catrileo; an indigenous Mapuche (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg56**) who followed his ancestral calling back to the southern region of Araucanía and a cop shot in the back early on the morning of January 3rd 2008. He and other Mapuche fighters were setting fire to bales of hay on an estate colonising their lands, which has been attacked several times in recent years.*



**12.10.11, Nottingham, UK:** *"A visit to Nottingham Prison last night culminated in a fire being started underneath a prison vehicle. It had just gone nine when we arrived and after tagging some nearby walls with the messages of "Fire to the Prisons" and "Solidarity to those kidnapped", we quickly and quietly stepped to the vehicles, lit our fires and took off quickly into the night."*

**04.05.11, Bristol, UK:** *Three minibuses of the Probation Service burn inside their compound; collateral from the anarchists' fire takes out another staff vehicle and damages the Probation office itself.*

# HOW THE LEFT IS HANDING OVER PROTEST TO FASCISM

*[ed. – Written from Madrid, Spain, before imprisonment of a communist rapper was the spark that exploded the laundry-list of tensions in February 2021, with riots across the Peninsular drawing Leftists as well as anarchists and many others back to the streets. However, the dynamics described here dominate in many other countries still.]*

At dawn on November 1 at 00:00, the curfew *[ed. – of the 'second-wave' COVID restrictions]* started in the Spanish state. At the same time there were calls in the streets to challenge this restriction. The protests had an international echo, as they ended with clashes against the police, smashed shop windows, barricades and sporadic looting. The left soon put the call to the skies, pointing to the far-right, which was largely behind the calls that night. Unfortunately, it was not easy to join the protests that night and not meet up with a bunch of Nazis, at least in Madrid. But there were many other people who took to the streets that day, many not even right-wing, and there was probably more than one youth without papers, the kind of people that Nazis like so much.<sup>1</sup> **There were confrontations with the police in different parts of the Spanish territory such as Murcia, Seville, Valencia, Madrid, Burgos, Santander, Bilbao and Barcelona.**

The following reflection does not try to deny the more than proven participation and even the call of fascist groups after some of these protests. Nor do we seek to legitimize the participation of the left in these protests, because we are far from sharing the barricades with Nazi scum.

**We are amazed at how nimble the left has been willing to point fingers at the extreme right over the events. It is clear that political violence is always taken by democracy as a throwaway weapon to delegitimize “the extremes” (since the state is the only one that can exercise violence in a legitimate and hegemonic way). To be able to pose as the neutral, the middle ground, and the most legitimate. The embarrassing thing is that there are certain collectives, self-proclaimed anti-capitalists, who participate in this farce.**

<sup>1</sup> In recent months, at least in Madrid, several “protests” have taken place, as well as attacks by Nazis against so-called “MENAS”, which are underage youths without papers.



**The right-wing government of Madrid places the poor neighborhoods & squares under military occupation in response to the second wave; the left-wing did exactly the same in Melbourne, Australia...**

While some fascist groups (who had instigated the mobilizations) shifted the responsibility away from themselves and blamed the antisistemas (a term used by the media for anti-system rioters, ticks) and the “menas” for what happened, the social networks were filled with reactions from the left in the form of articles and pictures. Some of these reactions are understandable, insofar as they respond to statements that are not entirely true.

What is not questioned by us, however, are the clashes themselves, the damage to multinational corporations and banks, and the injured police officers. Nor the reasons behind these calls, because **the Spanish state, like others, is using them to consolidate an increasingly totalitarian police state under the pretext of the pandemic.**

What we want to say is: it was not the anarchists who took to the streets that night to cause trouble. *But it could have been*, and indeed it would have been desirable that it had been us and not them.

Clearly, there are vegan Nazis, Nazis fighting for their labor rights, and many took to the streets when the protests erupted after the last crisis in 2008, although the calls mostly came from the left and they were always expelled from the protests. We can share certain conflicts against power with some sectors of the right, often extended with “anti-system” discourses and aesthetics. And this does not mean that our struggles in their totality have the least in common. This is nothing more than an old strategy of fascism masquerading as supportive, rebellious and militant. **The unfortunate thing is that in this crisis, which is socially, economically and politically of**

**an enormous scope, we are leaving the protests to the fascists. Why?**

It seems that the Spanish state now has “the most progressive government in recent years.” A hearty round of applause for Podemos [*ed. – ‘radical’ leftist party that rode anti-austerity movements into power before applying the same austerity*]. Now we have to be calm, we just have to see it. Since the beginning of this crisis, there have been many statements in the press and on social networks that have tried to protect this government and attribute any possible protest or dissidence to an attack from the right. “This is not the time to argue, we must be united.” The few protests we have seen from the left have been limited to specific areas where they could be directed against the regional government, which is of course from the right. We cannot explain how social movements are able to live with these circumstances without feeling like puppets of the political parties.

**On the one hand, we want to point out that fascism exploits discontent to grow, but also that it does not do so without the help of the left, which tries to make dissidence invisible and blames all criticism on fascist and conspiracy discourses.** But we see from our anarchist ideas the urgent need for a confrontational discourse and practice against the state and the current situation, which also confronts fascism and does not leave the streets to fascism. This does not mean pretending that Covid does not exist or going beyond the limits of people who need to feel safe in the face of this health situation. We believe that it is necessary to look for a management [*transl. – of the struggles*] that is based on autonomy and individual and collective responsibility, that does not obey the impositions of any authority and that takes into account the diversity of experiences and needs. But of course, given the attempts of power to transform this into an extension of its social control mechanisms and, as we have always done, to question any authority. In this sense, we wanted to take the opportunity to make a compilation of anarchist actions and contributions in the streets in recent months.

When the government barely allowed us to leave the house for a few hours a day, you could see anti-government rallies and mobs popping up in various places in the neighborhoods, mostly sponsored by high-income conservatives and attended by fascists. Fortunately, on several occasions there was a response, often with the participation or organization of anarchist groups.

But not only the rancid or party-organized right took to the streets to make a critique of the political and

social situation visible, and there were some small anarchist demonstrations in different neighborhoods. All of them were organized among companions without making a public call, but some of them were later reported. **It is worth mentioning that one of these demonstrations in Lavapiés ended with a racist assault that was answered with kicks and punches, and together with some migrants who live in the neighborhood on a daily basis,** the assault was stopped and the police were thrown out until they could bring reinforcements to restore “calm” to the square.

Recently, there have also been demonstrations, not authorized by the authorities, in which about a hundred people participated, smashing windows of banks, real estate offices and betting shops, and blocking traffic with container and rented motorcycles behind them, on guard against possible police interventions, which in no case were on time. One of them took place in response to the eviction of the Ateneo Libertario in Vallekas on October 23; the other on the occasion of 20N, after the anti-authoritarian call was canceled, where the demonstration not only provoked several attacks against this type of business, but also encountered a group of Nazis who had to flee, leaving two of them wounded.

Finally, a group of anarchists recently organized a solidarity action in front of the deportation prison when the people incarcerated there started a hunger strike for the closure of the facility after it was reopened after quarantine. This was done in a quarantined neighborhood and in defiance of government restrictions that do not allow gathering in groups of more than 6 people. This also happened in a closed call that was not publicized and took place among a few people who shared affinity with each other.

For some anarchists, it has nothing to do with demanding concessions from power by taking to the streets. Nor do we intend to show that we are many, of course we are not. **For us, to make the struggles that are taking place visible is a legitimate thing in itself, and when this is possible, our proposal is always aimed at attacking the state and capitalism in all its possible forms, and breaking the social peace that entails the suffering and poverty of many people.** For this reason, we would have liked to have been behind the calls that challenged the curfew, broke every window on Gran Vía and injured three or many more police officers. The most regrettable thing about this issue is that fascism does not have the confrontation that we should seek.



We will continue to attack power as much as we can and try to break with this unjust reality. If we follow the calls of the leftists who give up, we will push the conflict in front of us, as we did in Vallekas and in many other demonstrations, moments and places. And we will also try to generate our own calls and spontaneous mobilizations against the “peace” and the silence they want to impose on this increasingly worsening situation. As in recent months, we are increasingly convinced that we do not need mass actions or the acquiescence of the left and politics.

*December 2020, Madrid,  
Some anarchists.*

### 'WE HAVEN'T BEEN STAYING AT HOME THESE DAYS'



*15th January 2021*

We haven't been staying at home these days. Like many others we won't resign ourselves to passively watching the State's management of the disaster. We don't accept the consolidation of a reality consisting of soldiers, police, CCTV cameras, drones, tracking apps... while poverty and exploitation are on the increase; while the repression is striking those who fight, who don't accept the democratic pacification of the political milieus, and continue to stand up to power.

**During the night we visited various offices of the main electricity companies, representatives of this national capitalism clearly linked to the high political spheres of executive power. Windows painted and smashed, one form of attack against those who profit from theft and exploiting basic needs. Fire against their vehicles, an inverted metaphor of the cold into which they are forcing so many people.**

Let these companies, destroyers of the earth with their extractive activity, perpetrators of Spanish colonialism, smell the smell of war. A special mention to Naturgy and Iberdrola, responsible along with the Spanish government (yes, the progressive leftist government) for cutting off the inhabitants of Cañada Real's electricity [a shantytown in the suburbs of Madrid] and that of millions of other people all over the peninsula, while putting up prices with

“While there are many differences with the situation here in Germany, there are also some parallels. In the Netherlands, too, the field against the authoritarian state Corona measures was left open by the radical left. There, too, the far-right and conspiracy theorists said thank you and filled the gap that had been left open. Open criticism of the way the state is managing the pandemic with its authoritarian policies from the left, with a few exceptions, only came from insurgent anarchists. They were also the only ones, except for the far-right and conspiracy theorists, who called for resistance. On Indymedia NL, for example, there is a call from anarchists to join the current uprising [ed. – in the Netherlands]. [...] Many leftists like to discuss the revolts in Chile, Lebanon, Tunisia and France. Revolts in which proletarian youth rose up, but in countries like the Netherlands and Germany, large parts of the so-called left seem to have lost contact with the proletarians in their own country.

“When we talk about the uprisings in Tunisia at this point, it is also because no one in this country [transl. – Germany] talks about the riots in Stuttgart last summer anymore. Or, in other words, because there is no real spatial/perspective separation for the surplus proletariat that is full of pride in being responsible for the riots. There is only the left's misconception about the genesis and perspective of the whole affair. To a large extent disconnected from any proletarian reality of life, it settles down at home in the stay home Biedermeier until the state has eliminated the pandemic completely or takes pleasure in introducing differentiated concepts of the state of emergency into the discourse. To this day, there is no left-wing report worth reading on the revolt in Stuttgart, no interviews with those involved, no one knows the names of those imprisoned, no donations are being collected for the trials, no one visits or writes the prisoners” (Sebastian Lotzer in 2021 Nightshift [Part 1]). [...] On social media, many people cheered the collaboration between police and fascist hooligans in several Dutch cities on Tuesday night. That says a lot about the “common sense” in the Netherlands. Suddenly it was forgotten that the first clashes took place between the cops and the fascist hooligans. [No] doubt all together against migrant youth?”

– Corona Riots in the Netherlands

expenditure that is almost impossible for the majority of people to meet.

We chose a little vandalism to show them that we have not given up. Even if we know only too well that damaging a few windows is nothing compared with the millions of dollars that these vampires earn from others' misery. **Vandalism is just one possibility, there are many others. Strikes, boycotts, electricity theft... some other interesting possibilities.** These and other forms of protest, such as squats, are necessary moves to question private property and the society we live in. Some proclaim the need for greater control of the energy sector by the State, as if it didn't already have enough power in maintaining the status quo that subjugates us; as if a change of ownership or administration of the industry were a favour to pass round among "friends", when in truth what they are aiming at is greater control of needs, which correspond to the reality imposed by consumerism-work. Anything we can tear from capital and its structures will come through struggle and direct action. Any offensive action, against those responsible for our misery and the pillars that support them, is legitimate.

It doesn't matter how many pandemics and tempests befall us, we cannot neglect the fact that capitalism and its greatest paladin, the State, are directly responsible for exploitation and the destruction of life in all its most varied forms: think of those killed at work in exchange for a miserable wage so as to enrich the bosses; of the deaths of migrants in the sea (or elsewhere) as a direct consequence of the machinery of deportation put in act by all States; of the migration caused by the interests of the local and international ruling class; of the deaths related to the arms industry; of the deaths in police stations, in children's homes, in the prisons and detention centres for migrants, wretched places that the State uses to manage poverty and beat and intimidate those who don't bow down; of the destruction of the earth, the artificialization of existence, the tyranny of technology...

Because capitalism, even if they try to give it a human, digital, democratic, liberal, modern, scientific, intelligent, inclusive face... is this, and it is built on hunger, poverty, repression, dogmatism and piles of dead bodies.

We'll seek complicity and solidarity in every struggle and every revolt against the State and capitalism, and will express ourselves through attack.

See you in the streets.

*Some anarchists*

## A NEW LUDDITE REBELLION

*[ed. – Continuing our theme for this volume of Return Fire, that of querying exactly where the overlap is and isn't between us and whichever segment of the self-identified Left, we reprint this manifesto for your consideration by autonomous Marxist (sometimes identifying as anarchist) and pagan Rhyd Wildermuth; who often we find ourselves agreeing and disagreeing with in roughly equal measure.]*

*"Welcome to the modern world. It's just like the old world, except it doesn't work."*

*– Peter Grey*

My friend and I were both hungry; me perhaps a bit more so since I'd been traveling all day, hadn't eaten that morning and it was now mid-evening.

"I'll take you to dinner," I told him. "Somewhere close – maybe pizza."

"Okay," he answered, and then started looking at his phone. "This place has really good reviews. Just need to take two trains."

I was *really hungry*. "How long will that take?" I asked.

"45 minutes, maybe an hour."

I shook my head. "Seems far and will cost a lot to get there. Isn't there a place nearby?"

It was his turn to shake his head. "None with good reviews."

"I don't care," I answered, probably a bit too curtly. The hunger was irritating me greatly. "Let's just walk to one of them."

So we did, set out into the cold city night, finally coming to an Italian restaurant. I looked at the menu, the prices were decent. "Perfect," I said, turning to him.

"I can't find any reviews on Trip Advisor though," he answered. "But there's one about a mile from here with a lot of reviews..."

Exhausted and frustrated, I snapped back: "Food's food. I'm buying anyway... let's go in."

"But it might not be good," he replied, until suddenly seeing something on his phone that made him

excited. “Nevermind, I found it. Good reviews, we can go in.”

I’ve thought about this interaction very often since it happened a few months ago. My friend isn’t stupid; in fact, he’s very intelligent, and his magical insights into the world are often quite profound. Nor is he hardly alone in succumbing to the peculiar sort of paralysis of inaction I’ve recounted here. In fact, I suffer from it often too, as no doubt you likely do.



bizarre, anti-modern, ‘primitive,’ or appears to ignore all the ‘good’ that technology has done, you might be tempted to describe all this as ‘luddite.’ And you’d be correct, and not in the ways most moderns have come to understand what the Luddites [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg85] fought for.

**The Luddites have always fascinated me.** Men and women, sometimes cross-

**The desire to know if something is good before you try it, to want certainty about the uncertain – that’s hardly a new thing. But what is new, deeply radically new, is our reliance on social media (and the corporations which run them) and technological devices to give us that certainty, to tell us it’s going to be okay, to remove the risk that an action might not result in the absolute best conditions.**

As with a night out at a restaurant or a date with a person met online, so too with any of the actions we might take towards revolution. We look to Tumblr and Twitter to gauge the sentiment of others, to divine if our groups and theories and plans are popular enough, have all the required sign-off’s from every possible identity focus-group, and nod sagely when told *‘that won’t work’* by whichever correctly-branded social justice personality happened to come through our feed that particular minute.

We do not revolt because we might fail. People might get shot or imprisoned, vulnerable people might suffer more than they already do, police oppression might increase, and all that effort could be wasted forever. And though these fears have always been good fears, our reliance on technology for reassurances of certainty has amplified our inaction. This is not a controversial statement: if many of us can barely try a new restaurant without relying on smartphones to take away the very minimal risk of an awful meal, why would we expect ourselves to face actual, real risk?

## Those Satanic Mills

If you feel this way of critiquing technology seems

dressing, stealing into oppressive factories in the middle of the night to smash looms to stop production: that’s quite hardcore, regardless of why they did it. Besides the awesome acts of industrial sabotage, however, two other aspects of what the followers of King (or Ned, or Captain) Ludd did two hundred years ago are extremely relevant to us now.

The first aspect is their anarcho-paganism. They all claimed to follow a ghostly captain or leader who urged them on their night-time strikes against the industrialists. The stories they told about exactly who He was varied just as often as their actions: Ludd lived under a hill, or in a well, or under a church, all three places not ironically located “somewhere” in Sherwood forest, where Robin of Locksley and his fellow rogues were said to hide. Ludd was a spirit, a king, or a general (“No General But Ludd/Mean The Poor Any Good” went one of their chants), or just a captain amongst them, or even the ghost of a man named Ned Ludd (killed after sabotaging a factory, goes the stories). Like other similar groups such as the Whiteboys and Molly Maguires and Rebeccas, the Luddites invoked the mythic against capitalists and the State to great effect, at least while their resistance lasted.

And that brings me to the third aspect of the Luddite resistance, the part which I find most haunting as another year on this earth passes for me (I’m 41 today, it seems). **To explain this aspect, though, we need to step back a bit and look not just at the Luddites themselves but at the era in which they fought and the strange (and eerily familiar) historical circumstances which created the world around them.**

If industrial capitalism has a specific birthdate and birthplace, it was 1769 in Derbyshire, England. It was

in that year and in that place the very first modern factory was built by Richard Arkwright. The sound of the factory was compared to “the devil’s bagpipes,” a fact memorialized in this poem by Lorna Smithers:

When Richard Arkwright played the devil’s bagpipes on Stoneygate a giant hush came over the town. The blistering whirring sound against the pink horizon of a sun that would not set over clear sights for two centuries of soot and smog was damnable. Yes damnable! Gathering in storm clouds over Snape Fell.

You who have seen a premonition might have heard the village seers tell of smoke for flesh charry knees and the squalor of shanty towns. Red brick mills turning satanic faces to the coin of their heliotropic sun: Empire.

Piecers running between generations bent legged beggars, tongue in cheek defiant. Weavers watching shuttles slipping through fingers like untamed flies. Luddites sweeping across greens with armaments and gritted teeth...

It took forty years for Arkwright’s new terror, “those Satanic mills” as William Blake called them in 1804, to finally spark the resistance movement known as the Luddites. In that space of time, Arkwright’s first mill multiplied into 2400 similar factories spread throughout England (mostly in the major cities), an average of 60 a year.

So, in two generations, Britain had gone from a place where there was no such thing as a factory to a place where there were several thousands. In four decades, an entire society which had started out knowing nothing about industrialization appeared to become irrevocably industrialised, and it was at that point the Luddites struck.

But why then? Why not before? And why fight what appeared to be inevitable?

## Against the Modern World

We must first ignore the modern interpretation of what a Luddite is. They weren’t ‘anti-technology’ or slow-to-adapt old people hopelessly left behind in a new world. Nor were they only concerned with fighting for better wages for weavers (who, before the factories, were able to support themselves and large families on the income from their specialized trade).

They were people close to my age and somewhat younger, the oldest people alive in Britain who could still remember the old world before factories, but still also young enough to actually work in them. They were a generation that stood on a threshold between

the pre-industrial world and the new industrial capitalist order.

*Imagine if you will what it must have been like to see your parents and the older people in your villages, towns, and cities starving because they could not or would not adapt to this brave new world. Many of them were too old, feeble, or weak-sighted to work in the factories, and anyway the factory owners preferred children as young as five to do much of the nimble work (and they couldn’t fight back). So while you see the older generation starving and destitute, you also see your own children or younger siblings coming home from the mills with broken fingers, strange bruises, and unmentionable wounds from their 14-hour day crawling under machinery to tie broken threads or retrieve loose bobbins.*

*And then there’s you, you and others your age, still young enough to work in many of the mills yet old enough to remember when the world wasn’t like this at all.*

Now, it is almost impossible for us to imagine a world before factories, even as in many modern liberal democratic countries very few of us have actually stepped foot in one. That’s not because they aren’t around anymore: they’ve moved mostly to Asia and Africa, where exhausted workers are crammed up like cattle in a slaughterhouse to make the phone and laptops you’re probably reading this on (as well as the clothes you’re wearing, possibly the chair you’re sitting on, and most of the stuff inside the home where you lay your head at night) for little or no wages.



Some of the most hazardous chemicals on Earth entering the food chain in Ghana’s capital, Accra, from illegally-disposed e-waste coming from Europe that residents break up to sell the metals

And it is almost impossible to imagine what society was like before the factory. **What was it like to only wear clothes made by yourself or people who lived nearby? What was life like before the cities swelled with displaced peasants blinking in the light of dawn before the gates of textile and steel**

mills, hungry and exhausted but jostling each other in line for a job that day to feed their family? What did the streets and town squares look like at night before everyone had to wake up at dawn to go to work? How did we relate to each other before wages became the only way to survive? And what did society look like before mass-production, when no one ever wore the same thing, when 'pre-packaged experiences,' monoculture, and conformity were literally impossible?

It is almost impossible to imagine the world before factories.

Almost, but not *completely*.

Because we are living in a similar world to what the Luddites experienced.

### **"All that is sacred is profaned..."**

If you can pinpoint any places in western history where technology severely altered the way human society functioned, I suspect there are three. The most obvious one is the industrial revolution, which was also the birth of capitalism. The one before that changed the world as well (but much more slowly) was the invention of the printing press, which gave to early merchants and the bourgeoisie the power to disseminate literature outside the strictures of religious and royal decree. And while we tend to see that invention as a net gain for humanity, we must remember that mass-printing and distribution has always been primarily in the hands of the rich, with the rest of us merely passive consumers.

The third – well, that's the era we're in now, the computer/internet 'revolution.'

The first 'node-to-node' digital communication happened in 1969, 200 years after from the birth of Richard Arkwright's steam-powered looming frame. But being military technology, it took more than a decade for that technology to filter out to non-military capitalists and become the 'World Wide Web.' In the following decades, we've gone from a world where random ("risky") human interactions occurred only in public spaces to one where most such interactions now occur 'online.' Here's some other stuff that has changed:

- 30 years ago, there were no smartphones or texting; in 2015, 98% of all Americans 18-29 years old had a cellphone.
- 17 years ago there was no Wikipedia, 14 years ago there was no such thing as Facebook, 12 years ago no Twitter, 11 years

ago no Tumblr, and 7 years ago no Instagram.

- In 1984 only 8% of US homes had a computer of any sort; in 2010, 77% did.

These are all merely statistics about technological saturation; they tell us only as much as the figures about factories in England between 1769 and 1810 told us. But we don't need to dig very far to understand that this technological change has radically altered what it means to be a human in a capitalist society.

For instance: before cellphones, you could only be reached at home. That meant if you needed to wait for a call you had to stay by the phone, but it also meant that your life was less likely to revolve around the ability of someone to get a hold of you immediately. There was no expectation that your attention could be gotten at any hour of the day because such a thing was impossible.

Before texting and email there were letters. You had to take the time to decide what you were going to say to someone, write it out on paper, post it in the mail, and then wait some amount of time for a reply. Thus human interactions were slower and more ponderous and most of all more intentional. Even the angriest of letters wouldn't arrive until the next day at the earliest, and this slowness meant there was always at least a little time to rethink your immediate fury, unlike now with our instantaneous 'send' buttons.

Social media, however, probably represents the largest shift in how we relate to each other and also how we see ourselves. To have large groups of friends you had to do stuff for them, and with them, call them on weekends or send them letters, catch up with them for coffee or go to their parties or invite them for dinner, take vacations to see them or host them in your home. Now you need only post an update and read theirs to feel you've performed acts of friendship.

Accompanying that shift has been an increasing feeling of isolation and alienation. So many people now self-diagnose with introversion (as with trauma, or social anxiety, or many other ailments) that one wonders how humans ever managed to talk to each other before the internet.

The general response to this apparent increase in alienation is to state it has always been there, that being connected to each other more via the internet has helped us talk about it more, and that anyway we are #Blessed the internet came around to let us all be social despite our fear and misanthropy.



But in this case particularly, those of us who stand on the same threshold of change that the Luddites also stood upon cannot help but remember – *we all did fine without social media*. Better, even. We got over our shyness and anxiety because we had to, and the internet appears to have merely enabled us to *not* get over such things, to *not* address our social anxiety and fear of rejection and instead hide safely behind a screen.

Before the internet, binge-watching television (“Netflix and chill”) or staring at a screen for hours a day was a sign you’d given up on yourself and the world around you, were depressed and really just needed a friendly face or to go for a walk. They were symptoms of serious depression, indications that some large issue in your life has been unaddressed for too long and the things to ‘get you through’ had become addictions which prevented you from seeking help.

Now those things are all proud marks of ‘self-care’ enabled by technology without which we’d all surely be miserable, lonely humans. Nevermind that we are still miserable, lonely humans, and probably more so now.



### **Non-Binary Poly Radical #Blessed Vegan Cruelty-Free #Resister Queer Theorist Influencers Unite!™**

Less controversial but even more unaddressed is what this new ‘technological revolution’ has done to our ability to survive, to earn enough money to eat and pay rent. The much-vaunted and ridiculous ‘internet of things’ has made it so we rarely get to ‘own’ the things we pay capitalists for, and must re-sell parts of ourselves constantly in order to compensate for dwindling wages and no savings. This is the curse of the ‘millennial’ (a marketing term that, like so much else, somehow became a ‘fact’ in capitalist society) – to have no steady income but to have thousands of Instagram followers in the hopes of one day having enough to be an ‘influencer’. To

face insurmountable college debt and no way to secure housing but to get thousands of retweets on Twitter.

It is not just the fate of millennials. I’ve had two posts shared over 100,000 times and one seen by 1.5 million people. And yet I haven’t been able to afford eating more than twice a day in years, and have been nomadic for the last five years because *1.5 million views doesn’t pay rent*.

**The answer to the poverty experienced by more and more people (again – not just millennials) is to ‘monetize’ your life.** Or as put in a rather brilliant essay about nomads like myself at It’s Going Down (“Living In A Van Down By The Instagram”):

The point here is not to whine about how we all can’t be special snowflakes or social media super-stars; the point is to state that capital is colonizing all aspects of our lives, including online worlds, and attempting to make us in turn generate profit, content, and value during all waking moments, either online or off. And, there’s no better backdrop to do this than when we are constantly traveling, as we in turn are utilizing and activating our social networks for the sake of monetizing them. Thus, we are pushed to take photos and tag corporations in the hopes that maybe one day we could get \$50 for a sponsored post. To fundamentally turn ourselves, and our lives, *into brands*.

As was pointed out in the new book, *Now*, by the Invisible Committee, this has become both the economic baseline as well as central anxiety of our time. We aren’t just driving somewhere and enjoying a podcast or randomly picking up a hitch hiker, we are instead missing out on an opportunity to sell our labor power for Uber or Lyft. We aren’t taking photos to share with loved ones, we are building up our brand and trying to gain followers, which we will then sell to multinational corporations. This is the logic of the gig economy applied to all aspects of our lives, at all times, and in all scenarios.

To monetize yourself, though, requires you make yourself more sell-able, becoming a brand, a product, constantly adapting to market demands. Or as Badean wrote in “Identity In Crisis:”, in the *Journal of Queer Nihilism*:

The collapse of traditional subject positions is managed through the proliferation of a new positions: app designers, graphic designers, cyber sex workers, queer theorists, feminist publishers, social network engineers, trend hunters, eBay sellers, social justice activists, performance artists, porn directors,

spammers, party promoters, award winning baristas.

We are forced to continually define ourselves, to enact countless operations upon ourselves so as to produce ourselves anew each day as someone worth taking to market — our basic survival depends on the ceaseless deployment of increasingly discreet technologies of the self.

Everything is for sale: our sex appeal, our fetishes, our tattoos, our radicalism, our fashion sense, our queerness, our androgyny, our fitness, our fluidity, our abnormality, our sociability. Facebook and Twitter function as the new resume.

We are caught in the unending necessity to be continually educating, training, exploring, perfecting, and fine-tuning ourselves. Our continual self-invention is both economic imperative and economic engine.

No doubt this seems dire enough, but one more dark truth emerges from this constant race. **Because if we are constructing our identities in order to become more sale-able to people (be that for money or Facebook likes or even just to be noticed in this new hyper-gendered micro-radical hierarchy of new identities), how do we even know who we are anymore?**

To be honest, *I don't always know*. I am a radical queer anarchist pagan nomad punk fag brother boyfriend theorist bard druid, but none of that actually tells me what I am, only the hashtags people might use to define me on a social media post. Labels that once gave meaning now become indelible brandings. Try to shift any of those identities and the world (or the social media world, anyway) pushes back... hard. And just as often, those labels themselves are fiercely contested: I cannot count how many times I've been told I'm too 'masculine-presenting' to be allowed to use the term queer.

So who am I? Who gets to decide? And why are we using capitalist tools to mediate those discussions in the first place? Or is it possible it's those very tools which have triggered these crises in the first place?

## Not All Revolutions Are Good

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier

industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. *All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man [sic] is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.* (The Communist Manifesto)

The shift wrought by internet technology wherein identity is now the very battlefield of our ability to survive in the world may seem utterly different from any other struggle which has come before. In context of the struggle the Luddites and the early communists and anarchists fought, however, not much has really changed.

The rise of industrial capitalism triggered vast shifts in social relations which are to this day still being constantly disrupted. It should thus be no surprise to us that 'disruptive technology' is a statement of pride for many of the new architects of this current upheaval, an upheaval in which we also take part when we celebrate the destruction of older forms of relating (binary gender, hetero-normative society, class-based politics). What 'good' comes from these disruptions unfortunately seems fleeting and probably is. Because while it is a beautiful thing that acceptance of gender variance and queer sexuality have become so prominent, **it's a sick joke to say a poor queer or trans person desperately trying to pay rent by sleeping on a friend's couch while letting out their bedroom on AirBnb, turning tricks on TaskRabbit or bareback hookup apps, and desperately looking for the perfect filter to get their Instagram account another 100 followers has somehow had their life 'improved' by these disruptions.**

Yet, to this current horror in which we all find ourselves, perhaps the Luddites might shrug and say, *"at least you didn't have time forced upon you."* Because along with 'disruption' of the factory from hand-craft and laborer to factory and wage-slave came the beginning of an oppressive *order of time*.

Clocks became no longer curiosities but requirements. Suddenly, knowing if it was half-past eight or just 'morning' became the crucial difference between feeding your family for a day or starving on the street. Time literally had to be disciplined into us during the birth of industrialization, often times by christian moralists like John Wesley working on

behalf of the factory owners. Time became something that you “spent” rather than something that passed, work became measured not by what needed doing according to the season but what the factory boss demanded you do within a set number of hours.

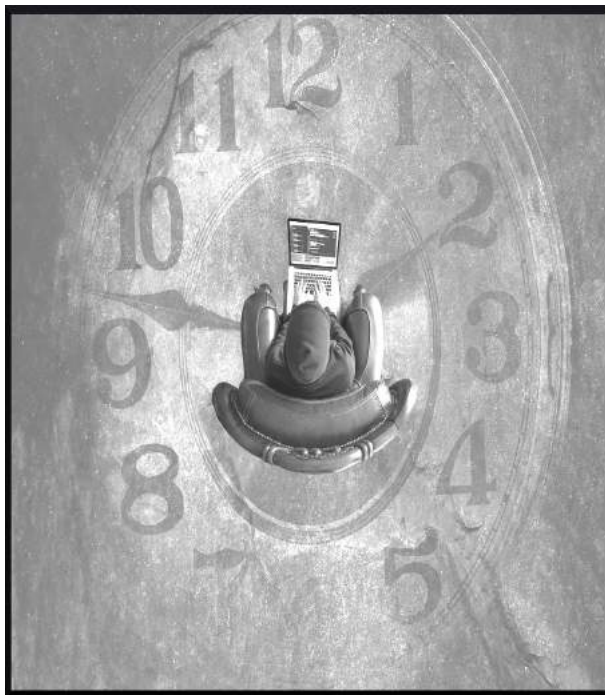
Before industrialization, work was task-oriented. You planted at some times of the year, harvested at others, ground wheat and fixed carts, wove cloth and made clothes not when an arbitrary number declared it was ‘time’ to do so but when *the thing itself needed doing*. And work itself was determined by how long you wanted to take doing the task, not how many hours the boss said you needed to stand at a counter or else be fired.

When attempting to imagine what that world was like (not very long ago), we tend to imagine it for ourselves, what our own life might have been like. Harder to imagine, however, is what all of society itself was like without clocks as over-seers. Imagine then what life would be like if not just you but all your friends and all the people in your town lived life without clocks, and you get a little closer to understanding precisely what the Luddites were fighting for.

## A New Luddite Rebellion

It was against such radical, world-altering shifts that the Luddites broke into factories at night, smashing looms. One imagines they wanted their time back, they wanted their children and parents back, wanted the ability to survive without working in factories back. They wanted back the rich texture of a society where you knew the people who made your clothes, talked to the people who grew your food, or were those people themselves.

We are living in another such time. People older than me lived most of their childhoods without the internet and do not (or cannot) adapt to a world where everything about them is on display, sold piecemeal through Facebook updates and Instagram photos.



Those much younger than me do not know a world without cellphones<sup>2</sup>, do not remember that it was possible to make new friends and meet amazing lovers without connecting first to an always-on device in your pocket. How many of them know you can arrive by train to a foreign city with just a paper map and a notebook and have the best trip of your life? How many will ever get a chance to experience what it was like to not just survive but actually have a pretty decent life in a city on less than full-time, barely-above minimum wage as I did in Seattle 15 years ago? And most of all, how many of them will ever know that risk and uncertainty is not something to be

avoided at all costs but very often the thing which makes life worth living in the first place?

*I barely remember what that was like.*

I also barely remember what it was like to be anonymous, to have hours and hours of free time without devices I felt like I needed always to be looking at, constantly notifying me that emails and texts and retweets and messages are coming in. To have long conversations with strangers while waiting for a bus, to make new friends on the walk to work or find an awesome lover by chance while whiling away the day at a cafe. And most of all, I barely remember what it was like to know who I am without labels – to not need to call myself anything but my name, and have that be enough.

I want that all back. If you are close in age to me, you probably do to. If you are younger than me and don't know what that was like, perhaps my telling of it is enough to entice you to want it also, and if you are older than me you might be shaking your head, having already mourned what's been lost.

More than anything, we **need** this all back. Not just our time (consumed constantly by always-on devices and relentless updates). Not just our Selves (boxed in, categorized, labeled and shelved by any number of ‘identities.’). Not just our ability to pay rent and eat

2 ed. – Indeed, police in England at one point handed out millions of leaflets with indications on how to “recognise possible terrorists”: not being in possession of a mobile phone or the “abnormal” usage of it (as in, not every twenty seconds) are considered officially as indicating potential threat.



and still have enough money left over to enjoy the ever-dwindling number of months and days we have on this earth. Not just all that, but we need our will back, our reckless desire to act in the face of risk and uncertainty, the chaotic and unscripted interactions between ourselves and the world which make our lives not just exciting, but mythic.

And therein's the key to the ritual invocation we must perform to take back what we've watched slowly sold off of our lives with each new screech of the devil's bagpipes. There are spirits, gods, and ancestors who keep the memory of the old worlds even as we forget.<sup>3</sup> Ludd was one, and though his followers failed to stop the horror born of



3 ed. – As we can already sense some readers' eyes rolling at any mention of sprits (let alone gods), it's worth mentioning here that the monotheistic Abramic faiths' ideas of God should not be taken as the template for what that word might evoke in a different context. For example, the so-called fairy faith of Gaelic culture of the past held these figures as distinctly unlike religion as we now know if in those lands: "The fairy faith is vast and broad. Linked to the land (I wrote a little about this for *Modern Scot*) especially in Scotland and Ireland and is still practiced in some places. At times, unknowingly. To my current thinking. The Síth link those of us in Scotland and Ireland back to roots of animism [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg41*] and ancestor veneration. I started thinking this while reading some of the tales of the Tuatha Dé Dannan (TDD) in the Book of Conquests (Lebor Gabála Érenn). [...] The euhemerist lens, (though I take a soft approach to this), allows a deconstruction of the ideas of the "divine" and divinity. AKA, the TDD are not gods and goddesses but human ancestors. It's a view that humanises them, which is a much-needed step back from current religiosity. The modern view of the TDD as god like is something which may have lashed itself to older ideas through a modern western interpretation. This interpretation is born from modern religious experience and interpretation. An overlaid subjective experience constructed from a western religious and scientific mind, later set to an objective fact. [...] This means unlike all-knowing god and goddess, they are fallible and more linked to a humanity we all experience. Under this philosophy, they aren't forces to be called upon to omnipotently deal with our issues. (A definite western phenomena). In short Euhemerism, is the idea that divine beings developed from the dead who later became venerated in life" (Who the hell is Sidhe).

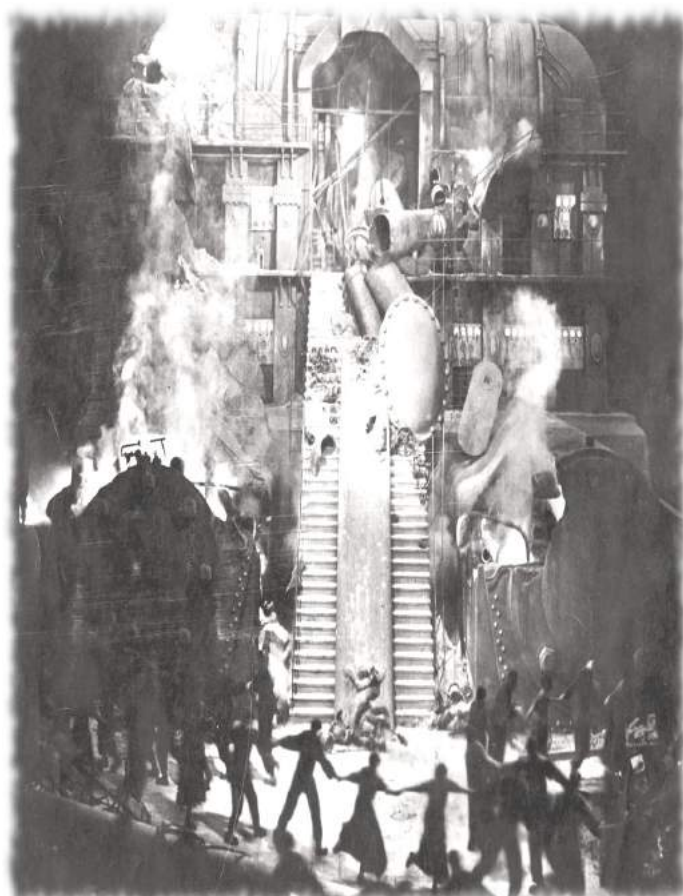
the factories in England, some of us still remember their attempt. Be it Ludd or the Raven King, Brighid or Dionysos, or perhaps all the old gods and heroes summoned together, we can make another go at stopping this new horror waking upon the world. From the shattered remains of the past we can reconstruct a new resistance against this increasingly senseless drive towards self-as-product.

And if we fail, we will no doubt be smeared by many for being 'anti-modern' just as the Luddites were, dismissed and forgotten by many others, but definitely remembered by some, just as the Luddites are still remembered now.

We may indeed fail. The risks are very, very great, and there's no Trip Advisor listing to assure us that there will be good food and pleasant ambiance after our uprising. Perhaps our failures will be re-tweeted across the world, Facebook Live videos streaming our defeat to countless millions using greasy thumbs to scroll through the comments. We'll lose Instagram followers and potential Influencer sponsorships while the rich and powerful of the world destroy more forests, gun down more poor people, and start more wars.

We probably won't win. But I'm gonna try anyway, because I want my life back.

And maybe you do, too.



## 'SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAN THE REFLECTION OF THIS WORLD'

The dream cherished by revolutionary movements in one way or another has always implied the emancipation of human beings. Be it freeing them from their chains so they can develop their full individuality, by changing their conditions so they can finally deploy the whole of their thinking, loving, feeling, living capacities, or be it by freeing them from this base behaviour: submission in servitude. A dream never unequivocal but rather diversified, influenced by resistance to the morals and habits of each time period and territory, inspired by unique desires. **When transformed into a rigid program it gave rise to the worst horror but it was never able to overshadow the passion of fighting for this dream for good.**

The enemy has been deaf towards these revolutionary aspirations. The struggles inspired by them and the fights carried out in their name have pushed domination in a dialectical relation to continuously adapt for its own defense. But that these insurrectionist ruptures have turned into tragedy does not conceal how the cavaliers of freedom, riding the plains of Ukraine after 1917 [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg46*], have for a moment felt an exceptional quality of life, that social revolution got wings several times throughout the summer of 1936 [ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; 'These Women Refused to Sacrifice'*], that in Latin America a great many times revolution assaulted the heavens. Or in our times in the Arab world, despite the generalised confusion and bloody defeats, fear has been set aside by the hope to change everything [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg87*]. **But power deploys a tremendous capacity to adapt and absorb.** Not because power has the best generals or its defense arsenal will always be much larger than the one of revolutionaries, but because domination is a social relation. Not only to we undergo it, we also reproduce it. We only evade shared responsibility for the continuation of domination in those preparatory moments before giving a destructive blow to power.

But that's not all. The dream we are referring to has, in the past, been amply reduced and has become digestible to power. There is no need to go through the whole of history, we can just look at the decades preceding ours. The subversive charge of the 70s, marking an important attack against the merchandising world and the state, carried a dream and desires. These desires were maybe more vast than what was experimented with in other revolutionary times; rejection of the family, demand for creativity and individual development, refusal of lifeless and

harmful merchandise, art as a realisation of life, destruction of work as a separate activity... All of this had a strong potential to weaken capitalistic and state controlled society. **But domination adapted in an unusual way following the defeat of the revolutionary movement, which was still not free of authoritarian tendencies and politics.** The material conditions that enabled the cohesion of a part of the proletariat needed to be destroyed. The demands it could express needed to be crushed. And this, so it goes, happened with the aid of new technology. Actually, the new technology permitted the enormous restructuring which took off in the beginning of the 80's: the breaking up of big industrial complexes and their dispersal over all territories, the exploration and exploitation of the “service industry”, the change of standardized mass production towards a differentiated mass production, the exploitation of “free time” rendering it productive. **Everything that was not yet absorbed by engineered commodification would in time gradually become so.** The activities having strictly nothing or almost nothing to do with production or reproduction were transformed into commodities under the cover of “free time”. Even the concept of free services, in some way camouflaging what is going on to the disbelievers, got put into the service of domination. It is enough to observe the tendency of putting different technological devices at free disposal, as well as telecommunication subscriptions, services, access to information (and sometimes even transport to facilitate access to the temples of consumption). This 'at no cost' concept is explained by the fact that in some way or another it generates more profit (for example in the form of information) that does its “selling” in the literal sense of the word.

All of this generated a new paradigm of the human being. New mentalities, new habits, new beliefs, new submissions. **The human being of today and of the future will be flexible, informed, multifaceted, different.** It has to go beyond everything that blocks the glorious march of domination. Ancient cleavages which in its time were necessary for the maintenance of order and the division of labor belong more and more to the past. Even those cleavages which have catalysed or are still catalysing important struggles, such as struggles against patriarchy, racism or colonialism, partial struggles with sometimes radical aspects can also be recycled and integrated into the democratic consensus as new niches and identities [ed. – see *'It Depends on All of Us'*]. The new model of the human being multiplies and plays with differences and profiles, including gender.

**The paradigm of the new human being does not, however, address all people living on this planet.**



For a huge number of the people living on this planet it only appeals as an 'inaccessible' model. It exclusively addresses itself to the included, it is the ideology of the included. Domination does not object to progressive conscience. The hipsters working in the ultra equipped Google spaces (Google has by the way abandoned fixed working hours given that the productivity of the individual does not necessarily coincide with the rigidity of schedules) can very easily feel concerned about the environment, hunger in the world, war victims or refugees drowning in the Mediterranean sea. They will probably disagree with the patriarchal division of tasks, the banishment of women to the sphere of procreation, the rather rigid hierarchical management instead of the participating model, the racisms of the [detention] camps, instead preferring the leveling cosmopolitanism of merchandise. **It will be more difficult to consider bringing down these included enemies because they present themselves as good-willed, tolerant, open, committed,** the total opposite of "reactionary barbarians" such as Daesh.

The world which is announcing itself has a much more gloomy side for the excluded. The times of lovely promises of well-being, that small decade between the fall of the [Berlin] wall and the destruction of the twin towers belongs to the past now. Domination has no reason left to financially support large layers of undesirables inside of the western paradise, as it used to do in order to defuse all subversion which could be fatal to it. **Soon the gap between the included and the excluded will be so deep that there will no longer be a shared language between someone living in a house of some technological company in Silicon Valley,**



Berlin, Germany: resistance to the proposed Google Campus

**combining work and fitness, cinema and ecological supermarket, creativity and communication, and the Mexican having a hard time in the sweat shops which the golden bubble is surrounded by.** As someone has said before, "*on the one side the included, those who "enjoy" the "well-beings" of technology and capitalism and seem to belong more and more to a separate world; and on the other side the excluded, the undesirables, those who die in the coltan mines [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**], around the fields of genetically modified soy [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg35**], at the side of rivers which become toxic tides, the redundant ones. The gaps that separate them become bigger every day, up to today's point where the bridges of communication are exploding one after the other. The technological language is one of its symptoms, the so called "irrationality" and hate without limits which is expressed during explosions of rage is another one.*"

In the technological world, the notion of space/time gets profoundly turned upside down. The technologies constitute a bulwark against the development of a revolutionary conscience because they modify the notion of time and space by throwing us into the a-historical, an eternal present. If we can no longer struggle for what has been *taken* from us (as was the case in the first phase of industrialisation), with a real memory of something more free, more desirable (even if that revealed to be, certainly, a myth as well), the roots of struggle necessarily switch to the domain of thought. And thought, reduced to what it is today, lost its capacity to create the imaginary, the necessary dream for all revolutionary movements.

*"Human beings cannot construct in the outside world that which he/she has not already imagined in his/her inside world",* warned a dreamer. **To build a world free**



December 2020: \$60 million damages to assembly units, vehicles & machinery during a riot of around 2,000 workers over unpaid wages at iPhone factory in Narasapura, India; thousands of iPhones are expropriated and production is suspended for two weeks during the crucial pre-Christmas period



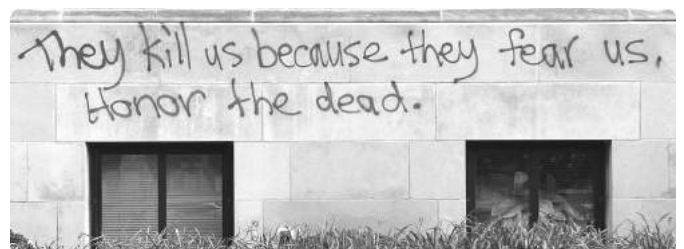
of authority, **one must be able to imagine it.** Not to program it, to schematise it or to measure it. No, just to imagine, in the two-folded sense of the word: to think it is to enrich it. But to imagine a world one must dispose of something different than the reflection of this world inside of ourselves. **And it is precisely the inside of the human being which is, assault after assault, today's target of the technological world.** We cannot fight the “new human being”, “the new man” this zombie deprived of an interior life, flexible, connected, (and which gestates in all of us, despite how revolutionary and rebellious we think we are) without conceiving deep down in ourselves a world, an imaginary, a dream which is qualitatively distinguished from the world-cage we are surviving in. This interior imagination cannot stay locked up in our brains and hearts, it would suffocate from wrath; it must overrun the real. And beyond the struggles to undertake, the actions to consider, the conflicts to participate in, or rather in relation to them, the question of *practical ethics* poses itself. To refuse as much as possible, and until the impossible, the invasion of technology, to not cultivate the dependence on technological devices, to not adapt to the era of immediacy. To continue reading books, those objects destined to become obsolete or a cult reserved for some elites. To not contribute to the impoverishment of language, this creator of worlds. To under no condition accept or justify the intervention of technology. These few declarations might make you laugh, but aren't those the laughs of ones who are already conquered?

## THE SIEGE OF THE THIRD PRECINCT IN MINNEAPOLIS – an account & analysis

[ed. – A granual working-through of the dynamics during a police station's surrounding and eventual iconic destruction following the murder of George Floyd by the US police.

Major TV channel Fox News and other reactionaries created a minor media storm over this piece, describing it as “Asymmetric Warfare 101”. Whatever criticisms can be made of the idea of fixed roles at a riot (which, indeed, the authors also make), this is a great break-down of how incredible acts of rebellion come to pass through complementarity of actions. We would recommend reading this piece alongside 'Imaginary Enemies: Myth and Abolition in the Minneapolis Rebellion' (despite the differences in our perspective), because although the momentum of 2020's rebellions on that continent overwhelmed the police as described (and even the National Guard and other militarised Federal units), ultimately it was the Left who were the most effective pacification, which deserves as much attention.]

The following analysis is motivated by a discussion that took place in front of the Third Precinct as fires billowed from its windows on Day Three of the George Floyd Rebellion in Minneapolis. We joined a group of people whose fire-lit faces beamed in with joy and awe from across the street. People of various ethnicities sat side by side talking about the tactical value of lasers, the “share everything” ethos, interracial unity in fighting the police, and the trap of “innocence.” There were no disagreements; we all saw the same things that helped us win. Thousands of people shared the experience of these battles. We hope that they will carry the memory of how to fight. But the time of combat and the celebration of victory is incommensurable with the habits, spaces, and attachments of everyday life and its reproduction. It is frightening how distant the event already feels from us. Our purpose here is to preserve the strategy that proved victorious against the Minneapolis Third Precinct.



Tagged during riots after the subsequent shooting in Kenosha of Jacob Blake by US police

Our analysis focuses on the tactics and composition of the crowd that besieged the Third Precinct on Day Two of the uprising. The siege lasted roughly from 4 pm well into the early hours of the morning of May 28. We believe that the tactical retreat of the police from the Third Precinct on Day Three was won by the siege of Day Two, which exhausted the Precinct's personnel and supplies. We were not present for the fighting that preceded the retreat on Day Three, as we showed up just as the police were leaving. We were across the city in an area where youth were fighting the cops in tit-for-tat battles while trying to loot a strip mall – hence our focus on Day Two here.

## Context

The last popular revolt against the Minneapolis Police Department took place in response to the police murder of Jamar Clark on November 15, 2015. It spurred two weeks of unrest that lasted until December 2. Crowds repeatedly engaged the police in ballistic confrontations; however, the response to the shooting coalesced around an occupation of the nearby Fourth Precinct. Organizations like the NAACP and the newly formed Black Lives Matter asserted their control over the crowds that gathered; they were often at odds with young unaffiliated rebels who preferred to fight the police directly. Much of our analysis below focuses on how young Black and Brown rebels from poor and working-class neighborhoods seized the opportunity to reverse this relationship. We argue that this was a necessary condition for the uprising.

George Floyd was murdered by the police at 38th Street and Chicago Avenue between 8:20 and 8:32 pm on Monday, May 25. Demonstrations against the killing began the next day at the site of his murder, where a vigil took place. Some attendees began a march to the Third Precinct at Lake Street and 26th, where rebels attacked police vehicles in the parking lot.

These two locations became consistent gathering points. Many community groups, organizations, liberals, progressives, and leftists assembled at the vigil site, while those who wanted to fight generally

gathered near the Precinct. This put over two miles between two very different crowds, a spatial division that was reflected in other areas of the city as well. Looters clashed with police in scattered commercial zones outside of the sphere of influence of the organizations while many of the leftist marches excluded fighting elements with the familiar tactic of peace policing in the name of identity-based risk aversion.

## The “Subject” of The George Floyd Uprising

The subject of our analysis is not a race, a class, an organization, or even a movement, but a *crowd*. We focus on a crowd for three reasons. First, with the

exception of the street medics, the power and success of those who fought the Third Precinct did not depend on their experience in “organizing” or in organizations. Rather, it resulted from unaffiliated individuals and groups courageously stepping into roles that complemented each other and seizing opportunities as they arose.

“We revolt simply because, for many reasons we can no longer breathe.”

– Franz Fanon



Brussels, Belgium, 09.05.21: Clashes with cops & police station burned over death of Ibrahima Barrie in custody

While the initial gathering was occasioned by a rally hosted by a Black-led organization, all of the actions that *materially* defeated the Third Precinct were undertaken *after* the rally had ended, carried out by people who were not affiliated with it. There was practically no one there from the usual gamut of self-appointed community and religious leaders, which meant that the crowd was able to transform the situation freely. Organizations rely on stability and predictability to execute strategies that require great quantities of time to formulate. Consequently, organization leaders can be threatened by sudden changes in the social conditions, which can make their organizations irrelevant. Organizations – even self-proclaimed “revolutionary” organizations – have an interest in suppressing spontaneous revolt in order to recruit from those who are discontent and enraged. Whether it is an elected official, a religious leader, a “community organizer,” or a leftist representative, their message to unruly crowds is always the same: *wait*.



Protest in Cardiff, UK, over January 2021 death of Mohammed Hassan from injuries in police custody

The agency that took down the Third Precinct was a *crowd* and not an organization because its goals, means, and internal makeup were not regulated by centralized authority. This proved beneficial, as the crowd consequently had recourse to more practical options and was freer to create unforeseen internal relationships in order to adapt to the conflict at hand. We expand on this below in the section titled “The Pattern of Battle and ‘Composition.’”

The agency in the streets on May 27 was located in a crowd because its constituents had few stakes in the existing order that is managed by the police. Crucially, a gang truce had been called after the first day of unrest, neutralizing territorial barriers to participation. The crowd mostly originated from working-class and poor Black and Brown neighborhoods. This was especially true of those who threw things at the police and vandalized and looted stores. Those who do not identify as “owners” of the world that oppresses them are more likely to fight and steal from it when the opportunity arises. The crowd had no interest in justifying itself to onlookers and it was scarcely interested in “signifying” anything to anyone outside of itself. There were no signs or speeches, only chants that served the tactical purposes of “hyping up” (“Fuck 12!”) and interrupting police violence with strategically deployed “innocence” (“Hands up! Don’t shoot!”).

## Roles

We saw people playing the following roles:

### **Medical Support**

This included street medics and medics performing triage and urgent care at a converted community center two blocks away from the precinct. Under different circumstances, this could be performed at any nearby sympathetic commercial, religious, or not-for-profit establishment. Alternatively, a crowd or a medic group could occupy such a space for the duration of a protest. Those who were organized as street medics did not interfere with the tactical

choices of the crowd. Instead, they consistently treated anyone who needed their help.

### **Scanner Monitors and Telegram App Channel Operators**

This is common practice in many US cities by now, but police scanner monitors with an ear for strategically important information played a critical role in setting up information flows from the police to the crowd. It is almost certain that on the whole, much of the crowd was not practicing the greatest security to access the Telegram channel. We advise rebels to set up the Telegram app on burner phones in order to stay informed while preventing police stingrays (false cell phone towers) from gleaning their personal information.

### **Peaceful Protestors**

The non-violent tactics of peaceful protesters served two familiar aims and one unusual one:

- They created a spectacle of legitimacy, which was intensified as police violence escalated.
- They created a front line that blocked police attempts to advance when they deployed outside of the Precinct.
- In addition, in an unexpected turn of affairs, the peaceful protestors shielded those who employed projectiles.

Whenever the police threatened tear gas or rubber bullets, non-violent protestors lined up at the front with their hands up in the air, chanting “Hands up, don’t shoot!” Sometimes they kneeled, but typically only during relative lulls in the action. When the cops deployed outside the Precincts, their police lines frequently found themselves facing a line of “non-violent” protestors. This had the effect of temporarily stabilizing the space of conflict and gave other crowd members a stationary target. While some peaceful protestors angrily commanded people to stop throwing things, they were few and grew quiet as the day wore on. This was most likely because the police were targeting people who threw things with rubber bullets early on in the conflict, which enraged the crowd. It’s worth noting that the reverse has often been the case – we are used to seeing more confrontational tactics used to shield those practicing non-violence (e.g., at Standing Rock and Charlottesville). The reversal of this relationship in Minneapolis afforded greater autonomy to those employing confrontational tactics.

### **Ballistics Squads**

Ballistics squads threw water bottles, rocks, and a few Molotov cocktails at police, and shot fireworks. Those using ballistics didn’t always work in groups, but doing so protected them from being targeted by

non-violent protestors who wanted to dictate the tactics of the crowd. The ballistics squads served three aims:

- They drew police violence away from the peaceful elements of the crowd during moments of escalation.
- They patiently depleted the police crowd control munitions.
- They threatened the physical safety of the police, making it more costly for them to advance.

The first day of the uprising, there were attacks on multiple parked police SUVs at the Third Precinct. This sensibility resumed quickly on Day Two, beginning with the throwing of water bottles at police officers positioned on the roof of the Third Precinct and alongside the building. After the police responded with tear gas and rubber bullets, the ballistics squads also began to employ rocks. Elements within the crowd dismantled bus bench embankments made of stone and smashed them up to supply additional projectiles. Nightfall saw the use of fireworks by a few people, which quickly generalized in Days Three and Four. “Boogaloos” (Second Amendment accelerationists) had already briefly employed fireworks on Day One, but from what we saw they mostly sat it out on the sidelines thereafter. Finally, it is worth noting that the Minneapolis police used “green tips,” rubber bullets with exploding green ink tips to mark lawbreakers for later arrest. Once it became clear that the police department had limited capacity to make good on its threat and, moreover, that the crowd could *win*, those who had been marked had every incentive to fight like hell to defy the police.

### **Laser Pointers**

In the grammar of the Hong Kong movement, those who operate laser pointers are referred to as “light mages.” As was the case in Hong Kong, Chile, and elsewhere in 2019, some people came prepared with laser pointers to attack the optical capacity of the police. Laser pointers involve a special risk/reward ratio, as it is very easy to track people using laser pointers, even when they are operating within a dense and active crowd at night. Laser pointer users are particularly vulnerable if they attempt to target individual police officers or (especially) police helicopters while operating in small crowds; this is still the case even if the entire neighborhood is undergoing mass looting (the daytime use of high-powered lasers with scopes remains untested, to our knowledge). The upside of laser pointers is immense: they momentarily compromise the eyesight of the police on the ground and they can disable police surveillance drones by interfering with their infrared

sensors and obstacle-detection cameras. In the latter case, a persistently lasered drone may descend to the earth where the crowd can destroy it. This occurred repeatedly on Days Two and Three. If a crowd is particularly dense and visually difficult to discern, lasers can be used to chase away police helicopters. This was successfully demonstrated on Day Three following the retreat of the police from the Third Precinct, as well as on Day Four in the vicinity of the Fifth Precinct battle.

### **Barricaders**

Barricaders built barricades out of nearby materials, including an impressive barricade that blocked the police on 26th Avenue just north of Lake Street. In the latter case, the barricade was assembled out of a train of shopping carts and a cart-return station pulled from a nearby parking lot, dumpsters, police barricades, and plywood and fencing materials from a condominium construction site. At the Third Precinct, the barricade provided useful cover for laser pointer attacks and rock-throwers, while also serving as a natural gathering point for the crowd to regroup. At the Fifth Precinct, when the police pressed on foot toward the crowd, dozens of individuals filled the street with a multi-rowed barricade. On the one hand, this had the advantage of preventing the police from advancing further and making arrests, while allowing the crowd to regroup out of reach of the rubber bullets. However, it quickly became clear that the barricades were discouraging the crowd from retaking the street, and it had to be partially dismantled in order to facilitate a second press toward the police lines. It can be difficult to coordinate defense and attack within a single gesture.

### **Sound Systems**

Car sound systems and engines provided a sonic environment that enlivened the crowd. The anthem of Days Two and Three was Lil’ Boosie’s “Fuck The Police.” Yet one innovation we had never seen before was the use of car engines to add to the soundscape and “rev up” the crowd. This began with a pick-up truck with a modified exhaust system, which was parked behind the crowd facing away from it. When tensions ran high with the police and it appeared that the conflict would resume, the driver would red line his engine and make it roar thunderously over the crowd. Other similarly modified cars joined in, as well as a few motorcyclists.

### **Looters**

Looting served three critical aims.

First, it liberated supplies to heal and nourish the crowd. On the first day, rebels attempted to seize the liquor store directly across from the Third Precinct. Their success was brief, as the cops managed to re-



secure it. Early in the standoff on Day Two, a handful of people signaled their determination by climbing on top of the store to mock the police from the roof. The crowd cheered at this humiliation, which implicitly set the objective for the rest of the day: to demonstrate the powerlessness of the police, demoralize them, and exhaust their capacities.

An hour or so later, looting began at the liquor store and at an Aldi a block away. While a majority of those present participated in the looting, it was clear that some took it upon themselves to be strategic about it. Looters at the Aldi liberated immense quantities of bottled water, sports drinks, milk, protein bars, and other snacks and assembled huge quantities of these items on street corners throughout the vicinity. In addition to the liquor store and the Aldi, the Third Precinct was conveniently situated adjacent to a Target, a Cub Foods, a shoe store, a dollar store, an Autozone, a Wendy's, and various other businesses. Once the looting began, it immediately became a part of the logistics of the crowd's siege on the Precinct.

Second, looting boosted the crowd's morale by creating solidarity and joy through a shared act of collective transgression. The act of gift giving and the spirit of generosity was made accessible to all, providing a positive counterpoint to the head-to-head conflicts with the police.

Third, and most importantly, looting contributed to keeping the situation ungovernable. As looting spread throughout the city, police forces everywhere were spread thin. Their attempts to secure key targets only gave looters free rein over other areas in the city. Like a fist squeezing water, the police found themselves

frustrated by an opponent that expanded exponentially.

### **Fires**

The decision to burn looted businesses can be seen as tactically intelligent. It contributed to depleting police resources, since the firefighters forced to continually extinguish structure fires all over town required heavy police escorts. This severely impacted their ability to intervene in situations of ongoing looting, the vast majority of which they never responded to (the malls and the Super Target store on University Ave being exceptions). This has played out differently in other cities, where police opted not to escort firefighters. Perhaps this explains why demonstrators fired in the air around firefighting vehicles during the Watts rebellion [*ed. – 1965 riots in the Los Angeles area after racist US police attacks*].

In the case of the Third Precinct, the burning of the Autozone had two immediate consequences: first, it forced the police to move out into the street and establish a perimeter around the building for firefighters. While this diminished the clash at the site of the precinct, it also pushed the crowd down Lake Street, which subsequently induced widespread looting and contributed to the diffusion of the riot across the whole neighborhood. By interrupting the magnetic force of the Precinct, the police response to the fire indirectly contributed to expanding the riot across the city.

### **The Pattern of the Battle & "Composition"**

We call the battles of the second and third days at the Precinct a *siege* because the police were defeated by attrition. The pattern of the battle was characterized by steady intensification punctuated by qualitative leaps due to the violence of the police and the spread of the conflict into looting and attacks on corporate-owned buildings. The combination of the roles listed above helped to create a situation that was unpoliceable, yet which the police were stubbornly determined to contain. The repression required for every containment effort intensified the revolt and pushed it further out into the surrounding area. By Day Three, all of the corporate infrastructure surrounding the Third Precinct had been destroyed and the police had nothing but a "kingdom of ashes" to show for their efforts. Only their Precinct remained, a lonely target with depleted supplies. The rebels who showed up on Day Three found an enemy teetering on the brink. All it needed was a final push.



07.06.20, Bristol, UK: much-hated statue of slave trader & local institutional hero Edward Colston (who transported about 84,000 enslaved Africans to the Americas and Caribbean) finally torn down after years of anger & dropped in the harbour near Pero's Bridge, named after an enslaved man; the council responds by removing the sculpture erected in Colston's place commemorating local black woman Jen Reid's participation in the crowd in under 24 hours, & 4 are charged with Colston's felling

Day Two of the uprising began with a rally: attendees were on the streets, while the police were stationed on top of their building with an arsenal of crowd control weaponry. The pattern of struggle began during the rally, when the crowd tried to climb over the fences that protected the Precinct in order to vandalize it. The police fired rubber bullets in response as rally speakers called for calm. After some time passed and more speeches were made, people tried again. When the volley of rubber bullets came, the crowd responded with rocks and water bottles. This set off a dynamic of escalation that accelerated quickly once the rally ended. Some called for non-violence and sought to interfere with those who were throwing things, but most people didn't bother arguing with them. They were largely ignored or else the reply was always the same: "That non-violence shit don't work!" In fact, neither side of this argument was exactly correct: as the course of the battle was to demonstrate, both sides needed each other to accomplish the historic feat of reducing the Third Precinct to ashes.

It's important to note that the dynamic we saw on Day Two did not involve using non-violence and waiting for repression to escalate the situation. Instead, a number of individuals stuck their necks out very far to invite police violence and escalation. Once the crowd and the police were locked into an escalating pattern of conflict, the objective of the police was to expand their territorial control radiating outward from the Precinct. When the police decided to advance, they began by throwing concussion grenades at the crowd as a whole and firing rubber bullets at those throwing projectiles, setting up barricades, and firing tear gas.

The intelligence of the crowd proved itself as participants quickly learned **five lessons** in the course of this struggle.

**First**, it is important to remain calm in the face of concussion grenades, as they are not physically harmful if you are more than five feet away from them. This lesson extends to a more general insight about crisis governance: don't panic, as the police will always use panic against us. One must react quickly while staying as calm as possible.

**Second**, the practice of flushing tear-gassed eyes spread rapidly from street medics throughout the rest of the crowd. Employing stores of looted bottled water, many people in the crowd were able to learn and quickly execute eye-flushing. People throwing rocks one minute could be seen treating the eyes of others in the next. This basic medic knowledge helped to build the crowd's confidence, allowing them to resist the temptation to panic and stampede, so that they could return to the space of engagement.

**Third**, perhaps the crowd's most important tactical discovery was that when one is forced to retreat from tear gas, one must refill the space one has abandoned as quickly as possible. Each time the crowd at the Third Precinct returned, it came back angrier and more determined either to stop the police advance or to make them pay as dearly as possible for every step they took.

**Fourth**, borrowing from the language of Hong Kong, we saw the crowd practice the maxim "*Be water*." Not only did the crowd quickly flow back into spaces from which they had to retreat, but when forced outward, the crowd didn't behave the way that the cops did by fixating on territorial control. When they could, the crowd flowed back into the spaces from which they had been forced to retreat due to tear gas. But when necessary, the crowd flowed away from police advances like a torrential destructive force. Each police advance resulted in more businesses being smashed, looted, and burned. This meant that the police were losers regardless of whether they chose to remain besieged or push back the crowd.

**Finally**, the fall of the Third Precinct demonstrates the power of ungovernability as a strategic aim and means of crowd activity. *The more that a crowd can do, the harder it will be to police*. Crowds can maximize their agency by increasing the number of roles that people can play and by maximizing the complementary relationships between them.

Non-violence practitioners can use their legitimacy to temporarily conceal or shield ballistics squads. Ballistics squads can draw police fire away from those practicing non-violence. Looters can help feed and heal the crowd while simultaneously disorienting the police. In turn, those going head to head with the police can generate opportunities for looting. Light mages can provide ballistics crews with temporary opacity by blinding the police and disabling surveillance drones and cameras. Non-violence practitioners can buy time for barricaders, whose works can later alleviate the need for non-violence to secure the front line.

Here we see that an internally diverse and complex crowd is more powerful than a crowd that is homogenous. **We use the term *composition* to name this phenomenon of maximizing complementary practical diversity. It is distinct from *organization* because the roles are elective, individuals can shift between them as needed or desired, and there are no leaders to assign or coordinate them.** Crowds that form and fight through composition are more effective against the police not only because they tend to be more difficult to control, but also because the intelligence that animates them

responds to and evolves alongside the really existing situation on the ground, rather than according to preexisting conceptions of what a battle “ought” to look like. Not only are “compositional” crowds more likely to engage the police in battles of attrition, but they are more likely to have the fluidity that is necessary to win.

As a final remark on this, we may contrast composition with the idea of “diversity of tactics” used by the alter-globalization movement. “Diversity of tactics” was the idea that different groups at an action should use different tactical means in different times or spaces in order to work toward a shared goal. In other words, “You do you and I’ll do me,” but without any regard for how what I’m doing complements what you’re doing and vice-versa. Diversity of tactics is activist code for “tolerance.” The crowd that formed on May 27 against the Third Precinct did not “practice the diversity of tactics,” but came together by connecting different tactics and roles to each other in a shared space-time that enabled participants to deploy each tactic as the situation required.

## The Ambiguity of Violence & Non-Violence on the Front Lines

We are used to seeing more confrontational tactics used to shield those practicing non-violence, as in Standing Rock [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg16*] and Charlottesville [ed. – *conflictual counter-demonstration against 2016 'Unite the Right' racist mobilisation in that town*] or in the figure of the “front-liner” in Hong Kong [ed. – *during popular and ongoing resistance to the colonial imposition of a Chinese*

*extraction bill for fugitives as well as other measures, by a mixture of democrats, nationalists, anarchists, populists and others*].

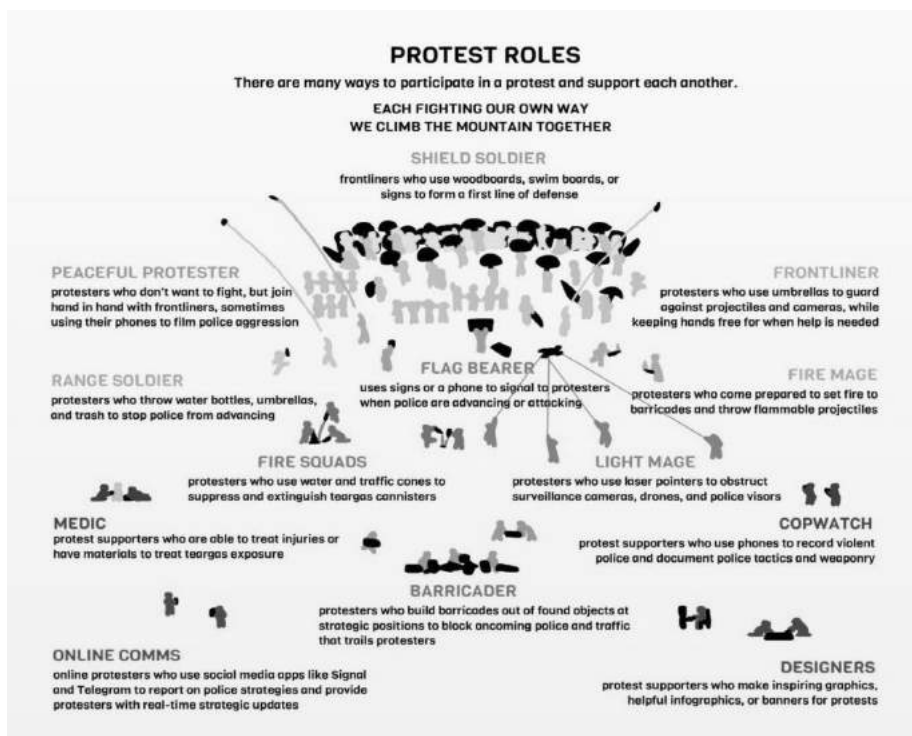
However, the reversal of this relationship divided the functions of the “militant front-liner” (à la Hong Kong) across two separate roles: shielding the

crowd and counter-offense. This never rose to the level of an explicit strategy in the streets; there were no calls to “shield the throwers.” In the US context, where non-violence and its attendant innocence narratives are deeply entrenched in struggles against state racism, it is unclear if this strategy could function explicitly without ballistics crews first taking risks to invite bloodshed upon themselves. In other words, it appears likely that the joining of ballistics tactics and non-violence in Minneapolis was made possible by a tacitly shared perception of the importance of self-sacrifice in confronting the state that forced all sides to push through their fear.

**Yet this shared perception of risk only goes so far. While peaceful protesters probably viewed each other’s gestures as moral symbols against police violence, ballistics squads undoubtedly viewed those gestures differently, namely, as shields, or as materially strategic opportunities. Here again, we may highlight the power of the way that composition plays out in real situations, by pointing out how it allows the possibility that totally different understandings of the same tactic can coexist side by side. We combine without becoming the same, we move together without understanding one another, and yet it works.**

There are potential limits to dividing front-liner functions across these roles. First, it doesn’t challenge the valorization of suffering in the politics of non-violence.

Second, it leaves the value of ballistic confrontation ambiguous by preventing it from coalescing in a stable role at the front of the crowd. It is undeniable that the Third Precinct would not have been taken without ballistic tactics. However, because the front line was identified with non-violence, the spatial and symbolic importance of ballistics was



To illustrate this 'Hong Kong strategy'

implicitly secondary. This leaves us to wonder whether this has made it easier for counter-insurgency to take root in the movement through “community policing” and its corollary, the self-policing of demonstrations and movements within the bounds of non-violence.

## **Fact-Checking: A Critical Necessity for the Movement**

We believe that the biggest danger facing the current movement was already present at the Battle of the Third Precinct – namely, the danger of rumors and paranoia. We maintain that the practice of “fact checking” is crucial for the current movement to minimize confusion about the terrain and internal distrust about its own composition.

We heard a litany of rumors throughout Day Two. We were told repeatedly that riot police reinforcements were on their way to kettle us. We were warned by fleeing crowd members that the National Guard was “twenty minutes away.” A white lady pulled up alongside us in her van and screamed “THE GAS LINES IN THE BURNING AUTOZONE ARE GONNA BLOWWW!!!” All of these rumors proved to be false. As expressions of panicked anxiety, they always produced the same effect: to make the crowd second-guess their power. It was almost as if certain members of the crowd experienced a form of vertigo in the face of the power that they nonetheless helped to forge.

It is necessary to interrupt the rumors by asking questions of those repeating them. There are simple questions that we can ask to halt the spread of fear and rumors that have the effect of weakening the crowd. “How do you know this?” “Who told you this?” “What is the source of your information?” “Is this a confirmed fact?” “The evidence seems inconclusive; what assumptions are you using to make a judgment?”

Along with rumors, there is also the problem of attributing disproportionate importance to certain features of the conflict. Going into Day Two, one of the dominant storylines was the threat of “Boogaloo boys,” who had showed up the previous day. This surprised us because we didn’t encounter them on Day One. We saw half a dozen of them on Day Two, but they had relegated themselves to the sidelines of an event that outstripped them. Despite their proclaimed sympathy with George Floyd, a couple of them later stood guard in front of a business to defend it from looters. This demonstrated not only the limit of their claimed solidarity, but also of their strategic sensibility.

Finally, we awoke on Day Three to so-called reports

that either police provocateurs or outside agitators were responsible for the previous day’s destruction. Target, Cub Foods, Autozone, Wendy’s, and a half-constructed condominium high rise had all gone up in flames by the end of the night. We cannot discount the possibility that any number of hostile forces sought to smear the crowd by escalating the destruction of property. If that is true, however, it cannot be denied that their plan backfired spectacularly.

In general, the crowd looked upon these sublime fires with awe and approval. Even on the second night, when the condominium development became fully engulfed, the crowd sat across from it on 26th Avenue and rested as if gathered around a bonfire. Each structure fire contributed to the material abolition of the existing state of things and the reduction to ash became the crowd’s seal of victory. Instead of believing the rumors about provocateurs or agitators, we find it more plausible that people who have been oppressed for centuries, who are poor, and who are staring down the barrel of a Second Great Depression would rather set the world on fire than suffer the sight of its order. We interpret the structure fires as signifying that the crowd knew that the structures of the police, white supremacy, and class are based in material forces and buildings.

For this reason, we maintain that we should assess the threat posed by possible provocateurs, infiltrators, and agitators on the basis of whether their actions directly enhance or diminish the power of the crowd. We have learned that dozens of structure fires are not enough to diminish “public support” for the movement – though no one could have imagined this beforehand. However, those who filmed crowd members destroying property or breaking the law – regardless of whether they intended to inform law enforcement agencies – posed a material threat to the crowd, because in addition to bolstering confusion and fear, they empowered the state with access to information.

## **Postscript: Visions of the Commune**

Ever since Guy Debord’s 1965 text “The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy,” there has been a rich tradition of memorializing the emergence of communal social life in riots. Riots abolish capitalist social relations, which allows for new relations between people and the things that make up their world. Here is our evidence.

When the liquor store was opened, dozens came out with cases of beer, which were set on the ground with swagger for everyone to share. The crowd’s beer of choice was Corona.

We saw a man walk calmly out of the store with both arms full of whiskey. He gave one to each person he passed as he walked off to rejoin the fight. Some of the emptied liquor bottles on the street were later thrown at the police.



The Precinct, defeated & abandoned, finally goes up

digging up a landscaping brick and unceremoniously heaving it through a bus stop shelter window. Her friends – also traditionally dressed – raised their fists and danced.

A masked shirtless man skipped past the burning Precinct and pumped his fists, shouting, “COVID IS OVER!” while twenty feet away, some teenage girls took a group selfie. **Instead of saying “Cheese!” they said “Death to the pigs!”** Lasers flashed

across the smoke-filled sky at a

police helicopter overhead.

**With buildings aflame all around us, a man walked by and said to no one in particular, “That tobacco shop used to have a great deal on loosies... oh well. Fuck ‘em.”**

We saw a woman walking a grocery cart full of Pampers and steaks back to her house. A group that was taking a snack and water break on the corner clapped in applause as she rolled by.

After a group opened the Autozone, people sat inside smoking cigarettes as they watched the battle between cops and rebels from behind the front window. One could see them pointing back and forth between the police and elements in the crowd as they spoke and nodding in response to each other. Were they seeing the same things we were seeing?

We shopped for shoes in the ransacked storeroom of a looted Foot Locker. The floor was covered wall to wall with half-destroyed shoeboxes, tissue paper, and shoes. People called out for sizes and types as they rummaged. We spent fifteen minutes just to find a matching pair until we heard the din of battle and dipped.

On Day Three, the floors of the grocery stores that had been partially burned out were covered in inches of sprinkler water and a foul mix of food that had been thrown from the shelves. Still, people in rain boots could be found inside combing over the remaining goods like they were shopping for deals. Gleaners helped each other step over dangerous objects and, again, shared their loot outside.

As the police made their retreat, a young Somali woman dressed in traditional garb celebrated by

We passed a liquor store that was being looted as we walked away from the best party on Earth. A mother and her two young teenagers rolled up in their car and asked if there was any good booze left. “Hell yea! Get some!” The daughter grinned and said, “Come on! I’ll help you Mommy!” They donned their COVID masks and marched off.

A day later, before the assault on the Fifth Precinct, there was mass looting in the Midtown neighborhood. A young kid who couldn’t be more than seven or eight years old walked up to us with a whiskey bottle sporting a rag coming out the top. “Y’all got a light?” We laughed and asked, “What do you wanna hit?” He pointed to a friendly grocery store and we asked if he could find “an enemy target.” He immediately turned to the US Bank across the street.



At the Precinct's remains; solidarity with 2020 uprising in Nigeria sparked by demands for Nigerian police (trained partly by the UK) to disband their death squads, with cop shops, banks, a TV station, state & corporate offices torched across the country & prisoners broken out, records and prison-blocks burned



# THE 5G NET

## – a key technology of power

[ed. – Reprinted from the German-language anarchist journal 'In der Tat – anarchistische Zeitschrift', #7, Spring 2020; English version from the translated compilation from In der Tat, Autumn 2020. This rightfully identifies 5G not just as another toxic and useless gimmick but as a linchpin of the new ("eco-")industrial expansion (that the capitalists will make sure is as much as possible paid for with public money, spurred on by discourses of health and security); something that certain anarchists and others have been pointing out well before the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the knee-jerk association of anti-5G sentiment with alleged conspiracy theories of the virus being caused solely by it: which the capitalists and the State have every interest in portraying as only opposition to this project. As of late November 2020, around 100 phone masts had been anonymously torched in the UK since the April lockdown (especially in West Yorkshire, including more than once on the same site after repairs) with many accompanied by anti-5G graffiti, while anarchists circulated online how-to guides based on the years of experience that has accumulated in our spaces from attacking these infrastructural necessities of capitalism's current configuration; Holland has also seen a density of attacks. Meanwhile since last year anarchists have continued to claim their own attacks on masts (including 5G) of various kinds, in Toulouse, Bath, Rome, Barcelona... (Regarding the latter, in October, while a second lockdown loomed the Catalan digital policy minister blithely announced that this year satellites would be launched by a new Catalan space agency to increase 5G coverage and surveillance.) Repression has struck this arson wave, largely in France (where, along with at least one anarchist, around three other cases have sentenced those judged responsible, including 14 people between 22 and 63 years old who are said to have acted together during the Yellow Vests anti-austerity movement to torch nine masts, mostly over the course of 2019) but also a 47-year-old was sentenced in England in June for one of the previous 13 attacks on Merseyside masts. In the case of Contes, in the coastal French Alps (and where popular opposition to a new installation over months had included several previous acts of sabotage), police waiting close by to the mast caught two red-handed. But in general there are far more masts than there are police resources to guard them...]



27.10.20, Bergamo, Italy: rooftop occupation on the site of the 5G mobile phone network as dozens of 5G masts are installed over a few days of lockdown

We could rightfully say that we are on the doorstep of a technological revolution if we weren't reluctant to use this expression for a project of domination. Many of you should be familiar with the projects, visions and dreams of the technocrats, therefore we don't want to bore you with another text about the dark future that looms in the shadows of technocracy. This text merely wants to emphasise one element that can't be sidestepped as being solely a question of details since from a technical point of view it is the basis of this revolution in motion. After discussing these technical aspects I bring up my own thoughts of where and how we can approach these projects of power with subversive intentions.

With technology, the ideas of connectivity and interconnectedness come along. A network which can be understood quite literally in a physical sense. Each new wave of technological innovation needs a connecting (infra-)structure which allows the necessary amount of data to flow. Many of these innovations in development (from the Internet of Things [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?**], the Industry 4.0 [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg14**], Smart Cities [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg31**] to autonomous driving) will put an enormous demand on the technological net.

**The old 4G mobile net won't be capable of meeting this demand, and therefore starting in 2019 the 5G net is being built.** The German companies Telekom, Vodafone and O2 already have around 60 5G cell towers operating in 20 German cities at partial capacity.<sup>1</sup> Numbers on how many cell towers there will be in the end are hard to come by. From 2025 on, the 5G net will be accessible everywhere in Germany. Estimations are that the density of cell towers will increase threefold. This would mean from the existing 75,000 up to 225,000. Existing 4G cell towers can also be converted to 5G masts, which is why other estimations conclude that in Austria, for example, only 1,000 additional cell towers are needed. Since the 5G net operates at a much higher frequency, the towers can't transmit over a long distance. That is the reason for a new, more densely enmeshed net, which doesn't only consist of cell towers that are one kilometre away from each other, but also of a dense "carrier structure".

Therefore by 2025, every 100 meters, "small cells" with 64 or more antennas have to be added to street lamps and traffic lights. Additionally the fibre optic net has to be expanded area-wide, which is a work in progress mainly done by local and municipal network operators. Furthermore all the dead zones (those previously without 4G coverage) have to get new 5G cell towers. The three largest network operators have erected 16,000 new antennas in 2019 alone. Last but

1 See [speedtest.net/ookla-5g-map](https://speedtest.net/ookla-5g-map)

not least, not only new hardware is needed but the entire cellular network also needs new software.

Germany has invested 6.5 billion euro in the expansion of the 5G net and another 50 million in research, while the EU is investing 700 million euro in 5G research. This massive global project of 5G technology is advanced by the state. The expansion of the net follows exact and tightly scheduled directives which are passed independently of which party governs. At some places in the German-speaking territories, there are protests (mostly citizenist) against the 5G expansion. There have been several petitions, and in Switzerland there is a "people's initiative" against it. Interesting in this is that these worried friends of democracy haven't understood yet that there is no democratic way of opposing the expansion of the 5G net, at least not in Germany. Also interesting is that these opponents of 5G have a partly radical rhetoric. They speak about an advancing surveillance state and about a technological open air prison. The conflict over whether the Chinese tech-corporation Huawei should get the license to build and manage the expansion of antennas in Europe has shown that those who own the infrastructure are in the end those who can do what they want with it. Thus, the expansion and management of this infrastructure is an open invitation for "espionage". Interesting is also that said critics first and foremost express health concerns about the expansion of 5G, while it's mostly new technologies that are praised for making life healthier, longer, more unrestricted. Countless studies try to prove that electro-magnetic fields harm us, as well as the flora and fauna. The expansion of the 5G net means that we all get additionally 1,000,000,000 of such electro-magnetic impulses every second. Whereas many anarchists (at least in the German-speaking context) cede arguments like this to a tin-foil-hat conspiracy fraction, I'm not surprised that connections can be made between Wi-Fi- and radio frequencies on the one hand and cancers, sleeping problems, infertilities and headaches on the other. That many trees might have to be cut down for 5G because they are obstructing transmissions, is just a side note... But what in the devil's name does the state try to achieve with such an enormous net? Basically, it is about the interconnection of the world and the smartification of all life. Sounds pompous? Well it is. If one reads the 5G plan of the German federal government (which areas shall be smartified with the 5G net), it is literally about everything. From industry and its logistics to agriculture and "farm-management-systems", to "intelligent networks" like smart meters and all sorts of smart grids and smart utilities, to E-Health and interconnected ambulances, and e-office-hour; the media of the future like Augmented and Virtual Reality and finally Smart

Cities with their intelligent street lamps and traffic lights, smart rubbish trucks and buses. These are all just examples, and it is clear that Industry 4.0 will be the sector for which this technology will be the most relevant. It is striking that the state not only builds the 5G net and offers it for use, but it wants "all branches" to "recognize the potential and to submit their requests", as well as having the goal to "foster the engagement of the German economy in the area of 5G application research" via competitions of Smart Cities that are tailor-made for individual cities and municipalities. **Finally the state and the industry aim for an extensive implementation of the Internet of Things.** First the applications will be available to industry, where from now on high-tech machines communicate with each other and "learn" automatically during the production of new machines and products. At the same time the scenario of interconnected and communicating devices through the internet is applied in video games and apps of the entertainment industry and step by step in areas like medicine and finally cities.

Such a world of the Internet of Things is finally the perfect cybernetic wet dream. Permanently data is produced, collected, selected, and analysed, so that processes can be observed and directed in real-time and developments and (ir-)regularities can be anticipated. Of course the state is in the position of the manager which tries to bring light to the dark spots, to find the irregularities and crises and to counteract them, preventively in the best case. Through this a self-regulating society of control will develop. Its architecture means that every break with the rules will be noted and individuals will develop a disciplining and preventive relation to themselves like the prisoner in a cell of the Panopticon [*ed. – see 'Everything is Sanitised, But We are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands'*] – the eye of the state always present. There is maybe not only an aesthetic similarity between the SmartWatch on the wrist of the jogger and the electronic bracelet of the prisoner on parole... Like mountain tops are now not only decorated with a wooden crucifix but are also topped with a cell tower... or even two, one in 4G and one in 5G...

If we face the enormous project of power to connect every aspect of society and earth with each other, to absorb their data and let their software loose onto them, then we have with the 5G net a so-called key technology. That means that without it, nothing really works as it should. All those new innovations won't come into motion without it. This is the reason why I think that it could be interesting to focus our attention a bit on this detail, because it will be 5G that will enable all the other new shit. Here are some proposals:

## Sabotage

The fight against telecommunication is a struggle against work and exploitation. There is no other structure industry and big companies are so depended on - except for electricity. To struggle against modern slavery and the exploitation of work in the 21st century means to recognise the telecommunication network as a potential target. Especially at this moment (March/April 2020 - state of exception, lockdown, Corona-panic) when millions of people are trapped at home and have to work from there. The expansion of the net means the expansion of work. But this is not only a question of innovations like 5G but of the net as such. A faster flow of data means only a more perfect exploitation, domination and stupidification. We want neither exploitation, domination nor stupidification – therefore it is not only about 5G but also about the fibre optic net, the energy companies as well as the old cell towers. In the French territory, it was demonstrated that also specific projects like the Smart-Meters (known as Linky in France [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg 36*]) can generate conflict. The network operator Enedis is a target of attacks since years [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg24*]. It is especially local network operators – within reach – that guarantee the expansion of the infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> Last summer in France has also shown that attacks against the energy and telecommunication net have the potential to spread and to be taken up as a proposal by other exploited and excluded. Numerous attacks on fibre optic cables and cell towers happened in the margins of the yellow vest movement.<sup>3</sup> The disruption of the net cannot be seen as only disrupting the enemy, but also as slowing down the technologically overstimulated society, as a refusal of the gamification of life and of the noise and stress of work and the restlessness of the entertainment industry. A real face-to-face encounter can only happen where there is no interruption every minute by a glance at a screen and where no app distracts.

2 See Storms&Lightnings: An overview of attacks and sabotages in France in 2019 at [actforfree.nostate.net/?p=3D36500](http://actforfree.nostate.net/?p=3D36500)

3 See *Einige Punkte zur Bewegung der Gelbwesten*, In der Tat, Issue 4. Or in French: *Quelques notes à propos du mouvement des Gilets jaunes*, Recueil Des Textes Anarchistes. You can find it on [sansattendre.noblogs.org/files/2019/10/brochgi.pdf](http://sansattendre.noblogs.org/files/2019/10/brochgi.pdf)

Nevertheless the subversion of the technological power can't be reduced to the praxis of sabotage. Since the current technological revolution has not only repercussions on a technical level, we can't answer the social changes only via ultimately technical disruptions. Of course every attack is also a social moment – on the side of those who attack, on the side of those that are attacked, and in the best case also in the wider context and through ripple effects. And it should be our goal to multiply attacks that are easy to reproduce, so that they can spread.

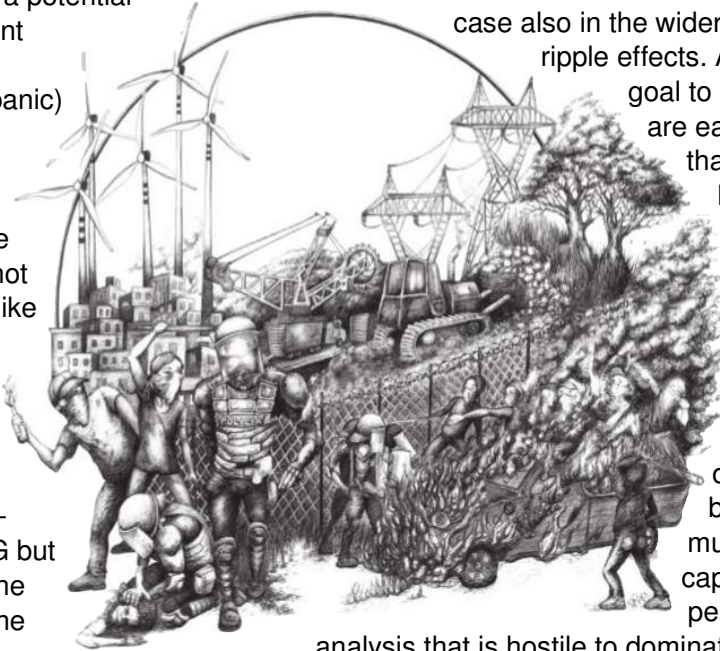
But the technological developments threaten increasingly to destroy the context in which attacks develop: relationships and discussions that are based on trust and mutual knowledge, the capacity to have a perspective and

analysis that is hostile to domination, and the capacity to move and organise in an uncontrolled manner. The coming years will for sure see revolts and social upheaval because state and capital will push the excluded of this brave new tech-world more and more with the back against the wall. But we face the problem that there will be an attempt to analytically and mentally disarm, through smartification, through wrapping them into the same net of control to paralyse them... those enraged and subversive ones that are willing to attack to dissimulate potential weapons and the net's weak points.

## To connect the centre with the periphery

A technology like 5G unveils the lies of capital. They praise it as an ecological innovation which allegedly needs less electricity. But in the end they build so many new cell towers. With regards to all the new end-devices and branches of industry, the overall energy use is much higher. There is no green capitalism and the promises of technology are false. Especially when we take extractivism into consideration (the industrial exploitation of the earth and the reduction of our environment to mere "natural" resources), there is no renewable nor green energy. All need raw materials and their extraction, transport, processing, and finally their usage poisons the earth.<sup>4</sup> In these latitudes, nearly nobody

4 See The False Promise of Green Technology on [theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)



understands that, since these raw materials are mainly extracted in the global south. I think this is a challenge we have to face: to connect the plundering of the earth in the global south with the Tech-Utopia that is built here. Who wants smart shit, wants exploitation in mines, millions of acres of poisoned earth, and the smell of burned plastic on the trash yards of Africa, South America, and Asia. Therefore we have to use the ecological question, the question of the destruction of the earth as a weapon against capitalism, the state, and industry and try to hinder their use of this crisis to restructure themselves and reboot the economy through it.

## Revolt instead of Virtual Reality

It is an old but stringent pattern: the market needs advertisement and propaganda to generate needs, and people are more open to new technologies if they come around as games. The current corona situation and the lockdown especially show how the state and

### 'AN ESCALATION BEYOND THE NORM'

[01.05.20, Philadelphia, so-called United States:]

Another May Day [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg87], another cell tower set alight. A small act in the earliest hours, but an escalation beyond the norm. And we never want to return to 'normalcy.' We don't know the difference between 4G and 5G. All we know is we want none of it.

The tower's proximity to a train yard, a major pharmaceutical company's office, and other military/mercenary enterprises in the Philadelphia Navy Yard was intended to interfere with their operations, however small the impact. It should also be a reminder that no one is untouchable if you have the appropriate determination. And this particular act was quite easy.

The first flame was a warm hug for the comrade Badger, allegedly on the run after a series of similar incidents in Bristol [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg58]. Stay free!

The ensuing smoke a signal to the comrades undergoing the Scripta Manent persecution in Italy [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Sentence of Anarchist Prisoners in Scripta Manent Appeal Trial*]... we stand with you!

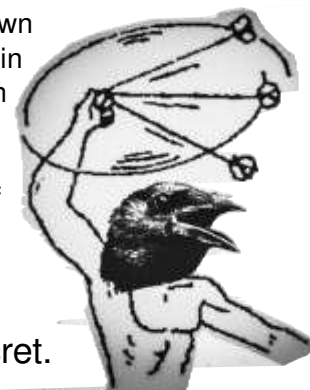
*For freedom,  
for anarchy!*

**Bristling Badger Brigade**



capital use an interruption of normality to increase and solidify their nets. Aside from the propaganda and surveillance measures, there are lots of free services, be it for streaming series or pornos etc. (At the same time for example in the UK there is a big roll-out of new 5G cell towers now during the lockdown – but during the first weekend of April, already around 20 cell towers burned down!). This shows that this technology is directed toward bored and lonely individuals. And who wants to miss the fun of getting some Virtual Reality glasses and playing around with them? The more you train the mental habit of gaming away your boredom or your sorrow, the more you come within the circle of dependence, which is accompanied by alienation, fear of loss, and the reduction of creativity. Through overstimulation with information and entertainment from the media, the experience of the users is standardised and their consciousness and fantasy is colonised. Ultimately, one alienates from oneself and follows tips from Google. One stops trusting oneself and once direct experience but trusts only scientific studies and experts. To even picture a life beyond an industrialised and urbanised one becomes harder and harder...

I think it gets more and more important to address this emotional side of the technological medal. The digital reality makes lonely, sick and depressive. From this misery one can liberate oneself by shutting down the screens, by starting to get in touch with oneself and through intensifying relationships, as well by conspiring against power and the development of ones own ideas. The joy is to be found in revolt and revolt in unrestrained joy. To ignite this revolt, herein lies the secret.



# THE GARDEN PATH

**Sudajii** (*Castanopsis cuspidata* var. *sieboldii*):

Ample moss-covered trunk rooted firmly on the ridge line rises to a vast canopy, drinking plentifully of sunlight to provide the community below moist shade. Sudajii, or shii, the elder, teaches the forest how to grow (and long ago taught humans how to grow shiitake mushrooms). Come Fall, this generous canopy showers the land with nuts, Perpetual forest. Perpetual food, fuel, medicine, and materials.

**In Sudajii's shade grows cha, té, tea (*Camellia sinensis*). That severe old wall-gazer Bodhidharma cuts off his eyelids and where they fall to the ground tea grows. A leaf falls in Shen Nong's bowl of boiling water...**

Crossing the tea house floor in measured steps, every action performed with practiced serenity. A ritual that comes close to tea's spirit medicine. Tea monocultures covering entire mountain sides do not.

Tall, perfectly straight, evenly spaced: An economic uniformity utterly alien to the wild. A sugi (*Cryptomeria japonica*) plantation bereft of a true forest's anarchic vigor, free association, and multi-generational growing, teaching, feeding. A lifespan determined by "board feet", machine size, global markets... left standing for as long as it remains cheaper to fell tropical rainforests. **Hopelessly incapable of performing the necessary ecosystem functions across the vast tracts it covers, it sways sadly, listening for chainsaw or strong wind.** Sensing the movement of vines making their way from the regenerating forest below.

From the slopes bearing down on the stream, a panoply of trees, shrubs, vines, birds, fire-flies, monkeys... Ferns at the water's edge, loquat and wild fig above. Kudzu, akebi, wisteria – vines clambering all over and through the mountain chestnuts, and higher. Gripping the sugi at the plantation's edge, they mercifully topple these misplaced shallow rooted anomalies. **Healing is what plants do.** A "chaos" that protects the forest interior, re-wilds domesticated lands and provides the animals (like us) with food and medicine.

A little more space, a little more light. **Forest and human habitation meet.** Stream side: Berries and herbs and thickets of itadori pin down the forest's protective mantle.

A pattern repeats. Fruit and nut bearing trees entwined with vines. A sub-canopy of cha, fig, mulberry... Lower still, shrubs, brambles, and herbs.

Itadori (Japanese knotweed, *Polygonum cuspidatum* syn. *Fallopia japonica*, *Reynoutria japonica*): Itadori's succulent roots are a spring staple. The hollow tube-like stems snapped and gathered when about thirty centimetres tall.

**Called "invasive," a sort of war is waged against it in North America – where Lyme disease has reached near-epidemic proportions** [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg34*]. Japanese knotweed is one of the premier herbs for the treatment of Lyme disease.

*Antibacterial, antiviral, antispirochetal, antifungal, immunostimulant, immunomodulant, antiinflammatory, antioxidant, antimutagenic, central nervous system relaxant, central nervous system protectant, anticarcinogenic, angiogenesis modulator, vasodialator, antiasthmatic, cardioprotective, antiathersclerotic, antihyperlidemic, antineoplastic, hepatoprotective, inhibits platelet aggregation, antithrobotic, antipyretic, analgesic, antiulcer, hemostatic, and astringent.*

As it rids the body of deep infections and toxins, so it rids the earth of heavy metal contamination and cleans polluted streams. The Japanese name *itadori* means removes pain.

Cold, cold water from the heart of the mountain: Slick, mossy surfaces. Dragonfly waits on a blade of rush. Spider waits too, web catching the glance of Sun. Dragonfly darts up to a fern frond perched high over the stream. Another sits mid-stream on a sun warmed stone – orange wings, sleek silver body terminating in two large black orbs. All of a sudden, both dragonflies launch above the stream, tumble through the air, chase one another to the far bank. Spider comes to wait. Water flows. Dragonfly returns to the same blade of rush as before.





**Kiwi climbs persimmon, making for the Sun. Below, cool water bubbles up from the earth – a gently carved course lined with aromatic peppermint, water celery and watercress, fuki and reeds.**

With back turned to a young stand of koriyanagi willow – some of these slim pliable canes soon to become baskets – north across the far edge of a small clearing two chestnut canopies meet. From trunk to drip-line, from deep to dappled shade, myoga ginger spreads. In the v-shaped sunny nook, formed where the chestnuts' long lower branches stretch and touch, is yuzu, a citrus. In front, a stand of yacon metabolizes full sun into sweet, crunchy tubers. To the west, a small thicket of jerusalem artichoke, tall slender stalks climbed by *Apios americana*, together sheltering the splayed deep green foliage of ashitaba. On the western edge of the clearing, another citrus – this with mandarin-like fruit – and persimmon. Further west, the canopy starts to climb. A large loquat, then higher to nashi pear and higher still to walnut. Rising with the canopy the twining akebi (chocolate vine) and carpeting the ground below, the winter raspberry, fuyuichigo.

No weeds, no crops. No invasives, exotics, natives. No pests or beneficial insects. A post- (and pre) agricultural landscape.

Entering the forest to collect fallen branches with which to we cook our meals, I go a little farther to visit a friend. The forest is unusually still. In the western sky, the sun blazes but here, filtered by foliage, the light is soft and the air cool. A leaf falls, tracing a near perfect vertical line to the ground.

Shizuoka, Japan

### 'FREEDOM FOR ALL'

A cowbird trap was discovered during a late night stroll through the San Joaquin Wetlands in Orange County, CA. Under the light of the moon, wire cutters were used to cut the top off the trap – releasing 6 brown-headed cowbirds into the wild. Government agencies and so-called conservation groups have labeled the brown-headed cowbird as “invasive” and using them as a scapegoat for struggling song-bird populations. Each year hundreds of these traps – usually latter traps containing between 4 to 6 live cowbirds as “decoys” – are set up in parks and wildlife areas throughout Southern California between April and mid-July [2019], where thousands of cowbirds are captured and “euthanized.” These traps are usually unguarded and in many cases held together with nothing more than plastic zip-ties, making them laughably simple to sabotage.

In memory of anarchist Will Van Spronsen<sup>[1]</sup> who died fighting for real freedom for all and a life worth living.

1 ed. – Shot dead by US police 13.07.19 during his armed attack on those running Tacoma migrant detention centre, torching staff vehicles

## NOTES ON “THE CRIMINAL CHILD”



“The Criminal Child” has, until now [ed. – afterword written in late 2015], never appeared in its entirety in the English language. Such a remarkable oversight – remarkable because it concerns a writer as significant as Jean Genet – would be reason enough for us to render a translation and bring it to print. But, in reading it, reasons far beyond the bibliophilic impulse reveal themselves and insist on the urgency, timeliness and import of this text.

Though never read on air, Genet intended “L'Enfant Criminel” as a radio address. Fernand Pouey, the director of dramatic and literary broadcasts for French radio, solicited Genet to speak on his radio program, “Carte Blanche”, in 1948 as a bit of commentary on proposed reforms to France's youth prisons. (Around the same time Pouey also commissioned Antonin Artaud to broadcast “To Have Done With the Judgement of God” – both pieces were censored by the powers that be.) A small edition of Genet's text was published the next year and was then all but forgotten.

**Genet was asked to give commentary on the issue – the youth prisons – because of his own time spent in the institutions in question.** Two years prior he published his novel *Miracle of the Rose* which recounted his own experiences in Mettray, a penal colony for youth. Mettray was Genet's teenage home for roughly two and a half years (interrupted only briefly by a short-lived escape), beginning in 1926. By the time it was closed in 1939, it had functioned for a century as an 'agricultural colony', modeled on the German *Rauhe Hause* (“Houses of the Wild”) where delinquent children were supposed to be reformed; to learn

discipline and morality through forced agricultural work.

The presence of Mettray – and its reformatory failures – permeates *Miracle of the Rose*, “The Criminal Child” and Genet’s whole body of work. Whereas his entire life he was an outsider – a sissy, a dreamer, a reader, a delinquent – at Mettray he was a thief among thieves, an outcast among many, an amorous youth admired by the older ‘toughs’ of the colony.

**Something began for Genet at Mettray. He attests to a creative impulse born in himself at the penal colony: “If to write means that you feel emotions or feelings so strong that your whole life is shaped by them, if they’re so strong that only by describing or evoking or analyzing them can you understand them – if so, then it was at Mettray that I started, when I was fifteen – it was then I started to write.”** Nowhere in Genet’s writing do we find penance, or reform. There is no assimilation or reconciliation at the end of his tales. He remained true to Mettray and to his delinquent youth. “The Criminal Child” is his pledge of illicit allegiance.

\* \* \* \* \*

The stance that Genet intended to take in his radio address is remarkable because it throws a wrench into the neat periodization with which some, such as Hadrien Laroche, have tried to organize his thinking. Laroche’s book, *The Final Genet*, begins with Genet, in 1968, crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, entering the occupied Sorbonne [ed. – *a university in Paris*], encountering Maoists and Palestinian combatants, and shortly thereafter writing “his first political text.” Laroche posits that after that point, Genet’s political turn, he concerns himself with ‘Man’ and his experience. And yet here, two decades prior to this supposed turn, we read Genet intervening in a political question, **but refusing to play the game on its terms. Those familiar with his post-1968 writings will recognize this mode of refusal – poetic, magical and distinctly anti-political. His refusal to be periodized likewise undermines the role fashioned for him by the Left.** He disrupts the fantasy of a transition from the first (criminal) Genet to the last (revolutionary) Genet. This text thickens the consistency between the supposedly distinct early and late – not to mention the criminal and insurgent – works of Genet. Something remains invariant in all imagined periods: his hostility.

Regarding Genet’s hostility toward attempted reforms, it is noteworthy that he wrote this address in the same year prominent artists and writers such as Cocteau, Sartre, Colette, and Picasso were formally petitioning the French state to pardon his past crimes. They insisted that his work tore him away from his

past – reformed him – and that a pardon was necessary to secure his reformation. **And so in “The Criminal Child”, we find an affirmation of crime and a condemnation of bourgeois art at the very same moment that his crimes are to be forgiven for art’s sake.** Through these words, he takes a side; swears an oath to his past, to crime; makes a declaration of enmity toward the society in which he lived.

Edmund White accounts for Genet’s enmity by instead characterized his turn toward anti-imperialism as simply a “sturdier platform from which to attack French society.” He also insists that Genet was already considering the question of revolution at the time of this writing in the late 1940’s. Regarding that time, he said that, “although Genet was wrestling with new sympathies for communism, he remained essentially anarchic, anti-social, inassimilable.” His interests, then and later, in revolutionary activity had little to do with parties or institutions, but everything to do with the messianic, power, terror, and the attempt “to introduce the worm to the fruit.”

Though he spent his later decades traveling and conspiring with various avowed revolutionaries, Genet eschewed the label for himself. His concerns, though at times intertwining with those of

“We wanted to ascend up there where once  
the penetrating eyes of the pagan poet gazed:  
Where the great thoughts arise and stand as inviolable  
oaks among the people; where beauty descends,  
invoked by the pure poets, and stands serene among  
the people; where love creates life and breathes joy!  
Up above where life exults and expands  
in full harmony of splendor...  
And for this, for this dream we struggled,  
for this great dream we died...  
And our struggle was called crime.”

– Renzo Novatore



Keeping the name of young anarchist Nikos Romanos on the streets during his 2014 hunger-strike accompanied by serious disturbances on the outside in Athens and elsewhere in Greece; see Return Fire vol.3 pg77 (he’s now free)

revolutionaries,<sup>1</sup> were different. Even Laroche had to admit, when citing the remarkable interview that Genet gave to Hubert Ficthe, that: “As a man of revolt, Genet cannot join revolutionary groups – the [Black] Panthers, the PLO [*Palestine Liberation Organisation*], or any other. And even if he is with them, he is still alone... [His revolution] is isolated because it is made of bodies. These bodies are not those of the Palestinians, but the result of events. The event of a body is solitude... Genet turns away from the Revolution – an empty word over which the great powers fight – to consider the revolutions of each person, experienced through the body, as an event.” Genet’s introduction of worm to fruit, then takes the form of an abrupt disruption – a pause or opening wherein to explore the insurgency of the body – each body – in singular revolt.

**If Genet’s insurgency began long before ‘68, and if his early commitments to crime and revolt endured long after, then we are called to read his supposed political works in a new light. How, for example, does this text about the power of a prisoner’s writing augment and complicate his communiqués in solidarity with George Jackson and other Black Liberation prisoners? What does his deification of inmates accused of killing guards in prison (as in *Miracle of the Rose*) tell us about his later years spent agitating for the freedom and mourning the death of Jackson, charged with the same crime?**

Rather than the distinct and opposed figures of Genet-the-Criminal and Genet-the-Revolutionary, we see instead Genet-who-disorders. His stance disrupts on many levels. His life testifies against the possibility of progressive reform of criminal children. His words obstruct the supposed transition from criminal to proper revolutionary. And finally he intervenes into the conversation of systemic reform in the present. While the question of the reformation – even abolition

[*ed. – see ‘Everything is Sanitised, But We are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands’*] – of this country’s monstrous prison system has reached all the way to the halls of power and the streams of the spectacle [*ed. – speaking from the US*], Genet insists on other questions. He explicitly criticizes those who wish to “win souls back to society.” He laments the banal life to which reform damns the child criminals; he laughs at those who desire to safeguard moral purity and offer pity to children who want none. He emphasizes the futility of society’s attempts “to eliminate, or render harmless, the elements that tend to corrode it.”

Genet asks us to imagine a hostility toward prison that doesn’t proliferate it (in some affirmation of the society which mandates imprisonment) – a refusal of control that doesn’t diffuse control through all of life. He reminds us that “whoever, by gentleness or privileges, tries to attenuate or abolish revolt, destroys all his chances to be saved.” **Against the well-intentioned reformers – the future architects of more sinister ‘houses of reform’ – Genet maintains his enmity.**

This enmity in Genet’s writing is coded as evil: his code word for an ethics of the outside, of rebellion. Genet’s admires his fellow criminal children precisely for the recognition of their roles as adversaries of society – their ardor for evil. “Evil: I mean just this will, this audacity to follow a destiny opposed to all the rules.” This evil is a secret – the children’s secret – but can be shared between them and used to forge lasting bonds of friendship and insolence and joy. The criminal children conspire in an “adventure against the rules of the Good” and Genet remains their accomplice. This conspiracy signifies a “lovely courage”, and Genet remains loyal to this sign.

Enmity, evil, the revolution of each body, obstruction of progress, a refusal of the terms of the game – a mode is emerging here; a mode hostile to reconciliation; a magical mode.

\* \* \* \* \*

1 ed. – “As the 60’s drew to a close, Jean Genet travelled to the United States on two occasions with the intention of contributing to the struggle there for black liberation. In addition to months spent traveling alongside and speaking on behalf of the Black Panthers, he agreed to write an introduction to a compiled volume of the writings of imprisoned black revolutionary George Jackson, awaiting trial in California for the murder of a prison guard. [...] Much of Genet’s writings focused on the fantastic underpinnings of prison life and his writing about Jackson continued this[...] As in his own prison writing, he articulated the way that sexual, racial, and libidinal ritual upholds and justifies the perpetuation of the prison order” (Bædan #3). Genet also went to Jordan during upheaval.

Those familiar with Genet’s depiction of Mettray in *Miracle of the Rose* will surely have grasped the magical nature of his memory of the place. When he writes of it, he writes as a mystic. He writes of love put through ordeal, of enchanted potions, of a secret world of childhood populated with monks, witches, shamans and deities. **In his book, time opens up and flows in many directions; images of the distant past permeate the less distant and the present. He declares writing an act of worship, as devotional to the figures of his past. He sings an evocation of memory so as to have a clearer,**

**more naked, view of life.** “The Criminal Child” offers a sharper focus of this mystical image. Here Genet details some of the workings of his own internal cosmology, the rites and methods of his unique magical system.

Genet reveals a system of initiation, not into an order, but into an adventure: one ineffable to the uninitiated, but shared between himself and other youthful offenders. “The young criminal already refuses being so indulgently understood, and the solicitude of this understanding on the part of a society against which he has revolted by committing his first crime. Having, at 15 or 16, or even earlier, come of age in a way that the good people will still not have done at 60.” Genet elucidates a storybook feeling – a desire for self-projection into “the most magnificent, the most audacious, ultimately the most perilous life” – that underwrites a young criminal’s ‘coming of age’. Their initiation forces open the door onto forbidden places, lovely landscapes. Genet’s criminal rites, his corporeal and metaphysical breaking and entering, announce a “young sovereign taking possession of a new realm.” In having the audacity to free himself of a state of torpor, the audacity to break the all-powerfulness of the world, he enters onto other worlds, hidden worlds of numinous forces and multifold potentials.

In the introductory pages of *The Thief’s Journal*, Genet writes, “with fanatical care, ‘jealous care,’ I prepared for my adventure as one arranges a couch or a room for love...” and correspondingly, in “The Criminal Child” he details that ritualistic care. To the initiated, he offers profound instruction:

Dress in outfits of dread and ignominy. Robe yourself in codes and attire which mocks the empty ritual of courts and tribunals. Perfume yourself in the secret odors discovered in criminal ritual work. Forge and carry weapons, psychic weapons and metal ones, weapons all the more powerful for their deviation from intended purposes, their profanation. Carry these close and conceal them under your mattress at night. Arm yourself with these in pursuit of criminal manifestations yet unimagined. Learn the names of your adversaries, of the sites which you must overcome – *Saint-Maurice, Saint-Hilaire, Belle-Isle, Eysse, Aniane, Montesson, Mettray, King County Juvenile Detention Center, Juvenile Hall* – and commit them to memory, charge them with meaning, weigh them with terror, project them onto destiny. Develop subtle argots, secret languages. Keep them hidden from the authorities. Sing songs of evocation, obscene complaints. Oppose your language to the language of society. Pay attention to signs and sigils carved and painted onto walls – *M.A.V. (Mort*

*aux vaches)*<sup>2</sup>, *B.A.A.D.M. (Bonjour aux amis du malheur)*<sup>3</sup> – and read these as you’d read inscriptions on the walls of an ancient temple. In them, sense the mystery of the past, but also the curve of your own destiny. **More than anything, arm yourself with memory: memory of the now-abolished places of your youth wherein you first found power, memory of the childhood which is dead and of the poetic powers which accompanied it, memories of those who populated that secret world, that fabulous hell.** Speak the names of the dead in order to speak of the world of death, the kingdom of darkness. Carve onto a wall the mantra: “Just as I am guarded by a prison door, so my heart guards your memory.” Swear an oath to not let your childhood escape. Do not live a moment on Earth without at the same time living in a secret domain. Let what has been destroyed carry on, continue in time. Guard it. Bring it with you wherever you go. Trace it up through the roots into the vegetative reality of each present moment. Find those who harbor the same memories. Build conspiracy between you. Let the honesty of your memories – the honesty of remembrance of paradise – build unbreakable bonds between you.

The youth prison is Genet’s fountain of memory, but each of us has our own clandestine world into which we were initiated as youth. It was there in those spaces that we learned magic as a force of liberation, self-creation, and world-building. Though our childhoods are gone, we can access that space again in remembrance and invocation. He instructs us to find or build a psychic space: a space brought to life by the comings and goings of our memories, our youth, the creative urge. He advises us to create a corner of the world whose image lives in our very souls – an “ideal and cruel place situated deep in the child’s heart” – and to project the image of that inner space onto the brick and mortar walls of this world. Project the desire buried in your heart and in the hearts of the child criminals. Dwell in this internal garden, this internal theater, this space of love and war and dreams of escape. Find others who’ve been there and live together in accordance with its ways. Build your inner temple here and consecrate it to “amorous passion.”

In this temple you can now face your ordeal. **Here you may cross a blazing fire and come back as someone else.** Let the names committed to memory evoke all their violence, their force, their virility. “For it is indeed that which children wish to conquer. Their

2 Death to cops.

3 Greetings to friends of misfortune.

demand is that the ordeal be terrible.” In this space, find the strength to face any test: brawls, billy clubs, dormitories, silences, prayer, punishment, clogs, scorched feet, marches in the sun, cold water, whatever disciplinary regime. We must remember that miracle recorded by Genet wherein Harcamone, condemned to death for murdering a prison guard, transfigured his chains into a garland of roses, one of which Genet clipped and concealed. We must recall his “ecstasy... shot through with a slight trembling, with a wave frequency that was alternate and simultaneous fear and admiration” in witnessing such a miracle. As we imagine him holding the rose we can hear the instruction articulated by contemporary practitioners of the Ordeal path such as Raven Kaldera, who writes:

Take the rose into your hands, and squeeze the thorns until your hands bleed, even as you smell the scent of Aphrodite. When you can understand why there is no contradiction there, the first step of the path will be open to you.



Genet's ordeal path individuates those who walk it. It must be faced in solitude, alone, “unnameable and unnamed”. In this namelessness the ordeal seeker is charged with “an even more dangerous power”. In this state Genet witnessed miracles, an entire secret life— gardens, monsters, deserts, fountains — found within the most minute secret spaces of the solitary heart. He gestures toward the possibility of emerging purified from such solitude. White, recognizing the incompatibility between self-exploration and conformism, affirms the necessity of individuation within Genet's system:

Cruelty and violence are the poetic expression of the youngsters' affirmation of Evil and rebellion. If they had been obedient and had acquiesced to the prison system, submission would have led to the extinction of their individual differences, whereas rebellion sharpens their individuality. Instead of being interchangeable sheep, each is a distinct hero. Finally, since for Genet crime itself is beautiful, he supports the cruelty of the unreformed prison system because it turns youngsters into hardened criminals.

“The erotic is subtle, but powerful, what cannot be ignored is that it is also frightening, and transgressive.

It requires the Devil, whom feminist readings of witchcraft can seek to elide. By this I do not mean that witchcraft necessarily needs a man, or that it cannot be performed alone. Nor does it need a phallus, though that is ‘traditional’ and it does not necessarily have to be attached to a biological male. What it does require is that it elicits a total body response. In turn such a response requires physical resolution in orgasm, tears, shaking, or overwhelming sensation; by which I envisage a reset of trauma, not the layering on of more dysfunction. We are driven by the thorns of ordeal into the inescapable presence of the moment. It asks that we go deeper into desire, to find the uncivilised body that State and Church and society condemn. Such work is bound up in the realm of ordeal that naturally follows on from the subtle state training of erotic exploration.”

– *Forging the Body of the Witch*

### “Supports” – White's word – doesn't quite fit

**here.** Genet is explicit in his enmity toward this society, its prisons surely included. He sees the prison as an obstacle to be overcome in a path of criminal becoming, a path of individuation. This is the folly of trying to read him as ‘the political Genet’. To say that Genet supports (or doesn't) any given state policy enmeshes his words in a political mode unbefitting the text at hand. Genet neither supports the prison nor desires to reform it. He seeks to escape it and into “the nocturnal part of man, which cannot be explored, where one can only enter if one is armed, if one is coated, if one is covered with all the ornaments of language.” His ritual work prepares the initiate to enter this nocturnal space. Here one may find the jewels with which to encrust a crown such as described in *Miracle of the Rose*. Here is the heaven he speaks of, the one he creates for himself and to which he is devoted. Here are the depths of the self, stirred by feelings of love both violent and mystic. Genet populates his nocturnal heaven with spirits, demons, deities, ancestors, and figures from his past with blue eagles carved across their chests, youths who stand “the way Mercury is depicted”. This inner space is nourished by solitude and dreams of escape. **For him, the writings of a prisoner are uniquely positioned to create such an internal cosmology.** Dreams are nursed in darkness.

Those who are sentenced to death for life... know that the only means of escaping horror is friendship. By abandoning themselves to it, they forgo the world, *your* world. They raise friendship to so high a plane that it is purified and remains alone, isolated from the creatures who fathered it, and friendships –



on this ideal level, in the pure state, as it must be if the life is not to be carried away by despair, as one is said to be carried off (with all the consequent horror) by galloping consumption – friendship becomes the individual and very subtle sentiment of love which every predestined man discovers (in his own hiding places) for his inner glory. Living in so restricted a universe, they thus had the boldness to live in it as passionately as they lived in your world of freedom, and as a result of being contained in a narrower frame their lives became so intense, so hard, that anyone – journalists, wardens, inspectors – who so much as glanced at them was blinded by their brilliance. ... [their] audacity to live (and to live with all one's might) within that world whose only outlet is death, has the beauty of the great maledictions, for it is worthy of what was done in the course of all the ages by the Mankind that had been expelled from heaven. And this, in effect, is saintliness, which is to live according to Heaven, in spite of God.

A perverse heaven, a nocturnal dreamscape, an internal door opened onto the dangerous and marvelous: this is where Genet found “the walls crumbled, time turned to dust...”

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This text was censored, nearly forgotten, and has until now remained untranslated. It was forced into a sort of exile, and we have taken autonomous measures to bring it back, to will it into existence. **This is not unlike the clandestine publication of Genet's early novels: each initially smuggled from prison, published without imprint or publisher information, circulated illicitly and with much scandal.** There is a long tradition of pirated editions of Genet's work. Years before *Our Lady of the Flowers* was published in English, an un-permitted edition was made available under the title *The Gutter in the Sky*. On the dust jacket of that illegal edition is a lovely note from Richard Wright declaring: “Genet has created a world that is out of this world. He is a magician, and enchanter of the first order.” Diane di Prima, in *Recollections of My Life as a Woman*, recalls: “We did a small run of Jean Genet's *Le Condamné à Mort*, put into English by me and Alan, and Bret and Harriet Rohmer. Alan's method of translating Genet was to pick up French gay hustlers on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and bring them back to Cooper Square to help with the slang. (A great pick-up line, no? “Come home with me, baby, and help me



25.07.20, Seattle, USA: The youth jail construction (see Return Fire vol.2 pg63) finally delivered to the flames during rioting

translate Genet”). We did a bilingual edition, and had to pirate the French, as Gallimard owned the rights. They sent us an acid letter at some later point. I am not sure who got the letter, as we purposely left publisher and place off the title page, just put the alchemical logo of Poets Press: a dragon eating its tail, flanked by the sun and the moon.”

The very poems di Prima mentions were first printed underground by Genet at his own expense. **It is only fitting to steal the words of a text by a writer whose rites have always disregarded rights; whose practice consistently involved the theft of the written word.** Genet said that “the unwelcomed word” is the means by which poetry escapes its prison. As a poet and also an enemy, he affirms the use and power of poetic weaponry. He speaks from the shadows and into the void. He stays at the edge of night and writes only for those – beautiful, criminal, unrepentant – who can hear him. The totality of Genet's work – and “The Criminal Child” especially – consists of words unwelcomed, but that nonetheless forced open the door onto the world. A long and arduous poem, of the truest sort.



30.04.17, Newcastle, UK: Three youth scale a roof to hurl bricks and tiles on cops trying to arrest them until one suffers injury and is taken to hospital (from where he escapes); upon being sentenced to jail in the following trial, another barges past security and bolts from the courthouse to freedom

## 'BENDING BACK THE BARS'

For June 11 [2019] – Solidarity for long term anarchist prisoners  
Just outside the city limits of Bristol [ed. – in the UK] tucked away in the dark is a poultry farm (Ivy Farm) owned by P&S Mitchell LTD. Located in Whitchurch Lane, Dundry, the birds never see the light of day. Despite the CCTV, the grain silo and broiler house were both spray-painted with the words **"Animal Prison"**.

A new McDonalds restaurant that is not welcome is being built in Fishponds Road, but maybe the "Burger Off!" posters in local's front windows isn't enough. Graffiti was sprayed inside the building site – **"McWork Prison"**.

Vinney Green, hidden in Emersons Green on the edge of Bristol is a special secure detention unit for 10-17 year old "dangerous

kids". The unit holds up to 24 detainees. A large hole was cut in the perimeter fence and then the next inner security fence was broken through by bending back the bars, causing a second human size gap. Then the prison buildings themselves were sprayed with the words **"Child Prison"**, **"Screws Work Here"**. Solidarity to Brian Vaillancourt who is serving a 9 year sentence in the USA for an arson of a McDonalds. To the imprisoned comrades in Italy who are fighting from inside the cells on hunger strike [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Sentence of Anarchist Prisoners in Scripta Manet Appeal Trial**]. To the 3 comrades arrested for bank robbery in Thessaloniki, Greece. To Lisa held in Spain [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Lisa Moved**]. For all the imprisoned anarchists around the world.

*Freedom for everyone!*

**Eco-anarchist vandals – FAI/IRF**

## POEMS FOR LOVE, LOSS & WAR

### Children of Gods

We greeted the children of gods with operatic indifference.  
Having already slaved to make the world right for some time we  
promised the earth (as if she were ours to gift) & set them to work in  
call centres & factories & department stores & endless cafe chains &  
when they finally began to show promise we stacked  
debt onto shoulders already bowed with overwrought expectation  
shackled their imagination to the sum total of our experience then branded them snowflakes.  
We deconstructed the earth's soul - reduced her to economic growth & dollar signs  
then set up focus groups to ascertain why the children just. didn't. get. the. bigger. picture.  
Isolating the most compliant young gods, we modelled them in our own image  
set them at giddy heights within the Milky Way as an example  
of what could be achieved through dedicated application then  
medicated their suffocating anxiety; devised cognitive therapy to cope with the vomit & hysteria.  
As the children of gods grew into our ways we peddled them stacks of blood bricks & stale  
education at over-inflated prices & those who balked  
were fed into sink hole estates or prisons & we told them to consume less  
urged them to buy more; graded the children of gods by skin colour  
or ancestral land-grabs then lectured them on being shallow & lacking in empathy  
as we condemned their racism, bigotry, sexism & aggressive homophobia & wrung  
our white hands that they did not care for the environment we had systematically disconnected them from.  
When they persisted in demonstrating no gratitude for the oceans of plastic & mountains of crap  
that made up their inheritance, we poisoned the air & their minds  
blasted the old gods into gravel drives; stripped the world of the forest's stories  
ripped the language of magic from their mouths so that the  
children of gods no longer recognised their reflection in cloud formations & lakes  
(only knew themselves in the echo-chamber of our online shops).  
We complained when they denied the earth's beauty & wept genuine tears of frustration that they just did not seem to  
care about anything.  
Finally, we surmised that their lack of interest in recycling our ideas & excrement  
was simple yet unexplainable laziness & when we had  
moulded enough of the children of gods into almost, almost, what we envisaged  
we died.

Sophie McKeand



# REBELS BEHIND BARS

– text by prisoners & repression news

## Spanish Media Side With Fascist: Former Political Prisoner Arrested for “Hate Crime” [+ update]

On December 12 [2017], headlines in Spain trumpeted the death of a 55 year-old man, murdered simply for wearing suspenders with the Spanish flag on them. The culprit was identified as Rodrigo Lanza, a participant in “anti-system” movements who had already served time in prison for leaving a cop paralyzed during a 2006 scuffle. Again and again, the media – from right to left – presented the same allegations, often without even the most basic fidelity to notions of sourcing, balance, presumption of innocence, or the protection of privacy. Throughout the affair, they have demonstrated affinity and complicity with fascists, and a burning desire to cover up police violence and corruption.

### The Story

Through bold statements in headlines and affirmations that were only occasionally modified with an “allegedly” or “according to police,” the Spanish media have constructed the following story: an old man in a bar was wearing suspenders with the Spanish flag on them. Rodrigo and his friends didn’t like that. An argument started. The man left to avoid a conflict. As he walked away, Rodrigo hit him in the back of the head with an iron bar, and then kicked him in the face as he lay on the ground.

It’s a horrendous story, but there’s a problem. None of these allegations have been independently verified, and the media and the police have already demonstrated a marked bias against the accused, and in favor of the deceased.

Contrary to common practice, the media have identified the accused and family members of his who have spoken up in his defense. Rodrigo’s mother and friends have already received multiple death threats from Spanish fascists, thanks to their doxing [ed. – *revealing of identity and personal details*] by the media. When speaking about Rodrigo, the media have been sure to mention several points: he is Chilean; he was convicted for severely injuring a cop in 2006; and he is a member of “anti-system” movements. Each of these factoids is problematic.

**1) His nationality is irrelevant.** Spanish media never mention when killers, child molesters, or drug



'WE DON'T FORGET THEM - WE CONTINUE STRUGGLING'

traffickers are whites or Christians. They mention the nationality of accused criminals from the Global South to encourage racism among their public, either intentionally or because they’ve never taken the time to understand how they have been socialized to see people of color as responsible for antisocial activities. Mainstream media coverage of crime has long been a major institutional cause of racism.

**2) Rodrigo Lanza could not have been responsible for the attack he went to prison for in 2006.** There is incontrovertible evidence, discussed below, showing judicial bias and suggesting a police frame-up. Because police blame him for injuring one of theirs, it is highly dubious that they could be trusted to impartially gather evidence in the present case, but rather than pointing this out, the media are using a partial version of his criminal record to portray Rodrigo as a criminal, which in their moral framework means he is guilty of whatever the police and the press accuse him.

**3) “Anti-system” movements do not exist.** They are a police fabrication intended to delegitimize, criminalize, and lump together all those social movements that police select for targeted destruction. These include anarchists and other anti-capitalists, radical feminists and trans activists, squatters, and national independence activists. Rather than doing any research to confirm whether they are talking in sensible terms or reporting on chimeras and bugaboos, mainstream journalists have preferred to act as the propaganda wing for the police department. They consistently report on a movement that doesn’t exist. Rodrigo is someone who has dedicated a large part of his life to movements for social change. Reporting that fact accurately, however, is not compatible with lynching him, so the media aid the police in portraying him as an antisocial

extremist, whereas they portray fascists in sympathetic, human terms.

### **Víctor Laínez Was an Active Fascist**

The supposed victim of the December 8 brawl was Víctor Laínez, an active member of the Falange, a fascist organization intimately connected to the Franco dictatorship and responsible for thousands of murders, dozens of them during democracy. They are not any minor league skinhead hooligan club, which is already dangerous enough. They are the equivalent of the Nazi stormtroopers, except that they still exist. Rather than being disbanded after having engaged in mass murder, they have been tolerated under democracy, and when they have run-ins with leftists, their members are given the benefit of the doubt. Though the figure is rarely mentioned, there have been 88 murders classified as hate crimes in Spain since 1990, nearly all of them carried out by the extreme Right. And that's only counting murders for which there was undeniable evidence regarding the motive. Who knows how many immigrants or homeless people police have found dead and not bothered to investigate thoroughly. What's certain is that extreme Right groups like the Falange encourage and carry out such killings.

Media portrayals of Laínez as an innocent "motorcycle enthusiast", their omission or toning down of his membership in a murderous, paramilitary organization, are part of a shameless attempt to convict Rodrigo in public opinion and create political support for the repression of antifascists. If they were honest about who he was, the police story would no longer sound so credible.

Víctor Laínez is suspected of having participated in earlier fascist attacks, and according to witnesses – who are not quoted in most of the mainstream media coverage, or at best referenced only after relating the police version which is portrayed as definitive – he began the conflict at the bar by launching racial slurs at Rodrigo, and then outside the bar attempted to attack Rodrigo with a knife. His comrades in the Falange make it clear that they do not consider him a victim, but a hero, comparing him with another comrade of theirs, the neo-Nazi who stabbed to death young Carlos Palomino in the Madrid metro.

Police claim not to have found any knife on the scene, though no one else is better positioned to make evidence disappear, and they have a stated vendetta against Rodrigo Lanza. When they arrested him and framed him in 2006, they also removed evidence from the scene before it could be properly documented. And when a neo-Nazi stabbed to death a young squatter in Barcelona in 2004, police "lost" the murder weapon. When it, or possibly another

knife smaller than the one actually used in the stabbing, finally showed up months later, it had no finger prints on it. Subsequently, the accomplice to the murder was acquitted, since there was no physical evidence connecting him to the weapon and the eyewitnesses didn't have the right political views to be trusted by the courts, those same courts that originally let the stabber go with a mere "injuries" charge, and finally convicted him for "manslaughter" rather than "murder", and with a reduced sentence at that.

It's possible that all these police failings are innocent. Maybe they're just not good at finding anything. Though the sensationalist yarn spun by the media has Rodrigo hitting Laínez in the back of the head with an iron bar, police have found no such weapon. However, if the cops are so incompetent, why do they receive a privileged status as impartial witnesses and media liaisons?

### **Gasoline for Spanish Nationalism**

The most sensationalist meme to come out of this is the idea that poor Laínez was killed simply for wearing a Spanish flag. Witnesses contradict this hyperbole, pointing out that Laínez himself started the argument by using racial epithets against Rodrigo, and that he was wearing a closed jacket so no one at the time could even see whether or not he was wearing Spanish-flag suspenders. Regardless, as a member of a murderous, racist, fascist paramilitary organization, he was not, by any stretch of the imagination, attacked just for wearing a Spanish flag. Every day of the week, antifascists cross paths with people wearing Spanish flag regalia, especially in a city like Zaragoza, and most of these encounters don't even lead to the trading of insults.

The importance of the Spanish flag meme lies in its usefulness to a major media campaign, which has been in overdrive all year, to fuel Spanish nationalism. In response to the Catalan independence movement, the mainstream media – especially Right and Center but also center-Left – have been encouraging catalanophobia and making passionate pleas on behalf of Spanish unity, which in practice means the suppression of the aspirations to self-determination of other peoples living under Spanish sovereignty. This wave of nationalism has already resulted in multiple xenophobic attacks and assaults on Catalan supporters of independence. The extreme Right has played a central role in these patriotic mobilizations, which received impetus and positive coverage from the main media.

It's a tragedy, because the extreme Right had largely collapsed in Spain, despite the continuing economic crisis. Their recent surge has largely been a result of



how the media have covered the independence movement. They have used alarmism, cries for law and order, and the demonization of those seeking independence, while covering up the corruption of the Spanish state or minimizing the violence used to suppress the independence referendum. The media successfully cast the struggle against Catalan self-determination as a struggle for self-defense against an irrational, authoritarian, criminal enemy.

Like most oppressors, Spanish nationalists find itself useful to portray themselves as victims. Spain maintains its control over Catalunya and the Basque country with recourse to state violence, but when these peoples talk about independence, Spanish nationalists accuse them of nationalism and start acting like they're an endangered species. Those who have followed the rise of Trump will notice a pattern.

The line about an old man being attacked simply for wearing the Spanish flag is calculated to mobilize more Spanish patriots to attack their perceived enemies. Chileans, other immigrants, and Leftists who are attacked as a direct result of this will not receive comparable coverage in the media. The Spanish press has already spilled more ink over this one dead fascist than they have on any of the hate crime victims of the past years.

To add insult to injury, the police and the media have successfully used this tear-jerker about an old man and his flag to charge Rodrigo with a hate crime. In another terrifyingly inane example of democratic pluralism, fascists become the victims of hatred. (In the US, with the repercussions of Ferguson [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg 75*] and the Black Lives Matter movement still shaking the country, the Right has proposed and sometimes passed dozens of “Blue Lives Matter” bills that classify attacks on the police as hate crimes).

## The 4F Case Reopened

The media did not waste a second in utilizing the accusations against Rodrigo to discredit all the very real criticisms against the police – and the media themselves – for their handling of the 4F case, the 2006 frame-up that resulted in Rodrigo doing seven years in prison.

In summary, the 4F case stemmed from a riot on February 4, 2006. The police were looking to start a provocation at a squat where a huge party was underway. It was a squat where drugs were sold, where suspected police informants lived, and which cops themselves had been protecting from eviction. When a group of South Americans with a squatter aesthetic passed by outside, the cops shouted racial

slurs and attacked them. They got more than they bargained for, though, as bystanders joined in the fray. One person inside the squat dropped a flower pot that hit one of the racist, rioting cops on the head, ultimately leaving him tetraplegic. Riot police came in, arresting anyone with a squatter aesthetic, and beating and torturing the principal defendants. The scene was cleaned up before forensics could arrive, and after about a day cops and city authorities changed their story, erasing mention of the flower pot and claiming Rodrigo, one of the squatters whom police had attacked down in the street, had thrown a rock at the cop. Expert medical witnesses testified that the police version was physically impossible, that the cop had been injured not by a rock thrown from street level but by a heavy weight falling from above; nonetheless, all the accused were convicted, and one person eventually committed suicide as a result of her imprisonment.

The case showed how easily police, prosecutors, media, and judges can conspire to fabricate cases. The police had total control over what evidence was gathered and what evidence disappeared, and their narrative was presented by the press, as usual, as the only version of events. Prosecutors decided to use the severest charges against the accused, to turn bystanders into accomplices, and to ignore police crimes. And the judge prevented the defense from corroborating their version of events by declaring any non-police witnesses who came forward would be arrested as accomplices.

In the end, the only evidence in favor of the fable cooked up by the prosecutors were the police themselves. It's hard to say that their bumbling, contradictory testimony actually helped the government's case; nonetheless, they were cast as impartial witnesses even though cops are professional liars. Their job is to help prosecutors make convictions, and their preparation of testimony in political cases tends to be apparent.

When *Ciutat Morta*, a documentary about the 4F case, was released and viewed by huge audiences, the lies, cover-ups, and brutality of the cops, the judges, the prosecutors, the politicians, and the media were on display for everyone to see. It was a huge embarrassment. Rodrigo and his mother both gave key testimony for the documentary. Evidently, powerholders never forgave those who brought their lies to light.

As soon as Rodrigo Lanza was identified as the suspect in the death of Laínez, all the guilty parties in the 4F cover-up began smearing the documentary's credibility. In an article dripping with sympathy for the fascists and the cops, Luis Benvenuty and Toni



Muñoz ironically refer to Rodrigo as a “victim executioner,” writing in *La Vanguardia*, Barcelona’s major newspaper and a key player in the 4F cover-up. Their paper has not labelled as “executioners” all the many cops who have murdered with impunity; on the contrary, they generally publish flimsy police alibis as objective fact, just as they did in 2006 when police arrested nine people, torturing some of them, for a crime they did not commit.

The old guard of Barcelona’s political elite have called for the prizes awarded to *Ciutat Morta* to be withdrawn, and they have lambasted Ada Colau, Barcelona’s progressive mayor, for giving support to the documentary.

In their shameless crusade, the media and the politicians have demonstrated their absolute hypocrisy and disregard for the very principles of rationality and due process that they champion. The mere accusation that Rodrigo has committed a crime does not mean he did it – the investigation hasn’t even concluded and no trial has been held – but beyond that, whether or not he killed a violent, xenophobic fascist has no bearing whatsoever on whether he told the truth in a documentary made years before.

The cops, again with media support, have tried to go even further. Victor Bayona and Bakari Samyang, two of the cops responsible for the 4F frame-up, eventually got caught when the immigrant they were torturing one particular day happened to be a diplomat’s son. They received a scanty, one year prison sentence. In an astounding leap, police have asserted that Rodrigo’s recent arrest means that the two cops were innocent of an entirely unrelated act of torture. On December 18, *La Vanguardia* gave the two cops a platform to claim the existence of a far-reaching squatter conspiracy to fabricate a case of torture and get them locked up as vengeance for the brave testimony against the 4F defendants, and with typical journalistic scruples, the newspaper presented all their claims as objective facts.

### **Media Support for Fascists & Police**

The media frenzy around Rodrigo’s arrest not only shows crass opportunism, but also a cozy relationship with police and fascists that directly endangers immigrants, working class people, trans and queer people, and participants in social movements.

Together with the courts, the media systematically uphold the dubitable portrayal of the police as a neutral institution that can be

trusted to gather evidence and enforce laws without taking sides in social conflicts. In Spain as elsewhere, police overwhelmingly sympathize with and participate in the extreme Right, and use their power to attack the Left. In the US, Trump’s most unshakeable base have been the border guards and cops, who have shown direct complicity with white supremacists in Charlottesville and at other mobilizations of the extreme Right; in Greece, startling percentages of cops were supporters or members of the fascist party Golden Dawn, which they also helped to arm in order to carry out attacks on immigrants, anarchists, and members of the far Left; and in Germany, as neo-Nazi attacks skyrocket, the police have been carrying out one repressive operation after another against the very people who mobilize to defend themselves against the Right.

An unending slew of racist killings and beatings, as well as increasingly visible signs of police complicity with white supremacists and fascists, have shaken public confidence in police neutrality. But the media have large preserved their aura of neutrality and legitimacy, especially in the US where they have been critical of Trump’s penchant for misinformation and offensive statements. Their role in reproducing oppressive structures, however, is crucial.

In Greece, after the 2008 insurrection, corporate media immediately began to give the fascist party Golden Dawn a major public platform, completely incommensurate with their support. It was the media that made outright xenophobic and racist ideas mainstream. In Germany, the media did little to explain the economic justifications for Merkel’s decision to take in Syrian refugees: that the country lacked skilled workers and appropriating Syria’s middle class – willing to work for low wages after being humiliated by a long and perilous crossing – while leaving the Syrian poor to rot in refugee camps,



was actually quite good for German businesses. In the US, the major media, while fact-checking Trump on most of his other claims, didn't find it convenient to popularize the widely accepted figure that 85% of lost manufacturing jobs have been stolen not by foreigners but by robots, which is to say, by the profit-focused decisions of corporate managers. (To be precise, this fact was reported primarily in media read by a more educated audience, rarely covered on TV news, not given the prime time or front page coverage that the xenophobic rhetoric of politicians received, and as far as I have seen was never phrased in a way that places the blame for job loss on corporations, the way immigrants or foreigners are clearly blamed for the job loss caused by more international trade.)

And in Spain, the media have long turned a blind eye to fascist violence – directed against human beings – while whipping up public condemnation of anarchist or leftist violence, which is directed against the property of the super-wealthy and against ruling institutions. The recent slandering of Rodrigo is just the latest example of how the media are willing to side with fascists and police, despite their proven record of murder, torture, and manipulation, in order to portray those who struggle against the status quo as dangerous criminals.

The need to reveal the mass media's complicity with racism and police violence is more urgent than ever. Without their mantle of neutrality and legitimacy, they cannot carry out the campaigns that make state repression, white supremacist ideology, and xenophobic movements possible. However, the effective fascist utilization of decentralized media like Facebook and Twitter reveal the dangers of simply bashing big media with populist invective. To solve this dilemma, we need our own forms of communication to reveal the lies that protect powerful institutions, and undermine the manipulations that give us scapegoats **instead of solidarity.**



*[ed. – Update: November 26th 2019, Rodrigo was given five years (plus having to compensate the family of Laínez with 200,000 euros) for 'reckless homicide': the prosecution failed to secure the conviction of 'murder with aggravating delusion of hate'. Both the defence and the prosecution will appeal.]*

*The address of the comrade:*

**Rodrigo Lanza**, PO Box 33044, Ronda Universitat 23, 08007 Barcelona, Spain

## Verdict of the Court of Appeal (Belgium)

*[continued from Return Fire vol.6 chap.1]*

On October 8th, 9th and 16th 2020, the case takes place before the Appeal Court. **Only one accused is present and refuses to answer the questions of the judge.** The prosecutor recommends sentences ranging from 3 to 6 years effective prison.

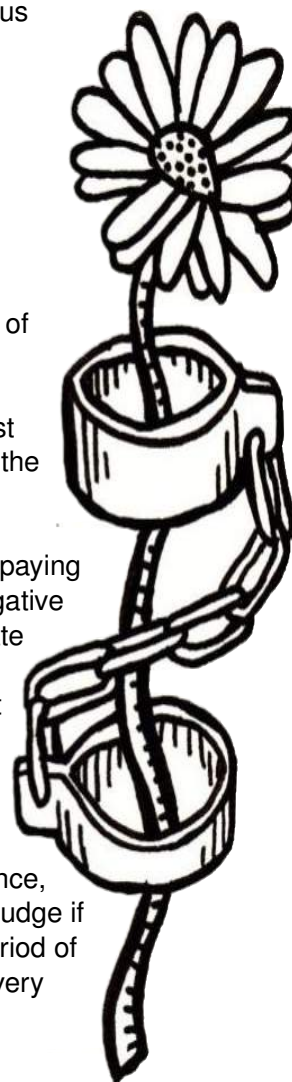
On Thursday, November 12th, the judge of the Appeals Court in Brussels made its decision public concerning the case against anarchists accused of criminal association and various crimes;

- 2 persons got 10 months of probation (during 5 years)
- 1 person got 8 months of probation (during 5 years)
- 1 person got 6 months of probation (during 3 years)
- 5 persons got a suspension of sentencing (during 3 years)
- 1 person got acquitted  
(2 persons got acquitted in first instance and were not part of the appeal)

People also got sentenced to paying fines and a part of the investigative and juridical costs, but the state will have to pay the bill for the phone taps (by far the biggest amount).

(A suspension of sentencing means the judge finds you guilty and doesn't set a sentence, but leaves this up to the next judge if you get caught in a certain period of time for a similar crime – not very different from probation).

**In the meantime, another investigation – also conducted by the same anti-terrorist police between 2013 and 2015 – is moving forward in the courts.** 7 comrades are accused of "possession of prohibited weapons (pepperspray and slingshot)" and 6 comrades are accused of "incitement to commit crimes (arson) and misdemeanors (property damage)". At the moment there is no date set for the Criminal Court in Brussels.



## Sentence of Anarchist Prisoners in Scripta Manent Appeal Trial (Italy)

[continued from *Return Fire* vol.5 pg86]

On November 24th, the sentence of appeal was issued against 23 anarchists accused in the "Scripta Manent" trial.

- Anna Beniamino: 16 years and 6 months (in first instance: 17 years).
- Alfredo Cospito: 20 years (as in first instance), in continuation with the sentence of cassation at 9 years, 5 months and 10 days of the trial for the action against Adinolfi.
- Nicola Gai: 1 year and 1 month (in first instance: 9 years), in continuation with the sentence of cassation at 8 years, 8 months and 20 days of the trial for the action against Adinolfi.
- Alessandro Mercogliano: acquitted of all charges (in first instance: 5 years).
- Marco Bisesti: acquitted from the charge of "subversive association with the purpose of terrorism and subversion of the democratic order" (in first instance: 5 years), but sentenced to 1 year and 9 months for "incitement to commit crimes" in relation to "Croce Nera Anarchica" ("Anarchist Black Cross").

The sentence for "subversive association with the purpose of terrorism and subversion of the democratic order" has been confirmed for Anna, Alfredo and Nicola.

Nicola, Alessandro and Marco have been released.

The night of the sentencing, two Enijoy cars and three motorbikes were set on fire in Milan in solidarity.

Unlike the trial in the first instance, nine other sentences were also issued to nine other comrades for "incitement to commit crimes." Convictions related, in various ways, to the publication of "Croce Nera Anarchica," an aperiodic magazine and internet site, and the management of some internet sites that had been charged in the trial. These sentences vary between 2 years and 6 months and 1 year and 6 months. As said, in addition to these sentences, Marco was also sentenced for "instigation."

In addition to Alessandro, nine other anarchist comrades were acquitted of all charges, including a comrade in prison since September 6, 2016 and released with acquittal in the first degree on April 24, 2019, and a comrade in prison and then under house arrest during the same period, also released with acquittal in the first degree. The other comrades were freed.

During the more recent years of their imprisonment, the comrades have struggled inside the Italian prison system against the hard conditions they are subjected to in an attempt by the jailers to isolate them and cut off solidarity from the outside and between prisoners. May 29th 2019, Anna together with Silvia Ruggeri (arrested over squat defence in Turin) launched a hunger-strike in revolt against the torturous regime on their AS2 high-security wing at L'Aquila womens prison (22 hours a day in the cell, heavy limitation on literature, mail delayed for months, disciplinary reports for turning off a light alone or taking a pen out of the cell...), with the objective of transfer from the prison and the closure of the wing itself. (Many anarchists in Italy are held in such wings.) Soon other comrades joined the hunger-strike in prisons from Rome to Florence to Sardinia, including Alfredo and Marco of the Scripta Manent case, backing these objectives. After nearly a month of fasting, the prison administration only tranfered one more anarchist onto Anna and Silvia's wing: she joined the hunger-strike. The strike lasted one month, with solidarity actions outside and inside prison; as the comrades on the L'Aquila wing wrote at the time, "to show that we are difficult material to box up".

To send letters: **Anna Beniamino** , C. C. «Gazzi» femminile , via Consolare Valeria 2 , 98124 Messina , Italia – Italy  
**Alfredo Cospito**, C.C Via Arginone 327, 44122 Ferrara, Italy

## Lisa Moved (Germany, Spain)

[continued from *Return Fire* vol.5 pg95]



'NEITHER DOMESTICATED NOR GAGGED  
Rebel solidarity with the April 13th case'

The imprisoned comrade has opted for voluntary deportation back to the prison system of the Spanish State, where she was living prior to her arrest for trial in Germany, to finish her sentence there.

Let her feel your solidarity:

**Lisa Dorfer**, C.P Brians I, Carretera de Martorell a Capellades, km 23, 08635, Sant Esteve Sesrovires, Spain

### **ON THE OUT – PRISONERS RELEASED**

Jeremy Hammond (USA)

[see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg72]

# MEMORY AS A WEAPON

## 'These Women Refused to Sacrifice'

When Revolution erupted in Barcelona in July 1936, the revolutionaries needed all the help and support they could get from both the male and female workers they claimed to represent. On the radio and through other media, parties and unions made appeals for women's support in the struggle against right-wing Nationalists. We know that the most famous women of the period – the Communist, La Pasionaria, and the anarcho-syndicalist, Federica Montseny – ardently and seemingly tirelessly worked for the victory of the Left. We are also well acquainted with the contributions of the militants of *Mujeres Libres* [ed. – *Free Women*] and other organizations. Yet the history of many other working-class women is less well known and nearly invisible. A focus on them alters the traditional emphasis on collective militancy in the Spanish Revolution. **A large number acted ambivalently towards the cause, and revolutionaries were forced to confront the individualism of females who identified only marginally with the collective social project of the Left.** Perhaps even more than their male counterparts, these women refused to sacrifice for the good of the struggle and defended personal needs, not those of the Republic or the Revolution.

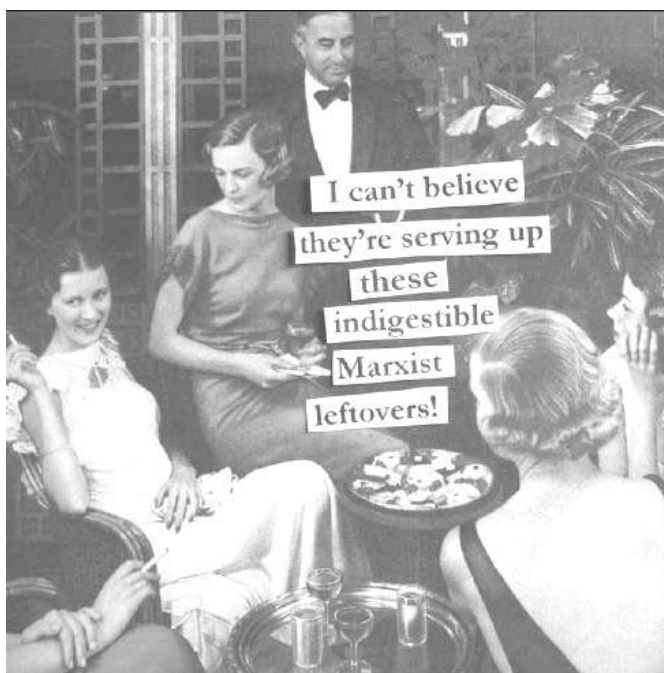
The revolutionary society was unable to integrate large numbers of non-militant females who challenged its *social disciplines*. [...] Women's failure to sacrifice for the Revolution did not mean that they were pro-Franco [ed. – *head of the military uprising that sparked the war, then fascist dictator for 36 years*] or a feminine Fifth Column. In fact, authoritarian and fascist regimes were also forced to confront and control subversive individualism, but its persistence and growth during the Revolution in Barcelona suggests that a social project founded on collective property and worker participation had little attraction for many women. [...] The persistence of individualism during the late 1930s in Barcelona demonstrates the inability

of socialist society to overcome the split between the individual and the collectivity. **Women's reluctance to sacrifice is an implicit critique**

**of the anarcho-syndicalist and Marxist revolutionary vision which many females felt too often renounced the personal for the social.**

Ironically enough, female collective militancy may have been more common before than after the Revolution, in the period of turmoil immediately preceding and following the establishment of the Second Republic in April 1931. At that time and throughout the decade women defended their standard of living and sources of income. Although food riots seem rare, women did actively participate in a 1931 rent strike sponsored by the [ed. – *anarcho-syndicalist*] CNT (*Confederación Nacional de Trabajo*) against rapidly increasing housing costs. During the 1920s Barcelona's population had grown 62.43 percent, and this massive immigration had pushed rents to heights never before experienced. After the establishment of the Second Republic in April, the CNT demanded rent reductions of 40 percent. In June and July meetings of the rent strike committee attracted large numbers of women. Landlords, many of whom possessed only small properties, reacted with meetings of their own. However, the strike proved effective and aroused the participation of perhaps 100,000 in a city of over one million.

**Neighborhood solidarity made evictions difficult, if not impossible. In certain cases neighbors threatened to lynch those who carried out the court's orders. Masses of women and children obstructed evictions of renters.** The government reacted with repression. It imprisoned strike leaders, sent police to ensure removals, and generally acted in the interest of the landlords.



[...] Women also defended their jobs and sources of income. To protest firings, they participated in one of the bloodiest strikes of the period. On 2 October [1931], 760 workers walked out of a foreign-owned metalworking factory that employed 1100 workers in Badalona. Two days later, police arrested and jailed two workers for violating the right to work. The authorities then detained

four women, whose militancy and solidarity with strikers provoked brutal treatment at the hands of the Civil Guard. Metallurgical workers protested the arrests and charged that police, who were engaging in loading and unloading, were acting as strikebreakers. On 24 October, the *Unión Patronal de Badalona* agreed to reinstate the dismissed workers but affirmed the employer's right to discharge personnel for "justified motives". Furthermore, the bosses prohibited union delegates from acting inside the factory but pledged not to dismiss workers who had a year of seniority. **Workers were to return to work the following Monday, but, without notifying the authorities, they continued their "illegal" strike.**

Tensions increased on 29 October, when strikers disobeyed a summons to disperse that had been given by mounted police armed with sabres. The Guard arrested four women, who were carrying stones, and five men. The next day, 250 "scabs", in the Governor's words, entered the factory. When a truck that was accompanied by policemen left the firm, strikers, "*presumably from the Sindicato Unico [CNT]*", attacked the vehicle with small arms. Those in the truck, perhaps Guards themselves, fired back and killed two strikers. The day after, the Governor responded to the workers' deaths by jailing the presidents of the transportation and construction unions of Badalona. During the funeral of the strikers, the Civil Guard "*was forced to charge [the crowd]*".

Yet judgments concerning women's involvement in militant organizations must be mixed. [During the Second Republic government before the war], union membership declined as the state and employers took repressive measures against workers' organizations. At the outbreak of Revolution, many wage earners – especially females most of whom belonged to no union before July 1936 – flocked into the CNT and, to a lesser extent, the Marxist UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*). **It should be underlined that many workers joined the unions not for ideological but for personal reasons: life in revolutionary Barcelona was quite difficult without a union card. To eat a meal in a collective kitchen, to acquire welfare aid, to obtain or keep a job, to attend a technical training center, to get housing, to be admitted to a clinic or hospital, to travel outside of Barcelona, to be exempted from military service, etc., a union card was often desirable, if not necessary.**

According to the CNT's own figures, it represented only 30 percent of the Catalan industrial workers in May 1936, one month before the Revolution, down from 60 percent in 1931. Thus, "tens of thousands",

many of whom were female, with little "class consciousness" or commitment to the goals of the Left entered either union in search of social protection and stable employment. A CNT manager of the power company thought that, "*one of the principal errors of the unions was to force the workers to join one of them. We are not really sure about many of the huge number of new members, although it's not worthwhile to discuss this outside of the union.*"

In June 1937 H. Rudiger, a representative in Barcelona of the revived First International (AIT), wrote that before the Revolution the CNT had only 150,000 to 175,000 members in Catalonia. In the months following the outbreak of the war, Catalan CNT membership jumped nearly one million, of which, "*four-fifths are, thus, new people. We cannot consider a large part of these people revolutionaries. You could take any union as an example of this. Many of these new members could be in the UGT.*"

This official of the resurrected AIT concluded that the CNT could not be an "organic democracy". In the rival union the situation was little different. One UGT official militant asserted that the Catalan Federation of the UGT had 30,000 members before 19 July and 350,000 to 400,000 afterwards. He recommended a new organization of the union since many affiliates lacked experience. Although union officials did not comment upon the gender of their new members, it is probably safe to assume that, especially in the textile sector, a disproportionate number were female. Some CNT unions discouraged the election of members who joined after 19 July 1936 to posts of responsibility in the organization or in collectives unless the new members were unanimously approved. This rule must have had the effect of excluding most women from leadership positions. **Therefore, the large influx of new members into the Catalan unions and political parties was not an indication of ideological conversion to anarcho-syndicalism, socialism, or communism but an attempt by rank-and-file workers, especially women, to defend their own interests as best they could in a revolutionary situation.** During the Revolution, the unions became integrated into the state. They therefore lost their status as independent organizations whose first priority was to defend workers' immediate interests and to protect dissatisfied wage carriers. Instead they became responsible for *producing efficiently*.

At the beginning of the Revolution, the unions collectivized the large factories and encouraged workers' control in the smaller workshops. However, even after collectivization or worker control was



instituted, many wage carriers were reluctant to participate in collective activities at the workplace. They individually avoided attending factory council or union meetings or paying union dues. In fact, activists often claimed that the only way to get workers to attend assemblies was to hold them during working hours and therefore at the expense of production. In one large metallurgical concern, only 25 percent of the personnel participated actively in assemblies. The most active workers were over 30, had at least five years seniority, and technical ability. We can assume that they were usually male. **Frequently, assemblies merely ratified decisions taken by smaller groups of militants or technicians.** Some workers – again probably including many women – felt uncomfortable and were reluctant to speak, let alone protest, during the meetings. For example, only 29 of 74 workers in a UGT-dominated clothing firm, a branch where women were the overwhelming majority, attended an assembly in October 1937. At other meetings, even when the rank and file was present, it often arrived late and left early. UGT telephone personnel – who seemingly did not empathize with women's dual domestic and wage-labor burdens – criticized female colleagues, the majority of whom had joined the union after 19 July, as never having attended even one assembly. **Some activists unsuccessfully proposed fines for members who did not appear at meetings.**

Even when unions improved working conditions, they had to confront the individualism of women workers. At the beginning of the Revolution, a number of textile collectives abolished piecework. Consequently when productivity of female wage earners dropped, male militants found themselves “haranguing the women workers”. The CNT newspaper, *Solidaridad Obrera*, claimed that the women who were making uniforms in the new CNT tailoring shops were content, and it contrasted the space, lighting, and machinery of the Confederation's workshops with the unhygienic conditions that prevailed before the Revolution. The CNT daily proudly stated: “*We are organizing some workshops with the same system as in the United States.*” Yet in June 1937 the Central Junta of Tailoring

criticized the “immense majority” of workers for misunderstanding the Revolution. The rank and file had not yet realized that they must sacrifice and, as a result, plans for the collectivization of the tailoring industry had to be postponed.

Several different incidents showed that non-militant females were reluctant to sacrifice for the Revolution and sometimes demanded pay for “volunteer” work. The UGT *Sindicato de Vestir* had called on four men and women to collect clothes for the troops. The volunteers did not “understand” that they would not be remunerated for their services and demanded their wages. As in other social revolutions, the flight of the monied classes deprived considerable numbers of female domestics of their sources of income. [...] Abandoning the pre-revolutionary practice of participating in rent strikes, a large number of families refused to pay their rent and gas/electricity bills. **Several weeks after the Revolution erupted, the Control Committee of gas**

**and electricity considered employing the Antifascist Militias to collect debts from “elements who are taking advantage of the present circumstances to avoid paying their bills”.** Two months later, the committee complained to a representative of the CNT Construction Union that many consumers were dishonest, “*always trying to find a way to swipe free kilowatts.*”

*Unfortunately, working-class comrades are among the defaulters (morosos). If we catch an upper-class defaulter, we give him what he deserves, but we cannot do anything to the workers since many plead that they don't have a job.”*

Militants wondered why despite the purchase of all available electric stoves, no increase in consumption had been recorded, implying that households, presumably with female consent, were



“Bus drivers and bus repairmen like I had once turned against the monster; they had taken over the entire transportation network of their city. Like a schoolboy reciting a memorized lesson I stressed the fact that shortly after the takeover the busses were again running on schedule, they were again transporting workers to factories and buyers to markets, they were again repaired. The workers themselves were doing without capitalists and managers exactly what they had done with capitalists and managers. In other words, with naive enthusiasm I told my hosts, over and over again, that workers had defeated the monster and yet remained chained to it. My hosts didn't respond; they evidently didn't understand why I was so enthusiastic, and they obviously didn't think that such a victory was worth a drop of a worker's blood.”

– Yarostan Vocek

tampering with their meters. At the end of the year the Committee studied a proposal to establish a special section dedicated to fighting fraud. Members suggested that the gas and electric meters no longer be read separately but together. Joint readings would not only save labor but also threaten potential defaulters with the interruption of both sources of power. The Committee wanted to take strong measures to force consumers who had moved to pay the bills which they acquired at their old address. One militant asked the Housing Commission not to rent to anyone who did not possess a receipt from a recent electric bill. **As the fortunes of the Left dimmed throughout 1937, desire to sacrifice ebbed further, and many women textile workers seemed to have slackened their efforts. The unions responded by attempting to repress individual resistances to work.** The CNT-UGT control committee of the firm Rabat, where women were in the majority, warned that any comrade who missed work and who was not ill would lose his *[sic]* pay. The workers of this firm were told that disobedience could lead to fines and perhaps job loss in an industry where, it must be remembered, despite wartime mobilization of males, unemployment was high. **All Rabat workers were required to attend assemblies under threat of fines. Only conversations concerning work were allowed during work hours. Other collectives in the clothing industry, which had unsuccessfully asked workers to increase production, also enforced rules forbidding conversations, lateness, and even receiving phone calls.**

Rather than organizing for higher wages, as had occurred in the early 1930s, individual females took unauthorized holidays during the Revolution. Those laboring in CNT offices ignored the slogan, *"during war there are no holidays"*. Militants felt compelled to take disciplinary action against a female typist who refused to work Sunday. They feared that if the offender was not sanctioned, *"many [women] comrades would miss Sunday work"*. A busy firm warned a female employee that if she continued to miss work to "party" (*fer festa*) she would be replaced. In similar terms, the workers' committee of the Casa Alemany, threatened two other women who took "unlimited leave". Even *Mujeres Libres* – the CNT's women's group which wanted to integrate women into the productive process – felt compelled to repress individualism. It accused one of its militants of unjustified absences, indiscipline, and immorality and took disciplinary measures against her.

**The repressive actions of unions and their satellite organizations at the workplace were**

**paralleled at a wider level by the reconstruction of a powerful state.** As early as March 1937, when the CNT was participating in government, all citizens between eighteen and forty-five (only soldiers, functionaries, and invalids were excepted) had to possess a "work certificate". **The authorities could ask for this card "at any time" and would assign**

"The progressive view of history and the acceptance, if not glorification, of work have encouraged the study of certain aspects of working-class existence and discouraged an exploration of others. Until recently [*ed. – written in 1990*], interest in ideologies and in the development of working-class organizations took priority over studies of everyday life of workers. Intellectual and political histories of parties, unions, and their militants dominated labor historiography. Examinations of ideologies, whether variants of Marxism or anarchism, permitted the productivist vision of the class to remain unquestioned[...] The anarchosyndicalists of the CNT, the most important working-class organization in Barcelona, were forced to jettison their theories of workers' democracy and participation to make the rank and file work harder and produce more. [T]he unions themselves, both CNT and UGT, were largely integrated into the state and committed to the development of the productive forces. Perhaps the very real threat of jail or a stay in a labor camp was effective in convincing the rank and file to avoid strikes. Barcelonan workers may have felt that it was less risky to use other strategies of resistance, particularly faking illness, to escape the workplace. Their refusals took more individual than collective forms. [...] Spanish working-class militants equated theft with sabotage, another strategy of indirect resistance. Barcelonan revolutionaries defined sabotage broadly to include both intentional and unintentional acts that hurt production, an understandable definition during their struggle. Saboteurs became identified with the "lazy" who became, in turn, "fascist." Militants politicized idleness, which existed in working-class culture long before fascism was born. [...] If avoidance of the workplace rather than party or union membership is taken as a measure of class consciousness, then many women's minimal identification with their role as producer might lead to the conclusion that females were among the true vanguard or consciousness of the working class. [W]orkers revolted against a variety of disciplines, including that imposed by working-class organizations. Wage earners certainly wished to control their workplaces but generally in order to work less. One may speculate that the way to eliminate resistance is not by workers' control of the means of production but rather by the abolition of wage labor itself."

– *Workers Against Work: Labor in Paris & Barcelona During the Popular Fronts*

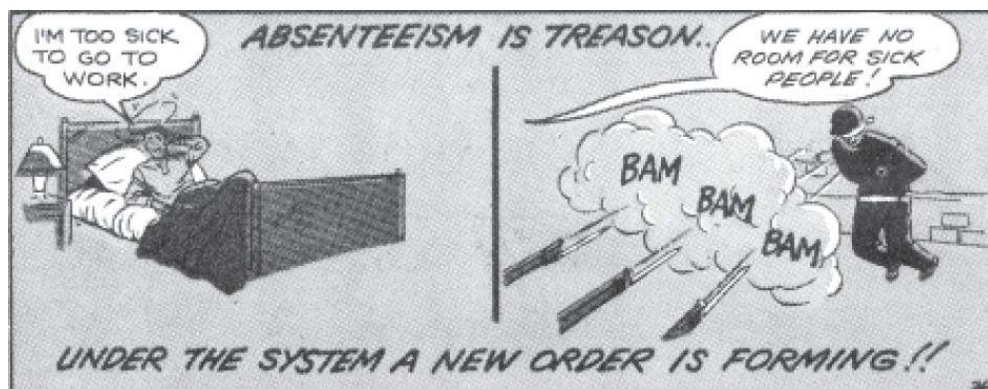
those who did not carry it to fortification work. If violators were found in "cafes, theaters and other places of

amusement", they could be jailed for thirty days.

In the columns of the CNT daily, *Solidaridad Obrera*, the socialist Luis de Araquistáin praised the Confederation for recognizing "the necessity of the state as a tool for the consolidation of revolutionary conquests. What a joy for a Socialist to [read] the program of the CNT."

[...] Women identified less with the workplace than men because of low pay and uninteresting work. The Revolution, while leveling wage differentials to a certain degree, destroyed neither the lower salaries of women nor much of the traditional sexual division of labor. When the *Federación Local* of the UGT needed a secretary or a cleaner, it naturally searched for women. In the *Comedor Popular Durruti* all the waiters, cooks, and dishwashers were male. [...] When box makers encountered economic problems, CNT militants approved the motion not to pay female workers, "who had other means of support". In other cases, some firms continued to provide separate dining facilities for the sexes, effectively institutionalizing prewar customs which, for example, tended to define certain social spaces as off limits to women. In another instance, the unions felt compelled to rationalize the backward Catalan textile industry in order to increase efficiency. Rationalization meant that the mostly female labor force had to work in the factory and abandon the home, where they had performed outwork or, as it was called, *trabajo a domicilio*. Women therefore came to have less control over their work schedule, and mothers were forced to make new arrangements for childcare.

The increasingly harsh economic situation in Barcelona made women less likely to have the time or inclination to sacrifice or even work for the Revolution. Women continued to bear the double burden of wage and domestic labor[...] These burdens increased as the economic situation in the city rapidly deteriorated. Wartime inflation certainly aggravated discontent, as wholesale prices increased more than two and one-half times during the Revolution. At the end of 1936 and at the beginning



of 1937, women demonstrated against the shortage of bread. The various political parties, especially the Communists, attempted to

use the discontent caused by inflation to increase their popularity. Indeed, the famous May Days of 1937, when male Communists fought against anarcho-syndicalists and anti-Stalinist leftists, may have been caused, in part, by female unhappiness over rising prices and increasing shortages. At any rate. On 6 May 1937 female demonstrators showed their rebelliousness by taking direct action.

Continuing the Barcelona tradition of popular seizure of food supplies, "a large group of women descended on the port of Barcelona where they looted a number of vans filled with oranges". Basic foodstuffs were rationed, and housewives were forced to wait in long lines. By 1938 milk, coffee, sugar, and tobacco were in very short supply. No deaths from hunger were reported in 1936 and only 9 in 1937, but in 1938 the figure rose to 296. Hunger continued to incite other women's demonstrations over foodstuffs. Little wonder that helping themselves and their families survive left women with little time for meetings of the collectives or other public affairs.

[...] They attempted to socialize female domestic labor by organizing daycare centers, which, predictably enough, employed only women workers. Even so, the relatives of female workers (usually mothers or mothers-in-law) probably continued to bear primary responsibility for childcare. [...] **The desire to integrate women into the productive process was also the goal of the campaign against prostitution.** While condemning males who frequented prostitutes, anarcho-syndicalist activists and *Mujeres Libres*' members argued for the reform of the members of the oldest profession through the *therapy of work*. They wanted to copy the Soviet model that, it was thought, had eliminated streetwalking. **Federica Montseny, CNT Minister, asserted that the Revolution offered prostitutes the chance "to change their lives and become part of the society of workers."** This was indeed ironic since there is some evidence that before the Revolution [women chose] to become prostitutes precisely to avoid productive labor and poor working conditions. The anti-prostitution campaign reflected a certain puritanism among

militants. Although, as mentioned, abortion was legalized and birth control information made available, some activists recommended that sex and childbirth be delayed until after the Revolution, “*when tools intone the symphony of work*”. Yet sex and prostitution undoubtedly persisted, especially since female domestics who had lost their jobs because of the flight of the monied classes joined the professionals.

[...] In August 1938 a female UGT official asked member unions about the possibilities of hiring more women. The responses of union leaders revealed both the state of Catalan industries and a range of male attitudes towards working females. The Secretary-General of the Woodworkers' Union replied [that] “with honorable exceptions” women were qualified only for “simple” tasks, such as varnishing, not for heavy or dangerous work. The UGT Health Workers' Union claimed that the CNT job monopoly prevented it from hiring more women who were “biologically” better suited for health-care positions.



“We fear that we who believe that '36 was the saddest year in the history of anarchism are a minority. The year in which the existence was revealed of anarchist leaders who would collaborate with the State and its whole repressive apparatus, who would support the communists and the bourgeoisie against any revolutionary steps and even would be complicit in the expansion of a prison apparatus (that later would be used against themselves), all the way up to the execution by firing squad of anarchist expropriators. Also during the Transition [ed. – *to democracy*] and the '80s the CNT gifted history with the same lesson as Leninism [ed. – see *'It Depends on All of Us'*]: that a bureaucracy is always authoritarian and as such never anti-capitalist.”

– *Another Critique of Insurrectionalism*

**[...] Female individualism reflected alienation from organizations which claimed to represent the working class. This indifference to parties and unions demonstrated the immediate priority which many women gave to the personal. Working for a distant socialist or libertarian society was a secondary goal. Furthermore, women had less reason to sacrifice. Males continued to dominate the revolutionary organizations, and while opportunities for women expanded during the Revolution, it was clear that men would continue to rule even if the Left emerged victorious.**

[...] This is not to argue that working-class women were crypto-*franquistas* but rather that they would offer resistance to any regime – Left or Right – which impinged upon their own personal interests in the workplace, in the streets, or at home. Social historians have neglected individualism for several reasons. By its very nature social history involves the study of groups, not individuals. Although its focus has shifted away from parties and unions to grass-roots movements and gender, it continues to examine aggregates. [...] **The refusal to work and to sacrifice negated the social revolutionary vision of Marxists and anarcho-syndicalists. Many women did not find satisfaction in the collectivized workplace, and they refused to dedicate themselves to a revolution whose aim was to make them better wage laborers.** To combat their resistance to workplace discipline, opportunism, and petty fraud, anarcho-syndicalists instituted a repressive order in the collectives and collaborated with Socialists and Communists to construct a powerful state capable of controlling the varieties of subversive individualism. The inheritors of both the anarchist and Marxist traditions failed to overcome the division between female individuals and society.

# 'ALL THAT WILDNESS NAMES'

*[ed. – What follows is taken from the introductory essay written by Jack Halberstam and Tavia Nyong'o for a 2018 academic volume. When academics (including those supposedly sympathetic) start to talk about anarchy, we normally bristle... In this case, at the usual trite amalgamation of our rich and complicated history into a false homogeneity of the 19th/20th century "old" (conveniently then being able to position themselves as experts on the "new" within the well-worn university tracks of critiquing a modernism that is already on the way out as a governing strategy), and their typical need to dissociate anarchism from individualist tendencies – both of these topics will we dealt with in more depth in the upcoming Return Fire book that's been hinted at. Yet there is something altogether more unsettling and profound when thinking of 'the wild' as they favour it here, cautioning against subscribing that concept too neatly into the dualistic revolutionary spirit many of us inherited from the Left, with its attendant Manicheanism (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg92**). Partly their volume was conceived as a dialogue with their deceased comrade José Esteban Muñoz: "What was the open question Muñoz left us with? It was this: What if the "queer" in queer theory were temporarily bracketed in order to examine everything that gathered under its sign and everything that remained beyond its purview? While **wild** was certainly never intended to substitute or replace **queer** term for term, Muñoz's question opened for us and our contributors a range of concerns – regarding race, coloniality, ecology, anarchy, and, yes, even gender and sexuality – that together present a disjunctive series of theoretical and political trajectories left open by the apparent diminishing and routinization of queer critique in its third decade." Take from it what you will.]*

New forms of wildness call to us on all sides, whether in the form of odd weather patterns, inventive forms of political activism, new classifications of the body, fluctuating investments in disorder, or a renewed embrace of the ephemeral. But, at the same time, wildness has a history, a past and, potentially, a future. As certain new forms of wildness present themselves to us (the digital wildness of the glitch), others slip from view altogether (natural habitats). To say that *wildness* has a past is in no way to declare that past over or to announce the arrival of a new discursive regime. Rather, we claim here that the past of wildness is not all that wildness is or can be. Wildness has certainly functioned as a foil to civilization, as the dumping ground for all that white settler colonialism has wanted to declare expired, unmanageable, undomesticated, and politically unruly. For us, that makes wildness all the more appealing. Like another problematical term – *queer* – *wildness* names, while rendering partially opaque, what hegemonic systems

would interdict or push to the margins. Unlike the way claims have been made on behalf of the queer, we are not brushing off a

rejected term and refurbishing it here so much as we are attending to what an idea has always gathered in its wake and what it gestures toward in terms of the expunged features of our own critical systems of making sense and order. It is time to rewild theory.

Saidiya Hartman, in her contribution to this issue, tracks the lives of young black girls in early twentieth-century New York City, girls whom she describes in all their glory as "wild and wayward." **As the law gathered itself up to issue new ways to snuff out the wildness of the wayward, those black girls found new ways to sound their riotous intentions, to flee the workforce for which they were destined, and to yoke themselves to a freedom held in abeyance but glimpsed ahead through the communities they formed.** Hartman names the forms of life forged by black girls in the city as "nothing short of anarchy" and sets out to account for the disorder they willfully sowed. This anarchy, in these girls and their forms of wildness, offers a glimpse of the stakes of rethinking the relations between civilization and its others.

The rewilding of theory proceeds from an understanding that first encounters with wildness are intimate and bewilder all sovereign expectations of autonomous selfhood. To be wild in this sense is to be beside oneself, to be internally incoherent, to be driven by forces seen and unseen, to hear in voices, and to speak in tongues. By abandoning the security of coherence, we enter a dark ecology, where, to quote Michel Foucault from *The Order of Things*, "nature can no longer be good." But even as wildness is internal in a psychic sense, we also sense it as an extrahuman, supra-human force, what Timothy Morton dubs a "hyperobject" and what might be received as a message from nature to humans reminding us that there could be and probably will be life without "us." **As Nina Simone reminds us, "wild is the wind," and the wildness of the weather, internally and externally, implies a pathetic fallacy that tethers the undoing of the human to the rage of new storms blowing in across the Caribbean.** Wildness is where the environment speaks back, where communication bows to intensity, where worlds collide, cultures clash, and things fall apart.

Wild is the will, and wilder still is the sense of an increasingly criminalized disorder of things. We live in wild times; we bear witness to wild and ruinous places. No history of wildness can be pure or clean. The idea inheres to colonial fantasies of the primitive.



It spurs pioneer dreams of unpopulated space; it fuels eugenic fantasies of social control. It emerges as the other to fascist principles of order, symmetry, and blood purity. And indeed, as the essays gathered here under the sign of “wildness” indicate, there are still multiple ways in which the wild remains a potent location in a febrile colonial and antiblack imaginary. Few here are interested in pursuing a history of ecology or environmentalism per se. Nor is wild theory offering another update of “the Other” of deconstruction and psychoanalysis. Instead, the essays gathered here think beyond the colonial epistemes in which wildness indicates uninhabitable space and unknowable peoples all at once. **What is wildness for those who have been forcibly gathered under its sign?** Wildness is loud and disruptive; it interrupts the neat narratives of freedom and escape, and it lurks within an anarchistic longing for what one writer in the archives that Hartman navigates calls a “wild world of fun and pleasure.”

While before the nineteenth century “the wild” could still take something like “nature” as its referent, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the wild had become part of a colonial division of the world into the modernizing and the extractive zones. The wild was a resource, a genetic variant, or an indigenous remedy to be patented, transplanted, exploited, commodified. As a source of white renewal from the supposed excesses of civilization, the wild had a vertiginous array of modernist avatars, from Tarzan to Picasso. And yet Wilfredo Lam, an Afro-Chinese surrealist painter of the decolonial imaginary, came to the African mask by way of Picasso in Paris, a mask that in turn led him and André Breton back to Haiti and vodun.<sup>1</sup> We cannot simply shake free of this division, of this inner complicity, of primitivism and wildness. But we can think about what wildness might signify in a postcolonial world and within an anticolonial project. Contributor Julietta Singh proposes, via Edward Said, that colonialism has imagined itself on an “errand into the wilderness,” the term *errand* picking up the etymological strands of “waywardness,” “errancy,” but ultimately signifying an unfinished bureaucratic mission. A rewilding of theory wants to make those connections. **The errand into the wilderness remains and will remain incomplete if only because civilization has already collapsed, and the black and decolonial world is already here. If**



**we refuse to access all that wildness names and has named, we will be acceding to a monologue of civilization with its narrative alibis of humanity, economic growth, and the approaching technological singularity** [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg43*]. Wildness speaks back [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg 41*] to the ongoing stream of consciousness of so-called civilized thought on behalf of those who live and dream otherwise.

In theory, we argue, the wild need not be delimited by its uses within a colonial, antiblack lexicon. Nor is it exhausted by the romantic image of spontaneous revolt. Wild theory uses and abuses these lexicons and brutal grammars while extending them, amplifying them, contesting some and ignoring others. While wildness itself continues to play its part in the ongoing project of propping up a thoroughly corrupt and barely legible understanding of the civilized, the real question to parse is, how might we become feral?

[...] The force of such wild modes of feeling and doing surface in the “utopian impulse” that, in previous work, Jayna Brown has located in the musics of Africa and its diaspora. There, Brown argues, the “buzz and rumble” of these musics sound out a bricolage of communications technologies, which operate on a frequency that evades the purview of neocolonial command. In this issue, Brown extends this argument backward in time, as she considers the anarchist call for the creation of counterpublics through the pirating of the airwaves in Lizzie Borden’s 1983 film *Born in Flames*. Critiquing neoliberal market feminism and its capitalist appeals for inclusion into the nation-state, Brown is interested in **a genealogy of black and brown feminisms that**

**refuse and unsettle and urges us to renew a politics of “noncompliance that dances and screams and blows things up.”** She insists on a historical memory of radical black and brown feminist articulations committed to decentralized and nonhierarchical organizing principles and to a politics of self-recognition. Speculative modes of revolt, like those in Borden’s film, continually

question, and they defy incorporation by dominant, and dominating, regimes of power.

Put another way, wild theory doesn’t come with a prefabricated apologetics or scholarly apparatus, because it doesn’t quite know yet how to fit into polite

1 ed. – Spirituality practiced by Aja, Ewe and Fon peoples of West Africa, and inspiring various diasporic spiritualities in the ‘New World’.

society. **Either that or it has forgotten its manners, insofar as rewilding embraces forgetting, senility, menopause, and absentmindedness as evasions of compulsory performances of youthful rebellion.**

The wild, that is, can be that which has

gone to seed, that which failed to thrive, those who are both in and out of the game. The wild can be loud and dangerous, but it can also be placid and unruffled, even neutral and sterile. Wild are the words that anarrange gender, sexuality, ability, and other modernist paradigms of normalization into unstable vocabularies and idiolects, symbol-words that are as much about getting lost in the inner and outer hinterland as they are about any resystematizing ambitions in queer theory (with or without antinormativity).

If I could write this in fire," Michelle Cliff states, "I would write this in fire." Rewilded theory fans the flames Cliff lights when she laments: "[I felt] that my wildness had been tamed – that which I had been taught was my wildness." If we could write this wildly, we would write this wildly. In this passage, we must listen for the interinanimative shift in her repetitions of *fire* and *fire*, *wildness* and *wildness*. A poetics of wildness evades terminological definition. Cliff continues:

I originate in the Caribbean, [where] I received the message of anglocentrism, of white supremacy, and I internalized it. As a writer, as a human being, I have had to accept that reality and deal with its effect on me, as well as finding what has been lost to me from the darker side, and what may be hidden, to be dredged from memory and dream. And it is there to be dredged. As my writing delved longer and deeper into this part of myself, I began to dream and imagine. I was able to clearly envision Nanny, the leader of a group of guerrilla fighters known as the Windward Maroons<sup>2</sup>, as she is described: an

"Even in the scope of the last handful of years, we can see the way Queer has been further institutionalized, rendered as a synonym for an accepted ideology or a particular aesthetic. The malaise of queer as in-this-scene or has-these-politics or this-type-of-sex was almost enough for us to leave the word behind. We almost parted ways because of its dumb reified identities. We didn't, because we think that something remains in it – something of its original weirdness, strangeness, alterity. Queerness has always been this remainder for us, something as corporeal as a heartbeat yet paradoxically evasive, and fantastical. It's what first drew us into the word: a danger, a power, a magic. Queer spirals outwards, goes in disparate directions, poses an unending series of corrosive questions – encrypts and decrypts – creates, destroys worlds. We kept the word, because of the holes it pokes in any attempted orthodoxy. We decided it was worth a fight over it; to find the holes, stretch them out, plot an escape."

– Bædan #3

old Black woman naked except for a necklace made from the teeth of white-men. I began to love her.

Cliff does not hallucinate Nanny as an imagined lineal ancestor (as settler-colonial subjects are prone to); instead, her phantom here grounds a decolonial black lesbian feminist imaginary in the prolonged exercise of its writing out from under the tamed wildness of English letters. **Like other colonial subjects who have had to write their way out of the madness of imperial rule – Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Jamaica Kincaid – Cliff finds that the only way out is through.** In "Notes on Speechlessness," Cliff retells the story of a dream in which she enters an old-fashioned butcher shop and samples the wares, only to realize, in an auto-cannibalistic ecstasy, that "the meat in the shop is the dead flesh of lesbians." As this anecdote shows, rather than just evade or repress the white supremacy of her class formation, Cliff recognizes that she must eat her own, that the opposition to colonialism requires that she fight fire with fire, violence with autodestruction, and civilization with wildness.

The wild modes of thought that we engage in here work best as a disruptive force, breaking free of the need to produce queer policy or trans modes of governance and instead offering critique in a utopian mode. This version of utopian thinking eschews the idealizations of straight utopian thought for the wilder speculations of queer utopia, such as José Esteban Muñoz models in his book *Cruising Utopia*. In the chapter "A Jeté out the Window," Muñoz recounts the staging of dancer Fred Herko's suicide as his final

2 ed. – Windward 'Maroons' (derived from 'cimarrón' meaning 'wild; fugitive; gone feral' in Spanish, the language of the first colonists of Jamaica and decimators of the Arawak inhabitants) were escaped African slaves inhabiting the 'Windward' side of the British slave colony (other maroon cultures occupied other areas outside the plantations) as small bands in remote regions, thriving by adapting various native West African land-based cultures to the island's ecology. They held out against Britain for

90-odd years at the height of the latter's imperial hegemony as world superpower, defeating thousands of colonial troops shipped in against them by the art of camouflage unknown to the British and by pioneering guerrilla-type warfare, using features of the landscape to their advantage. They fought under the martial cunning of the woman known as Queen Nanny, also a major spiritual figure in Windward Maroon culture.

performance. Using the concept of surplus value to frame acts, work, and modes of being that exceed capitalist flows, Muñoz takes Herko's leap into the void as an example of an excessive gesture – one that could be read as useless, childish, wasteful, or nonsensical – that literally refuses all that capitalism (and capitalistic notions of time) offers and instead gestures toward a particularly wild mode of queer aesthetic production, one where escape and refusal rub shoulders and cross paths. In his piece posthumously published in this issue, Muñoz shows that he was prepared to take these refusals, and these wilder forms of fugitivity, even further: he uses X's punk album *Wild Gift* as a place to launch his utopian idea of an uncommon commons: "The wildness of punk and its commons is that annihilative force, that refusal of cohesion and insistence on scatteredness, partiality, and the impossible act of not only living but also striving that are accomplished in an uncommon commons." **We return to the well of Muñoz's thinking, not to canonize or to fetishize, but in a Muñozian spirit of surplus labor, surplus pleasure, surplus meaning.** We began thinking and planning this project with him, before his sudden and untimely death. It is an incomplete and uncompletable fulfillment of the best (and worst) laid plans.

It would be antithetical to the spirit of this project to expect the authors here to present a common front or even to accept the framing terms of this essay as their own. Contemporary dancer and choreographer Trajal Harrell quotes Butoh originator Tatsumi Hijikata as reminding us that "in one step are a thousand animals." Harrell takes this as a choreographic principle for enacting the movement insight that any single gesture or term can unlock infinite and wayward series. **But the animals within his step or his gesture are not only human – in Dinesh Wadiwel's inspired consideration of the opposition that animals mount to human exploitation, we learn about chicken resistance to machine harvesting, and he reminds us that "even domesticated animals are always already 'wild'"! Wildness, indeed, is always already animality – an unruly energy that stands outside of human forms of control, management, exploitation, and consumption.**

[...] Wild theory subscribes to an understanding of the political that is not coextensive with our fucked-up political present, but nor does it appeal to an idealized anarchism of the past. Anarchist politics today, which we find to be a clustering of all kinds of social justice positions (some great, some not so much), few of which reduce down to individualism or sociopathic libertarianism, are not the anarchist

politics of the early twentieth century. While anarchy lingers in the practices of Hartman's "wayward" black girls and underpins the agitation in Chen's unruly bodies, it names now a set of practices and refusals that make up contemporary anticapitalism and indicate a new or at least different paradigm of the political, one that lodges more comfortably in the resistance to agendas and the improvisatory politics of what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney have named "the undercommons."

Let "anarchism" hold a space, for now, for a critique of the governmental forms that developed in the nineteenth century as new techniques of rule but that now, like so many nineteenth-century systems of thought, order, and rule, have become the scaffolding for neoliberal forms of tyranny [ed. – see *'The Position of the Excluded'*]. **A more erudite and informed wild theory to come might revisit and expound further on the wild as a concept as it was important to nineteenth-century anarchist thinkers, from Henry David Thoreau to Pyotr Kropotkin. This would be done not simply to name some mythic time and space before capitalism but rather to reference a space that opens up between the developed world and that which exceeds its reach.** For Thoreau, that space was to be found in the wooded regions beyond urban sociality.<sup>3</sup> As for Kropotkin, in his writings from the first two decades of the twentieth century, wildness offers an opportunity to think outside of capitalist logics of competition and deadly combat. His notion of "cooperation" identifies forms of mutual aid as far more representative of most species' struggles to survive and as a model for human sociality. **Wildness as a concept in these anarchist writings refers not to the colonial fantasy of untouched and unoccupied space but rather to a sensibility, an anticolonial mode of thinking, and a poetics of power.** In this context, we can understand the wild as a space rendered uninhabitable by modernity but crammed with interesting life-forms of its own.

Would a rewilded theory perform new acts of colonization? To the extent that it fails to acknowledge those accused of wildness – indigenous people who get cast as the inhabitants of a lost world of another social order may well ask, as

3 Thoreau understood that these spaces were never just natural, but were a palimpsest of histories of conquest and displacement. "I walk toward one of our ponds," Thoreau writes in "Slavery in Massachusetts," but "who can be serene in a country where both the rulers and the ruled are without principle? [...] My thoughts are murder to the State, and involuntarily go plotting against her." Of course, Thoreau fucked up sometimes and reproduced a lot of white settler-colonial dribble, too. Nobody's perfect!

Jodi A. Byrd does in her essay in this issue, “what is the wild to the American Indian?” For those bodies that continue to represent the very condition that others have the luxury to contemplate and debate, the wild can be a treacherous and, in Byrd’s words, a “dangerous and deadly” place. **But the theorizing of wildness, the calling forth of wild strands of the present, the claiming of a wildness that remains opposed to the persistent discourses of civility and civilization that mark contemporary neocolonialisms, has also been a key facet of indigenous aesthetics and specifically of an indigiqueer irreverence in the face of Canadian colonial balderdash.** If we turn, for example, to the work of Kent Monkman, the Cree artist whose work graces the cover of this issue, we might find a diagram for rewilding theory in his large, explosive, dynamic, and confrontative canvases. Over the past twenty-five years, Monkman has painted, performed, drawn, and filmed indigiqueer encounters within and against the wild, grotesque, and rapaciously sexual encounters that refuse the conventional staging of wildness as a confrontation between modern innovators and traditional, anachronistic communities. Across an enormously inventive body of work that includes massive paintings modeled on works by nineteenth-century heavyweight painters like Robert Harris, Paul Kane, and George Catlin, Monkman inserts indigenous figures, often queer, into meetings that would have excluded them and onto landscapes they were meant to recede into. He repaints art history from the perspective of the indigenous bodies that are conventionally held at the decorative edges to the main scenes of modernity, but he also mounts the travesty of stolen generations (what they taught me was my wildness) as gaps and voids, traumas and ghosts in communities ravaged by settler violence. This, too, is Canadian history. He reimagines history encounter[ed] as a camp bacchanal of gender-queer bodies, anticolonial carnage, and wild reversals.

In Monkman’s 2014 painting *Seeing Red*, for example, which appeared aptly enough in a show titled *Failure of Modernity*, we witness the blurring of visual, political, geographical, and art historical imagery. The painting offers us a startling scene bristling with symbolic systems at odds with each other and time itself. Against the backdrop of the blue of either skies or heavens, a helicopter and an angel cast very different eyes upon the scene below. In the background of the painting, we see the familiar markers of urban riot – a burning car, masculine racialized bodies in motion, smoke, confusion, graffiti. But there are also buffalo within this arena, creatures allied with the rioting bodies, on the one hand, but



symbolizing the loss of space, on the other. In the foreground, Monkman offers an astonishing scene of encounter. Not the policeman and the body of color, or rioters and property, not the mob and the riot police, but an imposing matador in drag and high heels is confronting the bull of Western art itself. The bull is not one of the buffalo, but wears a Picasso head and crouches before the matador, who holds a Hudson Bay blanket [ed. – see the companion piece to *Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation*] in one hand and poses with her other hand on her hip. In addition, the telephone pole holding up the wires that signal modern networks of communication and connection has been carved into a totemic pole, and there are multiple native characters in the scene. **Some of the native bodies are arrayed behind the burning car; two others are running one way, turning to look over their shoulders – one holds a feather, the other a musical instrument.** Ahead of them, a native woman kneels at the head of a white man in colonial clothing stretched out on the ground, possibly dead – this figure is lifted directly out of Édouard Manet’s 1864 painting *The Dead Toreador*.

*Seeing Red*, like many of Monkman’s large-scale paintings, is extraordinary for its detail and its competing message systems. Using satire, realism, postimpressionistic style, saturated color, caricature, naturalism, and many other representational strategies, Monkman wields his paintbrush in the same manner that his alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, wields lances – with artistry and flair, he seduces the bull only to wound it, calls on it only to draw blood. *Drawing Blood*, indeed, could be another name for the painting in which no blood is shed but all is lost for Western art and Western art history and aesthetics itself hangs in the balance.

The image on this special issue’s cover, *Cain and Abel*, painted in 2017, features two nude transmasculine bodies engaged in epic combat, as a female figure reminiscent of John Gast’s allegorical figure of American Progress half heartedly strives to

intercede. In the background, scenes of despair, rape, and plunder both reference and upend gender and racial conventions of conquest and white settlement. The story of Cain and Abel, of course, is about more than sibling rivalry. The brothers represent not only dynamics of family drama but also contrasting relationships to the land: Abel, in the biblical myth, is a shepherd, while Cain is a farmer. **In Monkman's hands, the brothers are locked in a mortal conflict that continues to haunt**

**modernity: that of settlers versus nomads, owners versus temporary residents, people who stay put and seek to extract value from the land versus people who move around and see the land as a resource, not capital.** Abel, the nomadic shepherd, falls at the hands of his brother and becomes the first martyr for wildness, the first victim of civilization. That the bodies of Cain and Abel in the painting are transgender, or two-spirited,<sup>4</sup> with male torsos and female genitalia, suggests that different relations to the body, to gender, and to reproduction are also at stake in the conflict. **As the bodies of cowboys are tossed aside by Indians in the backdrop, the painting offers to reverse the terms of civilization and wildness, turning the former into a lost cause and the latter into the future whose time has come.** Monkman's massively ambitious shows – with names like *Casualties of Modernity*; *The Rise and Fall of Civilization*; *Failure of Modernity*; and *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* – do nothing short of repaint the world, the wild, and everything in it.

Gathered here under the sign of the wild and wildness, our contributors have taken this term as an opportunity to think about errant sexualities, wayward black girls, fugitivity, mess, feminist anarchy, and other stray formulations of protest and refusal. They present for us not so much a united front as an impossible series. The impossible for us names the relation between states of affairs that could plausibly be, just not at the same time. It is not

4 ed. – A modern, pan-indigenous name offered by some to describe a traditional third (or fourth, fifth...) gender role in various cultures of Turtle Island (or so-called North America). Others oppose the term, as they have their own words for such roles (which vary widely when they exist), and see Western binary thinking behind the implication that a person contains “both male and female” elements.

“There is no time to lose. Our desire and passion will put an end to everything that dominates us. Civilization (not anarchy!!!!) is the highest expression of order. Therefore, instead of the order and control that drive us to madness, we embrace chaos, individuality, and the uniqueness of every living thing.”

– claim for 12.09.11 arson against construction multinational PERI (“dedicated to destroying the Earth through the building of highways, power stations, etc.”) in Madrid, Spain

“Though we forgo the privilege of naturalness we are not deterred, for we ally ourselves instead with the chaos and blackness from which Nature itself spills forth. If this is your path, as it is mine, let me offer whatever solace you may find in the monstrous benediction: May you discover the enlivening power of darkness within yourself. May it nourish your rage.”

– My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix

necessarily a coalitional or synthesizing term. The impossible is neither the impossible nor the implausible, but more nearly that which can be tantalizingly close while standing forever just out of reach. It represents the virtual and, why not?, the marvelous. A feeling for the impossible is as close to us as our ordinary and inevitable experience of loss, in which the lost object remains and continues to transform in both memory and imagination. We two are impossibility in relation with the third who began this journey with us and whose absence continues to shape its forward direction.

[...] Fred Moten and Wu Tsang in their poetic duet for this issue propose: “Earth makes space through world where we hold where study, strain through set logic.” Is it reasonable to situate the wild here, on the verge of sense making but where we are straining through the logic we inherit and trying to find another pattern, another disorder of things? Zakiyyah Iman Jackson thinks so and finds in the work of Sylvia Wynter a way around the order/chaos binary that situates blackness as the chaos that white order must hold at bay. What if earth makes space through world and new worlds, demonic ground, in Wynter's terms, require new science or a black feminine sublime, in Jackson's terms, that inverts the relations between matter and representation and unleashes a pure discursive chaos? What if, rather than fighting the chaos or explaining it, what if instead of locating the chaos and mastering it, we linger in the void and catch a glimpse of what Muñoz dubbed “the punk rock commons” or “the chaos of the everyday”? In his close reading of X's album *Wild Gift*, Muñoz asks, “What is the wildness of this gift that X offered?,” and he answers, “Maybe the gift must be wild to be a gift.” Maybe, but maybe the wild is a gift, one that we must accept without haggling, receive without asking for more, and open onto while making space through world. Maybe wildness, maybe now.



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**Anarchy, Secession, Subsistence**  
(rejoining rebellion with the land)  
[anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca](http://anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca)

**Anarchy Radio** (streaming and  
downloadable hour of global news and  
anti-civilisation analysis, every Tuesday)  
[johnzerzan.net/radio](http://johnzerzan.net/radio)

**A-News Podcast** (weekly curation of  
selected posts and topics for those  
without time to read [anarchistnews.org](http://anarchistnews.org))  
[podcast.anarchistnews.org](http://podcast.anarchistnews.org)

**Autonomy News** (UK & global)  
[autonomynews.org](http://autonomynews.org)

**Bad News** (collaborative presentation  
every month from shows around the  
world) [aradio-berlin.org/en/tag/badnews](http://aradio-berlin.org/en/tag/badnews)

**Ears & Eyes** (multi-lingual,  
documentation of surveillance against  
our movements and spaces by states)  
[earsandeyes.noblogs.org](http://earsandeyes.noblogs.org)

**Enough is Enough 14** (global)  
[enoughisenough14.org](http://enoughisenough14.org)

**Indigenous Action Media** (radical  
perspectives from occupied homelands)  
[indigenousaction.org](http://indigenousaction.org)

**Knowing the Land is Resistance**  
(re-enchantment and reconnection)  
[knowingtheland.com](http://knowingtheland.com)

**The Local Kids** (compiled translations  
from international voices in struggle)  
[thelocalkids.noblogs.org](http://thelocalkids.noblogs.org)

**Montreal Counter-Information**  
(Canada, bi-lingual)  
[mtlcounter-info.org/en](http://mtlcounter-info.org/en)

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[segadores.alscarrers.org](http://segadores.alscarrers.org)

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– by Rr

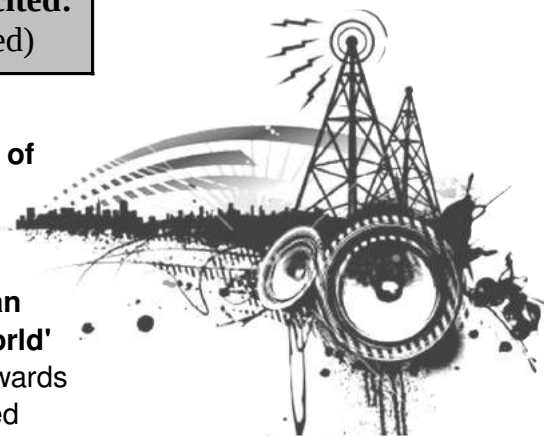
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– by Peter Gelderloos

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Seidman

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