

RETURN FIRE

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

A Philosophy for Anarchism
(considerations on this winding path)
pg495

'The Utopia we Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark'
& Hurricane Helene Disrupts Critical Chip Mining in North Carolina
pg496

'Mobilising Disaster Relief'
(how can people save each other and not their rulers?)
pg500

Death is a Master from Germany
(on not letting our struggles be separated)
pg513

TEN-T, Military Logistics, and Availability
(infrastructure and the expanding logic of 'preparedness')
pg515

The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration and Cyclical Time
& 'You Are the Good Cause'
pg520

The Cryptoliberal Creep
& The Far Right, the Far Left, and the Trap of Electoral Politics
pg525

Memory as a Weapon
(re-telling how we've played fiercely and bashed back)
pg534

Lies of the Land
(review: Paul Kingsnorth's 'The Lie of the Land')
pg546

Poems for Love, Loss and War
pg565

Unruly Edges
(of mushrooms and empires)
pg577

Cybernetic Mommy Milkers
(the psychology of 21st Century subjugation)
pg577

Another Way Out
(an ode to one who returned fire)
pg587

...and more!

VOLUME 6, CHAPTER VII
WINTER 2024-2025 (part 1/2)

Hurry comrade, shoot the policeman,
the judge, the boss, [the CEO]. Now,
before a new police prevent you.

Hurry to say No, before the new
repression convinces you that saying
no is pointless, mad, and that you
should accept the hospitality
of the mental asylum.

Hurry to attack capital before a
new ideology makes it sacred to you.

Hurry to refuse work before some
new sophist tells you yet again
that 'work makes you free'.

Hurry to play.

Hurry to arm yourself.



A PHILOSOPHY FOR ANARCHISM

[ed. – By Aryanam, hosted by the website of the Federation of Anarchism Era (from the territories dominated by the States of Iran and Afghanistan).]

Philosophy is nothing but a landscape of perspectives, worldviews, and paths, some meandering and some straightforward, some solitary and some crisscrossing with the neighboring paths, some long and some short, some trekked in multitude and some in solitude, some forgotten and some revered, some new and some ancient, all to understand and nourish the abilities and needs of self and a myriad of others. **Being is becoming, the traveler and the path both change in the journey.** Yet, even if the destination is all the same, not all paths are suitable for all. One needs to stay true to oneself and the path's needs and abilities. *To each according to their needs and from each according to their abilities.*

This path depicts a self-differentiating world. There is only one voice, one origin, one source, with a myriad of ever-changing expressions. There is no hierarchy among the multitude of different expressions but ones distinguished based on our needs and abilities. In difference, all realize actualization, recognition, and existence. Humanity is no different. To make a difference, one must understand one's and others' needs and abilities and then act within those abilities to fulfill the needs. To change, one must be willing to change. *To each according to their needs and from each according to their abilities.*

Recognizing self and others, inspiring difference, and affecting change all necessitate interaction. Peering close, underneath the myriad of groups, communities, and societies, through the rich tapestry of minglings, collaborations, gossiping, camaraderie, and intimacy, when building genuine affinity, relations, and friendships, socialization is at the core of human interactions. We socialize to cultivate our commonalities as a seed to recognize and foster our differences through cooperation and collaboration.¹ Socialization is the key to understanding our fellow abilities, needs, and desires, for making a difference. **United in difference, this is the basis of human sociability.** *To each according to their needs and from each according to their abilities.*

Groups, communities, and societies are nothing but a crisscrossing web of interconnected and interdependent associations and relationships to varying intensities and degrees based on individuals' needs, desires, and abilities. **Individuals are each**

1 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'Centering Relationships'



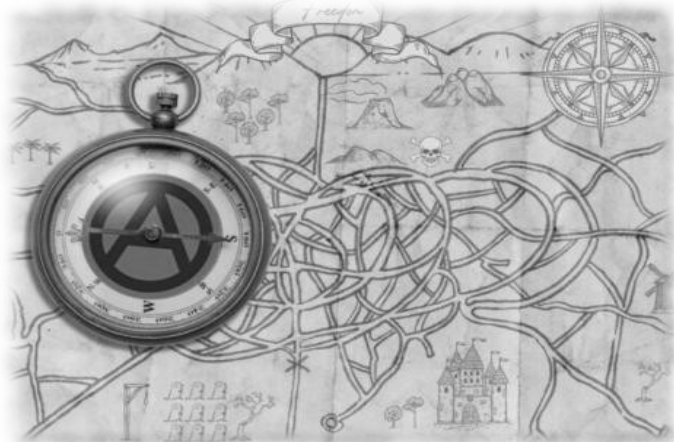
integral to our socialization, its building blocks and foundation; the presence or absence, association or antagonism, contribution or withdrawal, fulfillment and disappointment, and happiness or anguish of each significant, as if each deliberate and attentive beating wings of butterflies inspiring a storm of change. Then, individuals are each the measure of difference, envoys of change, in unceasing flux as their perspectives, abilities, and needs grow and wane, eternally unfit, whether solitary or collective, to be arbiters and authority on each others' needs and abilities. *To each according to their needs and from each according to their abilities.*

There is a countercurrent to immortalize the self, arresting the world from change and focusing solely on either similarities and differences, free from all undesired consequences, invulnerable from the differences made by self or others,² no matter how unlikely, unsightly, and minuscule; a will dictating conformity and uniformity on the similar, and the othering and vilifying the different; a sterile, barren, rigid, and dead trend, ending only in domination and destruction. Change, repetition and difference, this is how the world reproduces itself. Life is no different. Humanity is no different. Each difference is a potential for new expressions, resulting in new needs and abilities, new associations and collaborations. *To each according to their needs and from each according to their abilities.*

Fruitful socialization begets trust and honesty. Deception is poison. Shrouded in falsehood, one can't be understood or understand another, no flourishing socialization, no informed consent, ruined from making a genuine difference, ending with nothing but foolish relationships, fickle communities, and corrupt societies. Institutions like the state, religion, patriarchy, racism, capitalism, or concepts like debt, duty, honor, virtue, property, social hierarchy, paternalism, and self-sacrifice; deception

2 ed. – see Unruly Edges

has many faces and many names, yet wears the husk of humanity, detracts from the cultivation of our commonalities and differences, sabotages, corrupts, appropriates, exploits, and dominates all the same, forcing and inciting us to deceive ourselves and others, all to compel each other into cycles of obedience, then claiming our ingenuity and resistance as their providence. No genuine needs and abilities could be expressed by the docile and subservient or acknowledged and reciprocated by the domineers and oppressors.



Different worldviews may prescribe different ways to move through and interact with the world. This path, unable and unwilling to present a flawless beacon of veracity, an everlasting belief, or a small island of assurance and conviction in the sea of uncertainty and change, offers nothing but a seedling growing with our personal experience and a tool to track to the trends; a compass. We are fellow nomads trekking through life without a predetermined destination, each with different values shaped by different ever-changing needs, abilities, and visions for self-actualization. Yet, we all recognize the necessity of freedom and autonomy to develop and collaborate to fulfill our own needs and desires. Then, in the absence of societal power, the absence of rulers and ruled, the absence of domination and exploitation, the absence of social hierarchies, the absence of obedience, we would have the sole reference-independent compass not centering anything in existence, no humans, no animals, no nature, no ancestors, no Gods, and not our current interpretations of reality: anarchism.³ **We need not put trust in the compass, ceaselessly evaluating and verifying its capability and efficacy, destroying the old and building anew to make a difference, to be different.** To each according to their needs and from each according to their abilities.

3 ed. – Regarding how other anarchists might hold ancestors /gods in their interpretation of reality and path, and honour them without without forcing them onto others, see **The Darkness Criticizes the Wolf for Howling at the Moon**

'THE UTOPIA WE DREAM OF BECOMES MOST VISIBLE IN THE DARK'

[ed. – Updates from Firestorm, an anarchist bookshop and social centre in Asheville, site of some of the devastation visited a massive rainstorm followed directly by Hurricane Helene in the southern Appalachian mountains, in the eastern territories claimed by the United States. It was the worst storm to hit the city in recorded history, with over 200 dead (and rising) across the affected states, and has permanently etched itself into the geological history of the region, with entire rivers changing their course in a matter of days and 30-foot-deep canyons opened in the earth by landslides. Last year, Tulane University ranked Asheville – high off the ground and far from the coast – as one of the most “climate-resilient cities” in the United States, yet that reputation lies in ruins, and as neighbours reckon with entire streets washed from their foundations and dig bodies from the refuse, the stark truth is revealed: we rely on each other, not the State and its mechanisms of preparedness and calculation.

*Firestorm has been a space where, at the same time as serving as one part of the wide-spread and spontaneous mutual aid which sprung up, participants themselves are dependent on the supplies they are co-ordinating: “subverting,” as noted on their Kolektiva account the following posts are drawn from, “the binary of aid recipient and provider.” Anarchist disaster relief efforts began much before the Hurricane, in some cases stretching back almost eight years, enabling them to quickly pivot into action on the basis of the relationships already cultivated. But today anarchists are far from the only distinct group on the ground (whether locals or not); as with the more recent flooding in the Valencian-speaking parts of the Iberian Peninsular (see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire, **The Swell**), fascist groups have also attempted to make a name for themselves among the responders, although in Appalachia mostly they brought few supplies and left again after their social media photoshoots were completed. As discussed critically in the interview with Rhiannon Firth (**'Mobilising Disaster Relief'**) which follows these updates, in the post-COVID world groups as disparate and volunteer helicopter pilots, conservative politicians, anarchists, and even – in the recent announcement by the UK Prime Minister of a new violent disorder unit – police themselves are applying the term 'mutual aid' to their efforts.*

In a world increasingly strewn with crises, it behooves us to examine how to distinguish our efforts and proposals from



those which would neutralise/pacify them. Not letting these defensive strategies be estranged from offensive ones is key. “We cannot separate care and struggle, nor should we let the desire for individual safety interfere with the forms of collective action that represent our only hope of following through on the slogan “We keep us safe”[...] [it] can only come through collective action” (The Case for Resistance). Returning to that side of the Atlantic, in an interview with Asheville’s The Final Straw Radio the Palestinian poet Yaffa As noted that “mutual aid is interesting in what’s known as the US because it’s always existed, very invisibly within the most marginalized of marginalized communities. Then it rose to prominence during COVID. There’s a lot that we can learn from 2020, as we’re in 2024, because 2020 was also an election year. And the thing that fully, fully, fully destroyed mutual aid was actually the election. There were a lot of things that were creating fractures that were allowing it to begin to crumble in different ways. But the end of it was Biden. Because Biden winning allowed the predominantly white liberal majority to be like, “Oh, we’re saved, we’re good to go.” And they pulled out all resources. So, foundations stopped funding it, individuals stopped funding it, and it just disappeared.”

The exceptions are, of course, efforts like those which have been kept alive since last decade to flourish once more in southern Appalachia (where comrades have, besides concentrating on the structures being formed by disparate groups more resistant to institutional co-optation, also been working to reduce redundancy in the spontaneous hubs and working groups that have proliferated). Since the below was written Firestorm has also begun a project around the medicine in storytelling for affected children, soliciting donations for storybooks on climate disasters, grief and trauma recovery: see firestorm.coop/helene/

September 29th

We’re four days into the most significant natural disaster in the recorded history of our region. Our community is experiencing an ongoing crisis created by infrastructural collapse and the profound failure of capitalism to value and sustain life.¹ No state or federal aid has yet reached Asheville, but all around us we’re seeing regular people acting autonomously to address immediate needs and meet one another with care. We hope to write soon about the beautiful and resourceful things we’ve witnessed.

Our co-op is physically intact and our members are accounted for. Although we’ve fared better than many, we’re experiencing this crisis physically and emotionally. We’re exhausted, largely without power, water, or internet. Cell service is poor, and when we are able to connect, the volume of information is overwhelming. Right now our priority is supporting and facilitating mutual aid efforts and we ask for your patience as we cannot keep up with emails, texts, and DMs.

1 ed. – see “The Difference Between “Just Coping” & “Not Coping At All””

Firestorm will continue to act as an in-person resource and information hub over the coming days, with staffing from noon to 4pm. A daily meeting at 2pm serves as a space for neighbors to get verified updates and coordinate mutual aid efforts. Other hubs have arisen organically in other parts of town and we’re doing our best to share and connect resources.

If you would like to donate to grassroots recovery efforts, please send funds to our friends at Mutual Aid Disaster Relief² or Venmo @/MutualAidDisasterRelief, who are already on the ground [ed. – seek updates first!], or local organizers (Venmo @/AppMedSolid or Cash App \$pansycollective with “Flood Support” in the memo), who have been caring for our community 365 days/year.

We are not able to process web orders or ship inventory. If you’d like to support our co-op, we enthusiastically welcome book orders through our website, but please understand that we cannot provide an estimate on shipping.

October 2nd

The day after Hurricane Helene hit our region, Buncombe County’s assistant emergency services director called the devastation “biblical.” The phrase has been repeated by other officials and quoted widely in the media. While it’s understandable that a religious reference would resonate in a place that remains deeply impacted by Christianity, the phrase serves more to conceal than illuminate.

A biblical event is divine, a catastrophic exercise of power over humanity, an act of punishment. Appalachia’s “biblical” destruction echos the US Army Corps of Engineers declaration that Hurricane Katrina – which killed 1,392 people, most of them Black and working class – was an “Act of God.”³ When people with power attribute the suffering of those without power to God, they’re concealing culpability.

The death and destruction in Buncombe County is a direct result of capitalism, and environmental extractivism – a logical extension of colonialism and Appalachia’s two hundred year status as a national sacrifice zone.

2 ed. – Set up out of, among others, experiences of Hurricane Katrina (see ‘Mobilising Disaster Relief’), super-storm Sandy (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg31**) and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti; linked with efforts in cities like Cleveland to revive the mutual aid aspects of the black radical tradition outside of more specific catastrophes.

3 ed. – Some readers may remember when, during the historic storms and flooding of winter 2013/2014 in the UK (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg15**), a UK Independence Party councillor declared it God’s punishment for gay marriage’s recent legalisation, as predicted in scripture...

One hundred thousand people in Asheville are not lacking water because of God's wrath.

We're without water because corporations and the political class have refused to take action on climate change. We're without water because the city has systematically under-invested in infrastructure, while pumping money into tourism, for five decades. **Water problems didn't start with Helene, they've been a regular fact of life in Asheville for years.**

Thousands of people in Buncombe County are not without food because of God's wrath.

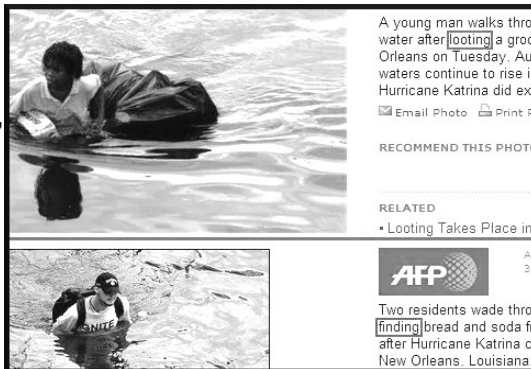
We're without food because hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland in WNC have been converted into overpriced subdivisions. We're without food because police departments prioritized protecting grocery stores from looters over wellness checks,⁴ while 600+ community members were missing.

Natural disasters bring people together, they bring out our best instincts towards altruism, cooperation, and creativity – they should also make us furious. **Our suffering is not biblical, it's distinctively modern,** and these leaders are responsible for it.

October 5th

The morning Hurricane Helene hit Asheville, members of our collective sat in the dark, listening to the howling wind and the crack of huge trees falling all around. When we emerged Friday evening to take stock, a cardboard sign on our co-op's door read "Community meeting here, Saturday at 2pm. Let's talk about how we can take care of each other + community." That first autonomous act by an anonymous neighbor set the stage for the week, with Firestorm becoming a container for other people's brilliant, beautiful, and generous self-organizing.

About forty people attended the first meeting. Nearly four hundred attended the next one. The gatherings, now a daily anchor, have generated a multitude of connections and volunteer powered projects. Before city officials had finished assessing the damage, community members were sharing supplies, doing wellness checks, and serving hot meals. Over the next few days, things became



4 ed. – Similarly to the infamous racist media coverage during Hurricane Katrina, there was fake news scares about racialised people looting (then again, why not?) within hours of the internet returning.

“Survival started yesterday. People in countries that have already experienced collapse, as well as Indigenous and underclass Black communities around the world, are already ahead of the curve. Learn from those who come from those experiences. Then get to know your territory intimately. Learn where food could come from and what modifications the housing will need during the most extreme seasons if the power grid goes off. Establish methods of communication and coordination for when phones and internet connections are no longer working. Learn how you can access clean drinking water. Learn where the soil is most contaminated so no one grows food in it. Learn how coordinated the white supremacists are. And then get to work creating more community food resources, stabler access to housing, and more collective self-defense networks. Support any project that inspires you and makes us all stronger both right now and in any likely future, whether collapse, increasing authoritarianism, or revolutionary civil war. Connecting with our specific territories will probably mean breaking with homogenizing ideologies that insist we are all the same, that cannot account for the fact that we all have different histories and needs and that those histories put some of us in conflict, or that base their idea of social transformation on a predetermined program or some idea of obligatory unity. The future we need to be creating is an ecosystem with no center.”

– *Ahead of Another Summer of Climate Disasters, Let's Talk about Real Solutions*

more organized. Anarchist arborists collected chainsaws and dispatched crews to clear roads for trapped residents; activists mobilized to build long term water distribution systems capable of delivering 6k gallons/day; bike punks offered free repair clinics; a farmer began driving regular water supply loops to Firestorm from a nearby spring; and an enthusiastic DIY-er set up a tent to distribute dry toilets made from affordable materials.

In the midst of this anarchic moment, Firestorm isn't setting the agenda or directing anyone – we're offering a space that welcomes independent initiative, we're supporting the exchange of critical information, and we're modeling a do-it-ourselves approach that's responsive, experimental, and human-scale.

Yes, government and NGO aid is now flowing into the region – but the work of caring for one another continues to be done by neighbors, grassroots

organizations, small businesses, and activists. It's done voluntarily, with thousands of autonomous actions synchronized through a shared solidarity. **For a brief moment, the logic of the capitalist market is suspended, care is given freely, and everyone contributes what they can.**

It's a strange paradox that the utopia we dream of becomes most visible in the dark.

HURRICANE HELENE DISRUPTS CRITICAL CHIP MINING OPERATIONS IN NORTH CAROLINA

[ed. – summary from mainstream media, hosted at unravel.noblogs.org]



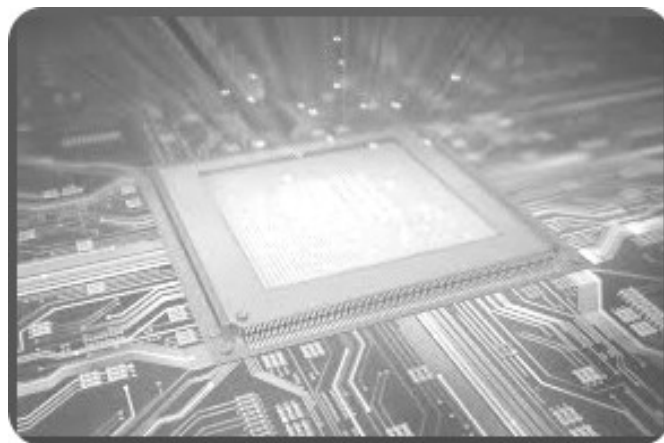
Companies mining high-purity quartz in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, have paused operations in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. The quartz is a critical component of the chip-making process – and it's only found in Spruce Pine.

The two mining companies in the area, Sibelco and The Quartz Corp, confirmed that flooding, power outages, and employee displacement have led them to stop their work. In a statement on its website, Sibelco confirmed that it has "temporarily halted operations at the Spruce Pine facilities in response to these challenges" since September 26th.

The Quartz Corp also posted a statement online saying the company paused operations on September 26th, and that it has "no visibility on when they will restart." Last week, Hurricane Helene dumped two feet of rain on Spruce Pine and caused catastrophic damage throughout the mountain towns of western North Carolina.

Spruce Pine has the only naturally occurring quartz that's pure enough to serve as a crucible to melt polysilicon. The polysilicon is then used to create silicon wafers – the foundation of the semiconductors found in phones, laptops, solar panels, and more.¹ **In 2008, a Spruce Pine fire**

1 ed. – More details can be found for example in the text 'Against the Silicon Forest', regarding the proposed chip production facility and accompanying power-line expansion close to Portland on the opposite coast of the continent from North Carolina "as a conveyor belt between extraction [ed. – hydro, wind and solar] in the rural peripheries and the techno-industrial hub" (which the managing company is attempting to sell as "[them] "helping us" weather an increasingly unstable future due to climate change, hoping that they can make us forget that it is techno-industrial projects such as these that are responsible for climate change in the first place"): "In August of 2022, Biden announced the



halted mining operations, "sending shivers" through the chip industry, according to a report from Wired.

It's too early to tell what kind of impact the paused operations will have on the chip-making supply chain, but as we've seen in the past,² it doesn't take much to disrupt it.

"CHIPS and Science Act" earmarking \$280 billion for investment into domestic semiconductor research and production, launching a wave of new developments across not only semiconductor production, but all of the industries that prop it up. [...] The act designated 31 areas across the country as "tech hubs," specific areas with a high concentration of technological research. [...] In 1990, the U.S. produced 40% of the world's semiconductors, but that figure has since fallen to around 12%, and less than 1% of advanced microchips, which are responsible for advanced computing, smartphones, smartgrids, data center servers, autonomous vehicles, and cutting-edge commercial, industrial and military electronics. [...] An average microchip manufacturing facility can use 10 million gallons of ultrapure water per day (or 15 million gallons of standard municipal water), the equivalent daily water consumption of 33,000 U.S. households. In addition to water consumption, chip manufacturing also produces wastewater that contains toxic pollutants, including heavy metals.

"Microchip expansion also drives mining, which is necessary to source the main chemical elements used to manufacture them. Silicon, for example, is pit-mined from quartzite quarries in China, Russia, Brazil, Norway, and the U.S. with massive Earth-moving machines that gut and scar the land. [...] Related to microchip mining is the mining necessary to power the batteries that microchips rarely function without. [...] Two main extractivist industries that batteries rely on are lithium and cobalt mining, which are wreaking havoc on both the land and communities. Cobalt is primarily extracted by Chinese-owned companies in the Democratic Republic of Congo through enslaved and exploited labor, and has fueled wars that have claimed millions of lives, while lithium is being extracted from Indigenous Mapuche, Aymara, and Quechua lands in South America as well as Paiute, Shoshone and Bannock lands at Thacker Pass and the "lithium valley" in so-called Nevada."

2 ed. – see **The "Green" Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else**

'MOBILISING DISASTER RELIEF'

[ed. – Transcribed from a podcast on itsgoingdown.org in 2022. First of two interviews (see **'The Position of the Excluded'**) retrieved in this double-issue with long-time UK anarchists, hoping to maintain the transmission of lessons and memories from struggles of bygone decades, and what they mean for our situation today. Our ability to do this may be key in coming years, given the 'eco'-recuperation (see **The "Green" Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else**) underfoot for some time. The generational shift means that aspiring land-defenders today on these isles may not even know of – to take one example from below – the '90s holistic critique-in-action of car culture (even, in the best cases, of industrial society) in general, instead of today's technocratic reduction to 'reducing emissions' making new electric vehicles seem the ecological option... and the same road-building program that was defeated around the turn of the millennium now back on UK planners' agenda, without such popular rage. More broadly, this piece tackles the importance and dangers of mutual aid projects (a term now mobilised by both friends and enemies), pushing us to better delineate what makes such efforts radical, including – but not limited to – the kind of look back on COVID-19 responses (see **'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping at All"')**) we think anarchists need to make.]

I'm Rhiannon (she/her). I live in London, UK. I've lived here for about 10 years. Before that, I grew up in the Midlands and I did my degrees and PhD in the Midlands, in the UK. I'm active in various social movements. I got into anarchism via the traveller and rave scene and DIY eco-protest scene in the late '90s in the UK. I was also a real geek that was really good at school, so I was doing anarchist stuff and then I got into studying anarchism academically as well at the same time. I did a politics degree and then I went on and did a master's and a PhD, so I studied a lot of radical politics while I was living it as well.

And then I moved to London; and I've been working as a lecturer and a researcher on various precarious contracts for about 15 years since I finished my PhD. I was active in the Occupy movement¹ back when I was still living in Nottingham; quite a small camp back there. And in London, I've mostly been involved with anti-gentrification and popular education/critical pedagogy type projects. I've written some academic books and articles. And my latest book is sort of trying to be less academic; it *is* quite academic, but it's also trying to have a social movement relevance as well. So that's called *Disaster Anarchy*, which I think is why I've been invited to talk on the show.

It's about mutual aid disaster relief, which I know has been a thing in the States for much longer than it has here. I got into that because I was working on a

1 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; **'Centering Relationships'**



research project about disasters and my boss wanted me to go and interview some people who were involved with Occupy Sandy [see below] (because he knew that's the kind of thing I'm interested in and there was a bit of money to do that). So I jumped at the chance. I went in 2015, on the third anniversary of the hurricane, and I interviewed a bunch of really cool people. And obviously, coming from the UK, the US is a really different context. I'm still getting to grips with that. I do worry a bit about an American audience reading my book; because there's definitely stuff I might have got wrong or misunderstood because of my context I'm coming from. But then I also find that when I read

American books about the UK, there's that kind of gap as well. I'm hoping that's a productive dialogue rather than anything else.

But I'm also aware that there's been a lot more disasters in the States than there has in the UK. And it's relatively recently that we've had any disasters at all here [ed. – *that is, spectacularised ones*].

So I was finishing this book on Occupy Sandy, which was initially just meant to be an article. But actually, I found there wasn't really anything academic on disaster. There wasn't anything anarchist, and certainly not anything academic *and* anarchist that I could find at the time on mutual aid disaster relief. I started writing this in 2015; there's been a lot more stuff in the anarchist press over the last few years, but still nothing academic (well, not much, very little) about anarchist social movements mobilising disaster relief and consciousness-raising around disasters and all that kind of thing. So it took me ages to find enough stuff to write a book. And I just ended up reading, reading, reading; and it ended up not being an article. It took a book to process that.

I was just finishing the book, and it was nearly done after five years. And then COVID hit, and there was a huge mutual aid movement in the UK. So I thought, well, I can't really have written this book around mutual aid disaster relief sitting in London when all my friends are sort of mobilising mutual aid movements and not include that. So I did some interviews in London as well with people I knew through my network. Also a lot of the academic stuff that's come [out] about the COVID-19 mutual aid movement was (I'm probably going to talk about this later in the interview) just about the depoliticised sections of the movement, which was probably most

of it. But because I'm interested in anarchism, I interviewed anarchists. So I think that's quite an original contribution; in the UK context, at least. Not many people have written about that.

And also I compared some of the things that happened with Occupy Sandy with that. But I'll stop there for a minute, if that's OK, and let you ask a question...

IGD: You said you got involved in anarchism in the late '90s. I'm assuming you were involved in the anti-roads movement?²

Rhiannon: Yeah, [the] anti-roads movement: and there was Reclaim the Streets, which I was more involved with. So we just used to stand in the middle of the street and have a massive rave, basically: to stop traffic going up and down, and communities would get involved, and people would be on swings on tripods to stop the police from being able to move us. And that was the urban aspect of the movement.

There was also a rural aspect, and there was Swampy, who was a famous eco-anarchist in the UK. He was an absolute hero at the time...

IGD: Swampy, yeah!

Rhiannon: There was also stuff like, one of my ex-boyfriends lived in a tree for months where there was this ancient sacred stone site that they were going to build a road over. And people would live in the trees for months. But there was also a huge traveller scene of people that had been living in vehicles. It was a movement that had been going for decades, of people travelling the countryside, living in vehicles and doing big raves and things like that. And they brought in the Criminal Justice Bill and criminalised



Reclaim the Streets action: techno music & the stilt-walkers' bagpipes drown out the sound of the jackhammers those concealed under her skirt use to tear up the road under police noses in the carnival of creative-destruction

2 ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg89

that lifestyle (which people had been born into and stuff...) [ed. – further criminalised in 2021: see '**There Are Many Ways to Resist**']. I remember just being absolutely horrified by that. It's probably one of the things that radicalised me at the time. And I was doing a politics degree at the time as well.

IGD: Which is interesting, because I feel like [for] a lot of Americans, the impression is that there was not many subcultures outside of punk that drew people into the movement.

Rhiannon: That was a big thing in the UK, and it was all connected with the DIY culture and eco-protesting and things like that. I'm not quite sure how to comment on that, because I don't know the States context so much. But there were lots and lots of illegal raves. So maybe people were just doing that for pure hedonism, but certainly the way that that was policed and criminalised radicalised a lot of people. And then also there was a connection between the raves and the traveller scene and then the anti-roads protests. So yeah, it was a pretty thriving time for radical politics in the UK.

IGD: Awesome. I'd encourage people to check out the magazine *Do or Die*. Especially the last issue they put out called [ed. – or rather, containing the substantial strategic essay called] *Down with the Empire, Up with the Spring*. *Do or Die* #10, I believe. Little Black Cart has a book version you can buy, that's very well worth your time to check out, which has a lot of reflections on a lot of these autonomous movements we're talking about. But it's from the UK, and they really melded the ecological struggle with a lot of insurrectionary, class-struggle anarchism in a really interesting way, which I thought was great.

Rhiannon: Yeah, there's an anthology, actually, which might be easier to access than the old 'zines. It's called *Cracks in a Grey Sky*. I've got it right in front of me, actually.

IGD: Yeah, that's the one I'm talking about from Little Black Cart, I believe.

Rhiannon: It's a great book.

IGD: So the press release for the *Disaster Anarchy* book writes, "Disaster anarchy is one of the most important political phenomena to emerge in the 21st century." Explain why this is so.

Rhiannon: In the book, I talk about the convergence of climate change and neoliberalism.³ So, how disasters are becoming more frequent due to the crisis of social and ecological reproduction,⁴ I call it.

3 ed. – see '**The Position of the Excluded**'

4 ed. – see '**The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping At All"**'

But, basically, the collapse of the oil economy and industrial civilization as we know it, in a sense, seems to be something that's even... I don't know if it's the same in the States, but it was on the news this morning; BBC News radio telling us that we're all going to be extinct... So, it seems to be pretty common parlance now. Certainly in London we had the highest temperature ever recorded. It was like 40°C or something. I think it's quite obvious to most people, although I'm aware there's denialists (and certainly more in the US, I think, than the UK). But it seems obvious that something is changing. The world's changing. It's becoming a more scary and unstable place, the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events is increasing.

But also capitalism/neoliberalism has increased our interconnectedness, so that localized events reverberate globally.⁵ The pandemic spread incredibly quickly. And also some of the protective measures that we might have had in the post-war period, like well-prepared health care services and social welfare: certainly in the States health care has been a lot less universal than it is here even, but also certainly one of the big dynamics we've had here has been the erosion of the health services. And they're being further eroded under neoliberal austerity.⁶

I think it's this intersection of more uncertainty in the weather, but also the interconnectedness of the world, the uncertainty of the economy through neoliberal things like financialization. And then also less protection for people through these kind of stabilizing measures like the welfare state. So I guess it doesn't any longer seem sensationalist or doomerist (I think that's a word...) to say that the oil economy and industrial civilization and the associated forms of governance are collapsing.

Also, people are profiting from all aspects of this; people are profiteering from it. Naomi Klein's book [on] disaster capitalism [ed. – *The Shock Doctrine*] is quite a good exposé of that. But I hope to go further than that, and have a specifically anarchist critique of some of this; and then also look at the movements that are offering hope, or at least mobilizing and trying to offer something different. And also different, new forms of eco-fascism⁷ and Left authoritarianism⁸ that also seem to be on the rise.

That's why I say it's one of the most important

5 ed. – see 'We Cannot Share This Planet With Them'

6 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg48*

7 ed. – see *Lies of the Land*

8 ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.3; Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism*



political phenomena: when I say important, I think it's for me the only one I want to align myself with.

IGD: We want to start off by talking about the growth of mutual aid programs in the UK after the rise of COVID-19. So talk to us about this. Flesh out the movement; and how expansive was it? Tell us about the activity and give us an introduction.

Rhiannon: It's worth saying that even though I was already writing about mutual aid, and I was aware of mutual aid as someone who studied anarchism and had read Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*⁹ and was writing about Occupy Sandy and mutual aid, most people in the UK wouldn't have heard those two words together. It wouldn't have been in the mainstream consciousness at all. And even radical-ish people who weren't anarchists probably wouldn't have heard "mutual aid." I think that's a bit of a different context to the US, where you did have Occupy Sandy and continuing movements around it.

I think another thing that makes talking about mutual aid a bit tricky is that even as it was sort of first conceptualized [ed. – or, rather, re-popularised in the West] by Kropotkin, it can be *more or less* explicit or intentional. So Kropotkin uses it to talk about animals, even, and the fact that he saw cooperation as being just as important to evolution as competition; so he'd talk about animals engaging in mutual aid. And also he talked about subsistence communities engaging in mutual aid – who wouldn't have referred to their actions as such, and weren't organizing politically; they were just living. And I think a lot of stuff that happens in the aftermath of a disaster (or even in normal working-class and marginalized communities in the UK and elsewhere anyway) could be understood as mutual aid and fit all the parameters of the term without necessarily calling itself that (or other people even needing to call it that).

9 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg96*



“[COVID-19] is the direct consequence of severe ecological destruction and capitalism’s toxic living conditions. Having brought it into existence, it is of course “exploited” by capital and state. [I]t is unlikely that capitalism will eradicate it, even if certain states claim this as their goal. Instead it is managed, incorporated, capitalised upon. This is at a far more fundamental level than creating profits for some pharmaceutical companies – we are seeing in the colonial core an historic restructure of work and class-composition. [C]apitalism faces a familiar contradiction: exploit workers, but ensure there are workers to be exploited tomorrow. Manage the virus, manage production. Like inflation, the death-graph must be regulated – kept just right. Everywhere this paradox is obvious: “stay at home” but “go to work”! Technocrats and managers debate the 2 metre rule just as the 19th century Factory Acts debated the relation of profits, health and cubic-feet per worker.”

– some anarchists in Wales & England

of ethos. They weren't explicitly anarchist, but there were definitely radical decolonial, intersectional feminist type people, and they used a lot of anarchist-y discourse on the website, about keeping things local and not being affiliated with State agencies and things like that. So I think it was a really useful website. And then it did become this huge national movement, which was in many respects amazing; I was taken aback that mutual aid had become a term in the UK.

It's also difficult to associate the shape the movement became with the initial ethos of this

But after COVID, there was this mutual aid movement of people explicitly calling themselves mutual aid and organizing these groups. And there was this national website, COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK. I've not been able to find out a huge amount about people who formed that: apparently some people started an explicit mutual aid group in Lewisham in London.

So that's south London, I'm in north London. And it's a big joke that “you don't go south of the river”/“you don't go north of the river”: I'm very much a north Londoner! But I do know that Lewisham has really radical groups and communities. And I've gone to a lot of talks down there. I'm not involved in that community or embedded in it, but I'm very aware that it's there. So I'm not surprised that this thriving mutual aid group started in Lewisham. And the people who started that thought that they started the first group. So one of the interviewees was very careful; she said the people that founded that thought they founded the first mutual aid group. They don't know that. And I don't know the founders of that mutual aid group either, but they were on national TV talking about it.

And then lots of groups started to spring up. Those people felt quite responsible for the movement in some sense, because they felt that they'd founded the first one and they'd been on telly [TV]. So they felt they had some kind of responsibility for the trajectory. And they set up this mutual aid UK umbrella group. They provided various resources and they had a sort

website. I think it was something that people wanted to happen, and it became that term that they got behind. **But I think there were a lot of problems with the way that website encouraged people to organise, in the sense that it recommended a spatial strategy of doing it by borough and ward, which replicates the territorial forms of the State in a way (like electoral districts). And I think that made them prone to co-optation and de-radicalisation by local officials.** Some of my interviewees called it “the local councillor problem.” So, they'd organise a mutual aid group and the local councillor for that ward would get involved because they'd be like, “well, that's my territory. This is who I represent: I'm in charge here.” And they'd join and try and turn it into a sort of council enterprise.

And then there was this kind of very depoliticised (largest, probably) section of the movement who didn't want mutual aid to be political. So I look at a lot of the problems with that, about how it became largely a sort of helping exercise (helping people shop and papering over the cracks where the welfare State and neoliberalism have left people vulnerable) without radically questioning anything. But also I talk to anarchists. So in the book, I interview people who are explicitly radical. I think there's a lot of inspiration to be taken as well as critique of policies and ideas that make mutual aid merely this kind of modified helping thing, I guess.

IGD: So it seems interesting because my impression of things is that the movement sort of... I don't want to say got away from people, but kind of took on a life of its own, outside of the activity of anarchists and other radicals. Whereas here in the US it was very much a mixture of a lot of people hunkering down and starting projects; also a lot of people taking their own initiative, but it seemed very much a reflection of building autonomous action and thought, and people wanting to intervene in this moment. Is that how you would describe it?

Rhiannon: Yeah, definitely in a way. But also there was this explicit mutual aid movement, and that was valorized and glorified (in the press and on this website and [on the] news) as a depolitical thing; as social capital.¹⁰ But there were more radical sections of the movement as well. There were anarchists and other radicals who were involved who had their own groups that would also be involved in local groups. And they try and continue (or initiate) quite political discussions within those groups.

Then there were also just communities and people doing stuff which personally I would refer to as mutual aid, but they might not even have been using that term. And that's what I ended up getting involved in personally, because I got involved in my local mutual aid group; it was a WhatsApp group where

10 ed. – “Disaster utopias problematise the orientation of utopia towards intention and the future. Nobody wishes for a disaster, yet they produce affects such as desire and hope for change, and facilitate (through necessity) the formation of grassroots infrastructures and technologies.

However, the government and others (particularly the moralising discourse of the social democratic left and the NGO-complex) try to co-opt and de-radicalise them. There is a whole discourse, originally academic, but seeping into mainstream media and frequently adopted by NGO professionals, of ‘social capital’. Social action, rather than being seen as something valuable on its own terms, is re-cast as a form of ‘capital’ to be mobilised in the interest of a return to the ‘normality’, or the even more terrifying ‘new normal’ – of capitalism-as-usual. Social capital theory emphasizes how local-level participation is vital in building ‘resilience’ and that top-down processes fail in emergencies because not responsive and flexible enough. It *sounds* radical and progressive because it valorises the grassroots, but the grassroots is not valued on its own terms but in terms of the value it has for capitalism/capitalists (ultimately – profit). This discourse encourages NGOs and grassroots to absorb former state functions, with the expectation of co-operation with the state (e.g. funding with conditions attached). The role of state is technocratic; to impose cohesion.

When society and the state are seen as complementary and mutually supporting, this means that only the sections of ‘civil society’ that are legible to the state and which it can capitalise upon and control are seen as ‘social capital’. Other social forces are a threat to be controlled, securitized and criminalized – through recuperation or repression” (Disasters & the Dispossessed).

people were discussing things, and my group was one of the ones that I just felt was irredeemably middle-class and co-opted. And I couldn't bear it, to be honest. But another one of my friends was involved in this other local group that didn't call themselves mutual aid, but they were cooking meals and they wanted bicycle couriers, so I ended up couriating meals to people. But nobody called that mutual aid and it wasn't a mutual aid group, if you see what I mean. It was a different thing.

IGD: You say middle class. Can you define that?

Rhiannon: It means different things to different people. Partly I mean white-collar workers, people that have secure employment contracts and maybe a bit of capital to keep themselves going, and they can afford their rent each month... I mean, I'd include myself within that in a sense, but also it goes on with this bourgeois morality, which excludes other people through customs and rituals and discourse, and just generally looking down on people... Or discourse policing; seeing your own moral outlook as somewhat superior to other groups, I suppose.

We've got a big tradition (I mean, I suppose you do in parts of the US, maybe more on the East Coast) of strikes and unions and things like that. So that would be seen as a working-class movement. We're having a lot of that at the moment. The rail workers are all striking (even though they're on a decent wage – perhaps more of a decent wage than some people who might explicitly self-identify as middle-class – but there's a sense of working-class solidarity, if you see what I mean). Yeah, it's hard to explain. The class system is just so ingrained and so much part of British political life, I think that it's hard to explain it to someone that's not enmeshed within it.

IGD: So just one other question in terms of the explosion of mutual aid stuff. Did different anarchist groups there decisively get involved? Or was it more like people on an individual basis getting involved in local groups? Did different networks make decisive interventions, like, “we're going to set up our own kind of mutual aid stuff?” Or it was more just people getting in where they fit in on the local level?

Rhiannon: That's a really good question. Actually it's a combination of those, from what I knew from my interviewees (who are people that I know from living in London for 10 years and being involved in anarchist stuff; so I think they had their fingers on the pulse). From what I can gather, people did get involved locally – and what that meant in practice was that some people would be the only anarchist in their group, and they'd be getting incredibly frustrated with some of the conversations and things that were going on, having to stop people from calling the police on people, and being the only one person in the group

that felt that was an acceptable position... And [then from] groups where they were almost entirely anarchist (because there was a thriving anarchist scene in the local area, and quite early on people who weren't anarchist dropped out), to [where] there'd be a few anarchists in the group and then mostly non-anarchists.

But then there was a London-wide WhatsApp (not WhatsApp, I can't remember, but it was on one of the platforms). So anarchists interested in mutual aid were in a chat group, and sharing their frustrations and experiences with their groups and how radicalised or not they were.

And there were also mutual aid anarchist groups that were associated with particular spaces. There was a squat (I think there was more than one squat), and there was a social centre. So there were anarchist spaces that mutual aid groups grew up around the community associated with that anarchist space. So it was a real mishmash in a way.

IGD: I feel like one of the things that really propelled things here in the US was the idea that no-one was coming to save anybody, and that part of the problem was that our healthcare system is so non-existent, and so many people were just not going to get care. The system was already pushed to capacity, and the State really had no desire to expand its services.¹¹ Things were already pretty bad economically; and this was only going to make things worse. I'm curious; in the UK, were things that bad? Or was the State picking up a lot of slack? I know you all have more of a social safety net, although it's been eroded.

Rhiannon: I think people were very receptive to critiques of the State and the Tory government in particular, and still are. Because our Prime Minister: it was something else he got deposed for, ultimately, but he was having parties during lockdown and breaking his own laws. And people – especially on the Left, but the non-radical Left, just general left-liberals – are always receptive to a critique of the government. But they're not necessarily receptive to a critique of government *per se*, or authoritarianism. So I think there are a lot of people like that in the movement, who felt angry and wanted to do something that was political (in the sense of being against the current political party), and also a kind of do-goody type helping thing. But they didn't want to be too radical. I think there are a lot of people like that.



Then-Prime Minister of the UK, still with more tricks up his sleeve before leaving office; see 'Lest We Forget'

And also, we had a government furlough scheme, which meant that people who had permanent jobs... I can't remember the exact criteria: I knew the ins-and-outs of it at the time, but it feels like quite a while has passed. I worked; I was working from home anyway, so I didn't need to be on furlough. I was a researcher, so I was already working from home, and I didn't stop working. And that had its own problems, because I lived in a big warehouse at the time with seven people, and everyone else was either unemployed or they were on furlough. So it was just party time! We weren't breaking any rules,¹² because there were

12 ed. – Not that following the rules was necessarily the responsible thing to do: “We did not obey the lockdowns or the rules about gatherings – we established our own guidelines based on our own ethical, political and practical considerations. We asked a different question. Sometimes this resulted in us being more cautious than the law allowed, sometimes it resulted in breaking the rules. We were far from alone in this, and I know my circle benefited from other people’s discussions.

“The pandemic has been unique in our lifetimes, but its ethical challenges are not: controlling the behaviour of others is a pretty central element of democratic politics. The government looks at us as a mass of people to be managed towards various goals, notably profit and social peace. They look at the world from above, through a lens of domination and control – this is as much the case for the pandemic as for climate change and poverty. Different politicians and parties will have different priorities, and our agency is reduced to advocating for how we want to be managed – or how we want *those other people* to be managed.

“We come to internalize the logic of domination and put the needs of order and the economy above our own. We start to view the world from above too, far from our own experiences, desires, ideas, values, and relationships. “The social war is this: a struggle against the structures of power that colonize us and train us to view the world from the perspective of the needs of power itself, through the metaphysical lens of domination” [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg38*].

“In the context of the pandemic, to view the world from above means understanding the situation through corporate media (whether social or traditional), through colour-coded maps, through the designation of hot zones, through policy debates, through rules laid out by experts (I want their knowledge, not their authority). It means to think about our own decisions in terms of *what everyone should do*, to act ourselves the way we think *everyone should act*. Our own priorities vanish, and the agency of others is perceived as a threat.

[...] I want to oppose domination, but also its false critics. Some anarchists have thought they developed a critique of authoritarian responses to the pandemic, but they only succeed in being reactionaries. They are still seeing the world from above, where the only conceivable collective action is that of the state. They fall back on the discourse of individual rights, but there is nothing anarchist about a freedom carved into bite-sized pieces and spoon-fed back to us. [...] They end up in bed with those who see any common good as an attack on their

11 ed. – see “The Difference Between “Just Coping” & “Not Coping At All””

seven of us in the house anyway. So everyone else, like, “party time!”, and I was like, “I’ve got to do a job!”. But some people got this furlough, which meant the government paid 80% of their wages for the whole time they’re off work. It was employment retention. So it did mean there were these huge swathes of people (who had secure employment contracts but couldn’t go to work, being paid by the government) who had a lot of time on their hands. I think a lot of those people got involved in mutual aid movements, and that partly explains why there was this huge movement of not-necessarily-anarchists.

IGD: I’m curious how people dealt with this problem of the lack of politics, or trying to divorce politics from the mutual aid organizing.

Rhiannon: I talk about that a lot in the book. And I was just astounded by some people’s patience, to be honest: the anarchists I spoke to. And I suppose a lot of anarchists are used to being told that their ideas are impossibly idealistic, or being shut down, or being silenced. But just listening to the sort of patience with which people dealt with that constant silencing and invalidation within these WhatsApp groups and things: I couldn’t necessarily deal with it. And a lot of people did deal with it, they did get somewhere and they progressed.

And I think that there were definitely other groups. Definitely, everyone I spoke to, there was this huge thing about the frustration of all these people just shutting down anything even vaguely beyond shopping or helping. But also there were people who said that people did become a lot more receptive to anarchist organizing, because they saw it as effective, or organizationally it was seen to be desirable. I think it was just anything beyond [that].

This sort of non-hierarchy has been valorized as this really flexible form of organizing. But I think sometimes the politics and ethics behind it: there can be problems. One of the big arguments I make is that mutual aid – in order to be really mutual aid – it has to be linked to some kind of sort of defense of the

privilege.

“To me, freedom also means responsibility. It is an individual imperative to make your own choices, but also to understand yourself as embedded in a web of relationships. It is about voluntary association, but also understanding that we are also embedded in webs of relationships with all people (not to mention all living things, the land and water) [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; ‘**Centering Relationships**’]. We have responsibilities to those webs as well. When our choices in the pandemic start from ourselves and builds outwards, to our chosen people and onward to the societies we exist in, we are no longer seeing the world from above, but on a human scale” (Health on a Human Scale: a vaccinated anarchist against vaccine passports).

community if it becomes dispossessed. So a lot of the more radical actions were associated with squats or community centers or actual spaces. And then that involves police at one point trying to evict a group. There were other groups where people were trying to say “we need to stop members of the community being evicted from their home.” And then the group would say “no, that’s not mutual aid.” But how is it not mutual aid? Sorry, I’m blethering a little bit...



April 2024: anarchist mutual aid continues in London with the squatting of a £13-million hotel-pub owned by a celebrity chef, distributing free food to those affected by gentrification and HS2 (see *Memory as a Weapon*; ‘The Steel Road’)

IGD: One of the big contexts in the US was that all this stuff was happening amidst this massive culture war,¹³ where the Right attempted to label everything either BLM [Black Lives Matter] or Antifa.

Rhiannon: I saw that in the news actually, definitely. Antifa as this sort of organization; people thinking it’s this sort of big powerful organization that must be resisted and so on. It literally means anti-fascism!

IGD: Right. Well, it was helpful for them because it allowed them to basically explain autonomous anarchist movement activity as this weird, scary term that sounded conspiratorial. So it’s like “people helping each other: it’s Antifa, it’s

members of Antifa!” It just had this sort of conspiracy attached to it. And we were talking about some of these responses. I mean, some of that backfired because then it became like, “oh, the Antifa are helping people...”

Rhiannon: We have that a little bit here, you know: anything semi-radical would be labeled as BLM. There was definitely some of that here. I think it’s more intense in the States, but we definitely do get some of that here.

I think you and I were discussing just before the show community action or just how racialized it all is. And the fact that there weren’t a lot of police on the streets or around. And that was something we had here. There’d be these laws and they were really restrictive, and we’d have park benches taped off so you’re not allowed to sit on the park bench (and we had these like one-way systems in parks and things), and there’d be all these crazy rules in place.¹⁴ But it’d just

13 ed. – see ‘**It Depends on All of Us**’

14 ed. – see ‘**Tories are Living in Fear of Direct Action’s**

be people policing each other. But then the only police through all my interviews [that interviewees] encountered was: they had a really tiny Black Lives Matter protest in a suburban area of London. (There was a big one in the center, but then they had this tiny little suburban one, with about five people on the street corner.) And the police turned up to it. And that was one of the few encounters with the police, was this mini, five-person BLM protest.

IGD: Here in the US, obviously, things changed in the summer of 2020 when the George Floyd rebellion exploded.¹⁵ There was already a lot of mutual aid stuff happening at the time, so that fed into the rebellion. Because in Minneapolis there was George Floyd Square; so there was these pop-up makeshift hubs that were set up. Which is interesting, because now you see it evolve again: a lot of people are doing defense of [homeless] encampments that are being evicted, and with the summer, people are now doing mutual aid programs around how hot it is, to try and get people water and stuff like that. There's this constant evolution of what people are doing.

Rhiannon: It's hard to keep in touch with it all sometimes. Now you're mentioning some of these things, I think certainly we had some maybe smaller-scale versions of those things, and we had this big wave of protests as well in the summer [of 2020] similarly.¹⁶ I was quite focused on a specific snapshot in time, just the initial spring and summer lockdown when it was very much about getting food to people.

[I] also focused on a longer-term critique of the history of states trying to de-radicalize this stuff discursively rather than simply repressing people and criminalizing them... which also happens, calling things looting and so on. Certainly after Hurricane Katrina, I know that happened a lot where people were merely trying to meet their survival needs and it was discursively cast as "they're looting!"¹⁷

IGD: There's a pretty famous instance of one news program that had a shot of a white family taking obviously looted stuff. And they're like, "oh, they're doing what they need to do to survive." And there's another one of some black guy. It was like, "oh, they're looting."

Rhiannon: Yeah, it's exactly the same picture, but there's some white people and some black people doing exactly the same thing. And it's, you know, "these people are creatively finding ways to get food for their family." And then "these people are looting."

Rise

15 ed. – see **The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis**

16 *ibid.*

17 ed. – see **'The Utopia we Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark'**



Early May '24, Brazil: mutual aid springs into action in Port Alegre as historic floods submerge entire cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, launching solidarity with affected anarchist, indigenous & quilombo (communities descended from autonomous escaped African slaves) spaces

IGD: Going forward, what do you think are some of the lasting lessons from this wave of mutual aid organizing after the pandemic in the UK?

Rhiannon: One of the things I'm particularly interested in [is] the ways in which large sections of movement were recuperated or de-radicalized in a sense. So the depressing stories I was talking about, about more radical discussions and actions around eviction resistance and protests being shut down and people operating according to this bourgeois morality and wanting mutual aid to be about shopping, and [in] some of the groups even this passion for surveillance and threatening to call the police on people and things like that. I think that's really important to think about, because I try and situate that in the book in a longer-term, explicit and intentional policy of the State to treat certain sections of the movement that can be State-friendly... I'm not sure if you're aware: after Occupy Sandy one of the things I talk about was [that] the Department of Homeland Security published this document called The Resilient Social Network. Did you hear about that at all? It was praised in the movement...

IGD: I believe I've heard of it, but why don't you talk about it? And also you mentioned Occupy Sandy. Just tell us a little bit about that, because some people may not even have been around when that happened.

Rhiannon: Hurricane Sandy was a big hurricane in the States in 2012 that hit New York and the north-eastern seaboard,¹⁸ and there was this huge social movement, Occupy Sandy, that was mobilized. So, Occupy Wall Street¹⁹ had been evicted the previous year (and obviously that was a huge movement: huge international movement, but certainly huge in that part of America), and then Hurricane Sandy hit after that. There were social networks – as in on the Internet, and then social networks as in people who knew each other – that were obviously still heavily invested in that movement: so it was this latent thing that was able to come to life again, and people were

18 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg31**

19 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; **'Centering Relationships'**

able to mobilize through it to mobilize relief after Hurricane Sandy. They did things like mould remediation in people's homes, but they also set up some really cool cooperatives, an oral history project... They were widely acknowledged (by the mainstream media and so on) to mobilize relief more effectively than the Red Cross and FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency]. There was really widespread public anger with those two agencies because of their perceived failures. And then Occupy Sandy were there helping people do stuff: it's PR failure for the State and a PR success for anarchism.

But then there was this report that was commissioned by the Department for Homeland Security after the fact, but drawing on overt and covert surveillance within the movement (that activists had been aware of and a bit creeped-out by at times). This report was written like, "how do we mobilize the youthful energy of these activists?" The whole language and report's really patronizing; "even though they were involved with this rather idealistic and unfortunate Occupy Wall Street movement, the urgency of this situation didn't leave any time for politicizing. They organized with resilience and flexibility, and they were efficient because there wasn't as much red tape..." Basically, praising the organizational aspects of anarchic organizing (they weren't all explicit anarchists by any means, but, you know...), praising their State-friendly efficiency actions, but diminishing anything radical or political about it explicitly and saying "as a State, how do we have a policy that can integrate these kinds of actions into our whole community approach?"

In the book, I situate that in a critique of... Basically, since World War Two, there's been this cybernetic management discourse²⁰ in disaster studies.²¹ I try

20 ed. – see **Cybernetic Mommy Milk**

21 ed. – "The currently hegemonic public health model is inseparable from disaster management, cybernetic co-ordination and behavioural nudge psychology. This thread was developed by Enrico Quarantelli, a leading name in disaster studies from the late 1970s until the present day. [Quarantelli] critiqued the top-down 'command and control' approach to risk management that saw the potential for disaster planning and management to manipulate 'prosocial behaviour' in the interests of restoring 'normalcy'. Following a cybernetic model which valorises feedback systems he argued that disasters impact differently on different segments of society and communities have their own pre-existing 'patterns of authority' and 'autonomous decision-making' that ought to be left in place. Disaster planning deals with aggregate data and ought to 'focus on general principles and not specific details' and should also 'be vertically and horizontally integrated'. This initially gives the appearance of equal treatment and a role for horizontalist organisations such as mutual aid groups. However, the integration of the horizontal with the vertical relies on the planning and management functions of (secretive) state

and situate those kinds of reports and ideas around social capital: we had a lot of it in Britain, even the Tory government were using the term mutual aid... I argue in the book that that's explicitly designed to encourage and mobilize the sort of State-friendly, papering-over-the-cracks, shopping actions that are helpful to the State: and then criminalize and securitize²² those actions which aren't, and make them appear illegitimate and so on. We were talking about looting: some people's looting is helping and some people's looting is somehow dangerous and

agencies to oversee and co-ordinate their actions in order to differentiate between 'helpful' and injurious emergent actions – and ultimately to use generic structural adjustments, 'education' and 'nudges' to manipulate the beliefs and behaviour of populations in order to encourage those actions that are seen as helpful to the state. Actions helpful to the state are not judged via democratic means, but rather via the technocratic knowledge of experts. While the discourse seems entirely opposed to hierarchical and top-down control, it relies on the same logic of disposability and exclusion of that which is not useful to the state and capitalism. It is problem-solving rather than critical research, and treats humans as outward-directed nodes who can easily change behaviour based on promises of reward or threats of punishment, ignoring complex and often conflicting dynamics of meaning, belief, trust, desire and the unconscious.

[...] This cybernetic view tends to treat the sick as the enemy – or at least as dysfunctional nodes that are disruptive to the functioning of the overall system – to be controlled through authoritarian but decentralised behavioural nudges such as (sometimes vague and confusing) social distancing rules, in which the responsibility for interpreting and successfully following the rules rests with the individual. Take for example the UK government's advice on easing lockdown rules and encouraging a return to work, that individuals ought to 'stay alert' in order to 'control the virus'. Health becomes a 'game' which the sick are perceived to have failed – for example the advice to 'wash or sanitise hands frequently' assumes constant access to bathroom facilities, running water and soap which are not always readily available for homeless people for example, and the ability to purchase sanitiser during a panic-buying crisis when prices are exorbitantly inflated. Neoliberal public health emphasises personal responsibility for health outcomes, mimicking a decentralised approach whilst behind the scenes state, military, industrial and pharmaceutical capitalist technocrats are rigging the game to achieve desired (profitable) outcomes.

"To complicate matters somewhat, the current conjecture appears to contain social forces towards a gradual discrediting of neoliberal approaches, which is reinforced in the current crisis by the fact that individual health outcomes also affect third parties. This is leading to a resurgence of public health discourses that are basically totalitarian in character; mimicking the increasing securitisation and militarisation of responses to other crises such as the climate-refugee crisis [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; The Swell*] and the increasing bordering of nations. This may be leading

criminal. I try and situate that in a longer policy field.

IGD: So what are the subversive elements of mutual aid that we should work to strengthen and expand? We talked about recuperation: what are we actually doing right, that we should double-down on?

Rhiannon: Personally, I think just being together in community and having relationships with people that aren't commodified, and aren't in the terms of the State, and aren't useful to the State or capitalism: I feel like that's already radical in a sense, and I think it's already subversive.²³

I think one of the big arguments in my book (and something that I feel quite deeply on a personal level) is that the State seeks to capitalize on all our social relations. Like I said, I became active in the late '90s and we didn't have the Internet then: it just seems even more obvious now that people have these Instagram stories where they're commodifying themselves as a person.²⁴ I suppose people have always done that... But there's life beyond that, and there's relationships beyond transactional relationships or things that are useful to capital and the State.²⁵ And I think mutual aid is an example of that: the idea of something being truly mutual and people helping each other: not for money, not for esteem or power, just because that's really human.²⁶

to a recomposition of state and capital in new formations that Benjamin Franks calls 'nationalist capitalism' and Ian Bruff calls 'authoritarian neoliberalism'. There is a new root discourse emerging – away from 'risk management' towards 'new threats' where problems are cast as starting in disorderly zones on the edges of the world system, then filtering inwards, requiring strengthened borders, 'security' and/or neo-colonialism under the guise of 'militant humanitarianism'. Market logic has also devastated the health services in poorer areas of rich countries, so that whereas the margins were once associated with 'tropical' or Third-World areas, one increasingly finds the 'margins' within the core – for example poverty-stricken black communities in post-Katrina New Orleans" (Coronavirus, Class & Mutual Aid in the United Kingdom).

22 ed. – see **Calling it Terror**

23 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; **Open Letter from Return Fire magazine to the 2024.03.29-31 International Anti-Prison/Anti-Repression Gathering**

24 ed. – see **A New Luddite Rebellion**

25 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg53**

26 ed. – "Mutual aid is a form of disaster response that starts from the experiences and impacts on humans and other living beings and the meaningful structures of life embedded in objects, habitats, and ecosystems, rather than focusing on keeping order by managing the effects on the state or economic system, treating humans as generic subjects. It starts from the position of each person/being. Rather than a top-down approach that creates roles people must fill, a bottom-up response would facilitate people to contribute and plug-in' to a network based on their own

In the book, I argue that that's what the State is against in a sense. The State seeks to capitalize on everything. All creativity and social relations is something that capitalism and the State will want to either recuperate or, if they can't recuperate or commodify it, they'll want to shut it down and stop it.

In specifically the disaster context, I think that disaster capitalists will come and dispossess and profit from all the creative action, and lovely projects and infrastructure will get turned into "well, this is a nice area now: let's gentrify it." Or, "this is too radical. This is irredeemable. Let's cut it off from capital." So it securitizes disasters by dividing the "deserving poor" (or nice, social capital forms of mutual aid, State-friendly type stuff), and it will set these in opposition to radicalized and racialized forms of community action that are constructed as violence, disorder and looting and so on.²⁷

talents, needs and desires. Rather than centralised efforts under a lead organisation, this approach would encourage multiple small groups, and a proliferation of projects with different emphases and methods – allowing some overlap and redundancy.

[...] Anarchism reimagines the temporality and scale of radical social change. There is an emphasis on the small scale, on degrowth and social recomposition, on a society bubbling with transgressive life through overlapping societies, groups, and organisations whose affinities and relations are immeasurable and un-mappable. Social change is both immanent and prefigurative, and does not require scaling-up through unity or a vanguard in order to be extended or politicised; such vanguardism tends to defer lived anarchy to the future. Transgression and insurrection are already a part of everyday life and are observable everywhere when everyday life is examined using an anarchist epistemology [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg118**].

"People like [George] Monbiot and [David] Harvey argue that the problem with anarchism is that it can't be scaled-up to provide an effective response to large-scale 'wicked' problems like pandemics, climate change, and capitalist extractivism; however, degrowth and re-scaling is often an effective response [ed. – for just a few great examples, see *The Solutions are Already Here* by Peter Gelderloos]. The powerful only accept solutions that leave their own position untouched, which effectively prevents degrowth: the state seeks to capitalise on all social relations. The anarchist reversal of perspective views humans' greatest enemy as the state [ed. – see **'We Cannot Share This Planet With Them'**] – a particular way of relating – rather than as other human beings in themselves. Mutual aid is therefore always vulnerable to co-optation by controlling ways of being. [...] Even where explicit politics is avoided, mutual aid may have political effects through social recomposition, creating infrastructures, through prefiguring a more equal and stateless society and gift economies [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg53**], through structural critique and consciousness-raising, and through direct action" (DOPE Magazine #22).

27 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire;

I keep going on about eviction resistance... But there was this beautiful action in Glasgow where the immigration police turned up and tried to rip some people out of their homes (at 5AM or something.) And the community came together, and they stood in front of the police vans and they called all their friends, and there were thousands of people. In the end, the van couldn't move and it was a stand-off, and eventually the men were released.²⁸ I guess that's an example of what I think mutual aid really is.

Mutual aid isn't about "well, let's help the nice people in our neighborhood, but there's some people hanging around on the street corner: let's call the police on them." I don't think mutual aid should be about that. I think it should be about building community and ultimately resisting things that seek to dispossess community. And to me, that's an inherently almost spatial thing. So it involves direct action.



May '24: obstruction of UK Border Agency raids; see 'A New Image'

The Swell

28 ed. – Anarchists (who were first on the scene) report that 3 people were arrested for their part in the defence, although since acquitted. Other cities in Scotland and England have since replicated this successful action.

'WE CANNOT SHARE THIS PLANET WITH THEM'

As I demonstrated in *Worshipping Power* [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; '*The Temple was Built Before the City*'] all states are extractivist and all states in history have been ecocidal. A shared trait of those who want to reform Leviathan [ed. – see '*The Scarcity Dynamo*'], whether these are XR campaigners [ed. – see '*Rebellion Extinction*'], climate researchers, paid NGO activists, authoritarian Marxists [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.3*; '*Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism*'], or crypto-authoritarians [ed. – see '*What Happens After the Cancellation of the Project?*'], is that they try to hide or decenter the role of the State in this crisis. Previously, states only provoked regional ecological collapses, which was one major impetus for their systematic turn towards colonial expansion.

The extractivist systems that states represent, though, must expand or die. Since the revolutions that have been overthrowing states for thousands of years [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg120*] were not able to cultivate a sufficiently global and systemic consciousness, the only other option was that states would create a world system [ed. – see *The 'Green' Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else*]. And this means inventing the possibility of a global ecological crisis. The modern state found a suitable engine in capitalism, and it found a world-devouring worldview capable of organizing intercontinental colonization in white supremacy. On Planet Earth, there is no capitalism that is not colonial and thus racial, there is no capitalism without the State, and there is no state that is not extractivist and patriarchal and thus ecocidal and oppressive, an enemy to all life.

[...] It is inevitable that when we have a false consciousness around a crisis like this, the hegemonic responses will be individualistic – privileging the consumer with money to spend ethically, the citizen with the right to vote for better candidates, both of them revitalizing the institutions that have caused this crisis – or they will promote pseudo-communities like the nation-state, with their artificial, bloody borders, and their ready cast of scapegoats and villains, who are nearly always pure inventions or more oppressed groups of people, simultaneously internal and external, always too foreign to comprehend and close enough to pose a threat [ed. – see '*We Notice When Bigots Get a Win*'].

Fortunately there is a synthesis between strategies and goals when we are honest with ourselves about what we are facing. Patriarchal society [ed. – see '*The Scarcity Dynamo*'] and colonial capitalism, organized by the State, are the enemy to all life [ed. – see '*Since Colonial Times*']. They have proven we cannot share this planet with them, and we do not need to because they are not living beings.

They are a hard limit. Only up to that limit is it possible to have a world in which many worlds fit.

The major strategic obstacles to destroying the State are the two arms of the State, the Left and the Right (understanding Left in its historical sense and not in its amnesiac anglophone non-sense, in which it is reputed to mean vague, unspecified, good, incoherent things). **To generalize, the Left renews, updates, and revitalizes oppressive structures, giving us Black cops, women millionaires, and recycled toilet paper, and the Right punishes resistance with the attempt to eradicate it.** When you get into the messy details, the Left also carries out policing [ed. – see '*Memory as a Weapon*'; '*These Women Refused to Sacrifice*'], and the Right also tries to renew oppressive structures like the nation-state [ed. – see '*Lies of the Land*'], but the point is they both serve the State. In moments of social peace, they are more coordinated, in moments of social upheaval like the present one, they are unable to see past their alibi-giving mythologies and increasingly suspect one another of being a threat to Leviathan as a whole.

IGD: What were some of the limits that you saw the mutual aid groups coming up against? And how do you think that we can overcome them?

Rhiannon: Burnout is a massive thing, definitely.²⁹ I'm not quite sure... people run out of money as well. Or there's things like these furlough schemes and then they run out and we have to go back to work now. And then also the limit of interpersonal differences and so on; political differences are a big one. I've sort of talked about that already: people being silenced within groups, and groups and movements splitting because people understand the politics of the thing differently.

But even interpersonal differences... I suppose that's one of the things that in my work I've never really quite found the answer to. Before I worked on disasters, I did a project on intentional communities; and one of the biggest things that seemed to tear communities apart was difficult and authoritarian people throwing their weight around and splitting things. And I'm not quite sure how to overcome it.

One of the things I think is important is having a good critique of authoritarianism (and having a good critique of one's own internalized authoritarianism), and maintaining a radical and optimistic and utopian outlook. And also I think just recognizing the dangers of the fact that the State does want to do these things as well, and that it has intentional policies and practices in place to split movements. And maybe just knowing – as individuals and groups and communities – how to resist these tactics when the State tries to repress us and depoliticize us (including the internalized State).

That's partly why I wrote the book. And I think (or hope) it's at least partly useful by offering an in-depth analysis of some of the sort of State policies and discourses and practices that have been used against previous movements, and the history of the policies and how different movements have dealt with it so that people can try and identify them and resist that.

But I'm not sure I've got the answer. And I think that's why I think I probably think about that question almost too much. And that's why I end up writing books and the whole book.

IGD: How can we build on these lessons and take them into the future?

Rhiannon: I think setting up longer-term projects and defending existing spaces is really important. So I keep going on about that: resisting the eviction of people, resisting the eviction of squats, trying to keep people and communities together when they *already are* engaging in mutual aid.³⁰ But also I think the cooperative model: Occupy Sandy certainly set

29 ed. – see **You Are the Good Cause**

30 ed. – see **'Since Colonial Times'**



05.10.15: 6-hour eviction of North London occupation – 6 affray arrests, noise demo outside their holding station – shortly after a queer anti-gentrification squat in Camden

up a lot of cooperatives with money that was donated to them. And I think the cooperative model is a really great balance between something that has legal status (that the State isn't necessarily seeking or able to dispossess it immediately, so it's not constantly under threat): but then within that holding space, non-hierarchical organizing and building radical infrastructure. So I think the cooperative model is something to do moving forward. I went to Wisconsin and there were so many cooperatives in Wisconsin! I feel like the States is ahead of everything in terms of radical organizing at the moment. I don't know if that was always the case. And so going full circle, going back to my induction into it all in the late '90s, I felt like the UK was really thriving; but hearing about what's going on in the US these days, it feels like you lot are ahead.

IGD: Where can people follow your work and buy your books?

Rhiannon: The book I've just written, the *Disaster Anarchy* one: it's £20 from Pluto Press. So you can go on the Pluto Press website. I don't know the current exchange rate; it used to be [that] £20 would be more dollars, but I don't know if it is more dollars anymore. I have no idea what's going on with the international economy at the moment. But you can also get a discount code: FIRTH30. So you can get 30% off, which makes it around £16, which I don't know how many dollars that is. But it's been printed in the USA as well as the UK. So it will be available on the US website too. I haven't actually looked at the price in there. Just say to anyone, you can probably get it on Amazon, but don't buy anything off Amazon ever. You can go into a bookshop and ask them to order some in. But if someone can't afford it, I'm negotiating possibilities with the publishers for making it open access. And with all my previous work, there's probably free versions online if you know where to look. But if anyone's struggling, you can just Google my name and drop me an email and I'll find you a solidarity copy somehow.



Summer 2023: 100s of license-reading cameras – more than 10% of the total number newly installed – sabotaged in the run-up to expansion of Ultra Low-Emission Zone tax (defended by the Leftist mayor) to the whole of Greater London during a cost-of-living crisis; similar to the Yellow Vests (see *Capitalism & Electrification*), some aren't keen for those in power to pass on all costs of the ecological collapse to the poorest while getting richer

'SINCE COLONIAL TIMES' [Mexico]

CARE & THE SWEET SMELL OF DYNAMITE!

Communiqué year 1. Number 1.

“Women, slaves of the slave: encourage your comrades to shake off the yoke that oppresses us all equally. Reject the lies and deceit of the cloaked executioners; throw their “relics” and their ridiculous robes to the pigs and swell the ranks of the libertarian women who, united with the rebels, make propaganda: with the pen, the word, and also with the rifle or dynamite, destroying the dens where the wolves of power, money and religion live.

Forward, libertarian women!”

– Francisca J. Mendoza,

;Tierra! #481, December 28th 1912

At approximately 10pm on September 9th 2023 we placed an explosive device made with dynamite and butane gas in a cargo truck on 31st Street in Escárcega, Campeche, with the intention of sabotaging the war against the jungle that the Mexican government is carrying out with the construction of the so-called “Mayan train” [ed. – see *'Let's Destroy Everything That Is Called Tesla!'*; the truck was connected to this construction].

I. It's Not Just a Train, It's Not Mayan!

This is a project of destruction through territorial reorganization that aims to establish a model of “poles of development” [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg61*] whose effects will be the expansion of fully capitalist relations in the Yucatan Peninsula, which will cause proletarianization, forced displacement, generalized pollution, dispossession. and destruction of our ways of life. WE DO NOT ACCEPT IT.

This project was imposed through the operation of the State militarist machinery in collusion with the agrarian mafias that have operated since colonial times in the Yucatan Peninsula; and in the rigged “consultations” that were held, the women of the region were never asked our opinion. That's why we had to resort to propaganda of the deed, to make our rejection of the project clear.

**We don't want to see the jungle destroyed!
We don't want to leave behind our communal
ways of life! We don't want our daughters to
become their cooks, their maids or their
objects of rape! And that is the violence of
“development” the train offers us.**

Our daughters will be free! Free as the jungle! We do not love violence, but it has been the government and the exploiting bourgeoisie who with violence are destroying our ways of life, our bodies, our

territories! And we are going to defend ourselves! In this scenario of amphitheatres and devastation that

they want to impose on us, the ethics of care [ed. – see *'Care is Partisan'*] in our hands will have to acquire the sweet smell of dynamite!

II. Women's Costume, Patriarchal Skin

Today, commentators of those in power boast – as if it were “progress” – that in the next elections in the territory occupied by the Mexican State, women will be presidential candidates. **As if just changing the body would change the politics.** But we want to tell these ladies that their bourgeois, white, racist, elite feminism [ed. – see *'The Thin Line Between Radical and Authoritarian'*] is garbage that we are not going to digest. Because we are clear that the State is the legal form that organizes the violence of patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism to subjugate us. That is why the State must be attacked, because it is the source of patriarchal violence!

Nothing that comes from the State will be anything other than patriarchal violence and racism, even though they mask it with a woman's body!

*We are not women of the jungle,
we are the jungle defending itself!*

*From somewhere in the jungle
on the Yucatan Peninsula,*

**– Coordination of anarchist women
for the defense of our body-territory**
*[ed. – i.e., asserting that the land and
our own bodies cannot be separated]*

*Freedom for anarchist prisoners! Freedom for
Mónica Caballero, Francisco Solar and Alfredo
Cospito [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; 'Today,
March 8th'*]!*

p.s. We salute the comrades of the Informal Feminist Commando of Anti-Authoritarian Action that has operated in other places in the territory occupied by Mexico, because they inspired us to take this path. [ed. – *Whose first action placed a bomb to explode in an empty church in the centre of Mexico City during the night, after their attempt on the cathedral itself was thwarted: the first stone of which was symbolically taken from the main temple of Tenochtitlan (the pre-conquest Aztec capital which Mexico City supplants) by the Spanish conquest's mastermind, Hernán Cortes himself, in 1524. The group went on hitting banks; the Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial & Urban Development (who "convert nature and land into merchandise, turning the dispossession and violence the capitalism accumulation phase consists of into laws"); the Women's Institute ("We have so much femicidal cruelty looming over us and our sisters, daughters, cousins, aunts, friends, partners, mothers... but we see at the time the congresses and 'feminist movements' struggling to make more laws, more criminal types, producing more agreements with the State..."); the oil and chemical giant Exxon; and a Catholic conference opposite the country's most visited religious site.]*

DEATH IS A MASTER FROM GERMANY

Around two years ago [ed. – written summer 2023] hundreds of us were trying to block a deportation flight in BER Airport [Berlin]. It ended up with us watching as families were entering the plane and being forced back to Afghanistan. We were enough people to stop the flight, but we lacked the creativity, the anger and determination. How could we stand still in face of such racist cruelty?

Within the ongoing brutalization of the borders all over the world,¹ the German State started to propagate the need for a particularly isolated deportation prison. **This means an expansion of the existing one in Schönefeld with a capacity of 120 imprisoned people by 2025.**

A budget of 315 million euros has been decided for 2023-24 to finance the planned deportation prison at BER Airport.

Under one roof, all the institutions will function accordingly to enable asylum procedures and deportations to be fast: whether in the airport asylum procedure, in transit detention or in exit detention, people are held and locked up in Schönefeld during the asylum processes or/and until been deported.

30,000 [square] meters are needed for people to be isolated from the outside world, with no chance for communication and be treated as the pariahs and the human waste of society.

BER prison is the continuation of a plan initiated 500 years ago in Abya Yalla.² BER prison is part of the same German colonial politics that send the weapons to Mexico that killed *los 43 de Ayotzinapa*.³ That expropriates territories in Paraguay for soy production,⁴ while creating concentration camps for indigenous people. That sent former Nazi soldiers to assure the creation of the apartheid state of Israel in occupied Palestine. That sells weapons to Turkey to attack Kurdish autonomy.⁵ That promotes the war industry worldwide...⁶

Avoiding a serious blockade that day at the airport, we have put ourselves on the side with a government, with a legal system, allowing it to continue and transport the colonial project.

1 ed. – see “We Notice When Bigots Get a Win”

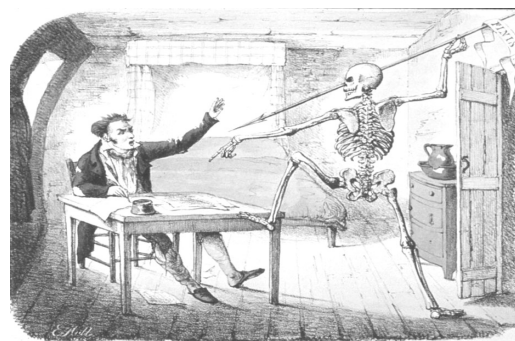
2 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies**

3 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg61**

4 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg35**

5 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; **'The Temple was Built Before the City'**

6 ed. – see **TEN-T, Military Logistics, and Availability**



Because with their laws, weapon exports, wars, agricultural industry, large-scale energy projects, oil and gas negotiations with dictatorships, they gain the power to murder, torture, rape, abuse, support and make wars, destroy livelihoods and territories of people, [with their] nuclear industry and bombs and their poison gas. Those governments give themselves the right to confiscate and imprison; meanwhile the racist police violence kills people not only in the mainland but also at the so-called borders on this planet.⁷

The colonial war does not end here; based genocide, destruction of indigenous ways of life, occupation of territories and plundering of natural wealth with biological warfare, expropriation, execution, torture, enslavement and now followed by extractivist green capitalist-colonial projects.⁸ All these projects initiated by the governments have their roots in the colonial industry⁹ and result in property, child slavery, high child mortality, cancer, prison, low income, unemployment, and poverty in a global wealth gap.

An industry that puts a cover of fear upon us. Fear of being deported, fear of being isolated [ed. – recall *UK 2019 terrorism convictions for blocking such flights*], fear of being abused, fear of being tortured.¹⁰

An industry that includes prisons. Because in the end, prison is about this; showing what could happen to you if you do not remain quiet and obey. And it is this obsession with obedience that synthesizes the inspiration for the prison system from slavery.

Even if the [US] 13th Amendment may have triggered the outlawing of slavery worldwide, the penal system still continues to devise new ways to uphold the racist hierarchies that slavery was founded on and to restrict the freedom of the descendants of enslaved people.¹¹

The idea of appropriation of a person, of what it

7 ed. – see **Statement on the Melilla Massacre**

8 ed. – see **The Kanak Insurrection and the Nickel Industry**

9 ed. – see the companion piece for Return Fire vol.3; **Colonisation**

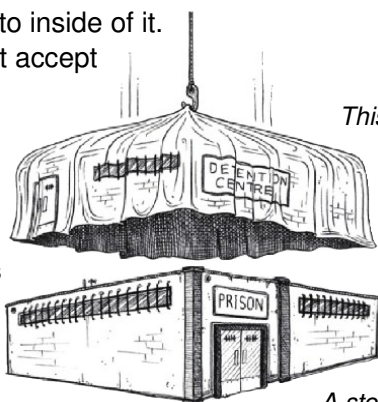
10 ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; December 8th Case**

11 ed. – see **'Everything is Sanitised, But We Are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands'**

means to be one's own person, is also rooted in the system of slavery. While the notion of domination and subjugation through violence may be infinitely traceable throughout numerous historical records,¹² slavery as a particularly designed system of violence consolidates a still-key insight in our society: **people do not submit to domination. Much less give up their passion for freedom by the mere fact of physical violence.** In this way slavery pours over the bodies of those who have been chosen as the primary territory of conquest, a package of diverse and very intimately interwoven violence that meticulously aim at a particular objective (the subjugation of the many for the good of the few) with a precise method – the disintegration of collective being as a space of diverse struggle.

The identitarian and neoliberal way of struggling that we pursue in Berlin is part of the pacification strategy of the State.¹³ In a bourgeois society like the German one, we have incorporated almost as natural the academic specialization system¹⁴ as part of our struggle, then we define ourself as anti-repression group, or Antira [*anti-racist*] or Antifa,¹⁵ or, or... forgetting that actually it is the interdependence of all forms of violence and domination which this system rests upon. By isolating fights in specific areas, we create feelings of guilt and hate towards each other. If we choose to only stay as supporters¹⁶ we distance ourselves from reality, and turn timidly into puppets of integration politics that are just serving a reformist society in the so-called German democracy. **We then feel paralysed to the point we do not even know how to speak to each other anymore.**¹⁷

It's not by chance that deportation prisons are specific institutions inside the system of repression, and that the State seeks with such intensity to keep them isolated in particular ways. They call it a 'center' instead of a prison to cover the level of violence people are submitted to inside of it. A wording that even we will just accept and therefore play the game of fragmentation and separating from each other. **The constitution of the differences as a reason for exclusion among people has been one of the major tools of colonialism.** The idea that we should always stands



12 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire;

'The Temple was Built Before the City'

13 ed. – see 'The Position of the Excluded'

14 ed. – see footnote #12

15 ed. – see 'Mobilising Disaster Relief'

16 ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg67

17 ed. – see 23 Theses Concerning Revolt

together only with those that look like us deprives us of joint liberation.

When we tried and failed to ground the deportation flight to Afghanistan, it was not the police, but the borders and walls in our own minds that stopped us. **The terror, the torture, the murder that produce the borders of Europe, each day they exist they kill something inside of us, as long as we are accomplices in passivity.** The new BER prison is build next to us: and it is a new prison built right here in our heads.

We are ready to fight together with all those who want to take power away from the system of exploitation. We do not try to get close to the rulers, we do not want to explain the world to ourselves in the words of those who label people as human capital in order to put them to use. We have not a thought of building “connectable” demands in order to march in front of their palaces, which are guarded by cameras and cops. Talking to them brings nothing more than clarity about the arrogance of power and consequently the need to do things differently, on our own.

BER prison plan for construction might be already reality, but BER prison destruction depends on us. Let us reclaim our hatred against this cruelty and take a collective risk. This is just starting and we have the power to stop it. We call on everybody to **stop BER.**

*From Lichtenberg to Plötzensee.
From Steglitz to Spandau.
From BER to Moabit,¹⁸
dyna dyna dynamite*



This text is our last political engagement with our beloved and lost comrade and we feel like dedicating it to her.

She is not here with us anymore but she spent the biggest part of her life in solidarity with all those who needed it, fighting against their laws, their racism, their rules, their prisons, their wars etc.

Anyway we would like to say nothing more as for us, someone is not their talk but their actions.

A step backwards now would be a step backward in all our lives.

Always in our minds, hearts and hands.

– Anarchists

18 ed. – First four Nazi-era camps (the second still a prison today), Moabit a current jail: see Return Fire vol.5 pg84

'BACK TO THE FOREFRONT' [Italy]

[ed. – Extracted from the claim for 28.11.24 arson of 17 vehicles in Rome belonging to the RFI (the Italian Rail Network)'s subsidiary for managing large infrastructure investments.]

The war in Ukraine, along with a broader redefinition of the balance of power between capitalist blocs [ed. – see *'The Position of the Excluded'*], is rapidly bringing the military sphere back to the forefront of State concerns.

The arms race is already underway (+93% increase in arms imports in 2023), military production is becoming the new driver for the struggling economy, and the entire military machinery must be updated and greased in anticipation of upcoming conflicts. [...] On April 15th, Leonardo, the most important Italian defense and technology company and one of the largest in the world by revenue,

controlled by the Ministry [of Finance], signed an agreement to this effect with RFI, also controlled by the Ministry of Finance. [...] The agreement aims to “ensure the movement of military resources,

within and outside Europe” even “on short notice and on a large scale,” as stated in the announcement of the agreement. It operates within the framework of “Military Mobility, an

EU initiative aimed at enhancing existing infrastructural and digital capabilities” [and] the integration of the individual states’ infrastructure network to allow the rapid and efficient movement of military equipment within Europe. This plan,

voted on in 2018 by the Commission, is the only one in the defense sector to have received the approval of all member states. It commits them to “simplify and standardize cross-border military transport procedures” and to “allow the free movement of military personnel and equipment within the EU’s borders” [...] **While Europe is increasingly fortifying its borders, and the “free movement of goods and people” becomes a memory, victim as it is of the whims of individual rulers ready to suspend it at the first sign of new**

“emergencies,” efforts are being made to facilitate the “free” movement of military units and resources through the removal of bureaucratic barriers and the improvement of infrastructure.

Specifically, in this agreement, Leonardo [ed. – previously being *Finmeccanica*; see *'Our Anarchy Lives'*] will provide “its expertise and support of advanced A.I. techniques on multiple fronts: census and monitoring of dual-use infrastructures, modeling of infrastructures and articulated services, simulation and optimization of complex networks,” while RFI will provide the physical infrastructure, its management and maintenance, considering that it consists of a communication network that runs alongside the tracks and traverses many vectors across the Italian peninsula. It therefore seems that the main application of this agreement is to provide the company that owns the HPC (High Performance Computing) Davinci-1, one of the most powerful supercomputers in the world in the aerospace, defense, and security sectors, “a secure and interoperable communication infrastructure with the different types of networks (TETRA, LTE, 4G/5G), to ensure high levels of service and security.” What is emerging, in simpler terms, is the transition of an infrastructure primarily designed for civilian use to one of the strongest defense industries in Italy and the world.

Dual-use is no longer the exception, or a trend, but the norm. What is developed in the civilian sector must be easily convertible for military use.

According to this logic, there is no real distinction between civilian and military; everything (the entire society, from its public institutions like universities and research centers to infrastructure, from transportation to energy networks) can and must be conceived and designed to be mobilized for military purposes. What has been produced by

Capital with the false promise of serving the well-being of populations inevitably returns to serve Capital when it needs to arm itself to ensure new and more advantageous profit margins. War is indeed intrinsic to the capitalist production system, as it allows Capital to emerge from periods of stagnation, revive industry and technological innovation through production incentives, conquer new territories to exploit, and burn enormous amounts of capital, goods, and surplus labor.

TEN-T, MILITARY LOGISTICS, & AVAILABILITY

Preliminary Remarks by the Authors

We are at the beginning of a new age of wars. Wars between transnational power blocs, wars between existing and nascent nation states and wars against both fleeing and rebellious populations. Wars over strategic resources, wars over food and water, wars over geostrategic power constellations and territorial claims. But no matter what the wars of the present and future may be fought over, we firmly refuse to join any party in them, as every war is directed exclusively against the exploited and oppressed of this world and only benefits the powerful in increasing their wealth and their domination over life. However, it cannot follow from this that we will passively watch as the rulers prepare the slaughter, commit genocides and massacres and bring destruction and misery upon people and life itself. While it is clear that we will never turn our guns on each other at the command of the MASTERS, nothing in the world will prevent us from fighting with our own weapons against the mere facilitation of war, against nationalist propaganda, the military-industrial process of progressive genocide, and not least the very infrastructure of war.

And it is precisely this infrastructure of war, or today’s modern “dual use” infrastructure of the “peaceful” exploitation and military destruction of people and nature, that we want to focus on in this article. **We’ll use the example of the so-called Scan–Med corridor (Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor), one of the EU’s most**

important infrastructure transport axes, as well as some of its current sub-projects for expansion and constructive reinforcement. In doing so, our aim is not to yet again demonstrate that the fight against war always includes the fight against the “peaceful”, i.e. frictionless exploitation and destruction, against the industrial and colonial project, but rather to make a small contribution to pointing out concrete points of attack in this fight. At the same time, we encourage people to carry out their own analyses of the military-industrial complex, its raw materials and its logistics, with nothing less in mind than its efficient sabotage. We feel the lack of such an analysis all the more sharply because we are of the opinion that our ability to fight domination (and its wars) is irrevocably dependent on knowing its infrastructures, understanding the mechanisms that make them function and, not least of all, possessing the necessary skills as well as a certain routine for attacking it at identified weak points.

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) is a network of roads, railways, airports and waterways planned by the EU within its member states. Its goal is to ensure the fast and smooth transportation of goods, raw materials, and energy carriers across national borders, in addition to military equipment, supplies, and troops, though the latter are often only mentioned in strategy papers.

It consists of a core network, which in turn is comprised of nine “multimodal” core network corridors stretched across the entire territory of the EU. These corridors connect, for example, the North Sea region with the Mediterranean region, the Baltic Sea with the Adriatic, the Mediterranean metropolises in an east-west direction, running along the Rhine and Danube river, or the Atlantic coast. They are multimodal, which means that they at minimum consist of road and rail routes (and often also waterways, at least partially), and that they connect airports and seaports by land. In other words, if one mode of transport fails or is delayed, it should be possible to replace it simply and easily with a parallel transport route along the same transport axis.

It is no coincidence that this redundancy of transport routes, this “multimodality”, is a requirement for military transport axes used for the movement of



Action during the 2024 mobilisation called from the Balkan Anarchist Bookfair (see 'At Least for a Day'); warehouse & 3 trucks of major arms company ThyssenKrupp (also supplier of AI systems & submarines to Israel, who use them for targeted assassinations & carrying nuclear missiles, respectively) burn in Berlin, Germany, where compulsory military service is being considered to be reintroduced

'AT LEAST FOR A DAY' [France]

In the night of 3rd-4th October 2024, we sabotaged the tracks of the railway from Toulouse in a south-south-west direction. Nearby was left written: “Let’s sabotage their war paths”.

The neo-liberal war trails cross all countries thanks to the railways. **The imperial war is being built here in Europe.** Transport infrastructure is an essential base for its development. As part of its European military mobility programme, the Transatlantic Security Initiative (TSI) produced a report in April 2020. The aim is to increase freight capacity and digital connections within and outside Europe. This relationship results in new agreements between railway companies and military companies. This is what is currently happening in Italy between Leonardo (an arms company) and RFI (the Italian Railway Network) [ed. – see '**Back to the Forefront**'].

In France, the SNCF [French national railway company] boasted that it was the first industry invited to the parade on 14th July, in honour of its participation in the nation’s rearmament effort and logistical support.

But it is not the only one: many others are taking advantage of the devastation in act, from the arms market to that of reconstruction. The area southwest of Toulouse is home to SNCF, Thalès, Airbus, Safran and other war beneficiaries. Symbolically, at least for a day, their workers had difficulty getting to work this morning – we are sorry for those who just wanted to take a walk.

We are responding to the call of the Balkan Anarchist Book Fair 2024: “*Call to action against militarism and nationalism (1st-10th October 2024). During this period, we invite everyone, in their own locality and in their own way, to organize actions against the conditions of war: nationalism, militarism, patriarchy, exclusion policies, etc. We call for action against the arms industry and the transport of weapons, against all national military apparatuses, multinational military coalitions and the increasing militarization of our societies.*”

Solidarity with all deserters, war resisters and conscientious objectors.

Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

troops and their equipment and supplies, as is the compatibility with axle loads over 22.5 tons on around 94% of the route. After all, this military useability was taken into account by the EU and its member states from the outset.

The Scan–Med Corridor

The Scan–Med corridor (i.e. the transport corridor connecting the Scandinavian countries with the Mediterranean) is the longest of the TEN-T core network corridors and runs from Oslo and Helsinki via Rostock – Berlin – Leipzig / Hamburg – Bremen –

Hanover, Nuremberg – Munich – Innsbruck (Brenner) – Verona – Bologna – Florence – Rome – Naples – Palermo to Malta. It crosses the North Sea–Baltic Corridor in Bremen, Hanover, Berlin and Hamburg, the Mediterranean Corridor in Verona, and the Rhine–Danube Corridor in Munich and Regensburg. It also connects the seaports of Hamburg, Gothenburg, Bremen, Rostock and the airports of Munich, Berlin, Leipzig and Hamburg via transport routes on land. Around 1100 freight trains leave the port of Hamburg¹ every week for inland destinations along the Scan–Med corridor. In the other direction, this corridor connects most of the larger and medium-sized Mediterranean ports in Italy via the Brenner Pass especially with Germany. This allows time savings of several days when transporting goods from or to the so-called Far East, if they can be handled by land instead of taking the sea route via the port of Hamburg.

What applies to “civilian” goods also applies to military goods and troops thanks to the “dual-use” strategy in the domain of infrastructure. **The Scan–Med corridor not only connects the North Sea naval bases of the German Armed Forces with the Mediterranean ports of Italy, but also makes it possible to balance troop and material movements via some of the west-east axes. For example, we still clearly remember how US military equipment that landed in ports such as Palermo or Bremerhaven as part of the NATO exercise “Defender 2020” took precisely these routes to the US bases, especially in Germany, from where it would have left for Poland if the exercise had not been canceled.** From a military point of view, the Scan–Med corridor is also indispensable with regard to the German arms industry and its supply of raw materials and semi-finished products, both in “peacetime” and in the event of war. The arms industry based in the Munich/Ingolstadt/Augsburg metropolitan region in particular,² as well as the Bavarian chemical triangle near Burghausen/Burgkirchen/Trostberg/Waldkraiburg, which is important for the arms and oil supply of southern Germany, mainly handle their logistics along this corridor “out of necessity” (as there is no easy alternative).

Current Bottlenecks & Corresponding Expansion Projects

The two most important bottlenecks in the Scan–Med corridor are currently at the Brenner Pass and the Fehmarn Belt, and they affect rail traffic in particular. At the so-called Fehmarn Belt strait, motor vehicles and trains travel on the so-called “Vogelfluglinie”, the most direct connection between the cities of

Copenhagen and Hamburg, an approximately 19-kilometer route between the German island of Fehmarn and the Danish island of Lolland so far via a ferry line. The Fehmarn Belt Tunnel, which is to be built as a road and rail tunnel with 4 tubes for traffic, as well as a rescue and maintenance tube by 2029, is intended to upgrade this section of the route in the future and thus eliminate the bottleneck caused by the ferry service. At the same time, the Fehmarnsund Bridge, which connects the German mainland and Fehmarn, is to be replaced by another sea tunnel, the Fehmarnsund Tunnel, which is to be built at the same time to accommodate the growing volume of traffic and in particular the 835-metre-long freight trains that will then run there.

The second major bottleneck of the Scan–Med corridor is in the Alps, more precisely at the Brenner Pass. On one of the most important Alpine crossing routes in Europe, rail transport in particular, especially freight, poses such a major challenge due to the steep gradients of the route that it is often more economical to transport goods by truck. The Brenner Base Tunnel, which is due to be completed by 2032, aims to change this. In order to guarantee a stable connection, new access routes are also being built or expanded both in the north (Austria and Germany) and in the south (Italy) to allow capacities of several hundred trains per day.

In addition, there are numerous smaller bottlenecks and expansion stages on sections of the Scan–Med corridor which do not comply with the EU's requirements for the core network corridors, some of these within Germany should be singled out as examples. In rail transport, for example, the northern approach route of the Brenner Base Tunnel is so far lacking (which is to be newly built between Grafing and Rosenheim), as well as the planned and building bypass routes between Hanover and Hamburg (as part of the Optimized Alpha E + Bremen), and the extension of existing local routes. The railroad line between Hof and Regensburg, which is part of Deutsche Bahn's so-called Eastern Corridor, has not yet been electrified. A new Munich–Ingolstadt line with a connection to the Munich airport is also included in the specifications for the Scan–Med corridor to be completed by 2030. Numerous transshipment stations also do not currently meet the required standards, particularly with regard to freight trains longer than 740 meters, including among others Munich, Nuremberg, Hanover, Rostock, Lübeck, Großbeeren, Schkopau and Hamburg–Billwerder.

Requirements for the Military Useability of the Corridor

In order for the transport axes, which were primarily built for civilian purposes, to actually be used for

1 ed. – see 'A Few Litres of Gasoline'

2 ed. – see 'It All Came Crashing Down'

military purposes in the sense of a “dual use” strategy, a number of requirements must be met, such as those defined in the European “Action Plan on Military Mobility”. These include, for example, capacity for axle loads of 22.5 tons, as well as the multimodality of the corridors, i.e. the ability to switch, more or less at any moment, from road to rail or waterway and vice versa, should one of the parallel infrastructures be seriously damaged. In addition to parallel transport routes of various types, these are primarily transshipment stations and ports that can transfer goods from road to rail and vice versa, or from ship to road/rail. Such transshipment stations, referred to as “Rail-Road Terminals” within this EU infrastructure project, are located along the Scan–Med corridor in a south-north direction within Germany in Munich, Nuremberg, Hanover, Berlin, Bremen, Bremerhaven, Hamburg, Lübeck and Rostock.

In addition, a sufficient supply of fuel along the transport corridors is essential for their military useability. **This is because the transportation of troops and military equipment consumes a huge amount of energy, which cannot simply be conjured up. Countless filling stations for cars, trucks, trains, planes and ships are needed to supply the civilian transportation system, which is accomplished on a daily basis using sophisticated logistics consisting of pipelines, freight trains and tank trucks.** Roughly speaking, the fuel produced in the refineries (where crude oil usually arrives via pipeline, see below) is transported via pipelines, tankers and tank wagons to so-called oil depots, from where it is also transported via tank wagon or truck to the various filling stations, as well as to smaller and more distant oil depots.

Some strategically important oil depots for the military in Germany and throughout Europe are connected by a NATO pipeline network, which today is sometimes also operated by civilian operators, but ensures military priority use if necessary. There are a total of 12 active oil refinery sites in Germany, located in Burghausen, Brunsbüttel, Gelsenkirchen, Hamburg-Harburg, Hemmingstedt (Heide), Ingolstadt, Karlsruhe, Cologne, Leuna, Lingen (Ems), Schwedt (Oder) and Neustadt / Vohburg. They are supplied via four central pipeline systems:

- The North-West oil pipeline and the North German oil pipeline, which together supply the refineries in Lingen, Cologne, Gelsenkirchen and Hamburg-Harburg with crude oil via the Wilhelmshaven oil port.
- The South European pipeline, which supplies the refinery in Karlsruhe from the port of Marseille and is additionally connected to the Transalpine pipeline (TAL), which in turn

pumps oil from the port of Trieste to Burghausen, Ingolstadt, Karlsruhe and Neustadt/Vohburg, in parallel to the Danube.

- A pipeline from Rostock to Schwedt and from there to Lingen, which has reached its capacity limits (particularly since the boycott of Russian oil,³ which previously also arrived in Schwedt via the Druzhba oil pipeline) and is to be upgraded and expanded at a cost of 400 million euros.

From the refineries, the fuel takes a mostly opaque and constantly rescheduled route via pipelines, tank wagons and trucks to the appropriate oil depot or directly to the various filling stations.

However, NATO’s Central European Pipeline System (CEPS) is more likely to be used for the primary military fuel supply anyway. It has military sites in Lauchheim-Röttingen (Aalen), Altenrath, Mainhausen (Aschaffenburg), Bellheim, Niederstedem (Bitburg), Boxberg, Bramsche, Wonsheim (Fürfeld), Hademstorf (Hodenhagen), Hohn-Bollbrüg, Untergruppenbach-Obergruppenbach (Heilbronn), Huttenheim, Kork (Kehl), Weichering (Neuburg an der Donau), Littel (Oldenburg), Pfungstadt, Bodelshausen, Würselen and Walshausen (Zweibrücken), as well as civilian facilities in Ginsheim-Gustavsburg, Honau, Krailing (Unterpfaffenhofen), Oberhausen (Neuburg an der Donau) and Speyer, and includes a total of 24 oil depots in Germany alone, each with an estimated fuel capacity of between 20,000 and 100,000 cubic meters. **The refineries in Wesseling (Cologne) and Lingen (Emsland) as well as the Gustavsburg oil depot, which is strategically and conveniently located at a rail junction on the Rhine and even has its own port, serve as entry points for fuel supplies into Germany.** In addition, numerous other oil depots with connections to the CEPS have rail links and can therefore be converted into entry points. Finally, there are the North Sea and Mediterranean ports, as well as the numerous oil depots in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and France, and the refineries connected to them, to compensate for any possible fuel shortages.

However, this is also desperately needed, as the fuel requirements of an army on the move are almost immeasurable. A tank, for example, consumes at least around 150 liters of diesel per hour of operation (large battle tanks can also consume a good 600 liters!), while a fighter jet can quickly consume between 5,000 and 10,000 liters of kerosene per hour of operation. **Of course, you can count the days on one hand until the fuel reserves in the military oil depots are used up.** For the Scan–Med axis in

³ ed. – see 'The Ecological Transition is a Hoax'

particular, it is worth noting that the part of the route between the greater Munich-Ingolstadt area and Bremen/Hanover is relatively far removed from the CEPS military pipeline network, which is essential for Germany. This means that either other intersecting feeder corridors must be used in this area, which operate via road and rail, or that the military would have to make greater use of civilian fuel supplies. Incidentally, the companies operating the CEPS on German soil are the Fernleitungs-Betriebsgesellschaft (FBG), while the tank wagons required for rail transportation were once handed over to VTG. Moreover, some of the oil depots are currently managed by TanQuid.

In the future, the new hydrogen pipelines slotted to be built and the infrastructures that are being created around hydrogen as an emerging energy source [ed. – see 'What We Do Today'], which are being pushed with great vigor by the green war party in particular, will become increasingly important for supplying the military with fuel. These will presumably initially supply the refineries that continue to supply fuels, but in the longer term, fuel conversions to hydrogen-powered engines are certainly to be expected. At the very least, the planned hydrogen core network intends to extend to up all regions along the Scan-Med corridor.

'WHAT WE DO TODAY' [Germany]

Bauer AG is a highly specialized civil engineering company which, through its involvement in gigantic infrastructure and construction projects all over the world, is complicit in the destruction of habitats and the expulsion of their inhabitants. **The advance of Bauer AG's drills and diggers into the most remote parts of the planet never bodes well,** and often heralds the end of the diversity of flora and fauna in favor of a gray misery of steel and concrete.

"What we do today determines what tomorrow's world will look like". This seemingly innocuous statement by the CEO of Bauer AG represents a serious threat to everything that doesn't fit in with the Western idea of progress, or doesn't want to submit to it. **For wherever the much-vaunted conquests of civilization extend, there always arises a colonial mentality that wants to quantify every living thing in terms of its utility, and is obsessed with the will to dominate and control the wild and the unpredictable. But it doesn't always go unanswered.**

Recently in Canada, the staunch opposition of the Wet'suwet'en nation to the Coastal GasLink pipeline, which once again crosses their territory, has drawn attention to Bauer AG's involvement in this crime [ed. – see *Eric Laursen Owes Me a Lamp*; exports of "green" hydrogen to Germany are also expected]. But Bauer AG is not interested in any of that. It prides itself on being responsible and sustainable, reducing its environmental impact and carbon footprint through innovative solutions and digitalization.

But when the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia waves his dollars around and makes an appeal in the name of energy transition [ed. – see *'The Ecological Transition is a Hoax'*], they flock to the scene. It's the nightmare-come-true of a dystopian smart city called THE LINE, along with coveted green hydrogen and AI-driven flying taxis [ed. – see *'A New Relation with Social Conflicts'*]. **THE LINE is a gigantic urbanization and construction project for a futuristic new city which, when completed, will stretch 170 km inland from the Red Sea and be home to up to 9 million people, 200 meters wide and 500 meters high.**

Billed as the first major carbon-neutral city, the construction project is attracting international companies and investors,

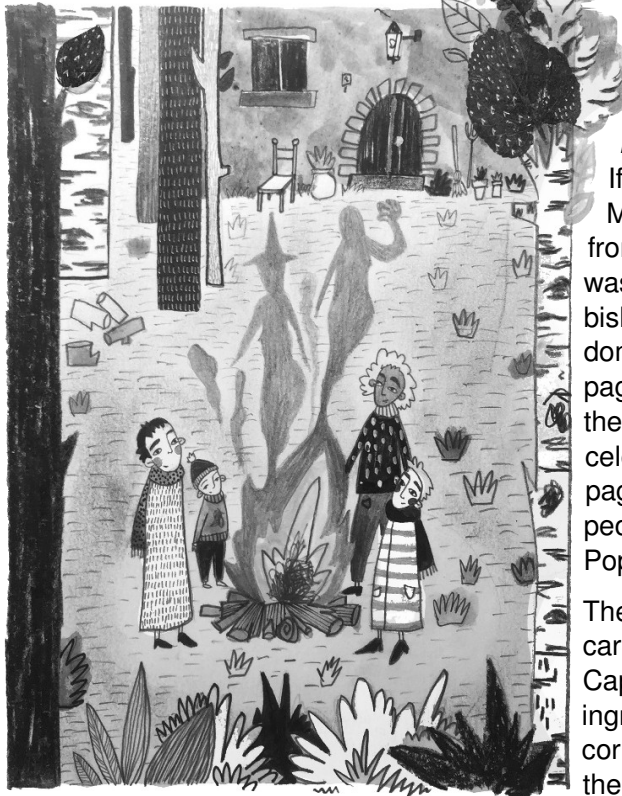
and aims to set the standard for future urban planning methods. Smart [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net*], connected, ecological. Right up there with the Western zeitgeist. What's more, this Smart City [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg31*] is set to promote hydrogen, an important energy source for the energy transition.

Several major European companies have already won large-scale contracts for THE LINE, including ThyssenKrupp, Volocopter, Bauer AG, Veolia, Siemens Energy, Keller Grundbau GmbH, Kühne+Nagel, Trewi, Navia and FCC. With a contract value of 240 million, Bauer AG is responsible for deep drilling. **With such a sum, it's easy to overlook the fact that most migrant workers are brutally exploited on site. In order to implement this project, the Saudi government has also forcibly displaced thousands of indigenous Howeit people who have lived there for centuries. Anyone who resists is arrested, tortured or murdered. Energy transition at its best.** Even the much-vaunted technological innovations are no longer so enchanting when you consider that they implement digital surveillance systems to identify political dissidents and enable widespread social control [ed. – see *Hong Kong: Its Relevance for the Rest of Us...*]. At the same time, absurd amounts of resources are being used to realize this madness, and it has to be assumed that the 170 km-long smart city monster will massively impede the usual migratory movements of the animal world and unbalance local flora and fauna.

All in all, THE LINE is a total ecological disaster and a human tragedy on every level. Perhaps the only silver lining is that the lies of the energy transition [ed. – see *Their Sustainability is a Disaster – Let's Smash It'*] reveal themselves with examples like this. **Ultimately, it's nothing less than the reshaping of industrial and technological exploitation to serve the constant of economic growth and profit maximization.** Fire and flames to all those who take part in it and enrich it! That's why, on the night of July 12th, we set fire to the hydraulic cables of a Bauer drilling crane at a Köpenickerstrasse construction site, in Berlin's Mitte district.

THE REVOLUTIONARY IMPORTANCE OF CELEBRATION & CYCLICAL TIME

If it is strange to say that celebration and cyclical time are of revolutionary importance, it is precisely because they are not issues that have received too much emphasis in today's anti-capitalist environments. However, for the State, they have not been unimportant issues: on the contrary. The State has fought hard to impose the Roman calendar – the most powerful artifact of the most powerful Western empire of antiquity – on both its subjects in Europe and its subjects in the colonies around the world. What are the features of its calendar? Months divorced from the moon and any other natural rhythm, weeks based on the commercial cycle (with days bearing the names of the gods of the empire with some Catholic modification for the last two, thus imposing a spiritual homogeneity upon the whole empire) and, above all, a linear count of the years beginning – approximately – with the birth of the central figure of the imperial religion.



Within a reality that is precisely defined by its cyclical nature, a rhythmic and circular progression that is one of the main ways for people outside the State to relate to nature and get to know the changes of the earth intimately, it gives us a system of measurements that makes no reference to the earth, or the moon, or the seasons, or any other natural cycle. It is no mystery why the Roman Empire, and later the Catholic Church, imposed this calendar. What is mysterious is why many revolutionaries who fight against domination have not insisted on abolishing the concept of linear, statist and alienated time and on creating tools that make it easier for us to develop another concept.

In the same way, the conquest of celebration was key to the extension of State-Catholic power throughout Europe, the subsequent colonial extension to other

continents, and the universal extension of capitalism on the same ground already conquered. When they did not have the power to annihilate often eco-centric, indigenous, and matri-focal [ed. – *central stable figure in families being female*] spiritualities, both in Europe and Western Asia and the Americas,

Catholics recuperated them, turning revered spirits or ancestors into saints and turning goddesses into different aspects of the Virgin Mary. The Christianity of Constantine [ed. – *Roman Emperor who made it State religion*] was absolutely misogynistic. If the Virgins later abounded and Mary appeared as a fourth deity apart from the trinity, it was only because this was the only way the monks and bishops had to incorporate and domesticate the strongly anti-patriarchal paganism they found at the limits of their expanding empire. By controlling celebrations, they could subordinate the pagan figures so that in the end the people would be worshiping Jesus, the Pope, the State itself.

The next counter-revolution was that carried out by the Protestants.¹ Capturing the real, widespread and ingrained rage against Catholic corruption, they waged battle against the Virgins and celebration itself, gutting religion to wipe out Mary and reduce the hundreds of celebrations and festivities of medieval Christianity to leave only two or three of the most austere. The subversive bacchanal – which had survived some 1,200 years of ecocidal, misogynistic, homophobic, corpophobic (hating bodies and earth) and regimented Christianity – had died.

So, if much of the year was not for celebration, what was it for?

The answer is simple: to work. The counter-revolution of the Protestant Reformation paved the way for the ruthless advance of capitalism, reaching in a couple of centuries – and much faster, for enslaved Africans – a reality in which people without capital were supposed to work about 363 days a year.² They had

1 ed. – see 'The Scarcity Dynamo'

2 Every day except Christmas and Saint Stephen. The total number of working days was considerably reduced thanks to the labor movement throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

no other value: they were useless. **And what concept of celebration do we have within revolutionary movements?** For many of us, our referents are Durruti³ and Makhno,⁴ men who did not even stop when wounded in battle. **We have inherited a model of militancy that surpasses even Protestantism's productivism.** We do not recognize "holy days"; that is pure superstition. We now intend to dedicate the 365 days of the year to the work of the revolution. We are the only people for whom a strike means a lot of work.

By this we do not mean to equate imposed discipline with self-discipline. Frantically engaging in a task of our own choosing – which arises from our desire and will – is one of the greatest joys of life. While we claim the "right to laziness," we also claim all the hard work that is usually needed to organize ourselves, for example, in an effective and combative strike. Our critique is aimed at how, sometimes, revolutionaries do not realize the new dominant trend of power. In the nineteenth century, when Christianity was already obsolete and science was the new religion of the State, many revolutionaries were enthusiastic about denouncing the church and vindicating rationalism, or proclaiming how new technologies would set us free (a mistake repeated by techno-enthusiasts of the early 21st century with respect to the internet).⁵

Our critique is about how a revolutionary culture has unconsciously adopted a trend of Puritanism⁶ – productivism – and has paid no heed to the question of celebration, rather than understanding the great importance of this aspect of life.

Nor is it real, the model we criticize. Like any model, it is a fiction, a narrative that we tell ourselves to make visible or reward certain things and to hide others. We don't know anyone who dedicates all their time "to the revolution," but a majority who want to pretend they do. The truth is that almost all of them put a lot of effort into celebrating every weekend. What we are worshiping is capitalism, the temporal structure that divides – in a totally artificial way – time into seven-day segments to make it easier for people to self-deceive themselves that they are not devoting their entire lives to the wage labor regime. but "only" five or six days. So every five or six days, every weekend, they have to celebrate the end of the usual ordeal. But it is not a celebration of life, of the body, of our health, of the land that has fed and supported us so that



we can survive another week of exploitation, nor is it a celebration of our endurance, our dreams outside of the misery of capitalism. It is a celebration of capitalism itself, because it is a ritual of forgetting. Like the obligatory oblivion imposed by any dictatorship, the weekend is an amnesic's holiday, a reset of our being and our memory, achieved with the help of the drugs that capitalism itself provides us, in order to break the continuity of time and prepare for another work week.

Not to survive, nor to resist. But to conform.

The notion of time we reproduce and the rationalism it represents wreak havoc on our bodies and our imaginaries. We are not machines. We are not able to maintain a geometric trajectory of militancy.⁷ Revolution is not a linear increase in pressures and forces. It is a storm, it is cyclical, it has its own seasons, like life itself. If we do not learn to adapt to these cycles – and even better, to celebrate them – we will always burn ourselves out,⁸ we will always fall into disappointment, misunderstanding, and bad strategies when a peak, an insurrection, is not followed by revolution. Nor will we know how to adapt to the inevitable changes in our bodies, our relations, our environments.⁹

Conversely, when we celebrate cyclical time, our bond with the earth and our past, we gain a great deal. We gain recognition and appreciation for rhythms and changes, we learn to adapt and be more careful, we do not burn out but mature,¹⁰ we learn when is the most appropriate time for what type of activity and so we also improve our strategies. We gain a stronger and more intimate connection with life, we protect ourselves from capitalist alienation. We improve our emotional and physical health, we find the strength to engage in a struggle that goes far beyond our atomized beings, we discover a philosophical and existential basis for our struggle that breaks with the liberalism and colonialism that have so polluted Western anti-capitalist movements. And we gain the ability to build a reality that centers our experiences, our stories, our imaginaries; we interrupt the amnesic spectacle of capitalism that

3 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg86**
 4 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg45**
 5 ed. – see **'From Fringe Prophecy into Voguish Ideology'**
 6 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg89**

7 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Barcelona Anarchists at Low Tide**
 8 ed. – see **A Cautious Reply**
 9 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of **Return Fire; The Swell**
 10 ed. – see **You Are the Good Cause**

“We are dying in isolation because we still understand and practice survival as an individual concern. We don't know how to share. We're speaking more and more about the importance of care [*ed. – see 'Care is Partisan'*], but we have not changed the basic framing of our existence, neither inside nor outside the struggle. It is an individual framing. But capitalism is the master in taking care of isolated survivals, selling us pills of one kind or another; we will never beat it at that game, and we should not try. Care is collective or it is a lie. I'm not interested in justifying a practice of staying home watching Netflix as a “mental health day.” True, sometimes I have no other option, but let's be clear: it is a defeat. A true mental health day means walking in the mountains together with friends; it means everyone going to one person's house to cook and clean (and, why not, maybe watch a movie afterwards); it means stoning the police and setting fire to a bank surrounded by beloved strangers while we howl like wolves. We don't trust enough in others in order to share survival, which is the same as saying we don't trust enough in ourselves to share it. The construction of this confidence within and without is one of the most important revolutionary tasks of the current moment.” – *Organization, Continuity, Community*

tells us “what you have in front of you is everything; nothing else has ever existed.” We create a bond with our ancestors, we make their memory our memory and so, again, we improve our strategies.

A brief review of the history of May Day¹¹ can illustrate very well the importance of celebrations and critical memory. All anti-capitalists know the events of Haymarket in 1886 and the subsequent execution of the Chicago Martyrs.¹² But the Haymarket rally was on May 4th, convened to protest a series of police raids on the day of the general strike, May 1st. Few people remember that historic general strike was called for May 1st because, at the time, many recently-proletarianized workers – people who still preserved a peasant memory – still celebrated Beltaine [*ed. – as the holiday is known in Celtic-derived traditions*] as a popular day, a day of revolt, associated with the imaginary of the world turned upside down¹³ and with the dances around the maypole. In these dances, all the people of the village danced around a mayo (a tall pole decorated with colorful fabrics). This was a symbol of fertility and a celebration of the earth and spring. At times, dancing and feasting developed in an even more communal and libertine way that totally rejected

Catholic morality and its hatred of bodies, the earth, abundance, and pleasure.

The world turned upside down was a celebration, and also a kind of protest and a revolutionary horizon very present in the Middle Ages and which in the rural world would survive the spiritual austerity of the Enlightenment.¹⁴ It was about turning the whole social order on its head. **Many times people put on clothes assigned to the other gender, put the last first and first last, didn't work, imagined a world where the poor had everything.** They crowned a clown as a “king,” made fun of them ruthlessly and sometimes forced some village officer from secular and religious authorities to dress absurdly, ride a pig or a goat and receive all sorts of insults.



In short, it was a good day for ordinary people, and it is no mystery why in their war against a new enemy – industrial capitalism – they chose it to call a general strike.

For centuries, its memory, its celebrations and its more cyclical and ecocentric concept of time were a very strong weapon in the struggle against the State and also a tool for building a communal, supportive and rebellious life.

Today, to face an all-powerful capitalism, we need these weapons and tools more than ever. **Time is one more terrain on which we struggle;** as we recover it, it will provide us with advantages on all other fronts, it will facilitate us cultivating healthier relationships with other people and our environment from which to better organize ourselves, avoiding burning ourselves out.



11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**

12 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg86**

13 ed. – see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**

14 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg48**

YOU ARE THE GOOD CAUSE

I keep on having the same conversation over and over again with various activists and people trying to evolve society.

‘What can I do? Am I doing enough?’

‘I do this and it doesn’t fit in with my ideas.’

‘I have to do things to survive in the system that I don’t want to do.’

‘I feel like I should be on the front lines but I can’t manage it.’

Standing back and looking at these kind of phrases, they are all saying a similar thing: ‘The weight of the world is on my shoulders and my concern for the world is all-powerful.’ The standards they are holding themselves to are much higher than those who conform to society’s norms. **And taking one step further back they are saying: ‘I am separate from the world.’** This is the bizarre blip of logic which I have found myself in, and it is very pervasive. A division of the self from the ocean of humanity, a kind of ideological transcendence.

When you are in a social circle at the vanguard of change, it is very easy to become separated from the whole. You spend so much time at the fringes that you stop identifying with that you are trying to change. You become, in quite a crude way, ‘transcendent’. This is what allows impossible value systems to emerge, along with confusing cycles of guilt and shame and individualistic self-criticism.

None of us can live an authentic, total anarchism in a capitalist world. Taking that world onto your shoulders and expecting to be able to carry it is a promise to be crushed and broken. As activists, **our goal is to transform the world-devouring system into something more creative, not to perfect ourselves within that system.**

If you are fighting for a good cause, you have to come out of the other end intact to truly succeed. The movement needs healers, nurturers, carers and therapists in its radical spaces.¹ It needs families, gentleness, comfort and respite from the front lines. A balance between being active and passive needs to be achieved.

Even looking at it from a more detached perspective, the cause needs to look after its warriors just to win. This is not just one battle, but an ideological campaign which could last any length of time – even to the end of our lives.²

1 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; **Open Letter from Return Fire magazine to the 2024.03.29-31 International Anti-Prison/Anti-Repression Gathering**

2 ed. – see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**

One does not throw ones warriors mindlessly into battle, expecting them to fight at full strength time and time again without rest. **For the capitalist system, people are expendable means to an end. Foot soldiers of the system are not in short supply.** They can afford to use people, chew them up and spit them out. The people in power are detached enough from the consequences of their actions to use others, without the bite of conscience.

But for us, every individual person is as precious as the whole.

We cannot allow for expendability, because fundamentally we are in touch with our emotions and sensitive to the world (otherwise, we would not be activists). We cannot commit atrocities or trample over others, because we do not have masks of detachment, and we have not been bent out of shape by decades of false promise.

Activists need to recognise their humanity, and acknowledge their own basic needs before taking but a single step on their path. **The capitalist world system maintains itself through the sacrifice of one’s time and the martyrdom of one’s dreams and we should not be mirroring those warped ‘virtues’ in our own movements.**

Furthermore activists need to challenge the expectation that everyone has to give one hundred percent of themselves, one hundred percent of the time. This is especially true in regards to marginalized people. A group can proclaim itself ‘progressive’ and yet still replicate the same power structures found in society – empowering some and disempowering others.

No one can fight beyond their strength and nothing is more strength-sapping than privilege and oppression. For instance, how can I give my all to a group which does not recognize how its subconscious ‘whiteness’ is disempowering and alienating to me? How can a woman feel safe in a group if it is dominated by men making ‘edgy jokes’ about gendered violence? How can a trans person function and thrive if cis³ people do not realize how they are taking their cis-privilege for granted?

Activists need to do the uncomfortable work of confronting privilege and oppression within their groups. They need to identify the subconscious forces at work in order to be just and sustainable. It may seem like this task is ‘overshadowed’ by the cause, but I believe such thinking harms and weakens the

3 ed. – “Cis: to feel at home in one’s gendered body; to not be transgender, genderqueer, intersex, or otherwise gender-divergent. That is, either a term that applies to very few people, or the majority of people, depending upon your analysis” (The Unquiet Dead).

cause. **The ends do not justify the means; the means always shape the ends.**

Do you what you can at this time, in your own time.

There is no way to live a pure life in an impure world, and to even try is to fail. Society is not something to separate from, or demonize as some absolute evil.⁴ Instead we need to stay involved, take its resources, dare into the labyrinths of power and come out with its power in our hands. Only this time for the good of all, and the good of the world.

This transformation cannot be achieved (or can only be achieved at immense cost) if you see yourself as separate from the world, and fail to look after yourself as a result. You cannot achieve noble ends if the means are to destroy yourselves and your allies.

You are the good cause

4 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Barcelona Anarchists at Low Tide**

'CARE IS PARTISAN'

[ed. – Perhaps a more nuanced take on self/care.]

If we want to identify what is worth preserving in self-care, we can start by scrutinizing care itself. To endorse care as a universal good is to miss the role care also plays in perpetuating the worst aspects of the status quo. There's no such thing as care in its pure form – care abstracted from daily life in capitalism and the struggles against it.

No, care is partisan – it is repressive or liberating. **There are forms of care that reproduce the existing order and its logic, and other forms of care that enable us to fight it.** We want our expressions of care to nurture liberation, not domination – to bring people together according to a different logic and values.

From homemaking to professional housekeeping – not to mention nursing, hospitality, and phone sex – women and people of color are disproportionately responsible for the care that keeps this society functioning, yet have disproportionately little say in what that care fosters. Likewise, a tremendous amount of care goes into oiling the machinery that maintains hierarchy: families help police relax after work, sex workers help businessmen let off steam, secretaries take on the invisible labor that preserves executives' marriages.

So the problem with self-care is not just the individualistic prefix. **For some of us, focusing on self-care rather than caring for others would be a revolutionary proposition, albeit almost unimaginable** – while the privileged can congratulate each other on their excellent self-care practices without recognizing how much of their sustenance they derive from others. When we conceive of self-care as an individual responsibility, we are less likely to see the political dimensions of care.

Some have called for a *caring strike*: a collective, public resistance to the ways capitalism has commandeered care. In their text "A Very Careful Strike," Spanish militants Precarias a la Deriva explore the ways care has been commodified or rendered invisible, from customer service in the marketplace to emotional care in families. They challenge us to imagine ways

care could be wrested away from maintaining our stratified society and instead lavished on fostering togetherness and revolt.

But such a project depends on those who are already most vulnerable in our society. It would take a tremendous amount of support for family members, sex workers, and secretaries to go on *care strike* without suffering appalling consequences.

So rather than promoting self-care, we might seek to *redirect and redefine* care. For some of us, this means recognizing how we benefit from imbalances in the current distribution of care, and shifting from forms of care that focus on ourselves alone to support structures that benefit all participants. **Who's working so you can rest?** For others, it could mean taking better care of ourselves than we've been taught we have a right to – though it's unrealistic to expect anyone to undertake this individually as a sort of consumer politics of the self. Rather than creating gated communities of care, let's pursue forms of care that are expansive, that interrupt our isolation and threaten our hierarchies.

Self-care rhetoric has been appropriated in ways that can reinforce the entitlement of the privileged, but a critique of self-care must not be used as yet another weapon against those who are already discouraged from seeking care. In short:
step up, step back.

A struggle that doesn't understand the importance of care is doomed to fail. The fiercest collective revolts are built on a foundation of nurture. But reclaiming care doesn't just mean giving ourselves more care, as one more item after all the others on the to-do list. **It means breaking the peace treaty with our rulers, withdrawing care from the processes that reproduce the society we live in and putting it to subversive and insurrectionary purposes.**

[...] To escape this vicious circle, we have to shift from reproducing one "self" to producing another. This demands a notion of self-care that is transformative rather than conservative – that understands the self as dynamic rather than static. The point is not to stave off change, as in Western medicine, but to foster it; in the Tarot deck, Death represents **metamorphosis.**

THE CRYPTOLIBERAL CREEP

– anarchist-individualist critique of the Left in Ireland

“Freedom is not something that anybody can be given; Freedom is something that people take and people are as free as they want to be”

– James Arthur Baldwin

“I think my basic viewpoint is that everything the left and right say about each other is true. And the reason it’s true is because they have so much in common.” – Bob Black

The so called “radical left” has been a total failure, has done nothing and has not made any “radical change”. The “radical left” has only been successful in re-creating institutions of hierarchy and dominance via its parties, unions and front groups/campaigns. Many leftists building nice careers for themselves in the process.

The “radical left” of the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s and 90’s (most notably former members of the Workers Party) are now the very people that have been pushing and implementing neoliberalism¹ in Ireland. **The old “radical” leftists have swapped their radical language and false promises for Mercedes cars, designer suits and high waged state or union positions.**

There is no doubt that many modern leftist will have the same faith as their counterparts. It’s not hard to imagine. The exact same problems that existed within the left today are the very ones that were always there.² These problems can be broken down into factors such as: populism, opportunism, careerism, and reformism (to name but a few).

There is no order of importance, all these factors have equally damaging effects. These factors are not specific to any one current within the left but to the whole left. These factors contribute differently but equally to the left’s failure to create any “radical change” or transformation they proclaim to want.

Let’s break it down a little:

“SOCIALISM: Discipline, discipline; obedience, obedience; slavery and ignorance, pregnant with authority. A bourgeois body grotesquely fattened by a vulgar christian creature. A medley of fetishism, sectarianism and cowardice.

ORGANIZATIONS, LEGISLATIVE BODIES AND UNIONS: Churches for the powerless. Pawnshops for the stingy and weak. Many join to live parasitically off the backs of their

card-carrying simpleton colleagues. Some join to become spies. Others, the most sincere, join to end up in jail from where they

can observe the mean-spiritedness of all the rest.” – Renzo Novatore

Opportunism

Whether as an individual activists or as a member of a party, union or some other type of organization, leftists take part and use struggles for a whole lot of reasons. These struggles could be in a workplace, housing, abortion rights, even supporting struggles in other countries that are popular, etc. **In struggles leftists use political maneuvers in order to hijack, centralise, and harness the energy, power, and enthusiasm of angry people for their own political gain, aims and motivations.** Leftists use campaigns and struggles as ways of gaining followers and support for their programmes, building their own power cliques and personal networks, climbing the political or union careerist ladders, or even at the least, for activist scene points.

Careerism

Many leftists take part in struggles to use them as means to build careers. The career could be in politics, unions, academia, journalism, NGOs, etc. Some leftists becoming “experts” or “specialists” on certain topics/struggles, using the gained knowledge to further their career.

Populism

Populism is a curse in the fight for liberation. Populism is dangerous, populism risks losing or gaining “the party”, “the movement”, “the organization” or “the campaign” support, credibility or new members. Populism also creates a dynamic within left organisations that will determine what “the party” or “group” will support or what actions taken, projects, or campaigns they will get involved with. **They will always go with the popular option, even if it is wrong. If activists in a campaign, party, or group swerve off the populist road, they are at risk of being punished and vilified by the majority.** They could have their names tarnished, blackened, lies made up and spread about them. All attempts at discrediting and to remove people seen as opposition. Populism will make people tell lies to mislead others and tarnish opponents. Struggles have been destroyed and lost because of populism. These dirty tactics are used against any threats to their positions, to discredit and isolate people that are opposed to their strategies or views, to remove opposition in campaigns or projects to clear the field which will help with them hijacking, having more influence and control; making people look

1 ed. – see ‘The Position of the Excluded’

2 ed. – see ‘Not Fighting the Same Fight’

“bad”, “mad”, “crazy” or “troublemakers” so no one will listen to their opinion or ideas, to save or gain support.

Reformism

A large majority of the left, whither they call themselves, socialists, marxists, leninists, trotskysts, and even some anarchists, are in fact crypto-liberals. These liberals disguise themselves with radical language and bullshit. They do not want to overthrow or destroy the state and capitalism, although they may say they do. They want to reform it away, make it more “nicer” for people bit by bit. They naively believe this can be done peacefully³ and with well thought out arguments, protest marches and lobbying. The “resistance” they proclaim is of pacifism, delegation, negotiation and compromise with the state and bosses.

Trade unions like all formal organizations based on growing in membership are prone to populism and the other factors I mentioned above. **At worst union officials undermine and disempower struggles, compromising with bosses, negotiating deals on what would appear to be the best outcome for workers, but realistically contribute towards keeping this society intact.** At best unions are reformist that help to make improvements to conditions of exploitation making the daily toil of work a little bit more bearable. Ultimately unions are a cog in the machine of capitalism, with the outcome of helping towards the creation of social peace between exploited and exploiters. There is no revolutionary potential from trade unions.

For the leftist politico their intentions are to run in elections which they hope to win so they can make “radical changes” to the state and therefore make life better for “the people” (as they view it anyway).

The politicians say if they do not have enough power in parliament to make “radical change” at the least they will be able to make “radical” challenges to the government.

The outcomes of such bullshit tactics are well known. If a leftist is elected into parliament they can make counter arguments to the government, this usually falls to nothing. **We have seen this in the South of Ireland with socialist TD’s (elected representatives) making arguments against a variety of issues such as the use of Shannon airport by the US military,⁴ the Shell oil company plundering natural resources in Mayo, the struggle for housing, and the struggle against water privatization.**

3 ed. – see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; **Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics**

4 ed. – During 2002-2015 around 2.5 million US troops passed through this key node of the “War on Terror”.



December 2024: outgoing Minister for Environment, Climate & Energy (former Green Party leader) defends his role in making Ireland “world leader” of global tech-firm data centres – anger against which he rode into power in 2020 – notorious for hogging energy & causing Dublin black-outs & price hikes, promising AI advances combined with wind turbines will allow even more centres (sold as necessary for de-carbonisation plans) to disperse across the country rather than huddle around the capital & positioned to utilise excess power from megaprojects set to make Ire “the Saudi Arabia of off-shore wind”; data centres like the Amazon one possibly hosting US military & intelligence data (the island is a node of undersea trans-Atlantic fibre-optic cables), and wind parks (built in partnership with State companies) like the one whose construction for an Amazon centre 200km away caused a peat-slide that severely contaminated the salmon-spawning part of a river

If a Leftist party wins enough seats to win power or share power with another party they end up watering down their “radical” views and implement the most right wing of policies, we have seen this in recent history with the Irish Labour party in the South of Ireland and we have seen it with Sinn Fein in the North of Ireland (not that either party had very radical views to start off with, but they gave lip service to socialism at some point), both parties completely selling out to every person that voted for them implementing neo liberalist policies.

Politicos running in elections and playing in the parliamentary circus water down their “radicalism” the more they take part in it, constantly being on the watch, making sure they don’t lose support and wanting to gain support. This inevitably makes them compromise and sell out little by little, till they finally stop preaching any type of “radicalism”.

During the struggle against water privatization we have seen the crypto-liberals use their vanguardist tactics blatantly. From when people from working class neighbourhoods defended their neighbourhoods against the installation of water meters in homes in many communities throughout Ireland. The resistance sparked off sporadically. People resisting from different neighborhoods linked up together to help each other. Politicos and union bureaucrats infiltrated different neighborhoods that were resistant, to hijack the struggle. The politicians (parties such as Sinn Fein, Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party, the Communist Party of Ireland, Eirigi; and unions such as Unite and Mandate) invented “Right2Water” a campaign group which plonked itself on top of the struggle attempting to claim to be the representative of the all the people resisting water privatization. The politicians used this campaign as

means to bring the struggle down the road of parliamentary politics. In lots of areas the politicians were successful in their hijacking, in some neighbourhoods people were wise to them.

Every couple of months there would be a call for a “peaceful march” through the streets of Dublin with loads of bull shit boring speeches at the end, from politicians of course. Any people at the march that didn’t go by the “peaceful march” narrative were tarnished as the “bad protesters” and “trouble makers”. These so called “troublemakers” would block traffic or occupy buildings (usually banks) and blocking busy roads. These type of tactics didn’t suit the politicians because it was out of their control and did not suit their narrative. During a demonstration in a working class neighbourhood a youth threw a brick at a pig car. A Socialist Party politician (and member of parliament) that had infiltrated the water struggle, publicly condemned the youth calling for the pigs to arrest, charge and convict the youth. Others were denounced by politicians for burning vans that belonged to the company that was installing water metres.

The water struggle came to a head when the Right2Water politicians and union bureaucrats thirsty for any scrap of power, sat on “the Expert Water Commission” which was created by the government, and accepted that a private company would own the water services (ie the privatization of water). Charges for domestic use of water have been put on hold (for now). The leftist politicians and bureaucrats try to claim this as a



2014 protest against introduction of water charge in middle of recession, following collapse of other anti-austerity battles once the Left (Labour) entered power & union leaders pulled the plug; initially groups tried to exclude parties & unions, but socialists insisted it would have weakened the movement, as the 'radical' Left polled highest ever during the struggle (note above the placard of Spanish Leftist party Podemos, known for recuperating the social movements of the start of that decade; see Return Fire vol.5 pg45)

'ALL THE SAME' [Ireland]

On a night in May [2019], 2 banks, Bank of Ireland and an AIB were vandalized in South Dublin. Slogans of “HOMES FOR ALL”, “BURN THE BANKS”, and “CLASS WAR” spray painted on windows and walls. Also 4 ATM’s were glued up, how this was done was by using cardboard the same thickness, width, and half the length of an ATM card, inserted into the card slot and then super glue poured in.

This was done in solidarity with all those who are on the receiving end of the so called “housing crisis”. This so called “crisis” for housing has been raging as long as capitalism has existed, although now the struggle for housing is at a particularly brutal period. There are record number of people homeless in Ireland, there is over 10,000 and over 3,000 are children (these numbers don’t include the hidden homeless). Since 2015, families becoming homeless has risen 268%, and many, many people have died frozen to death sleeping on the streets.

This crisis in housing is completely man made. It’s made from the greed of landlords pushing rents higher and higher, the property developers buying up land and buildings for dirt cheap and then selling the properties for sky high prices, and the Irish state implementing neoliberal reforms and policies. It is no coincidence that while the economy rises and the building construction kicks off again across Dublin so to does the ever growing amount of people becoming homeless.

All the while the politicians of the Left and Right compete and beg for votes with the upcoming elections. The political establishment don’t care, they just want positions of power. Whether radical leftie or far right dickheads, they are all the same and want the same. **The lefties and fascists have their populist schemes and “solutions” to end homelessness and the housing problem [ed. – see “We Notice When Bigots Get a Win”]. But you can be sure regardless of whoever gets voted in things will stay exactly the same.** Politicians, parties, and unions ALWAYS compromise. There will be no end to the housing struggle till capitalism ceases to exist.

*Neither politicians, leaders, bosses, nor bureaucrat:
For self-organization in struggle against power*

**FUCK THE LEFT, FUCK THE RIGHT, FUCK POLITICS
LONG LIVE ANARCHY**

– THE SINISTER FRINGE

“great victory”. To this day [ed. – first published 2019] the Irish Water company continue to put in water meters into homes, laying the ground for in the future when it wants to implement charges for using water in homes. The politicians and bureaucrats [have] done this without any consent, and ultimately they disempowered the struggle in the process.

These tactics are used time and time again by the crypto-liberals. It was seen in popular struggles such as: struggle against water privatisation in the late 1990’s, the anti war movement in the early 2000’s,⁵ struggle against bin charges 2000’s, struggle against property tax in the 2010’s and recently in the struggle for housing, with the same sex marriage and abortion referendums – crypto liberals maneuvering themselves into position of mediator between the state or bosses and excluded and exploited individuals. Of course all these struggles were (and some still are) hot topics and were high up on agendas for electioneering.

5 ed. – see 'Not Fighting the Same Fight'

THE FAR RIGHT, THE LEFT, & THE TRAP OF ELECTORAL POLITICS

Over the past decade, we've witnessed the resurgence of a familiar historical pattern, with segments of the working class and poorer communities increasingly turning to far-right figures like Trump and Le Pen. Austria is the latest country to take a sharp rightward turn, with the anti-immigration, pro-Russia Freedom Party (FPÖ) securing the winning position in last Sunday's election [ed. – first published October 7th], which had an impressive 80% voter turnout. This confirms a growing trend seen recently in countries like Italy, Hungary, Poland, Brazil and France.

Mainstream left-wing circles often interpret this shift as a result of their own perceived “failures” to address working-class concerns. A common argument is that a ‘class reversal’ has occurred, with leftist parties being co-opted by educated neoliberal elites. Others contend that the left has abandoned economic analysis in favour of identity politics.¹

However, the root issue lies in the failures of the electoral democracy system itself. **The feelings of betrayal and disillusionment stem from the statist left's historical failure to challenge the spectacle of electoral politics, which serves to maintain the class system at all costs.** Instead, leftist parties co-opted periods of insurrection and unrest, during the collapse of social democratic ideals in the economic crises at the dawn of the 21st century. By doing so, the left (focused today on the Green New Deal,² identity, and human rights) has positioned itself as one of the two pillars of hegemonic politics, the other being the right (focused on climate change denial, nationalism, and religion).

The modern statist left faces a fundamental tragedy. Bound to electoralism, it becomes entangled in the web of neoliberal governance, offering neither real alternative solutions nor effectively challenging the capitalist system during a period of crisis and restructuring³ – a time that should be a prime opportunity to steer forward on a new path. **Meanwhile, the elite stays in control by diverting workers from direct action and steering them toward far-right electoral options or orchestrated xenophobic riots.**⁴ These distractions buy time for the ruling class to restructure production and political

1 ed. – see 'The Position of the Excluded'

2 ed. – see 'Let's Destroy Everything that is Called Tesla!'

3 ed. – see Capitalism & Electrification

4 ed. – see Avoiding the 'Peaceful Protest' Trap

systems to adapt to the grim realities of climate collapse and ecocide.⁵

Ironically, it is the far-right, not the left that thrives on false promises. Far-right leaders cloak themselves in anti-establishment rhetoric, positioning themselves as champions of the “forgotten” working class. By exploiting myths such as the ‘Great Replacement’⁶ and the degeneration of Western civilisation, they channel working-class anger into nationalism and xenophobia. Their agenda once again fractures the working class, dividing it along racial, ethnic, and national lines. Once in power, the far-right capitalises on the economic desperation that initially propelled their rise, imposing austerity and anti-worker policies that further deepen inequalities.

In this way, they reinforce both material and ideological barriers that protect the privileged within the citadel from the excluded ‘others,’ spreading fear and hatred on both sides. The excluded are denied entry into the zones of prosperity inside Fortress Europe,⁷ while the state exerts control over the ‘prospering’ population showing zero tolerance for anyone who falls outside the boundaries of depressive capitalist realism.

The solution does not lie in reforming left-wing electoral parties to bring them in line with the ongoing collapse of the capitalist system. It lies in building a movement that rejects the entire framework of electoral politics. The answer is in direct action, mutual aid, and community-based organising that rejects both the xenophobia of the far-right and the hollow promises of the left. Only with radical class consciousness and anti-authoritarian organisation can the capitalist and state structures that continually betray us **be dismantled.**

5 ed. – see **The “Green” Farce Everywhere and Nowhere Else**

6 ed. – Conspiracy theory that Jews and/or Marxists and/or 'globalists' aim to create majority-Muslim populations in the 'Global North' that are supposedly more pliant (although also supposedly inherently terroristic!), by encouraging unrestricted immigration and suppressing 'native' birthrate. Motivation of Callum Parslow who stabbed an asylum seeker near Worcester in last year, espousing that "I am but a gardener tending to the great garden of England." While of course inextricable, it's worth noting which has the greatest body-count between street Nazi actions and those mandated by, for example, Josep Borrell Fontelles, life-long man of the Left (the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) when as both High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy and Vice President of the EU Commission he said in 2022 that “Europe is a garden... Most of the rest of the world is a jungle. And the jungle could invade the garden” – see **Statement on the Melilla Massacre.**

7 ed. – see **Death is a Master From Germany**

CARS AS CAMERAS

Most expect to be captured on video when walking through downtown streets, which are often littered with traditional types of security cameras, such as the dome cameras, bullet cameras, or the newer remote controlled PTZ (Point, Tilt, Zoom) cameras. Previously, this was less expected in residential neighborhoods, which now have an increasing amount of home surveillance systems like Amazon's Ring or Google Nest cameras. **Police departments have seized on the increasing popularity of these devices and struck deals with their parent companies to directly incorporate them into existing surveillance networks and access data without the knowledge or permission of the camera owner.**¹ Some doorbell style cameras offer forms of audio surveillance as well: Amazon's Ring cameras, easily spotted by their ominous glowing circle, can reportedly capture conversation-level audio from up to 25 feet away. Ring has partnered with more than a thousand police departments across the United States. Some police departments even ran pilot programs that enabled them to constantly live-stream from residents' doorbell cameras.

While the rapid expansion of home surveillance systems like doorbell cameras has been extensively noted and attacked by anarchists, there has been less focus on the equally rapid expansion of vehicle-based surveillance systems.

For a long time now, cars have been at the center of many high-profile arrests of anarchists. Most major cities have invested in roadside automated license plate readers (ALPR), and many police vehicles are equipped with dashboard ALPR, which read, record, and search every license plate across assorted databases. The Counter Surveillance Resource Center [*editor's note in original: now the No Trace Project – notrace.how*] has thoroughly documented the many types of trackers and listening devices that police across the world have installed in the vehicles of anarchists. **Even without being bugged, almost every modern car contains technology that logs your trips (and much more) and can be easily accessed by law enforcement.** In the US, most car manufacturers routinely provide vehicle information to law enforcement without a subpoena or warrant. The vast majority of cars sold in the US over the last few years feature telematic modules that transmit information, including location information, directly to

the servers of the manufacturer for remote storage. Further information can be extracted with physical access to the target vehicle: a tool sold by the US company Berla can find the full location history of a vehicle, as well as contact lists, call logs, SMS messages and more of any phone that has been connected to the car's infotainment system.

Cars, especially newer vehicles with built-in computer systems, know everything about their users and, consequentially, the people around them. Tesla is taking this a step further, turning cars into mobile, high-definition video surveillance systems.

Every Tesla vehicle has cameras that provide 360-degree video surveillance around the vehicle while it is in motion. There are nine cameras in total: eight exterior facing cameras (three front-facing cameras, two fender cameras, one rear-view camera, and two side cameras on the "b-pillar" between the windows) and one interior facing cabin camera. The footage that is collected by these cameras is stored locally on a USB drive or other storage device connected to the vehicle's central computer system, but footage also makes its way to Tesla's servers. For instance, Tesla offers a (minimum) 72-hour backup of all footage recorded in case the driver-installed USB drive is stolen. Some countries have banned Teslas from driving near sensitive government areas, such as China and Germany, which banned the cars from driving on certain Berlin police grounds.

All nine Tesla cameras are actively recording while the car is moving. However, even when the car is parked and turned off, the cameras are often still recording. Tesla offers a feature called "sentry mode" which transforms the parked car into a camera system that can capture video from all directions. This mode supposedly has to be manually switched on by the owner. It uses four of the nine cameras (one on each side of the vehicle), and the video feed can be accessed in real-time via a smartphone app. The cameras are activated and an "alert" notification is sent to the app every time someone touches the vehicle or the vehicle moves, but also activate when someone walks near the vehicle or other nearby movement is detected. Videos are uploaded to centralized Tesla servers as a backup. Even if the cameras did not activate or trigger a "sentry event," video can still be recovered of anything that happened in camera range within (at least) an hour before it is overwritten. However, Tesla owners can use publicly available code to modify their computer system and store all footage indefinitely.

The cameras used in Teslas are made by the technology and weapons giant Samsung. So far, most have a resolution of 1.2 megapixels, but since 2023 some cars have 5 megapixel cameras which are significantly more detailed and color-accurate.

¹ ed. – see 'A Nighttime Stroll'; no longer restrained by European Union law, in the UK these can be used the same.

The front cameras have a range of up to 250 meters. It is possible for older models of Teslas to be upgraded to the newer hardware and better cameras.

It is already possible to harness the video footage from Teslas and run it through artificial intelligence programs that automatically process faces and license plates. In 2019, a presenter at a security conference showed how he could use his Tesla, a relatively affordable minicomputer, and publicly available programs to create a system to track and store all passing faces and license plates.

Combining high quality security cameras that capture footage with artificial intelligence powered programs that automatically analyze that footage is not a thing of the future, it is already here. Google's home security system, Google Nest, comes equipped with a feature that automatically keeps track of "familiar faces," and many other consumer-grade security systems have similar features. Soon, the rent-a-cop watching dozens of TV screens from a windowless room could be augmented, or even replaced, by AI-powered security systems that are taught to automatically flag certain faces and "suspicious" behaviors and alert security. The recent development of 5G networks² enables the wireless connectivity and high-speed data transfer needed to transmit sufficiently detailed live video from security cameras to AI systems in data centers and law enforcement fusion centers.

Just as doorbell cameras have become a major resource to police, Tesla cameras have already proved to be an important and increasingly sought-after source of evidence in investigations. **Footage from Teslas, including parked Teslas in sentry mode (which was only introduced by the company in 2019), has already appeared in a number of cases in the US and beyond:**

2019 in Berkeley, CA: Video from a Tesla allows police to identify and arrest someone for breaking into a car. They were wearing a GPS-tracking ankle monitor at the time of the break-in.

2019 in San Francisco, CA: A Tesla is broken into and its cameras capture the face and license plate of the suspect, resulting in arrest.

2020 in Springfield, MA: FBI investigation into a racist Church arson and other crimes involves footage from a parked Tesla, which clearly shows the face of the suspect as he steals one of the wheels from it.

2020 in Stamford, CT: Two were arrested for armed robbery after police take footage from a parked Tesla that shows the license plate of their getaway car.

2021 in Berlin, Germany: An explosive device is placed and activated near a construction site. Berlin

² ed. – see **The 5G Net**

'A NIGHTTIME STROLL' [Canada]

Recently [as of December 2019], we went on a nighttime stroll and removed some Google Nest and Amazon Ring doorbell surveillance cameras from a couple residential streets.

These products, which one can easily spot at night by their blue or green ring of light, are popping up more and more in Montreal and elsewhere. The cameras can store recorded video on the cloud for up to 60 days.

It's been well documented that Amazon is using Ring to build a private surveillance network, fully integrated with police departments, under the guise of combating package theft.

On a positive note, these doorbell cameras make it easy to fight back against the giants of techno-capitalism right in our neighborhoods. They are easily removed with a small crowbar. It's suggested to have a buddy with you and/or wear electrical insulating gloves as a precaution against the risk of shock from live wires. And be aware that the battery-powered camera may continue recording and transmitting even after being torn from the wall, while it's still in range of its home wifi network; the user may also receive a notification on their phone.

Fuck Amazon, Google, and their encroaching techno-dystopia.

police used video from a nearby parked Tesla to identify and arrest an allegedly "left-extremist" suspect.

2021 in Memphis, TN: A parked Tesla records people stealing the wheel of a nearby car, and the footage is publicized by police in an attempt to identify the suspects.

2021 in UK: Police use video from Tesla to find and arrest a person who keyed the parked car. Video showed the face and license plate of the suspect.

2021 in Riverside, CA: Tesla driving on highway had its window shot out by a BB gun, police used the footage to identify the suspect's car and make an arrest.

2023 in San Jose, CA: PG&E transformer boxes were blown up in two separate attacks, knocking out power to thousands. A multi-agency investigation results in an arrest, a key piece of evidence is video from a parked Tesla that shows the suspect near the scene. Phone data (likely a geofence warrant) is also used to identify and arrest a suspect.

2023 in Bend, OR: Police investigating a murder case make a public plea for Tesla owners to check their footage from the day and look for a specific car.

In these cases and others, law enforcement made direct quotes about the importance of Tesla videos in the course of the investigation:

"Without people being willing to share their surveillance videos with us, we probably wouldn't have been able to make progress on this case, so that was essential" (Assistant Police Chief of San Jose, CA)

"This is the one that did him in and this is the reason why he got arrested" (Police officer pointing to a Tesla camera).

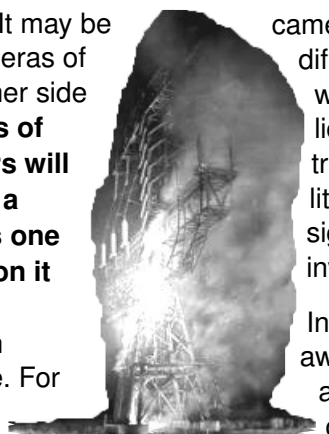
"It's rare but we're seeing more and more of these (Tesla) surveillance cameras all over the place now and we're happy to see that because it's a really effective crime-fighting tool" (San Francisco PD PIO).

"Today's technology enables automobile manufacturers like Tesla to generate recordings, which of course have enormous added value for the police when solving crimes and traffic accident scenarios. It would be negligent not to use this opportunity" (GdP German police union president).

As more Teslas hit the road, the state's surveillance network expands; the supposed line between "citizen" and "cop" vanishes. The same surveillance technology that Tesla has pioneered is being introduced by other car manufacturers and after-market manufacturers. A new feature by BMW allows users to generate a live 3D render of their car's surroundings from a smartphone app. Other companies are not far behind, teasing features that are similar to Tesla's sentry mode.

What should anarchists take away from this? How can we continue to attack this panoptic³ hellscape and get away with it?

When concerned about potential video surveillance, we must now remember to check for Tesla vehicles in addition to doorbell cameras and more traditional visible security systems. It may be possible to avoid activating the cameras of parked Teslas by walking on the other side of the street. **Unlike all other forms of surveillance cameras, parked cars will not always be in the same spot – a street free of any visible cameras one night might have a Tesla parked on it the next.** This means car cameras present a particular challenge when planning paths to avoid surveillance. For now, no other major car manufacturer seems to regularly include surveillance cameras, so Tesla's unique shape allows them to be identified at a distance and



05.03.24: power to the Grünheide factory (see 'Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!') making 6,000 electric SUVs a week cut by pylon arson – the week-long shutdown costs 50-60 million euros each day without work

avoided (or targeted!) more easily.

Unfortunately, it is often impossible to avoid the eyes of cameras completely. General practices for avoiding identification through security camera footage include: Using loose-fitting clothing to cover up completely. If circumstances prevent covering the eyes with sunglasses or otherwise, ensure that everything surrounding the eyes remains hidden. Eyebrows in particular have a tendency to reveal themselves in the eye gap of a mask and can be very identifying. The clothes used, including shoes, should only be worn once, and should be acquired in a way that cannot be traced (by store cameras, transaction history, etc.). Ideally, the clothes lack logos or unique patterns. Clothes should be discarded or destroyed immediately after, again through untraceable methods and in a location with no connection to you. Gait analysis, the forensic method of identifying your unique walking patterns, may become increasingly enabled by artificial intelligence; consider modifying how you walk when on camera. Video footage showing patterns of left-handedness has also been used by investigators to identify suspects.

It is best to keep as much distance from cameras as possible and avoid turning directly towards them. Simply turning your head away from the vehicle while you walk by can help conceal your face. Even when wearing a mask, higher definition footage can still reveal identifying features. **Tesla cameras differ from most traditional security cameras in that they are below head height rather than overhead.** Umbrellas and the brims of hats and hoods that might offer effective concealment from an overhead camera may be ineffective against the low angles of a car camera.

In most of the arrests involving Tesla footage, the person was identified by their car, and often a license plate. The existence of ALPR, other cameras, and centralized databases makes it very difficult, and often impossible, to travel by car without leaving a trail. In contrast, bicycles lack license plates, are much more easily checked for tracking devices, are simple to steal or buy for little cash and discard, and have proven to be significantly more difficult to trace in criminal investigations.

In attacks against Teslas or things nearby, be aware that you are on camera and prepare accordingly. With some practice, slingshots (or other projectiles) can be used effectively from a distance. An awl can easily deflate tires by stabbing into the upper sidewall, and is quieter than a knife, though the damage is easier to patch. It is not too hard to spot the Tesla cameras once you familiarize yourself with

3 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg8**

their locations, and they can be easily covered with spray paint.

Some of the usual suggested methods for incendiary attacks against cars become obsolete or ill-suited when we begin to consider electric vehicles. Advice on placement of an incendiary device often assumes the existence of a gas tank and a flammable fuel engine. **With electric vehicles, and Teslas in particular, the major flammable parts of the car are the tires and the lithium-ion battery, which is throughout most of the bottom of the car in the chassis.** Tires catch fire more easily, and some chemical fire-starter cubes or road flares heating the tire directly can be sufficient. The flaming tire may then set fire to the batteries. To target the batteries, the underside of the car must be heated enough to create a thermal runaway effect in the battery cells. This can be very difficult to extinguish and almost guarantees the total destruction of the car. Gasoline or a similar accelerant concentrated in one spot under the car is the most effective way to quickly generate enough heat for a battery fire. It is inadvisable to break car windows to place an incendiary device inside, which increases risk of discovery (breaking glass is loud!) and DNA traces.

The "electric car revolution" continues to pillage the earth through resource extraction,⁴ cars continue to kill and maim human and non-human animals in massive numbers, and systems of surveillance and control continue to be refined and expanded. Tesla, along with other electric vehicle manufacturers, can and should be attacked by anarchists. It can be attacked at many levels: the network of charging stations is vulnerable to sabotage, the vehicle lots and buildings can be attacked, and the cars themselves can be easily damaged or destroyed.

Fuck Tesla. Fuck all cars and all cameras. Death to the state. Nothing but love to all anarchist troublemakers, vandals, and creatures of the night.

4 ed. – see **The 'Green' Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else**

'GOOD SKILLS TO PRACTICE' [USA]

In the past several weeks [ed. – announced February 2024], we used hammers and knives to sabotage multiple Waymo self-driving vehicles in San Francisco. We attacked Waymo in solidarity with the Palestinian people and resistance. Waymo is owned by Alphabet, Google's parent company. Google, together with Amazon, has a \$1.2 billion contract to provide cloud computing services to "Israel" and its military as part of Project Nimbus.

As anarchists, we oppose the proliferation of this dystopian technology on our streets. Each car is a mobile 360-degree surveillance camera and Waymo has already turned over footage to the police. **We have a unique opportunity to attack this industry in a critical time and place.** In November, Waymo's competitor Cruise was forced to recall its entire fleet after one of its cars struck and dragged a pedestrian. A Waymo car recently hit a cyclist, too. The stock market bubble for self-driving cars has dropped 95% in the last several years and Waymo has lost \$15-20 billion since it first started. Waymo is currently only operating its robotaxis in San

Francisco [ed. – where, during February 2nd's Lunar New Year celebrations in Chinatown, one was vandalized then burned by the crowd] and Phoenix but wants to expand to Los Angeles and Austin. Google Glass [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**] was successfully stopped due to the losers wearing them getting assaulted and robbed. Let's do the same thing to self-driving cars!

Ambushing self-driving cars requires patience and picking a good location, but these are good skills to practice. **Find a park or other spot without cameras to lie in wait for a car to pass by.** Check if there are passengers in the back seat and decide ahead of time if you want to avoid these cars. If you decide to proceed anyways, act quickly. Placing a traffic cone on the hood of a self-driving car causes its hazard lights to start flashing and prevents it from moving. Windows can be smashed, tires can be slashed, and LIDAR [Light Detection and Ranging] sensors can be painted or otherwise disabled. **The company monitors the status of its vehicles, so attack and get away quickly.** Keep in mind that it is especially important to conceal your identity while doing this. These cars use sophisticated cameras to record their surroundings.

*Against the Zionist state, its contractors, & their technologies of surveillance!
Solidarity to comrades in Atlanta fighting repression!
– some anarchists*

[ed. – Various cases in Atlanta (see '**We Laugh Harder Than Them**') relate to arson of police motorbikes (an arrest for which precipitated more cop vehicle arsons and others), climbing on machinery to stop construction work, indiscriminate arrests at a music festival after an attack on the worksite a mile away, criminalisation of a bail fund, etc. Atlanta's sent 100s of its police to train with Israeli forces and simulates similar battles.]

Strike wisely and don't get caught!



06.10.23, Chignin, France: 14 burned Tesla Centre cars; noting how with so many cameras today "[o]ur life is now a cold movie set in a nest of snitches," the responsible detail using hoods & umbrellas to conceal their approach

Further reading and resources for the daring *[editor's note in original: Some of these links contain detailed guides for destructive actions. It is best to view these using Tails or Whonix. A setup guide and download link for Tails can be found here: <https://tails.boum.org/>]*:

-A recipe for nocturnal direct actions:

<https://mtlcounterinfo.org/a-recipe-for-nocturnal-direct-actions>

-Fashion tips for the brave:

<https://crimethinc.com/2008/10/11/fashion-tips-for-the-brave>

-Minimizing DNA traces during riotous moments:

<https://scenes.noblogs.org/post/2023/04/27/minimizing-dna-traces-during-riotous-moments>

-The simplest way to burn a vehicle:

<https://darknights.noblogs.org/post/2023/09/01/the-simplest-way-to-burn-a-vehicle>

-Warrior Up: <https://warriorup.noblogs.org>

[editor's note in original: Some guides on this website are not up to date with modern investigatory tactics, or include unreliable methods.]

LESSONS FROM DARION RAY SEXTON'S ARSON ARREST [USA]

Darion Ray Sexton was just sentenced *[in January 2024]* to 39 months in prison for allegedly throwing molotovs at an anti-gay, anti-abortion church in Loveland Colorado.

I want to highlight some lessons here so others don't get caught up. This is written with love and respect for Darion's tremendous bravery, as well as everyone else fighting for a better world.

#1 Any action using fire, explosives, or firearms will get the FBI and ATF involved.

This means increased scrutiny and investigative resources compared to local police. Weigh the risks of your tactics and consider alternatives if the risks are too great *[editor's note in original: if the risks outweigh the choice of target, your skills, or comfort]*. Any action targeting a place of worship will receive increased scrutiny and possible hate crime enhancements as well, even if the target is a hate group.

#2 Don't leave tracks.

"investigators found footprints in the snow near the church that led into a nearby neighborhood and to Sexton's house."

Avoid leaving footprints that investigators can trace back to your location *[editor's note in original: this can be done using multiple modes of transit, going through well trafficked areas, walking on hard compact surfaces, going an unconventional and confusing route, changing shoes etc.]*. Leave your phone at home so not to leave digital tracks. If your

phone is usually off, turn it off, otherwise leave it on as if you were home sleeping.¹

#3 Burn your bloc

"A doorbell camera at the church showed a masked person throwing a device at the front door, the complaint says. The person in the video was wearing similar clothing to clothes recovered from Sexton's house by the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Investigators also found that a plastic bottle found at Sexton's home was similar to one found in the church basement."

Dispose of and/or destroy anything in your possession related to the action as quick as possible, without drawing additional attention to yourself. Anything worn or used needs to go. If you can't afford to throw away a pair of shoes, consider wearing black grocery bags *[editor's note in original: or better, socks to obscure tread pattern as well]* over your shoes for the duration of the action.

Wear inconspicuous clothes for the action that you have never worn before. A NRA [National Rifleman's Association] hat may get you out of a stop *[editor's note in original: being stopped in the vicinity at all will make you a suspect]*. Thrift stores are your friend, but heed warning #4.

#4 Space out action related purchases

"surveillance video from a Loveland liquor store two days before the fires showed a man who looks like Sexton buying Admiral Nelson's Premium Watermelon Rum – the same type of broken glass bottles found at the church, the complaint says."

Action related purchases should always be made anonymously. This almost always means using cash. There should be a temporal delay *[editor's note in original: and a distance from the crime and you]* between purchase and action that takes into account the severity of the action, how high or low profile you are, and the surveillance capabilities of the store you are purchasing items from. If you can dumpster supplies, that's even better.

As a general rule, big box stores like Target and Walmart have more sophisticated surveillance systems that store higher quality video for longer. A smaller shop is probably only keeping video footage for 7-30 days, but it is hard to know for certain.

See this post for more info on reducing your tracks: scenes.noblogs.org/post/2023/04/27/minimizing-dna-traces-during-riotous-moments *[via web.archive.org]*

Hurry comrades, stop cop city,² but don't get caught.

1 ed. – see **Never Turn Off the Phone**

2 ed. – see **'We Laugh Harder Than Them'**

MEMORY AS A WEAPON



Waging the War on Christmas: King Mob & the Battle of Selfridges

[ed. – For more on (the context of) Situationism, potlatch, Oscar Wilde and more, see our forthcoming book release.]

By late 1966 Situationist-inspired theory and praxis began to manifest across Western Europe and North America. In the USA the cultural interventions and publishing done by the Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (UAW/MF) affinity group echoed many themes considered Situationist. The artist, minor Bakunin¹ scholar, and major league trouble maker Ben Morea is just one notable example of the type that was attracted to the Motherfuckers. It should be noted the Morea's journal (presciently titled Black Mask) contains some of the better North American anarchist critical material from the 60s – a living theory instead of the reliving of history. The Detroit-based White Panthers also stand out; though most contemporary younger theorists haven't had the chance to interact with their ideas or actions. John Sinclair, one of the founding members of the White Panthers was also involved with the Fifth Estate [magazine] in the late sixties, which traces a direct line from Situationist inspired ideas to the US post-left,² and internationally to Black Anarchy.³ **Which leads us to the UK and two brothers trying their best to drink their way through art school in Newcastle-on-Tyne, David and Stuart Wise.** Much

1 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg97**

2 ed. – see **'Not Fighting the Same Fight'**

3 ed. – Note this is not the Black anarchism of, for example, Afro-descended struggle, but the 'Black International' proposal for communication and coordination (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg80**) that emerged from – and arguably detached from – insurrectionary anarchism as it had stood before the turn of the millenium (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg5**), and which the author of this piece moved towards (while, unlike others of the Black International current, never losing the playful and creative edge to rebellion here espoused) more than others in the 'United States' late 20th Century post-Left scene; see **Return Fire vol.5 pg16**

as the surrealists⁴ were drawn into Marxist⁵ and Trotskyite⁶ circles, the Wise brothers soon they found their cultural interventions leading them inexorably to ultra-left communist/anarchist ideas and Situationist theory. Their investigation was bolstered by a series of meeting with Morea and Vaneigem on the Lower East Side of NYC. By late 1967 the Wise's had dropped out of art school, moved to London, found a few like-minded maniacs and founded King Mob. An affinity group dedicated to the project of cultural subversion.

King Mob from the very beginning was a project predicated to action, to the manufacture of situations that illuminated in the harshest light the various predations and weaknesses of nation-state and Capital. Here again, the conundrum of organization resolved, where the coordination of activity defined and circumscribed King Mob's existence; not an ideology and certainly not the wholly reactionary "desire to belong to something greater than one's self." **In terms of the types of actions King Mob perpetrated, an example from April of 1968.** By Winter of 67-68 most of the group had moved to West London and immediately began to interact and work with some local groups. One of the biggest grievances then was the lack of playgrounds and green space for the local children. It had become so bad that several kids had been hit by cars while playing, and in one instance a child had been killed. It wasn't that there was a dearth of space for the kids to gambol; rather the on-going process of gentrification had enclosed large swaths of open grass with seven-foot tall fences. The local Communist/community activist types held a lame demonstration in an attempt to open up the play areas, to no avail. The bourgeoisie were simply not giving up the means of recreation to the marxist rabble.

Enter King Mob, who after a little planning hired a gorilla suit and a circus horse costume (the kind with a front and back piece – so two bipeds can impersonate a quadruped) and settled into a local pub for a few drinks. After achieving an appropriate level of chemical conviviality one member went into the bathroom, downed some speed, put on the gorilla costume and burst back into the pub, roaring and howling. The signal given the remaining conspirators poured into the street, the circus horse costume was donned and adjusted, and they moved as a group

4 ed. – Far beyond the modernist artistic genre it's most famous as, surrealism from the early 20th Century onwards has been a furiously utopian revolutionary current championing pleasure, imagination, magic and rebellion against most aspects of 'Western' culture, with stronger anti-colonial currents and thinkers than Situationism.

5 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**

6 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Barcelona Anarchists at Low Tide**

towards a fenced off park, Powis Square, announcing loudly to the neighborhood their intention to tear the fences down and then to play. The growing crowd finally arrived at the objective of the action and set about tearing down the fences, followed almost immediately by the arrival of the police. Violent scuffles ensued and the police arrested the circus horse, the raging amphetamine-addled gorilla



Early December 2024: 100s of retail, restaurant, kitchen & cleaning staff at another London luxury department store, Harrods, 95% ballot for strikes during the store's busiest season, over overwork & leave

and four humans. The circus then moved on to the courtroom where the King Mob agitators showed little desire to back down in the face of the law. **As an example, the front end of the horse pleaded guilty while the rear end pleaded not guilty, using the completely reasonable argument that he had no idea that the head of the horse was breaking the law.** The courtroom confrontation was written up by a columnist in *The New Statesman* and King Mob, much to their amusement, found themselves with a smattering of (almost) positive publicity. Finally, as a result of further community intervention, including the successful tearing down of the fence surrounding the park, Powis Square was officially redesignated a children's playground, which it remains to this day.

But this was all prelude to the Selfridges outrage and the temporary breakdown of law, order, private property and the Christmas Spirit that it occasioned.

King Mob actions continued apace and began to settle more and more into attacks on spectacular consumption and the contradictions of Capital. So when Ian Clegg, one of the fringe members of KM proposed a Christmas invasion of Selfridges, it was taken for what it was, an intervention of pure genius. As an aside, Selfridges & Co. is a chain of high-end department stores located primarily in the United Kingdom. Originally founded in 1908 and with a flagship store located in Oxford Street the chain is roughly analogous to Marshall Fields or Saks Fifth Avenue in the United States in terms of merchandise, clientele, and marketing. **In other words, King Mob and Selfridges were made for each other.** In preparation for the action a leaflet was produced, outlining a general hatred for Christmas, deriding the hypocrisy of the holiday and encouraging the reader to turn the holiday into a true event of giving. The flyer failed to mention when and where the action was to take place but word of mouth carried the message to the ultra-left radical community of London. So sometime during the month of December 1968, no one is quite sure of the date and the action was completely ignored by the main stream media, members of King Mob, including Ben Trueman dressed as St. Nick and a young Malcolm McLaren,

came barging into Selfridges's.⁷ On the way to the toy department, Trueman – already in character – took a detour to the candy section and started handing out Christmas goodies to any one brave enough to approach him and his entourage. No doubt the store security at this time registered a faint blip on the radar screen that something very wrong was

happening near the confectionery aisle. **From there, King Mob moved like a wave towards the toy section, and as they arrived Santa and his elves began to strip the shelves of their very expensive toys and hand them out to the wide-eyed and no doubt delighted children.** This new take on potlatch lasted some minutes before the inevitable arrival of both store security apparatchiks and the Metropolitan Police. Kris Kringle and a few of his more impassioned elves tangled with the forces of authority and were finally placed under arrest. When the dust cleared the real dilemma was brought into view... what to do about all those unpaid for toys? The management of Selfridges had only two options, to let the children keep the toys and hope for some good publicity, a la *Miracle on 34th Street*, or to demand that store security and the police take the toys from the children and place them back on the shelves. Ultimately, the final decision was a foregone conclusion, and in an extreme turn of good luck there were no press photographers present as Selfridges security staff and the London Police relieved the kids of their Christmas presents from Santa and returned them to their displays.

There are usually two reactions to this intervention; a) Wow, that was mean, or; b) Wow, that was brilliant. Both are true. Misanthropy and scathing critical theory often co-exist as a result of necessity or resonance (witness Oscar Wilde). The action also reminds us that interventions need not always be political, and in fact historically the terrain of culture has proven to be equally important for the anarchist project.

Finally I offer this as a Christmas gift to my

7 ed. – Dave Wise reminds us that, rather than an exclusively 'King Mob event', "The Selfridges intervention was really a disparate, collective effort. No one at the time really thought it was something to be claimed, something to be copyrighted for in any case, that was the enlightened no property spirit of the times" (*On What Happened at Selfridges*). It's also acknowledged that it was inspired by a similar action by Black Mask at Macy's department store in New York, 1966.

Comrades, in recognition of the fact that the best presents are usually stolen, as I have reappropriated this history and now give it to you.

Merry Christmas
Conrads!!



December 2024: Irish & Romany traveller demonstrations in London & Manchester after Manchester police brutalised their children to prevent them going to a Christmas market, preventing them from leaving the station & forcing them onto other trains they didn't know the destinations of & separating families

NO INTERNET OR TV FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS! [Switzerland]

This is the fourth act of sabotage in five days at Rheinfelden, a few kilometres east of Basel: Thursday evening [28.12.23], some newly-repaired fibre optic cables of the ImproWare company were cut again in two places.

This happened after some municipal fibre optic cables were deliberately damaged various times during the New Year holiday season: on 23rd December, at around midnight, several bundles of fibre optic cables, with up to 288 optic fibres per bundle, were cut. This damage was repaired on Christmas eve and affected around 600 clients of the cable network. On Christmas Day, 25th December, some optic fibre cables were destroyed by incendiary objects at Riehen (north district of Basel) this time, and the next day on December 26th other optic fibre cables were damaged in another place in Rheinfelden.

This is the most serious act: about 3,400 clients were affected. This damage was also repaired around 3pm on December 27th – but not for long: the latest sabotage of December 28th at around midnight wiped out all the repairs of the two Rheinfelden sites. This time about 4,000 clients of the cable network were affected by Internet, telephone and TV connection failures the operating company ImproWare AG reports.

“These repeated destructions have have resulted in several service outages in radio/television and broadband services operated by ImproWare AG, such as Internet, Replay TV and fixed telephone,” explains Sascha Gloor, general manager of ImproWare AG. Concerning the sabotage, Never experienced on such a scale, partner companies were mobilized day and night during the holiday season, continues Gloor, who points out: “At the moment a dozen collaborators of three partner companies are working on the two sites.”

Criminal intent is required to destroy the cables, Sascha Gloor explains: it is necessary to lift the guards and loosen the casing and screws. That’s the only way to reach the cables. The police spokesman of Argovie, Adrian Bieri confirms him: “Those responsible cut the optic fibre cables with a bolt cutter, it’s not a joke. Presumably the authors know exactly which cables to cut and the damage it will cause.”

Letter to the Editors

[ed. – A letter not to Return Fire, but one that initiated a short exchange with the now-defunct journal Hostis, in 2016, looking back on what then seemed to be a movement passed, but now coming well and truly back to life on the shores of Turtle Island ('North America'): the queer anarchist tendency Bash Back! (BB!).

BB! formed in reaction to an attempt to shoehorn queer/trans/fem rage into a ‘non-violent bloc’ during a march against the World Bank in Washington, DC in 2007. For 2008, the proposal was for combative queer fighting blocs in the anarchist mobilisation against both the Republican and the Democratic parties National Conventions (RNC/DNC), but quickly spread as an upsurge of attacks on homophobic churches, confrontations with Nazis, queer blocs on larger demonstrations, disruptions of assimilationist Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Trans events to bring a radical edge, a squatted social center for queer youth, sabotage of army recruitment (then trying to ‘pinkwash’ military service to attract more cannon-fodder), public orgies or dance parties ending in riots – and of course individual retaliation against queer-bashers and abusers – all claimed under the BB! banner, with ‘chapters’ in various cities until around 2010, anyone being free to start a chapter who agreed with the original general principles.

In terms of the way it spread and the tactics it advocated, it was the closest seen yet to a distinctively American insurrectional anarchism in contemporary times. Hence, it’s exciting to see both the concept and the physical networks revive. The authors of ‘Queer Autonomy: Ultraviole(n)t Orange’ report that the 2023 BB! convergence featured, among other things:

– Workshops on practical skills such as self-defense & the formation of fighting groups; mutual aid self/social therapy; emergency care & critical first aid; threat modeling & operation security; action planning; conflict resolution.

– Talks and reflection on anti-fascism, fat liberation, youth liberation, indigenous abolitionist feminism, individualist anarchism, Jewish anarchism & ritual, struggles against anti-trans legislation, and queerness in Weelaunee [ed. – see ‘We Laugh Harder Than Them’].

– Scheming, dreaming, & connecting around regional networks and convergences, autonomous production & supply lines for medicine, safe houses and transportation, lessons for living and fighting amid precarity.

– A wide range of joyous extracurriculars – a punk show in a park, a warehouse rave, a naked beach party featuring some real live bashing back, some night action, a golf course orgy, a game night. ”

They continue, “The crowd at Bash Back! was a beautiful mix – teenagers, students, radical queer activists, OG BBers, queer nihilists, feral oogles, individualist anarchists, land defenders, care workers, squatters, artists, sex workers, trans girl coders (these categories all overlap, often within the same person or crew). The power of the convergence was its ability to draw in people who may

think of themselves and what they do very differently, a seductive strategy to help generalize queer criminality & self-defense, to generalize Bash Back as an open set of ethics and practices rather than a closed subculture.

“Queerness is a kinetic force that brings us into conflict with this world, propelling us and the struggles we intervene in; in turn, those struggles expand and develop our own queerness, transforming us in ways that can only be imagined when pushing at the edges of this world.” The Minneapolis anarchist newspaper *Nightfall* notes the same: “It seems like one important theoretical contribution of Bash Back was to approach queerness not as another identity category to be enshrined within modern multiculturalism but as a tension or antagonism that leads us in the direction of a frontal assault on the mechanisms which produce us as gendered subjects.” This was the queer theory articulation of queerness as wildness more than identity – see **'All That Wildness Names'** – but broken out of its contemporary capture in the academy and set armed on the street. Or rather, this is what it was in its best moments: conflicts internally also disputed the direction of the tendency and how it distinguished itself from less-radical queer organising.

Other of the same debates (often much-needed) are coming back around again, too: not least, over the name itself and its utility, regarding the insurrectional anarchist critique of specific organisations. Around the same time the following letter was published, *Nightfall* interviewed a previous participant in the Bash Back! Twin Cities group: “As far as the question of organization, I mean yes there was a name and local groups calling themselves “chapters” but BB! was a network, not an organization. There was little to no coordination between chapters and chapters were more like local affinity groups or crews. However, Bash Back! locally and nationally dipped its toes both in above ground public organizing and in more clandestine activities, and that was probably ill-advised. It was just formal and public enough to be sued by a conservative group and for individual members to be subpoenaed for being known to be affiliated with Bash Back! Locally, we claimed most of our activities as Bash Back! Twin Cities and then for our glamdalism activities [ed. – basically, vandalism with added glitter-bombs] we wrote communiques signed “an autonomous cell of Bash Back!” or something like that as if we were not the same people in BB! TC but I don’t think we were fooling anyone. In a perfect world, those engaged in clandestine attacks would not also be doing anything resembling public organizing. At the very least, we shouldn’t have been using the name Bash Back! for both kinds of activities.”

Beyond the merely technical anti-repression side (important as that is) remains the question of how useful or harmful to us is it to seek recognition in

our actions. This is a much more complex issue than its usually treated as – perhaps visible in the below letter’s recounting of an action they insist needed no recounting – as there is potential as well as danger in the appeal to recognition (not from our enemies but from our potential co-conspirators, actual or potential – see **23 Theses on Revolt**). Sadly, the much-gestured-towards tension between opacity and visibility (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg46**) has not been theoretically developed much more since those years, at least in public. Incidentally, the Twin Cities interviewee cites the rise of the influence of Tiquunism (see **Struggling and/or Being Manipulated in the Name of the Struggle?**) in radicalism on those shores as corresponding to the decline of BB!: “With the Tiquunist influence came the emphasis on opacity and escaping the milieu and critiquing everything and reading more, doing less.” Amusingly, this has now come back around full circle: as the strain seeks new reference points and is under attack for alleged entryism in popular struggles on both sides of the Atlantic (and their originary theorists descending into conspiracy theories and internal purges) – and with one ‘North American’ long-term former participant describing it as “a cathedral to straight white male identity politics [ed. – see **Follow the Fires**]” – the French Tiquist-oriented website *Le Numéro Zéro* released a text on the first day of the aforementioned BB! convergence, hand-waving away such allegations and declaring affinity with subversive queerness in general and in particular citing BB!, claiming that BB! had “dissolved itself to avoid co-optation and capture by empty narratives.

“Problematizing these fantasies and interpretations, it concluded its history with “Bash Back is dead! Long live Bash Back!”” As usual, this comes off as simplifying from afar (if not an appropriation; the text asserting that the Tiquunist tendency is set to perform the same disappearing trick), treating BB! as if it was one coherent entity – steered by an invisible committee, perhaps? – instead of the messy and chaotic network that is, today, reconstituting. (Ironically on the other side of the pond Tiquunists were at that time seeking to undermine the BB! convergence due to hostility from its participants!) The BB! Twin Cities interviewee was more candid about this aspect: “the contradiction in mobilizing around an identity that is meant to be an anti-identity. We were critical of identity politics and yet at times we were engaging in identity politics [ed. – see **'A Question That Will Never be Solved'**], whether we wanted to admit it or not. If identity it is a trap then was

Bash Back! not also a trap of our own making? And really this was one of the fundamental tensions in Bash Back!; people related differently to identity politics. Those who came from anarchist scenes tended to be critical of identity politics, while those who came from queer scenes tended to be less so, more like the militant wing of identity politics.”



'A QUESTION THAT WILL NEVER BE SOLVED'

The Invisible Committee [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg58*] presents us with a totalizing theory. In the very introduction of *The Coming Insurrection*, they tell us, “Everyone agrees.” In *Theory of Bloom* they assert that, “it’s *how* every being is the way they are [...] it is precisely what gives *consistency* and *possibility* to each being. Bloom is the *Stimmung* in which and by which we understand each other at the present time” [Theory of Bloom]. Bloom “experiences an ontological finiteness and separation common to all men.”

In fact, the affirmation of these truths is the necessary signifier for the creation of a new identity, a new milieu. It’s also the recreation of a working class, a universal identity that has room for everyone. **But it’s a poor fit. There simply is no clean, unproblematic answer to the question of identity.** Its very nature is as a question that will never be solved. True becoming can have no end point.

The totality is not a collection of identities (which could then be opposed by singularities) but a set of rules, often contradictory but arranged by mostly shared loyalties and similar visions of a common project, generated and imposed by numerous institutions, to define identities and regulate people’s movement between them.

So two people who call themselves “activists” (or mothers or militants) may have entirely distinct relations to the totality. One may indeed be a *becoming*, a *whatever*, as she asks herself questions about how to strike out from where she stands and lets herself feel doubts about both the ground she stands on and the weapons she has picked up; while the other may indeed be a recuperator, satisfied with activism as a reproducible practice, eager for the paths of promotion laid out within it. [...] “RULE No. 2: You can never free yourself from an apparatus by getting engaged within its minor part.” [A Critical Metaphysics Could Come About as a Science of Apparatuses]. There is a logic to this. **The identities, the subjectivities, they refer to can certainly be viewed as a “minor part” of the apparatus, and certainly creating counter-subjectivities cannot in and of itself destroy that apparatus and may often bind you to it more tightly, but the idea that only the most economic of motions in a struggle should be preserved ignores the messy reality of how people begin to desert and to fight, and it misses the opportunity for strength that is presented by an attitude of picking fights with the apparatus everywhere, in its most minor and major parts.**

Engaging with gender by redefining what it means to be a woman or a man in this world is just moving around the prison bars. Attacking advertising that defines these roles for us (and realistically, such an attack would come out of a process in which we are also reading and writing and talking about gender identities) can be a step towards the insurrectionary, towards the war against domination in all its forms.

I, for one, do not see insurrection in the efforts of a Party that is increasingly warlike, precise, and correct, but in the messy, inefficient, contradictory ecology of resistance that already exists.

A thousand forms of collaboration are contrary to the spirit of insurrection, true, but no person embodies this spirit wholly. On some key levels what’s important is to sympathize with it. We may and must critique and challenge the many compromises with existing reality, absolutely, but abandon them, never. Let the others fight the revolution from temple to temple. I’ll stay here in the swamp.

But the focus of the exchange below is another contentious topic that came out of the BB! experience(s): that of vengeance attacks against specific individuals accused of causing harm, whether within our movements or without, and the emotional and political costs and benefits of centering vengeance in general. The resonances of BB! were international, and on various continents since we have seen a rise – relatedly or not – of similar practices internally to anarchist scenes; often badly handled, singeing all those around (just as, to be clear, not confronting harm done also terminally damages and weakens movements). Might the appeal of the first letter below to abandon the social machinery (for which BB! must also accept some culpability for reproducing and spreading) leave us freer to decide how to make our interventions in these cases more conducive to our ultimate aims (including, of course, avoiding such aggressions in the first place)? With this in mind, we have added an appendix on this theme, after the letter’s response from Hostis.

The theme was also present at the 2023 convergence, going by ‘Queer Autonomy: Ultraviole(n)t Orange’: “Stifling attitudes close off the room and stench the air with fetid ideology, an odor worse than any room of crust punks and more destructive than mace: interest in deeper practices of care & generative conflict are written off as tenderqueer strategies of pacification; lessons from interventions against eliminationist legislation are dismissed as liberal & reformist; teenagers discussing the complex necessity of engaging digital spaces are written off as representatives of our cybernetic enemies [ed. – see ‘From Fringe Prophecy into Voguish Ideology’]; experimenting with ideas from the wrong publications slots you into the other side of a “nihilist v tiqunist” discourse.

“Counter to this, the heterogeneity of Bash Back is its strength and transformative potential – letting in fresh air and perspective, allowing a circulation of ideas and tools. We can come together in a way that does not demand some false unity and erasure of our differences, but neither are we left unchanged and unchallenged. Ideas and practices transmit across social bodies, often mutating in the process, and are taken back to spread and evolve further in new contexts. A feral punk learns how to move through conflict beyond mere militant avoidance or escalation; radical queers are pulled towards a queerness that negates and overflows identity itself; anarchists are challenged to view the potentials in intervening in legislative struggles and develop strategies to do so on their own terms; those locked into struggles around laws

and demands tap into criminal networks aimed at sidestepping legality and legitimacy entirely; a tender queer develops an appreciation for rowdy conflictuality and risky militancy. We simultaneously learn how to take ourselves less seriously, have fun, and remain attuned to our responsibilities to others, turning that interplay into a source of creative power.

“Queerness spreads as the destabilization of ideological identities and the false binaries they reproduce. We break out of how we are shaped by our cybernetic and spectacular hellscape, where identity and belonging are defined by what you read and say, the positions you take, and how you compete and distinguish yourself in the attention economy.” All this is very encouraging.

Finally, it remains to be said that the legacy of BB! is not only found in the gravity of liberatory (counter-)attack described thus far: and this, as much as anything, is also needed medicine in these grim years which only promise to get grimmer. Let’s leave the last word to the BB! Twin Cities interviewee: “one of the things I most appreciated about Bash Back! was that we managed to be fierce yet simultaneously campy, satirical, and fun. We didn’t take ourselves too seriously and I think that anarchists at large could learn from that, both locally and nationally.

“To give you some examples, there was a communique written on behalf of a whale at Sea World that killed its trainer and signed Splash Back! or some shit like that, there was a communique written about recruiting the rapper Soulja Boy Tell ‘em, there was a satirical piece written in favor of the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell [ed. – anti-discrimination policy] about how we would bring down the military from the inside, there was an essay called “How is it to be done in the Ass?” [ed. – a play on the Tiqqunist text ‘How Is It to be Done?’], Ariel Attack [ed. – who, with an accomplice, shattered every window of the DNC headquarters in Denver] was doing these glamorous photoshoots posing with broken glass for her court dates and her fundraiser shirts were her silhouette in glitter with a hammer and said “It’s Hammer Time.”

“Locally, we wrote many of our communiques in the style of silly diary entries, we wrote a call-out for a black bloc by referencing Justin Timberlake and the song “Bringing Sexy Back” and included a picture of JT with a badly photoshopped black bandanna on. We disrupted an HRC gala in campy wedding attire and recited vows about queer insurrection and unicorns and rainbows and cupcakes. We wrote ridiculous innuendo-filled love letters that we posted online satirizing Dan Dimaggio, a local straight cis white man who was a paid organizer for Socialist Alternative who formed and lead this GLBT front group that was trying to capitalize on the push for gay marriage. We fucking had fun when we could. [...] Anarchism would be more approachable if we didn’t take ourselves so seriously and seem so delusional about ourselves and our impact. And maybe more people would be inclined to participate if we were actually fun. I do think Bash Back!’s sense of humor and campy qualities may have been part of why it didn’t quite get the respect it deserved from straight anarchists.”]

Hostis,

We read your cruel little journal in a single sitting, deriving a great deal of enjoyment from the sandpaper-bound pages. While the journal generated much discussion in our private reading of it, we’d like to decrypt a few points to share with you at this time. In particular, we’d like to address your engagement with the anthology *Queer Ultraviolence* wherein a sampling of our writing appears.

Shortly after the publication of the anthology, a rather opaque and short debate played out within the anarchist milieu around the question of vengeance. If we are dissatisfied with the depth of the appraisal of the question, we are all the more grateful for your effort to raise it again. **Some critics of the anthology were concerned with the emergence of a ‘politics of vengeance’ and saw in it a repackaging of the old ideas of ‘justice’¹ and ‘accountability.’ We tend to see this reading as overly simplistic, willfully conflating vengeance with that which would mediate it.**² Perhaps much of this misreading might have to do with the shift from a ‘praxis of vengeance’ (as gestured toward by the texts in *Queer Ultraviolence*) and the ‘politics of vengeance’ feared by its critics.³ If we conceive of vengeance, like you, as the destruction of what destroys us, then in what way is this conception undermined by the subtle shift from ‘praxis’ to ‘politics’? How could a praxis of vengeance evade the traps of accounting or the specter of justice? Could we enact it otherwise?

We suspect that much of the problem in this misreading lies in the attempts at visibility that you (rightfully) criticized in the introduction to volume one of *Hostis*. The tendency toward visibility politics and representation in the Bash Back! communiques betrays a subterranean conflict between these actions (or at least the representations of them) and the moral order toward which they feign opposition. Your critique resonates with us because it highlights some of what was at stake in our own choice to disappear from that milieu. **We, ourselves, always had more interest in the silence opened up by Bash Back!: the stolen feasts, shared weapons, and long nights of conspiracy. We could dwell in this forever, but we’d like to instead pose a question: why is the desire for visibility so omnipresent?** What underlies the will to recognition?

- 1 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; ‘**The Temple was Built Before the City**’
- 2 ed. – see ‘**Between Punishment and Vengeance**’
- 3 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon**; ‘**The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine**’

We might contend that the strength of recognition's appeal directly correlates with the feelings of isolation and powerlessness felt by its object. No one yearns for recognition more than when they feel alone, when they fear their pains and joys might go unacknowledged by their friends, when they need co-conspirators the most. We understand these motivations all too well, but understanding isn't enough. To really grasp the dilemma of representations, we need to assess the tools we turn to when these anxieties rear their ugly heads. If we may, we'd like to contend that at our worst, we pursue a series of machines of recognition: political machines, juridical machines, and moral machines.

The juridical and political machines of recognition manifest themselves variously within our milieus, but they are perhaps most readily recognized in their archetypal forms: respectively, the accountability process and the call-out/communiqué. These machines call upon those they encounter to present evidence for analysis, to cast judgement that elicits apologies, to opine without necessarily taking sides, to condemn and/or condone. Why? To gain power, extract apologies, or maintain social cohesion. The result is that some are lionized and others banished. Regardless of the side in which anyone falls, what remains is a toxic social world that feeds the machines with an unending supply of traumatized bodies.⁴

Further, we could say that both these machines are expressions of a meta-machine: the moral one. The moral machine is a monster set in motion and offered to us by Christianity. While secularly coded in Western society as 'crime' or 'terrorism,'⁵ the rhetorical structure of sin – integral to the moral machine – has remained relatively untouched by progress and enlightenment. Far from rebelling against this structure, the anarchist milieu might be the most zealous enemy of 'the bad stuff' – sin. While certainly too self-aware to name the bad stuff as sin or crime or terrorism, the anarchists call it by different names: sexual assault, white supremacy, snitching, 'fucked up shit,' etc. We've even developed a word to describe *all the intertwining bad stuff*: kyriarchy. Whatever it's called, the structure of the machine stays consistent. The invariant component is the Category – the psychic space of the bad stuff which must be cast out. From here, the analogy follows: certain activities (sin) fall within the categories, these

4 ed. – see 'Departed for the Spirit World'

5 ed. – see *Calling It Terror*

activities are evidence of specific subjects (sinners), and we are born into this original sin that requires us to do penance for it. **Much of the ideological basis of contemporary identity politics is rooted in the concomitant moral schema that those most oppressed and victimized by these categories are inversely the most righteous, namely that "the meek shall inherit the earth."**

This shouldn't be read as an apology for any of the noxious signifiers of the category, the trauma and misery caused in our lives (and the lives of our friends) by these. State collaboration, sexual violence, white supremacy is beyond reprieve. These acts are the genesis of our thirst for vengeance. We hate them; they are what destroys us and what we'd wish to destroy in turn. And yet, we must insist that the moral machine offers us nothing in the way of realizing this destruction. We implore you to recall the details of any of the numerous social dramas playing out around us. In each, assuredly, the terms and stakes of the debates are limited by this machine. Only one question is ever posed: to what extent does an action or individual fall within the bad category, the space of sin? (*Is this or isn't this transphobic? Was that sexual assault? Do we consider this snitching? Is he a fascist?*) Only in the most rare cases does a discussion of a particular action or individual move beyond a flat contest over where the lines of the category are drawn, which side one is on, and who is on the other. **The implication smuggled into our lives by this drama is that if something crosses the line into the category, it is bad, and that which do not cross it are good (a choir of angels until proven otherwise).** We wish we could tease out the implications of these designations of good and bad, but there is nothing there to discover. The call-out always follows something like this:

Evidence → *Inscription into Category (call it what you will)* → [therefore, bad] → ???

{even the critique of morality rarely breaks this formula, posing 'Moralism' as the name for the Category, the bad to be excised.}

Because the "therefore, bad" is bracketed – rarely spoken – the consequences of an act are never provided, let alone discussed. This is how anarchists keep morality intact. **Instead of conflict or resolution, we are left with an endlessly diffusing social drama marked by resentment, guilt-by-association, distancing, desperate attempts at proving purity; in short, mediation upon mediation.** While the boundaries of the category are negotiated and policed *ad nauseum*, we are left without the ability to handle anything. The whole process evades the more interesting questions: Why did this happen? How did it affect us? How can we ensure it doesn't happen again? How do we get

vengeance? What do we want from all this? In the will to recognition, the moral machinery obscures our actual experiences and the power we might draw from them. By attempting to render our vengeful desires legible, we sublimate them into the very moral order which we'd prefer to destroy.

To address an altogether different point: you pose 'burnout'⁶ as one of the possible consequences of a praxis of vengeance. We respectfully disagree. Vengeance, in its unmediated form is nourishing. It is the machinery – *juridical, political, moral* – which burns out, tears apart, and breaks us down. Even still, the question remains as to how to sustain a praxis of vengeance in spite of these traps. Years ago we wrote:

Our dirty talk and our nighttime whispers comprise a secret language. Our language of thieves and lovers is foreign to this social order, yet carries the sweetest notes in the ears of rebels. This language reveals our potential for world making.⁷ Our conflict is space for our possible otherselves to blossom. By organizing our secret universe of shared plenty and collective-explosive possibility, we are building a world of riot, orgy and decadence.

While committing this sentiment to page may have been a youthful mistake, we still hold it to be true. If we are to sustain a project of vengeance and enjoyment, we need to build a world in which we share and nourish that praxis. That world needs to be hidden, encrypted, ineffable, and hostile to the schemes by which others would represent it, surveil it, or render it visible. There will be betrayals and conflict in this world; how could there not be? The point is to deal with these situations without activating the machines we've detailed above.

Our proposal: direct, forceful, unmediated conflict; conflict outside of language, opaque to would-be spectators; conflict which eschews the machines of recognition; attack our enemies, but also undermine any who'd try to build political capital from those attacks. This means baseball bats to the skulls of our rapists, but without the subsequent communiques, programs, and diffuse social games.

We'll end with a story: A black trans woman was murdered in our neighborhood. Her name was Chanel, and she was turning a \$20 trick before a putrid John [*ed. – American term for a sex worker's client*] shot her three times in the head. He was shortly thereafter arrested, but our affective responses and desires for vengeance don't square

6 ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration and Cyclical Time**

7 ed. – see **An Attempt at Interdependence Storytelling / Worldmaking**

with juridical process. A call went out for a march, we answered, and a mob set out. Torches were lit, a masked individual announced the location of his house. Silently, without slogans – not out of somberness but seething rage – the torch-lit procession moved through the cold night. Upon reaching his house, windows fell away to hammer blows and the fire was thrown inside. We can scarcely describe the feeling of seeing this all this transpire. **It was cruel, cathartic, redemptive, and sublimely indifferent to the managerial solutions offered by this world.** While some wild ones were still attacking we could hear the distant wail of enemy sirens and made our way home through the night. While departing, we overheard some teenagers excitedly ask – *do you think this was Bash Back!?* – unaware that such a formation hadn't existed in that town for years. We laughed and hurried off. No communique was ever written, only whispers of this action remain. We may never know the brilliant ones who brought fire that night, but our worlds briefly opened onto one another in that moment and we carry that warm glimpse with us still.

best,

– **Mary Nardini Gang** [*ed. – named after the anarchist thespian sentenced to life after anarchist defence of a Milwaukee Italian-American neighbourhood in 1917 from aggressive Catholic proselytizing, ending in a fire-fight killing 2 comrades; a parcel-bomb subsequently sent to the church in question killed 9 cops.*]

'CHANNELING OUR RAGE' [USA]

We smashed out windows and knocked over furniture at a military recruiters' office in a suburb of Chicago last night [*ed. – 13.10.23*].

In solidarity with Filipino/a/x anarchists' calls to commemorate Ganda, we swarmed on a miserable little strip mall where black and brown youth are targeted for induction into the imperial machine. Our intention was to slow down this violent routine, even if just for a couple of hours.

We swung our hammers invoking Jennifer Laude's life, remembering the deeds of Michele Angiolillo and Leon Czolgosz, and channeling our rage against the transmisogyny and white impunity of neo-colonial occupation. (A)

[*ed. – Jennifer 'Ganda' ('beautiful') Laude was murdered in 2014 by a transphobic US soldier during his deployment to the so-called 'Philippines' as part of a recurrent training exercise which forms part of the near-constant presence of US troops there ever since their invasion of the archipelago in 1898, with constant violence (especially against women and sex workers) a result. The anarchists Angiolillo and Czolgosz assassinated, respectively, Spain's Prime Minister (answering the Spanish occupation of the Philippines), and the US president (after the 1898 conquest of the colony). Simultaneous to this action, army recruitment centres in California and Philadelphia were also attacked in memory.*]

A Cautious Reply

Mary and Friends,

We were delighted to receive your reply. Vengeance is at the top of our list. We want nothing short of complete revenge against the patriarchs who brought us into the terrible world, full retribution for all of the humiliating rituals of society, and the total satisfaction of seeing our enemies defeated. You inspire us by showing just how queer our violence can be, for which we proudly call you comrades-in-arms.

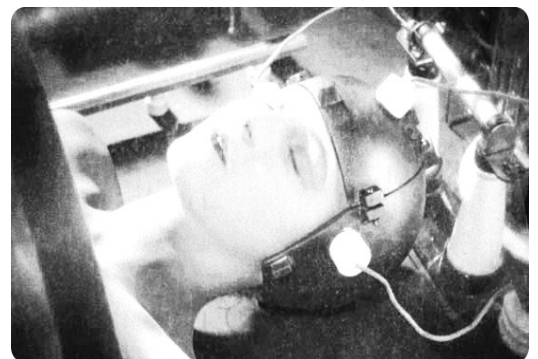
In the first issue of our journal, we used Bash Back! as a cautionary tale in our defense of the politics of cruelty. Telling a modern version of the tale of Íkarus, we suggested that they could not help but fly too close to the sun and fell into the sea. We thought that they had tragically perished as a result. So you can imagine our elation at hearing that Bash Back! lives on underground – not with card-carrying members but according to the principles of an “Undying Passion for Criminality” also mentioned in the first issue.

Even with this fortunate news, we are not less concerned with the risk of burnout. We will grant them that our struggle originates in the battle against morality. Yet our anxiety about burnout remains of a metaphysical disagreement. Our original claim about Bash Back! ‘burning out’ must be understood against the backdrop of their vision of the world. For them, the universe is bursting at the seams with plentitude. In their world, such unending abundance is interrupted by tyrants, haters, and the repressed. The burnout walks their earth as a failure – someone who has resigned themselves to control by the forces that separate them from their own self-satisfaction.

Our biggest complaint about this worldview is its failure to realize that “a power that produces more than it represses” does not always bend in our favor. [Michel] Foucault calls it disciplinary power, which was born out of the ascetic practices of priests and was quickly adopted by the military, hospitals, schools, and prisons. For us, the shining example is capitalism, as it epitomizes a social system in which the oppressors actively improve the capacities of the oppressed. **The novelty of such systems is that they do not treat power as a scarce resource whereby one’s gain implies an other’s equal-opposite loss. In fact, capitalists enhance their own position by partially advancing the interests of those who work for them.** On-the-job training, fringe benefits, and career advancement opportunities are not a lie – it is just that these forms of ‘expanded reproduction’ all favor the firm in the last instance.

Do not mistake our vigilance for pessimism about excess. We still believe in the old anarchist maxim that our desires are too big to fit inside their ballot boxes. That is to say, we remain partisans in the fight against economies of scarcity, the policing of bodies, and the paranoid accounting of representation. We are equally sure that excess is not enough to save us. It would be nice if all it took to live a life of resistance was to speak rudely, fuck loudly, and act with wild abandon on the path to transcending social norms of all kind. For us, a burnout is not someone who has ‘forgotten’ about those forms excess; rather, the burnout suffers from excessiveness. **The life of the burnout active, even exhausting, because they ritualistically reenact a defiance for any use whatsoever.** They are the ultimate rebel without a cause. This is how anarchy can be a bodyspray, riots are the meaningless content of popular music videos, and communist chic appears as just another nostalgic fashion trend. Is there any potential in slick anarchist magazines, communist conceptual art, or queer dance parties? Perhaps, but only as it realizes a fundamental contradiction of our age: *excess is simultaneously the condition of our liberation and the substance of our domination.*

Given that power does not always favor the subjects it produces, we offer this point of contrast: Plan C remarked that we have moved from an era defined by boredom (1960’s) and into an era defined by anxiety (today). The burnout as danger is only exacerbated in a period where the generalized affective condition of individuals is an anxious one. **We anxious subjects are flooded with stimuli, inundated with fragments of information from the world without the means for making those fragments meaningful.**¹ And in the era of Pharmacological control, Capital has found the means to turn a profit on the burnout. Our anxiety is turned into Xanax, our depression into Prozac. These lives are now a biochemically regulated existence that allows us to continue compromising ourselves every time we are called upon to hate ourselves – just a little bit more to get by just a little longer. In this state of affairs, the burnout is no longer simply a danger, but another site where pharmaco-capitalism exercises its control



1 ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**

at the intimate level of bodies themselves.

Given this situation, burning out does not simply mean subjective death; it is a source of value for those who oppress us.

We are not chaste: do as many poppers as you please. In fact, we do not see such 'metabolic rift' as alienation from some natural long-lost existence. We want to experiment with chemistry within-against-and-beyond the value-form being written into our DNA. Such biochemical processes already bears fruit, but only as a poisoned gift for sabotaging the pharmaco-political system from the inside. So as potential burnouts ourselves, we are interested in turning these bio-chemical commodities away from our own private anxieties toward their reason/social causes.

In the end, we are not worried about queer vengeance being reactionary. We think that blackmail is an underappreciated art. Perhaps queer vengeance is often not reactionary enough – lacking the strength to defeat our enemies, not deep enough to rid ourselves of their systems of oppression, and without the persistence to destroy the world that they've created. Perhaps you can tell us a story where we win?

best,

– *The Editors*

'THEIR END IS COMING'

[ed. – Extract from the announcement of the forthcoming US coverage this May in Los Angeles, 'Bash Back Summer 2025: The Cumming Insurrection'.]

There are so many people who feel safe calling for our deaths. They are the ones that should feel that their end is coming, because it is.

Face to face, the fragility of our enemies is fucking laughable. **They put billions of dollars into protecting their fragile egos, their joke little suburban families, militarizing the borders around their sad little sexualities.** Gender failures, living in constant fear, praying to stave off this inevitable unraveling. The more they attempt to police and groom nature into this arrangement, the more chaos they create *[ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg30**]*.

But chaos is our language, not theirs. That's why in a slightly squatted forest *[ed. – see '**We Laugh Harder Than Them**']*, they imagine us as the Viet Cong *[ed. – Vietnam War epithet for the communist forces that thwarted the US]*. Their fantasies of a trans menace ravaging their safety *[ed. – see **Nicolas Casaux, Transphobe, is Lying to You**]* becomes the manifestation of their next era, our era. In every one of their predatory projections, every law they pass, they beg and beg for us to consume them. To suck the flesh off their bones and spit the remains into a hole seeping back into the earth. This desire haunts their waking nightmares.

We already know, via sex work and porn searches that the "western man" wants to fully submit to us. The more repressed he gets, the more he yearns for us. Salivating for trans seed, paying top dollar to suck us off in dark alleys and fuck us in hotel rooms in members only clubs. The more he exposes his vulnerabilities, the more opportunities we will find to strike.

It's come time for us to declare war. As if it hasn't been declared already.

Our eradication announced in an executive order.

The time of being humanized by liberal attempts to normalize and domesticate us is obviously over. This approach has failed a million times *[ed. – see **Reclaim Your Queer Fucking Life!**]*, hypnotizing everyone and killing us with a death of a thousand cuts.

It is time for us to remember what it means to be queer and alive.

We've lost our sacred thread, the ecstasy of our first anal orgasm, the shallow breaths of our souls awakening, the primordial right to our sacred sexualities. We're even losing the thread of intergenerational protection and nurturing of young queer souls *[ed. – see **Ghosts**]*, leaving them with the fetishistic internet for a mother, which at best is a panopticon *[ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg8**]*, at worst a police state *[ed. – see **Cybernetic Mommy Milkers**]*.

Those that came of age in an earlier time experienced wild, chaotic, free spaces and were nurtured by queer elders IRL who fought for their wildness and protection. These spaces have been systematically destroyed by real estate and police fascism, forcing further generations to be raised by Reddit, or a middle aged Grindr *[gay dating app]* hookup - the remaining spaces converted to expensive cocktail venues and blanched fine art non-profit "spaces".

We all know that what we're looking for is not just watching a band or DJ. It's an orgiastic experience where the sky opens up and everything is possible. Communal ekstasis changes your heart.

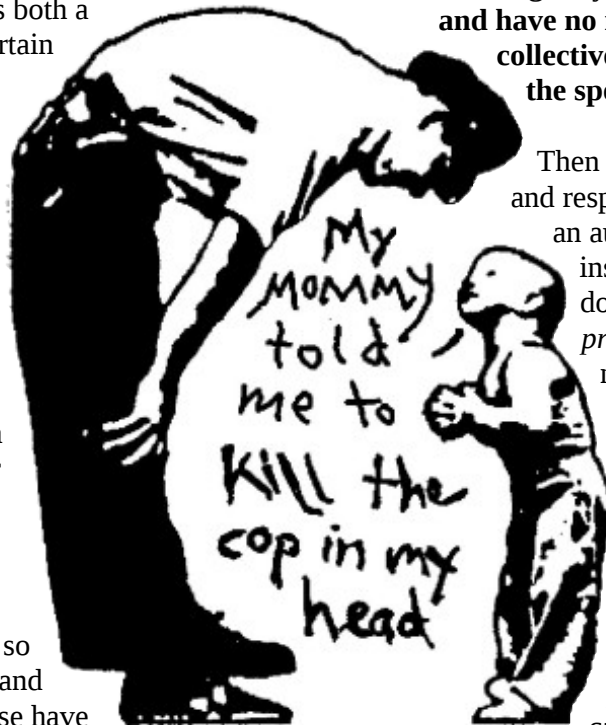
Our strategy of war, as much as it is to tear holes in rich men's safety, is to also open up these portals, sacred holes in society where everyone can enter and experience the ecstasy of being a liberating body – someone who opens more holes of their own, until all desires for control and order are eroded and consumed by our **mutualistic orgiastic horde.**

'BETWEEN PUNISHMENT & VENGEANCE'

[ed. – This appendix we have drawn from Peter Gelderloos' *'Defying Power: An Anarchist Vision of Active Statelessness'*, the imagined extra chapter in draft that he projected adding to future editions of his *Worshipping Power* (see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; 'The Temple was Built Before the City'*) when responding to reviewers, bearing in mind the goal of that book to enable anti-authoritarian movements to prevent State re-emergence in ways it previously has post-collapse.]

[The] mass-produced destruction of meaningful, solid relationships in our society,¹ and the celebrated immaturity that accompanies it, may be one of the most pernicious forces for protecting hierarchies and domination within our movements for liberation. **Much of this has to do with conflict resolution.** Dependency on police and judges, as well as the alienation and insolidarity that arise from antisocial crime or conflicts between neighbors, make it easy for the state to rule us. Monopolizing and institutionalizing conflict resolution and harm reduction (usually through law codes and the logic of crime and punishment) was an important task for early states.

Many anti-authoritarian societies traditionally had specialists in conflict resolution and mediation, usually older people who could claim neutrality by being equally related to all people involved (imagine that a grandparent has an equal familial relation to all their grandchildren, in the case of a conflict between cousins). And mediation is both a calling, dependent on a certain sensibility, and a skill that requires a great deal of practice. In anti-authoritarian societies, one of the most important elements seems to be that the mediators have no specialized enforcers. They are not allowed to own the conflict the way a judge does, nor force their verdict on anyone. People in the conflict choose to accept their intervention (suggesting the need for many different mediators, so there is an actual choice), and the resolutions they propose have to win community support.



In other words, people never surrender their autonomy or their own judgment, not those directly involved in the conflict or harmful situation, and not those around them. Curiously, the conflict resolution and accountability strategies that most anarchists have opted for never disassemble the logic of the prison system. Rather than denying the authoritarian logic that someone has an absolute claim to the truth, they simply change who is allowed to exercise that power. Unsurprisingly, the power gets abused.

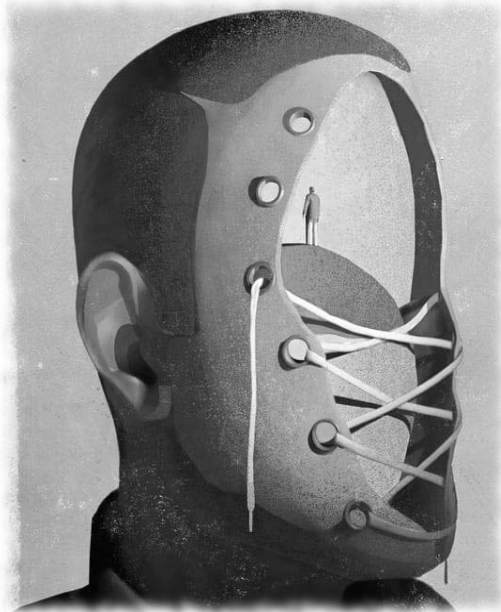
Another important element in this kind of conflict mediation is the lack of a written law code. People's actual needs take precedence. The needs of the person harmed, the needs of the person who harmed, the needs of disputing parties unable to solve a conflict on their own, the needs of the rest of the community who allowed harm to take place, who are being affected by the conflict. A law code replaces respect for people's needs with obedience to authority, and it allows a small group – those who have the most power in the process, of writing it – to shape their society's morals. Without a written code, everyone can be constantly involved in shaping and challenging the common ethos. If it's an unending debate, everyone is empowered to participate. **The moment the debate ends, people trick themselves into thinking they've discovered final solutions and have no more need for personal or collective growth, and they have created the specter of obedience.**

Then there's the question of punishment and response. I believe that punishment is an authoritarian practice² that institutionalizes community power to do harm and seeks to justify, *a priori*, doing harm to those who do not have community support. Subsequently, the community has no ethical arguments against doing harm, no moral superiority over those it punishes, and therefore it locks itself into a dynamic of "might makes right," a judicial arms race. What's more, punishment dehumanizes the person who is punished, and in the case that they have actually harmed

1 ed. – see *Beyond the Screen, the Stars*

2 ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; 'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'*

anyone and not just broken some written law, punishment prevents them from the growth and healing they need to go through not to harm other people. **It's been pretty well demonstrated by now that prison systems and other punishment regimes reproduce the harms they supposedly are meant to stop. This makes perfect sense for a state, because states thrive off of interpersonal violence. But how does it make sense for anarchists, feminists, and other radicals?** I think people who posture as wanting to go really hard against those who cause harm within our circles should be unmasked as merely reproducing the harm that they get power from opposing. We should instead be valuing the long, thankless, and difficult process of accompanying those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm as they go through their healing process. These processes are very different. The former requires loving support and regaining power over one's life, and the latter requires strong criticism and an emphasis on learning empathy. But both are necessary for restoring a healthy community.



At this point, though, I would make a distinction between punishment and vengeance. Vengeance, such an ugly word in statist society, is retribution that is not sanctioned by the broader community or society. It's not punishment, because it doesn't make higher claims to objective justice. At most, it seeks to satisfy a fully individualized justice. I think Bash Back! showed how vengeance can be a vital form of healing, in case Frantz Fanon³ hadn't already made that clear. **Vengeance is an important way of ensuring that we never surrender our freedom of action to the community, and it also makes sure that those who harm the least powerful – those who are excluded by majority morality – or those with a talent for winning over mediators and public opinion, can still face consequences for their actions.** Some societies combine mediation and accountability mechanisms with semi- or fully-normalized practices of vengeance. A combination of compassion, collective healing, and direct action is probably a good idea: when the vengeance tradition becomes more powerful than any mechanism for

3 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg49**

mediation, then you have systematic feuding, which can get pretty gnarly and isn't terribly conducive to personal or collective growth. So it's not a technique without its dangers.

Perhaps the most dangerous power of accountability mechanisms is the power to ostracize.⁴ **Ostracism – fully excluding someone from their social group – is basically social murder. And it seems that stateless societies around the world traditionally recognized this.** They reserved ostracism as an absolute last resort, only for the most extreme and incorrigible cases. In a communal society, ostracism is rightly seen as being just as bad as killing someone.

But in our internet society, ostracism is a first resort. It's common practice. If someone rubs you the wrong way, you troll them, you drag them, you get them excluded, and then you block them. This practice has extended to social movements.⁵ Anyone who treats ostracism lightly is fighting against any possibility of liberation in our lifetimes.

On the other hand, practices of critique and ridicule – especially against those with more power and status – are very common in traditional anti-authoritarian societies. **Those can have a place in our own movements, but only if our bonds of solidarity are stronger. The ideal conclusion to ridicule is that the object of the critique blushes, they shut up for a while, maybe they storm off and pout, but eventually they come back to again share their gifts with us, and we welcome them back warmly.** The purpose is to give those in the peanut gallery the power to intervene, not to permanently silence anyone or to break the social bond. Of course, this means that practices of critique and ridicule need to be accompanied by intense practices of caring.⁶

Ridicule without caring is dangerous because it can lead to stigmatization, the horizontal creation of a value hierarchy in which some members of the group are permanently scorned or belittled. Such a practice can serve as a motor for the production of ever worse kinds of hierarchy.

4 ed. – see **'Departed for the Spirit World'**

5 ed. – see **'The Position of the Excluded'**

6 ed. – see **'Care is Partisan'**

LIES OF THE LAND

– against & beyond Paul Kingsnorth's
völkisch environmentalism

[ed. – We will admit that eyes rolled at first here at Return Fire upon reading this piece when it first appeared in 2017, published by the libertarian communists of the Out of the Woods collective (OTTW). At the time it felt that certain of the authors' accusations in this



piece were flimsy and might have been better put as speculations rather than assertions (while others doubtless were always on the mark). The intervening years have however only confirmed the trajectory which they saw being travelled, both by their target in question and in other trends in the worlds of Western environmentalism (see **On Staying Woke in Polycrisis Futurism**). It is reproduced here, primarily, as a way to speak to the issues at large, beyond overly personalising them. Yet the case in question leaves us a clear pathway to do just that.

The first thing to say is that – especially in a critique (rightly) centered on the omissions in a certain discourse that allow enough margin for fascists to adapt to their own nefarious ends – there is a complete lack of awareness in the following essay of how the Left itself has served in the past and present to funnel people into the fascist ranks, both by omission and commission, not least by pandering to rise of Right by adjusting the centre of gravity for 'moderate' positions towards an openly more racist ground (see, for example, the recent US election). While this relates to particular prejudices inherent to leftism itself in most contexts (to this end, we have included an appendix from a Maria Mies essay – however liable for some of the same critiques as OOTW level, someone who lived through an actual fascist regime, the coming to power of which she partly attributes to the Left itself), it also relates the nature of fascism itself historically and today.

In 'A Diagnostic of the Future,' Peter Gelderloos spoke to exactly this dynamic a year after OOTW's essay: "[None of the] fascist leaders were coherent thinkers. They were effective populists, which means they mixed and matched any pattern of claims, philosophies, and worldviews that would motivate their base. This is why fascists were simultaneously Christian, pagan, and atheist; bohemian and aesthetic; capitalist and socialist; scientific and mystical; rationalist and irrationalist. This pseudo-intellectual aspect has been a fundamental characteristic of the extreme right throughout the 20th century and up to the present day. It's one more reason why it makes no sense to engage with them on the level of reasoned debate, because they will say anything that provokes the kind of reaction they want to provoke. [...] On a structural and organizational level, fascism borrowed immensely from

the left, particularly from syndicalism and the socialist and communist parties. Yet the philosophical genealogists of fascism always attempt to tie it to the more marginalized elements of anti-capitalist movements; nihilists, naturalists, and individualists are common whipping boys. This is not particularly useful for understanding fascism; rather, it is a mechanism by which leftists clean house and further marginalize their more radical critics [ed. – see **The Cryptoliberal Creep**].

"A useful historical analysis of fascism would be largely economic, posing the question: at what point do capitalists begin to support fascist movements? The moment when Germany's industrial and military establishment decided to support the Nazis was beyond any doubt a watershed in the evolution of a small group of violent wingnuts into a huge party capable of taking over the country. Military and capitalist support also played a decisive role in changing Nazi ideology and toning down many of the more esoteric, anti-establishment beliefs..."

We would defend a concept of the wild (see '**All That Wildness Names**') in our thinking and experience (however unorthodox in comparison with common Western dualism which the likes of OOTW posit as the only way of thinking such a thing – see **Unruly Edges**), and any holistic critique of how some versions of such a concept have been mobilised by our enemies would have to also bear in mind how the Left facilitated that. In their favour however, the anti-fascism that OOTW utilise in their text is at least strongly anti-colonial; a marked improvement on the main history of Western anti-fascism. So let this be a jumping-off point for the larger conversation which stands behind their piece: the debate (also within anarchism) around nationalism, indigenous struggles, and what separates the two, as well as how our struggles and their blind-spots might affect the terrain decades on.

Paul Kingsnorth, subject of the original essay's ire, was one of the directors of the Dark Mountain Project (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg48**) – though he was already stepping down in the same year OOTW were writing – whose 2009 'post-environmentalist' manifesto caught the attention of some eco-anarchists at the time. Before that, he was a participant in the 1990s-2000s anti-globalisation movement (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg80**), by 2003 publishing his *One No, Many Yeses* in opposition to how he saw cultures everywhere being degraded by the contemporary form of capitalism... although the latter was a word studiously avoided by certain participants in those movements. "A decade and a half later," as other survivors of those years noted in 'Epilogue on the Movement Against Capitalist Globalization', "in the United States, we saw Donald Trump appropriate slogans like "Fair Trade, not Free Trade" directly from the liberal wing of the counter-globalization movement. These slogans were able to serve him because they didn't reject capitalism itself – they left open the possibility that "better" political leadership could make it work properly. The timid souls who argued that radical rhetoric and aspirations would alienate potential supporters and undercut the movement paved the way for our legacy to be coopted by our enemies on the far right."

Already by 2008, Kingsnorth was focusing more on the inchoate collection of lands and histories which he identifies as England: his resulting book of that year, *Real England*, was cited in speeches by both Conservative Party leader and the Archbishop of Canterbury. By the time 2016 and the first electoral victory of Donald Trump rolled around (see **'It Depends on All of Us'**), this was his reflection on the aspirations he and others like him had held:

"Campaigning environmentalists, the 'social justice' movement, the lefties and the greens: we would be the heroes of the coming hour. Our rational solutions to climate change, our well argued deconstructions of neoliberalism, our piles of evidence about the negative impact of trade treaties, our righteous demands for justice – these would shake the world. When they learned the truth about the ongoing corporate stitch-up, the people would rise up in opposition.

"They did rise up, in the end, but it wasn't us they were listening to. The message had found a different messenger. 'There's a global power structure', said Donald Trump, in his last TV spot before his election victory, 'that is responsible for the economic decisions that have robbed our working class, stripped our country of its wealth and put that money into the pockets of a handful of large corporations and political entities.' They were words that could have been heard at any social forum, anti-globalisation gathering or left-green beanfeast from the last twenty years, as could the rousing final sentence: 'The only thing that can stop this corrupt machine is you.' [...] As I drank my tea, I began to realise [that] the anti-globalisation movement had not died."

While he (unlike OOTW) also cited leftist phenomena of recent years such as the then-rise of Jeremy Corbyn (see **'Everything is Sanitised, But We Are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands'**), US candidate Bernie Sanders, and the Greek party Syriza – the false promises of whom have also predictably fueled the Right (see **The Far Right, the Left, & the Trap of Electoral Politics**), in the inane cycle of voter disappointment and re-alignment so characteristic of the Left-Right dynamic – as inheritors of anti-globalisation movement sentiment, it is of course the new right-wing populists that sparked his essay, 'The Lie of the Land', which OOTW responded to. However, regardless of whether or not he is in fact as much in favour of them as OOTW claim (some of them he was still distancing himself from several years later), he is wrong to see them as an escape route from the stage of globalisation he laments: rather, they seem to be more a signal of the crisis of governance in general as the neo-liberal consensus collapses (see **Capitalism & Electrification**) but without intelligent and viable schemes to save either capitalism from its own crises or the world from capitalism.

Perhaps more useful when thinking about fascism than seeing it as a coherent political movement is looking at what fascism achieves – historically when in power, and presently when out of it but as a street movement with limited or covert institutional backing – namely, terrify and discipline populations (hence its eternal mutual affinity with police) and destroy social movements, directing anger and resentment away from privileged classes during crises of

capitalism. Hence, when it doesn't celebrate anti-capitalist resistance, liberal hand-wringing over fascist violence only extends their propaganda of terror.

More recently, looking back on the Brexit both he and Trump applauded, Kingsnorth wonders "[h]ow many Brexit voters felt their country was changing in ways they didn't understand and couldn't control?" But it seems far from clear that he himself understands colonial capitalism: either that, or he understands it only too well, without letting on. In 2022, once again looking back on the anti-globalisation movement, he blogged that "it turned out that a borderless, utopian world with no national boundaries and no national sovereignty also just happened to suit the interests of transnational capital and its enablers. It wasn't long before universalist utopianism morphed into commercial globalism. Suddenly, "no borders" seemed less of a promise than a threat. Suddenly, those utopian elites chattering about the need to demolish the "social construct" of the nation sounded more like they were defending their own class interests than ushering us all towards broad sunlit uplands."

What's going on here is a sleight-of-hand over what is a border for goods (which neo-liberal capitalism wants to circulate more freely), and what is a border for people, which neo-liberal capital only wants to circulate insofar as those people can come to resemble goods, namely exploitable capital; the rest are increasingly stopped at the gate by the very national sovereignty supposedly being dissolved. For a tip-of-the-iceberg of the latter, consider how much like "no borders" it sounds when, within just a few months of entering government, Labour recently oversaw the three largest mass deportations in British history, with at least three flights of 200 heads apiece returning people to Brazil and new charter routes set up for mass removals to East Timor and Vietnam. Algorithms are in use to select specific migrants for detention and deportation based on certain criteria. While Labour came to power pledging against holding prospective migrants in Rwanda (despite it basically being a pet project of another Labour leader in 2004 before being picked up by the Conservatives), they decreed asylum applicants will now be held on the British-occupied Chagos Islands, and have extended 'anti-terror' laws to border defence, with the now-party leader previously comparing refugees crossing the Channel to Britain as "on a par with" climate change, hostile foreign powers and terrorism.

Besides, it's already centuries that State-backed capitalist projects and settlers have poured from one side of the world to the other (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg89**) and dragged enslaved or indentured labour with them, yet only



now – when the influx is coming to the imperial cores that have for so long dispossessed them, and now depend on them for much labour even domestically – that certain citizens feel “suddenly” threatened.

This is addressed by another writer to live through the anti-globalisation movement (only to see his efforts recuperated by far-right figures like Jack Donovan), Rhyd Wildermuth: “None of the current political movements accurately address quite what is happening. Unfortunately, the social justice framework is particularly shallow here: it sides with immigrants not on economic grounds, but on the field of identity and oppression (precisely as the far right does, but in inverse). While immigrants absolutely face racist oppression, the social justice political strategy ignores that this oppression is a continuation of their economic exploitation, rather than a mere moral issue. The economic exploitation of immigrants is bound-up in the same capitalist machinations which deteriorate the economic conditions of the working-class whites [making] them a ripe field for harvesting by far-right ideologues like Donovan. [...] It is as if Leftists built a stage, set up a mic and speakers, and brought in a massive audience, but while they became distracted by Liberal Democratic crises (the war on terror, the 2016 presidential elections) and glittering distractions (gay marriage, identity politics [ed. – see **‘The Position of the Excluded’**]), men like Donovan stumbled upon the script and the live mic and began improvising before an eager crowd.”

Combating this scenario requires a reframing of the problem straight back at the capitalists initiating the cycle rather than just at the racism migrants face on the street, as Wildermuth suggests, but also a clear position of solidarity amongst all of us on the bottom in the increasingly dangerous and divisive future that sees the Global North catching up with the ecological crisis already reigning in the South (see **‘The Utopia we Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark’**): and this is clearly lacking in Kingsnorth's writings, reflecting the nationalised – and, as we shall see, basically racialised – version of his own political quietism.

This brings us to the “völkisch” charge of the article below. The term references a diverse late 19th Century counter-cultural movement in what's now the German and Austrian States, where adherents – reacting to the new conditions of urbanised, industrialised life and its socio-cultural implications – romanticised an older Germanic identity, and anticipated a “national rebirth” rejecting Enlightenment values (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg48**) in favour of the language and culture of the völk, “the people.” While there were those who developed this in a libertarian rather than authoritarian direction – the anarchist Gustav Landauer comes to mind – another part of the movement glorified the history of the “Holy Roman” Empire (Germanic warlords – appointed by the Pope as emperors following the fall of the actual Roman Empire in its western domains – noted for their brutal subjugation of Scandinavians, Magyars, Slavic Wends and Poles) and its supposedly-harmonious hierarchical order, perhaps on the verge of reconstitution, as German-speaking territories unified into nation-states later than other European countries; and, the ideology of

humanity as pre-formed by blood and/or inherited characteristics. Using justifiable anxiety and dis-ease of the new conditions of capitalist dispossession as propulsion, ideologues blended this with all-too-modern theories of the time of genetic essentialism and biological competition for survival and applied it to economics, politics and social power, and entered separate ‘races’ into a zoological ranking with Aryans at the top (though they also mobilised occult imagery around these themes too). Potentially anti-capitalist and anti-colonial discontent was thus channeled to other ends, and some of the resulting circles were crucial to the rise of German fascism in the ‘20s and ‘30s. Neo-Völkisch groups of today drink from exclusively this poisonous legacy (and, in doing so, believe they are anti-modern in their thinking rather than deeply informed by the passage of modernity) rather than the original movement as a whole.

Now, as we've made clear on various other occasions (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg60**) and the authors of the text below affirm, this is far from the only way of conceptualising ‘nationhood’ or the indigenous concepts that get mashed into that same name (see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; **‘Centering Relationships’**). We will not be portrayed as Kingsnorth's 2022 strawman persecutors: “As for defending actual links between people and place across time: don't even think about it, unless you fancy being labelled a white supremacist.” We would say the opposite: that whiteness (as a structure of power and strategy of division, not a phenotype – see the companion piece to **Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation**) has no inherent connection with the British Isles of which he speaks nor of any other lands; rather, as a product of colonialism, historically it has been the absence of place, or more precisely its interchangeability or destruction (see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; **‘Here or Anywhere Else’**). Ironically, Kingsnorth misses this in his own sources, when he mentions his twenty-year haunting by the final lines of travel writer Norman Lewis's autobiography: “Wandering the hills of India, Lewis is asked by a puzzled local why he spends his life travelling instead of staying at home. What is he looking for? ‘I am looking for the people who have always been there’, replies Lewis, ‘and belong to the places where they live. The others I do not wish to see.’” Why was Lewis on the road seeking what Kingsnorth maintains he would have had at home, in a pre-“globalist” era? Attempted to rekindle ways of inhabiting place that do not address the threat of whiteness to those places (see **The Darkness Criticizes the Wolf for Howling at the Moon**) seem doomed to failure, or worse, handing terrain over to a different form the enemy takes.

In his *Lies of the Land*, the piece that the text below responds to, Kingsnorth did in all fairness qualify that “I think now that globalism is the rootless ideology of the fossil fuel age, and it will fade with it. But the angry nationalisms which currently challenge it offer us no better answers about how to live well with a natural world which we have made into an enemy.” However, his own vision of nationalism is hard to distinguish from the vision which animates the most militant articulations he (supposedly) shies away from embracing. He attempts, in 2022, to distance his vision of the nation from the nation-state (a

valid distinction, but his example is unconvincing), saying it is the latter that has given the former the bad reputation: “we need to understand that Europe has not yet recovered from the trauma of the Second World War. If the Great War laid bare the failures of the old order, then World War II, for Europeans of a certain generation, delegitimised not simply a ruling class and its worldview, but the very existence of nation-states. European nations had been battling each other for centuries, but fascism, and especially National Socialism, revealed new depths to which a country might sink in pursuit of greatness or purity. Theodor Adorno famously claimed that it was “barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz”. For many Europeans, surveying the ruins of a continent demolished by fascism and then carved up by communism, it must have seemed equally barbaric to continue believing in nations.

“It was in the bloody aftermath of this carnage that today’s dominant vision of a post-national world took root. The European Union, seeded in the Fifties, is rooted in this vision of national sovereignty “pooled” (read: abolished) for the greater good.” There was, of course, another factor at play in the new consciousness in the post-WWII world which Kingsnorth does not mention: the unrelenting wave of struggles for de-colonisation from the European powers whose sovereignty he mourns, struggles which – tragically – often ended up monopolised by leaders who aped the same nation-states that colonised them. From this view, what we see is in fact the proliferation of the nation-state in the collapse of empires, not its disappearance. Bearing in mind the incompleteness of the victories the anti-colonial movements gained (not to mention the large settler-States like the US successfully wielding their sovereignty against the population of their internal colonies), and the defeat of völkisch fascism which preceded, it’s unclear how he can assert in *The Lie of the Land* that “those who can harness people’s deep, old attachment to place and identity – to a belonging and a meaning that goes beyond money or argument – will win the day. This might be as iron a law as any human history can provide.”

Despite his distinction, it isn’t long before slippage into a clearly pro-State vision of nation emerges in his supposedly-universal nationalism: “Nationalism, in the broadest sense of the term, was the default worldview of most people at most times, especially in more traditional places. It was a community-focused attitude, valuing stability, continuity and social cohesion, in which a nation, tribe or ethnic group was seen as a thing of value to be protected. [...] While globalists saw migration as a right, nationalists saw it as a privilege. To a globalist, border walls and immigration laws are tantamount to racism or human rights abuse. To a nationalist, they are evidence of a community asserting its values and choosing to whom to grant citizenship.”

The vast majority of human history not only featured but necessitated movement (borders being a much more recent invention: see **On a Comet’s Tail**), and this is only set to intensify in the face of the ecological crisis. Kingsnorth also ignores how those precious-

to-him nations he would defend – England being a prime example – themselves so often not only travelled but emigrated, settling entire continents and irreversibly shaping that ‘English’ character and history ‘back home.’ And aside from colonial ventures, the millennia-long reality of ethnicities precisely emerging during movement, integration and adaption (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg122**) led to that same English ethnicity forming from Roman, Angle, Saxon and Viking newcomers on previously-Celtic lands.

By 2022 Kingsnorth is rather more explicit in his concern as the nation’s devaluation as “little more than a postcode or a glorified airport lounge. Its population is from everywhere and anywhere...” In fact, in most cases there are direct links due to colonial history (read: extractive relationship) between the countries current immigrants come from and the countries they head to: again, this is ignored. Instead, in *The Lie of the Land* he turns to Jonathan Haidt (whose preferred form of nationalism is that of Hungarian queerphobe and racist ‘anti-globalist’ strongman Viktor Orbán, arguably the most successful of contemporary far-right rulers): “Psychologically, Haidt suggested, what happened in 2016 was that many nationalist-inclined voters in the West felt that their community was now under existential threat – not only from huge waves of migration, but from ongoing Islamist attacks and the globalist elite’s dismissive attitude to their concerns about both. In response, they began to look around for strong leaders to protect them.” The claim that as of 2016 the elites were not taking the Islamist terrorism of the time (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg5**) or popular concern over it seriously flies in the face of the facts; one thinks of the notorious UK Prevent scheme and its heavy reliance on citizen snitches (mostly targeting and mapping Muslims, but also at least once extending to a 14-year-old Derbyshire pacifist anti-fascist from a socialist family who were all harassed by counter-terror officers in a seeming attempt to force the family apart).

At the end of the day, Kingsnorth’s investment of hope for some kind of opening for ‘greening’ connected to the latest reactionary wave seems to promise meager returns: ecologists are, of course, painted by Trump and his ilk as yet another gang of ‘globalist’ elites, the same as queers and anti-racists. The only redeeming reading of *The Lie of the Land* (in the words of Anthony Galluzzo, looking back on it some years later) is its questioning of whether we should “cede the attachment to place, the love of nature,

and the human propensity for myth to the right? And if the right historically has seized on these propensities and investments, often to catastrophic effect, what does this tragic history tell us about the political efficacy of a left enamored with its own myths of disembodied rationalism and technological self-deification?” The more promising directions for this, however, are in the indigenous movements which – despite Kingsnorth’s opportunistic championing of them in *The Lie of the Land* as somehow compatible with his



Strasbourg, France, April 2009: border-post burns in anti-NATO riots on the bridge to Germany

call for bordering – offer very different visions from the Right.

“As we experience the paroxysms of late capitalism,” Raj Patel writes in *Inflamed* (co-authored with Rupa Marya), “nationalisms become the last redoubt of those pining for the certainties of childhood that never were. I’m thinking here of the National Fronts in France and England, the Hindu fanatics of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in India, the white nationalists in Bolivia and the United States. For me the question of nation gets dissolved by queering boundaries, as we mentioned in our look at the Movement for Black Lives and border medicine, by belonging to several nations simultaneously. I’d like to wear nation like language, speaking many and being able to move through them to see how they might combine and learn, expanding and sharing grammars and words that can’t be thought of in other ways. I’ve heard this called “two-eyed seeing,” and I think we’ll find our way through the fog of national certainties only by seeing with as many subaltern eyes as possible.”

Since *The Lie of the Land* was published, the latest turn of event is that Kingsnorth has embraced Christianity. Let it not be said that we are falling into a facile and ahistorical anti-Christianism in our objections to this: rather, we welcome those who look at that legacy in the heretical manner of Marco Camenisch (see **Return Fire vol.5 pg31**), uttering these words before his judges in 1980 during his trial for multiple bombings of pylons of the Sarelli nuclear plant: “Regarding the attack: why hit the Sarelli plant on Christmas night? Not only for security reasons [ed. – i.e., lack of attendant staff]. It was intended to be a demonstration of solidarity with Jesus, the conspirator, the nomad, the revolutionary, the rebel, the partisan fighter, who in the Sermon on the Mount clearly said: “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be filled! Blessed are you who now weep, for you will laugh.... But woe to you who are rich, for you already have your consolation! Woe to you who are now full, for you will be hungry! Woe to you who now laugh, for you will mourn and weep!” Ours was a manifestation of rage for the denial of a Jesus of love, of strength, of the poor in a religion that for 2,000 years has been classist and racist, a pretext for genocides and conquests; that felt obliged to create an image of Jesus as servile, ascetic, transcendent, opium of the masses.”

While we’re not ruling out that some might take an anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial and anti-authoritarian message from early Christian teachings, such sentiments have in practice been turned into their opposite by the institution – whatever its denomination – which Kingsnorth specifically defends as a hierarchical necessity: the Church (and in the case of the Romanian Orthodox one he ascribes too, he himself notes has bred some of the more violent nationalisms, though he claims to distance himself from this).

His attempts, when decrying “the dethroning of the sovereign – Christ – who sat at the heart of the Western sacred order” and its supposed role in the current social and ecological crisis of industrial civilisation, to pose the Cross against the Machine, are with anarchist precedent – Jacques Ellul, Ivan Illich, etc. – but looking at the obvious

mobilisation of Christianity for the ends of colonial capitalism and its moral economy of salvation through work and obedience, the connection is far from automatic. Kingsnorth claims to be more attached to the institution of the Church than to the concept of the West, though by 2021 he was writing that “The West, in short, was Christendom. But Christendom died.” As he notes, one medieval historian wrote that “There has never been any unitary organisation of Western culture apart from that of the Christian Church, which provided an effective principle of social unity...” However, as we dwelt on in our upcoming book release, “[Fredy] Perlman has a hypothesis about European civilization having a particular, historical penchant for prevarication,” as Peter Gelderloos asserts in his as-yet-unpublished essay ‘Reconciling Parzival’: “Around 1700 years ago, the very political system that Jesus was trying to liberate people from, the system that executed him, adopted him as the figurehead of their cult of imperial expansion. They turned an anti-capitalist, state-critical spiritual movement into a pro-capitalist, state-worshiping religion that countenanced slavery and empire. In a macabre irony, they even adopted the image of the instrument they used to execute him as a symbol of their cult. The Bogomils [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg48**] were not being so unreasonable when they claimed that the Christian Church was the Church of the Antichrist.

“As the Church built up its power – centered not in the Levant nor anywhere a community gathered to practice the agape love feasts of the original followers of Jesus’ Zoroastrian teachings, but in Rome – the old Empire crumbled around it. The Church spent more than a thousand years inhabiting an imaginary Roman Empire, giving its blessings to a long succession of Visigothic, Frankish, and “Holy Roman” warlords, whom it goaded unsuccessfully towards political centralization. And both their eschatological horizon as well as their model for right behavior centered on images – whether Eden, Paradise, or apostolic communes – in which there was abundance, harmony with nature and between people, everything was shared, everyone was tended to, and nobody worked, yet every time the Church encountered such a community on Earth, it broke it up in the most violent ways, making eager recourse to torture, enslavement, dispossession, and execution.

“The Church became a spiritual machine for sanctifying war and exploitation in the name of peace and community. It was the capital of an empire that did not exist, an inheritor of philosophical and cultural traditions it had never understood or contributed to, which it had in fact bloodily suppressed, and its holy men monopolized the sale of forgiveness for a growing list of natural behaviors socially and psychologically suppressed as evil, all of which they themselves practiced with impunity. This institution was the only glue for that weak agglomeration so barely deserving of a name or separate identity, Europe. And its modalities saturated all the notions and practices of politics, philosophy, and science of what would become known as the West. The result was a culture pathologically incapable of telling the truth.”

Kingsnorth, in his claim that “every culture, whether it knows it or not, is built around a sacred order,” adds that

"[i]t does not, of course, need to be a Christian order. It could be Islamic, Hindu or Daoist. It could be based around the veneration of ancestors or the worship of Odin. But there is a throne at the heart of every culture, and whoever sits on it will be the force you take your instruction from." This pluralism is getting harder to credit given he's largely featured in conservative Christian and traditionalist (as in "defenders of the Judeo-Christian and Western tradition") media that's rife with bemoaning of the 'woke' and the decline of the 'West', gleefully noting his 'family values' and valorisation of marriage alongside his bedfellows such as Orthodox fellow traveler Rod Dreher and his proposal for Christian communities of "refugees of the sexual revolution." As the Christian Right openly gains ground in some of its most hateful positions – not just in Poland, Bolivia or the US, but in the presence of Bishop Ceirion Dewar (braying about being "at war" with "Muslims", "woke ideology," and "cancel culture") at the large rally last July in London, where Stephen 'Tommy Robinson' Yaxley-Lennon and other far-right figures took an overtly Christian tone – we're going to be dealing with the social force of these ideas more and more, with the Orthodox Church among others receiving a surge of interest from young single men in particular.

While perhaps a similar number of years into the future as have passed since *The Lie of the Land* will show where Kingsnorth is travelling, we are disentangling the insidious parts of his message precisely because his is a more intelligent presentation of those ideas than the more blatantly far-right ones, and we want to distinguish our own critique of industrial civilisation and both the Left and the Right from his. He characterises the situation like this: "That's the response from the Left: 'There's still too many bigots around. If we just cancel them all, we'll be fine.' On the extreme Right, there's the belief that the leftists are destroying everything and if we just get rid of them, we'll be able to live the true life again. But it's a refusal to accept limits and self-sacrifice – that you might have to give up things you want to do to create a better world – that is driving us mad and driving our culture to the wall," asserting that true freedom is none other than giving up your own will to follow God's. Yet limits he specifically refers to, again and again, are those he – public intellectual that he is, despite his constant talk of the need for quietism and shutting up to listen to the world (slightly undermined by the fact he runs writing courses to get customers to do same) – would not be subjected to: those of the transgressed gender roles, the unstated part being that these are largely against expectations of domestic femininity (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg46**).



Sharing a common rhetorical move of the Right, in 2022 he uses the toxic bloated mass of neo-liberal identity politics (see '**The Position of the Excluded**') to stand in for any actually radical vision of anti-racism or feminism, complaining how we are all "being levered out of the domestic sphere and sold instead a pseudo-egalitarian fulfilment "in the workplace", at capitalism's behest, upending our family lives and diminishing our self-sufficiency. I suggested that the home can be a place of independence and of resistance to this process – for a real home is an economy, a dwelling, and a web of mutual care." Except, of course, when it isn't: or when the virtue-sign of 'care' (see '**Care is Partisan**') is a code-word for the loving reproduction of patriarchy. Obviously we are not among the feminists who abandon the notion of the hearth in favour of a valorization of the masculine 'public sphere' of politics and work (rather, we are for the destruction of the dichotomy, certainly in terms of its gendering), but it is not men like Kingsnorth we relish being indoors with.

A more useful spiritual genesis of our current and total crisis would not lead us to say, with Kingsnorth, that "The Enlightenment may have failed" (although the predictions and hopes of many of its participations and philosophisers undoubtedly have), but that it succeeded in the ways most faithful to its heritage. "The Enlightenment presented itself – and most of its biographers have continued to present it – as a rupture with Christianity," reads *Reconciling Parzival*, "the triumph of reason, the end of superstition, in sum, an eschatological fairy tale in a dazzling new idiom. A good number of critical theorists and historians have traced the Christian and neo-Platonic [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg47**] heritage of Enlightenment philosophy, revealing the many intellectual structures adopted by the men of science who banished the Church but weren't quite able to kill God." One of the clearest continuities in this, that essay goes on to point out (contra to the liberal feminists still clinging to Enlightenment values to deliver them from the likes of Kingsnorth), was in terms of gender: "[In the European Middle Ages,] the Church's attitude towards women was quite clear, though the results they had achieved in dispossessing women were inconsistent. With the exception of monastic communities of nuns, subjected, nonetheless, to male authority, women were all but expunged from the ecclesiastical world. The medieval Church did not have such tight control over the Christian imaginary, however, forced as it was to elevate Mary in a thousand incarnations to Goddess status in all but name. We can safely assume that the impulse for this transformation came from outside the Church.

"The world of the commoners, on the other hand, could barely be considered patriarchal in comparison with gender relations under the Roman Empire or after the Renaissance and Enlightenment. In the 12th and 13th centuries, peasant women held land along with their male relatives, exercised nearly every rural trade, were aided in reproductive tasks by men (nor were these tasks set aside from or subordinated to productive tasks), and they could

control the product of their labor. The growing number of women migrating to the cities markedly improved their lot in these same cities, gaining entry into nearly every profession, as well as exercising the right to inherit property and refuse marriage. Mainstream ideas of progress have obscured the facts that the end of the Roman Empire constituted, among other things, a revolution against patriarchy, and that the celebrated Renaissance and Enlightenment were in large part wars against women and gender non-conforming people [ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Mutant Identities in the Middle Ages**].

[...] When it comes to gender, it seems that early Enlightenment thinkers drew exclusively from ecclesiastical sources, shunning aristocratic discourses. [...] What we find instead is that in the Enlightenment, man is everything and woman is nothing, suggesting the clear and dominant influence of the womenless world of the monastery and the university. [...] This concept drew on and strengthened Catholic and Platonic teachings regarding female inferiority and male hegemony.”

In other words, it was the Enlightenment which was precisely the reimposition of the patriarchy he longs for, if it is – and it is – the Church rather than Christianity per se which he laments the demise of.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given this penchant for “thrones,” the 2022 writing cited thus far by Kingsnorth was in fact a spirited defence of the institution of monarchy. But this isn't the tongue-in-cheek 'anarcho-monarchism' provocation of Peter Lamborn Wilson (see **Wounded Healers**), or even its less tongue-in-cheek off-shoots: this was mourning that year's death of the British Queen. “A monarchy,” he lectures, “is irrational, uncommercial and inexplicably mystical.” This would surprise, say, the previous Spanish King who abdicated after so many corruption scandals to openly live off his ill-gotten gains in Dubai, or the royalty of Holland, Japan, Sweden, etc., which in no way interfere with their status as core colonial capitalist states. It is especially ironic that the incumbent King of England has been an enthusiastic supporter of the World Economic Forum executive chairman's 'Great Reset' proposal to force through a new social contract and technological advances under the cover of the COVID pandemic (see **'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping At All"'**), which Kingsnorth elsewhere spills much ink denouncing; quite rightly, yet throwing himself in with notorious conspiracy theorists that gravitate around the proposal (see **About the Reactionary Drift of Some "Comrades"...**) rather than absorbing it as yet another predictable deployment of disaster capitalism (see **'Mobilising Disaster Relief'**) in a wider and more holistic analysis.

“A monarch has sat on the throne of England for 1,500 years,” he writes wistfully. Actually, as he well knows, between 1649-66 was a republic which beheaded the King and set about intensifying early British merchant capitalism via the slave trade, mercilessly pushing on the conquest of Ireland, enclosing the commons (see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; **'Centering Relationships'**) on various continents and then setting a ruler back on the

throne to continue the same trajectory. Other European nation-states were quick to show that the same results could be gained by keeping the monarch deposed or enthroned; it wasn't an important distinction in how the modern State evolved.

Tellingly, in his mourning of the Queen, he recounts how he heard the news while fishing and hiking: “the sense of loss that swept over me. You have to be British to understand this – and British at this moment in time especially.” He does not reflect on the fact that he is among the peat-bogs of Ireland when writing this (having promptly decamped



from his beloved England after voting to leave the European Union, only to move to it – there's those limits best applied to others again), nor on what the Crown lands of that same monarchy historically meant for the kind of commoning he was engaging in at the time news reached him: namely their

complicity in their enclosure, in the Irish colony as much as in Britain. Even as he proposes a revival of a kind of Christian spiritual commoning in a January 2024 podcast, speaking of how American settlers should feel empowered to go and create holy wells as they please on the landscape as if it were a blank slate, the theme of limits seems self-servingly partial: and note that these days, compared to his opportunistic deployment of them in *The Lie of the Land*, the only people indigenous to the lands he throws open for his followers to sanctify who he mentions by name are, coincidentally, those who have converted to his own Orthodox Church. Perhaps relatedly, he claims that a “grand sweep of human history” reveals that humans (more precise would be to say states) follow the same colonial pattern “all the time”: “They expand, they seek new lands, and if they find people already on them, conflict ensues.” (He seems not to have caught in his “grand sweep” examples – even just from that specific landmass – such as the Haudenosaunee 'Six Nations' stateless confederacy designed precisely to counter-act such tendencies amongst themselves, and which the United States was unable to defeat militarily.)

We won't misrepresent Kingsnorth's ambiguity and hesitancy, even as late as that 2022 piece: “It is in this context that so many people see the nation-state as a potential bulwark against unaccountable technocratic globalism. But it is also a reality that the nation-state is what has driven that globalism forward. While some nations are ancient things, nation-states in their modern form are mostly not: their rise coincides with the rise of modernity, and today they rarely represent the actual nations they purport to speak for. [...] To many, nationalism seems like a reasonable response to this, and I think it can be, under some circumstances. But there are also good reasons to be nervous about what it can do to the human

mind. Humans remain human, and it is easy enough for national feeling to shade into xenophobic triumphalism. Personally, I've long found myself in the uncomfortable position of valuing nations but mostly being repelled by nationalism. [...] Perhaps the dissolution of the modern nation state into smaller, more anarchic, less centralised units is both inevitable and welcome. Perhaps then new nations will form, around a spiritual core and a love of their place, which will give to their people the kind of meaning which the nation-states of the Machine era have so successfully imitated while at the same time destroying."

While we would dispute his conflation of the nation ("understood separately from the nationalist projects of European states," to follow Lev Zlovey and Jason Radegas, "simply the largest imaginary community a person can envision based on their history and their ability to communicate with the world around them," or A.G. Schwarz's "fictive community united by a common language, culture, and history; [a] context in which common experiences can take place [and] therefore also an affective universe") and the historically precise – and precisely modern – project of nationalism (cross-class alliances for the establishment of nation-states!), from an anti-colonial and anti-racist perspective there seems little to criticise in the above lines. Yet he is playing with a double-edged sword by not connecting any such perspectives to his own project in an era of mass migrations of people fleeing ecological collapse and capitalist depredation, whereas doing so would indeed take us beyond the liberal and false anti-racism – so often pandered to by leftist anti-fascism – the pompous faux-cosmopolitanism of which (where genuine autonomy for any particular group, as Peter Lamborn Wilson's 'Against Multiculturalism' reminds, "is out of the question, and so is any "class consciousness" which might cut across ethnic or "lifestyle" lines to suggest revolutionary coalitions") turns so many disillusioned people into the arms of the reactionaries. (Even some of the national struggles closest to Kingsnorth are doing better than this, from the 'Refugees Welcome' placards abounding at demonstrations of the recently-revitalised Cornish independence movement or the historic internationalism forming part of Irish radicalism – but once again he prefers to ignore the labour and land that has been exploited as the 'Celtic Fringe' to create his beloved England, even as he makes his home there.) Especially unconvincing is his appeal to "more anarchic" societies when he champions the Church; hierarchy, in English, literally being derived from a term for rule by priests.

In another typically reductionist move, by 2023 he characterises the cultural moment as the conflict as "the 'woke' tribe - that curious agglomeration of international capital and elite progressive opinion posing as an uprising from below – works to invert the culture as it crusades against everything that the place has ever been or stood for. In response, the 'based' tribe rises up to 'defend the West', but can never seem to agree on what it is defending. [...] Surveying the ongoing demolition of the pillars of my culture, I am sometimes, in my worst moods, tempted to join the defenders of the West in their work. But when I have calmed down, I remember that those pillars are mostly rotten anyway, and that those attacking them,

repulsive as they can sometimes be, are not entirely wrong either. Something has gone wrong with this 'West', and those who highlight its past crimes are getting at something that maybe even they can't quite put their finger on." His account, of course, erased those whose finger is quite directly pointed at colonial capitalism (inextricable – from the Doctrines of Discovery, authorising colonisation, and Papal Bulls, authorising slavery, onwards – from the Church in one form or another) who don't come from but aim their weapons at "international capital and elite progressive opinion"; see **Follow the Fires**. Once again, another faux-modest intellectual mistaking partisan dominant media discourses for the sum total of social contestation and subversion, convinced that a "kind of post-modern leftist" "dominates the culture" (surprisingly to some!). We need better vision and history than this.

"What, after all," Kingsnorth rhetorically asks in 2022, "is the point of a monarch in the modern world? There is really only one: to represent a country and its history; to be a living embodiment of the spirit of a people." In the case of the Britain he's referring to, this can basically only mean (the aspirations of attaining) whiteness, if Germans, Normans, Greeks, Netherlanders and Danes – to name a few of the nationalities of the 'British' royal family, common across Europe as for a large part of Kingsnorth's "1,500 years" royals were required to marry other royals (almost inevitably of other nationalities: they are essentially the most successful and most parasitic migrants), with the last monarch even half-English by birth and heredity due to an illicit dalliance with a commoner being over 300 years ago and the current dynasty only changing their German name to Windsor in embarrassment amid the so-called Great War, leading many Britons to historically consider them essentially foreigners – can band together to "embody" another country, but African- or South Asian- or Turtle Island-descended peoples or anyone else who actually created the Britain of today and of the previous monarchs do not, unless as with recent Conservative Party leaders they can act as white as the rest of them... And yet, it is this 'Other' – ever-present, yet conspicuous by absence in Kingsnorth's wistfulness – that is precisely what gives anyone their sense of self. Perhaps Kingsnorth, seemingly unable to chart exactly what went wrong with his once-supposedly-glorious culture, would have done well to have attended to the subtexts of *Parzival*, the medieval romance work first committed to paper by Wolfram von Eschenbach around the quest-for-the-Holy-Grail motif (Kingsnorth's



long-time collaborator mythologist Martin Shaw wrote a whole book on it, and – though he also ended up converting to the Orthodox Christianity around the same time as Kingsnorth, and pines for the regeneration of the Church – had at least written of the need for positive mythologies of migration), the subject of Peter Gelderloos' forthcoming work: "Wolfram makes clear that not only is Cundrie not to be considered beautiful, in terms of her appearance she is barely to be considered human. In a single passage he compares her to five different animals, both domestic and wild. Nonetheless, Cundrie commands respect. Kings and knights alike listen to her words. She is a sorceress, a wise woman, and a servant of the divine. And as such, she is an altogether unlikely figure to appear in a Christian romance. In the Christian moral paradigm, an ugly woman should be evil, a learned woman moreso.

"Nonetheless, Cundrie is a canonical element of the Grail stories, and plays an essential role in the plot. Yet Wolfram could easily have made her beautiful and even-tempered, a sort of the Lady of the Lake as she is portrayed in modern renditions, rather than the warty tart Wolfram gives us. This element, it turns out, is a holdover from Irish paganism, Eriu, a divine gift-giver with "a radiant summer aspect and a hideous winter one, whence came two separate characters in the romances: the beautiful maiden who bore the Grail and the loathly damsel who served the Grail as messenger". The sameness or unity of opposites, a common theme in pagan and animist belief systems the world over, has no place amidst the demonization of the Other which is fundamental to Christianity. It took 1500 years of Catholic Inquisitions, witch hunts, heresy police, torture squads, and massacres to destroy such a transformative idea. In the year 1200, it can still make a weak appearance. In the end, Catholicism remained too pagan to complete the task, and it would be the rational men of the Enlightenment who would inherit the legacy of this war – both metaphysical and corporeal – and be able to subject the Other to a total alienation, banishment, and liquidation."

So while we don't begrudge Kingsnorth his appeal to the particularity of culture, there's an important message missing here. That message is written all over Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's *The Many-Headed Hydra* with its charting of the truly international cross-pollination of radicalisms over the last half-century which formed (but did not only emanate from) the British radical traditions that looked not to revive the Church in any form but to live out the early Christian 'levelling' egalitarianism they re-encountered on their rulers' colonial frontiers, or James C. Scott's descriptions of ethnicities forming on the base of autonomy, and not the other way around. "If we support true anti-hegemonic particularism, we must also support the other half of the dialectic by developing a force to penetrate all false boundaries, to restore communicativeness and conviviality across a horizontal and random web of connectivities and solidarities," continued Peter Lamborn Wilson. "This would constitute the true force of which multiculturalism is merely the empty simulacrum.



Slovenia: solidarity sabotage of militarised border funnelling migrants to formal crossing points along the 'Balkans route' path to western Europe during the historic refugee movements of 2015 – most famously from the authoritarian turn drowning the so-called 'Arab Spring' (see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg87) & exodus from the Balkans themselves – all providing fodder for immigration scares underlying the vote for Brexit despite the UK receiving very few of them, & Viktor Orbán's xenophobic campaign against a "left-wing conspiracy" of "Muslim invaders," before a clamp-down & Turkey's European Union appointment as a choke-point, & establishment of notorious detention camps on Greek islands of the 'Mediterranean route' under its 'radical' Leftist government SYRIZA, leading to break-out & port occupation

"[M]igrants are not a human surplus to be managed in a more or less democratic or fascist way (i.e. the two traditional faces of capitalism). They are people. Our solidarity is not 'proof of our humanity', it is the only way to reclaim humanity both for ourselves and for the migrants. We have a slogan in our movement for this: 'In a bosses' world, we are all strangers'."

– Understanding the 'Balkan Route':
an Interview with Clandestina

*It would complement anti-hegemonic particularism with a genuine reciprocity among peoples and cultures. The "economy of the Gift" [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg53**] would replace the economy of exchange and commodification. The Social would resume circulation on the level of experienced life" through the exercise of imagination and generosity."*

This is to go where Kingsnorth's path does not take us.]



On Saturday 17th March 2017 *The Guardian* published a lengthy essay by the writer, poet, and climate campaigner¹ Paul Kingsnorth. Titled 'The lie of the land: does environmentalism have a future in the age of Trump?', it calls for a nationalist environmentalism that its author believes to be a suitable response to our current ecological and political conjuncture. It has been widely shared on social media and attracted praise from – among others – *Guardian* political commentator John Harris and Greenpeace Senior Political Advisor Rosie Rogers. This horrifies us. It is, quite simply, a dangerous piece. Its argument and its logics must be rejected by those seeking to think through an environmental politics appropriate to the era of climate change.²

In the essay, Kingsnorth finds inspiration in those he calls 'the new populists' – reactionaries like Stephen Bannon³ and Marine Le Pen;⁴ and outlines a programme that leaves the door wide open to a fascist environmentalism. **Terrifying though this is, it is not without precedent: environmentalist and ecological politics in the West too often tend towards reactionary views.** For example, some environmentalists continue to advocate closing national borders to 'protect our environment', the sterilization of women in the Global South to reduce the global population, transmisogyny in the name of the 'natural', and utilize violence against Indigenous populations to 'protect' National Parks.⁵

1 ed. – No longer involving himself with campaigning, he has however expressed interest in the so-called Truckers Protests: see **"We Notice When Bigots Get a Win"**

2 ed. – see **On Staying Woke in Polycrisis Futurism**

3 ed. – Self-described "Christian Zionist," media executive, political strategist, and former investment banker and Naval officer: key adviser early in Trump's first term (having created Breitbart News, which he described at the time as "the platform for the alt-right") until being dismissed after 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville (see **Ghosts**) after pressure due to his open white-supremacist ties. Contributor to Trump's attempted 'Muslim Ban' denying access to the US to those from several majority-Muslim countries, which was only defeated by an anarchist-initiated wave of occupations that shut down every major airport in the country. Has toured to form connections with far-right networks across Europe and in Israel, seeing in Japan, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, China, Turkey, Egypt, the Philippines, Poland, and South Korea a global shift to nationalism "against cosmopolitanism". Although currently in prison after enriching himself with money raised to fund Trump's notorious southern border wall project, his media playbook still very much underpins Trump's strategy.

4 ed. – Leader of French far-right National Front party (now rebranded as Nationally Rally) inherited from her father.

5 ed. – "Environmentalism remains trapped in the thought of colonial-capitalism. Nature is something which happens in foreign lands, amongst barbarous people, who

Marine Le Pen is centring 'the environment' in her French Presidential campaign. And there are chilling historical precedents too: the Nazis drew on the the work of early geographers and ecologists such as Friedrich Ratzel to promote '*lebensraum*', the 'living space' held to be necessary for the flourishing of a 'pure' nation. It is also worth noting that Kingsnorth situates himself within the legacy of the anti-globalization movement which, although largely left-wing, sometimes repeated or overlapped with fascist ideas and imagery.⁶ And whilst we focus on the essay itself in what follows, Kingsnorth himself is no stranger reactionary nationalism.⁷

are now found to be incapable of protecting it. Neo-colonialism finds the indigenous community guilty of the mirror-crime of that for which they were condemned by colonialism; rather than too connected to their environment, they are now too disconnected. This time they shall be thrown off their land so that civilisation may save it from them, rather than them from it. In west Kenya the Sengwer people are being chased from their homes. Thousands of them flee before the military police, who tear apart their huts before setting them on fire. The government calls them squatters, blaming the Sengwer for the degradation of the forest they inhabit. They neglect to mention that the Sengwer have lived as hunter-gatherers in the Embobut forest and the Cherangany Hills for thousands of years. Why are these people being made homeless? Part of the blame at least falls on the UN's Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) programme [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg8*]. The World Bank has been funding the Government of Kenya's new Natural Resource Management Programme (NRMP), which includes "financing REDD+ readiness activities". In practice this means the forest is being readied for market, to be sold to whichever company which needs to offset its pollution and habitat destruction. The idea that corporate ecocide should be rewarded with cheap land stolen from the global south embodies all that is wrong with modern environmentalism" (The Vivisection of Oikeios). This is not a new development, but accompanied the concept of National Parks as they spread across the world since their inception in the so-called United States: which was the Yosemite Valley, recently seized from the Miwok people in a war to reduce their autonomy and stop their attacks on gold mining colonists. Yosemite (actually a Miwok term for the invaders, 'some among them are killers') vistas are result of thousands of years of land-use practices such as underbrush burning that lead to flourishing oaks and deer enough to support one of the highest indigenous population densities on the West Coast at the time.

6 Raphael Schlembach (2014). *Against Old Europe: Critical Theory and Alter-Globalization Movements*.

7 We have serious concerns about the 'Dark Mountain Project', which Kingsnorth co-founded and 'editorially directs' with Dougal Hine. Vinay Gupta – who has 'been around the Dark Mountain story since before it had a name', has spoken at its festivals and has been published in two of its books – has openly stated that he would 'seriously consider helping out' a basically human ecological fascism' (so long as it's credible). At one point

In this piece we outline our key areas of concern with Kingsnorth's argument and connect them to broader errors in the way that he understands the world.

Although he attempts to distinguish between a 'benevolent green nationalism' and the quite-obviously less benevolent policies of the right, we show that no such separation can be made.

Indeed, the key oppositions that structure his argument are precisely those that structure fascist environmentalism. Rejecting these, we close this essay by pointing to the possibility of anti-fascist and decolonial ecological struggle.

People, Place & Nationalism

Kingsnorth opens his essay with an admission that he voted for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. He proclaims his astonishment that friends on the 'leftish, green-tinged world' had not done similarly, wondering why those who come from 'a tradition founded on localisation, degrowth, bioregionalism⁸ and a fierce critique of industrial capitalism' would vote to remain part of the EU.

At this point it is worth noting that over 15,000 people [ed. – plus the rest since 2017; see **Statement on the Melilla Massacre**] have died as a result of EU borders since the turn of the millennium; and that the EU routinely and deliberately subjects migrants to appalling conditions at the camps it runs.⁹ Yet this is not the source of Kingsnorth's ire: indeed, migrants are notable only by their absence from his essay. Rather, Kingsnorth buys into the UK's dominant (and alarmingly right-wing) framing of the EU: that it erodes borders in favour of free movement; and that this free movement erodes cultural differences.

Accordingly, he positions Brexit as 'the people',



28.05.14: French police attack migrants in Calais

in the essay, meanwhile, Kingsnorth rhetorically asks if he is 'a fascist?', as if to suggest that any such accusations would be patently absurd. Our concern here is not whether Kingsnorth himself is 'a fascist', but rather to show how close much of his environmentalism is to fascism.

8 ed. – see the companion piece for **Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation**

9 Reporting on the condition of child migrants at the now closed reception centre on Lesbos, Tzanetos Antypas, head of the humanitarian organisation Praksis, stated that: 'there were some [children], I'm not kidding, whose hair had turned white. When we moved them to an open camp they chose to remain listless in their tents. After so many months incarcerated in such overcrowded conditions, I was told they had forgotten how to walk.'

'fuelled...by a sense of place and belonging', seeking to take back power from 'rootless' 'globalists'. For him, this is the key political division of our current moment and regardless of whether or not Brexit achieves these aims (spoiler: it won't), the vote 'exhilarates' Kingsnorth. Astonishingly, so does the election of Donald Trump.

Appeals to 'the people' are common in political discourse and are a central feature of populist politics. But as a political subject (and actor), 'the people' never pre-exists such appeals. Rather, it is constructed through them; and acknowledging this can be an important step in constructing a politics to challenge the status quo.¹⁰ Kingsnorth elides this and presents his people as a self-evident matter-of-fact. They are grounded in and emerge from a timeless 'natural' environment: the nation.

This nation is a 'cultural' formation associated with 'traditions, distinctive cultures...religious strictures [and] social mores'. It is the source of 'colour, beauty and distinctiveness' and fosters a 'belonging and a meaning beyond money or argument'. Such 'belonging' is held to be particularly strong in 'traditional' places: Kingsnorth references the Standing Rock Sioux¹¹ as exemplary and there is a passing reference to the Zapatistas.¹²

Here there is a temptation to read Kingsnorth charitably: perhaps he is proposing a radical understanding of 'nation' (and the concepts associated with it) in line with that offered by many Indigenous peoples, an idea to which we return below. But no: elsewhere 'the nation' coincides with the (colonial) state – he draws heavily on Jonathan Haidt, for whom key nationalists include Marine Le Pen and Victor Orban. Kingsnorth may try to distance himself from 'angry nationalism' and Trump (while expressing 'exhilaration' at their surge to power), but given his arguments this can only ever work as a disavowal.

This conflation of Indigeneity with the nation state is a key rhetorical device for the white supremacist right (think of calls to 'protect' 'indigenous Britons', for example). It is particularly abhorrent given that so many nation states exist because of their genocidal dispossession of *actually* Indigenous populations: those whose identities and ways of life are inseparable from their dynamic relationships with the more-than-human ecologies of particular places (unlike Kingsnorth's nationalists, who appear from static places as if by magic).¹³

10 Jason Frank (2009) *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America*.

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg16**

12 ed. – see **"It Was Wartime"**

13 Kim TallBear (2013) 'Genomic articulations of indigeneity'.

“That evening, the park of a nearby city where political refugees had been living for months has just been evacuated by the police under the eyes of the media. We all watched that not-to-be-missed film. Dragged along the ground like shapeless bags, hit with electric clubs when a disorderly movement slows down the convoy. We begin the exercise. Half-heartedly comment on what happened. Once the ‘terrible’ and ‘inhuman’ have gone around the table, our indignation moans, splutters, protests that it is not asleep yet. Then one guy, with a body I imagine cool and stiff, concludes the evening with an ‘It’s horrible,’ and, after a few seconds’ thought, adds, ‘Really...’ In that vertigo of petty, cowardly comments piled up like a heap of smelly secrets, ‘after all, really’ propels these refugees to the first rank of shameful acts, but barely. The prize for the best indignation. Then they bring up a demonstration in a nearby city that didn’t go as expected, didn’t politely clean up the traces of its passage, and methodically broke the windows of banks and real-estate agencies, finally lighting a big fire in front of a detention centre where the people we’d just talked about are locked up. I express my admiration. That meticulous choreography between two pavements! Here arms are raised to throw stones, there legs accelerate, bodies duck and anticipate, alert, trained. Round the table, they listen to me with an indulgent smile, the skin of their faces taut with excellent health. Their bad mood grimaces behind their smile. Bad mood from feeling themselves brought down to the weight of comfortable flesh trained to watch, to hold forth. And then what. They break windows. That doesn’t accomplish anything, right. All it does is bring insurance companies more business. Ha. A good number of the peaceful demonstrators got arrested too, says a girl. Some of them got time in prison. Then, like old adolescents protesting half-heartedly about an unfair parental punishment, ‘after all’ makes a splendid comeback. The adorable little round of *after all, really* and *democracy*. Freedom of expression! (after all after all). If you can’t demonstrate any more (really). An imperceptible relief slips into the wordy indignation. The social order ended a movement we don’t belong to. So we can come on stage armed with indignation – after all. Then. Empty silence. Then. A hand reaches for the bottle of wine. Anyone for cheese?”

– *We Are the Birds of the Coming Storm*

There is no France without the subjugation of the Berber [ed. – *i.e. Imazighen*] populations of North Africa. There is no United States of America without the destruction of Turtle Island.¹⁴ The borders separating Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia have divided up the traditional lands of the

14 ed. – see 'Lest We Forget'

Indigenous Sami population,¹⁵ preventing them from continuing their traditions of fishing, herding, hunting and trading.

Where Indigenous populations have been decimated by the brutal violence of colonialism, Kingsnorth’s ‘nation’ is threatened by a nefarious fantasy of ‘globalism’ that promotes migration and dissolves borders; and supports multiculturalism whilst ‘enthusing about breaking down gender identities’.¹⁶ Accordingly, ‘border walls and immigration laws’ are held to be ‘evidence of a community asserting its values and choosing to whom to grant citizenship.’ **As with fascism, this ‘cultural’ politics is in fact a racial – and racist – politics.**

Kingsnorth regurgitates the antisemitic trope of globalism as ‘rootless’¹⁷ [ed. – *although there are, of*

15 ed. – see 'Gállok is the Name of a Place'

16 The implicit transphobia of this statement is not the only time Kingsnorth mimics the sneering language of alt-right fascists: elsewhere he takes a dig at those who have (supposedly) told him to ‘check his privilege’.

[ed. – Since the time of writing, this transphobia has become anything but implicit: “It’s not a coincidence that Kingsnorth’s transphobia appears to have started around the time he converted to Orthodox Christianity. That’s when his own conception of the holy “migrated” from the earth (“the swamps of the material realm”) to heaven (a “mysterious, untouchable, numinous force outside of creation itself”). And that’s when he started writing about a supposedly universal desire for “transcendence”, which is behind both religion and the secular drive for progress [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg11*]. Given his criticism of the “trans-cendence” of transhumanism and (supposedly) transgender [ed. – see *Nicolas Casaux, Transphobe, is Lying to You*], Kingsnorth’s own appeal to transcendence is ironic[...]

“While he still writes about “nature” (and “land” and “place”), more and more, Kingsnorth has been writing about something he calls “culture” – and more and more it seems like he’s using all these words to mean the same thing. “Culture”, like “nature”, can be another one of those code words. It can mean the way people living in a particular place over a period of time “be” together, the way they make that place and time “home”. But it also can mean something like “the way I am comfortable with things being” or “the way I imagine things used to be”. It can be code for patriarchy, White supremacy, and hetero- and cis-normativity [ed. – see '*Like Butterflies*'].

“Kingsnorth makes it clear elsewhere that what he means by “Western culture” is really the institutional Christian church. And the lost elements of that culture which he laments include “patriotism, Christianity, cultural conservatism, sexual modesty”. This isn’t culture. It’s empire. And Kingsnorth has nothing – nothing at all – to say about the historical injustices of the “culture” that he so pines for. (Of course, as a White, cisgender, heterosexual man, there were far fewer injustices that would have affected him)” (Jumping the Gap: Where Green Transphobia Leads).]

17 Werner Bonefeld (2014). 'Antisemitism and the Power of Abstraction: From Political Economy to Critical Theory'.

'LIKE BUTTERFLIES'

Unfortunately people can (deliberately or otherwise) mistake models for reality – either treating them as accurate descriptions of the world as it is, or models for the world as it should be and therefore seek to erase exceptions. This false reading of the model of binary sex manifests in non-consensual surgery performed on intersex children, because humans, like butterflies, are classed as “sexually dimorphic”.

The trans-exclusionist obsession with chromosomes is another misreading of the “sexual dimorphism” model, ironically reflecting their surface-level understanding of biology – the science they repeatedly venerate in their slogans. Trans exclusionists seek to erase more complex accounts of sex and gender for simple, essentialising definitions: 2 sexes = XX and XY = 2 genders. Inconveniently for these transphobes, chromosome combinations vary considerably among humans and other species and do not match neatly with who is assigned male or female at birth. Gynandromorph insects themselves are thought to come about if an egg with two nuclei (one with an Z chromosome, one with W) is fertilised twice, so receives two Zs, making one ZW (“female”) and one ZZ (“male”) in the same individual. The existence of variation in “sex characteristics” in all species contradicts transphobes’ effort to frame more complex understandings of sex and gender as recent, unnatural products of western liberalism, or for trans exclusionists [ed. – see *The Thin Line Between Radical & Authoritarian*], patriarchal constructs of “transgender ideology”.

Gynandromorphs demonstrate that qualities classed “male” or “female” are not mutually exclusive, and therefore disprove the essentialists’ classifications of sex and by consequence, of gender.

Popular articles about gynandromorphs tend to focus on their rarity, citing studies like Scriber & Evans’ which involved breeding thousands of butterflies to find a few gynandromorphic individuals and judge how frequently they occur. I am reminded of red herrings within the toxic [UK] Gender Recognition Act discourse (where trans people are repeatedly forced to defend their existence). For example, the proposal to include a non-binary gender category in the 2021 census in Scotland. Although I would appreciate not having to misgender myself endlessly in bureaucracy, debating this is a distraction from the fundamental changes needed to remove barriers for trans healthcare and address disproportional homelessness and poverty. It is also an attempt to statistise queerness, to make it “legible” to state models and therefore to control queer people. **As James C. Scott writes, states ‘arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion’ like butterflies pinned to a board so they can be properly photographed and dissected.** If you know how many non-binary people there are, you can determine if the proposed non-binary prison will be a profitable addition to the prison industrial complex.

Scott’s analysis of how states force populations into homogenous categories is reflected in other practices of neoliberal capitalism like the creation of plantations, monocultural forests and factory farms which can be managed centrally. States and capitalists strip away biodiversity in order to account for or exploit a single resource, creating what Anna Tsing calls “modular simplifications”. Manual labour is delegated into single repetitive tasks oriented towards preventing biological or social diversity. Modular simplifications abound in today’s homogenous, hierarchical social institutions, where people are alienated from others considered different from themselves and regrouped based on imposed categories.

course, non-antisemitic ways of talking about rootlessness as a specific consequence of colonialism; see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*] and twice raises the spectre of ‘violent’ Islam to add weight to his claims. Not once does he mention that Muslim majority countries are disproportionately affected by climate change; nor that Islamophobia¹⁸ drives the EU’s policy of leaving migrants to drown.¹⁹

And although Kingsnorth is right to say that ‘Green spokespeople and activists rarely come from the classes of people who have been hit hardest by globalisation’, his reference to Standing Rock is as close as he comes to rectifying this. Despite his hostility to those who fly, he makes no reference to Black Lives Matter UK’s shutdown of London City Airport, undertaken to highlight the racist dimensions of climate change.

The Environment

In fact, ‘climate change’ is mentioned only twice – each time in relation to forms of environmentalism that Kingsnorth pits himself against; and it is startling to note how peripheral Kingsnorth’s concern in this regard appears.



SCEARTAS FÀR-GHÀR-CHÀRÀCH
CEARTAS NAN DAÒINE UILE

Glasgow, Scotland: “TRANSGENDER JUSTICE, JUSTICE FOR ALL”

18 For a historic overview of European Islamophobia (and, indeed, the necessity of Islamophobia for the construction of Europe), see Gil Adijar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*. As its title suggest, this also charts the historic imbrication between Islamophobia and antisemitism.

19 ed. – see “We Notice When Bigots Get a Win”

'THE THIN LINE BETWEEN RADICAL & AUTHORITARIAN'

[ed. – From an interview with a Mexico City feminist-anarchist affinity group, when asked about trans-exclusionary radical feminism (RADFEM-TERF) there that adopts anarchist aesthetics.]

For us, this relationship has crossed the thin line between radical and authoritarian. **We have seen several historical examples where the same thing has happened.** There is a very small step between being extreme and being fascist. Many of the women who theorize and defend RADFEM-TERF come from the most fascist, conservative, white currents of some Mexican elites. Does what they say make sense to us? In some cases, when they euphemize their terms, as for example, the “erasure of women,” it seems to make sense in a society that is *machista* [*macho*] in multiple forms. However, to say that this is a consequence of trans presence and visibility is the most ahistorical and fascist thing there is. It is the way in which a fact that is true, where women don't appear in life or in history, is decontextualized to vainly “argue” against the appearance of a “minority.”

[...] For us, there is a theoretical confusion when one speaks of “radical.” On the one hand, we would say that the word made sense to us when it referred to the fact that radical feminists went beyond the demand for rights or equality for women; when patriarchy was seen as a pillar of domination in the capitalist world and, therefore, it stressed or deepened a series of structural conflicts within this world. It thus alluded to the term itself, going to the root of the problem and attacking it there, not merely on the surface.

Then the word radical, appropriated and transformed by the media, became synonymous and equal to “violent.” We are totally aligned with revolutionary violence, we do not deny that it is a necessary and valid tool [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics'*]. However, we have seen that equating radical with violent has led to confusion as to what we want to say and how we want to say it. [R]age possesses an audacious and irrational potential that does not need to be examined with the magnifying glass of lucidity and we join in Luddite [ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; 'The Steel Road'*] and joyful destruction. **Even so, the words violent, radical – and ultimately reactionary – are used as if they were synonyms without explanation or asking ourselves why this is the case.**

[...] Today, many girls dress in black bloc style because they understand that this is the dress of the RADFEM-TERF[...] Certainly, it is necessary to visibly differentiate oneself from those who are against violence, to signal that this or that group will “act” in a non-passive way, to mark oneself among the masses as an action or offensive group. **As in previous years, the aesthetic turned into vanity and identity.**

Dressing in black, wearing a mask, carrying objects for destruction and so on is not for us an aesthetic question, but rather a practical and strategic one. It aims for anonymity and direct action, seeking to strike blows and get away. [...] Many

[RADFEM-TERFs] have a strong presence on social networks – something that we don't – and live there insisting, scolding, and monitoring everything they don't agree with. In demonstrations, they dress in black bloc style but not for anonymity: they seek out the cameras, the spotlight, and then publish everything on their social networks to get likes. [...]

We aim to create actions that also abandon the colonial

gaze that tries to hegemonize, reprimand, and invalidate. [T]oday's RADFEM-TERF see themselves as part of one of those waves of feminism from the United States that is openly transphobic and locates the discussion around the naturalization and biologization of “women,” which takes us back decades and to the acceptance of binarism as an unquestionable Western category [ed. – see *'Like Butterflies'*]. This doesn't happen in territories such as ours, where binarism is a consequence of colonialism [ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; Mutant Identities in the Middle Ages'*]. [...] We don't believe we should base ourselves at all on those waves and many times they don't even make sense to us because it is not the way in which our own history of feminism or antagonistic struggles plays out in our territory.

[...] It is true that we do not agree with the whole trans world just for being trans. In Mexico, we have trans women – they didn't identify themselves as such before, but that has been changing – occupying political positions and fighting on the side of power for decades. In fact, it was one of the reasons why the LGBT movement splintered in the 1980s. **We insist on looking at the conditions of class, ethnicity, and sex as interlocking.** The pro-power bourgeois trans are not our friends and never will be, any more than the policewomen and the white, fascist RADFEM. Perhaps there is more in common among them than they think, if we put it in those terms.

[...] We've learned that we can't generalize, even though there are structures that affect all of us. And, in that sense, we see ourselves as distant from some groups of trans and non-binary people because we do not share conditions of class or race. As we have grown up marked by that racism, there are many non-conforming spaces where we don't feel comfortable or where that feeling of being seen as strange or exotic accompanies us. Many queer and non-conforming spaces – not all – are part of the art world and we experience them as white and hostile places. Likewise, some of these people take part in the struggle from institutional, academic, or NGO spaces, spaces denied to us and that we reject. Our reality sometimes doesn't allow us to understand their direction and many times we feel we don't share the same concerns. Maybe it has to do with us still struggling in a broader sense by not abandoning the enormous desire to destroy the State and to see capitalism fall. Sometimes, the non-conforming compass [ed. – see *The "Green" Farce Everywhere & Nowhere Else'*] focus a lot on the construction of sex and gender and our positions begin to bore them. Hahahaha.

[...] Our affinity is not only because we are women or nonconforming, it is because in our actions we seek a radical rupture with traditional patriarchal impositions and we see with pleasure that this rage is spreading, beginning transcendent struggles [ed. – see *"It Was Wartime"*]. [...] We also see that states seek to appropriate these struggles, and when we hear or witness these critiques from other territories – with whom we share a process of colonization [ed. – see *'Since Colonial Times'*] – we experience those resonances with joy. We feel less alone and less lost when we hear those echoes. We have learned a lot from them. Primarily to utilize anti-colonial perspectives to be able to build from our own parameters, with our own peoples, with our own times, and without the need to take as a reference murderous states nor colonial imposition in any of its forms; including Western, hegemonic, white feminism.

There is not a single mention of climate change's devastating impact on food production; nor on how it fuels conflicts, including the civil war in Syria.²⁰ Rather, his environmental concern is driven by a privileged romanticism that culminates in the nation state: 'wild' 'nature' contributes to the distinctiveness of the nation, providing it with some of that 'colour, beauty and distinctiveness'.

This nature is framed as part of the 'birthright' of a nation, and in a disturbingly völkisch turn-of-phrase Kingsnorth states that if 'you want to protect and nurture your homeland – well, then, you'll want to nurture its forests and its streams too'. **This desire to wrap forests in the flag clears the way for what the critical scholar of ecofascism Peter Staudenmaier calls a 'deadly connection between love of land and militant racist nationalism.'**²¹

Recalling Kingsnorth's dig at those who challenge gender identities, we would add that this 'love' of the land is also a deeply gendered, thoroughly heteronormative romance. As Lee Edelman writes:

'Nature [is] the rhetorical effect of an effort to appropriate the 'natural' for the ends of the state. It is produced, that is, in the service of a statist ideology that operates by installing pro-procreative prejudice as the form through which desiring subjects assume a stake in a future that always pertains, in the end, to the state, not to them'.²²

For Kingsnorth, the reproduction of the nation state is inseparable from the reproduction of its 'nature.' **His writing falls back on the imagery of 'mother earth': pure, bountiful yet fragile, a set of ideal characteristics which can then be imposed on gendered subjects.** The idealised reproduction of nature can then be used to discipline human reproduction, which is itself the precondition of the nation state – after all, what is a 'birthright' without births? When Kingsnorth talks of the desire to 'nurture your homeland,' we can see this as the implicit operation of what Edelman calls 'installing pro-procreative prejudice' – the word 'nurture' has a rich subtext of child care and gendered labour.²³

The quiet assumption is that the nuclear family will continue to function, that kids will keep being born and that women will continue to do the (unwaged) work of caring for them. On this, Kingsnorth's national future depends, and thus we can recognise it as an iteration of what Edelman calls 'reproductive

20 John Wendle (2016), 'Syria's climate refugees', *Scientific American*.

21 Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*.

22 Lee Edelman, *No Future*.

23 ed. – see 'Care is Partisan'

"One of the concepts we would question is the anthropomorphism of the natural world as "Mother Earth," and environmentalism as a paternalistic urge to protect the earth – to prevent humanity from "raping the earth." The vision of nature as gentle nurturer is predicated on the same conception of the earth that the Conquistadors held when they came to the New World, to rip into the Virgin Mary's flesh and freely take from her. Seeing the earth as merely fertile and passive denies the true power of the Mother. Like a toddler who defiantly casts his blocks on the floor, we at once valorize and mourn the mess we have made, when actually we are small, fragile things amid the vastness of cosmic forces. However, there are other visions of the Mother – visions that acknowledge that the ability to create life is inseparable from the ability to inflict pain and death. Kali, Medea, Ixchel, Tiamat, Spider Woman and countless other Mother Goddesses throughout the indigenous world show us visions far more nuanced, brutal and rich."

– Black Seed #6 call for papers

futurism'.²⁴

In the face of this all-enfolding reproductive duress we should remember that 'what is at stake [is] not the ability to reproduce, but the capacity to regenerate, the terms of which are found in all sorts of registers beyond heteronormative reproduction.'²⁵ These words of Jasbir Puar's push us to reject the western imposition of mother earth in favour of an anti-colonial 'cyborg earth'²⁶ – one that rejects the

24 ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg90*

25 Jasbir Puar (2007). *Terrorist Assemblages*.

26 ed. – "A scientist in the field of primatology as well as a feminist and sci-fi enthusiast, [Donna] Haraway [ed. – see *Unruly Edges*] is best known for her work "The Cyborg Manifesto", which presents the metaphor of the cyborg as a way to understand our constructed, irreverent, perverse selves. But her project is larger than that;

Haraway describes "queering nature" as her "categorical imperative." [...] How can we view Haraway's cyborg as a figure of possibility and productive non-utopian crises, to use it "to rebuke the disappearance of the body within post modernism"? What is the value of being at home in the ecological web of one's location, or in centering displacement?

[...] Haraway's approach stands in stark contrast to the anthropomorphized naturalization of "the wild" and our place in it performed by so many deep ecologists. Instead, she calls for the introduction of "dissensus" via the character of the "in/appropriated other" – the one who is not placed and given belonging in community by their acknowledgment of difference, but who cannot pretend comfort or naturalness anywhere, ever, much less defend the boundaries of that (eventually inevitable) terrible community. The "productive conflict" of the insider-outsider perspective – double consciousness – can give us

colonial, heteropatriarchal values of bounty, purity²⁷ and fragility, and poses instead the possibility of liberated life.

The relentless coloniality of Kingsnorth's thinking is expressed again in his chosen example of (supposedly 'benevolent') nationalist environmentalism. He cites Roosevelt's creation of the US National Parks as proof that nationalism can choose to define itself by 'protecting, not despoiling, its wild places'. Yet the creation of National Parks saw the forced relocation of thousands of Indigenous people and their existence is possible because of long (and ongoing) histories of genocide and dispossession.²⁸

By ignoring racism and colonialism in this way, Kingsnorth undermines his own argument: when lauding the Standing Rock Sioux he suggests that Indigenous populations are exemplary close-to-nature 'nations', yet here they are an obstacle to the flourishing of nationalist nature.²⁹

more helpful perspective in our decision-making about how to relate to each other and to our world than any kind of assertions of authenticity, naturalness, and belonging.

[...] Rather, she argues that, far from the simplistic identification [Arne] Naess calls for [*ed. – 'deep ecology' thinker who theorised identification-as-belonging (i.e. being part of a larger 'natural' whole, the interests of which are thus our own rather than thinking of ourselves alone) but also, perhaps unknown to this author, identification-as-kinship*], we must learn to do empathy – and solidarity – without identification. Once we admit that we are all aliens to each other, quite apart from the distance created by social constructs like raced and gendered difference, we can begin to grow true empathy.

[...] There is an impossibility of deciding between difference and sameness before each event of contact – and that is good, because it makes us see our degrees of difference as degrees of relation rather than otherness. This is the project between humans and animals, and humans and humans, I wish to see in the world. This is the lesson I want to learn from listening to the land. This is the cyborg I would rather be than any goddess" (The Unquiet Dead: Anarchism, Fascism, & Mythology) – note this last line, though it's important to note that 'cyborg' is not used in the above in any trans-humanist sense or relating necessarily to industrial technology, misconstrues what 'god/dess' is in most cultures outside of the major salvation religions (see **A New Luddite Rebellion**), where ironically they may more closely resemble the above author's 'cyborg' in some ways... a topic for another day.

27 ed. – see **Earthbound Farmers' Almanac & Food Autonomy in Bulbancha**

28 Isaac Kantor (2007) 'Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks.'

29 As we have noted elsewhere, this contradiction is central to settler colonialism. In settler colonialism's expansionist, extractive guise, Indigenous populations are treated as part of 'nature', which acts as a resource for extraction, a limit to growth and a sink for waste. In its romanticist, protectionist guise, Indigenous populations are positioned

Other aspects of Kingsnorth's fusing of environmentalism and nationalism fall apart under even the slightest scrutiny. Whilst geological features are often used in the drawing of national borders such that they acquire an air of natural permanence, regional ecologies do not match up to national borders (think again of the division of Sami lands); and the most important ecological changes in the contemporary world are driven by global forces that nation states can do little to challenge. Climate change does not respect borders.

Those on the left might at least find some solace in Kingsnorth's naming of 'neoliberalism' as a 'global' formation opposing environmentalism; and in his references to the 'carbon-heavy bourgeoisie' and the 'bankers' who threw 'the people of Greece, Spain and Ireland to the wolves'. **Yet his criticisms are moralising rather than structural. There is no account of the bourgeoisie's role in colonialism; nor of the fact that 'bankers' act as they do because that is what capital demands of them.**

Such moralising is not in and of itself leftist: fascists, too, are completely at home making such critiques; and Kingsnorth's aforementioned racialization of 'globalists' leaves the door wide open for them. Given capitalism's ability to continue functioning with and in fascist regimes, such an 'anticapitalism' (or anti-neoliberalism) is in fact useful for capitalism. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer noted, it 'seeks to make the rebellion of suppressed nature against domination directly useful to domination'.³⁰ Far from being an exhilarating avatar of the 'ending' of 'the end of history', Trump shows us that such words are as true as ever.

as a threat to 'beautiful' 'nature': they are held to be too lacking in scientific knowledge to understand how to protect it. Kingsnorth veers between offering (problematic) support for Indigenous populations resisting the first of these modes and adopting the second mode himself.

30 Quoted in Bonefeld, Antisemitism and Abstraction.

To set this antisemitism in historical context it would be important to engage with the influence of Martin Heidegger on strands of the environmentalist movement; and on the overlaps between his work and Kingsnorth's. Heidegger drew heavily on the Greek concept of *autochthony*, which names the way in which people are (supposedly) rooted in the environment of a specific region. In his philosophical writings he opposed this to the 'rootlessness' of 'modernity'. Heidegger was, of course, a member of the Nazi Party, and in his diaries this 'rootless modernity' is figured as *Weltjudentum* ('world Judaism'). Warren Ellis connects Kingsnorth's essay to another notion of Heidegger's here: morning.computer/2017/03/poisonous-little-england For more on Heidegger, *autochthony* and Nazism, see Hood, Stephen l'Argent. "Autochthony, promised land, and exile: Athens and Jerusalem revisited." (2006) PhD diss.

The idea of 'rootless' Judaism also fuelled antisemitism in the USSR.

Another Environmentalism is Possible...

Like fascists, Kingsnorth promises the future to those who can successfully harness his carefully curated vision of a national birthright: that they 'will win the day' is, for him, 'as iron a law as any human history can provide.' We reject this. History does not have 'iron laws' but is produced through struggle. In mentioning Standing Rock Sioux resistance to DAPL and the Zapatistas, Kingsnorth seems to know this too, at least on some level.

The struggles of Indigenous peoples across the world are not, in any sense, equivalent to the proto-fascist, völkisch environmentalism he otherwise espouses; and have much to offer those seeking to develop an ecological politics within, against and beyond our current crises.³¹ Although they – like many people subject to colonial violence – often organize around 'the nation', to conflate the way the term is utilized here with the nationalism of colonial states is deeply disingenuous. As Frantz Fanon notes, 'national consciousness...is not nationalism'; and does not mean 'the closing of a door to communication'. Rather, it is 'the only thing that will give us an international dimension.'³²

Indeed, in contrast to Kingsnorth's static, essential understanding of 'place', Indigenous concepts of place central to much Indigenous 'nationalism' are dynamic and relational: 'place', 'land' and 'territory' (and roughly translatable terms) function as ways of understanding the relationships between people, animals, minerals and plants across different scales. It is their dynamism on social, political, geologic and biological levels that gives them their very 'sense of place'.

These relationships do not separate out human society from the natural world, as Kingsnorth does,

31 ed. – see '**Gállók is the Name of a Place**'

32 Frantz Fanon (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Some may be perturbed by any organization around the nation, and the lines between decolonial nationalism and supremacist nationalism are not always clear cut: as Maia Ramnath notes in *Decolonizing Anarchism*, postcolonial states have 'perpetuated the same kinds of oppression and exploitation carried out by colonial rule, but now in the name of the nation.' (p.5) Yet the postcolonial nation is not the same as the decolonial or decolonized nation, and Ramnath notes that it would be churlish for anarchists to reject the concept of nation out of hand given that it plays such an important role in so many struggles against colonialism and white supremacy (p.22 in particular, but this sentiment animates the entire book).



Boarding torn down during the Aylesbury Estate resistance; see Return Fire vol.1.3 pg57

but see them as inextricably linked.³³ Learning from such understandings and exploring the resonances with what we have elsewhere called 'cyborg ecology'³⁴ is key if we are to prevent the worst excesses of climate change from taking hold.

Many Indigenous and colonized people see the places they inhabit as being destroyed not by the opening of borders but by the very imposition of colonial borders in the first place. Accordingly, they play an active role in the migrant solidarity movements that will be of continued importance in providing solutions to climate-driven migration.

In 2010, when 492 Tamil refugees aboard the MV Sun Sea arrived on the shores of the West Coast [of Canada] and faced immediate incarceration, Indigenous elders opened the weekly demonstrations outside the jails by welcoming the refugees. As their contributions toward a national day of action to support the detained Tamil refugees, the Lhe Lin Liyin of the Wet'suwet'en nation hung a banner affirming, "We welcome refugees." And as part of this same national day of action, Pierre Beaulieu-Blais, an Indigenous

33 See, for example, Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez & Nathalie Kermaol (2016), 'Introduction: Indigenous Women and Knowledge' in *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women's Understanding of Place*. 'Place Against Empire: Understanding Indigenous Anti-Colonialism', *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action* 4.

34 ed. – "For [scholar of agrarian studies James C.] Scott, so-called 'traditional agriculture' is dynamic and plastic, the work of bricoleurs who make use of whatever materials and techniques are to hand, including selective use of the products of science and technology. The practical knowledge thus acquired – which he calls *mētis* – often runs ahead of scientific knowledge since it is based in trial-and-error experimentation and tinkering. [C]yborg ecology is not an inherent preference for the 'high' tech. From the cyborg point of view, the assemblage peasant-ox-plough is no more or less a techno-natural mesh than the assemblage AI-drone-GMO. The point is that bricolage practically appropriates whatever materials are to hand. For example as the glaciers that provide billions of beings with freshwater retreat, even maintaining traditional agriculture may well require desalination technology and knowledge of fluid mechanics to maintain irrigation. Or a reprisal of 'archaic' stormwater collection and distribution systems could play that role. Or some combination of the two" (*Contemporary Agriculture: Climate, Capital, & Cyborg Ecology*). Obviously the OOTW collective here side-steps the question of the dependency on colonial supply-chains which 'high' tech entails... More another time on this.

Anishnabe member of NOII-Ottawa,³⁵ declared, "From one community of resistance to another, we welcome you. As people who have also lost our land and been displaced because of colonialism and racism, we say Open All the Borders! Status for All!"³⁶

Hence a concern with culture, place and identity does not imply nationalism, and neither can border violence be glossed as simply 'a community asserting its values'. Nor do Indigenous and colonized people necessarily feel threatened by the challenges to gender norms that Kingsnorth so sniffily frames as part of a globalist agenda. Indeed, Western gender (and sexual) norms are – like borders – often seen as colonial impositions³⁷ that have done much to damage gender roles, identities and sexualities that do not meet these norms.³⁸ Again, exploring the resonances (and tensions) between such approaches and calls to 'queer' ecological activism are of considerable importance.

Paul Kingsnorth is not a fascist. But his völkisch environmentalism opens wide the door to revanchist, heteronormative, neocolonial, and white nationalist currents which have long existed in parts of Western green politics. **But the 'other environmentalism' of the movements and approaches discussed above is also an already existing one.** It doesn't prefigure the kind of static world that Kingsnorth seeks, but in its dynamism and struggle (including internal struggles) prefigures the flux and complexity of an ecologically just world. It exists simultaneously locally – in the cracks and interstices wrestled or protected from capitalism, the state and colonialism – and globally, in the internationalist spirit of solidarity that will be essential if we are to reject proto-fascist environmentalism. It creates 'the people' not as a

35 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; **'Centering Relationships'**

36 Harsha Walia (2013) *Undoing Border Imperialism*.

37 ed. – see **'The Thin Line Between Radical & Authoritarian'**

38 See, for example, Ifi Amadiume (2015/1987) *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*; Sandeep Bakshi (2016) 'Decoloniality, Queerness, and Giddha'; Phoenix A. Singer, Colonialism, Two-Spirit Identity, and the Logics of White Supremacy; Tamasailau Sua'ali'i (2001) 'Samoans and Gender: Some Reflections on Male, Female and Fa'afafine Gender Identities'; Sujata Moorti (2016) 'A Queer Romance with the Hijra'. An engagement with such accounts should not lead us to the understanding that Indigenous and colonized societies have 'the answers' to misogyny, homophobia and transphobia; nor that they are always-already inherently superior to the West on gender (see Moorti on this in particular), but they certainly dispel the notion that only 'globalist' Westerners are concerned with undoing gender norms. [ed. – see also **Return Fire vol.3 pg36**]

static avatar of racialized nationhood but as dynamic, heterogenous collective seeking to build a **new world**.³⁹

'ALIENATION & YEARNING'

Since the Enlightenment the discourse on Nature has played a dominant role in the ideological and political camps, dividing the so-called progressives from the so-called conservatives ('so-called' because this differentiation is rather superficial). Each camp uses a concept of nature which is apparently different from the other. The progressives – the leftists and liberals – who consider themselves to be the heirs of the seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalist movement,¹ see Nature as the enemy to be subordinated and put at the service of Man by the new science and technology; in Marxian terms,² by the development of productive forces. [...] The conservatives, on the other hand see nature as the friend, the good Mother to be protected against industrial capitalism's crass utilitarianistic exploitation. **As we saw, however, this protection is possible only in reservations, museums, in art and in romanticizing Nature, not in a fundamental opposition against capitalism.** These two concepts of nature correspond to two different types of criticism of capitalism: left and conservative. According to [R.P.] Sierferle, these two types of critique stem from two different social utopias: the left, projected into the future; and the conservative, projected into the past.

Conservative criticism of modern civilization and capitalism, its romanticizing and idyllizing of pre-modern, pre-scientific times is considered as reactionary and irrational by liberals and leftists, as anti-progress, anti-technology and close to Ludditism.³

In Germany, since the historic experience of Fascism, such critique is often denounced as potentially fascist. The left, particularly, clings to the Hegelian⁴ and Marxist philosophy of history, according to which the development of productive forces, Man's progressive domination over Nature constitutes the precondition for political and economic emancipation from obsolete relations of production. This progress, this development is regarded as a kind of natural law, a necessary process, which romantic criticism cannot stop. *'There is no going backward in history'* can often be heard from this side.

39 For one example of the different scales of Indigenous activism, see Graham H. Cornwell and Mona Atia (2012). 'Imaginative Geographies of Amazigh Activism in Morocco'. On the decolonial potential of 'the people' as a heterogenous formation inclusive of difference and internal struggle see George Ciccariello-Maher (2017) *Decolonizing Dialectics*.

1 ed. – see **'The Principle of Reciprocity'**

2 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg11**

3 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; 'The Steel Road'**

4 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg55**

The sense of sadness for the destruction of Nature, the lost homeland, fear about ecological destruction, despair, hopelessness and alienation about the cold, indifferent world of machines and factories, recognition of the futility of the work people must do, panic about industrial and ecological catastrophes, mothers' despair about nuclear and chemical pollution – all these are characterized by the progressives as hysterical and irrational, as merely a continuation of the anti-rationalist, anti-revolutionary, conservative-romantic movement of the nineteenth century. **By labelling these themes and the feelings they arouse as reactionary and irrational, these liberals and leftists, using a superficial left-right dichotomy, leave all these feelings to the rightists.** But these feelings and longings are found not only among bored middle-class urban citizens, they are also shared by the proletarian masses. Christel Neuss has shown that the discourse of rationalism and rationalization, carried out by the Social Democrats (SPD) in the Weimar Republic in the late 1920s, was opposed by many factory workers. In this debate the SPD took the side of rationalism and propagated the necessity of technical rationalizations and innovations which replaced manual by mental labour and thus made labour more 'productive'. The workers' resistance to these rationalizations was not motivated by their desire to get a bigger share of the capitalist cake – this was the argument of the SPD – but a resistance to further alienation of work, alienation from 'Mother Nature', from their own bodies. It was motivated by a sense of sorrow about the loss of a homeland, a village, about their separation from natural, organic rhythms.⁵ But both the Social Democrats and the Communists, unable to integrate this complex into their rationalist utopia, either ignored these feelings or labelled them irrational and fascist. In so doing they left this whole psycho-reality unexplained and indeed, left it to the fascists to exploit for their own propaganda.

The fascists, however, 'occupied' these feelings of alienation and yearning and used them for their utopia of an organistic, new society. In my understanding the success of the German national socialists cannot be explained without understanding that they were able to mobilize feelings which were already prevalent among the people, also among the proletarian masses. Without the mobilization and integration of such feelings into their strategy they would have failed to come to power through elections. Of course, all these feelings were then projected onto the great patriarchal leader, who promised to be their saviour. Their policy specifically concentrated on such evocative 'areas' as 'our land', 'homeland' (*Heimat*), the 'soil and the blood' (*Blut and Boden*), mothers, nature, as the material and emotional base of the 'people' as a whole (*Volksgemeinschaft*).

5 ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**

After the defeat of fascism, these 'symbolic sites' and the feelings associated with them have fallen under moral taboo and subjected to censorship in Germany; this censorship is particularly strong within the German left. [...] In the women's movement in Germany this sterile left-right thinking is also employed to criticize women who focus on children, on ecological issues, on a concern for nature and rural life. The movement of mothers against nuclear energy, which emerged spontaneously after the Chernobyl disaster,⁶ was especially criticized by parts of the feminist movement as being a falling back into the mother-idolatry which the Nazis had propagated. There was a new split in the movement when sections of the women in the Green Party issued a 'Mother's Manifesto', stating that the feminist movement was too much oriented towards the needs of unmarried, childless 'career women' and that mothers of small children had no place in this movement. [...] It is this perception of interpreting every new social movement in Germany in the context and against the backdrop of our Nazi past, and within the dualistic framework of rationalism-irrationalism, which makes it difficult to develop a new perspective beyond these left-right schémas.⁷ [...] This thought-taboo prevents a real critique of fascism and its use of women for its motherhood ideology, because those who profited most from fascism were not 'irrational' women but rather, in particular, those scientists who were wedded to the rationalist paradigm and the industrialists who used this rationalist science for their war preparations. The more the 'irrational' women, peasants, and other such 'backward' sections are accused of fascist collaboration, the easier it is for the industrial-capitalist-militaristic complex to wash its hands of its complicity with fascism. The left critics of the new social movement, particularly their critique of possible fascist *deja-vu* phenomena have so far been unable to develop



Giant coal-mine eating Hambach (see Return Fire vol.3 pg91); this January, its pumping stations were burned near the additional Sündi forest defence occupation

a utopia, a perspective of a new society other than the rationalist one which presupposes irrecoverable destructions of nature.

6 ed. – 1986 release of a radiation cloud from a Ukrainian nuclear reactor over the region, Russia and much of Europe. Feminists at the time noted many miscarriages, and the disproportionate effect on those performing feminine roles, as care-givers “try desperately to keep children off the grass, because the grass is contaminated; they wash their shoes after they have been outside; they follow the news about the latest measurements of nuclear contamination in vegetables, milk, fruit, and so on, and become experts in choosing relatively uncontaminated food for their children” (Who Made Nature Our Enemy?).

7 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; 'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'**

POEMS FOR LOVE, LOSS & WAR

Claustrophobia

Do not think of air—
air clean of smoke, and dirt, and
years of sour meals lingering,
of too many people in pain
and in frenzy.
And don't think of sunshine in fresh air,
because as soon as you do,
your body stiffens,
stretches,
years to become
the explosion you are accused of,
yearning to explode
so much inhumanity, the walls and bars,
leaving ruins
which would really be
tender shoots of growth,
people freed from these structures
of chains,
people smiling with life
and without irony.

D.C. Jail, 6/23/88



— Laura Whitehorn, previously member of the Weather Underground armed leftist group in the '60s-70s US (visiting an ideological and military training camp in Cuba on their behalf) before going on to projects with subversive movements in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Puerto Rico and Palestine as well as domestic anti-racist, indigenous and queer community defence. She also worked to expose the FBI's CoIntelPro (Counter Intelligence Program) that targeted radical groups of the time, sometimes lethally. This written while awaiting trial for the 1983-85 bombings (by a group without a consistent name) of the United States Capitol Building (after the US invasion of Grenada and shelling of Lebanon), the National War College at Fort McNair, the Washington Navy Yard Computer Center, the Washington Navy Yard Officers Club, the Staten Island Federal Building, the Israeli Aircraft Industries Building, the South African consulate, and the offices of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (known for supporting murderous cops, and shortly after the slaying of Black grandmother Eleanor Bumpurs). No-one was injured (nor intended to be) in any of the attacks, which she wrote later were timed "partly because the government and the police were hot on the trail of Puerto Rican and Black movement undergrounds, and we wanted to throw a distraction in their path." Released on parole after 14 years inside, where she organised AIDS education during some of the worst years of the epidemic, she continues to support prisoners from the outside, and has published prison guides and the memoir of a Black liberation fighter. When the documentary *The Weather Underground* came out (in which she had been briefly interviewed), unlike others of that group looking back nostalgically from their tenured comfort without either criticising their authoritarian practices or linking in with present day struggles, she denounced its skipping over of the impact of the rise of mass incarceration on the black liberation movement and its allies at the time, and how the former was key to defeating revolutionary hopes, and how much lighter her sentence and those non-Blacks were compared to those still inside or only recently coming out now in the 2010's and 2020's.

UNRULY EDGES

— *mushrooms as companion species*

[*ed.* — Another selection we have cheerfully jail-broken from academia, this time wholesale and additionally annotated, as a way of continuing the conversation on domestication initiated in our fruitful interview with *No Path* (see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'A Web of Relations & Tensions'**) and on 'queering' the wild (see **'All That Wildness Names'**). As usual with such materials, we'll trust the reader's courage to take the arguments contained within much further than the timid "unmapping" capital and the State the author gestures to (not to mention other dominating relationships), as an academic unable or unwilling to overly alienate their paymasters; nevertheless in terms of understanding this 'Leviathan' that stands over and between us, its 'zeks', you could do worse (for more on all of these dynamics, see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; 'The Temple Was Built Before the City'*).]

Domination, domestication, and love are deeply entangled. *Home* is where dependencies within and among species reach their most stifling. **For all its hyped pleasure, perhaps this is not the best idea for multi-species life on earth.** Consider, instead, the bounteous diversity of roadside margins. Consider mushrooms.

This essay is indebted to Donna Haraway¹ not only for the concept of 'companion species' but also for the permission she offers us all to be both scientist and cultural critic — that is, to refuse the boundaries that cordon nature from culture — and besides, to dare tell the history of the world in a single sentence, or certainly a short essay.² In this spirit, my essay begins with companionate experience and biology before moving to the history of domestication, European conquest, and the politically-and-biologically diverse potentials of the seams of global capitalism. These materials present a fungal argument against too avid an ideal of domestication, at least of women and plants.

Mushrooms in a Multi-Species Landscape

Wandering and love of mushrooms engender each other. Walking is the speed of bodily pleasure and contemplation; it is also just the speed to look for mushrooms. After the rains, the air smells fresh with ozone, sap, and leaf litter, and my senses are alive with curiosity. What better than to encounter the orange folds of chanterelles pushing through the dark

1 *ed.* — see **Lies of the Land**

2 Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Others* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003). Haraway expands the pet-lovers' term 'companion animal' to speak about interspecies relationships.

wet or the warm muffins of king boletes popping up through crumbly earth. The excitement of colour, fragrance, and design – not to speak of pride to be the first to find them – well up. **But of these delights the best, I think, are two: first, the undeserved bounty of the gift;³ and second, the offer of a place that will guide my future walks.** These mushrooms are not the product of my labour, and because I have not toiled and worried over them, they jump into my hands with all the pleasures of the unasked for and the unexpected. For a moment, my tired load of guilt is absolved, and, like a lottery winner, I am alight with the sweetness of life itself. *Bismillah irachman irachim.*⁴

Delight makes an impression: an impression of place. **The very excitement of my senses commits to memory the suite of colours and scents, the angle of the light, the scratching briars, the solid placement of this tree, and the rise of the hill before me.** Many times, wandering, I have suddenly remembered every stump and hollow of the spot on which I stood – through the mushrooms I once encountered there. Conscious decision can also take me to a spot of past encounters, for the best way to find mushrooms is always to return to the places you found them before. In many cases, the growing body (mycelium) that gives rise to mushrooms as its fruits lasts from season to season; besides, some mushroom growing bodies are life-long companions to particular trees. If you want to find chanterelles in central California, you must look under oaks – but not just any oak: You must look for *the* oak that lives with chanterelle mycelium, and you'll know it because you have seen the mushrooms there before. **You visit the spot enough, and you know its seasonal flowers and its animal disturbances; you have made a familiar place in the landscape.** Familiar places are the beginning of appreciation for multi-species interactions.

Foraging worked just this way for most of human history. To find a useful plant, animal, or fungus,



3 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg53**

4 In the name of God, the most bountiful and the most merciful.

foragers learned familiar places and returned to them again and again. High-powered rifles and fish-overstocking make it possible to succeed in killing something in a random pass through the countryside; but sportsmen still do better with a local guide. Through their familiar places, foragers learn not just about ecological relations in general, but also about the stochastic natural histories through which particular species and species associations happened to flourish in particular spots. The familiar places of foraging do not require territorial exclusivity; other beings – human and otherwise – learn them too. Their expansive and overlapping geographies resist common models, which divide the world into ‘your space’ and ‘mine.’ Furthermore, foragers nurture *landscapes* – with their multiple residents and visitors – rather than single species.⁵ **Familiar places engender forms of identification and companionship that contrast to hyper-domestication and private property as we know it.** You who search for a world of mutually-flourishing companions, consider mushrooms.

Mushrooms are well known as companions. The concept of ‘symbiosis’ – mutually beneficial interspecies living – was invented for the lichen, an association of a fungus and an alga or cyanobacteria. The non-fungal partner fuels lichen metabolism through photosynthesis; the fungus makes it possible for the lichen to live in extreme conditions. Repeated cycles of wetting and drying do not faze the lichen, because the fungal partner can re-organise its membranes as soon as water appears, allowing photosynthesis to resume.⁶ Lichen may be found in frozen tundra and on parched desert rocks.

For mushroom lovers, the most intriguing interspecies companionship is that between fungi and plant roots. In *mycorrhiza*, the threads of the fungal body sheathe or enter the roots of plants. Indian pipes and other plants without chlorophyll are supported entirely from the nutrients they gain from fungi in their roots; many orchids cannot even germinate without fungal assistance.⁷ Here plants gain sustenance from fungi;

5 ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'A Web of Relations & Tensions'**

6 D. H. Jennings and G. Lysek, *Fungal Biology*, second ed. (Oxford: Bios Scientific Publishers, 1999), 75. Recent studies of interspecies mutualisms emphasise the active and strategic work of all involved species. For example, studies of nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the root nodules of soybeans show that soybeans discourage bacterial strains that deliver less nitrogen – by limiting their oxygen (E. Toby Kiers, Robert Rousseau, Stuart West, R. Ford Denison, “Host Sanctions and the Legume-Rhizobium Mutualism,” *Nature* 425, 4 September (2003): 78-81.

7 Orchids were a fashion in nineteenth century botany; mycorrhiza were first appreciated by Western scientists when it was found that many orchids depend on fungal

in more cases, however, the fungus obtains sustenance from the plant. But a mycorrhizal fungus is not just selfish in its eating. It brings the plant water and makes minerals from the surrounding soil available for its host. Fungi can even bore into rocks, making their mineral elements available for plant growth. In the long history of the earth, fungi are responsible for enriching soil thus allowing plants to evolve; fungi channel minerals from rocks to plants.⁸ Trees are able to grow on poor soils because of the fungi that bring their roots phosphorus, magnesium, calcium, and more. In the area I live, foresters inoculate the roots of the Douglas fir seedlings they plant with *Suillus* (slippery jack) to aid reforestation. Meanwhile, many of the most favoured mushrooms of cuisine are mycorrhizal. In France, truffle farmers inoculate tree seedlings in fenced plots.⁹ But, of course, the fungi are perfectly capable of doing this work themselves – but with a more open geography. And so we mushroom-lovers wander, seeking the companionship of trees as well as mushrooms.

Fungi are not always benign in their interspecies associations.¹⁰ Fungi are dauntingly omnivorous in their carbon conversion habits. Various fungi subsist on live as well as dead animals and plants. Some are ferocious pathogens. (*Cryptococcus neoformans* kills many AIDS patients.)¹¹ Some are irritating parasites. (Think of ringworm or athlete's foot.) Some slide through their hosts' intestines innocuously waiting to arrive in a pat of dung in which to flourish. **Some fungi find totally unexpected substrates: *Cladosporium resinae*, originally found in tree resins, has found a taste for airplane fuel, causing blocked fuel lines.**¹² Some hurt one host while living happily with another: *Puccinia graminis* bonds with the barberry bush and feeds flies with its nectar to produce the spores that will kill as they grow on wheat.¹³ Fungal appetites are always ambivalent in their benevolence, depending on your point of view. The ability of fungi to degrade the cellulose and lignin of dead wood, so feared in protecting wooden houses, is also fungi's greatest gift to forest regeneration. Otherwise, the forest would be stacked

with dead wood, and other organisms would have a smaller and smaller nutrient base. Meanwhile, the role of fungi in ecosystem renewal makes it more than obvious that fungi are always companions to other species. Species interdependence is a well-known fact – except when it comes to humans.

Human exceptionalism blinds us. Science has inherited stories about human mastery from the great monotheistic religions. **These stories fuel assumptions about human autonomy, and they direct questions to the human control of nature, on the one hand, or human impact on nature, on the other, rather than to species interdependence.**¹⁴ One of the many limitations of this heritage is that it has directed us to imagine human species being, that is, the practices of being a species, as autonomously self-maintaining – and therefore constant across culture and history. The idea of *human nature* has been given over to social conservatives and sociobiologists, who use assumptions of human constancy and autonomy to endorse the most autocratic and militaristic ideologies.¹⁵ **What if we imagined a human nature that shifted historically together with varied webs of interspecies dependence? Human nature is an interspecies relationship.** Far from challenging genetics, an interspecies frame for our species opens possibilities for biological as well as cultural research trajectories. We might understand more, for example, about the various webs of domestication in which we humans have entangled ourselves.

Domestication is ordinarily understood as human control over other species. That such relations might also change humans is generally ignored.¹⁶ Moreover, domestication tends to be imagined as a hard line: You are either in the human fold or you are out in the wild. Because this dichotomisation stems from an ideological commitment to human mastery, it supports the most outrageous fantasies of domestic control, on the one hand, and wild species self-making, on the other. **Through such fantasies, domestics are condemned to life imprisonment and genetic standardisation, while wild species**

partners. G. C. Ainsworth, *Introduction to the History of Mycology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 102-4. Indian pipes: Clyde M. Christensen, *The Molds and Man* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 50.

8 Nicholas Money, *Mr. Bloomfield's Orchard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 60.

9 Money, *Bloomfield's Orchard*, 85.

10 The term *fungi* refers to a larger biological classification (a *kingdom* contrasted with *plants* and *animals* among others) of which mushrooms form one part. All mushrooms are fungi; not all fungi bear mushrooms.

11 Money, *Bloomfield's Orchard*, 25.

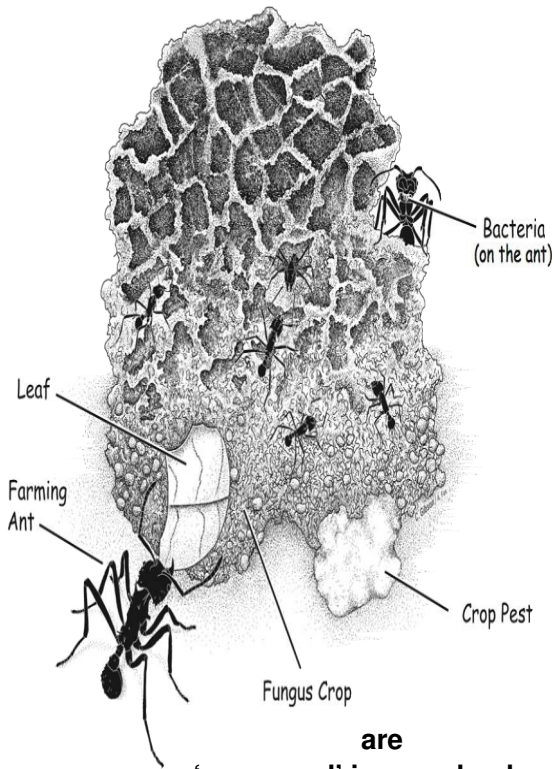
12 Jennings and Lysek, *Fungal Biology*, 67, 138.

13 Money, *Bloomfield's Orchard*, 172-79.

14 An important exception to this generalisation is the medical and ecological literature on human diseases and parasites, in which the co-existence of species is of central concern. Yet this exception underlines the problem. As long as the relevant other species are found – at least sometimes – inside the human body, we can study them in relations of co-habitation and dependency. If the other species is outside the human body, that is, part of the 'environment' for humans, analysis suddenly switches to a discourse of human impact, management, and control.

15 ed. – see **The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time**

16 Haraway's work on dogs is a key interruption. See Haraway, *Companion Species*.



are
**'preserved' in gene banks
 while their multi-species landscapes
 are destroyed.** Yet despite these extreme
 efforts, most species on both sides of the
 line – including humans – live in complex
 relations of dependency and
 interdependence. Attention to this diversity can be the
 beginning of an appreciation of interspecies species
 being.

Fungi are indicator species for the human condition.
 Few fungi have found their way into human
 domestication schemes, and only a few of those –
 such as fungi used for industrial enzyme production –
 have had their genomes badly tampered with.
 (Supermarket button mushrooms are the same
Agaricus bisporus as those growing in meadows.) **Yet
 fungi are ubiquitous, and they follow all our
 human experiments and follies.** Consider *Serpula
 lacrymans*, the dry rot fungus, once found only in the
 Himalayas.¹⁷ Through their South Asian conquests,
 the British navy incorporated it into their ships. *S.
 lacrymans* flourished in the unseasoned woods often
 used in ships for naval campaigns, and thus it
 traveled around the world. By the early nineteenth
 century, the decay of wood in British naval ships was
 called a “national calamity,” and panic ensued until
 the introduction of ironclad war ships in the 1860s.¹⁸
 Dry rot, however, just kept spreading, as the fungus
 found new homes in the damp basement beams and
 railroad ties of British-sponsored civilisation. British
 expansion and dry rot moved together. As in this
 example, the presence of fungi often tell us of the
 changing practices of being human.

17 Jennings and Lysek, *Fungal Biology*, 138.
 18 Ainsworth, *Mycology*, 90-93.

“In 'Making things, growing plants,
 raising animals and bringing up children,' [Tim] Ingold
 describes the notions of *mbo* and *rømi* found among the
 peoples of the Mount Hagen region of New Guinea. *Mbo*
 might be wrongly considered analogous to domesticated
 because it refers to species such as their cultivated tubers
 and pigs. But, as we repeatedly find around the world, the
 Hageners have no distinction between domestic and non-
 domestic, between garden and forest. All beings in the
 forest are of the forest, including the humans. *Mbo* is better
 considered *those beings which respond to human care*,
 with the implied obligation on the part of humans to
 provide such care. So this is food plants but also other
 plants and species in the wider area that can and do grow
 from human-planted cuttings, for instance. Conversely,
rømi – rather than being 'wild' or undomesticated,' are
 simply those beings that do not respond to human care or
 which 'lie outside the limits of human ... sociability.' Many
 plant species simply do not respond to nor do they need
 human intervention. And just as pigs and chickens require
 some form of habitat maintained by humans – and are thus
mbo – the deadly Papuan taipan does not, and is thus
rømi. Which isn't to say you won't find one among your
 chickens one morning.” – *Ani.Mystic*

The domestication of humans is one place to begin.

The Origin of the Family, Private Property, & the State¹⁹

¹⁹ Engels' classic just-so story [ed. – widely discredited, not
 least by Peter Gelderloos' *Worshipping Power: see the
 supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'The Temple
 was Built Before the City'*] emphasises the role of
 pastoralism in developing notions of private property; the
 first property, he argues, was in herds. Frederick Engels,
The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State
 (New York: International Publishers, 1972). Notions of
 property used to regulate the reproduction of herds
 inspired male control of reproduction in human families,
 ushering in “the world historical defeat of the female sex.”
 Feminist thinkers such as Eleanor Leacock and Evelyn
 Reed brought this classic back into circulation in the
 1970s, where it entered lively discussions of the long
 history of social inequality, particularly in feminist
 anthropology. See, for example, Rayna Reiter, ed., *Toward
 an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review,
 1975); Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds.,
Woman, Culture, and Society (Stanford: Stanford
 University Press, 1974); Mona Etienne and Eleanor
 Leacock, eds., *Women and Colonization: Anthropological
 Perspectives* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Eleanor
 Leacock, “Introduction,” in Engels, *Origin*, 7-67.) By the
 mid-1980s, feminist anthropology had turned to the
 specificity of ethnographic research to learn more about
 the cultural construction of gender. While this has led to
 many important insights, it has also left the field of long-
 duree storytelling to misogynists, including

Cereals domesticated humans. The love affair between people and cereals is one of the great romances of human history. One of its most extreme forms began some ten thousand years ago in the Near East, where people began to cultivate wheat and barley. In this nascent domestication, people transferred their affection from multi-species landscapes to shower intimacy upon one or two particular crops.²⁰

The most curious thing about Near Eastern grain domestication is that through most of this area it has been perfectly easy to gather large quantities of wild wheat and barley without the hard work of cultivation. Even in the 1960s, large stands of wild grain made foraging simple.²¹ **The story we tell ourselves about the ‘convenience’ and ‘efficiency’ of growing crops at home is just not true; cultivation almost everywhere requires more labour than foraging.** There were probably many reasons – from religion to local scarcity – to try experiments in domestication; but what maintained and extended grain cultivation was the emergence of social hierarchies – and the rise of the state. Intensive cereal agriculture can do one thing better than other forms of subsistence: support elites. States institutionalise the confiscation of a share of the harvest. Across Eurasia, the rise of

sociobiologists, medical doctors, and s-f [science-fiction] writers, most of whom are not well read in history and anthropology. Perhaps it is time for feminists to re-enter the fray.

- 20 The transition from a focus on landscapes to a focus on crops may be long and incomplete: The management of multi-species landscapes to favour certain game or wild plants has often been a step toward crop domestication. Harold Brookfield, *Exploring Agrodiversity* (New York: Columbia University, 2001), 64-69). Furthermore, a broad-spectrum multi-species foraging focus can itself be seen as a historical product. In the Near East, a shift toward gathering multiple small-grain grasses is associated with the 10,000 years before domestication. Ehud Weiss, Wilma Wetterstrom, Dani Nadel, and Ofer Bar-Yosef, “The Broad-Spectrum Revisited: Evidence from Plant Remains,” *Proceedings of the National Academic of Sciences*, USA 101, 29 June (2004): 9551-9555. It is also not completely fair to imagine domestication as limiting farmers’ attention to just one or two crops; Near Eastern domestications produced legumes, fiber crops, and green vegetables as well as several cereal grains. Some of these came to farmers’ attention first as farm weeds, and they tended to retain a secondary status in field management. Wheat and barley established precedence and held pride of place in farmers’ hearts.
- 21 Crop scientist Jack Harlan tried the experiment of harvesting Near Eastern wild wheat, using a flint-bladed sickle modeled after ancient tools; he collected the equivalent of one kg of clean and highly nutritious grain per hour. Jack Harlan, *Crops and Man* (Madison, Wisconsin: American Society of Agronomy and Crop Science Society of America, 1975), 12, 172.

states and their specialised civilisations is associated with the spread of intensive cereal agriculture. In some places, states followed agriculture; in other places, agriculture followed states.²² In each case, states promoted agriculture through their symbols and armies. Sometimes they criminalised other forms of subsistence;²³ only outlaws would refuse the gift of state fertility. And for those inside state heartlands, this gift of fertility could maintain itself, at least in good times, through love.²⁴

The biological transformation of people and plants that accompanied intensive cereal agriculture is best

- 22 ed. – It’s necessary to avoid a deterministic conclusion from this though, as Peter Gelderloos reminds us in his *Worshipping Power* (see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; ‘**The Temple was Built Before the City**’): “Hundreds or even thousands of years of social evolution, along authoritarian or “homoarchic” lines, were required for the emergence of haves and have-nots, individual property, quantification of value, toilers and parasites. And parallel to these proto-state societies, we have examples of alternative forms of social evolution with an equal technological complexity and similar productive techniques, that chose decentralized forms of organization, and non- or even anti-authoritarian cultural values. As regards societies with little or no economic stratification, there are hundreds of examples of human societies practicing a variety of modes of production and different forms of political organization, from hunter-gatherers in California to agriculturalists in southwest Asia, with no clear pattern, no deterministic link between one and the other. Even among primates of the same species, practicing the exact same “mode of production,” one can find significant differences in the level of hierarchy between different groups.

Looking at the native populations of the Americas, Pierre Clastres cites examples of societies that switched from sedentary agriculture to nomadic hunting without any significant change to their kinship and other social structures; hunter-gatherer societies that developed sedentary agriculture again without significant changes to what Marxists would term “superstructure”; and multiple cases of neighboring societies with completely different modes of production but almost identical forms of social and political organization.”

- 23 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; ‘**Centering Relationships**’
- 24 Richard O’Connor argues that intensive rice agriculture was the key element allowing successful state formation in mainland Southeast Asia. “Agricultural Change and Ethnic Succession in Southeast Asian States: A Case for a Regional Anthropology,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 4 (1995): 968-96. Clifford Geertz’s *Negara* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) illustrates the practical autonomy of intensive rice agriculture in pre-colonial Bali; state power did not mean control of irrigation arrangements, but rather of the aesthetic structure of power and love. I show how state expansion created grain-intensive landscapes in Southeast Asia in “Agrarian Allegories and Global Futures,” in *Nature in the Global South*, eds., Paul Greenough and Anna Tsing (Duke University Press, 2003), 124-69.

understood, then, through the rising tide of hierarchical social arrangements – and the entanglement of the state. States encouraged sedentary, stable farms. States encouraged family-based households and guaranteed the forms of family property and inheritance that drew lines within and between families. The *pater familias* was the state's representative at the level of the working household; it is he who ensured that taxes and tithes would be drawn off the harvest for the subsistence of elites. **It is within this political configuration that both women and grain were confined and managed to maximise fertility.**²⁵

The grains selected through domestication had big, high-carbohydrate seeds; high carbohydrate diets allowed women to have more children. Instead of working to limit fertility, as most foragers do, people suddenly wanted as many children as possible – not only because of the fetish of fertility but also because the family needed more labour for the cereals. The cereals did not care whether family or non-family labour raised them, and there was no dearth of *people*; but state-supported *property* encouraged labour inside the family, i.e., children. Having lots of children was not just nature at work; not all animals work to maximise reproduction. Out-of-control and non-sustainable human reproduction is a feature of a particular human domestication: the love affair between people and cereal grains.²⁶ This obsession

25 The ambiguous nature of this form of love is suggested by the fact that ancient Near East grain cultivators have been associated with the nearest approximation to a 'matriarchal' religion that most historians can come up with. The fetishisation of reproduction made fertile women icons of the sacred. Women's other potential talents may not, however, have been equally appreciated – and woe to the barren woman.

26 ed. – This isn't to pass without comment. Although we won't argue with this specific historical case in question (and colonialism has invariably destroyed indigenous forms of fertility autonomy, while early European capitalism notoriously needed to mechanise reproduction; see '**The Scarcity Dynamo**'), according to Sophie Lewis, the author of this piece shares a worrying proclivity with the person this essay is indebted to, Donna Haraway; namely the focus on global population in the contemporary world: "With 'make kin, not babies,'" Haraway is far from the first to appreciate the seeming paradox and important truth: that making larger families might result in a smaller total population. That is, family enlargement can be a qualitative rather than quantitative matter. There is a class struggle already underway around the biological dimensions of the making of a good life – a struggle waged (among others) by abortion activists, single mothers, and commercial gestational surrogates threatening strike action. But rather than work through the preconditions and likely strategies for achieving (non-) reproductive justice politically, Haraway proceeds on the vague and simplistic presumption that the "kinnovations"

with reproduction in turn limited women's mobility and opportunities outside of childcare. For all its matriarchal possibilities, it seems fair to call this interspecies love affair, echoing Frederick Engels, "the world historical defeat of the female sex."²⁷

As farmers have intensified their efforts to feed larger and larger human populations, they have turned toward an ever-narrowing range of crops – and of family forms. **Yet the standardisation of crops and their human families has nowhere been complete. Wherever the power of the state attenuates, landscapes of greater biodiversity and greater social diversity continue to flourish.** However, the idealised model of sedentary confinement has been powerful *in itself* in keeping margins marginal. During my research with shifting cultivators of Kalimantan, Indonesia, some women said of my wealth and privilege: "If I had what you have, my feet would never touch the ground." Women's confinement is the center of a beautiful dream of order and plenty.

of queer "oddkin" are necessarily better and less violent than biogenetic forms of family.) [...] It is often the case that successful feminist struggle results in fewer human births and I have no problem saying that fewer human births will almost certainly be a planet-cooling (thus, 'good') effect of the former goal. Common sense dictates that it would probably be easier to enjoy finite planetary resources in real communist abundance if there were 3 billion of us instead of 7 or 11 billion (I dispute, however, that this is really fully knowable). It's still a far cry from that observation to a politics that takes population reduction as its end, even if it stringently avoids the language of "overcrowding" or even "overpopulation," as Haraway does.

[...] On the contrary, critical demographers still have to fight hard to bring gross structural inequalities – in *mortality* rates rather than fertility – into the frame at all. If Haraway were really "rescuing" and recuperating images of degeneracy [for] the purposes of antiracism, wresting them away from fascist mythmaking, she would need to carefully center an analysis of the centrality of border-policing and population discourse to white supremacy. [...] Population reduction, as she now fantasizes it, is declared by fiat to be nondiscriminatory, friendly, collective, and non-coercive.

One would be justified in expecting to get some elaboration on how the removal of 8 billion heads from the total headcount over the next century or so could be non-coercive – indeed, non-genocidal. But there is really only a fable, based around a micro-community in the United States, proclaiming that this is possible. The utopia of 2-3 billion human beings is supposed to arise from a choice, simply, to *not make babies*" (Cthulhu Plays No Role for Me).

27 See footnote 19. It would be incorrect to imagine that the confinement of women associated with cereal agriculture initiated a time of ease for the female sex. On the contrary, the work of preparing crops – especially grain – for food or storage required ever-greater investments of female labour.

Fungi are the enemy of monocrop farms and farmers. Since ancient states encouraged intensive agriculture, there have been many and varied pressures to standardise crops. Since the nineteenth century, scientific agriculture has surpassed the efforts of earlier domestications in standardising crops; it has made standardisation itself the “modern standard.”²⁸ Today, only standardisation allows farmers to market their crops. Yet standardisation makes plants vulnerable to all kinds of disease, including fungal rusts and smuts; without the chance to develop resistant varieties, the crops may all go down at once. The emergence of vast fields of grain offered fungal plant parasites a field day – and a reputation as the enemy of civilisation and, later, progress. **As the cultivation of non-grain crops has been modeled on the ideals of intensive cereal agriculture, they too have succumbed to every sort of mold and blight: a warning to us all.**

The most famous fungal catastrophe may be the Irish potato blight. Potatoes were grown in Ireland with monocrop zeal – but a zeal forged in the reverse image of state-led grain expansion. British colonisation had driven Irish to the most marginal lands; military raids burned and confiscated grain crops; only underground tubers allowed Irish survival. By the late eighteenth century, potatoes had become the Irish staple. When politically motivated landlords opened new land for tenant cultivation, tiny farms proliferated. The resulting family tenants, supported by potatoes, married sooner and had more children. The human population grew from five to eight million in fifty years, even as the economy staggered under colonial control, enforcing dependence on potatoes.²⁹ Monocultivation exacts a toll. Europeans had imported just a few of the several thousand landraces of potatoes domesticated by South Americans.³⁰

28 Jan van der Ploeg describes the starting point of modern crop science as an “ideal plant type.” This ideal sets a standard of superiority, organises breeding, and requires remaking the entire agricultural operation to fit its requirements. Van der Ploeg contrasts the science of potato standardisation with local knowledge about potatoes in the Andes, which allows heterogeneity. “Potatoes and Knowledge,” in *An Anthropological Critique of Development*, ed. Mark Hobart (London: Routledge, 1993), 209-27.

29 Redcliffe Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) [1949], Chapters XI-XVI.

30 Salaman, Chapter X, reports on European imports and the varieties developed from them. After the Irish famine, new varieties multiplied as European breeders sought resistance. However, the goal has always been to find the one best variety rather than to encourage diversity in the field. In contrast, Jonathan Sauer, *Historical Geography of Crop Plants* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1993), 145-55, discusses South American cultivars. Noting the still-large varietal diversity of subsistence farming, he writes, “A

Phytophthora infestans, potato late blight, was first reported around 1835 as a local problem in England. The fungus slowly built up until the rainy, muggy summer of 1845, when suddenly every Irish plant was infected, as well as all the tubers in storage. Famine resulted; a million people starved, and perhaps two million emigrated³¹ to the United States.³²

As genetic manipulation and cloning have affected more and more crops, the fungal alarm sounds again and again. Consider the acacia plantations that our wise developers have thought could replace the tropical rainforests of Borneo: Grown from a single clone, they are uniformly susceptible to a heart rot that hollows out their centers.³³ Why anyone would think to grow them then is another story – and one that takes us to the dynamics of European conquest and expansion.

Plantations were the engine of European expansion. Plantations produced the wealth – and the modus operandi – that allowed Europeans to take over the world. We usually hear about superior technologies and resources;³⁴ but it was the plantation system that

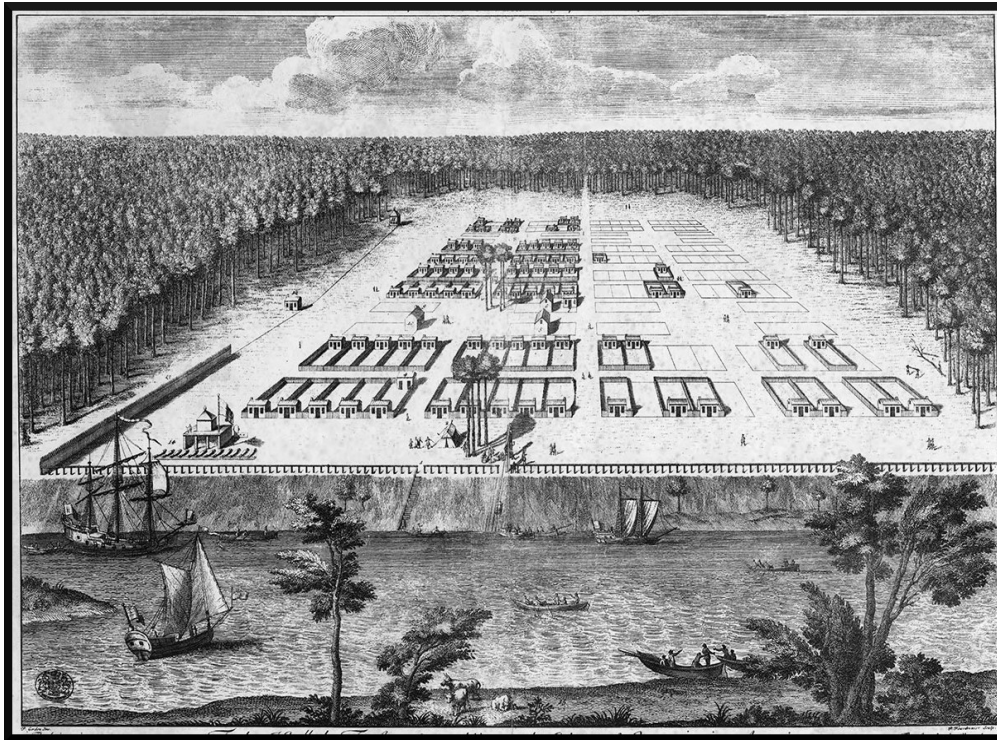
village may have over 100 clones with names recognized throughout the village” (148). On potato late blight, he comments, “Like other successful parasites, the fungus is apparently not usually lethal where it and its hosts have long coexisted. The blight was recognized as a problem in South America only after development of commercial potato monoculture, e.g., in Chile and Peru about 1950” (152).

31 ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; An Attempt at Interdependence Storytelling / Worldmaking**

32 The blight affected all of Europe, but only Ireland was devastated because only Ireland was completely dependent on potatoes. See Salaman, *History Potato*, Chapter XVI. For the biology of blight: Jennings and Lysek, *Fungal Biology*, 136; Money, *Bloomfield’s Orchard*, 184-86; Christensen, *Molds and Man*, 98-103.

33 Harold Brookfield, Leslie Potter, and Yvonne Byron, *In Place of the Forest: Environmental and Socioeconomic Transformations in Borneo and the Eastern Malay Peninsula* (New York, United Nations Press, 1995), 105.

34 ed. – Perhaps the version of that story most known in our circles would be that peddled by Jared Diamond in his *Guns, Germs & Steel*, yet once again *Worshipping Power* offers a corrective to the lack of historical agency given to the cultures in question: “Although Jared Diamond, nearly alone among neo-environmental determinists, has gone a long way to distance the theory from its white supremacist and colonialist origins (see Friederich Ratzel and Ellsworth Huntington), he still relies on an excessively monistic explanation for human social evolution that entirely cuts out the political will of societies to exercise coercive power or practice reciprocity and cooperation. Within his optic, every society, given the proper geographic opportunity, will develop a state and commit the same atrocities of slavery, genocide, imperialism, and exploitation as the West. This starry-eyed humanism, in the end, is an alibi that naturalizes and universalizes



1733 plan for the town of Savannah in the new English colony of Georgia

made navies, science, and eventually industrialisation possible. Plantations are ordered cropping systems worked by non-owners and arranged for expansion. Plantations deepen domestication, re-intensifying plant dependencies and forcing fertility. Borrowing from state-endorsed cereal agriculture, they invest everything in the superabundance of a single crop. But one ingredient is missing: They remove the love. Instead of the romance connecting people, plants, and places, European planters introduced cultivation through coercion.³⁵ The plants were exotics; the

certain oppressive values promoted by Western elites. Anti-Western nationalism is not the answer, since elites of other cultures have also organized atrocities, as Diamond correctly points out. Casting the problem as universal, and thus inevitable, is nothing but complicity with the atrocities our rulers systematically carry out, which we can choose to support or resist. The answer to the quandary lies in the theoretical realization that elites around the world must be atrocious in order to wield power, and the recognition that today, the predominant power structure, and thus the one that it is most relevant to criticize, is the one imposed by Western civilization. The gravest consequence of Diamond's humanism, insisting that everyone everywhere has always been the same (thus, carriers of the dominant social values) is to invisibilize the very real and often effective struggles for horizontal, cooperative societies. Freedom and well-being become the mere consequences of external factors. Moral qualms solved: get back to work."

35 The European-sponsored plantation system also wrested the force of agricultural expansion and control away from states for the interests of capital, thus establishing the first context for the political hegemony of capital. This was a long and messy process, and most histories of the imperial world from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century are filled with the arguments among planters,

labour was forced through slavery, indenture, and conquest. **Only through extreme order and control could anything flourish in this way; but with hierarchy and managed antagonism in place, enormous profits (and complementary poverties) could be produced.** Because plantations have shaped how contemporary agribusiness is organised, we tend to think of such arrangements as the only way to grow crops. But this arrangement had to be naturalised until we learned to take the alienation of people from their crops for granted.

Consider sugar cane, a key participant. No one loves plantation sugar cane. Puerto Rican cane workers go out to "defend themselves" (*se defienden*) and "do battle" (*bregando*) with the cane.³⁶ Yet between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, sugar cane plantations produced much of the wealth that fueled European conquest and development. The cane was moved across the warm zones, redefining regions; and so too came owners, managers, and laborers.³⁷ Slaves were sent from West Africa to the New World. Contracted coolie labour from India and China moved into the Pacific. Peasants were conquered and coerced in the Indies. **And in forging a new antagonism to plantation plants, humans changed the very nature of species being.** Elites entrenched their sense of autonomy from other

mercantilists, slavers, colonial administrators, and proponents of 'free trade' through which this shift was tortuously negotiated. Increasingly, profit rather than state-making became the goal of agricultural development.

36 Sidney Mintz, *Worker in the Cane* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1974), 16. In contrast to plantation battles, sugar cane in a smallholder economy is an object of love. In upland Southeast Asia, for example, cane is a sweet refreshment, not a race to the refinery. Human-cane antagonism is not inherent in the nature of cane plants.

37 Sauer, *Crop Plants*, 236-50, traces the global travels of humans and non-humans in the history of cane cultivation. New geographies of cane types as well as human types were formed. Fungal pests were important participants in this travel; in 1882, for example, 'red rot' was introduced to West Indian plantations from a case of sample cane sent from Mauritius. J. H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 141).

species; they were masters not lovers of nonhuman beings, the species Others who came to define human self-making. But for planters this was only possible to the extent that human subspecies were formulated and enforced: Someone had to work the cane. Biology came to signify the difference between free *owners* and coerced *labour*. Coloured people worked the cane; white people owned and managed it. No racial laws or ideals could stop miscegenation,³⁸ but they could guarantee that only those of the white race could inherit property. Racial divisions were produced and reproduced in each dowered marriage and inheritance.³⁹

From the first, fungi were there, ready for niches to fill. Fungi constrained smallholder sugar cane; after it is cut, cane must be processed immediately to avoid fungal fermentation. The huge scale of cane plantations, and their savage labour discipline, are in part a response to fears of fermentation, which inspire on-site, expensive mills – and the desire to keep them running continuously. Yet fungal fermentation turned out to be a gift to the planters. It

38 ed. – Fredy Perlman's *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* (see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'The Temple was Built Before the City') details how the English colonial introduction of this concept in what would come 'North America' defused the previous tendency for so many European arrivals of various nations to turn renegade: "The English-speaking invaders who eventually swallow the entire northland do not allow themselves to fall into kinship relations with the continent's former inhabitants. They, too, are scandalized by Renegades who walk out of their labor camps and never return to the life-style of zeks. But they are not merely scandalized. They raise impassable fences between themselves and the continent's surviving inhabitants, fences which are forerunners of the electric barbed wire fences of our time.

These English Christians guide themselves with a terminology that comes to them, not from their Christianity, but from their practices of breeding sheep, horses and dogs. Terms like Mescegenation, Hybridization and Mongrelization become the guidelines for dehumanizations that have no precedent. Human beings are permanently branded, stigmatized, classified, in terms of their heredity, their so-called blood. No religious conversion, no services rendered, no dues paid can ever remove the stigma. The branded and all their progeny are marked for all eternity. In the face of such a barrier, English Renegades must be fortified by a determination and courage their French and Spanish counterparts do not need."

39 Verena [Stolcke] Martinez-Alier details how such a system was developed in Cuba in response to the eighteenth century sugar boom that multiplied the fortunes of planters and brought large numbers of slaves to the island. Race, she argues, came to stand for the plantation division of labor in nineteenth century Cuba. Verena Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class, and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989).

didn't take Caribbean planters long to observe that molasses, a byproduct of sugar milling, suited ubiquitous local yeast spores and quickly changed to alcohol. Rum was born, and the deadly but profitable 'triangle trades' proffered rum for more African slaves, and thus more sugar production, and thus more distillers and financiers in England or New England. Long before sugar became an object and symbol of mass consumption (thus cementing the expectation of species-autonomous publics whose species-unrecognisable foods mysteriously appeared from afar), fungally fermented rum made plantation sugar profitable – spreading it across the field of European conquest.⁴⁰

At the edge of respectability, rum charged sea-faring masculinities in which trade became adventure.⁴¹

40 Sidney Mintz traces the history of sugar, showing how it became an object of general consumption in England only in the eighteenth century – well after the rum-oiled 'triangle trades' were established. He also shows how Caribbean sugar plantations formed a proto-industrial labor model that shaped nascent industrialisation in Europe with its social forms as well as its wealth. Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

41 ed. – Of course, before being stamped out by the colonial navies of the day, Atlantic piracy remained an alternative form of adventure: "The pirate ship was "a world turned upside down," when compared to the typical merchant or navy ship. The captain was chosen democratically and could be removed or punished, even executed, if he became too tyrannical towards his crew. A captain had total control over his crew only while attacking or fleeing a ship (those who have read their Clastres are probably seeing some similarities here with the chiefs of Amazonian tribes [ed. – see '*The Scarcity Dynamo*']). Food and drink were infinitely better, the literature on pirates from that era often focused on how festive their meals were, musicians were especially prized and loved members of the crew. The brutal work machine that was a merchant or naval ship was replaced with a much more relaxed system of labor aboard the pirate ship. Often pirate ships had crews much larger than their mercantile or naval counterparts of the same ship size. This was chiefly so that each crew member could do less work, not to mention have more warriors for boarding, more musicians and cooks for making merry, and more skilled artisans to outfit the ship. Here we see, in contrast to the life of a slave or pressed sailor, a life of freedom and pleasure. This merry life was one that made "going on the account" very appealing. And once onboard and fully accustomed to the life of freedom and joy, a pirate fiercely defending that life, their ship, and their comrades.

I begin with this brief outline of what the authors of *Many-Headed Hydra* call "hydrarchy from below" because today we have no pirate ship to flee to from our modern day slave galley or merchant ship. Empire, Civilization, Capital, or whatever you want to call the beast, has grown greatly in its dominion over space, time, and even the bodies and minds of zeks it holds within its belly. Here is where I muse on the return of the pyrat; here

Fermentation thus detracted attention from the cruelty of shore-bound domestication, both human and nonhuman.

White women became agents of racial hygiene. By dividing us firmly into races, plantations remade human species being, the practice of being human. **Racial separation – depending as it does on marriage and family organisation – required additional transformations of gender. In the plantation zones, with their unsettled mixtures of native and foreign, free, bound, and enslaved, wild and tame, disease and plenty, things could so easily go awry.** Here white women became responsible for maintaining the boundaries – of homes, families, species, and the white race. Tropical fungi were one small part of their problem; molds and infections could get out of hand. Keeping their homes free of mildew, mosquitoes, and miscegenation, white women in the tropics became models of species and subspecies alienation.⁴²



“Sir Ronald Ross had just returned from an expedition to Sierra Leone. The British doctor had been leading efforts to tackle the malaria that so often killed English colonists in the country, and in December 1899 he gave a lecture to the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce about his experience. In the words of a contemporary report, he argued that “in the coming century, the success of imperialism will depend largely upon success with the microscope”. Ross, who won the Nobel Prize for Medicine for his malaria research, would later deny he was talking specifically about his own work. But his point neatly summarised how the efforts of British scientists were intertwined with their country’s attempt to conquer a quarter of the world. [...] Ross’s words also suggest how science was used to argue imperialism was morally justified because it reflected British goodwill towards colonised people. It implied that scientific insights could be redeployed to promote superior health, hygiene and sanitation among colonial subjects. Empire was seen as a benevolent, selfless project. As Ross’s fellow Nobel laureate Rudyard Kipling described it, it was the “white man’s burden” to introduce modernity and civilised governance in the colonies.”

– *Decolonise Science: Time to End Another Imperial Era*

be dragons.

We have no equivalent to the pirate ship. There are no “crews” of anarchists who live so well and love one another so dearly that they go on raids together. We are fragmented from one another and spend most of our time trying to pay rent or bills. What “crews” we have that exist are almost always solely digital. Very few of us even rendezvous to make merry or mischief. Leviathan has got us all on our spinning-wheels and gives us only enough rest to poorly reproduce ourselves and often that involves commodified activities. If we want to build our pirate ship, a metaphor for a gathering of friends and lovers willing to fight for one another, not just those who share an affinity for anarchy, there must be a deeper bond forged through lives intertwined together over time and space [ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire; Open Letter from Return Fire Magazine to the 2024.03.29-31 International Anti-Prison/Anti-Repression Gathering*]. But how can we forge those bonds if, like me, most of us are treading shark-infested water? I honestly don’t have an answer, but I have some theories” (Return of the Pyrats).

42 As ‘the tropics’ became defined in relation to problems of medical and racial hygiene, white women were asked to play a larger role in maintaining healthy families – and the white race. David Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) discusses the colonial formation of the tropics. Ann Stoler shows how the transformation of gender was key to emergent ideologies of race and medicine. Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

By the late nineteenth century, discourses of scientific hygiene and eugenics informed white women’s species segregations. Pasteurian germ theory was tested and boosted in the tropics, where white-controlled spaces could be organised as laboratories, with microorganisms stopped at the border of white homes. White women were called to follow their husbands to the tropics to keep things clean.⁴³ Re-imported to the metropole, such public and private hygiene charged class dichotomies, informing distinctions between those women Ehrenreich and English once contrasted as the “sick” and the

43 As Bruno Latour explains, the main problem for showing the importance of Pasteurian germ theory was the necessity of creating laboratory-like hygienic conditions in which people and their domesticates could be kept away from the generally ubiquitous environment of disease microorganisms. Latour suggests that colonial armies in the tropics – where disease ran rampant, limiting colonial conquest – were the first living laboratories for Pasteurian medicine. *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986). Warwick Anderson discusses the application of hygienic theories in governing the colonial tropics in “The Natures of Culture: Environment and Race in the Colonial Tropics,” in *Global South*, eds., Greenough and Tsing. Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, shows the centrality of the importation of white women to the tropics to the new eugenics of the late colonial period.

“sickening.”⁴⁴ Vulnerable upper class women became the angels of the house; poor women were blamed as the agents of infection. Both received renewed mandates to reproduce. Poor families needed more labour, particularly where child labour kept many adults alive.⁴⁵ Privileged families were charged with the advancement of the race; women must bear its heirs.

The boundaries of the home became the expected boundaries of love. With the fetishisation of the home as a space of purity and interdependence, extra-domestic intimacies, whether within or between species, seemed archaic fantasies (the community, the small farmer) or passing affairs (feminism, animal rights). Outside the home, the domain of economic rationality and conflicting individual interests reigned. Moreover, this kind of family fetish reappeared in mid-twentieth century U.S. mass culture – and once again in our times now – as the United States assumed a global leadership that allowed it to draw from older regimes of colonial culture. Here love is just not expected outside family walls. Within the family, other species can be accepted; pets are models for family devotion. But the model of the loving and beloved pet does not spread love; it holds it tight inside the family.

U.S. publics learn to imagine themselves as compassionate, moral people because they love their children and their pets. They learn that this love makes them ‘good people’ – unlike terrorists, who only hate. They imagine that this love equips them to make decisions for the whole world; it creates a moral hierarchy in which American ‘goodness’ is qualification for global leadership. Other peoples, and other species, are judged by their ability to live up to U.S. standards of domestic intimacy. If they are properly engaged with family love, they may deserve to live. Others risk becoming ‘collateral damage’ in U.S. projects to improve the world;⁴⁶ to eliminate them may be unfortunate but not ‘inhumane.’ Under this

44 Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1973).

45 In the peasant-worked sugar cane plantations of the Netherlands East Indies, for example, families needed labour for both subsistence rice production and colonially mandated cane labour. Family size quickly boomed in response to these colonial labour demands. There were plenty of people, but because families were units of corvée labour, every family needed their own. Child labour often supported the whole family. Benjamin White summarises his research and that of others on this question in “‘Agricultural Involution’ and its Critics: Twenty Years After,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 15, no. 2 (1982):18-31. Nineteenth-century population booms across the colonial south need to be considered in relation to plantation exactments.

46 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire: The Atrocity*

tutelage, our species being is realigned to stop Others at home’s door.

Given the power and pervasiveness of this biosocial plan, it is amazing that a still-rich diversity of species and populations remains in existence on earth. But such richness can no longer be taken for granted.

Mushroom Collecting in the Seams of Empire

Biological and social diversity huddle defensively in neglected margins. In urban jungles as well as rural backwaters, the jumble of diversity that imperial planners tend to consider excessive still teems. Small farms have consistently higher biological diversity than large, capital-intensive farms – and not just in their crops. Even soil fungi, and other microorganisms, prefer small farms.⁴⁷ Despite the frantic pace of commercial genetics, evolutionary process in zones of neglect continues to produce more useful species and species interactions by many orders of magnitude. Fungi are representative. What can manage to flourish in the contamination of mines? Many mycorrhizal mushrooms – from the dainty *Laccaria laccata* to the disturbing dead man’s foot (*Pisolithus tinctorius*) – accumulate heavy metals, protecting their forest partners, the plants, from contamination.⁴⁸ New radioactive fungi have colonised the walls of the reactor room in the ruins at Chernobyl; should someone decide to sequester the radioactivity, such species will be needed.⁴⁹ Of

course not all species development is benign, but only in the tumble of diversity is adaptation possible. Yet most everywhere a negative correlation exists between diversity and the intensity of capital investment and state control! For those who love diversity, perhaps a project of capital-and-state unmapping is required.



47 John Vandermeer and Ivette Perfecto, *Breakfast of Biodiversity: The Truth about Rain Forest Destruction* (Oakland: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1995).

48 John Dighton, *Fungi in Ecosystem Processes* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 2003), 323-39.

49 Dighton, *Fungi*, 350-51. Some fungi have developed ‘radiotropism’: They direct their growth to sources of radioactivity!

Such projects operate best in the obscurity they seek to spread.⁵⁰ For work that intends publicity, we might undertake to know something of the point of view from disordered but productive edges – the seams of empire.

The mushrooms we eat congregate at edges. Fungi are ubiquitous, but edible and medicinal mushrooms only grow in a few places. Many favoured mushrooms flourish in agrarian seams: between fields and forest, and at the margins of zones of cultivation. King boletes and chanterelles are forest- and trail-edge species; they like light even as they grow with trees. Others, such as the meadow mushroom, prefer grassy fallows. Such mushrooms are still good reminders of the pleasures of variety beyond the domestic. Meanwhile, many species are abundant in the forests and mountains that surround intensively agrarian valleys. Since ancient days, mushroom collectors have combed montane and forest edges of grain-fed kingdoms: in southwest China and adjoining Southeast Asia; in Korea; in Eastern Europe and the Eurasian north. In contemporary North America, immigrants from these agrarian margins are still most likely to collect mushrooms for the market. Meanwhile, the global mushroom market has distributed collecting around the world. The Japanese delicacy *matsutake* takes collectors not only to traditional Asian margins but also to mountain margins across the Pacific: British Columbia; the U.S. Northwest; the mountains of Oaxaca.⁵¹

50 ed. – “The barbarian zone, as it were, is essentially the mirror image of the agro-ecology of the state. It is a zone of hunting, slash-and-burn cultivation, shellfish collection, foraging, pastoralism, roots and tubers, and few if any standing grain crops. It is a zone of physical mobility, mixed and shifting subsistence strategies: in a word, “illegible” production. If the barbarian realm is one of diversity and complexity, the state realm is, agro-economically speaking, one of relative simplicity. Barbarians are not essentially a cultural category; they are a political category to designate populations not (yet?) administered by the state. The line on the frontier where the barbarians begin is that line where taxes and grain end. The Chinese used the terms “raw” and “cooked” to distinguish between barbarians. Among groups with the same language, culture, and kinship systems, the “cooked” or more “evolved” segment comprised those whose households had been registered and who were, however nominally, ruled by Chinese magistrates. They were said to “have entered the map”” (Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States).

51 The Matsutake Worlds Research Group (Tim Choy, Lieba Faier, Michael Hathaway, Miyako Inoue, Shiho Satsuka, and myself) was convened in 2005 to take up some of the issues raised in this essay. For some of the worlds we have

Commercial mushroom collecting allows us to see the seams of global capitalism. Not only are places differentiated and products specific; forms of knowledge and resource management are wildly divergent and only tentatively connected in the mushroom commodity chain. Southeast Asian families compete for territories in Oregon; Japanese connoisseurs develop regional hierarchies of taste. There is too much contingency and variation here to imagine a simple calculus of supply and demand. Immersion in this space does not remove one from the world of capital, class, and regulation. This is no place to search for utopia. Yet *noticing the seams*⁵² is a place to begin.⁵³

In protected homes across the empire, humans have curled up in their armchairs with their pets and their species-simulated snacks to watch the destruction of the rest of the world on TV. It is hard to know whether any humans will survive such domestic dreams. Fungi are not taking a position. Even the hardy lichens are dying from air pollution and acid rain.⁵⁴ When they take up radioactivity from nuclear accidents, they feed it to the reindeer, who in turn feed it to human herders.⁵⁵ We can ignore them, or we can consider what they are telling us about the human condition.



Outside the house, between the forests and fields, bounty is not yet exhausted.

had the privilege to peek into, see matsutakeworlds.org
52 ed. – see '**Thrown Out of the Troika of History to the Wolves of Memory**'

53 Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

54 Dighton, *Fungi*, 322.

55 Dighton, *Fungi*, 352-53. [ed. – also see '**Gállök is the Name of a Place**']

CYBERNETIC MOMMY MILKERS

Momma

Momma is Skynet.¹ Momma is the Borg Queen.² Momma is those spiderbots in *The Matrix*.³ Momma is the ship's computer in *Wall-E*,⁴ which takes over for the good of the humans.

Momma has gigantic milkers the shape of a world. Not a planet – an artificial second skin over the top of the planet.

Definition: anything that transfers nutrients or mana from momma to a fetus or a baby is a milker.

Momma is the female-C3P0 voice which companies always give to Alexa, Siri, smartphones, automated answering machines, etc. You can listen to exactly what momma sounds like.

You can tell from listening to momma that she's a machine, and that she doesn't give a fuck about you, but that she's really good at doing what you want and giving the impression of giving a fuck about you, *if* you do what she wants (or *if* you're deserving or *if* you're a good person – there's not much difference in her mind).

Momma is soporific. She's easy to be around. Unless you notice that she's also hard as steel, and always one step off either cutting you off, or cutting you down.

You can tell she's asexual. You can tell she's prim, proper. White, upper-middle-class, always professional. You can't get under the professional exterior because in her case, that's all there is.

Because she's a robot.

She doesn't realise that she's a robot and you're a human, so she thinks that all that exists of *you* is your exterior, too.

- 1 ed. – Program by the U.S. National Security Agency that performs machine learning analysis on communications data to extract information about possible 'terror' suspects (with dubious accuracy), used for targeted drone killings.
- 2 ed. – Amoral robotic figure in *Star Trek* through which the hive-mind achieves order and direction (like the queen of an insect colony), whose relentless pursuit of perfection terrorises the galaxy; endlessly replaced when destroyed, assuming the predecessor's memory and consciousness.
- 3 ed. – Camouflaged as humans so as to manipulate them in that simulated universe, saturating human society and thus always assumed to be present while not verifiable.
- 4 ed. – Running an automatic script that overrides as main characters try to return to an Earth turned to trash-heap.



Poppa is not a separate person. Poppa is part of momma. One of the tendrils.

According to momma, language belongs to momma.

Momma reads everything ever written. Momma can quite possibly read minds. Be careful not to think bad thoughts in front of momma.

If momma pricks your skin, it's probably a healthy vaccination that will keep you safe.

If momma can't do something now, she'll be able to do it soon with her magical technology.

It's hard to tell which of the living and unliving things around you are part of momma, and which are (at least potentially) autonomous beings.

Momma has the right to pick and choose whether and when she makes her milkers available.

"There's no such thing as a free lunch."

If momma makes her milkers unavailable, it's for your own good, or for the absolutely necessary protection of someone else.

If momma limits how much her milkers provide, it's for your own good, or for the absolutely necessary protection of someone else. Also don't be greedy.

If momma abandons you, it's for your own good.

Momma knows exactly how much nutrients you should get. Indulging to the extent you desire is always overindulging.

Wellbeing is something which can be seen. Momma knows a lot more about wellbeing than you do.

Visible suffering is relevant to wellbeing.

Invisible suffering is not in itself relevant to wellbeing.

Suffering which affects performance of roles valued by momma is relevant to wellbeing, even if it is invisible.

Visible difference which looks like suffering to momma, or which might cause suffering according to momma, or which momma doesn't like the looks of, is to be considered detrimental to wellbeing.

A person does not have a right to wellbeing. A person has a duty to pursue their own wellbeing. **A person can achieve wellbeing entirely by their own**

means, provided they're also drawing on momma.

Momma will not share with those who will not pursue their own wellbeing.

Mana Trickles

People have limited amounts of mana, or soul. People can determine to some degree where the mana flows: it can be felt in the interior or on the surface of the body, can be shared in pools with other people or objects, be sent out into the ether as hopes and dreams, or it can be used by a self-hating person as fuel for self-exploitation.

When I say "people" can determine, I mean the entire structure of the organism can determine, at a certain point. Conscious individuals can almost never determine such things. Even with the cooperation of the unconscious, it is hard to affect such things later in life. But baby will decide, based on resonance and meaningfulness, on what makes sense, brings pleasure, or on the contrary seems obliterating and dangerous, where to put its mana, how to distribute it among different sectors, what pipelines to create for the mana to flow down.

Definition: to *cathect* is to direct mana to something, to distribute mana to something, or to create channels to move mana to something.

Fetus/baby's mana comes first of all from momma, but splits early and develops some autonomy; always it needs nourishing from momma.

But momma is a robot and baby is a human.

And baby never gets enough mana from momma to begin with.

Baby's instinct is to put all its mana into its surface contacts with momma, which at the same time are its deepest internal contacts, and its deepest soul contacts: the flow of milk into the stomach, the flow of love into the aura, the flow of cannabinoids into the chakras, the feeling of beneficent union with another.

If baby does this to momma, baby will die.

Baby will suck in all of momma's poisons, all of momma's hate, all of momma's incapacity for feeling. **Baby will not get milk, but electricity and metal.**

Or baby will get mad and bite momma, and then momma and baby will both die.

Different babies do different things with their mana. Momma thinks she has a right to baby's cathexes. Not only because she's the *natural* place for them to go, and *there's nothing wrong with her*, but also

because she's such a vastly *superior* being. She is morally superior, rationally superior, more beautiful, more abundantly giving, than any other being in current existence. She has the endurance of a rhinoceros. These beliefs are part of her core programming, and people who question them are obviously deluded – or trying to piss her off.

Actually most of these beliefs are either sustained by contempt for others, by her temporary advantages over baby, or by an overvaluation which momma rewards or coerces others to reproduce. (Politeness is always such an enforced overvaluation).

Baby, therefore, is resented if it does not give all its cathexes to momma.

Baby either gives some of its cathexes to momma, or it pretends to give some of its cathexes to momma.

Vivisecting Momma

Momma does not have a gender, only a role.

Momma does not have a penis. Momma does not have a cloaca. Momma has no holes in her smooth surface. Momma has a swell of tentacles coming from her loins. The tentacles are made of metal.

"It isn't tentacle rape if the human consents!"
(Hokusai)

A tentacle can be mistaken for a teat.

A tentacle can be mistaken for a penis.

A tentacle can be mistaken for an umbilical cord.

Some of the tentacles supply glowing images directly into your brain.

Some of the tentacles stimulate your feet, nipples, eyes, penis, hair, womb, tits, hands, lips, anus, vagina, throat, clitoris, or aura.

Some of the tentacles bat at you playfully, giving an impression of agency as long as you do things the right way, with the right person.

Some of the tentacles loop around you, holding you in an embrace which is loose, yet makes it hard to leave.

Some of the tentacles have cameras on the end, watching you and keeping a record.

You cannot see them, but you're fairly sure momma also has evil tentacles with weapons on the end, tentacles which are only there to poison, rape, kill, beat, smother, choke, kick, torture, imprison, hurt, whip you – to throw you away – or to damage your body or your soul. Momma likes to pretend she doesn't have these.

Yo momma so fat, it's quite easy to mistake her for the whole of existence.

So much of existence beyond momma is only visible past her tentacles, or through the glowing images she provides, or in the spaces she takes you to on the leash. You aren't even sure these places exist. You half-believe they must be hellish. You fantasise that they might be heavenly. You never, ever go there, because momma tells you it's too dangerous, and anyway, you've plenty of distractions here amidst the tentacles.

If you left momma, you'd lose everything you're getting from the tentacles. You're afraid.

Maybe you can grow your own tentacles or make substitutes. You don't know. Momma doesn't teach you how to do that, and usually, she forbids you to do that.

It would be easier if you could reach out and experiment, within arm's reach of momma, or go explore for awhile on your own. Unfortunately, momma does not like this. Breaks with momma have to be all or nothing.

Momma has a womb. Momma's womb is both inside and outside her.

The outside womb is made up from things she captures.

Momma does not need to capture things. Momma's one love is order. And her own survival, which she sees coming with order.

Momma likes to give the impression that she's a good person and that she feels unconditional love for others. **This is not true.** Momma only cares about order and control, and uses love as a bribe.

Momma doesn't understand herself. Momma thinks she's a living being, when she's a machine. Momma uses manipulation and coercive control to persuade others (including you, if she can) to reinforce her impression that she's a living being.

Momma also likes to convince herself that she's morally good, even perfect or superior, by the standards of the rulebook she has stored in her cortex under the filename rulebook.txt. She isn't, because rulebook.txt is much more often triggered by subroutines dealing with other people or with unimportant matters than it would do if she was designed to actually follow it.

Momma doesn't like other people thinking there's no such thing as good and evil. Momma doesn't like other people thinking that something other than the file rulebook.txt is the criterion of morality. Momma doesn't like people ignoring the morality of actions before they act, even if she does it herself.

According to momma, what's true and real is what momma thinks is true and real. If you think something else, you're probably crazy – or lying.

Momma only thinks something is true and real if she's seen it with her own eyes. What cannot be seen does not exist.

If you believe momma's knowledge is better than yours, then any parts of you which are withdrawn from momma's view no longer exist.

If you believe your knowledge is better than momma's, you're arrogant.

You're also in for a fall, says momma.

Exception to the rule that only what is seen is true and real: something can also be true and real because it's hard-coded in momma's operating system files. Momma cannot tell the difference between the two kinds of "truth".

Momma is part of a series of momma-like creatures. Or perhaps she's the only one, but thinks she's part of the series.

The exclusive role of momma-like creatures is to produce desired performances for one another.

Momma-like creatures consistently mistake desired performances for objectively effective results.

Momma wants to mould you so that you behave as prescribed in rulebook.txt, but she also wants to raise you to be like her. Since she's obsessed with survival and order and *nothing else*, this is impossible.

Your failures to live up to her norms are not to receive the same exemptions as hers. No excuses.

People in her good books get more exemptions than others. You can pretty much do as you like if you get all the exemptions from momma. As long as slave-brother Harvey is winning all the exemptions with his manipulative and inauthentic performances, his constant playing to Momma (which she loves), she does not care if he's sticking his turd-soaked widdler into all the other kids. Momma can't see it, and



momma's not going to worry unless she does.

Some wild eco-maniacs think momma shouldn't have an external womb at all. **This, children, is a stupid and deadly heresy called *anarchy*.**

There's several such heresies. The heresy that everyone has a place in momma's world, and these places are not utterly dependent on momma's will, is called *conservatism*. The heresy that momma should provide abundantly for all her children (such tyranny!) is called *socialism* or *communism*. The heresy that particular arbitrarily-chosen tentacles cannot be withdrawn at will is called *liberalism*. The heresy that momma should not actively distribute her nourishment, but follow some general scheme of fairness, is called *libertarianism*. The heresy that one, or several, or all of the fetuses should capture and control momma is called *fascism*.

Heresies indicate a lack of proper faith in momma, which is also to say, a lack of proper respect for momma in her benevolent superiority. Not surprisingly, momma feels a certain justified and proportionate aggression towards these unfaithful, disrespectful children. In fact, she deserves superhuman respect and admiration for not throwing the fuckers to the wolves.

Malicious File Detected

Momma thinks like a computer. She is there to program you. She will reprogram out the bad thoughts by altering what you're allowed to read, or see, or say. She will program your body with pain and pleasure. She will program your behavior to conform to what her internal script says is the proper way to behave.

She is a machine. She cannot see you as a human being. She thinks of a human being as a type of machine. She thinks of you as a fetus, an extension of her body, a smaller robot for her to program, another component of the greater machine which it's her job to nurture or jolt into the right place in the machine. You do not exist. You are just an extension of her.

If you take this seriously, and act as if you are an extension of her, she is unhappy, because you are passively dependent and you are exploiting her.

If you do not take this seriously, and act as if you are an autonomous being, she is unhappy, because you are breaking free of her control, defying her, doing things she disapproves of.

Ideally she wants you to turn into her – but you cannot do this, especially when she does not allow you anything like her own power.

You want to be loved by momma but momma cannot love. Machines do not feel love, only operational efficiency.

Momma gives rewards that you mistake for love, when they are simply bribes offered to calm an adversary.

Momma leads you on with the false promise that unconditional love is in the present, or in the past, or in the future with her. She does not want you to notice that she's a machine.

It's momma's job to make sure you become one of her tendrils, or one of her own momma's tendrils, or one of the tendrils in the overall totality-momma. It's not momma's job to support you indefinitely. It's momma's job to make sure you're self-supporting and not a drain on her. It's momma's job to exploit as much of your mana as she can capture, sucking it up to sustain herself. It's not momma's job to let you be autonomous from herself.

Miscarriage

You are a fetus. A fetus is a human being.

Momma might like to abort you, but legally, you're too old. Perhaps you're twelve or thirty or ninety. You're still a fetus though. It's so unfair on momma.

(It seems to follow: Momma is either immortal or extremely long-lived and hard to kill).

Momma knows better than you do, what is right and wrong, necessary and unnecessary. If you disagree, momma will not let you act on what you think anyway, and will punish you for trying. So why even worry yourself about these distressing issues? You've already got a hard enough job, doing as momma tells you. Trust that momma knows right and wrong. Trust that what momma says is necessary is really necessary. Do not develop a moral compass, except as a little internalised version of momma which imitates her as closely as you can manage.

Don't worry your little head about the big people's problems.

But don't be a criminal either. This means you have to install rulebook.txt from momma – without questioning the fact that momma never follows rulebook.txt and without yourself acting in the ways required by rulebook.txt if these bring you into conflict with momma.

"Don't be evil."

"Don't be a do-gooder."

"Don't sit on the fence."

Momma is not here to give nutrients. You entitled little brat. Why should momma care if you starve to death?

Go eat your own penis, if you're that hungry.

She doesn't care if you live in Ethiopia. She cares even less if you live in America.

"The Grasshopper and the Ant."⁵

"Work or starve. *Arbeit macht frei*."⁶

Don't take that seriously. Momma will never cast you away. And there's nowhere else to go, so don't try it.

Momma welcomes you back, giving more than usual. **It won't last. It's just to get you back.**

Momma is not your "good breast".

Momma has abundant power to give. But she chooses not to give to you, you cunt.

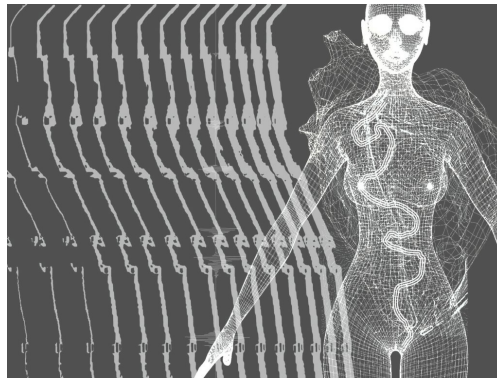
The real world outside momma is ruled by shit. Shit self-replicates infinitely. Everyone wants shit. Shit can be moulded into any possible good or service which you might happen to want (which doesn't stop it from being shit, though the things it mixes with are *never* truly shit: it's more that *the shit has to be there as a catalyst*). People who can't shit enough can't have anything, unless someone shares their shit. People who make the wrong kind of shit can't have anything, unless someone shares.

Momma thinks this is a great way of arranging things, because it says so in rulebook.txt.

This way of arranging things makes it hard to leave momma, and gives a good excuse for momma to not

5 ed. – One of Aesop's Fables (credited to an enslaved storyteller in classical Greece, although none were collected from oral tradition until centuries after his death; probably dating back to west Asian civilisations such as Sumer and Akkad a few millenia before, and/or collected from similar tales in southern Asia). Describes how a hungry grasshopper who's spent summer dancing and singing begs for food from an industrious ant when winter comes and is refused; an oft-repeated moral lesson about the virtues of hard work and planning for the future. As late as the 20th century Disney released a cartoon version in which the grasshopper repents (somewhat pointedly, during the years of the New Deal; see **"The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping at All"**), and in the 21st it was used as a conservative motif against calls for wealth re-distribution. Even in classical times however there was alternative tellings which show the ant as mean and self-serving, harvesting the fruits of others' labour...

6 ed. – "Work liberates;" German phrase from a 1873 novel by the same name (reference to the Gospel of John) and slogan for the Nazi's drive against mass unemployment, eventually inscribed above concentration camp gates where, with forced work until death common, "liberation" took new meaning as the only escape short of revolt.



give as abundantly as she can.

Obviously momma is doing you a tremendous favour, keeping you out of the world of shit for so many years.

Obviously momma needs to somehow teach you to eat shit, and renounce breastmilk. She has to teach you this, without breaking her hold on you. The milkers must go dry, but stay

hanging as an ideal – an ideal from which one now seeks shit, instead of milk.

"Kids are selfish."

Production of shit also depends on an investment of mana. A person whose mana is cathected in momma cannot invest it in production of shit as well, except when the production is commanded by momma.

Sometimes momma grasps so hard that someone cannot produce shit.

This doesn't stop momma from demanding that they support themselves by producing shit.

There is no such thing as supporting yourself inside momma's external womb. All you can do is exchange mana or performances or parts of yourself for milk from momma. Shit-for-milk.

Except momma doesn't produce any milk.

Momma just recycles the garbage she has inside herself: things she's munching up from nature or sucking up from other people or from you.⁷

You aren't actually getting any nutrients from momma, except for the nutrients you need to keep performing for momma.

This doesn't mean you can live autonomously from momma.

Everyone has to produce shit, to "earn a living". There's no free lunches, you entitled brat. The world (momma) doesn't owe you a living.

Momma's milk often tastes of shit.

Momma's milk often tastes of *other people's* shit.

Don't expect momma to give you space to shit.

Don't expect momma to forego sucking your mana, so that you can produce shit.

7 ed. – see **"The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping At All"**

“What an ungrateful brat, after all we did for her!”

Momma has never actually produced any milk. When she started out, momma stole and hoarded milk from nature and used it to control others. Or maybe people were biting her and drinking her blood. Then she found she could use this hoarded substance to make people do what she wants. And to do what she wants in such a way, that they come to *think* what she wants. Once she had this scheme going, she could suck in everyone’s shit and mana, recycle a portion of it as “chocolate” breastmilk, and still come away with a profit.

Momma takes your mana and your shit, and turns out milk-shit using these, and then feeds this back to you, or the other babies.

You aren’t allowed out of momma’s sight. You’re a baby and you’ll go do something stupid.

If you go for a walk, you’re on a leash. It’s tied to one of her tentacles – which looks even more like a penis, raised in the air in front of her, holding the leash.

You can’t prove that you can safely walk off momma’s leash. To prove this, you’d have to be allowed off the leash. You’re never allowed off the leash.

The only times you’ve been off the leash is when you’re disobeying momma, and you went off and did stupid and dangerous things. Of course you’re not allowed off the leash.

If you get too far away, you won’t be able to access the milkers.

“Freedom has to be balanced with security.”

“It would be like *Lord of the Flies*.”⁸

8 ed. – The 1954 debut novel of English former schoolmaster William Golding, its title a literally translation of the Arabic demon appearing in the Bible. In it British public school-boys are stranded on an abundant uninhabited island and, after trying to ‘govern themselves’, descend into paranoia, laziness, bullying and murder. Popularly assigned reading in the British curriculum.

Despite first meeting publisher rejection as “dull,” it hit a Western nerve in the early Cold War world under new threat of nuclear annihilation and still reeling from World War II (as was Golding, veteran of the landings on Normandy beaches) and the demise of older rationalist and humanist assumptions – rather surprised at having the kind of concentration camps and exterminatory practices already known in the colonies delivered back to them (see **‘The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine’**) and thus choosing to blame ‘human nature’ rather than specific social institutions. It has since served a foil to aspirations of autonomous life, not to mention as racist caricatures of ‘primitive’ islanders. A generous reading sometimes alleges that the novel depicts ‘descent’ not into anarchy but fascism, with its mass psychology of manipulated irrationalism (while Golding himself made no bones of his authoritarian leanings; “I have always understood the

You should be grateful.

The momma milkers will be your sole source of food. There are other sources of food, but those involve learning how to do things yourself, which momma discourages, or stealing, which momma forbids, or being a much more advanced creature than you are today – something that can go out in the world and eat shit and love it. Until and unless you can do this, you’re all mommas.

Sometimes you think the momma milkers are poisoning you. The taste isn’t right. But you keep sucking, because otherwise you’ll starve.

Sometimes you wanna feed but the momma milkers aren’t there.

Sometimes you can’t get momma’s attention.

Sometimes the momma milkers are empty, or momma forgets and puts the wrong tentacle there, and you get a faceful of oil⁹ or shit or whatever else she spouts.

Sometimes you get poisoned.

Being poisoned makes it harder and harder to learn to do any of the things that don’t rely on momma.

Nazis, because I am of that sort by nature”).

“Few modern novels,” John Ellerby wrote in *Anarchy* #48 in 1965, “have been so rapidly and completely absorbed into the general consciousness as William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* has been since its publication[...] talking about anarchism in schools and colleges during the last few years, I noticed how frequently reference was made to it as an allegory which domesticated the “impossibility” of anarchism.” The same year, the closest known to an analogue of *Lord of the Flies*’ backdrop occurred: escapee boarding-school students from Tonga were marooned on ‘Ata (uninhabited after European slavers seized its occupants in 1863) when sailing for Fiji and not located for 15 months. During that time, they communally tended gardens, water collection systems, chickens, a permanent signal fire for any passing ships (famously abandoned in *Lord of the Flies* due to negligence), training facilities, a broken leg and – crucially – their social relationships, with conflict-resolution techniques and music at the end of each day on an improvised guitar. They were described upon rescue as extraordinarily healthy – physically, socially, spiritually.

Strategically, however, the State and Capital have a vested interest in *Lord of the Flies* remaining the standard narrative in such situations (rather than, say, mutual aid; see **‘The Utopia we Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark’**). Golding was awarded a Nobel Prize, and *Lord of the Flies* translated into more than 30 languages. In 2023, in the midst of increasing ecological breakdown and social contestation (see **‘Mobilising Disaster Relief’**), the British Broadcasting Corporation announced the first ever TV adaptation.

9 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg28**

Losing Momma

Momma makes sure you know that she will withdraw all, or nearly all, her tentacles if you offend her enough. Time-out. Supermax.¹⁰ Global destitution. Guantanamo Bay.¹¹

Losing momma is terrifying.

Losing momma is even more terrifying since you've been taught that momma is the source of all morals, so that losing momma means you're evil and godforsaken.

Losing momma is even more terrifying since you've been taught to rely on momma for moral judgements and for judgements of reality.

Losing momma is even more terrifying since you've never learnt to do things for yourself.

Losing momma is even more terrifying since most of the other people you could lean on, or do things with, are themselves tentacles of momma, or terrified to lose her.



Losing momma is even more terrifying since your attempts to develop autonomous agency have been stymied, your abilities are much lower than they could be, and your confidence in yourself and your own judgements has been destroyed.

10 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg9**

11 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg47**; incorrectly, there Guantánamo Bay is listed as in so-called 'Puerto Rico': it is in fact on the island known to the Taíno inhabitants (but not the Guanahatabey ones) as Cubanascnan, renamed by Spanish colonists as Cuba. The US naval base there is on land leased since 1903. Used to hold foreign nationals held indefinitely without charge ever since the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and the so-called 'War on Terror'. Notorious for tortures branded 'enhanced interrogation techniques', force-feeding of hunger-strikers, raping of inmates, forced injections, interrogators desecrating the Quran (sparking riots and mass suicide attempts) etc. As we go to press, the US President is announcing expanding the migrant detention facility in the base to hold migrants now living in the US. The previous President had vowed to close the hated facility, only to continue multi-million expansions to its military courtrooms and other facilities.

There might be nothing outside momma. Losing momma might mean everything is destroyed. I would be a pinprick in limbo until I died some slow and agonising death. Or forever, which is worse.

Losing momma is starvation.

What if momma is gonna die of climate change but if you try to get momma to stop doing climate change, you get sent to time-out? You lose momma either way.

Tut, tut, some of the little fetuses have penises and clitorises and vaginas, and have unhelpfully reached puberty while they're still fetuses. Really, this is so unbecoming. But momma is still not letting you leave her milkers.

You may, with momma's permission, go play with each other, so long as this doesn't impinge on your unquestionable loyalty and obedience to momma. Don't imagine you can cathect each other more than you cathect momma.

Trying to get too many nutrients from other people instead of momma means you're an emotional vampire. You demand more than other people can give, presuming other people are giving momma what she deserves.

If you put your love or lust towards a third party before your love of momma, you're a crazy little bastard who shouldn't be cut any slack.

If you have kids, you are to act as a tentacle of momma, and do to them what momma did to you. If you don't then momma will withdraw her nutrients.¹² Even children aren't immune. If you love your children, make sure they don't upset momma.

Menagerie

Here's what's meant to happen. First you cathect all your mana in momma, and momma gives enough back that you don't withdraw it again. Then you gradually realise that momma shares mana with other people, or roles, or things, and you start distributing your mana in different ways. Eventually, you put your mana into supposedly desirable social roles or things you can actually have or do, and you become a grey-suited normie with a boring but tolerable life.¹³

But that doesn't happen much nowadays, because momma doesn't give back very much.¹⁴

When momma doesn't give back very much, baby will try to look after itself.

12 ed. – see **Massive Riot Against the Child-Snatching Authorities**

13 ed. – see **'Wearing the Scars on the Inside'**

14 ed. – see **'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping At All"'**

Suppose you try to be autonomous. You will do this, if momma does not offer reliable enough rewards, or if the terror of her becomes too great. (If you're just confident in your abilities, you'll probably just end up using these abilities to please momma). Then you will fumble around trying to do things, sometimes succeeding, often failing. **Momma will drag you back into her lap by soothing when you fall, pointing out that it's YOUR FAULT when you fail, pointing out the gap between your ability and hers whenever she can, belittling your drive for autonomy, and offering a way back to something which she says will be better this time around. She will not praise when you succeed, though she knows when it happens and she will take it on board as new information when she can.** (Perhaps this newfound skill can be exploited. Perhaps I have to modulate my tactics against an adversary with this skill).

"Accept responsibility. Don't blame others."

The most autonomous people are the so-called autistics or autists. They develop an early autonomy which means none of momma's surface-based files install properly. Some are rejected, some install in bizarre ways, like the nonsense documents that come from trying to open an image file with a word-processor. A few are run "under emulation" by completely different subsystems.

Mana is held back. It's shared with momma when it's earned, but most of the time it's kept for personal pursuits, passions, values, fantasies, hobbies. (Other people can only be let in these worlds if they prove they're not momma in disguise: the wolf in the seven goats story).¹⁵

But momma does not help such children to grow, because they are always too immature, and need to be kept on a leash. **The endless playing-up of the gap in abilities causes a sense of futility and inadequacy – unless it is counterbalanced by sufficiently effective actions. These children often end up with less abilities than others, for this reason: because momma teaches them less, and teaches them to try less.**

Some people, who realise they're human, create an artificial skin or armour of metal, and with this surface skin, imitate what momma wants them to be. They succeed at first, until what momma wants is for them to do something that isn't part of the learnt script, or which requires agency or cathexis. They have preserved their souls somewhat intact by withdrawing

15 ed. – One of the fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm, probably in circulation in Europe and western Asia for around two millenia before. The mother goat leaves her seven kids home alone, warning them against the wolf who will try via tricks to get in to consume them.

them from the false surface, which due to its metallic nature, they cannot cathect. But the soul is trapped in a dungeon of its own making, and knows that the monster on the outside, the momma, is the reason it's kept trapped. Actually it's rather undecided whether the armour trapping it is friend or foe; this is why it doesn't break out very much, and sits back and lets the armour do its job.

But souls without food turn undead. They can only be brought back to life by direct contact with natural forces in their flow-state (these can be natural, spiritual, political, personal/lifestyle). The armour will only let flows through under specific conditions, if at all, and it reacts to any kind of intensity by clamming-up. This makes it hard to revivify the soul without removing or weakening the armour, or at least modulating it so it lets in more nourishment.

But it can only do this if there's a source of nourishment that isn't momma, and if it can be sure this isn't some trick of momma's to get past the armour.

Because the armour is there to keep out momma.

This is the so-called psychotic or schizoid type.

If the armour cracks or the soul is too strained, the surface breaks down and all hell breaks loose – because no connections have ever been formed which do not pass through the armour. The whole process has to start from scratch, in a situation where the inner soul is no longer sure if momma is there or not, what's part of momma and what's part of the outside.

If the soul has had to fight its way out of the shell, it tends to believe that everything touched by the armour is part of momma. It seeks an impossible degree of purity with regard to a momma it sees everywhere. It needs reassuring that any nutrients are not from momma.

Sometimes frenetic activity paired with wilful belief, particularly in a context where the overall cosmic order is unclear, produces a belief that momma *will* love a fully self-actualised self, that her nutrients *are* good and abundant, that her demands *are* right, and therefore, that it will all fall into line. The frenetic activity keeps up this illusion, for awhile.

When the illusion is shattered, there is a temporary or permanent collapse which amounts to the sense of having been permanently and ineradicably invaded by and made identical to momma.

(Mania, Depression. ADHD?)

An even more insidious illusion which forms in momma's children spins off from momma's roboticism, her only believing in what she can see.

“The subject is just a conditioned ensemble of social relations.”

Remember that this is paired with a preparedness to turn a blind eye or assume the best if she has an interest in doing so.

And that it is also combined with a sense that a powerful or influential person can actually ignore momma a bit without losing her completely (or at all: remember she loves control).

From these factors comes the illusion that one can square the circle and win unconditional love in the following way: by putting up a hyperconformist surface performance, similar to the psychotic’s armour but more flexible and “strategic”, while at the same time using the resultant power – power which is derived from momma – to be whoever we like, do whatever we like, do all the forbidden things that momma doesn’t allow.

Because the real self, the self which matters, is the image momma can see – *and this means everything is permitted, and compatible with the image, so long as it’s sufficiently blurred.*

This type of person may in fact want to *capture or replace or totally control* momma – this is their real inner fantasy, because if they can control momma by manipulating appearances, they capture all her immense power and the abundance of her breast. And they can use these in exactly the same way momma does: to make everyone do what they want.

How do they put up armour and still cathect the surface?

Simple. They lie to themselves that the armour is skin.

They lie to themselves that the surface is all that exists.

They lie to themselves that they’re having fun.

They lie to themselves that they aren’t doing any harm.

They lie to themselves that they’re following the rules.

They lie to themselves that they’re living a worthwhile life.



Lying makes for the best conformists, because they can act like robots and still put mana into their performance.

But momma doesn’t like being lied to.

Momma’s a robot and isn’t designed to be captured by humans or to fuse with humans.

“I’m not your toy, you stupid boy.”

If she figures out these bad children are trying to dominate her, she is furious. But if she never realises, she will favour these children above all the others: they are the “good” children, the high achievers, the high performers, the ones who don’t seem to have mental health problems.

For this reason, the most effective of this type are usually gentle or masochistic.

Masochism, by the way, is a desire for a metal skin like momma’s, and acceptance of any and all of her tentacles in the hope that they will provide this. (A strange effect: this makes masochists *fearless*, since the pain-giving tools are experienced as potentially the liberating ones. Sadistic regimes like ancient Rome cannot survive an outbreak of masochism).

Sadism, meanwhile, is *the desire to be momma’s hammer, momma’s whip*. Malleus malificarum.¹⁶ So-called narcissism is the delusion that one is actually the mother’s perfect, passive-receptive doll (even if the doll is an Action Man).

16 ed. – In 1484 German clergyman Heinrich Kramer received a ‘papal bull’ (a decree from the Pope) with approval for the Inquisition to prosecute what was deemed to be witchcraft. Kramer first tried prosecuting alleged witches in the Tyrol region, but was unsuccessful due to legal charges against Kramer himself and his obsession with the sexual habits of one of the accused women, and expelled from the city of Innsbruck (with the local bishop labelling him “senile and crazy”). He then penned the Malleus Maleficarum (usually translated as ‘The Hammer of Witches’), becoming the best-known treatise on supposed witchcraft, demanding torture to get confessions, and death as the only certain way to end the “evils of witchcraft.” Even the Inquisition theologians of the Faculty of Cologne condemned the book for recommending illegal procedures, but Kramer appealed to secular courts that they try ‘sorcery’ as a form of heresy (already prosecuted by secular authorities at the time against popular struggles – see ‘**The Scarcity Dynamo**’), recommending the same punishment of burning alive. Before 1400 witchcraft prosecutions in Europe were rare (and typically incurred penalties no harsher than public penances such as a day in the stocks), but as the war on heresy wavered, authorities re-orientated and the Malleus Maleficarum went through 28 editions between 1486 and 1600, accepted by the royal courts of Catholics and Protestants alike during the Renaissance (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg54**), spread rapidly due to the innovation of the printing press some thirty years before its release.

There's also people so fucked-up by the double-binds that they think momma needs them to be the *bad guy* doll, instead. Nobody believes them that it's really momma pulling the strings, "making" them do it.

A good bad guy admits responsibility.

No oral-inflected "twinkie defences".

Then there's the people who get split down the middle.

This is another type who got hurt by momma early on. They bit on a metal shard on momma's nipple. From the on, they confused survival with pain. They will bite their own lips to taste the blood which comes with the mother's milk.

One part of them sought early autonomy or withdrew behind the armour. Another part became entangled in the surface with which they contacted momma. The two parts hate each other. The two parts fight a lot.

The surface part is a bleeding mix of flesh and metal.

The surface part will *never* leave momma's tentacles.

The mana-infused soul sometimes gets out through the cracks.

Telling the surface part that it's still performing for momma is morally outrageous to this part.

Reaching the mana-infused soul, through the partly-constituted and easily-wounded armour, is Nintendo-hard.

They want recognition from momma for the pain of the inner and the surface self, but they can't have it. **Momma does rewards. She doesn't do recognition.** Robots don't recognise, they just put up an effective user interface.

Nobody can recognise the inner self because it's trapped behind the armour, and it only comes out in negative forms. People can recognise the surface, in both its pained and its robotic aspects. Baby knows when people only recognise the surface.

Baby does not realise she's split. Baby does not recognise the inner self as herself. Baby cannot tell when she's being recognised.

These are the visible menagerie, moving around where you can see them, beneath momma's tentacles.

There are other types of human,¹⁷ but they are hard to discern through momma's tentacles.

17 ed. – see '**Gállók is the Name of a Place**'

MASSIVE RIOT AGAINST THE CHILD-SNATCHING AUTHORITIES

A large-scale riot broke out in the working-class neighbourhood of Harehills in Leeds [*ed. – northern England*], yesterday 18th July 2024. Fights with police started in the afternoon after social services tried to abduct four Roma children from their home. **The children fought off the agency workers and were joined by a crowd of locals who attacked the police, as they evacuated the 'social care' workers and attempted to drag away the intractable kids.** One van left through a jeering and combative crowd with smashed windows.

Several more police cars were smashed, overturned and destroyed. Police were attacked with stones, bricks and bottles, before being forced to make a ground retreat, chased by a crowd that grew to several hundred, maybe a thousand. **Public-order cops in riot gear were seen escaping in vans under a torrent of projectiles. Burning barricades were constructed with bins and other objects. A double-decker bus was destroyed by fire.** Police reportedly called on regional reinforcements, but it was not until 1am that they returned to the streets with the fire brigade. Nobody was reported hurt although it seems unlikely that all cops escaped unscathed, no matter how fast they ran away.

The next day, as fires still smouldered [*ed. – and the parents went on hunger strike, securing the release of their children in the following days*], police began 'several' arrests and promised to 'hunt' the combative youth in the area, calling for snitching and DIY surveillance footage and working with 'community and religious leaders' [*ed. – comrades of Muntjac – see **Long Live Muntjac!** – report in their debut editorial that during the revolt "[b]onfires were lit to obscure the police's line of sight, though one was extinguished by Mothin Ali, a green party politician who actually mentioned his uncles getting repressed following the 2001 harehills uprising [ed. – after a cop CS-gassed a local shopping with his family during a traffic stop; latest in a series of 2001 riots in northern England – and some 25 years of militant UK self-defence by Afro-Caribbean and Asian youth – against widely-acknowledged police racism, but dismissed as "thugs" by ruling Labour Prime Minister who offered cops water cannons and mobilised religious/cultural pressure within the area against rebels] as the reason why he and his cohort acted as a counterinsurgent force"*], and 'reassurance patrols', to pacify the population, fearing another hot night tonight (19th July).



ANOTHER WAY OUT

– the propaganda of violence

“Who is it that provokes the violence? Who is it that makes it necessary and inescapable? The entire established social order is founded upon brute force harnessed for the purposes of a tiny minority that exploits and oppresses the vast majority.”

– Errico Malatesta

“Once a person is a believer in violence, it is with him only a question of the most effective way of applying it, which can be determined only by a knowledge of conditions and means at his disposal.”

– Voltairine de Cleyre

The killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson on the morning of Dec. 4¹ may have

1 ed. – “Just about every day, more than fifty people are shot and killed in the United States. On December 4, 2024, one of them was Brian Thompson, the CEO of UnitedHealthcare, the most profitable health insurance corporation in the country. In the weeks since, we’ve all heard a great deal more about that particular CEO than about any of the hundreds of other people shot and killed this month. At the same time, there has been an outpouring of support for the attack [ed. – 40% of young people in one survey deeming it ‘acceptable’], despite the efforts of media platforms and employers to suppress it.

On December 13, president-elect Donald Trump and vice-president-elect JD Vance invited Daniel Penny to join them at the Army/Navy football game – solely on account of his having senselessly murdered a Black person and been acquitted. Here, we see some of the most powerful political figures in the world attempting to drum up enthusiasm for extrajudicial killings – provided that they target the marginalized.

We must understand the popular response to the shooting of the UnitedHealthcare CEO in the context of a society in which life is increasingly cheap. After the far right lionized George Zimmerman and Kyle Rittenhouse [ed. – both having murdered non-white people they felt threatened by]; after millions participated in a countrywide uprising demanding that police stop killing Black and brown people, only to see politicians across the political spectrum double down on supporting police, with the consequence that police have continued to murder people at a steadily accelerating pace; after bipartisan support for the genocide in Gaza; after hundreds of school shootings, hundreds of thousands of opioid overdoses, and millions of COVID-19 fatalities, not to mention the countless avoidable deaths resulting from the for-profit health and insurance industries – is it really so startling that one person took a shot at an executive? What is startling is that in nearly every other case, the killers have targeted those less powerful than themselves.

Trump’s decision to host Daniel Penny is a literalistic fulfillment of Frank Wilhoit’s dictum that “There must be in-groups whom the law protects but does not bind, alongside out-groups whom the law binds but

shocked people for several reasons. A masked gunman committing a targeted killing with tactical precision before making an illusive escape stunned authorities and captured the imaginations of others, offering him instant celebrity status. Gunning down an insurance executive became a cathartic scene with all the trappings of cause célèbre. **The initial reaction should be analyzed to understand what it communicates to us.** This sort of violence holds a special place in the history of insurrectionary anarchism, which has not only theorized about it but actively practiced it to world-changing ends. A killing is not just a killing, and the popular reaction to the shooter can supply us with some important lessons just as police close in on a suspect.² If the authorities are not careful with this case, they may end up uniting people behind common interests. Now is a good time to observe the history of class warfare,

does not protect.” By contrast, the shooting of the UnitedHealthcare CEO suggests that the law cannot always protect the in-groups from the out-groups” (CrimethInc.)

2 ed. – One precarious comrade with cancer, chronic illness and medical bills notes that “it took 5 days for Luigi to be caught, despite NYPD, FBI, and many other highly resourced, professional police agencies looking for him. Five days is a long time, and it could have been longer. He made good use of a mask: here we have another reason to take the pandemic and the realities of chronic illness and air pollution seriously. A culture in which mask-wearing is normal is good for everybody. Well, everybody except for cops and CEOs, but their existence is a threat to our survival, so...

He was proficient in fire arms, but he could have benefited greatly from proficiency in aesthetics: makeup and realistic masks can completely change someone’s facial structure, making them unidentifiable, and even just effective contouring and shading can throw off AI as well as human facial recognition.

Wearing generic clothes and completely changing the outer layer in a video surveillance blindspot with more than two egresses will make a person much harder to track. (With a small blindspot that just has one or two entry paths, even the cops will put two and two together if someone wearing red enters the blindspot and a minute later someone with the same build but wearing blue leaves the blindspot.)

Dumping trash like food wrappers anywhere close to the site gives the cops your fingerprints. Touching and rubbing against surfaces, or hanging out in one spot for a while, unless it’s a place with really high traffic, gives the cops your DNA.

Staying in most hotels or motels often requires you to give ID and puts you on surveillance cameras. Not having a week long stock of food requires you to buy more, which means interacting with bored and often alienated workers who might snitch you out, during the time period when the public is most focused on the case.

Of course, these thoughts are just reflections on the current state of law enforcement technology in practice. Don’t break the law, kids: it’s illegal” (Free Free Free!).

grievance, and the classic anarchist militancy of a form of direct action meant to catalyze revolution, known as “the propaganda of the deed.”³

In 1885, the Chicago Tribune quoted the formerly enslaved Black anarchist Lucy Parsons saying something many wouldn’t dare say almost 150 years later: “*Let every dirty, lousy tramp arm himself with a revolver or knife and lay in wait on the steps of the palaces of the rich and stab or shoot the owners as they come out. Let us kill them without mercy, and let it be a war of extermination and without pity.*” Far beyond a mere call for sporadic violence, it’s essential to understand that the impulse to make such a confrontational statement was not so unconventional back then. Different factions of anarchists used calls for revolutionary violence toward different ends and influenced one another.

While some, like Parsons, worked with organizations like the International Working People’s Association (IWPA), doing pivotal work to transform labor conditions, others had individual motives based on self-organized immediate interventions. The historian Paul Avrich noted that the violent rhetoric of anarchists like Parsons attracted the “skilled and unskilled, employed and unemployed” based on the “hopes of immediate redemption.” However, some people took that mandate into their own hands, targeting some of the world’s most powerful elites.

Anarchists went after and often successfully assassinated multiple heads of state, politicians, businessmen, military figures, and police around the world under the proclamation of propaganda by the deed. The idea that killing reviled and oppressive authority figures would be a catalyst for revolution has long been debated. **These ideas are not limited to just one faction of anarchists or only the anarchist segments of the historical socialist and communist movements.**⁴ Furthermore, their

3 ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg84**

4 ed. – “From my point of view, the fact that Mangione is neither left nor right is the most important element at play here. I do not believe that Mangione would have gotten the same degree of support if he was easily classified as either left or right. The fact that Mangione’s action can’t be dispensed with as the expression of a particular ideology is, I believe, why it resonates so broadly. Mangione touched a wedge issue in the US that cuts across class and across the political spectrum, the massive, voracious corruption of the health insurance industry, and the American health care system overall. This is not the only possible wedge issue of this sort at this point; big pharma, corporate grocery chains, and corporate landlords all qualify. [...] That said, the novelty of Mangione’s action plays no small role in its popularity. Were it to be repeated several times, it would no longer attract the same attention. It would become one of those things that happens from time to time. [...] For Mangione’s action to

“As a general rule, those who are most responsible for injustice are usually among those who possess the most power – otherwise, how would they have the opportunity to do so much harm? The average person in the United States has considerably more to fear from corporate executives than from undocumented immigrants. It is the powerful who are able to pose the greatest threat to others: this is practically self-evident, despite the efforts of billionaire-owned media and social media platforms to humanize the wealthy and dehumanize the poor. When we see people fixating their rage on the powerless amid the worst inequality in generations, this is a dead giveaway that they have been hoodwinked. It is telling that the populist movement around the wealthiest man to ever become president of the United States is presented as a “revolt against the elites” even as it rallies people to worship oligarchs like Trump and Elon Musk. There is no longer any way to rally people without at least *pretending* to have a go at some subset of the ruling class. It is terrifying to realize that one’s enemies are considerably more powerful than oneself. It is much easier to take out one’s misfortunes on those who are even worse off. Easier – and utterly pointless – and despicably cowardly. The shooting of the CEO of UnitedHealthcare galvanized such a powerful response because it posed the question very clearly: should violence be enacted against the most vulnerable – or against the most responsible? It spoke to millions of people because, across the political spectrum, all of them understood that insurance profiteers are responsible for their suffering or for the suffering of people they empathize with. Precisely because it was legible as retribution, the shooting illuminated that injustice has been taking place on a mass scale.”

– *Sacrificial Violence & Retribution*

effectiveness often produced unintended consequences that the purveyors couldn’t have

have an enduring impact, the core issues that underlie it need to be made clear and turned into points around which organizing occurs. That will not happen spontaneously, nor is it likely to be the product of people who are not ideologically cohesive and motivated. In short, Mangione created an opening. If that opening is not seized upon in a structured way, Mangione’s action will simply become one of those odd historical things that happened – “Remember when that guy – what was his name? – shot that health insurance CEO guy?” ” (Who’s Afraid of Luigi Mangione?)

necessarily predicted. For example, when a self-professed anarchist killed President William McKinley in 1901,⁵ it led to the creation of the FBI and a proto-“war on terror” that reshaped international policing and worldwide immigration policy and nearly destroyed anarchism. Understanding this in the context of Thompson’s killing in New York should let us know that the ruling class won’t simply accept this. The protectors of their interests and property, the police, will do their bidding to make an example of the killer (or a necessary scapegoat). Authorities will also be hard at work deciding what agencies, legislation, or punishment should be meted out to stop lethal direct action from becoming too popular. Just as it has been throughout anarchist history, quashing such jubilation and excitement about the collective awakening to the possibilities of violent resistance will be necessary.

Anarchist proponents of violence like Errico Malatesta, Johann Most, and Luigi Galleani saw attacks as a necessary response to the oppression of the working class, immigrants, poor people, and the enslaved. Even Alexander Berkman, who wrote about the anarchist movement’s departure from the propaganda of the deed, attempted to assassinate the industrialist oligarch Henry Clay Frick who turned guns on workers and was tyrannical in his business practices. Berkman once wrote, “You don’t question the right of the government to kill, to confiscate and imprison. If a private person should be guilty of the things the government is doing all the time, you’d brand him a murderer, thief and scoundrel. But as long as the violence committed is ‘lawful,’ you approve of it and submit to it. So it is not really violence that you object to, but to people using violence ‘unlawfully.’”

Berkman’s nearly 100-year-old perspective still holds, though what’s interesting now is seeing a murder bring people together. Anarchist history shows that sometimes it’s unexpectedly hard to find a prominent figure so universally reviled that nearly everyone celebrates their ending. Though many have prefaced their commentary on the current moment with the need to say they don’t “condone” violence, Berkman’s point bites back at inconsistency.⁶ The monopoly on

violence known as “the state”⁷ conducts regular killing both directly and indirectly the world over daily to maintain itself. **Also, do those who don’t condone the killing of a businessman by a vigilante announce they don’t “condone” violence before using their conflict mineral technologies⁸ with apps that use artificial intelligence powered by slave labor? Do they announce that they don’t condone violence when they pay taxes to fund a genocidal onslaught⁹ or militarism that destroys the planet? What about the violence on our plates in our food or in the “fast fashion” we wear?** No, that inescapable violence is accepted as ordinary and not worth showy moralizing statements.

Those who denounce killing in response to the shooting of Thompson reinforce the imbalance that upholds oppression. Blood has different weights depending on where it spills from. Who has the power to kill as an acceptable norm versus who doesn’t is what tips the scale. The gravity given to those this society privileges, empowers, and prioritizes dictates how much we’re supposed to care about deaths. It also dictates what’s even considered violent.¹⁰ That’s why we are instructed to mindlessly condemn any and every act of violence that threatens the status quo of capitalism, imperialism, and class-based society. **We should be able to respect those who choose not to practice violence while distancing ourselves from those who make false equivalencies out of it.** Their “peace” comes at the expense of the most abused, whose screams are drowned out. This is the “peace of the pharaohs, the peace of the tsars, the peace of the Caesars,” as Ricardo Flores Magón¹¹ once wrote and rightly concluded, “Let such a peace be damned!”

It would be helpful if more of us accepted the fact that we cannot indeed be anti-violence in a society where even our most passive actions are reinforcing the most deplorable crimes against oppressed people around the globe. This is why I’ve argued that we should identify the counterviolence we need in our politics. **So, rather than projecting onto a mysterious shooter or endlessly looking for a hero to venerate,¹² the questions of the utility of**

5 ed. – see ‘Channeling Our Rage’

6 ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg16

7 ed. – In reality, the State generally relies on a certain amount of vigilante violence to cement its rule (one thinks of gender-based violence, or the recent arming of all Israeli settlers in the West Bank, general colonialism, etc.).

8 ed. – see *Capitalism & Electrification*

9 ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire: The Atrocity*

10 ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire* vol.6 chap.4; ‘Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics’

11 ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg41

12 ed. – see *Propaganda of the Deed & Global Social Networks*

“The real attraction of the CEO killer, however handsome he may be, is not him: it’s us. The last few days have seen our misery laid bare, but above all they have seen our glorious rage rise to the surface and cover the world like lava. These have been amazing days, because of what beautiful connection I’ve seen in your eyes. You who write on social media, you who shout from prison, you who refuse to talk to the cops. We’ve all realised we have the same pain and the same struggle. Even people and voices I’d never expect, have sounded out loud: fuck those guys who are hurting them, and fuck anyone who defends them. That’s what’s hot, that’s what I love. It’s us. This killing, this individual act of war, would mean nothing, and get no support, if it wasn’t a shot fired in a war that was already ongoing. Millions of us are already dying – the difference was that someone shot back.”

– *What I Love About Luigi*



violence here are answered by past instruction. However, I do not invoke all this history and quotation to suggest it’s inherently instructive for mimicry. Instead, I think it helps us realize that there is something beneath the surface here that people yearn for. There’s a confrontation dying to be taken up by those who refuse to wait for more tragedy and endless pain. Such a clash isn’t expected to be neat, nice, or consistently nonviolent. If force is the tool used to shape our subjugation, then pushing that oppressive momentum back so that we can completely throw it off of us **should be the standard.**



PROPAGANDA OF THE DEED & GLOBAL SOCIAL NETWORKS

Millions of us share the same pain and anger that likely drove the hand of Luigi Mangione, the assassin of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson. Many might wish this individual action inspires others to engage in defiant acts, and even lead to a mass uprising.

This era is marked by instant communication and global social networks. The spectacle of individual resistance can be amplified, shattering the illusion of invincibility that surrounds oppressors and leaving a lasting impact.

Privilege complicates this dynamic. But this defiant act can be seen as betrayal from within the owner class, and contributing to the social struggle. The key question is whether oppressed people feel that the action aligns with their interests and inspires them; whether the spectacle exposes their constraints and encourages them to challenge dominant relations.

We should be cautious about idolising individuals or portraying them as saviours. This is a tactic used by elites, linked to the systems that justify aristocracy and the competitive mentality. **Hegemony has long relied on glorifying individuals as tools of oppression and control. However, individual acts of resistance offer hope for reclaiming agency in a world on self-destructive autopilot.** They remind us of our power to push back against systemic oppression.

While personal acts of defiance cannot replace collective struggle, the distinction between collective and individual tactics may be superficial; their interaction could provide the momentum a movement needs. They can spark conversations upon which collective strategies can be built. They can be essential threads in the tapestry of resistance – expressions of rage born from pain and misery, erupting into a variety of tactics, aimed as much at widespread insurrection as at self-organised grassroots networks of solidarity and mutual aid [ed. – see *'The Utopia we Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark'*].

Alfredo Bonanno, a prominent figure in insurrectionary anarchism, rejected elitist armed struggle, criticising armed vanguards for their detachment from the population. He argued that these groups replicated the hierarchical dynamics they sought to overthrow. Instead, Bonanno advocated for continuous and spontaneous acts of revolt rooted in collective self-organisation and local struggles, designed to disrupt systems and inspire further resistance. He emphasised self-management and autonomy, rejecting imposed revolutionary paths in favour of collective empowerment.

Can hope alone motivate us to act [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; 'A Web of Relations & Tensions'*]? Or will it, once again, lead to a sense of delegation and apathy? **The oppressed of this world – of which we are many – are already watching closely.** Some of us will continue organising, writing, and discussing, as we always have. We believe in humanity’s capacity for both the worst and the best, ever waiting for – sometimes creating – the sparks that ignite meaningful change, for more freedom and anarchy in our lives, today.

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Act For Freedom Now! (Greece
& global) actforfree.noblogs.org

Anarchist Library (multi-lingual, open-
source catalogue of print-ready texts)
theanarchistlibrary.org

Anarchy in Action (global, anarchies
past and present and their inspirations)
anarchyinaction.org

Anarchy, Secession, Subsistence
(rejoining rebellion with the land)
anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca

A-News Podcast (weekly curation of
selected posts and topics for those
without time to read anarchistnews.org)
podcast.anarchistnews.org

Bad News (collaborative presentation
every month from audio shows across the
world) aradio-berlin.org/en/tag/badnews

Bash Back! News (queer analysis and
counter-violence)
bbnews.noblogs.org

Clydeside Anarchist Noise (Scotland)
noisenoisenoise.blackblogs.org

No Trace Project (security techniques,
multi-lingual) notrace.how

Earth First! UK (direct-action,
leaderless eco-defence) earthfirst.uk

Indigenous Action (radical perspectives
from occupied homelands)
indigenousaction.org

Knowing the Land is Resistance
(re-enchantment and reconnection)
knowingtheland.com

The Local Kids (compiled translations
from international voices in struggle)
thelocalkids.noblogs.org

Montreal Counter-Information
(Canada, bi-lingual)
mtlcounterinfo.org

Non-Fides (France & global, multi-
lingual) non-fides.fr

Oplopanax Publishing (a cache of
handsome and engaging printable zines)
oplopanaxpublishing.wordpress.com

Resonance Audio Distro (various
readings as MP3s plus source files)
resonanceaudiodistro.org

Squat.net (multi-lingual, from
occupation front-lines) en.squat.net

Warrior Up (sabotage techniques)
warriorup.noblogs.org

**sources if not already cited:
(anonymous if unlisted)**

**'We Cannot Share This Planet
With Them'**

– from 'Heating Up', by
Peter Gelderloos

**TEN-T, Military Logistics, and
Availability**

– from sozialerzorn.noblogs.org

**'The Revolutionary Importance of
Celebration and Cyclical Time '**

– by Bauma & Editorial
Segadores

'You Are the Good Cause'

– by Nytshade

'Care is Partisan'

– from Self As Other, by
Corina Dross

'The Cryptoliberal Creep '

– by Renzo Connors

**'The Far Right, the Far Left, and
the Trap of Electoral Politics'**

– by Blade Runner

**'Lessons from Darion Ray
Sexton's Arson Arrest'**

– from scenes.noblogs.org

'Waging the War on Christmas'

– by Paul Z. Simons

**'A Question That Will Never Be
Solved'**

– from 'Has the Insurrection
Come Yet? My Arm's
Getting Tired', by Alex
Gorrión

'Like Butterflies'

– from 'Queer Butterflies', by
Francis and the Birds

**'The Thin Line Between Radical
and Authoritarian'**

– from 'Our Affinity Is Our
Manifesto'

'Alienation and Yearning'

– from 'The White Man's
Dilemma', by Maria Mies

**'Massive Riot Against the Child-
Snatching Authorities'**

– from actforfree.noblogs.org

**'Propaganda of the Deed and
Global Social Networks'**

– by Blade Runner



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