The Anarchist Review
of Books

Issue #6 Summer/Fall 2023

Migrant squat in the former psychiatric hospital of Leros Island, Greece. Photograph by Marc Lepson 2023

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About the Cover

L'évasion de Rochefort by Edouard Manet. Oil on canvas 1881

Imprisoned on a pacific island for his support of the Paris Commune, French journalist Henri Rochefort escaped to San Francisco by boat in 1874.

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Migrant squat in the former psychiatric hospital of Leros Island, Greece. Photograph by Marc Lepson 2023. In 1958, the "hospital for psychopaths" opened in a former army barracks. After being exposed for cruel and abusive practices against inmates, in the 1980s the asylum was restructured and partially closed. In 2016, a camp for refugees arriving by boat was built on the grounds. Today, a high security detention center for migrants sits on the hillside above, while the abandoned hospital buildings remain a site for transient shelter.

About This Issue

Welcome to the sixth issue of the *Anarchist Review of Books*, produced by a collective based in Atlanta, Chicago, Exarchia, New York, Oakland, Richmond and Seattle.

This summer—of floods and fires, of capsized migrant boats, air quality alerts, and deadly temperatures across the globe—the words of Diane di Prima keep coming to mind. "I have," di Prima wrote "just realized that the stakes are myself. I have no other ransom money, nothing to break or barter but my life."

The climate crisis, and global climate predictions for the coming decades, cast this existential dilemma in bold relief. Amid weeks of punishing heat from the American southwest to the Middle East to Europe and Asia, The United Nations is now pushing away from the climate pessimism reinforced by IPCC reports and decades of reporting, and rebranding the climate crisis as "a race we can win."

The idea of a race against time, against greed, against propaganda, against poverty of ideas; and the language of competitions and battles, apt though that language may be, distracts from holding corporations and governments accountable for violations against all life on earth.

Di Prima's words remind us that each of us, all of us, have nothing but our bodies and minds to bring to the barricades. As anarchists, ideas of individual autonomy and collective action reinforce one another. The struggle to understand and protect the environment has been central to anarchist philosophy from the beginning—from the anarchist scientist Kropotkin's earliest work on mutual aid as a factor in evolution, to Murray Bookchin's Institute for Social Ecology, to the militant acts of the Environmental Liberation Front—who sounded the alarm and took direct action against the fossil fuels and logging industries decades before the average citizen understood the stakes.

In Greece, anarchist fire brigades from Exarchia are putting out blazes in the Athens suburbs. In Atlanta, anarchist forest defenders are holding strong against clearcutting and construction of a massive militarized police training base. In Canada, anarchists—as part of an Indigenous-lead movement against the $40 billion Coastal GasLink pipeline project near Houston, B.C.—have taken direct action against the pipeline's machines and security forces.

Direct action tactics used by anarchists since the mid-twentieth century have been essential for protecting life and land and will continue to be in this new era of climate emergency.

Of equal importance are anarchist tactics for protecting and fortifying hearts and minds against state propaganda. The state will offer two mutually exclusive alternatives: a surrender to the "new normal" of extreme weather, and a dependence on state regulation of capital...with the regulations written by capital. It hardly matters that these claims are contradictory; the point is to paralyze and demobilize, to make thinking deeply and creatively about the climate emergency impossible.

As di Prima writes in *Revolutionary Letters*

> The only war that matters is the
> war against the imagination
> all other wars are subsumed in it
> The ultimate famine is the starvation of the imagination.

As the climate crisis progresses, we will necessarily have to create new ways of developing and sustaining community, for both fighting back and simply living in the day-to-day. It is essential for us to be able to imagine another world instead of receiving dictates of what that world is doomed to be.

This issue we bring you dispatches from artists and activists fighting in Exarchia, Ella Barnes writes about the fiftieth anniversary of Revolutionary Letters, Yasmin Nair illuminates on class and organizing in Chicago, Payton Alexandre reminds us that our tactics are etffective—even cops use them, and Andreas Petrossiants looks at the enduring power of the Young Lords. We also have fiction by Nate Lippens, poetry by Claire Wahmanholm, critical analysis by Carrie Laben, transformative and transgressive art by Joey Terrill, Chitra Ganseh, Scott Treleaven and Erin M. Riley.

ALL POWER TO THE IMAGINATION

Cara Hoffman, August 2023

The *Anarchist Review of Books* is published twice a year by an independent collective of working writers, artists and organizers.

ARB brings you intelligent, subversive, non-dogmatic writing with an anti-authoritarian perspective. We are dedicated to transforming society through literature and through open, incisive critique of the media, politics, history, art and writing that shape our world.

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Sparks

Curated by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

"Is a blood-soaked document the best we can ask for? If so, then we've already lost."
—Eric Stanley, at Left Bank Books in Seattle, February 28, 2023

"That safety could be reconstituted as care is indeed a revolutionary proposition."
—Robyn Maynard, in *Rehearsals for Living*, co-authored with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Haymarket, 2022)

"What does not exist in form, something like freedom, can exist in practice, in the trying out of one's voice, in throwing one's voice toward what one desires."
—Roger Reeves, *Dark Days: Fugitive Essays* (Graywolf, 2023)

"It is where words fail that language truly begins."
—Daniel Allen Cox, *I Felt the End Before It Came: Memoirs of a Queer Ex-Jehovah's Witness* (Viking Canada, 2023)

"I want acts and accounts of care as shared and distributed risk, as mass refusals of the unbearable life, as total rejections of the dead future."
—Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023)

"The best revenge is not living well; it's simply not wanting revenge to begin with."
—Kathleen Rooney, "Western," Best American Poetry blog, November 27, 2022

"Most social change is made by people that we've never heard of, and I think it's really important to tell those stories, because I think it gives us a more accurate view of history. And it gives us a more accurate view of our present. When we spend a lot of time pining for a great man to come save us, a great man to come lead us, we've already lost."
—Dan Berger, interviewed by Guy Oron in Real Change, January 25-31, 2023

"A million Covid ghosts and more live inside the phrase 'tight labor market.'"
—Alyssa Harad, on Twitter, February 13, 2023

"I was angry at the broken communities we were born into, and the godly men who perpetuated the cycles of abuse. Who told us to seek happiness in ignorance and faith in a God who seemed indifferent to our suffering. Who taught us to forgive too readily, and that forgiveness restored power, when in my experience, forgiveness had only taken my power away."
—Danielle Geller, *Dog Flowers* (One World, 2021)

"The worst part isn't feeling disliked. It's the feeling of wanting to be liked."
—Emerson Whitney, *Daddy Boy* (McSweeney's, 2023)

"I'm less than a survivor: I've just been living."
—Aaron Shurin, *Unbound: A Book of AIDS* (Nightboat Books, 2023)

"Humor can only go so far. It can protect me from a lot, but it can't protect me from myself. With or without my sense of humor, I'll always be raped."
—Myriam Gurba, *Creep* (Avid Reader Press, 2023)

"Maybe home is where we don't have to pretend that we're not scarred by life."
—McKenzie Wark, *Love and Money, Sex and Death* (Verso, 2023)

"The absence of hope is a beautiful catalyst."
—Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, in *Rehearsals for Living*, co-authored with Robyn Maynard (Haymarket 2022)

Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore is the author, most recently, of *The Freezer Door*, and the editor of *Between Certain Death and a Possible Future: Queer Writing on Growing Up with the AIDS Crisis*. Her next book, *Touching the Art*, will be published in November.

Outlawing The Outlaw State

Glynis Hart

Ludic Ubuntu Ethics: Decolonizing Justice
by Mechthild Nagel
222pp Routledge/Informa 2022

Philosopher and prison abolition advocate Mechthild Nagel's *Ludic Ubuntu Ethics: Decolonizing Justice* compares effective justice in precolonial communities with the carceral system in the United States. Can anti-authoritarian, community-based models offer a useful alternative to the U.S. court system? Nagel deconstructs the criminal justice system in the United States, and examines examples of Ubuntu ethics in South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, the Gacaca courts after the Rwandan genocide, and some Restorative Justice efforts in the United States. She addresses the roots of the criminal justice system and its role in the social welfare system and offers a restorative justice paradigm.

"Ubuntu" is a Bantu word that describes the relationship of the self to the community: "I am because you are," or "I am because we are," implying a network of obligations and responsibility for each other's well-being. "Ludic," from Latin, means playful, as opposed to rigid Kantian concepts—based on rational thinking—which discount lived experience and context. Nagel writes that in the U.S. system, justice has come to mean vengeance and punishment. A ludic Ubuntu justice would restore peace and safety to the community after a harm has been committed, through full consideration of each person's relationships and obligations to others.

Nagel reminds the reader that, in the United States, prison abolition effectively already exists for those who are well-connected. It cannot be said that we have a universal system of laws when a class of people lives exempt from its rules. Police who attack unarmed civilians are not punished, except in very rare circumstances. The Sackler family, like other corporate criminals, are exempted from prosecution for their role in causing the opioid epidemic. So embedded are our cultural beliefs in who is dangerous and who is not that even juries faced with incontrovertible evidence will fail to indict, much less convict, privileged persons who deliberately or callously harm others.

At the same time, there is another, broader class of people whose victimhood is treated as natural and unremarkable. A Black drug dealer shot by a police officer, or a prostitute who has been raped, elicits no social outrage, no media attention. Not only are such victims considered to be "asking for it" for living as best they can within their economic reality; if they apply for justice and thereby become entangled with the police, they may end up in jail.

Nagel calls the class of people exempted from the law the Outlaw State, which originated in colonial times when the European invaders refused to answer for crimes committed against the Indians. A white man could murder an Indian without being punished by English courts, but a retaliatory murder by the Indians justified the extermination of their entire tribe. "I argue that it is the state itself that is devoted to strategic lawlessness, designating certain groups to live 'beyond the pale.'...The outlaw state is not bound by universal principles of morality."

The ideology of the court system "affirms the socially connected and powerful," Nagel writes, and it practices vengeance on the socially marginalized. The Outlaw State divides society into those who are punishable and those who are not. It is dominance-, and violence-based.

It also includes a vast, mostly unreported-upon other side: family courts, social workers, and Child Protective Services. The welfare system's policing of families creates a foster care-to-prison pipeline and continues the processes of family separation first practiced on indigenous and enslaved people.

"In addition to the United States having the unfortunate status as the world's largest jailor, it also holds the record in foster placement the world over." Further, the 1997 Adoption and Safe Family Act incentivized children's removal from their families with financial rewards for social service agencies that moved children quickly into adoption. BIPOC children are far more likely than white children to be removed from the home and placed in foster care; BIPOC parents are far more likely to be cited for neglect. The onus of the surveillance state is on poor mothers, and the consequences for them and their children are dire: family separation has traumatic and far-reaching effects. At the same time, Nagel writes, "The industries associated with the family regulation system are thriving at the expense of the children and the parents."

Poor mothers are policed by the departments of social services through mandatory drug tests, drop-in home visits by social workers, and a constant stream of forms and permissions that require recipients of aid to solicit information and permissions from landlords, medical personnel, prospective and current employers, ex-partners and other relatives. There is no privacy and no commitment to poor parents' rights to raise their own children; poverty itself is transmuted into child abuse, as children are removed to wealthier, whiter homes by social workers with police support. There is little redress through the courts, which accept the Child Protective Service workers' recommendations: "The parents' testimony has no worth against the privileged testimonial voices of the state enforcing an unwritten white middle-class codex."

(He) grew up... by Ben Durham. Graphite text on handmade paper, hand-dug clay, and steel chain-link fence 2018

Nagel writes, "CPS reports are replete with remands of the following kind: the mother makes insufficient eye contact with her children or does not hug the child. Her parenting skills are considered 'inappropriate' or downright dangerous: take the case of a mother being cited for bringing chicken nuggets to a supervised lunch visit. Family court judges rarely wonder why 'appropriateness' is used as a standard when the law specifies 'neglect' or 'imminent danger' as grounds for removal of a child."

Beside the fact that foster care can be unsafe and abusive, removal from the home is traumatic for the hundreds of thousands of children seized by social workers (with police escorts), sometimes to fulfill adoption quotas encouraged by federal law. "Such excessive transfer would be labeled child trafficking if it were not done by the power of the paternalist state."

Serious consideration of abolishing prisons must include addressing children's safety in a radically different way. Families need to be strengthened rather than torn apart. People need to be brought together and helped to form strong communities, rather than being traumatized by separation and isolation.

Nagel writes about a judge in Mali, a country that has a low incarceration rate; Malians widely consider prisons a toxic relic of colonialism. On the street, a woman chastised the son of a judge publicly, accusing the judge of being a man who "steals people." The judge was embarrassed, took the point, and responded by being less punitive in his sentencing. (Imagine that happening here!)

Maya Angelou's autobiography describes another example of traditional community justice. While she was living in Africa, Angelou decided to divorce her husband. The friend-and-relative circle around her and her husband convened to discuss the marriage, question both parties about the reasons for the marriage's dissolution, and render (or not) their approval of a divorce. The process took a long time and a lengthy discussion, and could not be more different from the antagonistic process required by U.S. courts. Successful or not, such a process at least aims toward reconciliation and greater peace between the affected parties, rather than producing winners and embittered losers; it involves listening to those being judged, rather than a top-down verdict by a strange authority figure.

However, although community justice models may be more effective in interpersonal issues, Nagel finds that government-sponsored models of restorative justice failed to address harms sponsored or supported by the state. The South African Truth and Reconciliation courts sought to bring peace to the country after apartheid by using community-based models of traditional justice. It was not logistically possible to incarcerate all the individual perpetrators of racist attacks after apartheid ended. The TRCs brought those who had committed harm together with the families of their victims in a process of truth-telling, possibly performative remorse, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Nagel gives Bishop Desmond Tutu—the architect of the TRCs—credit for what he was trying to do, but notes that the greatest harm, the wholesale theft of land from the African people by the white invaders, was not addressed. With Black Africans still ghettoized and separated from the land, justice and peace have not been achieved.

In Rwanda, the Gacaca courts also faced an impossibility: bringing peace to a country where thousands of the inhabitants had massacred more than a million of their neighbors. So many people were involved in the slaughter that incarcerating them all was just not possible. So, basing the courts on a traditional community justice model, the Gacaca, the government set out to reconcile the living inhabitants to one another and prevent a retributive massacre. But Nagel points out that the original Gacaca courts dealt with petty crimes like theft or family disputes. Serious crimes like murder were the province of the chiefs. Truth-telling and forgiveness, furthermore, cannot be forced upon anyone.

Nagel writes that the Gacaca courts became perverted from creating peace between those who committed the genocide and their victims' families, and instead became a vehicle for vengeance—not necessarily for those directly involved, but for Tutsi families who had fled the country in 1959, thirty years before the genocide took place. It was certainly vengeance and not justice operating in the case of a Hutu woman who hid her wounded Tutsi husband to protect him during the massacre, appeased one of the attackers by having sex with him, and was later prosecuted by the Gacaca for sleeping with the enemy and being a "collaborator."

Finally, Nagel looks at models of restorative justice practiced in the United States today. In Hawai'i, a traditional form of community-based justice, the Ho'oponopono, is used in diverting youth and families from the criminal court system. Unfortunately, because these restorative justice programs are sponsored by the government, it's hard to know how well they would work in a pure form. As they are, participants who fail are remanded to the criminal justice system. Further, if the Ho'oponopono elders are not punitive enough, the criminal court judge may take a case away from them.

In the end, *Ludic Ubuntu Ethics* advocates for turning away from the carceral system and creating community systems of harm reduction, justice, and healing that avoid government involvement. In some places, this is already happening. Instead of directly attacking the criminal justice system—a suicidal move—people are avoiding it altogether. They create organizations like SOS in New York City to help others dealing with homelessness or mental health crises; they rely on one another for help, rather than the government.

Even with community justice models integrated into the current system, Nagel concludes that the system is rotten from the root, and attempts to reform it have so far fallen short of creating real justice and real peace.

***Glynis Hart** is a writer, award-winning newspaper journalist, and library director. She lives in Wilmot, New Hampshire.*

The Lovers

Joy and liberation in the art and struggle of Exarchia

Kostadis Mizaras

One of the Three Cupids outside the student-actor occupied National Theater of Greece. Photo by Marc Lepson 2023

Is the glass half empty or half full?

Not the easiest question to answer. But, facing such an optimistic or pessimistic moment in time, could simply an answer to that question be our ultimate and only goal?

The gentrification of Greece, in most of the country's areas, has already been accomplished. We are now facing, not the change to a tourist-centered everyday life, but an actual environment that has no need—or patience—for the non-tourist. Few native people are needed in the area, only tourist service providers: hotel or airbnb personnel, coffee shops and restaurant employees etc., and of course—police enforcement. Exarchia, in the center of Athens, is now full of specialty stores, social hubs, hipster aesthetics and atmosphere. Will this last forever? No. Probably not. Will Exarchia ever be as it was before? No. Most probably not. And life goes on.

But then, what's all the fuss over these 70 trees on Exarchia square that the proposed metro station will abolish? Also, what's all the fuss about maintaining Strefi Hill as a free public space that will not be used for commercial reasons? (Note: until recently, in *our* minds, the term public included in its etymology the concept of freedom).

In September 2022, the statue of the Three Cupids, a landmark for the square and the whole Exarchia district since "forever," was removed. The square, surrounded with metal barricades topped with chain-link fencing, turned overnight from a vibrant public space into a no-go zone. The impromptu protests that day led to two or three arrests by the police, who to this moment are continually "guarding" the fence. The Three Cupids, as any statue in a public square, was part of the public commons. A simple encounter with any statue—human shaped or not—in a public area will captivate you! All forms that were created with the intention to narrate a story, or just their physical presence, are a never-ending invitation to start a mental or actual conversation. This possibility ended with the removal of the statue from the square. Since the abduction of the statue, the collective mind of Exarchia has been trying to respond. And it did!

The open assembly "No Metro on Exarchia Square" that aims to stop the plans of the Greek government and private investors from profiting from gentrification of the area and constructing the metro station, is fortunate enough to have members with diverse political ideologies and work backgrounds. Artists that participate in the assembly, and particularly actors and puppeteers, came up with an idea to recreate the Three Cupids of the square. At first the idea remained simple: a two-dimensional version of the Cupids was proposed. But solidarity and social ties among the puppeteers in Greece made it easy to imagine a far more elaborate plan. A complete three-dimensional representation of the Cupids, fully articulated and almost the original size, was created. It took the better part of one month to construct, and nine puppeteers were needed for it to "come alive."

The Cupids re-entered Exarchia square, or rather the area of surrounding metal barricades, and feelings that were imprisoned for months were freed: tears, laughter…sometimes both at the same time. And rage. This happened during one of the events that the Strefi Hill assembly planned in November 2022 with the participation of many solidary movements and "Anihti Orhistra," an open orchestra that meets to play music and support political and social movements.

Since then, the Three Cupids have made appearances in other instances, as the political and social life in Greece has yet to let us live in a "peaceful" period, apart from the recent pre-election period where "calmness" is projected—or rather enforced—everywhere.

Was the liberating moment when the puppet-Cupids reappeared in public joyful and artistic? Yes, it was. What also came to be apparent to the puppeteers manipulating them, is that—art won! Not that any performance or any form of art (theater, music, poetry, painting etc.) could have. But art—rhythm, sound, color, movement, representation, dramaturgy, all the elements that make art…art. It is still very clear in our minds that it was the truthful and real movement and existence of the puppets that "won" against the police in their first encounter. And the lively participation of the audience, of course. But during the two hours of the event, which included a march and two stand-offs with the police occupying the public space, the puppets became something more than just symbols. They became alive.

The question that arises could be formed this way: "Was the artistic need more important than the political one, or vice versa?" Is the glass half empty or half full? This remains to be answered.

Kostadis Mizaras is an actor and puppeteer. He lives in Exarchia.

How Soon Is Now

Andrew Spieldenner

We Are Having This Conversation Now
by Alexandra Juhasz and Theodore Kerr
280pp. Duke University Press 2022

We Are Having This Conversation Now: The Times of AIDS Cultural Production is a series of conversations between HIV activist artists and friends, Alexandra Juhasz and Theodore Kerr. The book is broken up in two parts, "Trigger" and "Silence," and begins with a timeline of this first modern pandemic. "Trigger" refers to the intent of early HIV community-produced videos, which were meant to start dialogues in the community about HIV and related health issues, including gender-based violence, substance use, mental health, sexuality, and homophobia. "Silence" refers to the many ways that HIV went from being front-page news to disappearing largely from public discourse. Their dialogue is deliberate, thoughtful, and well-edited.

The two conversationalists entered HIV activism in quite different times: Juhasz in the late 1980s/early 1990s, and Kerr in the late 1990s/early 2000s. For Juhasz, this meant community-based arts practice to fuel education, HIV prevention initiatives, community-building, and protest. Kerr, by contrast, entered an HIV field that had been developed over decades. Kerr noted that these organizations often contained bits of the past: posters and other paraphernalia that made him curious about the people and circumstances that built these places. Juhasz and Kerr do not hide from these differences. Rather they conscientiously reflect on each other's positions in each moment, leading to new insights.

The structure of the book is innovative. Rather than a standard academic approach with an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion, the back and forth makes the book more accessible. The authors' voices come through clearly.

Still-Life With Zerit by Joey Terrill. Acrylic and mixed media on canvas 2000

Who am I?

The book is deliberately self-reflective and urges readers to self-reflect. I have had HIV for over twenty years, and been an activist since 1990. Most of my professional life has been in HIV organizations. When I was twenty years old, I ran a creative arts HIV program at an LGBTQ youth center in San Francisco. When Juhasz speaks, I recognize much of the politics and guerilla tactics of creating community narratives and interventions, in documenting lives that would otherwise go unrecorded. Juhasz claims that this was "a generation that for better or worse got very good at marking death as an emotional, cultural, and political aspect of AIDS." I remember the tension of needing to do something when the government and society did not seem to care about HIV and LGBTQ people. It was a time where we expected disgust and scorn, where the few representations of our lives were tragic, sinister and secretive. And we organized, desperately, looking for a connection, a possibility, a proof that we were there. Or my circle of friends and colleagues did anyway, and we carry the tattoos and scars from that era.

One lesson from reading this book: we all have our own version of HIV depending on age, geographical background, and personal experience. For instance, I rarely use the word "AIDS" anymore, yet the term is used throughout the book to describe the industry, the activist organizing, and the health condition. The word gives me pause, as my relationship to HIV is intimate and medical. In a particularly difficult period of my life, I was informed I had "AIDS" by a social worker. The term reminds me of being poor and the ways that I am disabled, and these are not memories I care to confront when I think about living with HIV. To me, "AIDS" is a descriptor from the past, evoking a near-death experience or a category to obtain health benefits or other forms of public assistance. Access to effective HIV treatment changed this, as fewer people met the guidelines that were labeled "AIDS" (including low T-cell counts and opportunistic infections), and clinicians and governments adopted "HIV" as the primary term to describe the disease.

The book encourages the reader to be open to other people's versions of the epidemic. Even when I teach HIV in my classes, the students are making their own meaning about the public health history, the media, and my own stories. This kaleidoscope adds to their sex education, their personal and familial experiences with HIV and sexuality. Similarly, readers of *We Are Having This Conversation Now* have the space to reflect about their own version of HIV, and locate it in relationship to this conversation.

Why this conversation now?

Juhasz and Kerr develop a timeline of the epidemic consisting of six movements: AIDS before AIDS (pre-1981), The First Silence (1981-1987), AIDS Crisis Culture (1987-1996), The Second Silence (1996-2008), AIDS Crisis Revisitation (2008-present), and AIDS [Crisis] Normalization (2016-present). The brackets around "Crisis" allude to the ways in which the disease is no longer considered an emergency as long as effective treatment is accessible. They acknowledge that there is overlap between these times, ebb and flow, and perhaps other movements beyond this timeline. The first and second silences become integral to the through-line of the book.

The first silence begins with the identification of an emerging disease and the stigma associated with it. HIV was associated with certain identities: being gay, bisexual, transgender, poor, substance using, immigrant, Black, a sex worker, or an inmate in a corrections setting. The lack of action from governments around the world led directly to a global pandemic, and not nearly enough resources were directed toward research or public health interventions. While the first silence was characterized by this societal neglect, it was also full of community organizing from people living with HIV and other allies, including the larger LGBTQ community, people of color, some faith leaders and celebrities, and physicians and other healthcare providers.

The second silence begins with the development of effective HIV treatment. This movement centers the health clinics as the primary site of intervention, not the community. More and more people are tracked into relationships with their medical providers, not necessarily other people living with HIV. Prescriptions, routine visits, and pharmacies become necessary for both living with HIV and a growing proportion of HIV prevention activities with Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Juhasz and Kerr note that "HIV-related activity is ongoing [but] it becomes, again, less connected and less visible." In the second silence, the experiences of HIV become more individualized, leading to people feeling disconnected about the epidemic.

Within the two silences, Juhasz and Kerr critically engage various objects, including health education videos, art exhibits, photos, archives, and community organizations. Through these conversations, they resist the "cultural fetishization of the past of AIDS… [which] made it almost impossible for people to attend to, let alone conceive of, HIV in the now." In popular culture (for instance, on TV series like *Pose* and *Sense8*), early HIV movements are often presented nobly, an activism that bound communities. Crafting this past as a monument can shrink the possibilities of activism today. Are there clear enemies to fight? Causes to take up? The environment and capitalism can be overwhelming; racism, misogyny, transphobia and homophobia affect us differently. The clarity of early HIV organizing is an attractive nostalgia. Juhasz and Kerr resist this nostalgia in their conversation. They deliberately look at the past, the present, and the future with painstaking clarity.

All of us have been living through another pandemic—COVID-19. For two years, the news media used epidemiological terms like "flattening the curve," "contact tracing," and "case reporting," as if these were common parlance. There are differences between HIV and COVID-19, and this is evident in investments and political will, depending on who is impacted most and where they live. There are also similarities, as people hide their COVID-19 infections due to embarrassment or to avoid restrictions in their movements and interactions. Access to vaccines echoes the battle for HIV treatment access.

We Are Having This Conversation Now is timely. Across social media and the news today, there is a lack of empathy in discussions about disease, health, disability, marginalization and identity, even though ideas about HIV and the impact of public health circulate more readily. Reading the book requires an engagement with the media, objects, and people presented throughout. Kerr asserts that "[i]n dialogue, we learn new things, consider things we may have otherwise missed, and empathy becomes part of our process."

***Dr. Andrew Spieldenner** is Associate Professor of Communication at California State University-San Marcos His books include:* Intercultural Health Communication, Post-AIDS Discourse in Health Communication, *and* A Pill for Promiscuity.

Taking Root in the Mind

Ella Barnes

Revolutionary Letters: 50th Anniversary Edition: Pocket Poets Series No. 27
by Diane di Prima
244pp. City Lights (U.S.) 2021
232pp. Silver Press (U.K.) 2021

If you plot a timeline of significant cultural and political events of the '50s and '60s, Diane di Prima was probably there in some capacity: writing, organising, publishing, teaching. She worked with the Black Panthers, lived in Tim Leary's intentional community, worked with the Diggers in San Francisco and was one of the first people to publish Audre Lorde, to name just a few things.

She returned to her collection *Revolutionary Letters* many times throughout this incredibly full life. As a result, these poems traverse vast tracts of society, history, politics and ideas with astounding dexterity. They range from responses to specific events (from the death of LeRoi Jones to the Gulf Wars), to brutally practical advice (how to hide a fugitive, how to plan a sit-in), to swift, scathing indictments of capitalist societies (see #98, 'Things too ridiculous to put up with'), and glimmering visions of anarchist utopias.

She refuses to let her work be introspective, and constantly directs it outwards, addressing the reader and the world. One iconic line reads "get up, put on your shoes, get/started, someone will finish" (#2). She directly addresses her reader and urges them not to be paralysed by impotence but to find motivation to act in the knowledge they are part of a wider movement. This call to action is not only communicated in the content of her poetry but in the use of the epistolary form as well. These are, after all, revolutionary letters, and implicit within that is a recipient and a response: she addresses most of the poems to 'you', asking questions and making challenges, meaning that the process of reading this collection cannot be passive. You must actively engage with it and, by extension, with the world it asks you to re-examine.

Di Prima continued to add to the collection right up until 2018, so it can be assumed she would have expanded it still further, had she not passed away in 2020. She imagined revolution as "process, there is no end, only

Untitled (goat reflected in antique scrying mirror/Genesis P-Orridge) by Scott Treleaven. Torn 35mm negative prints 2021

means, each one / had better justify itself" (#26). Her collection, like her revolution, is not the glorious end of a linear trajectory, but an ongoing process that must constantly embody its own values.

It could be argued that there is a naive romanticism to some of her politics, particularly the earlier poems. She proposes that "left to themselves people/grow their hair…take off their shoes…share blankets, dope and children" (#4) and often returns to a primitivist philosophy in which "forward is back" (#33). These ideas are rooted in the late '60s counterculture and, from a world-weary 21st century perspective, can appear naively idealistic.

We can forgive her these romantic notions; she began writing at the height of the civil rights movement, second-wave feminism and the birth of modern environmentalism, so there is a sense of hope and momentum, a conviction that "these are transitional years"(#10). Even when she acknowledges that "change is quick but revolution will take a while" (#10), there is a definite feeling of being at the cusp of change: "America has not even begun yet. The continent is a seed" (#10).

The latest edition contains 15 new poems and all previously published poems. While di Prima's commitment never wavers, the weight of half a century of history has shaped these later additions. #108 is wryly named "Yet another rev letter", reminding us that 108 poems and 50 years later, the same battles are still being fought. Others, such as "Why money makes me sad" and "Things too ridiculous to put up with" take on the small, insidious absurdities of the 'system,' betraying a weariness and frustration that is absent in earlier poems.

However, di Prima makes it clear that the conversation is not over; she holds on to her faith in the cycle renewing itself, saying "we do what we can/trusting others will do the rest" (#108), echoing her earlier conviction that, whatever you start, "someone will finish." Her own contribution is "the poem/ taking root in/ thousands/ of minds" (#110). This line, from one of her final letters, reimagines the ending of the collection as the beginning of a renewed cycle. In this way, di Prima situates it as part of the ongoing process of change.

By emphasising the new forms that her poems will assume as they take root in the minds of readers, she resists presenting her own ideas as gospel. Instead, she makes space for a multitude of approaches because (and we would do well to heed this at the moment) "NO ONE WAY WORKS/ it will take all of us/ shoving at the thing from all sides/ to topple it" (#8).

***Ella Barnes** is a writer and literature student based in London.*

Through a Haunted Fog

Carrie Laben

The Call-Out: a novel in rhyme
by Cat Fitzgerald
192pp. Seven Stories 2022

Well maybe it's true that I'm old and bitter,
But I was a witness. And I want to say
Something about it. I deleted my Twitter
(whenever I checked it, it ruined my day)
so instead, in a fit of desperation
I'm posting this extended narration
And (to make it even worse)
I'm going to tell the story in verse.
Some of what happened I picked up after,
And some of it I overheard,
And sometimes I've guessed at what occurred.
Is this story tragic? Or fit for laughter?
Do we ever learn from the things we do?
Sweethearts, god, I wish I knew.

If you've spent time on social media, *The Call-Out* by Cat Fitzgerald may give you a sense of foreboding similar to the best ghost stories. The book, imagined as a series of posts from "Eunuch Onegin" and written entirely in verse modeled on Pushkin's classic, follows a group of trans women—with a few cis and transmasc compatriots—through Brooklyn, New York from one New Year to the next. They love, fight, create, and destroy within a microcosm of a microcosm, beset by a hostile world, trying to build their own space within it.

Does this sound like an anarchist project? It is, though it's never explicitly named such. Being trans, being femme, in some cases non-white, or sex workers, or multiply marginalized in all sorts of ways, these characters can't look to the established authorities for protection or conflict resolution. Parents are problematic, bosses are malicious, the thought of going to the police never even comes up. The call-out(s) of the title occur in this context.

The new world of *The Call-Out* also suffers the same problem as most attempts at small-scale anarchism today—it can only be perceived (by readers and characters alike) through a haunted fog: through assumptions about gender, love, and family, and about power, responsibility, and justice, that are themselves formed by that rejecting and oppressing larger world. The use of the Onegin stanza does interesting work here—it's lovely in itself, and it provides distance that moderates the pain of the more intense moments of the book, but it also reflects how the forms of the past shape the present. A novel-in-verse is sufficiently unusual that the reader notices and acknowledges it, but the book is full of less obvious artifacts of the past: defining one's relationships in terms of romance and parenting, punishment in the guise of reform, and reform through isolation and improving literature.

Equally fascinating is what the novel isn't structured to show. Sex, flirtations, lovers' quarrels, dreary literary readings, intoxicated excess, are all portrayed with what seems like transparent frankness—though it's only the point of view of a single person, claiming rather a lot of knowledge about the private moments of others. But of the internet shit-storm at the core of the plot, she gives very few specifics. Within the context of the novel, this makes sense because her presumed audience would have read the whole thing for themselves.

For those on the outside, perhaps the specifics don't matter—after a few go-arounds, internet dogpiles take on a dreary similarity—but this also replicates a recurring problem in current efforts towards non-carceral justice and accountability processes. Even starting from a stated basis of believing victims, the voices of those who've been harmed get lost. What restoration looks like is unclear, making it hard to say if it's been achieved or not. Too often the community carries on with a few more fractures, scratches, and dents, no one really happy, no one with energy to do more. It's almost enough to make a weary person go into retreat, believing that real anarchist love and justice are impossible.

And yet, despite this doubt, the novel makes clear that individuals keep on looking for solutions: keep on loving, keep on needing to be in community, keep on trying different strategies and making the same mistakes, keep on asking the questions that don't have perfect answers. All in hopes that for a moment the haunted fog will clear.

***Carrie Laben** is the author of the novel* A Hawk in the Woods *and the forthcoming novella* The Water Is Wide.

A Long, Slow Fuse

In conversation with Yasmin Nair

Cara Hoffman

Yasmin Nair is a writer and activist and the co-founder, with Ryan Conrad, of the radical queer editorial collective Against Equality. She is currently working on a book titled *Strange Love: How Social Justice was Invented and Why it Needs to Die*. Her work is archived at www.yasminnair.com.

ARB: You and I once had a conversation about your vision of utopia, and how radicals and anarchists might think about issues of joy and liberation, focusing on these things more than the negative.

You said utopia is when you pick up your car from the shop and have an interesting conversation with the mechanic about the latest Žižek essay, and also that the mechanic gets three weeks of summer vacation.

YN: At least. He gets three weeks of summer vacation and his buddy down the street takes over his jobs until he comes back. So there's no meaningless petty competition.

ARB: How do we create circumstances where working people have time to think and take vacations? How do we all engage in intellectual culture? How do we get there from here?

YN: For me, the "here" is the publishing world, where I write for a living. And, at least in the United States, it's a wasteland, with outlets toppling and disappearing everywhere. Publishing is currently dominated by relatively young billionaire venture capitalists who have taken early retirement, are deeply bored, and imagine themselves as modern-day Medicis and public intellectuals. Political values cannot exist without a vibrant publishing world, without a vast array of outlets that produce all kinds of thought—whether it's about soap operas or political ideologies, or the Republicans, whatever. The left needs to pay more attention to intellectual and political work and how it can be sustained by, to put it bluntly, fucking paying people for their goddamn labor.

It's difficult in the U.S. because American writers—across the political spectrum—don't think of themselves as laborers, or of intellectual labor as labor. The WGA union strike is interesting because you have writers talking about their work as labor.

ARB: I think the WGA strike can have some traction because it's linked to television which is the drug of choice for Americans. Until AI starts writing the shows, execs have to keep paying the humans. But part of the reason people don't see intellectual labor as labor, is because many working in media today grew up rich and were pedigreed in journalism schools, rather than being people of varied classes with a knack for writing who came up through the ranks. The same thing is happening in academia where adjunctification of universities has made it so only those with money can afford to teach college. In 2018, a professor and historian named Caitlin DeAngelis wrote about teaching a class at Harvard on the connections between Harvard and slavery for no pay. The administration reasoned that DeAngelis's unpaid lectureship was "a professional development opportunity." UCLA and Washington University have also hired unpaid professors. Intellectuals without money no longer have access to positions in which they disseminate information or engage with the culture. So that utopia where mechanics have enough education or enough personal time to read the latest work of political philosophy seems like a dream.

YN: Well if anarchists don't dream who will? It's what we do: dream of impossible and distant futures. But you're right about the economics of who gets to be in writing and academia. In the 19th century only the monied elites could become professors or enter publishing, and now, here we are: right back to where we were for centuries. In many countries in Europe education is free—if you want an education, you get an education. I'm hopeful that the current conversation and activism around student debt might lead us there someday, but Americans, even on the left, are very bound to this idea that only the "best and brightest" deserve education. The situation is dire.

ARB: You've said there is no political change without intellectual change. Do you think this comes down to schools and universities?

YN: No—Occupy showed us the possibility of different kinds of radical education: we can create and sustain different learning environments. But while the American university system is in shreds, we have to resist the kneejerk anti-intellectualism that denounces it so roundly (and consider how much of it comes from libertarians and conservatives who have happily received several degrees). There are ways in which research structures sustain thought and praxis. But right now, most of us hardly have the time to think about radical thought or action. There's a reason the right has so many think tanks and educational structures and funds them well, and why it never organizes meetings without food. The left expects you to show up for evening meetings with nary a slice of cold pizza in sight. We've bought into this idea that we have to starve and live miserably in order to think and act radically.

Meanwhile, those who can activate change are, increasingly, now part of the elite and think that simply reading and teaching Marx makes them radical. It's becoming a struggle for people on the outside to embark on teaching and writing careers, to argue that our work needs funding, that it is even work and not some "calling."

The American left fetishizes "working class" as an identity—represented as an imagined salty, white man doing manual labor. Left elites have this fantasy of the working class as Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront*, and that is attached to a pathologized idea of the "working-class man" as a sad, desperate figure. Consequently, they also imagine him as incapable of an intellectual life. That has been a stumbling block in terms of how we think about intellectual labor as germane to our politics and its connections to class—who has the privilege to write for free or very little, for instance? That's related to class hierarchies.

ARB: We are also living at a time where discourse about class and personal identity is complex.

YN: The term "identity" is a racist dog whistle on the left, and class and identity operate differently depending on which part of the world you are in (U.S. and European lefties tend to forget that left politics is not limited to Europe and the U.S.). People ignore the fact that whiteness is as much an identity as any of the identities they ascribe only to immigrants or people of color. "Class" itself has become an identity formation.

The failure of the left is its failure to understand how capitalism is not separate from matters of identity, and that capitalism utilizes identity. When capitalism could exploit poor Appalachian whites, it did; when it could turn non-white people into slaves, it did. The issue is not that capitalism is not about identity—it's how and why capitalism locates certain forms of identity in their spaces of vulnerability and exploits them, as convenient.

Class and identity are implicated in each other; you can't just disentangle them in the hopes of reaching some white fantasy of a figure without any connections to gender or sexuality or race. For instance: migration is an economic issue, but sometime around 2006, in the U.S., it stopped being about the exploitative conditions of capitalism and matters like NAFTA and the faceless millions who suffered and, instead, became about the sad, good immigrants we could now feel connections to because of their individual stories: undocumented and queer students, sad mothers torn from their children, babies on cold floors and so on.

Today, we only care about migrants we can feel sad about, and forget the economic conditions that brought them here. We're only concerned about immigration at the end point when people are dead or dying. That famous photograph of the child on the beach does not evoke mourning for him: the discourse is about wanting that child dead. When I say wanting that child dead, I'm not talking about the right which of course wants that child dead. I'm talking about the left. The left wants dead migrants. They want migrants to die.

At the same time, whiteness prevails in immigration discourse, but few will acknowledge that. Ukraine, for a long while, languished in that limbo space between white and not-white (as does Greece, in the international imaginary). But Ukrainian refugees watched as their Arab and Asian friends were treated very, very differently as they all made their way across borders in the wake of the war: Ukrainians had become white in a new geopolitical structure. So, we can't dismiss identity when it is still so clearly a sifting mechanism even within geopolitics—we have to account for it in the trail of capitalism and its wars, without needlessly fetishizing it. Whenever I hear someone denounce "identity," I take ten steps back and question where they're coming from.

ARB: This gets us back to your work in the Against Equality anthology, *Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion,* in which you write about queer people being afforded basic rights as long as they mirror normativity or adhere to conventions of the dominant culture. The early gay rights movement, for example, supported healthcare for all, not simply for married people, regardless of sexuality. Separating the movement by class and respectability politics was a capitalist tactic.

YN: And "gay" is an identity, one that is now integral to the U.S. neoliberal project, and the intense privatization of every kind of resource. The only reason the West paid attention to gay issues like marriage is because the campaign for gay marriage centered whiteness at its core: so here you have two identities combined to further a very particular economic project. We see again that not paying attention to whiteness as an identity—and how it links to others—will mean political failure. Rather than dismiss identity as a category of analysis, we have to consider how it's strategically deployed.

The left fails to understand that capitalism is not separate from identity: capitalism utilizes identity. When capitalism could exploit poor Appalachian whites, it did; when it could turn non-white people into slaves, it did. Capitalism locates certain forms of identity in their spaces of vulnerability and exploits them, as convenient. Capitalism isn't racist but can be racialized, and it exploits racism to pit people against each other. It will exploit whoever is most useful, regardless of identity—the "class first" leftists are wrong: we can't stop thinking about identity, we have to consider how it's used and how identity is still a material reality for many

people. Capitalism is implicated in these messy discourses and these systems of exploitation. But anyone who thinks that we can just stop thinking about how identity plays a role in capitalism is engaging in wishful thinking and, implicitly or explicitly, trying to center whiteness.

ARB: So again how do we get to that vision of utopia? How do we achieve it outside these systems of power? How do we create support for one another? In the past you've been very critical of the concept of community, yet these changes require an active interconnected community.

YN: My cynicism about community comes from living in the U.S., where "community" is a messy, sticky concept that mostly involves communal living, crisis intervention, and mutual aid. I still depend on the last two in more individual than systemic ways, but they are not more than band-aid solutions, and such measures tend to create a sense that we should help people we know, who need our help. They also tend to reinforce structures—like the nonprofit industrial complex which mushroomed from grassroots efforts—that perpetuate inequality in order to survive as the dispensers of resources. Community can also be composed entirely of strangers who don't know one another.

ARB: I think that does define community—where one doesn't need to know a person to help them.

YN: Exactly. But that's not how it works in the United States where "community" inevitably means "people you know and like," and it also means you have to craft a certain way of being, a kind of personhood, to survive. If you're not liked, you're screwed. We need these kinds of stop-gap measures but they have to be ways by which people get what they need without having to perform a good, likable self. And we have to think long-term, about creating more sustainable structures and changes in systems.

This will be controversial among anarchists, but I do think the state has a role to play. How do we build larger systems of support and distribution without simply depending on and trusting the good will and integrity of fellow human beings? For instance, I would never use the more formal mutual aid structure in Chicago—I don't trust many of those involved to not use my information and vulnerability against me down the line.

I do believe in the power of organizing, with or without mutual aid in place. Chicago's organizers are fierce motherfuckers no matter what side you are on. You don't want to tangle with them. They tend to be horrible people, and many of them are racists, some of the worst people I know, but they are also among the most effective organizers.

As an example: Ten years ago Rahm Emanuel shut down 50 schools on the South Side, and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students, faculty, and organizers have never stopped their constant activism on all fronts, against the closures and the discrepancies faced by CPS. Student activism, led by organizations like the abolition-based Chicago Freedom School, has created generations of incredible activists in a city that keeps trying to obliterate them—largely on account of their identity, to be precise, which falls on the complicated axis of race and class. They are the reason why we now have a Chicago Teachers Union organizer as Mayor—Brandon Johnson will not be perfect, but this is a huge political win in this city. So in terms of how we get there from here: shit takes time to happen.

ARB: Yes, but you're talking about an electoral process. Methods like mutual aid and solidarity are not just used by organizers and anarchists, they are used by police and soldiers because they are effective strategies. I don't disagree that things related to political organizing are significant, but I'm less interested in electoral politics.

YN: I'm not talking about students fighting for the election of a certain mayor but pointing out that it's their relentless activism over years that led to a huge political change. I'm not interested in electoral politics either, but I also recognize its value and meaning in specific arenas. The students, politically, are a wide mix—it's worth examining the history of their work in a city like Chicago that is not as homogenous as many European or even American cities tend to be. Students are fighting against the system and saying they don't want to have their schools shut down, they don't want to have their education taken away, and they're going to keep fighting. Brandon Johnson is one instrument.

ARB: It's good to see students taking action. I've been thinking about radicals raising children, as there are so many children living in Exarchia, and they are part of a multi-generational movement. In the U.S., it's difficult to sustain that because the upward mobility of future generations is part of the American myth, and many young people do what it takes to meet their fundamental human needs and desires, like having a house, or children, or being able to do things other than work. I've talked to radicals in their 20s and 30s who want to have children but say the climate crisis and exploitative labor practices prevent them. Many people end up abandoning their values in order to survive or to start families.

YN: What is monstrous about the U.S. is that it makes it impossible to have and sustain children in a healthy framework and simultaneously makes it impossible to not have children if you choose not to. Even in Chicago, where it's technically possible to have an abortion, getting one can involve either an expensive ride or several buses and trains.

ARB: And in the U.S., where abortion is increasingly prohibited, poor people's children become commodities for wealthy people, in a truly exploitative adoption system.

YN: Yes, and through surrogacy. This is very much about economic power, whether it's about surrogacy in India involving poor women, or surrogacy involving poor women in the U.S. I'm writing an essay about motherhood as a hustle. American mothers are always hustling, in a sense: trying to make the next event, the next four hours, the one night away happen. And it's a hustle even if you're middle to upper middle class—getting your child to their lessons, getting them into the "right" schools. Mothers all day long hustle from one hour to another while many men, even enlightened lefties and progressives, see themselves as babysitters, not as parents. Parenting is isolating and exhausting.

How we integrate children into political life is also part of how we get there from here. Who are we taking along with us, why are we not allowed to take our children along to our activism and our work, who gets to go on those journeys—those are the questions.

I also think it's important to talk about identity and childbirth. Gay men in particular often exploit poor women, particularly poor women of color, for surrogacy. Dorothy Roberts has written about the foster care system and how it's set up so that wealthy and mostly white parents can take children away from their homes with assistance from the state. When we think about identity, we think it's so great that gay men can marry and adopt. Where are they adopting from? Pete Buttigieg and his partner have biracial twins.

ARB: Yes. That famous picture of the two of them sitting together in a hospital bed holding the twins…

YN: And Buttigeig has a terrible track record on race. Now that he has biracial children, he can claim to be anti-racist. Everything about him is a PR campaign.

ARB: This can be said broadly of politicians.

YN: Well, yes, but again: this is where we fail when we don't consider how identity is deployed. His campaigns, past and future, are very much about being the potential gay president. His difference in identity from nearly every other politician is what marks his candidacy: if we stop paying attention to that, we risk ignoring—at our peril—the massive, massive political and economic interests, including those in the finance and defense sectors, represented by a very powerful gay lobby.

In terms of political change—how do we get there from here— we need to remember that life takes time. The people who've been working on prison abolition have been mostly Black women like Ruthie Gilmore and Mariame Kaba who've been doing the incredibly hard work of combining action with analysis for twenty, thirty, forty and more years—long before the cause became fashionable among a certain set.

Change is a long, slow fuse.

Listening for Echoes & Spotting the Ghosts

Suparna Choudhury

Mothers, Fathers, and Others: Essays
by Siri Hustvedt
304pp. Simon & Schuster/National Amusements 2022

Ambiguity is hardly a virtue of academic pursuit. And though we all speak of the brain as the organ of great complexity, we look to neuroscience for certainties about behavior, emotion, mental suffering, facts that can shape our sense of who we 'really' are, categories that prescribe to us a season of psychotropics, or psychedelics, or Sudoku. However, brain science can be reductionist, and a great deal of uncertainty and unwieldy complexity is also minimized, normalized, corrected for, or erased. The source of uncertainty and complexity is what Siri Hustvedt takes up in her collection of essays *Mothers, Fathers and Others*.

Hustvedt is a novelist, poet and essayist who later in her career also became a lecturer in psychiatry. She embraces ambiguity as part of her feminist project, imploring us to acknowledge the slipperiness of the categories and classifications we take for granted. Though uncertainty can be generative, she reminds us that dwelling in the uncertain or the in-between spaces, as a writer or scholar, entails vulnerability.

Hustvedt's essays, which blend memoir with research and anecdotes, are wide ranging in theme, from death customs to mentorship, misogyny to *Wuthering Heights*. Binary oppositions such as "man/woman," "self/other," and "mind/body" have been called into question by feminist scholars of every wave who challenge dualist tendencies embedded in Western philosophical thought, and argue that human existence is characterized by ambiguity. Hustvedt's premise is that selfhood, aesthetic experience, and our experience of reality can only be understood by embracing ambiguity, and examining the liminal spaces and muddled categories that intersect and transgress delineated boundaries: "we are all mixed up, impure, a mélange, a mess." She proposes an alternative mode of engagement between reader and text, and undermines the fixation in modern science on individuals as bounded entities, emphasizing the interrelatedness of mind and matter, and between human minds and bodies, making a plea to overcome the "wall between self and other."

In the spirit of wilding the brain and queering biology, Hustvedt's attempts to mess up boundaries take seriously a biology—a brain, a gut, a reproductive system, a body in context—that is open-ended, less sovereign, unruly, highly receptive and transformative in its environment. In "Tillie," a memoir essay about Hustvedt's paternal grandmother, Hustvedt resurrects the story of her grandmother, the details of whom, the very person "who bore and suckled and cared for [her father], are missing" in his eulogy at her funeral:

> It is only as an adult that I have been able to meditate on the problem of omission, on what is missing rather than what is there, and to begin to understand that the unsaid may speak as loudly as the said.

Hustevedt's purpose is to restore her grandmother's tale and foreground her role in the family, "a debt to the disappear[ed]" not only as a service to a woman whose details have been washed out, but also to attend to the "ghosts" in our lives who animate our present and future. Hustvedt shows that these spectres inhabit us in ways we may never understand in part because their stories have been lost

> ...into the forgotten land of the mother and mothers, the speechless realm of the womb where every human being begins and from which every human being is born, a territory Western culture has studiously repressed, suppressed or avoided…

Black Monday (Del Monte Tomato Sauce) by Anne Doran. Flashe on advertising circular 1988. Courtesy of the artist and MARCH

This is part of her central thesis about the omission of birth stories and birth givers, but also our failure as a culture to engage with our interconnectedness. As she writes in "Both-And," pregnancy is the ultimate state of mingling: "Pregnancy is a chimeric state, and the chimera is still a terrifying animal because it involves mixing." The placenta is the embodiment of chimeric substance, *par excellence*, but a "long forgotten organ of gestation not only in art, but in science too." It is an "in-between" organ, sitting at the interface of the maternal and fetal vascular beds, neglected in the literature and yet the organ that enables existence in utero, that makes life possible. Our discomfort with in-between states or hybrid forms comes from a deeply ingrained cultural "queasiness about contaminated categories." We are reminded that in Greek mythology, a chimera is nothing short of a "fire-breathing she-monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail." Hustvedt demonstrates, through excerpts of popular science media reporting on the placenta's role in cell migration between mother and fetus, just how monstrous and "alien"-like this level of "blend[ing]" of cells, of flesh, is to our culture.

Hustvedt draws on anthropologist Mary Douglas' work in the book *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966) to examine the perils of border-crossing of elements and ideas. As Douglas says, "all margins are dangerous." Hustvedt roams from anecdotes of her exclusion in a Kant seminar of bearded men to Bourdieu's sociology of "symbolic violence" to substantiate societal fear of the liminal being, challenging the power structures and gatekeepers that maintain territorial borders—of land, bodies, social categories and ideas.

Our tolerance for ambiguity, in the form of hybridity, uncertainty, absences, or mixing, would be reclaimed, Hustvedt argues, if we could abandon the tenacious divide between nature and nurture. In the late 19th century, Francis Galton deepened the distinction between "nature and nurture," this disjunction implicating nature as the sole vehicle of inheritance. The last couple of decades have seriously challenged this traditional separation between nature and nurture, and the mainstream understanding of twentieth century biology, where genotype dictates phenotype in a unidirectional fashion. Research in epigenetics stipulates that human biology is constantly being altered by its environment. Hustvedt, through her genre-crossing style, and her ample reference to the evidence of genomic and neural plasticity that forces scientists to rethink the primacy given to biophysical explanations, challenges us to destabilize the dichotomy of nature/culture and instead address the fundamental interaction of mind, body, and society, and within that the mutually constitutive relationship between the writer, reader, and art.

Her strategy is to use storytelling situated in her daily life and past to send home the message that dividing lines are arbitrary. While her movement between disciplines, anecdotes, reportage, and research can seem less than seamless, she appeals to the brain's thirst for narratives in the form of stories to drive home the argument against the nature-nurture divide. It is no accident that she roams so freely between these different bodies of knowledge—her point is that we can only arrive at truths about our human condition through assemblages. No purist approach will provide a true—or ethical—account of who we are.

Hustvedt's ambition with these essays is not just to interrogate the science of the human, but to show that doing so, and restoring a space for the "in-between" and ambiguous, has far-reaching ethical and political implications, with particular relevance to feminist epistemology.

Feminist theory has historically had a vexed relationship with biology, because of reductive, hierarchical, and binary tropes that have run through theory and methods with powerful and often violent effects in the service of colonialism and misogyny. What Hustvedt is arguing here for, along with recent queer and feminist theorists, is not an anti-scientific perspective, but a non-reductionist, systems approach to the mind and body. It is also a position that refuses to privilege biological data over anything else. Equally, we embody our social, cultural, and institutional worlds, and they are constrained and lived through and within the contours of our bodies, leaving traces—social and biological—for generations to come. These are the claims lurking underneath each essay, and behind Hustevedt's anecdotes about exclusion in the scholarly sphere: "Being treated as a polluting invader made me feel bad and dirty, even though I had nothing to feel bad about."

Here she is referring to being the only woman in a philosophy seminar in New York, her engagement with Kant being tacitly ridiculed by "gatekeepers" that we all, in all spheres, encounter time and time again, patrolling the borders and preventing infiltration of voices, vocabularies, methods, and challenges from those they deem unfit to participate. To stray across disciplinary borders in the academy is to be treated like a thinker who is "undisciplined," and Hustvedt, with one foot in English and the other in psychiatry, is well-experienced in being treated this way.

Though interdisciplinarity has been often reduced to a buzzword, Hustvedt convinces us that only a truly interdisciplinary spirit will do. She also shows that these are not just the concerns of the white-coated lab scientist or the academic in the ivory tower, that in fact these questions of boundaries "affect every one of us" in how we understand where our own human boundaries begin, how we sense the world, how we relate to others, how we make love, how we suffer and how we imagine. Her message is most powerful in moments when it reads like a manifesto, a manifesto of resistance and refusal:

> No one, no body is closed. We are open beings living among and dependent on others. We are all born from the body of someone. No discourse or discipline of purity, no wall, no barrier, no gatekeeper or colossus will alter the truths of mixing and change.

Hustvedt's refusal to submit to scientific beliefs of the sovereignty of the individual body and mind insists on our interdependence, and resounds with echoes of our forgotten debts to motherhood and the deep significance of this refusal for feminism.

Hustvedt has multiple disciplinary commitments—to literature, neuroscience, art, and psychoanalysis. However uneasy, ambivalence has a price, and is in many ways productive as a position from which to unsettle and remake. Hustvedt no doubt has in mind an audience that includes those she critiques—the scientist, the academic in the ivory tower—and in that sense, she is abiding by the codes of legitimacy in those spheres, as a woman and as a scholar trained in the humanities dwelling in the halls of science. To illuminate this liminal positionality, and foreground the messiness of our being, we must sometimes embrace the discomfort of both-and, of unknowing. We must listen for echoes and spot the ghosts. Certainty can be an illusion; though we are rarely told so in the lab, clarity and definitive knowledge come with foreclosures and narrowings of knowledge, attention, and experience.

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Ask

Steven W. Thrasher

Unsafe Words: Queering Consent in the #MeToo Era
Edited by Shantel Gabrieal Buggs and Trevor Hoppe
216pp. Rutgers University Press 2023

"What does it mean to consent?" ask sociologists Shantel Gabrieal Buggs, a Black queer woman, and Trevor Hoppe, a white gay man, in the introduction to their provocative anthology *Unsafe Words: Queering Consent in the #MeToo Era.* The slim collection of 13 essays, interviews, and photos is bursting with ideas.

Must consent be verbalized? Affirmative? And given that this framework, as scholar Blu Buchanan writes in one essay, "lends itself to the neoliberal insistence on personal choice as our primary metric of freedom" and to the logic of incarceration, can it be applied to queer and trans people's sex without causing harm?

Most Americans became aware of Me Too when white celebrity Alyssa Milano tweeted it as a hashtag as Harvey Weinstein's reign of sexual terror was exposed in 2017. In fact, Me Too had been started many years before by Tarana Burke, a Black women dedicated to addressing sexual harm through restorative justice. Still, if the last decade or so makes up the #MeToo "era," this period has also been shaped by several other significant social movements: Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and the disability-informed politics of COVID-19.

The most popular form of consent propagated by U.S. media about #MeToo sees humans as autonomous, neoliberal subjects whose sexual relations ought to be regulated by strict legal architecture. This comes into great conflict with the more collectively-minded movements of our era. The abolitionist politics underpinning BLM eschew going to the state to settle conflicts. Both OWS and disability politics encourage mutual aid when the state abandons us, not to call upon the courts. And if viruses have taught us anything in recent years, it's that none of us has "bodily autonomy." None of us is independent; we are interdependent. (Consider Alice Wong's *Year of the Tiger* [2022], Sami Schalk's *Black Disability Politics* [2022], and Dean Spade's *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)* [2022].)

How, then, do we manage consent, without hierarchical punishment and a heteronromative concept of sexual relations?

Unsafe Words provides many urgently needed, generative, and useful ways to think about sexual ethics beyond the punitive, and lets the kinds of people whose sex lives were never destigmatized (or even decriminalized) lead readers in asking better questions.

Neapolitan Projection by Carrie Moyer. Acrylic, sand, glitter on canvas 2019

What does consent look like during anonymous gay hookups, in bars and in back rooms? Co-editor Hoppe considers when non-verbal cues grant consent; an Asian American performance studies scholar thinks about the racial dynamics of being groped in gay bars; and writer Alexander Cheves writes honestly about how he likes "getting a little fucked up, losing my inhibitions and fucking strangers I don't know or care about and there are many people out there, queer and otherwise, just like me."

Is consent "sexy," as we have been told in mass media repeatedly (the slogan plastered across college campuses)? Sociologist Angela Jones, who has a background in sex work, argues that no, consent is *not* sexy—it is often an awkward buzzkill. They also make a brilliant argument about how the demise of digital spaces to solicit sex work due to SESTA and FOSTA takes consent away from sex workers, who can't weed out clients online and face more danger on the street—that pro-consent advocates need to give sex workers the tools *they* need to consent, too.

Whose bodies get to consent? Black nonbinary femme Blu Buchanan considers their body in the kind of bathhouse where Samuel Delany once wrote about "massed bodies." In "Rejecting the (Black Fat) Body as Invitation," co-editor Buggs writes personally and compellingly about how she has "denied justice and fair treatment to myself as a Black queer woman out of my concern for other queer people," specifically regarding how many people (of all races, sexualities, and genders) feel entitled to her body.

Can teens give consent? One of the most provocative essays, "Was I a Teenage Sexual Predator?" by HIV activist Mark S. King, explores how he sought sex with adult men as a 14-year-old decades ago. Liberals generally would want a 14-year-old to be able to seek out an abortion, *possibly* to seek out gender affirming care, but *not* to seek out sex with an adult. Fascinatingly, King seems less harmed by any of the men than by the pain of being 'abandoned' by therapists who "interrupted my story to state they were obligated to report any incidents of childhood sexual abuse. Even if the perpetrators were dead," which took away King's ability to speak freely in therapy.

The essays of *Unsafe Words* speak to one another in generative and sometimes unexpected ways. For instance, in an era defined by everyone having a video camera in their pockets, photographer Don (D.S.) Trumbull's "Consent Through My Lens: A Photo Essay" and Buggs's essay set in a bar both invite the reader to think about the consent ethics of photography far beyond the realm of sex.

As a Black queer man whose work on viruses has made me think of bodily autonomy as a myth, reading *Unsafe Words* was less in conversation with Amia Srinivasan's 2021 *The Right to Sex* than with Larry Mitchell's 1977 novel-treatise *The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions*. Mitchell is not concerned about consent in that book, a gay commune fantasy without private property, without private coupled relationships, and where everyone has access to *every* body in a kind of sexual socialism. But, as Blu Buchanan writes, in "many marginalized communities, the idea of a discrete individual sits uncomfortably alongside the ways we are connected and care for one another." How, then, *do* we queerly negotiate permission in the collective experiences of sex and living without reinforcing cis-hetetrosexual patriarchy and control?

Anarchy and the hard, ongoing work of collectively working through our ethical responsibilities to one another in different contexts go a long way. "The straight rules don't apply," Jane Ward asserts in her essay on lesbian sexual ethics, and that much "is possible when patriarchy is not the context in which women are being fucked."

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Prowl

Nate Lippens

Some people get the glory. Some people get the glory hole.

I remember when I was young spying an old man—probably forty—sitting at a gay bar in short shorts and a tank top, smoking with the slow-mo of a 1970s movie, like he had all the time in the world. When the door opened, he appraised new arrivals. I examined his get-up, his fussy little gestures, and his longing stare with repulsion. To be so old and still on the prowl.

Now I'm well past his age and I can bring the prowl to my door. And I do.

I am the age where young men's daddy issues work to my advantage, but I can't bankroll my end of the deal. I am stuck with the truly damaged seeking validation or abuse or abusive validation. *Bring the belt* one messaged. The next morning my hand was swollen. I'd sprained it spanking a low-level brand strategist in a designer jockstrap. I told my friend Charlie about the injury because I'd once loaned him money for the dentist after he chipped his tooth on a wedding band at a glory hole.

Charlie says, "Why not age disgracefully? I mean, have you seen what passes for dignity? For us, it's always been an awkward age."

Horse on the House by Sameena Sitabkhan. Digital collage with analog scans 2023

After a disaster date with a guy who said, "I guess I thought you were butch by your photo," I changed my profile to: "5'7" fem with the face of an embittered sea captain, the voice of a pissed-off fey concierge, and a body like an unmade bed."

I've never maintained a romantic relationship for more than two years. I don't have children or pets, and I recently purchased, nurtured, and murdered a cactus.

An acquaintance asks if I'm dating anyone. He has a friend in mind. I say I'm retired. I came out at fourteen which means I have more than thirty years of being out. I should be able to retire. I don't expect a watch, maybe an acknowledgment: "Thanks for your service." Maybe a moment of silence. I am simply done. I'm not good at romantic life. I make bad decisions and stick with them. Loyalty to poor judgment is one of my most pronounced character traits. I am bowing out too late to have any honor but before I cause more harm. Not exactly noble but at least belatedly honest.

I have so vigorously rejected my role as gay sidekick/agony aunt that when someone tried to tell me about their marital problems this week, I said, "Are you hitting on me?"

"Imagine a life without shame," Charlie says.

"I believe that's called death."

Charlie is not a hugger. We have both joked about being raised by wire monkey mothers. I once explained my mostly forgotten childhood to him this way: "When I was about six, my paternal grandmother told a group of church women I had introduced hugging to our family."

My friend's thirteen-year-old daughter asks why I never married. I tell her I haven't found the right one. I don't say marriage didn't exist as an option when I was young, and I learned to think and live outside all those situations. I don't say part of rejecting the victim's badge was turning what I was taught was wrong and disgusting about me into excess and glory. Make trauma into refusal. Things have changed, as my fuck buddy Dustin says, but I can't undo a lifetime. Later I teach my friend's daughter how to play triple peak solitaire. "I'm good at this," I say. "And the best part is no one knows."

Soft targets: Me lying in bed awake wishing I knew how to tell the man sleeping next to me what it was like to be in my head but knowing that would mean he wouldn't love me anymore. That knowledge meant I couldn't love him either. In the end, I had to tell him. I didn't want to hurt him, but I knew I would. How do you tell someone you don't love them anymore? He cried but I didn't hold him. I meant for the pain to be quick. I'd rehearsed for days beforehand. Once it was happening my words were an echo. He asked how long I hadn't been in love with him. I talked around the answer because there was a fine line between honesty and cruelty.

People say they want honesty, but not this. I admit my faults. If they insist on them from a place of superiority, what they imagine as moral or ethical, I enumerate their reciprocal faults according to their own standards. Yes, I am fragile and erratic, and you are a serial monogamist reenacting your childhood abuse and abandonment in a looping series of relationships that are codependent, cruel, and, worst of all, boring.

The number of texts I have typed and deleted this morning: five. Expression outpaces doubt but doubt has the final word (silence). I await disaster. I mean Dustin's text. His messages are too short or run-on with drink and maudlin words. A voice talking to itself. Fantasies talking to other fantasies. What concerns me is wanting them. Clearly, they need no one. A loop intelligible for the length of a tinny anthem, then dark.

I station myself where the bar curves, riveted by performances of unembarrassed need. All around me it's duck-duck-goose, misery-misery-magnificence, obsession-obsession-disappointment. A man moves through the bar like he's panhandling for sex. An older man—my age—has a younger man buttonholed by the corner mirror. Sugar Pop's eyes are like a 150-watt bulb screwed into a small reading lamp: It hurts to look at them.

Beside me two men are sparring or flirting.

"You're hurting my feelings."

"You have feelings?'

"I do. I have a sensitive side."

"The shaft of your dick doesn't count."

In the mirror behind the bar, I'm not bad. Might be good to have a body beside me, something solid to keep me from floating away. Not a smart idea. But this isn't a thought. It's blood moving around.

Dustin finishes and hunts around for his smokes. I stand with my jeans still unbuttoned, grab the pack of cigarettes and lighter, which have slipped behind the couch cushion, and hand them over.

Dustin fumbles one from the pack and concentrates on the flame.

I button up and walk to the bathroom where my wild face slides into the mirror's view. Back to the living room, Dustin, coat on, wavers as he leashes his dog, a scrubby mop named Angie.

"Dickinson?" I asked upon introduction.

He looked confused. "You mean Emily?"

Never mind.

He told me Angie was named after a friend who died. What a hell of a tribute. Picking up shit in memory.

"I'll walk you down. Angie needs to go out."

The words are slurry yet determined. Dustin wants me to clear out. His husband will be home from work soon.

I wear Lee's blue and black checked flannel shirt—an XL that drowns

me—and remember leaning against him and resting my head against his shoulder.

Three springs ago, snow still patchy on the ground, I smoked by a woodpile and hitched up Lee's long johns, which I was wearing. I thought of his body and the cigarette keeping me from it. A big man with a beard and long hair. For an atheist, I sure have dated a lot of men who look like Jesus. Lee was hot. On an actual body temperature level. Wrapped around me, I sweated under his heat, like I might dissolve.

Cigarette finished, back in bed, Lee kissed my forehead. He held my face in his hands and said, "I'm going to give you a beautiful life." I wanted what he said, wanted to believe, but then a blip-thought: Why must you lie to us both? And also: Who do you think you are?

Lee was a foot taller than me. One night, we fetched the soft tape measure and laid it all out—thigh circumference, knee to groin, forearm length, clavicle to navel, ball hang in a seventy-degree room in January—and wrote the numbers in a grid notebook.

Months later we were in the dark. The end of a long night.

"We're going in different directions," he said

The fact he thought I had a direction broke my heart.

"We'll figure it out," I said.

"I already have."

The heat drained from me. Not a wisp of love in his voice. Efficient, businesslike. I wanted to be far away from its rounded baritone gone flat. Many mornings I'd been in the same spot listening to water run in the bathroom. Sometimes I'd gone in and joined. Once when Lee had gone to work and left me in his apartment sleeping, I woke, picked up the paperback on the nightstand, and opened it to see his neat signature in the flyleaves. Such schoolboy claims made me smile. I wanted to be his book.

A string of worn and worthless words ran together. Phrases dumb people made to break up with other dumb people.

I stood and it was as if I'd never been there at all. In the dark I couldn't see the ripple on Lee's bed. I dressed. Moving to leave, I heard my name twice as I closed the door. The hallway was bright and blurry. I took the stairs so I wouldn't risk being in the elevator riding down with other people leaving other beds.

I know how to leave, and I know how to stay, but I have not understood anyone else's reasons for leaving or staying.

Lee once told me it was better to be rejected for who you are than to be loved for who you are not. Both demonstrated a sense of solid self I couldn't relate to. I had spent too much time trying to find a place in the world—sometimes literally a roof over my head—that the luxury of imagining rejection as a choice was laughable. I had mistaken many people for friends, for kindred spirits, not understanding they had chosen to opt out of conventional life, and I had been thrown out. They could go back, and they carried the values like shrapnel. I had different wounds that reacted to different weather and there was no going back.

Thirty years ago, when the first man I was in love with broke up with me, I left Seattle and took the train to Chicago. I'd never seen much of the west and was in no hurry to arrive and face my confusion. A teenager and her baby sat beside me. She was headed home to Iowa after breaking up with the baby's father. Her parents didn't know she was coming or that they had a grandson. Twice she left the infant with me to go smoke when the train stopped. Third time she left I told him a story, some bastardization of Peter Rabbit, and realized the train was moving again and she hadn't returned. An hour passed and I entertained the idea she had abandoned her son and I would keep him. The girl returned. "I met a guy, and we hung out in the club car." The next day in Iowa, I said farewell to my almost-son and wished his mother luck. We didn't exchange information because I wanted to pretend things would turn out for us.

The night: dark and breathing. Him: a dancer's bearing, light and deliberate. Sidewalk gait. Colored lights stipple his face.

Are we mostly paper dolls to one another? A row of silhouettes with food allergies, kinks, and gripes?

I understand how someone who was once considered beautiful struggles as they age. I understand not because I am compassionate or kind, but because I see they are experiencing loss and I have always lived in the place they are now relegated to. I can't extend a welcome though because there is no meeting ground. They remember where they came from, and I remember where they came from too. I'm only visible to them now. I saw them all along.

Charlie shows me the profile for the guy who gave him herpes. Under the herpes guy's name: I have a HUNGER for freedom. A PASSION for helping and DESIRE to spread good. "Good." We both laugh.

Forty individual muscles in the human face and my frown lines are the strongest. I know it doesn't help to think if certain people weren't dead the world would be more companiable, even—especially—if it is also true.

Charlie tells a story about Sam, our friend who died twenty-plus years ago, and his eyes get teary.

"Okay, let's get a drink," I say.

"I'm broke."

"I'll spot you. C'mon."

"I don't want you buying me drinks. I should be buying you drinks."

"Is this a chivalry thing? Get your fucking coat."

Afterward soused Charlie sleeps on my couch. I remove his shoes and carefully lay a blanket over him. On the porch I smoke, angled to watch both the intersection where traffic whizzes along and inside where Charlie doesn't stir. Jesus Christ, it's cold.

When Tuesday Weld was asked by a reporter what drove her into seclusion in the 1970s, she responded, "I think it was a Buick."

My urge is escape or to at least reclaim my mind from the world, to slow my attention, put my phone in a drawer, read a book in bed uninterrupted. Let the day and its malcontents run wild, unknown. Alone and forsaken is my heaven.

Release. Escape artists fascinated me as a kid. Take your pick: Handcuffs, straitjackets, bags, coffins, cages, chains, steel boxes, barrels, burning buildings, fish tanks. I read about Houdini and illusionists and vanishments. D.B. Cooper, the name the FBI gave the unknown man who hijacked a plane, demanded a ransom, and parachuted into the night over southwestern Washington state. Never identified or apprehended. I went to the public library and read about him, parachute stunts, night jumps, and canopy collisions. What I wanted to know was how to go unfound.

I watch Hugh age: crepey elbow, sunspots, thinning hair. This year his neck changed. My hand smooths his rogue eyebrow hairs. We've slept together on and off for decades. He holds me because he can and he's always known how, since we were fifteen-year-olds in the attic of a house under foreclosure. Now we are two middle aged men in a hotel room. Morning turns black to gray rain, and Hugh sleeps with his arm across me. I remember what it is to love someone even if love is in the past. I mean romantic love. The rest of love pours from everything, emanating from bad furniture and cheap heavy draperies and car horns five floors below. They all conduct the feeling so it can be lost. Hugh stirs, rolls on his side, and it all breaks apart, as it should.

Nate Lippens *is the author of* My Dead Book, *which was a finalist for the Republic of Consciousness Prize in the U.K. His new novel* Ripcord *will be published by Semiotext(e) in 2024, along with the reissue of* My Dead Book.

Night and Day

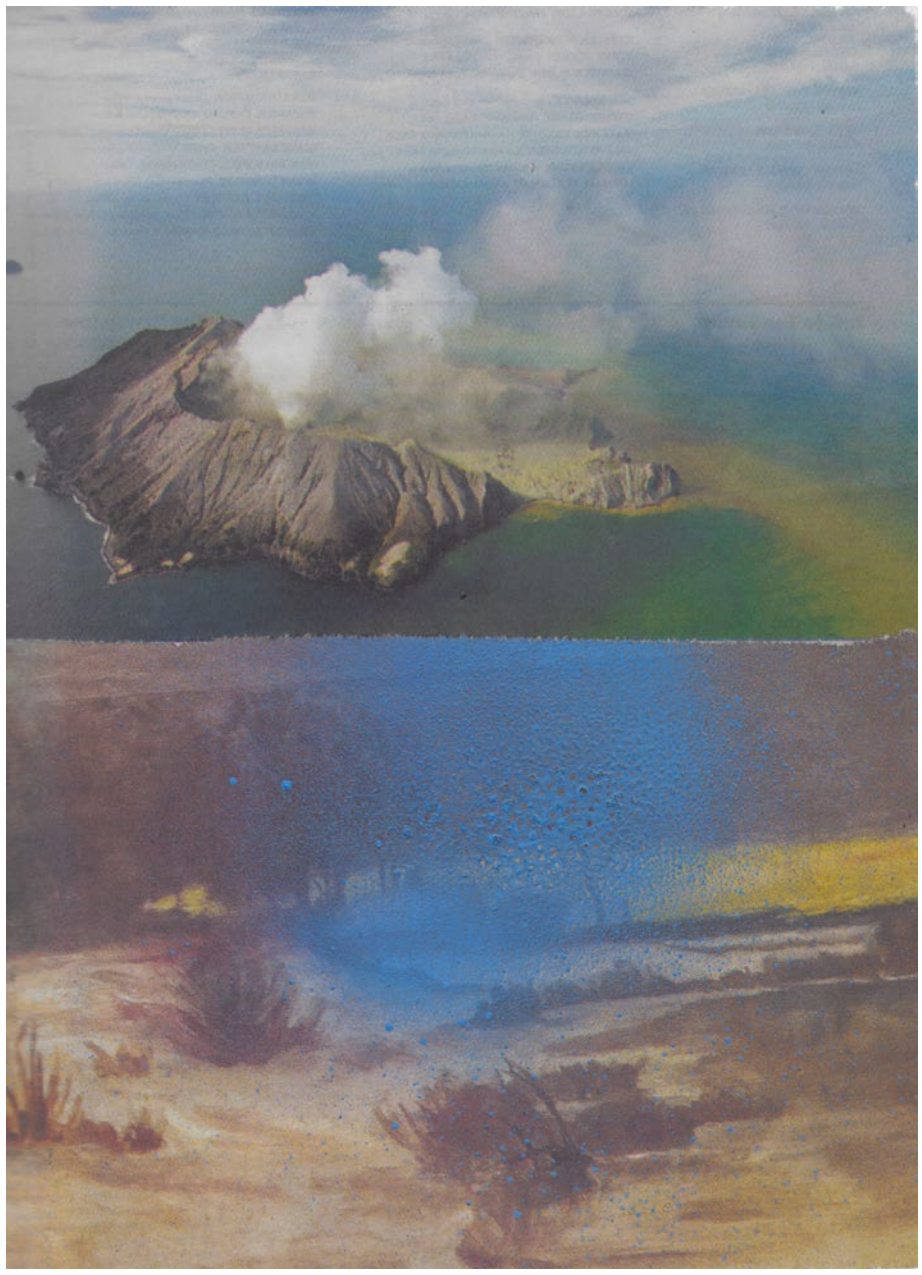
Anarchism after *The Dawn of Everything*

Joseph-Kass Tomaras

The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity
by David Graeber and David Wengrow
704pp. Macmillan/Holtzbrinck 2021

It has been more than a year since the publication of *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, by the late David Graeber and his still-living collaborator David Wengrow. With 526 pages of text, an additional 84 pages of substantive endnotes, and a 63-page bibliography, a full reading takes some time. I suspect that no one can read this book without having at least some of what they believe challenged, about matters as fundamental as what society is and how human beings relate to one another.

The book begins with a frontal assault on the "crude simplification" of the "state of nature" allegory told by both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Hobbes. Along the way, several core assumptions of the 19th Century European intellectual climate in which Marx and Engels were participants also crumble in the face of the ethnographic and archaeological evidence assembled in this book. But this isn't simply a polemic: The book's textual references to Marx himself are respectful, particularly with reference to his maxim, found in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that "People make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."



Magic Space by Michael Byron. Collage on paper 2021

But Marx is more than his maxims. He also sought to formulate a set of "laws" that would describe not just how people make their own history, but how the circumstances they encounter change in some ways—and remain constant in others—from one historical epoch to another. In 1847, in his response to Proudhon, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx postulates a relationship between the "forces of production" and the "mode of production" in which the former is always prior: "In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist." With examples like this it is little wonder that many subsequent Marxists concluded that a "materialist" understanding of history begins with a form of technological determinism. This view is not limited to Leninists and others whose interpretation of Marxism posits a series of necessary evolutionary steps to which human will is subordinated. For example, the council communist Anton Pannekoek, in a 1942 essay called "Materialism and Historical Materialism," wrote of "Marx's original scientific contributions," including "first of all the theory of historical materialism, according to which the development of society is determined by its productive forces that make for a certain mode of production."

Graeber and Wengrow chip away steadily at any sort of technological determinism, not delivering the finishing blow until page 500, when they list a series of world-changing inventions and the decidedly unproductive purposes to which they were first put. "Ceramics were first invented, long before the Neolithic, to make figurines, miniature models of animals and other subjects, and only later cooking and storage vessels. Mining is first attested as a way of obtaining minerals to be used as pigments, with the extraction of metals for industrial use coming only much later." And so on. One is drawn inexorably to the conclusion that the greatest "productive forces" in the broad sweep of human history have been curiosity, creativity, art, play, performance, and ritual.

If this were the book's only contribution, it would require an extensive revision of a conclusion that Pannekoek called part of "the solid fundament of Marxism." Several other such pillars, however, are demolished by the authors, almost in passing. Even more comprehensive than their case against technological determinism is a broader effort to refute the notion of "social evolution" in general. For example, "One problem with evolutionism is that it takes ways of life that developed in symbiotic relation with each other and reorganizes them into separate stages of human history." But if we reject the social evolutionism and technological determinism underpinning the idea of "Progress," what do we have left? In addition to academic social science and much of Marxism, *The Dawn of Everything*'s arguments also undermine several presuppositions of classic works of anarchist theory.

Early in their book, Graeber and Wengrow demonstrate that the idea of "Progress" of various sorts emerged as a centerpiece of European-American thought as a means of asserting cultural supremacy over the indigenous people of North America, in the service of conquest. In their account, social evolution was a 19th century invention to discount the relative freedom experienced in indigenous societies as compared to European and settler societies, and attested to by European and indigenous intellectuals alike. Rousseau's focus on the supposedly universal problem of social "inequality" is reframed as part of the European effort to justify lack of freedom as superior, and conquest as inevitable. This Rousseauian concern with inequality, tied to an emergent notion of social progress shared by Marxist and anarchist thinkers alike, is an inauspicious starting point for liberatory social thought.

It is easy to see the traces of this false start in a wide variety of anarchist literature. Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* focuses not primarily on natural selection—inasmuch as the book does that, it foreshadows many subsequent advances in the study of evolutionary biology and animal behavior—but devotes six of its nine chapters to social evolution, using Morgan's discredited taxonomy of "savages," "barbarians," and the civilized. Technological determinism does not appear as strongly among classic anarcho-communists such as Kropotkin and Malatesta as it did among their Marxist contemporaries, but it arises most notably within anarchist literature among the anarcho-primitivists, who largely take for granted James C. Scott's account of the inexorable link between the domestication of cereal grains and the emergence of something called "the State." In contrast, Graeber and Wengrow document gaps in the archaeological record between the domestication of major grain types and clear evidence for the emergence of State-like forms of domination that are measurable in millennia. If this is "determinism," then it is a peculiar sort of determinism, in which human beings, acting collectively, are able to forestall the supposedly inevitable results of their past decisions for forty generations or more.

Which leaves us with that long-standing bugaboo of anti-authoritarian theory, propaganda, and practice, "the State." At present, nearly all human beings live under the authority not only of a state, but of a particular type of state whose relative novelty can be seen in its name, a state possessing Westphalian sovereignty—a concept dating to a treaty signed by European authorities in 1648—that is, the exclusive right to rule within a defined territory. Within less than 400 years the powers of Westphalian states expanded across the globe in tandem with European conquest to the point that now it is taken for granted, as common sense, that each individual human being is either a citizen or a subject of the state that claims sovereignty over the patch of earth on which that person sets foot. The recency of the concept of state sovereignty's universality is an indication, however, of its ephemerality.

Extending the ephemeral concept of "the State" retrospectively into human history is, Graeber and Wengrow show, dubious in its explanatory power.

Graeber and Wengrow lay out a theory of what they call "three elementary forms of domination": The bureaucratic, heroic, and the charismatic. Following a series of thought experiments, they suggest that "three principles—call them control of information, control of violence, and individual charisma—are also the three possible bases of social power." "Control of violence" maps to what they refer to as "heroic governance"—that is, the chieftain whose ability to threaten and command injury or death extends over a certain territory—while "control of information" maps to "bureaucratic governance," which can range from the rigorously practical (chore wheels!) to the abstract and esoteric (such as, to quote the authors, "the names of the twenty-seven hells and the thirty-nine heavens, and what creatures one would be likely to meet if one traveled there").

They then argue that "states" emerge when the two forms of governance (bureaucratic and heroic) merge together. A case could be made. But equally we might ask if this is really such a significant issue in the first place? If it is possible to have monarchs, aristocracies, slavery and extreme forms of patriarchal domination without a state (as Graeber and Wengrow show it evidently was); and if it's equally possible to maintain complex irrigation systems, or develop science and abstract philosophy without a state (as it also appears to be), then what do we learn about human history by establishing that one political entity is a "state" and another isn't?

The explanatory framework that Graeber and Wengrow develop accounts for the wide variety of social forms in societies without the state as a guide to political practice. Two of the three "elementary forms of domination" are already described to in the quote above—the bureaucratic and heroic—though we can quibble with this terminology. It seems a concession to the official state ideology to refer even implicitly to a police officer who kills with impunity, or a soldier who inputs a set

of coordinates into a drone bomber, as enacting a form of "heroic governance." Let us, then, refer to domination based on control of violence as "sovereignty." Likewise, in their account of various non-state societies in which complex information systems are maintained, there are several—ranging from Basque villages in the Pyrenees to the earliest days of the Sumerian city of Uruk—where this has not entailed the impersonal and arbitrary exercise of authority implied by the word "bureaucracy." We can refer to this, then, as "administrative power."

The third type of domination — charisma — Graeber and Wengrow acknowledge, "tends to be the most ephemeral." Nonetheless, this is not only the form of domination that is most highly valued in contemporary electoral politics. It can be found also in the records of Mayan cities, which united sovereignty and charisma in the form of kings selected for their athletic excellence on the ball-courts, while relegating administrative power—control of information—to a priestly caste which seems to have used it not for registering the births, deaths, and tax payments of subjects, but for calculating the birthdates of the gods. In effect, Graeber and Wengrow argue, for a system of domination to approximate what we currently understand to be "the state," it is necessary and sufficient for it to command both sovereignty and administrative power; charisma is optional, but most modern states command it to some degree.

By this account, then, if anti-authoritarians describe our aim merely as "the abolition of the state," it would be sufficient, to attain that, to separate administrative power from sovereignty, that is, separate control over the information needed to maintain all that is necessary to sustain life from control over violence that causes injury or death. That would be what Engels advocated in his *Anti-Dühring*, where he projected a future communist society in which the "government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not 'abolished', it withers away." That this is not regarded by most anarchists as sufficient is evidenced not only from how little ritual recitations of this quote have availed Marxist sects, but also from fuller statements of anti-authoritarian aims.

For example, Malatesta, in his *On Anarchy* pamphlet that begins by restricting the meaning of anarchy to "the abolition of government," goes on to say that

> anarchy, as understood by the anarchists and as only they can interpret it, is based on socialism. Indeed were it not for those schools of socialism which artificially divide the natural unity of the social question…we could say straight out that anarchy is synonymous with socialism, for both stand for the abolition of the domination and exploitation of man by man, whether they are exercised at bayonet point or by a monopoly of the means of life.

With an understanding of "the natural unity of the social question," it is clear that even in the counterfactual hypothetical scenario in which it did without the bayonet, a state that reserves for itself a monopoly of the means of life is no less noxious than one which protects that monopoly for the capitalist class.

As anarchists, we can recognize that regaining freedom means not only undoing the state's sovereign control of violence, but sharing information counter to arbitrary administrative controls on its distribution, and undercutting even the subtle and ephemeral ways in which charismatic individuals set themselves up as uniquely exempt from shared social effort, whenever these threaten to limit one's ability to move, to disobey, or to create new ways to live.

If it is possible to have a stateless society with monarchs, aristocrats, slavery, and patriarchal domination, and also possible to have a stateless society with hygienic plumbing, then this implies that human collective action requires choices to be made above and beyond the overcoming of the state's current near-omnipresence.

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Infectious Irreverence

Johanna Fernández and the lasting power of the Young Lords

Andreas Petrossiants

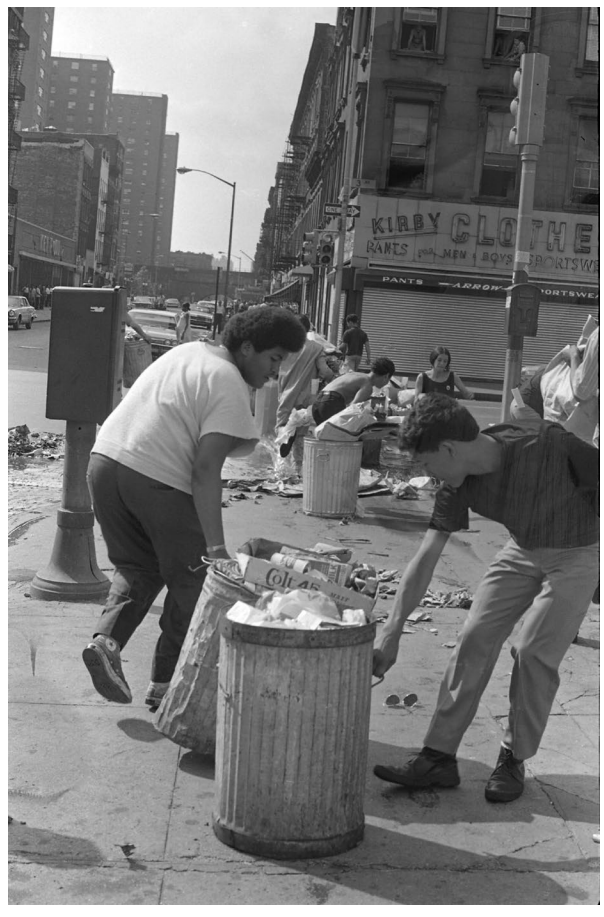
The Young Lords: A Radical History
by Johanna Fernández
480pp. University of North Carolina Press 2020

I wish that I'd had a copy of Johanna Fernández stunning and masterful history of the group, *The Young Lords: A Radical History* when I first started to take part in housing movements in New York City. "Against the backdrop of America's escalating sixties urban rebellions," she writes, situating the group amongst other forms of organization and revolt in the period, "the Young Lords unleashed a chain of urban guerilla protests that amplified the primacy of class analysis and revolution in the fight against racism. From garbage-dumping demonstrations to a series of church and hospital occupations—termed 'offensives' in deference to the Tet campaign of the Vietnamese—this small group exploded into the country's consciousness in July 1969, staging their social grievances with infectious irreverence and distinctive imagination."

At 480 pages, the book is a key resource for historicizing the actions of this group and their collaborations with other revolutionary organizations like the Black Panther Party. It is not only an excellent document of a period that continues to have massive ramifications for struggle in the present; Fernández's historical methodology is in itself *radical*—a term she uses elsewhere in the book to describe the Young Lords' concerns "with root causes of social problems and system-wide change." In addition to traditional sources for her historical work—primary documents, newspapers, and close to one hundred critical oral histories(!) that she conducted with former members and allies—her historical method also relies on contesting the power of the state and police apparatuses. Key sources for her research include "the FBI's COINTELPRO documents on the Young Lords as well as surveillance documents kept by the New York Police Department… Known as the Handschu files, these police documents were found as a result of my 2014 suit against the NYPD for its failure to honor my Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request for the police records of the Young Lords."

Fernández's radical analysis is trenchant, such as when she examines the 1960s-70s struggles to keep universities free (or cheap), as rising tuition fees became a form of retaliation against campuses becoming incubators for anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist strategy. "The New York Young Lords formed part of a cohort of young working-class people—and people of color among them, in particular—whose unprecedented access to higher education sharpened their latent critique of society and afforded them an infrastructure for dissent," she writes. Modeled on the Black Panthers, the Young Lords saw "local community organizing" as "perhaps more urgent than university study," especially "following spontaneous rebellions that had swept through East Harlem just two years earlier in 1967 in response to the killing of a Puerto Rican man by a police officer."

The book begins with the Young Lords' origin in Chicago as a gang. Fernández "examines how the mass



Dragging trash into Third Avenue, NYC during the Young Lords' Garbage Offensive. Photo by Bev Grant 1969

dislocation of Puerto Ricans occasioned by federal housing policy forced them to settle in densely populated blocks on the edges of hostile, white ethnic neighborhoods, where young men of color, who were outnumbered by their white counterparts, joined gangs to survive and became embroiled in a life of petty crime."

This first chapter describes how the "group's famed leader José 'Cha Cha' Jiménez" was politicized in prison and through struggle. While he was at first reluctant to lend support to local anti-displacement causes, Fernández demonstrates—through precise archival work—how he came to see the connections between racist, colonial, and capitalist forces through his own life and those of his fellow gang members. Fernández then gives a thorough description of Operation Bootstrap:

> After World War II, U.S. policies in Puerto Rico led to an exodus from the island so great, in proportion to its population, that it exceeded the vast relocation of European immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth century. Between 1947 and 1970, one-third of the people of Puerto Rico were dispersed to the continental United States, mostly New York.

From there, she recounts the formation of the New York City chapter which "had transformed sprawling urban discontent in New York into a radical and well-organized social movement that became a magnet for thousands of disaffected urban youth."

Fernández comprehensively documents "the Young Lords' class-conscious, community-based campaigns and their impact" including their medical activism in setting up free clinics and their door-to-door campaign testing children for lead poisoning in the tenements of East Harlem. She also details the Young Lords' occupation of the First Spanish United Methodist Church, "their relationship with a younger cohort of church parishioners who supported their actions, and the response of the church to their protests," and many other of their political campaigns—all of which were fueled by revolutionary ideology.

Like the Black Panthers, the Young Lords saw the fight against racism and colonial domination as key, "rather than secondary" to the fight against capitalism. For this reason, they called themselves revolutionary nationalists, "arguing that the fight for national independence was integral to the struggle for socialism." Fernández describes how the Young Lords were heir to the Black Power movement, which "enabled Americans of all shades to redefine their political relationship to the nation and to negotiate that often-fraught relationship from a position of strength. In the process, however, the color of the Black Power movement, and the civil rights movement more broadly, was changed as well."

The Young Lords: A Radical History is a remarkable example of how history writing can radically engage with present struggles, offering insights from the Young Lords that can help us confront contemporary expressions of exploitation.

Andreas Petrossiants*'s writing has appeared in* The New Inquiry, Bookforum.com, Artforum.com, *and* e-flux journal *where he is the associate editor. He is currently researching revolutionary housing movements and autonomist Marxism.*

Mutual Aid: A Factor of Policing

Payton Alexandre

Mutual Aid Planning: A Manual Designed to Assist in the Development of Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Systems
by J.M. Baines
112pp. National Sheriffs' Association 1973

> Mutual Aid, involving the exchange of services, personnel and equipment between law enforcement agencies, is not an entirely new concept. Indeed, it has often been utilized to meet the emergency situations posed by natural disasters. However, new challenges requiring the use of Mutual Aid have emerged. During the past few years an increased frequency of various kinds of civil disorders has added new dimensions to law enforcement responsibilities. Confronted with these challenges, law enforcement agencies have had to pay greater attention than ever before to Mutual Aid planning, coordination and operating procedures.
>
> –Ferris E. Lucas
> Executive Director
> National Sheriffs' Association

History rhymes. In the wake of massive social rebellions, the National Sheriffs' Association conducted a study titled *Mutual Aid Planning* that examined police cooperation across the country in 1973. The purpose of their study was to collect data on how police departments interacted with one another at the time, while strategizing the means to protect private capital during natural disasters and crush liberation movements. Their use of the term "mutual aid" shouldn't be confused for simple cooptation of anarchist language. More accurately, it was an extension of the long and sometimes conflicting history of mutual aid, which includes police, Mennonites, corporations, church communities, and anarchists alike.

And when the time for the breaking of the law is here, be sure it is to take place in the matrix of our everyday thoughts and fantasies, our wonderment at how we got from there to here. (The black and green snake fights the blue one), by Dianna Settles. Acrylic, gouache, colored pencil on panel 2023

Their research was done in tandem with the construction of mock towns called "Riotsvilles"—experimental training grounds where U.S. military and police agencies collaborated to hone their counterinsurgency tactics. These cop cities were open-air laboratories where law enforcement mutual aid was honed and evaluated. Not only were they learning to use new weapons, tactics, and machinery, they also "became aware of the many potential problems and pitfalls they could encounter as a result of such operations. Consequently, the concern for Mutual Aid legislation, planning and the formalization of hitherto unwritten agreements became increasingly important."

At the time, only 20 states had laws in place to formalize mutual aid agreements among police—which was one of the barriers for establishing compacts. Informal agreements led to situations where compensation, overtime, injury, loss, and damage became subjects of tension or rivalry between agencies. Today, cop mutual aid is much more robust and integrated into a wider ecosystem of nonprofit, state, and federal response measures like the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The old "cross the county line" to evade the pigs logic doesn't hold water in the ecosystem of police mutual aid. Buddy cops will often patrol into neighboring territories to support departments with less resources since these agreements allow police to cross jurisdictions to perform their operations—often carrying their immunities. Cop mutual aid allows them to strategically share resources, intelligence, and personnel with a streamlined level of organization.

Data for the study was collected through a survey that was sent to over 1,800 departments across the country, with a total of 700 responses. Each agency was asked a series of questions about their relationship to mutual aid; however, not all police were even aware of the concept between agencies. Some had already established informal relationships with nearby departments, while others were completely isolated. The study breaks down the percentages of formal and informal agreements, the types of responses that evoked mutual aid requests, and the obstacles that prevented mutual aid between agencies.

Not only did the study present raw data on the state of national police mutual aid, it was also "intended to be a planning manual as well. It presents recommendations for the improvement of existing Mutual Aid systems and for the establishment of such systems" where they didn't exist. A significant fraction of the research is dedicated to case studies in four different states, Michigan, Iowa, Louisiana, and California, with detailed reports of disaster response and crowd control tactics in each region. Throughout the text are examples of procedural shortcomings within police responses, from day-to-day law enforcement to crisis alike.

Although it's outdated, it's an important text that highlights the evolution of repression tactics in the U.S. and demonstrates the state's self-awareness in the face of revolutionary mass movements.

In 2020, the term "abolition" exploded into popular consciousness, although it was quickly subdued by the more palatable request to "defund" the police. At the same time, mutual aid gained popularity and along with it came an assortment of think pieces, books, op-eds, podcasts, films, and debates. Still, for many people who've recently become radicalized, and even many seasoned activists, the history of mutual aid is sometimes incomplete.

It's difficult to pinpoint the first recorded use of the term "mutual aid," but it's been around in different contexts for about 200 years. In the middle ages, European communes, guilds, trade unions, benefit societies, burial societies, cooperatives, credit unions, self-help groups, friendly societies, lodges, and fraternal orders existed where the church and state were absent. The term "mutual aid society" itself appears in the middle 1800s in reference to networks formed by neighbors to support others in need. Members would sometimes contribute dues to a common fund that could be tapped to help in the event of illness, injury, or other hardships.

The mutual aid movement is preceded by thousands of years of communal support structures among indigenous and agrarian communities around the world that practiced horizontal, collective resource sharing and decision-making long before the invention of the term "mutual aid." In resistance to colonization, indigenous peoples formed maroon societies, susus, underground railroads, cooperatives, seed banks, credit unions, civic organizations, churches, and other collective infrastructures to care for each other and fight back.

So, when Peter Kropotkin wrote about mutual aid in the late 1800s, he was not the first to use this term, although he politicized it in a way that had never been done before. He drew from the concept of mutual aid societies as well as decentralized indigenous confederations with a specifically anti-state analysis. He wrote that "if the institution of the guild has taken such an immense extension in Asia, Africa, and Europe, if it has lived thousands of years, reappearing again and again when similar conditions called it into existence, it is because it was much more than an eating association, or an association for going to church on a certain day, or a burial club. It answered to a deeply rooted want of human nature; and it embodied all the attributes which the State appropriated later on for its bureaucracy and police."

In his writing, Kropotkin acknowledged that the State had been working to assimilate and crush these grassroots support systems. By the time *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* was published, the police had already developed their own mutual aid practices through inter-department collaboration and police benefit associations that supported officers and their families.

Anarchists don't own the concept of mutual aid. So, it's important for us to be specific about what we mean when we talk about it, and pull from a more well-rounded historical analysis of the concept. It would be ahistorical to say that Kropotkin came up with the phrase, and it would be a massive oversight to ignore the legacy of mutual aid in policing.

We can understand interagency police cooperation as an example of decentralized mutual aid networks. As anarchists, we may feel protective of these terms, but we have to form nuanced understandings of this language in order to recognize how it can be used in different political contexts. Although the police may have a decentralized, autonomous structure as a national constellation of forces, their command system is deeply authoritarian and they become highly centralized at the local level.

In response to Superstorm Sandy in New York City, the Department of Homeland Security released a study titled "The Resilient Social Network" that acknowledged that autonomous, decentralized, horizontal disaster response models managed to out-organize the top-down state approaches despite having considerably less resources. This study in particular presents an interesting contrast between police and activist mutual aid models.

History rhymes. In the 1970s, the state spent an unimaginable amount of resources to develop and study repression tactics. Today, in the wake of the 2020 social rebellions, Atlanta is caught in a struggle to prevent the new iteration of Riotsville—Cop City. We understand that if this facility is built, over 40% of the officers using it will be from out of state, with some coming from as far as Israel. If Cop City is built, it'll be a hub for advancing the development of police mutual aid strategies at a global scale. For this and countless other reasons, it must be stopped.

A challenge of our time is to develop more robust, intercommunal infrastructures that can topple the state without emulating it. We have to have nested, neighborhood-level networks that are capable of sharing resources, spreading ideas, and making horizontal decisions that impact our collective material conditions. It doesn't need to be called anarchist, but it has to be adversarial to the state. As we build our own networks, we have to understand theirs as well. We have to map out our local police relationships. We must organize toward an insurgent mutual aid.

[The texts referenced above are available online for free and I highly recommend checking them out].

Payton Alexandre *is a 29-year-old Black Anarchist. He is co-producer of the forthcoming four-part docuseries,* The Elements of Mutual Aid, *which focuses on the origins, infrastructures, healing ways, and logistics of collective, anti-authoritarian organizing.*

Deep Truth

Antonis Vradis

At a moment when spacial computing is hailed as seamlessly bringing together the virtual and physical worlds, and fake news has created "safe communities" based on the deliberate refusal to acknowledge facets of reality, it seems anachronistic to speak of the power of a neighborhood to sustain the truth of resistance, and the strength of revolt. Especially when that small neighborhood is being occupied by several hundred police.

And yet, this is the exact right time to talk about the power of Exarchia, the Athenian neighborhood in question, to maintain and sustain revolution. Exarchia has weathered remarkable ebbs and flows over five decades, from an epicenter of country-wide uprisings and daily skirmishes that evicted the police; to the depths of neoliberal consumer frenzy; and more recently, of rampant gentrification and the police occupation that supports it.

But how did we even get here? From the early days of the first New Democracy government in 2019, it became obvious that Exarchia was a target because of its symbolism. On the eve of the elections, the subsequent minister of health, Thanos Plevris, filmed himself surreptitiously at dawn on Plateia Exarchion, looking around in anguish for any signs of hostile life in the still sleepy square, threatening "they are coming" for Exarchia. And they were coming. Over the first term of the New Democracy government (2019-2023), Exarchia saw more policing than it had over its entire post-dictatorial history. In light of this, it could plausibly be assumed that Exarchia's spatial contract—its unique position as a place where autonomy, local conflict, and confrontation with state power endured even amid regional and national state hegemony—was now truly over.

And yet, the sheer presence of police in such numbers makes Exarchia once again exceptional.

Untitled by Nafisa Ferdous. Digital drawing 2022

Or rather, not "once again" but continuously so. This is in fact the continuation of the spatial contract by other means, an unspoken but very much felt realization on the side of hegemony that Exarchia's capacity for conflict and contestation remains unabated.

Why are they so afraid of Exarchia? Over the decades, the neighborhood has proven to hold a deeptruth. Unlike the synthetic media of the deepfake, this deeptruth permeates lived experience and cuts to the heart of the collective memory of continuous revolt; from the 1973 Polytechnic uprising—a legendary event that has been presented by the post-dictatorial regime as its natal moment—to the 2015 influx of migrants and the proliferation of housing occupations in the neighbourhood to house the new arrivals, these landmark events extend through time within the neighbourhood, forming a multilayered deeptruth that is near impossible to uproot.

To uproot Exarchia would mean uprooting the memory of the neighborhood and the collective memories of Exarchians. It would mean doing away with the stories, the tacit understandings, the local knowledge, and the deeply held truths, sometimes whispered—other times shouted—from the neighborhood's rooftops.

People ask: in twenty years, will Exarchia still be a center of revolt? The honest answer is I don't know. What I do know is that for revolt to be extinguished in Exarchia, it will entail the erasure and the tearing apart of a deep seeded truth, one that runs deeper than the riot squads and motor police patrols that tarnish our daily lives but scatter at the sight of a Molotov or a stone thrown by the hand of a hooded youth—they scatter, at the first glimpse of Exarchia's deeptruth.

***Antonis Vradis** lives between Scotland and Exarchia.*

ARB DIY

Eat to Live

Overwork and depression are associated with malnutrition. It hardly matters which comes first—the chicken or the humble egg—the point is to do something about it. The Canadian literary collective Night Beats did so, with *The Sad Bastard Cookbook: Food You Can Make So You Don't Die.* The cookbook contains real, and real simple, vegan and vegetarian recipes, and also useful anti-recipes, such as "Grapefruit No," as you shouldn't consume them if you're on SSRIs. Community-sourced, available as a free e-book, and full of dark humor and the occasional good tip, *The Sad Bastard Cookbook* is an excellent example of DIY cultural activism. We spoke with authors Zilla Novikov and Rachel S. Rosen, and illustrator Marten Norr.

ARB: What was the motivation for producing the book?

Zilla: Our society imposes a lot of stigma around "good" food and "good" cooking. In our earliest discussions about the project, we went looking for sources on "depression cooking" and found recipes for almond-crusted barramundi, but no hacks to make ramen taste better. This culture of shame when someone isn't eating "right" makes it harder for exhausted people to eat at all, let alone to find food that satisfies more needs than metabolic hunger. Our cookbook is motivated by the same drive towards mutual aid that makes us participate in organizations like Food Not Bombs. Everyone we know is exhausted—suffering from activist burnout and work burnout, mental illness, and physical disabilities. With our backgrounds in writing, art, and graphic design, we had the skills to make an e-book of coping strategies sourced from our lives and our community, and to make it free to anyone who needed it.

ARB: How did you community-source the recipes?

Rachel: We asked. Almost everyone we knew had a go-to recipe for something that gets them through tough times. One of the joys of writing this cookbook has been watching it spark far-flung conversations as people share their stories and their survival strategies. Food in any context—even eating a spoonful of peanut butter from the jar—can be a powerful force for community building.

ARB: Are you pro- or anti- chore wheel?

Marten: We're all different. Rachel hasn't done a chore wheel since she lived in collective housing, and Zilla prefers a 52-card pick-up approach to chores. I'm more of a write-a-to-do-list-and-hope-the-tasks-magically-complete-themselves type of guy. Besides, as someone who's self-employed, a chore wheel would not suit my (extremely chaotic) workflow. I know the guy who makes my schedule, and he's full of shit.

ARB: What is the one recipe from the book one simply must try?

Zilla: Good sir, I believe you have fundamentally misunderstood the purpose of *The Sad Bastard Cookbook*. I hope no one is ever at the point of their lives where they're deciding between eating freezer-burnt French fries microwaved vs still frozen. But if one is unlucky enough to reach that plane of existence, I speak from experience when I say microwaved fries taste marginally better with added salt.

Marten: Pickle.

Rachel: Definitely the pickle.

ARB: What the heck is Night Beats?

Rachel: Night Beats is both a writing collective and an internet-spanning in-joke. It started as a shared fictional TV show for my novel, *Cascade* (The BumblePuppy Press, June 2022) and Zilla's upcoming novel, *Reprise*, both of which needed characters to make pop culture references that wouldn't get dated quickly. But it quickly spun into a group of like-minded creators who shared similar ideas about communal storytelling, Creative Commons, and DIY marketing. It's become a home for artists from small presses and independent projects—people whose work doesn't quite fit into any box. Anyone who references Night Beats in their work is welcome to join our community of writers, artists, and game designers.

Zilla: In practical terms, Night Beats is a shared universe based on a terrible TV show. It's a gimmicky procedural show, with vampires, werewolves, and weekly case files. The special effects are low budget, and no one writing the show keeps track of canon or continuity. Or at least, that's our version of it.

Marten: Night Beats can be anything you want it to be. In my novel it's a series of pulp fiction magazines, because television hasn't been invented. Most of all, Night Beats is also a creative support network. Writing is like swimming—don't go in alone.

Free ebook here (but the print version is very professionally done): https://night-beatseu.ca/the-sad-bastard-cookbook/

In The Perfect Tense

Agnes Borinsky

The Fifth Wound
by Aurora Mattia
288pp. Nightboat 2023

A Queen in Bucks County
by Kay Gabriel
104pp. Nightboat 2022

Love, Leda
by Martin Hyatt
176pp. Peninsula Press 2023

Aurora Mattia's *The Fifth Wound* is a book full of ideas, quarrels, longings, story, song lyrics, poems, mythology. It rails against the kind of engagement that marketing copy tends to traffic in—it swallows and disgorges other forms, from police reports to rejection letters. Trying to reproduce "what it is" here feels like trying to transplant sensitive flowers into synthetic soil. Cornel West talks about the deodorization of culture. He talks about sweat, and funk. This book is full of fragrance.

Which is not to say it's easy. I found Mattia's book by turns boring, frustrating, overwhelming, devastating, and funny. The pages of my copy are sloppy now with hearts in pencil, dripping tears or blood.

Mattia writes about a desire between two people, between a narrator and her Ezekiel. But how could she not be writing about desire in general, about the movement of some I towards some You? Her book, and this desire, terrified and infected me. She writes about staring down into the face of someone

> not pretending to be measured, someone whose desires were so direct that, from the distance of dissociation, they appeared (in fits and flashes of which I felt ashamed) frightening and grotesque, all the more so if you loved them…

The force of her address in this book was such that I wanted from it a kind of love.

There are times when her book filled me with such protective anger, and deep fellow feeling. I felt the muscles in my leg twitch. There is a man in the book who I wanted to kick with more force than I've ever directed at another human body. How does a progression of sentences stimulate the nerves so immediately?

As transsexuals, we have a reader problem. No one knows how to read us. We give instructions, over and over, we construct our texts as pleasure palaces that embed a how-to in every crystalline flash. But there's some blockage. And that is the world. Their loss. And also: how lonely.

"Here's a fable in the perfect tense," Kay Gabriel writes in *A Queen in Bucks County*. The perfect tense describes an action that is complete, finished—perfect. In the land of ramshackle ever-becoming that is transness, a shocking arrival!

A Queen in Bucks County is a book of poems-as-(mostly)-letters, missives from Turner, "a heteronym of the author," "a persona in a bag." The letters are written to friends about fucks. And in that sense they're flirtations. Gabriel's book covers Viktor Shklovsky's *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love*. They skim the cream off other texts; they throb allusion and insinuation. They're laced with a politic, a poesis, a materialist praxis—and that's where the real lip-lick happens.

Each letter, each poem, is an acrobatic performance, skimming register, rhythm, and reference. If an Ashbery poem is a garden, it is a fairly domestic and enclosed one. Gabriel's poems are a train yard somewhere in Jersey, all trash, smell, waste, and wildflower. The speaker here is endlessly in motion—a comedian, an internet star, a high-school debate champ; seductively in crisis," and calls for "a private literature of recognition."

What does it mean for recognition to be private? Especially in the context of a politics of public space?

Shklovsky's love for Elsa Triolet, the love he wrote-by-not-writing in *Zoo*, was unrequited. For all the cum shots in *Bucks County*, there's a twinge of hurt I

Why Now? by Erin M. Riley. Wool, cotton 2021

working harder than any of us and getting laid too.

The virtuosity has work to do. As I say, we a have a problem, as trans writers, of how we are read. I'm not talking about passing. I'm talking about the traces we leave in language, the narratives we are invited to inhabit. We are always arguing with readers, insisting that they find other ways of reading us.

Why does it matter? We need space to breathe. We need space to be with the people we love. There's a David Wojnarowicz photo from *Sex Series* on the book cover, and one of the letters mentions that "David wrote about making the series to keep him company." We make things because we need them. "Keep" can be companionable; it can also be anxious, clinging. I'm keeping you. Language is a nest, a home, a snare. We have a history of being abandoned. Mattia writes to "trap [her] reader's precarious faith." Turner/Kay writes to a group of friends. That's a kind of keeping, too.

One of the many things I love about *Bucks County* is the way the Turner-Kay axis becomes an instrument for flogging time into a whimpering muddle. Kay reveals herself in the poems, comes in and out of view. We wonder if she'll ever sign them "Kay." There's a suspension, a gasp, and then Turner's name arrives again—a recurrent deferral, a joke, a fuck-you. Gabriel refuses to let identity settle into the chronology that transfeminine narrative conventions demand: of a boy who once-was and a woman that boy became.

There is always, in Gabriel's words, "that coy interval." She means between gays and trans women; she might be talking about the heteronym and the author. She writes, "I'm vexed at the tendency of writers living and dead to use transsexuals as the window-dressing of social decay, a metonym for public space feel as the book spirals and lands, something unsatisfied. But a hurt isn't a failure. It's a part of being human. "It's a shame for words to be more vibrant than sex," Turner says. And that's the slippage both Mattia and Gabriel are engaging. How do we know when we are loved? Can we be loved when being misunderstood is constitutive of our being?

"Men buy me things." So begins Turner's first letter. Money secures relation. Later: "Men buy me things, // I return them for the cash."

Mark Hyatt's *Love, Leda* is similarly a book of restless transaction. It opens: "I have just stolen ten pounds." The narrator, "the brave one, god of any telephone kiosk," is on his own, huddled against London's morning chill. He notices someone, "the man of the day," and offers to buy him something. It's a first move towards sex.

Love, Leda is a novel of cruising, crashing, and surplus desire. Like *The Fifth Wound* and *A Queen in Bucks County*, it speaks from a body bruised by an often-hostile world. It ends up in a sweaty tussle with language itself.

Written in the mid-1960s, when Hyatt was in his mid-twenties, it is being published for the first time this year. Hyatt published some poetry while he was alive, but very little prose. He took his own life in 1972. (Editor Luke Roberts's afterword puts Hyatt's work in the context of a community of other writers, and of explicitly queer '60s literary production. It's a helpful guard against what Mattia calls "the rhetoric of sui generis by which so-called marginalized storytellers are tokenized, dehistoricized, and therefore isolated…")

Leda, the novel's narrator, has no permanent home and no consistent job. He stays with friends sometimes, he gets work as he needs it. Sometimes people give him money. Things are a yawning chasm of existential confusion. And also: things are often okay. There's awfulness, and despair, and also an exhilarating kind of freedom.

Financial transactions are meticulously recorded. We tend to learn exactly how much any purchase costs. The book's gentle march of declarative sentences sometimes feels like an extension of this spirit in which everything is accounted for:

> The morning is hazy. My senses tell me which direction to go. I cut down some backstreets and see the milkman hard at it. I pass a car with someone sleeping over the steering wheel. Five charwomen are walking on the other side of the road, talking and laughing. It seems mad to me at such an early hour, to be happy and going to work. I see a dead cat lying in the gutter, its body steaming.

To name something is to charge it with some significance. But Hyatt's narrative voice refuses to hold onto anything too tightly. Images come and go, the way money appears in Leda's pocket one way one day and is gone soon after.

> I pick a flower from a garden and stick it in my hair, cross the main road and walk straight into a policeman. He looks at my hair and then looks me in the eyes.
> 'What's all this then?' he says.
> 'What's all what?'
> 'That flower there.'
> 'I stuck it in my hair to make me look pretty, because I feel awful.'
> 'Have you been to a party?'
> 'Yes, I have.'
> 'Well, take that damn silly thing out of your hair and be on your way…'

Here the policeman stands in for the paradigmatic straight reader, demanding something of a text. What is the value of the thing? What are you trying to say? What's the meaning? What are the terms of the exchange?

Leda is in love with David, desperately, to the point of attempted suicide. Ultimately, David will only pay Leda to clean his house; will commit him to a psychiatric ward; will hand him, in a hospital bed, thirty pounds. The problem of this love is here, as in any book, the problem of a profusion of desire. Mattia's narrator addresses Ezekiel; Gabriel's addresses her friends; Hyatt's Leda addresses David. Something is wanted, something is offered. Will the offer be accepted? Changed for cash? It's a surplus, and that surplus floods language, floods reality, warps the redemptive possibility of narrative.

> Am I not the gentle speed in your action? Do I have to put it into black print and write? Must I chronicle my words, turning out my time on your God's ghost, pretending that ink is my blood and happiness?

Over and over the narrator crashes against his own status as a builder in language. (For a day Leda is a guillotine operator in a metal shop. The metal rectangles he cuts stack up like the sentences, accumulate in paragraphs.) "I'd

love to know," Hyatt writes, "the value of words."

There's a way of reading *Love, Leda* as an archival document, an explicit record of a certain time and place, of a queer world. But Hyatt's book is more than that. It's heartbroken over its own archival impulses. Hyatt knows what he's being asked to do, and knows that what he needs to do is something else entirely. "Everything inside me is too factual," he writes. He has to write the facts to be known, to be legible. But he wants, too, an escape from their ultimate falseness. He is seeking a form that can hold his own intuitive theology.

Even now, read against a lineage of gay male cruising literature, *Love, Leda*, doesn't quite fit. The name Leda conjures images of the Spartan queen, raped by a god; the word itself comes from the Greek for "woman," or "happy." Leda is "male by nature, not by choice." Leda's body and desire feel like they drift away from gender towards something more restless and provisional. "My head is filled with wind," Leda tells us, "and I hope the wind is of wisdom."

Love, Leda infected me with a funny sense of freedom. For a while I found myself worrying, with each cup of coffee or sandwich, that the narrator would run out of money. That each exchange of cash would go wrong. Why, otherwise, record each price and payment so meticulously? Name an event in a fictional narrative and some part of you wonders if it's a setup for a catastrophe. But when it comes to having a place to sleep and something to eat, Hyatt's narrator always turns out alright. The grief, and the crash, is elsewhere.

I see now that my reflexive narrative worry as the novel's accounting clicks along, sentence by sentence, has to do with a lifetime of reading a certain kind of novel: the bourgeois novel, a novel built on a logic of scarcity, in which the presumption is that property ensures freedom. But what if that's not the case? Hyatt's narrator may be trapped, but it isn't for want of a marriage or an estate. *Love, Leda* reminds us that ownership, like biological family, is nothing more than a series of demands the world makes of us. And however much heartbreak, isolation, and loss batter the spirit, those demands, at least, are always things we can manage to refuse.

__Agnes Borinsky__ is a writer and theater-maker based in Los Angeles. She is working on a novel about queer second-century rabbis.

Dream of a Queer Future

The pragmatic anarchism of Evan Greer

Molly Torinus

On stage in a small indie record store in Prague, surrounded by queer teenagers singing along to her militantly anti-authoritarian lyrics, Evan Greer hadn't expected to be known or even recognized. It was 2010. An obscure transfeminine folk-punk artist from Boston, she had never been so far from home and was shocked to find the store packed with fans who had heard her songs on Napster. "There were like a hundred kids," she reminisced, "who knew all the words to my little songs about being queer." They'd burned CDs for one another, falling in love with the queer anarchist future her lyrics described. "I want something that's better than this," she sang, her acoustic guitar ringing out through the cramped room. As her young audience shouted back, "and I'm not sure exactly what it is!" Greer fell in love too—with the new audience she'd found for her queer art, yes, but also with the queer anarchist chosen family she would come to center in her music and organizing.

Long before she found community through music, Greer was a queer revolutionary seemingly by nature. While still in high school, she got her start in activism by organizing a protest against the 2003 Iraq War. Her passion for social justice grew further while she was a student at Swarthmore College, where she discovered her anti-hierarchical politics. Five years before the first Queers Bash Back convergence, when queer anarchism was only well-known in the context of early anarcha-feminists' dedication to free love, a college-aged Greer was fighting for abolition as a member of her local Anarchist Black Cross chapter. When she dropped out of college to pursue a career in music, she leveraged the power of technology to spread her liberatory message. Websites such as Spotify and Napster enabled her to "find my audience, authentically be myself, and pursue my dream of using music to support social movements that I cared about." Once she shared her music publicly, her DIY and primarily acoustic punk songs—exploring themes such as politics and the family ("Hey Dad, I'm An Anarchist"), trans identity ("Assimilation"), and classical anarcha-feminism ("Emma Goldman Would Have Beat Your Ass")—were suddenly beloved by the young, radical, and queer.

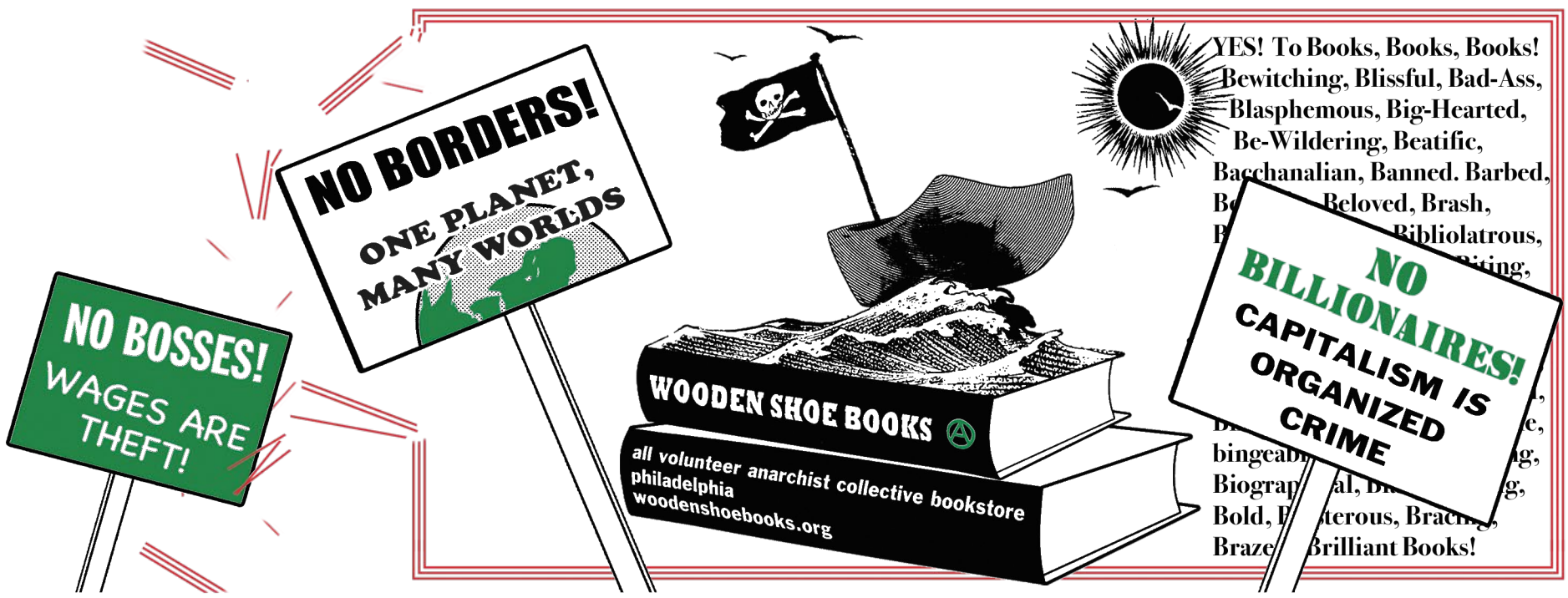
In 2021, Greer took her music and advocacy to a new level when she released the album *Spotify Is Surveillance*. This high-concept project critiqued online surveillance while celebrating the range of anarchist organizing spaces that liberated her. With songs such as "Back Row" and "Taking Down The Tent" honoring her folk-punk roots, Greer describes the sense of community that comes from both queercore and anarchism—the same affinity she felt with her young queer fans in Prague. In "Back Row," when she sings in her softly militant voice, "We were outcasts, we were freaks / We were idealists, we believed / When the band played our favorite songs / We felt like we belonged," she establishes anarcho-punk community as liberation in and of itself, conferring hope and chosen family.

Despite its community focus, *Spotify Is Surveillance* does not merely portray anarchy as a social force to be shouted about in punk songs rather than a political one to be continually prefigured. Instead, it elevates anarchism to a historically established theory and ideology. In the punk anthem "Emma Goldman Would Have Beat Your Ass," Greer harkens back to anarcha-feminist history while decrying nominally leftist strains of bro culture. Her interest in political theory goes beyond casual references in her lyrics. In addition to Goldman, she takes inspiration from abolitionist-feminist theorists of today. As she put it, "I think the autobiography of Assata Shakur is a book that every leftist-activist-person should read. I love Diana Bloch's *Arm The Spirit*. I'm obsessed with Mariame Kaba and Adrea Ritchie's book *No More Police*—and that constellation of Black-womxn-led abolitionist thinking that surrounds it, and Cory Doctorow and Rebecca Giblin's *Chokepoint Capitalism*." In her art, and especially *Spotify Is Surveillance*, she elevates queercore to political theory and vice versa, musically bridging the gap between ideology and practice.

As the deputy director of internet freedom nonprofit Fight For The Future, Greer has experience with the many contradictions of online organizing, and she explores this ambivalence in her music. In songs such as the album's title track, "Surveillance Capitalism," she uses her guitar and voice to carve out a vision of an ideal Internet that serves all its users rather than prioritizing corporate interests. Yet, despite her longtime work for online liberation, Greer is not unthinkingly pro-technology. When I questioned her on the anti-tech strains of anarchism, she said, "I remember when both primitivism and anti-civilizationist strains of anarchism became popular, and in some ways, I think a lot of those folks saw something that the rest of us didn't see—in terms of the enormous harm that even technologies that can be empowering can also bring, and that many technologies can amplify liberatory struggles and amplify oppression at the same time." Because of its co-optation by hierarchical institutions, Greer views the internet not as inherently radical but as a space to advocate for liberation—or not. In our interview, she lamented that "the internet has been something of a force multiplier for fringe ideologies. You can make a pretty good argument that that's why we lived through four years of Trump as our president. But," she added more optimistically, "the positive side of that is, you can turn on MSNBC and hear someone make an argument about abolishing the police."

Anarchism is often considered hopelessly utopian rather than necessarily transformative by those who remain unscathed by state violence. Yet, Greer's anarchism is refreshingly materialist while remaining centered around a dream of a queer future. She identifies "as anti-authoritarian first and foremost—that's kind of my main driving force—and as an abolitionist. It's a very pragmatic anarchism." This pragmatism is not only crucial to her DIY ethic but fuels her passion for both theory and anarchist chosen family. Unlike many adherents of insurrectionary anarchism, Greer does not solely advocate for the dismantling of oppressive systems. Instead, she dreams of building a new, liberated world in the shell of the old. In her punk rock music and ethos delivered through DIY media and evolving technology, Greer invites us ever closer to true queer liberation.

ARB's middle-school correspondent, __Molly Torinus__ is an anarchaqueer & xenofeminist organizer, performative poet and Laura Jane Grace fangirl.



Little Red Book

Joshua Calladine-Jones

The Red Book of Farewells
by Pirkko Saisio
Translated by Mia Spangenberg
250pp. Two Lines Press 2023

No one asks themselves what the domestic means until they've stood at the kitchen sink. The washing-machine may have liberated the writer to write, but the dishwasher took away the podium of internal drama, the household's meditative stage. Frightful conclusions are made while washing the pots. Truths revealed that border on glassy violence. What truth? Surely not that the personal is political. The political is wildly impractical, however executed. And the personal is practical. The most personal thing, in fact, is the failure of practicality. So the personal is political after all. Circular musings for the kitchen sink.

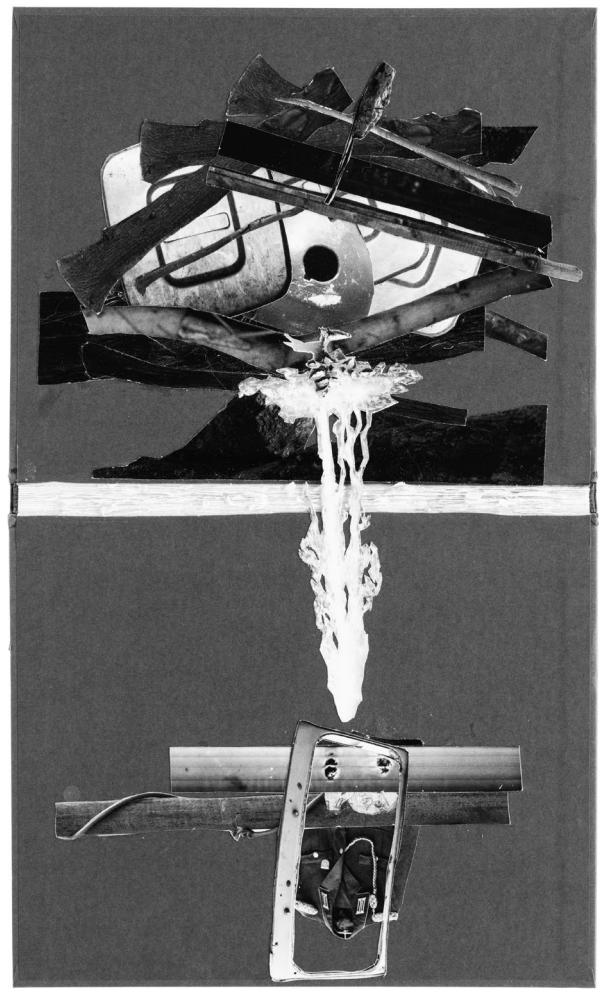
This circularity is something of a theme for Pirkko Saisio, whose *Punainen erokirja*, translated from the Finnish as *The Red Book of Farewells*, circles her own life in a sort of faint red marker. Above it you might add the curve of a question mark.

> Mother is lying on her deathbed.
> She's standing at mother's side.
>
> "Oh my. It wasn't a bad life, but…somehow it still feels like it was all for nothing…"
>
> And she says: "I know this doesn't mean anything now, but anyway…I'm going to be a writer."
>
> "How so? What do you mean?"
> "I'm going to be a writer. I have a contract, even though…"

And the rest disappears somewhere between sentimentality and implausibility.

This might be one thing to consider about autofiction: if there's an autobiographical element to all fiction, all memoir should have its fictions too.

Memory itself is fictitious, as Saisio claims, therefore autobiography is owed nothing of authenticity. Facts disappear. Others take their place. The terse, sparse, and mistily direct create an illusion of clarity which conceals what's left out by highlighting what isn't. Saisio works with and against this, adopting minimalism into a stylish form that is easily readable and frustratingly enigmatic. Unlike the sombre clarity of contemporary autofiction, *The Red Book of Farewells*, which was unpublished in English for twenty years, plays the oldest card in the pack: charm. Saisio doesn't shy from laughter to win her audience over. In twenty years a sense of humor is just one of the things autofiction, save a few outliers, has lost.



89/90 by Justine Kurland. Collage (hardcover) 2021

> "This one will tell us whether you have an egg allergy. We'll see if you're allergic to eggs."
>
> She hears "eggs" but thinks of the word's other meaning: "balls."
>
> And she hears herself saying:
> "Well, yes, I am allergic to balls."
> And she blushes immediately.
>
> "Chicken eggs mainly," the nurse says, not noticing her red face.

The present-tense screenplay feel of the book backs up one of its other major themes: queerness. But this is no tale of valiant struggle against the oppressive force of the straights. The Saisio of the book's past couldn't care less. A prize-winning author writing on her struggles with sexuality and acceptance, her queerness isn't reducible to a token identity of varying colors. She seems, as the title might imply, happy to remain red and red alone. But this is the young Saisio of the book's memories. A member (by default) of society's criminal class: a subversive, a sexual deviant, a night-time adventurer.

> The new organisation's first priority (its name is Sexual Equality for All, and it becomes known by its acronym, SETA) is to remove homosexuality from Finland's criminal code.
>
> She is stunned. She wants to be a criminal. Otherwise, she is nothing.

And still, Saisio catches herself years afterwards shedding a tear when an old friend texts her 'Congratulations.' Now a professor at the Helsinki Theatre Academy, she even goes as far to indulge in a theatrical cigarette from her office window. The congratulations, she realizes, are for a historic event. Finland has, in 2002, legalised registered same-sex partnerships. She is no longer a criminal. Prejudice, of course, cannot be outlawed. Like all human feelings, it resists the restraining hands of the legal, passing through them.

> Girls no longer have to talk about ladybugs and wait for the flash of understanding in the other girl's eyes. Boys no longer cruise around Yrjönkatu's indoor swimming pool, what we called Yrjönkatu's whore aquarium.

Saisio writes of a normal life, but her career hardly qualifies her as normal. The average reader isn't a popular author in their home country, with a career in the academy and theater. This is the talent of artists who deal in the day-to-day of existence, with its thrills and disappointments: They must be skilled at disguising their own freakishness, at assimilating with the masses, without really being one of them at all. A writer in this vein, and a novelist in particular, must be able to play the incognito. And so domestic life, in Saisio's novel, becomes the battleground of the self, the grand narrative being the everyday: not personal as political, but (fittingly for Saisio's thespian background), the personal as dramatic. Home and kid and cat and divorce. Mum and dad and death and decline. Boys and girls and politics and parties and all the fun trivialities and posturings of the young. This is the life Saisio writes of, and as she drifts back into the crowd, she raises her hand in the air, a red book in her fingers.

Joshua Calladine-Jones *is a poet and literary critic-in-residence at the Prague Writers' Festival. His work has appeared in* 3:AM, The Stinging Fly, Freedom, The Anarchist Library, *and* Minor Literature[s]. *He is the author of* Reconstructions [Rekonstrukce] (*2022).*

Rachel Pollack August 17, 1945 – April 7, 2023

She said that Odysseus was as funny as Bugs Bunny and that Bugs Bunny was as profound as founding myths.
She knew where to find secret caves in Mount Parnassus, places where people still worship Pan, and she led tours through the ruins of Delphi.
She once walked into an auditorium with a single Hebrew letter written on the back of a napkin and used that as her notes for a keynote address.
She said the problem with the second amendment was a typo—a missing comma which had spurred centuries of debate.
She told jokes that can't be repeated.
She had a pen-pal who was a right-wing Christian, because she said he had things on his mind that she wanted to understand, and also, they both liked to collect pens. People don't need to agree, she said.
She was good at cards. Tarot of course, she was a master, but also poker.
She was a great letter writer, signing off with the words Art and Ardor, or just Love; the liquid blue ink of her fountain pen like art on the page.
She was excited to talk about ideas; in letters, on the phone, at the diner, in the café, at home, walking the dog, out on the street, in the classroom, at the bookstore.
She was competitive about hailing a cab.
She encouraged every manner of artistic expression and upheld the highest standards of ethics.
She liked word play. She liked that in English the word LIVE spelled backwards was EVIL.
She was a connoisseur of mystical experiences.
She translated the great detective story Oedipus Rex.
She was a skeptic who knew gods still walked the earth, and witches were real, and divination came in many forms.
She did not suffer fools but was interested in their archetypal position in the world.
She wrote books that won awards, and books that everyone read; books that no one remembers, books kids read at night under the covers with flashlights, books that changed the way you thought about time, or reality, or magic, or people, or weather, or bodies, or life.
She did not care for authority of any kind.
She was smart and funny. The kind of funny that made people cry from laughing, made your belly ache, made you feel amazing.
She was a radical saint.

Speaking To Things

JJ Amaworo Wilson

Zapatista Stories for Dreaming An-Other World
by Subcomandante Marcos
Translation by Lightning Collective
160pp. PM Press 2022

When the Zapatistas first appeared on January 1, 1994, to protest against NAFTA, the signs were unpropitious. What kind of army was this? The group consisted of the most marginalized people in Mexico: the indigenous poor. When they swept down from the mountains of Chiapas that cold day, some were barefoot. Some carried guns last used during the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Others carried cardboard cutout rifles.

But soon enough, the Zapatistas had seized several cities and made enough noise that the government sent in the army. The insurgents melted away into the forest, but they didn't disappear.

In fact, they've outlasted four Mexican presidents, sustained an autonomous society in their ancestral lands while under constant attack, and inspired leftist movements worldwide. Their main demands are for land rights and autonomy, but their declarations encompass many other issues including healthcare, education, food, equality, and housing.

That the Zapatistas are alive and kicking almost thirty years later is a testament to the possibilities of collective struggle. That the world knows about the movement is in no small part due to its charismatic spokesperson, Subcomandante Marcos.

The Scarlet Pimpernel of the Mexican highlands, Marcos appears and disappears like a mirage. He uses aliases—currently Subcomandante Galeano—and he's always photographed wearing a black balaclava so no one knows what he looks like. What we do know is that he's a poet-warrior. A prolific author, he commands using the imagination as much as the gun. This seems fitting; as with all movements battling a many-headed monster like neoliberalism, the Zapatistas have to imagine a better world.

The imagination is present in every sentence of this terrific story collection. These allegorical tales have their roots in the traditions of Mayan storytelling as day-to-day life collides deliciously with surreal flights of fancy. The stories include pipe-smoking beetles, a machine-gun-toting mouse, and a wise Marcos alter ego called Don Antonio. Each tale is just a few pages—some are shorter—but each packs a punch. My favorites were "The Story of the Night Air," about the origins of the flying bat, and "We Who Came After Did Understand," a tale that on its surface is about tree planting but that is really about time, love, community, and everything else that matters.

The collection comes with a superb Foreword by JoAnn Wypijewski, providing context for the tales and giving us a rich sampling of Zapatista thought. There are also excellent commentaries from the translators—Colectivo Relámpago (Lightning Collective)—although I wish these had appeared individually after each tale rather than clustered at the back of the book. The commentaries would have been easier to grasp with each story fresh in the reader's mind.

Overall, this slim book is a gem. In "The Story of the Night Air," we read about how the blind bat, cursed by the gods, finds its salvation. It discovers that by speaking to things—thereby creating soundwaves—it can orient itself and "come to know the world." From this creature, men and women begin to understand the power of the spoken word. What better metaphor for the Zapatistas, a movement based on internal dialogue and on the idea of outcasts finding their way in the dark?

J.J. Amaworo Wilson *is writer-in-residence at Western New Mexico University and teaches at the Stonecoast MFA in Creative Writing. He has authored 20 books, including the novels* Damnificados *and* Nazare.

Change is in the Air by Chitra Ganesh. Mixed media on paper 2023

H

Claire Wahmanholm

Here: hold this handful of hail until it hurts. Hold this hog as it howls. Hook its hooves. Hold this hood over its eyes. Hold this hornet in your mouth. Hush, you're home. How horrible is too horrible? How many holes is too many for a hull? Hold the hen, behead the hen, crush the unhatched chick. This is how it feels to be held, held in a headlock, held hostage in your own house. Would you hack off your hands to escape? Helplessness becomes habit, your habitat, where you feel most at home. Heft the hissing snake around your hips. Hold the hemlock to your lips. Do you feel homesick yet? Here: hold this flag, hold this heirloom handgun, cock the hammer. Is it heavy? Huddle together, hunker down. Here come the hounds. Brace as if for a hurricane. Stop holding out for help. Stop holding your breath. It is an honor to live here. It is an honor to live hamstrung, handcuffed to harm. It is an honor to be hopeless. It isn't hell, it's holiness. It's the hill you'll die on. You saw what happened to the hen. Better to be the hawk; better to be the heron than the herring. It's your heritage. Is it heavy? Did that headline hurt? Is that history harrowing? Hollow out your heart and pack the hole with hay. Pack it with holly if you miss the sensation of pain. You'll habituate. You'll learn to handle the heat, or you'll be the hog. You're the horizon, the highway, the hitcher, the hatchet, the stopping car, the house up the road. How far are you going? How far are you willing to go?

Claire Wahmanholm *is the author of* Meltwater *(2023),* Redmouth *(2019), and* Wilder *(2018). Her work has most recently appeared in, or is forthcoming from,* Cream City Review, TriQuarterly, Sierra, Ninth Letter, Blackbird, Washington Square Review, *and* Beloit Poetry Journal. *A 2020-2021 McKnight Writing Fellow, and the winner of the 2022 Montreal International Poetry Prize, she lives in the Twin Cities.*

How It's Told

Heather Bowlan

The Rendering
by Anthony Cody
144pp. Omnidawn 2023

Voyager
by Nona Fernández, translated by Natasha Wimmer
136pp. Graywolf Press 2023

O
by Tammy Nguyen
144pp. Ugly Duckling Presse 2022

Hydra Medusa
by Brandon Shimoda
144pp. Nightboat Books 2023

Yes, truth is relative, but the dominant narratives that influence our perceptions and actions continue to shift, refract, and contort to maintain that dominance, like the systems they uphold.

In distorting these narratives, or disrupting them, how do we reinsert necessary doubt in what happened or what it means? Layering in personal experience, alternate tellings, and visual elements, four recent and very different books challenge conventional ideas of memory and history and how they shape our world.

Take for example the links between neural activity and memory, which build into a self and story in Nona Fernández's latest collection, *Voyager*. In this book, the connections between history and memory are explicit and non-linear. What's remembered lives alongside the gaps in information and memory forced on people by violence.

Voyager begins with Fernández at the hospital with her mother, who is undergoing tests to find the cause for recurrent fainting episodes she can't recall. Fernández watches the pattern of her mother's brain activity on monitors as a particular "constellation" of neurons lights up with a specific memory and afterwards shares what she sees with her mother:

"I tell her about the electrical pattern of her neurons, the glow of her memory, the constellation that lit up the moment she summoned it, the luminescent reflection of her own past."

She then learns her mother was remembering the moment of Fernández's birth.

This opening scene frames the intimacy grounding the large scope of *Voyager*, traveling to and through space, just like the NASA spacecrafts from which the book takes its name. Comparing neural patterns' microscopic rendering of memory to the designs and the stories we create/locate in the universe's origins, Fernández opens a path through myth, science, and history and their intersections.

Fernández shares her own memories of her family, threading together stories of birthdays and gatherings as well as their evenings spent yelling at the television every time Jaime Guzmán, a politician and collaborator with dictator Augusto Pinochet, justified the dictatorship's actions.

Later, she relates the edits made to her son's school speech (by his teachers) commemorating the national vote to transition to democracy on October 5, 1988; he's asked to excise sentences that address the dictatorship's often murderous punishment of dissent and difference.

Memory is one of the casualties of the dictatorship's violent repression: Her son's teachers willfully edit events, but we also learn that her mother has forgotten the nightly rants against Guzmán. Resistance seems overwritten by other collective memories of resignation, hesitation, shame.

These stories orbit around Fernández's participation in a cosmic memorial, organized by Amnesty International, to honor 26 anti-Pinochet activists killed by the Caravan of Death, a Chilean army death squad. Murdered in the Atacama Desert near their hometown of Calama, none of their bodies were recovered—only fragments at most.

The Atacama Desert has arguably the best skies for stargazing, with limited light pollution and distortion from the earth's atmosphere. So to honor these people (and their families, who weren't given the chance to bury their dead), Amnesty International arranged to have a new constellation of 26 stars named in their memory, one star for each massacre victim. A memorial is held in the desert when the designation is official, gathering the families together.

end the beginning (detail) by N. Masani Landfair. Collage on paper 2021

Fernández participates in the memorial by adopting one victim, Mario Argüelles Toro, as her "godson." This means learning about his life and family, and uncovering and writing his story (however incomplete or imprecise) from the memories of those left behind, for publication in a book about this cosmic memorial.

Fernández includes the URL for the original petition to create the new constellation, noting that the site no longer exists. The record is always shifting, disappearing, reappearing. "Twenty-six lives and twenty-six deaths and twenty-six bodies hidden in some corner of history, in a blind spot where there's nothing left to be found anymore."

In *Voyager*, memory is "a chaotic, dangerous game… It rears up, raves, curses, demands, shrinks. It attacks us, falling upon us and disarming us unexpectedly." In Brandon Shimoda's *Hydra Medusa*, a collection of poems and short hybrid essays, this chaos gives the poet an opportunity to fill in the narrative.

This collection, a continuation of his 2018 book *The Desert*, continues the earlier book's navigation of the Arizona desert, a site of Japanese internment camps during World War II, and a current site of imprisonment and violence against migrants. This is the landscape where he now lives in with his wife and daughter.

Shimoda interweaves moments of beauty with the ugliness of buried history, including the murders of two men, Toshio Kobata and Hirota Isomura, in the internment camps in 1942, and the murder of a Mexican teenager, Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez, through a border fence in 2021. He muses on the lack of "legal" guilt for the men responsible and the larger consequences of sanctioned violence. "A grave discomfort, distrust, disgust" fueled the prison and border guards who committed these murders, built on "the psychosis of white anxiety and rage."

"White American blood is cult. White American blood is curse," Shimoda writes.

The pomp and circumstance of "history" is showcased in its arrogance in Shimoda's essay "The Ghosts of Pearl Harbor," which in part describes the physical incongruity of a memorial to the USS Arizona, sunk by Japanese bombs during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The ship remains at the bottom of Pearl Harbor, but the memorial sits in the middle of the state of Arizona, in the middle of the University of Arizona's campus. The memorial, Shimoda writes, transforms the university lawn into "the ghost of the sunken battleship."

The bell that tolls over the memorial every month reinforces the narrative of U.S. heroism and erases the atrocities of American xenophobia, incarceration, and murder. Shimoda builds a description of the bell that overpowers any excuses of "blind patriotism" to ask how we're complicit simply by our presence in spaces like this, seduced by the ritual, allowing ourselves to forget.

Like Fernández, Shimoda goes beyond documenting indifferent violence and exploitation and opens the possibilities of writing over history with other memories, other stories. He explores the counter-narrative of ancestral memory in pieces like "The Descendant," incorporating definitions of ancestors from other descendants of interred Japanese Americans ("feedback loops," "a chorus of voices," "benevolent ghosts,") with poetry that offers a space less tied to history and its consequences, an open question for ancestors, one that is always "yet to be determined":

> I am returning to my original place
> where I would run, get lost,
> throw myself on a rock
> and turn into the sky.

In his reflections on the landscape itself, Shimoda often points to the beauty that exists alongside violence, wrought by humans and the desert's severity. "Why do people ask if I like living in the desert?" he writes:

The question (the feeling)
remains

ambulant

euphoria, ecstasy
crucifixion

treacheries

and the intimation of water
in the dry dry dirtying.

In the notes of *Hydra Medusa*, we learn that an image bifurcating Shimoda's essay "The Skin of the Grave" is a collage made in 2021 by his mother, Karen McAlister Shimoda, illustrating a poem which she overlays, or "buries" as she termed it, with a page of a Bobbsey Twins book she read as a child. Memory layered on memory, the ephemeral moment always rewriting the story.

Shimoda wrote *Hydra Medusa* in stolen moments around work and while raising his daughter, and the poems in particular reflect the fragmented, magical leaps of neurons seeking each other out in spare moments. If anything, this underscores the book's success at rejecting the tidiness of linear thinking and its omissions.

Tammy Nguyen's *O*, like *Hydra Medusa* and *Voyager*, moves backward and forward in its themes and the histories and memories it interrogates. The book's progression is framed by narrative signposts, by the development of the central, two-page O image that appears periodically, interrupting the text.

The evolving foreground and background patterns shift with each iteration, emphasizing elements in the stories that unfold: the appearance and disappearance of figures responding to the O or a fork and knife around it so it resembles a plate with seafood, the letter's submersion into the background of thick foliage, and finally its displacement by a delicate patterned paper with cutouts of midcentury modern furniture, a visual rendering of incongruous objects that appear at a particularly jarring moment in Nguyen's travels.

O appears in every thread of Nguyen's book, from histories of Vietnam and her family's personal immigration stories to her travels in Vietnam and Malaysia and her own deeply intimate history of her lifelong efforts to have an "American smile."

This quest is suggested by her uncle Võ Văn Nhật, who adopts the American name David Van, tries and discards various business ventures, and understands assimilation's crucial role in the typical immigrant success story. "The Americans take you seriously when you have a nice set of teeth," he instructs. While he's not a dentist himself, his advocacy for the "American" aesthetic is persuasive, especially presented alongside the success of other respected immigrants (who happen to be dentists) in the Bay Area Vietnamese community.

In response, Nguyen and her family pay a visit to an orthodontist, which results in spending a great deal of time and money over decades for lateral incisor implants. Nguyen relates each step of this journey in detail, so that it feels both possible and impossible to relate it to other experiences of body modification prompted by American ideals.

But this story grows along and around others, including a trip to the Phong Nha Karst, a Vietnamese national park whose ridges Chinese mythology names the Earth's teeth (also the filming location of the film *Kong: Skull Island*). Nguyen's descriptions of the park's caves, their large mouths, as seen just after she's finally reached the end of her implant journey, are evocative and lyric.

"Around us, boulders stacked like ancient books of knowledge. The ground below was a mixture of rock, sand, and shell-like shards. It was as if we were standing on the diseased tongue of a mouth overgrown with teeth."

This trip through one unfamiliar landscape is presented against another, Forest City, a manmade island in Malaysia conceived of and developed by a Vietnamese real estate developer, Yang Quoqiang. We learn that Yang was inspired in his career partly by Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. Forest City is the luxury housing equivalent of the imperative of the American smile.

Nguyen visits the development, ostensibly to purchase a condo, and her descriptions of the experience simply and frankly underscore how Western ideas of success are written everywhere. From the luxurious and chaotic lunch buffet offerings to a promotional video with descriptions that reminded me of *Jurassic Park*'s early tour scenes, Nguyen creates a picture of a wholly manufactured place without an identity. The model units feature midcentury-inspired furniture and plastic plants (versus the hundreds of live plants featured in press descriptions of the development's commitment to sustainability).

The desire to succeed, to locate, to commemorate—the Vietnamese 1992 constitution and phrases from Southern Vietnam's anthem during the war are also woven into the text—these spill out of *O* and fold back on themselves. Remembering Vietnamese country songs her grandmother played during her childhood, Nguyen writes, "I can feel the structure of the melody sculpt itself into the physical world. Each word ricochets off whatever surface it can find—a living room couch, a rock, a chair, a leaf—and molds its sadness to the shape of my surroundings."

O sculpts itself into the pages of the text, not only in the constantly changing double-page images, but in the hole-punch circles that suddenly appear on the borders of the pages toward the book's end. There is no singular story of a person's relationship to her past, her family, her country, her trajectory. The gaps in the pages often reveal butterflies on the page beneath. The story is always growing and changing.

Nguyen's book resonates because it resists simple indictment. She is witness and participant. When her implant surgery is finished, "The entire office's staff rushed in and rejoiced. 'They look real!'"

Anthony Cody also challenges the role of the witness and recorder in his book of textually experimental and visual poems, *The Rendering*. Using found images and Dorothea Lange's iconic 1930s photography of Dust Bowl migrants to California, as well as climate change reports and oral histories, Cody disorients the reader over and over, forcing us to question the romance and nostalgia that frame accounts of the devastating environmental and human impact of the mass migration west.

Reading the book, I'm reminded of Shimoda's warning (to himself and others): "Writing about incarceration, reciting its history, runs the risk of letting it pass into the biblical realm, where the suffering of injustice becomes allegorical, therefore instructive, assuaging future suffering with the moral of survival."

The placement of texts and images often points to displacement. Text is overlaid over photos and scattered across the page, often in multiple orientations; photos are blurred or stretched or layered. "This land is your land, Holtville, California" plays off the famous folk song, acknowledging the poverty that's always on the other side of ownership, as well as the toll the migrants took on the lands they moved from and to. The text spreads across a Lange photograph of trash from a migrant camp, more text spiraling out around the image, an echo of the barbed wire in the photo itself.

Similarly, the series "Everywhere I sleep, I see Dust Bowl," presents poems with a series of other Lange photos and archival recordings and documents of the moment, and often reiterates and highlights the consequences of the urge to conquer, to "Go West."

Cody writes "the binary dies" on one page, so the text is pointing down to the abyss of the white space on the page, next to a portion of a 1939 Lange photo of an irrigation pump. And on the next page, "no one wants this to be the final answer. they want/ they want more."

At the same time, the poems acknowledge the power of the narrative the migrants followed—even as it erased other people, especially people of color, living and struggling with poverty in central California. In "Everywhere I sleep, I see Dust Bowl 9.0," we're shown a partial photograph by Lange, askew to the page, of small children walking to a dilapidated house, with a woman barely visible in the doorway. There is a narrative of another, much happier photograph squeezed into the diamond of space along one side: "When I look away to recall the children, their hands are always linked."

In later poems, Cody removes all vowels from the text, which is incredibly frustrating and effective. What should be easy in writing or reading or trying to understand the absence of water, of housing, of stability, of reckoning? From "brd":

thn crps plnts nd plnts nd
plnts nd plnts
thn dry nd ht nd dry nd cld
nd dry nd ht
thn rbbts nd rbbts nd rbbts
pld nd lghd
vrythng brnd

In the documents that inspire or are the source texts for these poems, experiences were recorded and often filed away, or used as examples of the important work that can result from federal arts funding (as Lange's work was primarily funded by the Farm Security Administration, part of the New Deal). The documentation has become, maybe always was, collusion, and Cody's work draws our attention back to the people and the ongoing impact.

"What is the difference between dream and memory?" Fernández asks. Or/also, I'd add, between affirmation and memory? In the brain, and in systems, the telling of the story is more important than what happened. There is me and the world I witness today, and there is the me of a decade ago, dreaming or despairing about this future moment in time.

At every moment I'm a person remembering and misremembering and not remembering; there are the thousands of versions of myself and my personal and shared histories I've told in conversation, in writing, in my own thoughts, every time reframing the story based on mood, location, audience…every time moving further from "the facts."

These collections draw attention to the silences contained in every story, and their retellings and unearthings point to connections and paths that might be possible when memory is untethered from truth. Together they ask, what is possible when many voices tell the story? What can emerge when we acknowledge our own unknowing?

Heather Bowlan *lives in Philadelphia. Her writing has appeared in* New Ohio Review, Interim, make/shift, SORTES, *and elsewhere. She's now at work on a project exploring perspective and collaboration through poetry, photos/videos, and music.*

Jen Angel (1975-2023), zinester, editor, publisher, publicist, baker, and activist, was fatally injured after a street altercation in Oakland, California and passed on February 2, 2023. She first entered the milieu with her perzine Fucktooth, which she began publishing while still in high school. Angel founded the Zine Yearbook anthology series, had an eventful if brief turn at Maximum Rock'n'Roll, and co-published the important and high-quality anarchist magazine Clamor between 1999 and 2006. She was also a major organizer of the Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair, one of the largest in the United States. As an anarchist, Jen Angel did not believe in the efficacy of the carceral state—her family, friends, and partners have called for restorative justice over incarceration of anyone who might be found responsible for her death.

And Still They Dare

Carrie Laben

Tomorrow They Won't Dare to Murder Us
by Joseph Andras
144pp. Verso 2021

How to Blow Up a Pipeline
by Andreas Malm
208pp. Verso 2021

On the 11th of February, 1957, the French government took the life of Fernand Iveton. The 31-year-old, guillotined in the yard of an Algerian prison, was of European descent but a supporter of Algerian independence—the only such person to be executed by the French during the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria. Iveton was sentenced to this fate for a bomb that did not go off, that was purposefully placed so that if it had gone off it would have caused no human injuries.

On the 18th of January, 2023, the government of the State of Georgia took the life of Tortuguita. The 26-year-old, shot at least 14 (according to initial police account) and perhaps over 50 (based on the bullet wounds discovered at autopsy) times, was of Venezuelan Indigenous descent but had come to Atlanta as part of the Stop Cop City/Defend Weelaunee Forest movement for environmental justice and against police brutality. Theirs was the first loss of human life in that struggle. Police on the scene claimed that Tortuguita fired first, but an autopsy revealed that they had their hands raised at the time of their execution, and no gunpowder residue was found on their body.

In 2016, the French publishing house Actes Sud released *De nos frères blessés* by Joseph Andras; it would later be translated into English under the title *Tomorrow They Won't Dare to Murder Us.* This short but powerful novel recounts Iveton's life, his beliefs, his arrest and torture, the efforts of his lover, comrades, and lawyers to save him, and the way his death echoed through the conscience (such as it was) of France. In the final pages of the book, Andras quotes the belief of socialist politician Roland Dumas that guilt over Iveton's death and the other atrocities of the Algerian War prompted François Mitterrand to abolish the death penalty shortly after he became President of France.

This idea that the conscience of power can be shocked by the consequences of its own cruelty is a potent and hopeful one; it offers an alternative to raw might-makes-right as a way of changing the world. Even at the heart of empire children are taught a few glosses on the words of Gandhi and the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. But it's tricky business, much less simple than the schoolbooks make it sound. Whenever power thinks it's caught sight of a martyr, it strives to superimpose a monster. Words like "terrorism" and "violence" are applied to acts of property destruction with no human victims. And to even more minor actions: some of Tortuguita's comrades in the Stop Cop City movement have faced charges of domestic terrorism based on the underlying offense of trespassing.*

Trying to thread this needle and make an appeal to conscience that is simultaneously radical and relatable to a supposed 'mainstream' public has occupied a lot of time and mental effort for various portions of the left (and even larger numbers of disingenuous liberals, but we cannot ignore questions simply because liberals are mucking them up, or there will be nothing left). Consider Andreas Malm's *How To Blow Up a Pipeline*, published in 2021, which outlines a theory of sabotage meant to address the current climate emergency without outraging the broader public into backlash. Malm is in a difficult position—writing from a Marxist perspective, he nevertheless sees that the urgency of climate change means that solutions cannot be punted until after the revolution; the problem must be solved, somehow, while capitalism still reigns. Here the state must be the hero because no-one else can do so at the scale necessary. To Malm, in this book at least, that means addressing the problem of being seen as terrorists head-on through a program that, while it lacks the self-abnegation of typical Western pacifism, is still composed of very carefully vetted (and in some cases, like the deflation of individual SUV tires using mung beans, almost too nice) property destruction.

asbestos by Frank Selby. Graphite on Mylar 2012

All of it relies on the idea that the state will, by functioning according to the will of a public not unduly provoked by violence, act as a brake on the fossil fuel industry once enough popular pressure is applied. Either a Mitterand or a million milli-Mitterands will feel the guilt, outrage, and urgency of the problem if it's properly brought to their attention. It's reasonable to doubt that this will happen in a timeframe that can still be useful. Consider the gap between Iveton's death and the abolition of the death penalty in France, or the decades it took for King to go from reviled agitator to secular, context-free saint—a transition still far from complete. Given the enormous amounts of money and power at stake in this particular issue, and the fact that neither Iveton's cause nor King's is yet fully won, it is reasonable to doubt that it will happen at all.

With this in mind, contrast the book *How To Blow Up a Pipeline* with the film of the same name directed by Daniel Goldhaber. The difference starts in the first scene: instead of messing around with mung beans, Xochitl—one of eight protagonists in this true ensemble piece—takes out SUV tires with a blade. Climate change is not a philosophical question here. Every character who contributes to blowing up the titular pipeline has already suffered at the hands of the fossil fuel industry and its various lackeys, including the state. The film does a masterful job of presenting authentic-feeling debate around tactics governed by the characters' own personalities and priorities, without ever lapsing into conventional centrism. Blowing up the pipeline is good, and it is done with care and attention. And the purpose is to convince other people, individuals and communities. Not to vote or lobby or make more documentaries about the problem. To blow things up themselves.

Malm himself, in the spate of interviews that coincided with the film's release, has shifted rhetorical focus from sabotage as an act of persuasion to sabotage as an act of self-defense. And that is where we are at right now. While the interests of either capital or the state still dare to murder us, we have the right to declare our selves as worth defending; persuading others to join us is important, but first and foremost we must survive.

**At the time of this writing, protesters are also facing felony charges for distributing flyers with the name of one of Tortuguita's assassins. According to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's report on the killing, the following Georgia State Patrol officers were involved: Bryland Myers, Jerry Parrish, Jonathan Salcedo, Mark Jonathan Lamb, Ronaldo Kegel, and Royce Zah.*

***Carrie Laben** is the author of the novel* A Hawk in the Woods *and the forthcoming novella* The Water Is Wide.