

Stalking the Earth

a collection of data, past and present - distilled. composted.

Anonymous



Texts included: Anarchist News podcast editorials, The Anvil Review essays, Stalking the Earth originals, and some miscellaneous stuff

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Hello world

Welcome to the new site. Over the years, we here at Stalking the Earth have amassed a plethora of material scattered around various notebooks, hard-drives, and Internet websites. Some no longer are with us, lost to the ages of misplaced papers, corrupted computers, forgotten passwords, and natural disasters. This website is an attempt to collect and detail all the previous and future research in one accessible location.

Please bear with us as our website is still being decanted into whatever it may become. Soon though, the databases will be filled with our old and new discourses on society. Looking forward.

José Martí, Cuba, and the Anarchists

(2005)

May they not bury me in darkness
to die like a traitor
I am good, and as a good man
I will die facing the sun.

-Part of *Versos sencillos* by José Martí

José Martí, the famous Cuban revolutionary and prolific writer whose published works fill 28 whole volumes, including - children stories, letters, poems, journalism, theater, translations, notes, and essays on a variety of subjects ranging from anarchists to white roses. Martí is often credited as the "father of modernism", especially in regards to Spanish-American literature. He was born in Old Habana, Cuba in 1853 and died in 1895 fighting against the Spanish there. Martí was and continues to be the haunting spectacle of Cuba. What follows, are some thoughts and minor research about Martí, specifically - his ten years spent living in New York City, his views on capitalism and work, and his thoughts about anarchists.

At the age of 16, Martí was sent to prison for treason against the Spanish government, then in control of Cuba. He was soon exiled to Spain where he studied law and philosophy, but in the coming years he returned to Cuba, where he was again exiled to Spain. Eventually, in 1880 Martí found himself in New York City (NYC) writing journalism, translating articles, and working as joint consul for Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina. His time in NYC proved to be critical- as he helped launch Cuba's third war of independence while there, by fund raising and organizing against the Spanish. Soon afterwards, as history has come to tell - Martí was killed near Palma Soriano, Cuba in the very first battle of independence. The legend goes that he charged into battle on a white horse, while wearing a black overcoat, making him a prime target, and soon after dying. In comparison to the sword, the pen was the mightiest for Martí, as the 30+ volumes of his collected works attest to.

Being clever is a good way to start being free, rough translation

For me, this exploration of Martí began when I visited Habana, Cuba and ventured into some of the many used book shops there. Book shops are interesting in Cuba, because there is often a somewhat limited selection amongst public sellers due to state censorship, but at the same time there is a plethora of old inexpensive books floating around, both above and underground - the most unusual, often dust covered little bookshops one can imagine with discounts on already inexpensive books. Of course, it is mostly all Spanish, but there is also old Russian language books and some English language books.

A lot of time was spent browsing these shelves, and most all of them had one thing in common - José Martí; the man continues to be a controversial character even in death. The Castro's use Martí in their five hour speeches and dialogues, even including him in their Constitution. While, at the same time their enemies, have also claimed him as one of their own; setting up media broadcasts from Miami, Florida and elsewhere to beam into the island. It's a cat and mouse game on the radio, as one group radio broadcasts messages and the other side eventually jams the frequency. New and different technologies, plus less restriction on the availability of cell phones and other computer technology on the island has increased the chances of these types of messages not only getting in, but out as well. In the USA there has been some focus on well-known Cuban bloggers.

The million dollar question, is that if Martí were alive today - what would he do? In reality, Martí would have more than likely disagreed with the current situation in Cuba – that being the 1959 revolution of Fidel Castro and it's continuation. In the most basic sense, Martí spent his time struggling towards a free and independent Cuba. Martí is one of the most flowery and ubiquitous writers of the modern century, and while it is never certain as the dead remain silent, one may be able to distinguish ideas by looking at his writings on the anarchists of New York City

For fourteen years (1880-1894) Martí lived in the "gran manzana" (big apple) of New York City (NYC). During this time, Martí experienced first hand the desolation of American capitalism, in regards to race, poverty, and the working class. The worker - who, according to Martí, each day struggled for eight hours, fair wages, and an overall better world. We will examine two of his articles more closely: *Grandes motines de obreros, alzamiento unanime a favor de ocho horas de trabajo...*, published in NYC on the 16th of May, 1886 and *Un drama terrible: Anarquía y represión...* published on the 1st of January, 1888. These articles by Martí about the NYC anarchists appeared in the newspaper and should be thought of as paid propaganda, as his view is often unfavorable and can be seen as a product of the times.

In these two articles and some others he explores the events leading up to and of the Haymarket Massacre. With these articles Martí helped inform and radicalize readers, not only in the USA, but throughout Latin America, and the world. In the texts, he presents us with a look inside the events that helped spawn Mayday and the International Day of Anarchy, while also helping to understand why these were inspiring events at the time. Part of his appeal to anarchists can also be found in his his homage to Albert Parsons written in NY on the 17th of October, 1886.

When the trapdoors of the gallows were released on November 12, 1887, Albert Parsons had begun to say "Shall I be allowed to speak? O, men of America..." before his voice was cut short by the noose. Deeply moved by the injustice of Haymarket, José Martí continued to speak, in the name of the executed anarchists, for the poor and the hopeless, and for the Latin American republics threatened by U.S. foreign policy. Thus, the Haymarket affair underlines how Martí's familiarity with, and critique of North American current events during the Gilded Age did in fact play a substantive role in maturing his views on labor and enabling his later critiques of colonialism.¹

In the first article "Grandes Motines de obreros..." He thought that since the American Civil War there had not been a more crucial moment in USA history. He wrote flowery that, the blood stained flowers of May signaled that there was not a more serious problem in the USA, than the problem of heartless capitalists and work. In response to the Haymarket massacre, Martí observed that the situation seemed to suddenly appear; as an uprising, spontaneously, even though the problems were already deeply ingrained within society and revolutionaries had been struggling against them since even before. Everything, just kind of took off.

The workers in the USA were uprising – demanding better working rights, and undermining the capitalists oppression. In the glorified eyes of Martí, the streets seemed to always be filled with workers, fighting against the police and capital. In the first article, he wrote that, the anarchists were reading books about insurrection and then target practicing with guns in the streets of NYC almost every Sunday, while everyone else was at church. With this, he compares and contrasts anarchists and workers into differences he presumes - such as

¹ The Limits of Analogy: José Martí and the Haymarket Martyrs by Christopher Conway - University of Texas—Arlington

"peaceful" vs. "violent". The naiveté is curious and is more likely the result of a profound dislike of anarchist idea, although in another text he is intrigued by Lucy Parsons.

Martí states that he believes non-violence and actions within the law were most just. Interestingly enough, soon afterwards Martí picked up a gun to help fight against the Spanish in Cuba. While I'm not exactly certain what changed his mind, it is clear his opinions had changed or he is the ultimate hypocrite. On this note, I think Martí was in line with the demonstrations - but stopped at the point of NYC's gun slinging anarchists and others around the USA. More so, he was part of the press and the time was ripe for yellow journalism.

Martí's first articles on the Chicago anarchists are in step with the North American press and the xenophobia it promoted: anarchist terror is the work of monstrous Eastern European immigrants who have brought the violent ways of the Old World to the New. The notion of "America" as a democratic alternative to barbarous "Europe" stands. After the execution of the anarchists, however, Martí does an about-face and re-writes his earlier account of events. He turns his rage on the political and justice system and softens his earlier critique of the anarchists. The U.S. is now as unjust and violent as despotic Europe.²

It goes on to say that:

In his initial reactions to Haymarket, Martí had celebrated the heroism of the police and demonized the European anarchists in terms similar to those found in the mainstream U.S. press. In "Un drama terrible," however, he retells the story of what happened on May fourth in a way that was much more sympathetic to workers and anarchists. He indicts the police, the national media and the justice system for their lies and corruption. If before he had referred to the anarchists as beasts, now it was the Republic as a whole that has become savage like a wolf (795). Martí's new-found solidarity with the working class, and his sympathetic representation of the anarchists he had previously rejected, results in a powerful identification with the working class, where a new community emerges out of the ruins of the Haymarket Affair.³

José Martí and his on-again, off-again relationship with the anarchists never made it to see the "new community" emerge from the ruins of the old, but then again neither has any revolutionary of the past or present. His writings, full of illusion and splendor, are a somewhat enjoyable introspective into one aspect of the late 19th century revolutionary thinkers. For many, Martí has withstood the test of time and his influence on contemporary thought is evident today in Cuba, but outside as well – even if with different interpretations.

Other articles by Martí about New York:

La ciudad, el viaje y el circo - La vida neoyorkina - Los indios de Norteamérica - La diversion norteamericana - El problema industrial en los Estados Unidos - La escuela en Nueva York - El puente de Brooklyn - The Dedication of the Statue of Liberty

*Author's note: Originally, some years ago, there was another article about José Martí, Cuba, and the Anarchists; that was, looking back - pretty bad. This version is an attempt to fix that and never look back again.

The revolution is just a Che t-shirt away

There are perhaps four large categories of American thought which provide definitions of the fifty years of Castro rule: 1) the right-wing which views the island as a totalitarian, communist police state where starving people live under daily repressive rule, and the government is involved in drug trafficking and terrorism; 2) the center through to the liberal left which agrees, perhaps in the mode of Michael Moore's movie, *Sicko*, that the Revolution has provided good social services for

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

the poor and resisted U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere, but needs to install more democracy and private investment; 3) the organized left which sees very little wrong with the island and views all criticism of it as aid to the U.S. empire, and 4) the anarchist view which, indeed, sees the island as a police state needing a second revolution to install workers democracy, but has no use for calls for returning to private forms of ownership or foreign investment.

Formally known as Caobana in the native Taíno language, the island now known as Cuba is located in the Caribbean sea and rests just 90 miles south of the Florida Peninsula. Discovered in 1492 by the Spanish flagged crew of Christopher Columbus and later claimed for himself; the island has been ruled by Spain until their final overthrow in 1902. Cuba tempted multiple revolutions in the mid-to-late 1800s and one important actor to come out of this was José Martí, the prolific Cuban writer who died fighting against Spain in 1895. Today the words and slogans of Martí are manipulated by not only the Cuban State, but it's opponents as well - with each declaring him for themselves. In 1959, Fidel Castro with the help of Ernesto "Che" Guevara and others overpowered the USA backed Cuban government of Batista and with little exception has been in power ever since.

Cuba is one of the places in the world that citizens of the United States of America (USA) are not allowed to legally visit, just ask Jay-Z. Usually, unless you're a doctor, lawyer, journalist, student, Cuban-American, some-kind-of professional, musician, or something close by those terms, you may NOT be able to visit. Although, times are slowly changing and a 2011 New York Times article, explains some current ridiculously expensive vacation exceptions for regular USA passport holders. But what if you can't afford that, or those pre-planned cookie-cutter trips are not appealing to you, yet you'd still like to visit?

Cuba is only 90 miles away from the USA, appearing like long lost pen pals who in the end turned out to be neighbors, that secretly hate each other. There has been some discussion in prior years of capitalizing on ship/boat cruises from Florida to Cuba and reverse, although I'm not sure if this ever really panned out. A lot of cruise ships (floating monstrosities) can't make port in Cuba due to the USA economic embargo. Traveling to Cuba by plane has also become a bit easier with some added options for flights; although the USA mainstays are still Los Angeles, New York City, and Miami with permission. Otherwise, you're looking at first traveling to Canada or Mexico for your departure.

Once you arrive in Cuba, there is a \$25 entry fee from the Cuban authorities, and legally as a USA citizen you're not allowed to spend more than \$20 on the island. Therefore, by simply entering Cuba - you're breaking the law; which if I remember correctly there is also was an exit fee of like \$20+. If someone wants to specifically clarify any of this info, that would be great - because honestly these things change and it's confusing. One of the funniest parts for me is USA - "land of free to travel where you want" and you can actually travel there "without breaking a law", but you can't spend more than \$20; which is a impossible with a \$25 entry fee from Cuba. It's confusing from both sides, with each one saying different things. The economic embargo is from the USA, but then Cuba totally blocks even arrival in a legal sense for USA citizens by making them pay over the USA quota.

Upon arriving in La Habana, when I handed customs my passport and told them to stamp it, they looked back with a rather funny perplexed expression. "Yes, really please stamp it." Otherwise, usually they insert a blank sheet of paper and stamp that instead. I needed mine stamped because I was legally visiting the island and would be there for sometime, with other customs hoops to jump through which required the officialness.

And... money? Otherwise, so the story goes. Obviously, "non-legal" travelers from USA, it seems usually make sure you don't have to use a credit card or other banking devices there to get your capital. Even using your passport/ID to check in at some hotels can lead to the USA knowing of your stay in Cuba, thus invoking a possible fine once back home and crossing the border with your fantasy Cuban cigars and rum. Bring all the money that you may need with you, don't get robbed (just kidding), and otherwise prepare for the squeeze, if you ever come back. I imagine if you have a non-USA bank you may be okay, but check ahead and consider your options. Whatever you do, exchange your American dollars for Canadian or something else before you get to Cuba, otherwise be prepared to pay an hefty (15%?) tax for using American dollars there. Hotels usually charge dramatically more to exchange money into Cuba's two different currencies, Pesos Nacional y Convertibles

(CUC). Make sure you exchange your money at a "Casa de Cambio" or exchange house for the best rate. Plan ahead to save your dimes. They are located all over the city of Habana, a lot of Cubans use them as well (get there earlier, to ensure they have what you're looking for if you're exchanging a lot).

Even with its privileged bureaucracy, its police control, and centralized economy, there is a spontaneous, communal, imaginative aspect to the Revolution. This shows up in its vibrant culture and music scenes, but also on the local level where women's groups challenge traditional machismo, neighbors plant vast community organic gardens, and most share a pride in having defeated and held off the imperialist monster of the north. The island's education system creates a higher literacy rate than that of the States, and its universal health care system provides a better infant mortality than the U.S. These and other successes have made Cuba a model of what can be done with little. (For instance, Detroit's infant mortality rate is 16 deaths per 1,000 live births; Cuba's is six.)

An Anarchist in Cuba: Socialism or Cell Phones

by Walker Lane

Fifth Estate #378, Summer 2008.

\$4.00

Adios Socialismo

by Walker Lane

Fifth Estate #383, Summer 2010.

\$4.00

The species being of anarchist economics

(2013)

Capitalist Crisis and Anarchist Economics, a talk by Wayne Price on August 20th, 2013 in Rochester, New York at the Flying Squirrel Community Space

Last Tuesday I attended a talk by Wayne Price on the *Capitalist Crisis and Anarchist Economics* which also served as a entry point for his newly published book *The Value of Radical Theory: An Anarchist Introduction to Marx's Critique of Political Economy* hosted by "your friendly neighborhood" anarchist organization, Rochester Red and Black. I must say, they were friendly and the Flying Squirrel is a pretty nice place for Rochester to have. I also picked up a copy of the his new book, but haven't read past the first fifty pages yet, although the introduction has so far, been the most interesting. What follows is more of a look into his talk and some questions I had before and afterwards.

As anarchists, we are against state and capital, yet we are also not immune to the society we live in. We have to work for a living in order to survive and pay for food and shelter; some of us may even want some luxuries like books, bikes, the occasional keyboard to play, and maybe even more. The point being is that just because we are in opposition to civilization, we still live under it and more often than not have to play by their rules, while attempting not to comprise our ideas. Anarchists and economics are often like oil and water, they don't mix well and as Price wrote - outside of perhaps Proudhon there is barely any sense of "anarchist economics." This is were the ideas, formulations, and systems of Marx and Engels come into play with their importance in Price's opinion. And onwards: Just as the Russian revolutionaries in 1917 asked, how is it to be done, this anarchist economics?

Price began his talk by stating that he is retired (from what he didn't say) and that his family is in the same boat as all of us, experiencing the economic crisis with layoffs and difficulty finding meaningful jobs. He stated that he was an anarchist, of which kind or type he also didn't say, although I have always thought of him in the class-struggle anarchist vain. He also went on to say that he is not a Marxist, yet he is open to some of their ideas as being valid. His basic speech was that society is historical and built upon commodities that are often useless, cycles are necessary for the health of the capitalist system, and that the panic has turned into the crisis. Profit is the goal of the capitalists, rather than use, as he described the analogy of the hammer - the capitalists

make them, but will never use them. Price also talked of how capitalism fails to plan ahead, which brought to mind the old story of the grasshopper and ant. Although is this not planning ahead necessarily true?

According to Price, capitalism has been in decline since after World War II. This can be seen in the creation of the Bretton Woods system, which led to the International Monetary Fund and what was called the World Bank, both of which aim to stabilize business as usual. Overall, I was more than a bit disappointed in his talk because I felt like everything he mentioned could have also been discussed in a Political Science college somewhere. It was almost as if he completely left out the anarchist economics half, and instead choose to talk to the large group in a general history leading up to the crisis. And on to the question and answer we went...

Why would anyone want a new society? For the most part, the answer is that they don't. So what should we do as anarchists? Organize! But, around what? Price mentioned strikes and supporting them, supporting workers, taking over factories, and having worker run co-ops "from the bottom up, run by the workers." He also mentioned that many of these *alternative* ideas are still within the system, like for example co-ops still being under the capitalist market.

One of the more heated questioning and answering of topics came when Price used the term "terrorism" to describe anarchist sabotage. It almost started to look like the Crimethinc. / Chris Hedges debate up in there. Perhaps instead, Price should have used the often anarchist term of propaganda of the deed (POD) to describe his distaste for it instead of the catch all often government term of terrorism. It turns out, Price is not in favour of small group POD, and instead believes that we need to win the "battle of ideas" (again this sounds like a military term from Iraq and Afghanistan). In the end, Price's answer was that you can't stop capitalism without a "mass movement" to end it.

And what about anarchist economics? Well, someone asked if he could define anarchist economics and talk about it in the context of his book, however he stated that there were "major issues" but - he wasn't going to touch upon them. In Price's defense, the question and answer had already gone on for quite sometime (with no one else asking this!) and it was a super hot night outside in the city. Although, he did offer some keywords as the next question also touched upon the title of his talk. He stated that the basic principal is that "no one exploits anyone else" and that exactly how no one really knows because we're anarchists, and have many different ideas. He went on to mention that certainly PARECON was possible, but it has "issues" and that we need to experiment to see what works.

On a last note, Price often used the term "democracy" in discussing these anarchist alternatives and it would have been great to hear more of a critique of democracy from him or his specific ideas on the subject. Inside of me, I couldn't help but cringe while thinking of the JM Barrie from *Peter Pan* (1928) quote: "Every time an anarchist says, 'I believe in democracy,' there is a little fairy somewhere that falls down dead."

Letters of Insurgents: A brief commentary

(2009ish)

authors note: *This text was originally an attempt at an online book reading & discussion over at <http://insurgentsummer.org/>. The site is unfortunately currently down as of December 2013 (and before), but one can still process the gems of wisdom from the wonderful Internet Archive page lookup. It was a series of blog entries that have since been edited with many revisions and changes made, but still keeping the overall flavour. Times have changed, my writing was really bad - it hopefully is a little better here; it's still really bad, but the pictures are nice.*

Part One

So, things are heating up over at "Insurgent Summer", a participatory reading of *Letters of Insurgents*. Tomorrow is the deadline for the first letters to be completed, and I've just finished them, so I'll try and write down some thoughts to get the ball slowly rolling. I'm going to try and do this for every set of letters, so we shall see how that goes. It is really exciting for me to be reading this book again (I first read it last summer), since I consider it to be within my current top all-time favorite books. *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce and *One Hundred*

Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez are my other two favorite books currently, so it has good company. This will be my second time reading the book, but I'll only be commenting on the weeks reading section (or the previous sections, when related) - so I'll try not to bring up any *spoilers* before their time.

What I'd really like to do, and what I wanted to do before when I read the book, was write an all-encompassing review of the work - however, this never *really* happened - and instead we're left with this. Perhaps, these weekly posts along with other commentary from individuals will help in the overall creation of an in-depth review of the book someday [unfortunately it looks like with the site offline, this information is no longer readily accessible except with the way back machine https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://insurgentsummer.org]. If you don't have a copy of the book, which is out of print and can be difficult to obtain, you can read it from The Anarchist Library here <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/sophia-nachalo-and-yarostan-vochek-letters-of-insurgents>. The original book was scanned, machine read, human edited, and uploaded to the library for specifically for this online reading.

The book takes the form of a series of incredibly touching letters between two long lost friends, Yarostan and Sophia. Do you write letters to your friends? Prisoners? How has letter writing has changed with the advent of computers, e-mail, cell phones, and text msg? It would seem there is much less of this actual long-form letter writing, and much more of the short instant msg shared by technology. It is a lost art. As much as I enjoy the fact of being able to quickly communicate with friends; at the same time, I really miss the personal touch of the post. Reading *Letters of Insurgents* kind of makes me envious of friends who can write such eloquent long-form letters, and express themselves so-well in this manner.

Visions of horror are inverse utopias so beautiful tears come to my eyes

There is so much to comment on in the first letters alone, if one is to really delve in (a bit of a cop out on my part, no?). But, that's tough, and it's only Thursday - so we can leave it for the easy going... for the moment at least.

If anything, I will try and comment a bit further in comments on the first part and continue with some posts on the other letters. And most of all, have fun this summer. Saludos!

"In a context where any word or gesture can lead to the dreaded arrest there's no freedom"

- an excerpt from Yarostan's first letter

Part Two: losing your illusion in the land of gigantic objects and monstrous toys

Hello there world. It has been a busy week, with the official start of summer, and one more set of letters.

One idea that really sticks out in this set of letters that of *illusion*. In true Gunz 'n Rose's fashion, we find ourselves losing our illusion, only to shed it off for another illusion.

Since we all know we'll eventually die, since any of us might die tomorrow, are all our hopes and dreams illusions?

- Sophia (2)

How does one
go about shedding their illusions,
losing them,
like death,
nothing else is imaginable

Shedding our illusions, repressing our wants, forgetting our possibilities: these are the slogans of the ruling order; coming from you they sound bizarre.

- Sophia (2)

I recall the time some years ago, when I was living in La Habana, Cuba seeing a distinctive orange cargo truck with the words "viva la ilusión" spray painted on it, toting the circled A for anarchy meandering through the city streets.

What is your life project?

The following are headlines from the media: (of course only jokes, but actual quotes, just with titles that define them from the get-go!)

Yarostan, the killer:

"At first I shot to avenge my parents. Later I just shot; my only concern was to hit."

- Yarostan (2)

Sophia on friendship:

"A complete lack of human warmth, understanding, sympathy, comradeship. A cold, dispassionate dissection of an animal."

- Sophia (2)

Sophia on Hakim Bey:

Can you really be saying that insurgents only rise against the ruling order so as to reimpose it?
Can you really be saying that the only dreams of rebels are dreams of authority and submission?

- Sophia (2)

Sophia on the radio:

The radio is an instrument which kills communication; it robs people of their tongues; it broadcasts the voice of a single individual to millions of listeners, reducing them to passive receptacles. If communication has the same root as common and community, the radio is an instrument for uprooting all three.

-Sophia (2)

Sophia on teaching:

"I decided during my first teaching job that I wasn't going to let myself be reduced to a means of production for the production of means of production."

- Sophia (2)

Sophia on life:

"I've tried to show you that my whole life has revolved around the experience I shared with you and that all my life I've sought to communicate with you."

Well, goodnight all. Till, next week and then some. Saludos...
ps. sophia = much sweeter? love struck? and regretting leaving paradise?

Part Three (y más): Dancing in the Dark (*you can't start a fire, without a spark*)

If you haven't been paying attention, the folks over at Insurgent Summer have made some great posts about the book so far and I've really enjoyed reading their thoughts, as an addition to the book. Some things we have in common, and other things I probably would have never realized if I hadn't read their thoughts.

I'd like to briefly comment on one area that is really important for me. It's dancing, and to be honest I'm a terrible dancer (in terms of official dance, a la salsa, etc). But, I love to dance - I mean, I love to go wild and lose myself in the music, in the passion of movement/moment, and going crazy with your friends, basically having a good time (don't stop me now!). It makes me feel good. I think one of the problems with society is that people forget how to *dance*. My mom, who is a warrior - has really helped me realize how important stuff like this in life.

"But you just said, 'It takes doing.' Dancing is doing! Poor Jasna is always so sad, and she was so happy when she danced."

Jasna is the sad, lonely, solitary being that loves to lose herself in books. She literally loves books and they are her extreme, reading. And read. And read for days on end, nothing is more important - on being caught up in the life of books.

I feel in love with the Daft Punk album *Homework* when it first came out, and I was in my very early teens then and it made me want to dance. Music, plays such an important part of so many peoples lifes.

You can do anything you want

"impossibility is a term of logic and reality doesn't observe the limits of logic"

- Sophie (page #382)

Don't get me wrong, I actually really enjoy writing on a keyboard/screen/computer, but at the same time there are things about handwriting stuff that just blows me out of the water. There are so many things I like about handwriting - a few of them are, looking back upon, reading it years later, in your hands, no screen, the writing style and way of forming words / fonts that develop and begin to show with time. Plus, I don't know - but it just seems that something is different when you hit keys vs. actually writing the words out with your hand, certainly not as fast - but none-the-less refined.

Today, after I woke I spent the entire day riding bikes with a friend out to the country, escaping from the city. I thought about Sophia and Ron (plus Sabina) riding their bikes out as far as they could go. We found things that we never knew about before, and traveled to places unknown - it was wonderful. Then tomorrow, (now today) one more day before the world of *work* resumes.

These *days off* vs. days of work, are special for me - and I'm sure many feel the same way, unless you're a Luisa. Some of us work much more than others, and sometimes I think it is one of the most important things to spend a day doing *nothing*, like a days spent walking around aimlessly on city streets like Sophia or weeks on end spent reading books like Jasna. Actually, Jasna is kind of funny - it seems she reads to lose herself from reality and create something that is unreal, like an imaginary illusion. Or, just as Yarostan remembers, it's not my life project to find myself in death, looking back realizing that I never really was *alive*.

Here are some quotes that I marked along the way:

Yarostan on species being:

All around me human beings are attempting to come to life as human beings, as universal individuals, as species beings, each advancing with all and all with each. (page #193)

Zdenek on representation:

I think humanity is finally rejecting what has always been an impossible project, the project of representation. The present proliferation of major and minor pharaohs around the world is the final and ludicrous stage of that impossible project. My life can't be lived as a representation; my representative can't realize my aspirations, take my steps or engage in my actions. The pharaohs are the final and definitive proof of the impossibility of representation. I think we've all finally learned what took me so long to learn, namely that I'm robbed of my enjoyment if my representative enjoys himself for me, that my hunger remains when he eats for me, that I don't express myself when he speaks for me, that my mind and my imagination stagnate when he thinks for me, and decides for me, that I lose my life when he lives for me." (page #199)

Hugh on friends [to Sophie]:

My new friends don't need you. What you carry inside you, what surrounds you, whether you intend it or not, is all the rot we've started to shed. (page #409)

Imagine someone saying this to you. Sometimes, we all need a bit of a reality check, some more than others - and I suppose really in the end this is what it must have felt like to have this said about you. I like this because even if it sounds pretty mean, it also feels like inspiration. Where do we find what moves us each day? Is it *anger* that drives you? Something else, or perhaps better a combination of things? Do you even know what drives you? Or what you drive for?

Sophia on school newspaper:

That group of students didn't disperse at the end of the school year, the way we did. They kept their publication going.

I think this is an interesting quote to think about, because it actually seems like a constant problem among student groups (or even other groups who may have some form of separation) who have a running publication. I imagine the time and distance of a summer to be huge gap between doing and non-doing - so how does one, keep the metaphorical ball rolling?

Sabina on what it all means:

There's nothing to understand, Sophia, and nothing to fit into. It's your life to do with as you will. There's no structure. Nothing is banned. Everything is allowed. No holds are barred."

And I will leave you with that, and now that I've caught up again with the reading, after a monstrous never-ending summer took hold - I look forward to keeping a more steady grasp on the writing, and thinking a little more critically about the book. Cheers!

Letters of Insurgents: Just Dance

A rather funny comment, yet touching - that was said the other week was something like this: "gosh, I think it was worth visiting just to see [insert name here] going wild on the dance floor." I don't know about that, but I can appreciate the sentiment, obviously dancing around with your friends is wonderful. And, how could it not be?

Zdenek on dancing:

"I dream of nothing else! I haven't danced for over twenty years and I'm bursting with the desire to dance!"

Mirna on the real Mirna:

"you might not like her as well as you like your shepherdess"

Out of the other parts of what I've read so far in *Letters #6*, this quote was one that stuck with me. In many ways, this book is fascinating because each one of us can relate to it in some way with the characters. As for Mirna - a shepherd growing up on our small family farm in the middle of the countryside. Although, I think for Mirna, she didn't really like the animals that much - and almost secretly dreamed of the city. We imagine growing up on a farm to be one of the best possible situations today, although it is up in the air. Rewilding, falling off the map, going off-the-grid, is the anti-civilization dream, but you can't escape everything. We barely ever made any money.

Justice - "Dance"

Broken Social Scene - "Meet me in the basement" (video inspired by G8/G20 in Toronto, check out all the dancing!)

Reality is starting to incorporate our dreams

Maybe what's happening is that we're all becoming children again. Our rigid roles and characters are dropping off like dried skin. We're fascinating to each other because each one of our acts might be a total surprise, at any instant our personalities might change completely. Like children, we're not exhausted by what we've been and are; life is ahead of us; we're no longer dead.

- Sophie, (page #561)

Yesterday, August 20th was Fredy Perlman's birthday. Are birthdays important? I don't know, but they are nice. It also marks the end of Insurgent Summer, and even though I still haven't finished the book yet (so close!), here is a brief post. Like Yara, I will be spending the next week going to the mountains, or rather you could say - someplace far away in the middle of *nowhere* Adirondacks. Goodbye Internet, and goodnight neverland. Perhaps, I may finish the book there, and even write my final thoughts, upon a rock somewhere like Lem. Or not. Lem, IRL would freak me out in some ways and seems a bit wing nut - or crazy/insane (almost) as society may think. Don't hold your breathe.

"The contradiction between the subject of those books and my own mindless drift became unbearable to me."

- Sophie (page #570)

Oh, really?

no army can be "popular"

- Yarostan, (page #510)

This quote reminds me of something my mom always told me growing up - that "no one ever really wins a war".

How about something less lethal... like, books - you say?

Sure. On a totally different note, although when put through Kevin Bacon's nine degrees, things seem alright.

Drawing a line between love and (anti)politics

What's a book? Is it a self-realization of an individual's life in the context of living others? Or is it self-realization as a closed compartment, for example an "insurgent," a category that remains separate from all the other separate categories?

- Sophie

Review: Genesee River Rebellion

(2016)

Your friendly neighbourhood anarchists

The Genesee River Rebellion(GRR) is a new quarterly publication from the Rochester Black Rose Anarchist Federation. It's a large 4-page newspaper with 6 articles of varying length that we picked up for free from the distribution bin inside a local Rochester restaurant. There was a stack full of copies placed in the distro and it appears that there are stacks of this paper around a handful of local establishments for the curious reader to find. There also appears to be a subscription based model along with some other perks for those that signed up via the GoFundMe page, which accordingly raised around \$1,500 of a \$2,000 goal for printing costs, etc. Aesthetically, the local publication looks nice and it was exciting to find an anarchist newspaper circulating around in hand on our way to get some food. On the other hand, there are also some gripes about the publication and the ideas behind it. Below is a brief review of the new publication, along with some shared experiences from the Black Rose Anarchist Federation.

The front page main article is titled "The Shit List: Dregs of Our City" which is a recap of the the top nine worst people in the Rochester area. Certainly a clever idea and one that holds a lot of potential (especially for making powerful enemies), but after reading the article what stuck with me the most was amount of poor language used to convey their otherwise critical message. The audience is getting these (almost) beautiful ideas and papers into peoples hands, unfortunately it also seems that the language used is quite poor and specifically poignant as a group. The school-yard insults, remarks about peoples appearances all seem distasteful and out of touch with the possible audience (building a mass movement?). Perhaps in the next issue, we can hear less name-calling and more from GRR about what it means to be an anarchist (especially in Black Rose) in Upstate, New York, their projects, and thoughts on the Federation. How is it to be done? One answer from GRR appears to be that "the world is bad, and here is how to fix it" possibly by subscribing to our quarterly newspaper and donating money to the organization.

Some of the noteworthy "radical" lexicon used from the article follows:

To begin lightly, by describing Danny Wegman, CEO of Wegmans, a popular grocery store, as a "poverty pimp" and calling him "our own coked-up, Ferrari-driving, billionaire savior of Rochester's poor!". Then following up with Joel Seligman, President of The University of Rochester (U of R) who is described as an "over-sized fetus" and "1st among people who look like a Q-tip in human form." It goes on to say that "Though it may be difficult to discern exactly where Seligman's neck ends and his head begins" and finally finishes up by stating "It should come as no surprise that in order to pay for the vast quantities of warm milk he drinks before bed each night". Bob Lonsberry, who is a radio talk-show host on WHAM 1180 AM is called out for his penis size, "Sources close to Lonsberry confirm that he is indeed compensating for something" and later described as "a man who looks like a human butt plug." Howie Nielsen, who is the owner of Sticky Lips BBQ is told "fuck your boats! Oh, and the ribs at Sticky Lips suck." Sande Macaluso, City of Rochester Marshal is described as having a "Hitler-esque mustache and sporting a big cigar" who is also a "living Garbage Pail Kid". Maggie Brooks, the Monroe County Executive is called "a turtle-faced charlatan". It goes on with Lyjha Wilton, a developer in Rochester by saying "If you still don't want to hold him down and take a giant shit in his mouth". And lastly, Bob Duffy, former Police Chief and Mayor of Rochester, etc is described as having a "jerk-off muppet face".

This is an intriguing list of the rich and powerful in Rochester - and, aside from the "you're an idiot" writing, there are solid points to be made about each individual. But, is this the kind of writing that is appealing to their audience and other anarchists? What is the common denominator between the anarchist audience and their non-anarchist friends? Is the general sentiment towards this "turned off" or "on"? For us, we're out of lulz and unimpressed; reading and digesting abusive and insulting language masked up as anarchist critique is not something we like to spend time doing. Alas, the review must live on, so we read.

To others, this may seem funny and not an important aspect to focus on, but it makes their overall idea appear *unsexy*, immature, and a sad reflection of GRR. On a larger scale, this seems to be the trend of not only the local

GRR group, but of the federation as well. While the bad-faith arguments, poor critiques, and lack of ability to have and build relationships among the terrible community has been a point of contention forever, it seems to be amplified by certain hanger-ons. It's no wonder platformists in North America have such a bad reputation internationally as being some of the most reactionary, sectarian, and partisan "anarchists". The common phrase from them sounds something like "they have absolutely nothing in common with us, they're not real anarchists, so fuck 'em." Too bad, so sad - as the pot signals the kettle, time for a coffee break.

Here is a quick rundown of the other articles: *The Editorial: Tragedy in Orlando: An Anarchist Queer's Response* is a welcoming quick read about the the state, police, society, guns, violence, justice and LGBTQ. *What if Pride Were Run by Anarchists?* concludes that "an anarchist-run Pride event would be an anti-capitalist celebration of the struggles of all LGBTQ people. It would be designed to challenge the status quo of mainstream LGBTQ "rights" while calling forth the true history of Pride." In *First Edition: Storming the Bastille* it sums up why they decided to release the newspaper on July 14th (national holiday in France much?). *The Old World is Dying* is a text about the prefigurative politics of building "a new world from the shell of the old." It goes on to touch upon the strikes in France surrounding the new laws about the 35-hour work week, the Rojava Revolution, and the 2012 student strikes in Quebec. They also share some ideas regarding the overall practice of GRR - work call ins, tenant unions, rent strikes, and the Fight for \$15. It was also mentioned that "we're not just planning to relentlessly mock those power - as fun as that is - we're going to share a vision for the world with all of you", which does somewhat respond to our earlier question regarding the audience and future direction. And the last article *Pigs in Shit* is a very brief report-back from a recent Black Lives Matter demonstration in the City of Rochester that saw 70+ people arrested and a lot of attention from the community.

One last area to look at is the *Online Anarchist Resources* sidebar provided in the newspaper. Overall, it lists 13 websites and here are a few of the more polemical: AK Press who seem to be the mainstay "anarchist" publisher; while AK doesn't have the best track record working alongside other anarchists over the years, they seemingly have improved a bit. Recently, they found themselves under fire during Schmidt-gate. Another link, Zabalaza Books whose mothership, Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF) of South Africa have also found themselves caught up in the same controversy re: Michael Schmidt and the two AK Press authors who wrote the exposé. Thought Crime Ink is an anarchist non-profit that provides ephemera. Libertarian Communism A website that continues to have controversy surrounding it for being run / supported by cop-collaborators (see On Why Dr John Drury Is A Collaborationist Asshole & cop-out – the significance of Aufhebunggate (2013)). Anarkismo of course. Anarchist Platform A WordPress site that hasn't been updated since 2012. And finally, Common Cause, an organization that dissolved itself this past Spring (2016). A rather eye-opening list of links for the curious audience - especially those with little or no prior reference to anarchist ideas.

Anarchist media needs to exist and the GRR is a welcome addition to a sparse North America anarchist newspaper lineup, even if the "you're an idiot" and overall party approach to anarchy-ism seems more grumpy and unattractive than revolutionary. One recent anarchist newspaper (+online) project particularly stands out for aiming above all of the ridiculousness, called The Blast. In the about us, they write: "For those new to the struggle we present some of the rich stories of what has come before us - tales of our gains and losses, of what is possible in the future and in our daily lives today. For those who have been here a while, we'd like to reimagine familiar issues with a critical eye while maintaining no (or at least shifting) sacred cows."

How will the GRR respond to this review? Disastrously we imagine, as unfortunate it becomes when one looks at the GRR website "About us":

Odds are, we're just going to read your complaints aloud at a meeting and laugh at you.
- GRR

Real Anarchists Have Day Jobs: A brief visit with the Black Rose Anarchist Federation

Whilst I know there are many decent but mistaken individuals who pride themselves on their party membership I consider that the best job pro-revolutionary organisations do is to contain

all the idiots in one place, permitting to everybody else the luxury of avoiding them. - Nihilist
Communism

Around a year or so ago, I decided to attend a General Interest Meeting (GIM) of the locale Black Rose Anarchist Federation. I went because I was curious to meet and see what other anarchists in the area were working on. The meeting was very well attended for a city that isn't known for having a bunch of wild-eyed anarchists. People were interested and the anarchist outreach game was on point as the meeting began in an old church, whose member(s) had invited the anarchists to use the space.

The presentation was dry, awkward at times, and not one that seemed to be overly appealing to the packed room of listeners, although many faces did continue on into the first part of the "integrating process." This overall bland tone carried on into future meetings, discussions, and direction of the group, with at times showing life, but mostly seeming basic and at times even hostile to anarchist ideas. Since (or before) 1999, the platform in North America has gained a reputation of being the sectarian comrades you never wanted and unwelcoming to other anarchists. At the time of the GIM, Black Rose was around 1 year old, as it had previously combined various anarchist organizations throughout the USA into one group to rule them all. The north-east of the USA and North America, with the exception perhaps being Montreal, seem to really favour this platformist, syndicalist, and especificismo approach to anarchism (class / work). Why is that?

The most intriguing part of the GIM was their explanation and discussion of the platform vs. especificismo. A basic summary would be that the platform after the Russian Revolution (ATR) is like "hey, we lost" - how do we change our specific anarchist organization, tactics, and strategies to ensure we stop losing (A: federalism?). Especificismo has a huge overlap with the platform and appear quite similar - although over our short stay; it was explained to that Rochester Black Rose "isn't actually a specific platformist or especificismo group, or even how the group describes itself", but the alternatives and exacts were never quite clear enough. Organizationalism, social insertion, and other trademarks on the platform / especificismo always seemed to be the most stressed.

Previously, the group had started as Rochester Red and Black and then changed their name to Rochester Black Rose when they joined the new federation. Rochester Red and Black had been around a few years prior, mainly focusing on housing issues, education, and "political work." They've since continued in other areas with some of the main projects being the Fight for \$15, the IWW Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), and the new publication mentioned above called the Genesee River Rebellion.

As explained in the GIM, membership into the Federation would come after a 3-6 month integrating process. The process included attending the monthly General Assembly (GA), paying dues to the Federation, a monthly reading group, and overall participation in Black Rose. During this period, one was assigned a "mentor" or a standing member of the group. These mentors also had bi-weekly(?) or so meetings with the locale about their thoughts on their mentees. While we have a lot of "feelings" about the whole process, it mostly felt like a popularity contest amongst a closed clique of people who were already close friends. Curiously, our adoration was not as esteemed as some and we were eventually informed around 5 months in, the vote would be a big "no" to become a member in good standing. Ouch! As individuals interested in and working on anarchist projects, it felt a bit awkward and sad to have such a hard time building lasting relationships with other anarchists that live only a few blocks away.

So, what happened? Well, a lot over the course of those months, although we've also known some of them for years prior and have attended their workshops, conferences, and meetings on a number of previous occasions. However, it was mostly over recent discussions, readings, and observations that changed our mind about working alongside this locale of the Black Rose Federation. For those so interested in building the mass movement of community, affinity, and solidarity together - life seemed far away. Discussion of this and other concerns were never really actualized or received genuine replies. The responses we did receive didn't seem to come from people who were interested in having good-faith arguments, working with other anarchists, or possibly seeing life outside the blinders. Along with their unwillingness to have us, the departure was just as much on our end. After everything, we somewhat quietly left the group and went back to *doing nothing*. The next time we ran into our "mentor" was at a music show after they were coming back from the local Bernie Sanders rally, where they may have also just given a speech.

Some of the forks-in-the-road we encountered and are willing to share here are as follows. Facebook was used to organize pretty much everything. Within Facebook, it's possible to have "secret" groups and this is how the majority of integrating and standing members communicated and shared information with each other. Of course, nothing is illegal and the type of anarchism that the Black Rose Federation is associated with is largely public, above ground organizing. Still, it was tough to take seriously and understand why not use other more anarchist friendly alternatives to communicating and sharing? The answer seems to lay somewhere in-between it's convenient, everyone had a Facebook account; and the naive, we don't care if our enemies can see everything we're talking about. Even after Occupy, the Arab Spring, and other uprisings greatly aided by social media - it has been tough to take seriously people who organize specifically over it. Google was also used to keep track of supporters, membership, and dues. From these Google files, which everyone could see, we can get a more personal view of members finances. How much do you make? Check the anarchist spreadsheet and do the math. Whose supporting us? It all seemed a bit intrusive, especially in an anarchist organization where things are more-often-than-not open and accountable, but especially revealing for those who are tasked with monitoring and destroying anarchist organizing. Sometimes we make other peoples jobs way too easy.

Most (repressive, dividing, and controlling) State activity works by identifying individuals and relating them through organisational structures, all membership organisations, therefore, are built with flaws present from the outset which the State is able to exploit, usually to the detriment of the whole "movement". (Look at the film, The Battle of Algiers.) -Nihilist Communism

Another fork-in-the-garden-of-irregularities is that of the relationship between the union staffers and the Federation. The North Eastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists (NEFAC) was often criticized for having various union flags waving at their demonstrations, metaphorically and real, and it was often difficult to tell where the line was being drawn by the anarchist participants and their union day jobs. During our brief stay with the Federation, this issue seemed to surprisingly come up a few time as disagreements between the various locales in Black Rose. Of course, anarchists have all kinds of jobs and work just like everyone, along with a strong past and present of being involved with struggles of the syndicalist nature, however bringing your liberal-leaning union / job into an anarchist organizations practice became a point of contention. A story related to us, was that in one anarchist meeting, support papers for the local social justice organization were handed out that made it feel like you were being recruited. In other times, anarchists were being asked to do the volunteer work for the main project of the locale - the Fight for \$15; while a few within the locale got paid a salary for working on it via their day job. A rather weird repulsive dichotomy and one that seems to be becoming a more acknowledged issue within the platformist struggle. If only we too had an anarchist army to do our day job! Yes, these gripes were certainly not all we encountered in our stay, but a few we felt comfortable briefly mentioning here; we could go on and perhaps down the road we can find a way to write some meaningful words towards this end.

Until then, why write this? This brief review is simply a way of looking back and can hopefully be understood as a work of care, as in we care because we're talking about you. We still live in the city and work on (different) anarchist projects and aren't interested in creating more drama or frenemies; there is already way too much of that. What we hope and aim for is extending a warm and welcoming hand to other anarchists in the region and the larger anarchist space in general. There are some lessons to be taken away about how anarchists create and maintain long-term working projects, friendships, and the world we'd like to see. Anarchists don't need a nation-wide Federation to organize and spread anarchist actions, we especially don't need groups like GRR ridiculing other anarchists and their projects for their opposing beautiful ideas. Of course, it's not possible to do what is to be (un)done with everyone in the terrible community. Our projects need to be fun and a reflection of the large, healthy, and vibrant international anarchist space we desire.

Rochester Black Rose on The Anarchist Library: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/category/topic/rochester-red-and-black>

A [draft] response to: An Anarchist Survey

A response to a survey posted on Encounters with Anarchism, exploring our beautiful ideal

1. — *How would you most succinctly define anarchism? Is there a shared “anarchist project” — and, if so, how would you characterize it?*

At the heart anarchism is anti-state / anti-capitalist, or as the old saying goes “no gods, no masters.” The explanations from this can go on for a bit, but overall the shared “anarchist project” is a life project that is characterized by anarchy.

2. — *What is the relationship between anarchism and the concept of anarchy?*

Anarchy is the idea, while anarchism is the ideal. Ideas change and develop over time, whereas the ideals of anarchism are defined concepts at a specific time and framework; the -ism also implies a prior movement towards something.

3. — *What is the value of tradition within the anarchist milieu and what might be its uses?*

Of course!, tradition and non-tradition are valued within the milieu, spaces, and movements of anarchy. Anarchist history (against Leviathan), it’s human resistance, insurrections the world over and revolution, and other important anarchist pursuits.

4. — *What, specifically, is the role to be played in the present by the anarchist literature — whether theoretical or artistic — of the past?*

Anarchist literature knows it’s roll, and that is to... Attack! But, also remember; a remembrance of anarchist things past. The documenting of the usual and unique past, as well as the more famous historical events from an encompassing perspective. It’s everything.

5. — *What are the most significant challenges facing anarchists — and anarchism, as you understand it — in the present?*

Building a mass movement of anarchists and friends... like a federation. Just kidding, but maybe. If that’s where you’re at, nothing wrong. Do it. Neighborhood anarchist friends are the best.

Most of all, building that life project.

6. — *How would you characterize the present state of anarchist activity (outside the realm of theory and propaganda)?*

Depends on where you look and how far recently back into time you go. In North America, the current state of anarchist activity seems largely centered around antifa, although the high water mark for that may have been a year ago. Before that, it was Occupy everything(!) in 2011 and the summit hopping years of anti-globalization from 1999 on into the 2000s. What is today? The anarchist gathering as camping adventure over book fair over meetings over riot!? It looks different across the world, but seems especially defined by region and anarchist tent affiliation. Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Harvey, the Ferguson insurrection, Standing Rock, and other events, to name only a few, have painted an alternative picture of possibilities.

7. — *How would you characterize the present state of anarchist theory and propaganda?*

With the Internet, social media, and communication as it is today, brings with it a characterization of speed an ability to share ideas over large distances instantaneously. Quality conversation and dialogue seems to have deteriorated a bit over letter correspondence; but it also may just be more difficult to find, as there are so many things out there. The act of writing letters, the time involved in the previous literary boom of magazines and correspondence does seem to have unfortunately largely faded away, for a different more modern approach of communication and typing. The technology of communication and learning, sharing, critiquing, and comments.

8. — *What are the most urgent changes to be made in anarchist practice moving forward?*

Perhaps , a step away from the infighting and attacking of other anarchists and ideas in an uncritical and non-productive manner. Critique is healthy, but having good faith conversations over the all-to-common sectarian squabbles becomes too much over time, especially for new people. The poor critique is a turn off. Next, after we’ve solved all the relationship problems ;), the commune, the collapse, and the forest garden.

9. — *What is the role of some kind of “anarchist unity” moving forward? What form could or should that unity take?*

We don't all have to get along, but perhaps some shouldn't relate other anarchist thinkers as a demigod to their only god of whatever. The platform federation or the union of egoists, down to the neighborhood affinity groups and friends / individuals, let's do it all.

10. — *What are the greatest needs with regard to new anarchist theory, propaganda, literature and art?*

Anarchist spaces offline and online to share these things IRL with other anarchists and friends.

11. — *Do you currently identify with any particular anarchist current or tendency — and, if so, how do you characterize your position?*

Anti-civ much younger growing up, post-left, green anarchy, but today just an anarchist. The tent is big, come on in and hang out for a bit, say hi. Perhaps, the oft said quote by Fredy Perlman, that they're just a "violinist" or something like that, although violins are perhaps a bit too bluegrass and unplayable here.

12. — *What additional questions would it be useful to pose to a broad anarchist audience?*

Offline: How is it to be done? (this is the age old question, rephrased, so many ways, again)

Online: How do we organize the international anarchist _____ work flow? Helping _____ and _____ anarchist _____ around the world?

13. — *Would you be interested in participating in future surveys, perhaps addressing more specific elements of anarchist theory, practice and culture?*

Perhaps. And specifically, how anarchists like yourself use this information gathered from an international survey of this sort. Does it change anything for you? And, if so, how so? What do you think that looks like for everyone else? What are some gems to share from the takeaway? Thanks for doing this, - stalking the earth

anarchistnews dot org podcast editorials:

Local and World Politics (May 5th, 2017)

The world of politics has certainly been a wild ride for the books this year. This week alone, with elections coming up in France and the ever ongoing process of governments across the world making drastic headlines with the love-hate relationship of mainstream media, we look towards how this pertains to the world of anarchism.

It could be said that many anarchists pay extremely close attention to this world of politics, even while having a strong distaste of such a close reading. In turn, with some basing their anarchistic actions and responses to such governments call-to-action. Writing letters the old fashioned way to the news and elected officials, calling up and leaving a message to their government “representative”, and as can be seen over the past week, making signs and marching down a street somewhere near you.

While on the other side of things, even those who begrudgingly follow along with the latest of world politics, take a strong anti-political approach to such events, as the follow up. On the more rebellious side of things, putting your body and mind on the line for the idea. Between these two camps plays out the other love-hate of international anarchism. Perhaps common everywhere is a sense of disempowerment, despair, and hopelessness when we see our actions, whatever they may be in the name of anarchy, after we wake up tomorrow and the beautiful idea we have based our lives off of is no closer to realization than last night's wonderful dream. Or is it?

Some may argue that perhaps these global catastrophic events carried out in the name of world politics, in the short run are discouraging but over time strengthen whatever it is that the international anarchist space may be / become. You have to crack a few eggs, if you're to make that omelet for your friends and loved ones.

Here at anarchistnews dot org, we often take the brunt of critiques from all sides in response to the coverage and commentary shared on the site, metaphorically cracking a few eggs. It is plainly obvious that even as these world wide political events unfold, there are those who no matter the camp, enjoy attacking other anarchists more than whatever their instruction manual proclaims as public enemy number one. “Why is this political thing covered and that other one not? Why are such comments allowed? And what is up with the collective?”

Then as the next day unfolds, we return to our daily lives, our work and the wash, rinse cycle of world politics repeats itself with slightly different beginnings, middles, and ends. The stories, the comments, and the reactions keep coming, as our levels of loss and victory wax and wane throughout this first week after May Day, 2017.

Waking the Woken (July 1, 2017)

This past week Doctor Bones wrote a text entitled “Anarchists Failed Philando Castile and They Have Failed Black Americans” that covers the expanses that anarchists in the USA are failing at. The text takes some strong words towards “woke anarchists” saying that:

if your politics can only function in “radical spaces” they are *worthless*. If they can't keep people alive *they are garbage*.

It goes on to state that in America the police can execute a black man in front of their child and reasonably expect a jury to let them off the hook, while radicals are more concerned with the identity politics behind the cultural appropriation of food from Mexico, arguing over whose administrating Facebook groups, and so on. Meanwhile anarchists are marching in Pride while the cops are showered with roses two blocks ahead.

While I don't disagree with El Doctor and find common ground in their solutions of going more hard, as hopefully all anarchists can agree (at times, at least), the over arching point is the lack of a large anarchist *movement* in the USA. If anything it seems to me here that the post-Trump era anarchists are winning, whatever that means. It's like the old adage, that sometimes our greatest successes come from our failures, or something like that. Because in reality, what winning looks like in the anarchist space is not a large scale social-political revolution, but the smaller scale of an ant preparing for the coming winter months, while the grasshopper aimlessly plays.

The times have changed – this isn't 1910 Mexico, 1917 Russia, and the 1930s in Spain anymore. It's not 1969 in France and a long way off from the 1980s and 90s of the USA. One can understand the many reasons for a lack of hope and wild eyed gleams in radical society today, when you and your compas can have a laser guided missile come through your bedroom window one night while you browse ANEWS. I wish all we could do was win, but we've been losing so much, that perhaps our idea of what winning looks like needs to change.

Just this past week, I listened to the "Intelligence Unclassified" podcast from New Jersey Homeland Security about anarchist extremists. Accordingly, from their intelligence reports the anarchist space across the USA lacks a central leadership (duh!), is largely disorganized, split into regions, and when we do attack they are low level unsophisticated attacks. These critiques from our enemies in blue is certainly not new, but quite interesting to actually hear, as one can imagine very similar good faith arguments coming from other anarchists like El Doctor about the current predicament. They went on to break down anarchist extremists into two distinct groups, the heroes of the day, the antifa and the traditional anticapitalists. Not surprisingly, the east coast was portrayed as "peaceful" while the west coast not so much. With the exception of Montreal and the fact that it's a city in Canada and not the USA, the east coast does seem like the sleep of old father time has dazed them off into a long slumber. Writing this editorial from the East Coast of things, I can agree that naps and nothing doing, seem like the status update of the day for our unwoke anarchist friends. Yes, we've all failed and will continue to fail. This isn't grade school anymore though and the grit and grime of failure can hopefully (long pause) only help us pass onto something that looks like winning. And that as anarchists, we can get back to the most beautiful idea of all, anarchy.

Heroes and heroines (July 29th, 2017)

Heroes and heroines. The important people and loved ones in your life, inside and outside of the anarchist space. This has been a monumental week of solidarity for the anarchist heroes and heroines we have come to love. July 20th thru 27th was a week of solidarity to support defendants arrested while protesting the inauguration of Donald Trump, six months prior on January 20th (#disruptJ20). July 25th also marks the International Day of Solidarity with Antifascist Prisoners that originated in 2014 in support of an Australian friend. Our lived philosophies and endeavors, whether successful to some degree or not, will often steer us toward trouble and into the roughest spots of the sea. After the storm has passed, we're often faced with the brutal results, friends and loved ones hurt in need of long-term care and others facing long stays behind bars.

As anarchists, I think one of the things that we have learned to do well is support our friends in trouble or at least aim for such heights. In many ways, the sole praxis of being an anarchist means perpetually being in sights of those who wish to see us fail. It's terrible enough that often it seems, the feelings we express towards other anarchists and their projects, people on the same team, is the harsh sectarian reality of real life, like a mirror reflecting the worst of society back onto us. Over the years, the regional and international solidarity efforts have made a large impact. In the United States over the last years, some IWW branches have went from organizing in the factories to organizing incarcerated workers (Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee), to the delight of many red anarchists. Prison solidarity work is often one of those thankless projects for those involved. It's tough to keep up the steam at times, especially when directly dealing with your enemies, the jailers, the police, the courts. It's nice to see the growth of new projects, groups, and events year round to support not only anarchists in trouble, but for the total abolition of all prisons and prisoners.

Going back to title of this editorial, perhaps we should use a different word for heroes and heroines. Yes, utmost respect to those facing time and total solidarity, but the word just seems like too much of an idolization of each other. No, I'm not talking about "kill your idols" kind of view either, but that the language of society and heroes is often associated with those of superpowers, fighting against *something*. Of course, a heroes welcome home is called for, but the hero worship and idolization of each other seems off for anarchists. A quote from the retired NBA player Charles Barkley comes to mind where he says, "I'm not a role model" in an old Nike commercial of all things marketed to the culture of cool.

On such a note, this past week a recent text on *It's Going Down* regarding prison solidarity work called-out readers for doing-nothing, nothing-doing. "Dear reader, I do not mean to insult you but chances are the most active you've been in the last year-and-a-half is critiquing our president at your favorite bar." Ouch! This random shelling of dear readers must totally be spurred to action now, leaping from their bar stools to help *the revolution* throw newspaper boxes in the streetz. As every wise anarchist critic knows, as the old saying goes, if you don't riot you can't complain. End text.

Back to school edition (September 2nd, 2017)

It's that time of year again when students, teachers, professors, and the related faculty of workers are returning to school again at the elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels. The day after this labor day holiday here in the States, many young and old wild glowing eyes will awaken with excitement, dread, uncertainty, and a thousand other emotions about what this coming year means to them. A few weeks back, CrimethInc. published a topical text about the anarchist relationship to school. It covered the efforts of a small group of anarchists to use collegiate level student funding to maintain an anarchist group at their university. These kind of creative projects that spring out of the depths of institutions and environments often at odds with the anarchist idea, inspire us to take a closer look at those involved. Those coming back from vacation, "the place where only dreams can be realized", are witness to the energizing and turbulent situations of Charlottesville and Hurricane Harvey, to name just a few world-changers currently unfolding in the American landscape.

The University and school are often fleeting events in the lives of the student, whirlwinds of those working in such places, and a constant in the life of the townies just watching everything pass by. I fondly remember my first introduction to anarchism being around the age of 15 and finding an anarchist magazine and quickly trying to absorb and make sense of these particular ideas. Stumbling upon those anarchist ideas and friends at a young age completely changed my life and future relationships, and more than 15 years later here I am remembering some of the life inside the institutions of school as someone from Generation Y (or millennial from the early 1980s into the mid 90s and early 2000s).

I can fondly remember being a student in secondary school and absolutely despising almost everything about such a life, except for the friends and relationships made. Funny enough, here I am thinking about the younger generation. I heard a podcast the other day about the new so-called "I-Generation" (I-Gen) or roughly adolescents born between 1995 and 2012, or the first generation to spend their entire youth with a smartphone. Some of these same data has previously been covered here and related anarchist podcasts, but it's worth noting. According to the data, some scholars have determined that the I-Gen is having less sexual activity, less binge drinking, and physical fights have decreased. So basically they're having less fun? These same data sets also said that the I-Gen is more depressed, lonelier, less rebellious, and at greater risk for suicide and self-harm. Teens are spending less time with their friends in real life and tend to spend their leisure time in fundamentally different ways than before.

Accordingly, social media and cell phones seem to be one of the issues related, be it causally or correlated, and a reflection of a much deeper problem. The podcast goes on to say that many in I-Gen spend a great deal of the day enveloped on a screen with limited face-to-face interactions, while these face-to-face interactions that are missing are often linked to a better mental health; sound familiar? As Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple put it recently, "sometimes the very technology that is meant to connect us, divides us."

On the other side of things, the I-Generation tends to be less religious, less spiritual, and less likely to believe in a god or gods. On the political spectrum and possibly most interesting for anarchists is that I-Gens tend to be more politically independent, have no party affiliation, an individualistic approach to culture with a focus on the self, and appear to be very liberal on social issues, yet more conservative in other areas like gun control. At base they are libertarians. However, according to the data with this political approach comes a stronger work ethic than previous generations (possibly out of fear and vulnerability) with a lack of taking action towards their beliefs, related perhaps to their low level of optimism. Damn... kids these days.

So basically smartphones have ruined a generation of youth, and it was not everything else, like student loan debt and the changing job market? Whatever it is, I-Gen has become known as a generation of thinking without consequences, people thinking more along computational lines, and the rise of artificial intelligence. We are looking at the effects of technology on a child's brain development, the dopamine levels, the screens everywhere one looks, and often the resulting deprivation and lack of sleep. I-Generation is being characterized as more vulnerable, having a stronger desire for validation and need for instantaneous feedback via the ubiquitous social media and connected apparatuses.

While data is just data and the question of such overarching generalities (plz don't generalize), it does hold up with some personal experience. The idea inside and outside of many education circles today is that technology can save us, these unknown places to go; and here we see data sets about what is going on with the youth today. Science and the race of the State to be all: certainly a dark, but intriguing thought experiment.

Back to school, work, play, whatever it is you're doing. One can find inspiration in encountering anarchist ideas and practice in the unknown places of everyday life outside of the weeknight / weekend / vacation. Outside of that and everything else, to a time of everything - "maybe what's happening is that we're all becoming children again. Our rigid roles and characters are dropping off like dried skin. We're fascinating to each other because each one of our acts might be a total surprise, at any instant our personalities might change completely. Like children, we're not exhausted by what we've been and are; life is ahead of us; we're no longer dead."

On the art of reading every single comment (September 29th, 2017)

This past week well known ANEWS commentator Emile wrote a new forum post on the "Realist' bias (intolerance) in Anarchist News Editorial policy". They're seemingly upset because thecollective has been "deep sixing" their 500+ word responses to articles posted on the website. Not only have we been doing this continually for some time now, but we've also communicated with Emile multiple times about why their comments are being moderated to the dust bins of time. Unfortunately, the message doesn't seem to have gotten through as they keep writing exceedingly long responses and complaining when they are unpublished.

For a while there, thecollective was doing Emile a solid and unpublishing their comments on the main articles and reposting the comments to the more open ended forums. One can imagine that such a task can become increasingly routine, let alone actually trying to engage and dig into what each comment is saying - as I was not thecollective member doing this, I can't say much - but bet it felt a lot like having a full-time job. To be honest, I could personally count on my fingers the amount of times I've tried to read an entire long winded comment by Emile. Of those times, I'd say that 9 out of 10 of them the language was beyond overly complex for the text in question. Don't get me wrong, the long-form essay is a beautiful thing, however there is also an art and way of engaging in a conversation and dialogue, especially over the Internet (and on ANEWS).

In the past, thecollective has even go so far as to publish a 60 page zine of Emile essays and comments, not because we love it, but it's just the way we roll. Hopefully, for Emile's sake, they're saving all of their comments somewhere and perhaps one day can complain no more, as their magnum opus largest book of all time is published and then maybe they can add another over 9,000+ comment about their own writing. The Cuban writer, José Martí comes to mind with his 28 volumes of published material one can find stacked in the low lit dusty bookshelves of a sweltering Habana city, with the pages blossoming flowery texts, although to be honest Martí is much more of a digestible read.

I think I could go on talking about Emile, their comments, and all of that – but that’s just part of the thing, especially the focus on one person. It holds no interest for many when stacked up against the totality of anarchist writers and texts. ANEWS has always been a place where the big tent of anarchist ideas are shared and discussed, whatever that discussion may look like. If one is upset about the poor discussion, please try and chime in and make honest comments about the text or redirect the conversation towards something interesting. Believe it or not, we are human and do our best to moderate out really shitty comments. You should only see some of the shit people talk about ANEWS as a project and its caretakers, some of it is even enough to make it through the fire, even though the comments are still witness to the common critique of being terrible. A funny, but somewhat sadly disturbing story is the time a new friend mentioned that if ANEWS was a real thing, it should be burned to the ground because of a comment they read there that upset them. That friendship ended pretty quickly. Trust me when I say, that I find a lot of comments upsetting as well, especially those by the infamous regulars. We’re continuing to have conversations and discuss what comments look like.

Part of the problem is that we’re an anarchist website that publishes original content, aggregates anarchist counter-information, and allows anonymous comments – plus, perhaps most importantly we’ve made a name for ourselves. To many this recognition is the burden and huge wooden cross we carry while crawling down a jam packed city street with cars breathing exhaust into our lungs. It’s not for the faint of heart to view.

Time often doesn’t allow for reading all of the things, but when it does the comments leading down a winding forking path of lulz, hilarity, seriousness, anger, and a 1,000 other emotions. Here is a cheers to having good conversations and intriguing anarchist thoughts. For more information, please have a look at the ABOUT US section linked in the sidebar. #smashthelikebutton

On publishing all the bad things. And the best of. (October 27th, 2017)

A lot has been said over this past week in regard to publishing all the bad things, which is just the latest hubbub to strike the infamously drama-ripe North American anarchist space, at least according to the comments from everywhere else. You’re probably as sick of it as I am, but maybe not – and if so, in that case here you go. In the text “On No Platform and ITS” by William Gillis they not only call out Anarchist News and Little Black Cart, but The Anarchist Library as well for publishing texts related to eco-extremism. A simple DuckDuckGo search reveals that these are far from the only three websites to have published so-called eco-extremist material. Oh well, let’s grind the axe on the most hateable of all. As the old fishing saying goes, the only certain things in life are death, taxes, and leaky waders – one could probably add bad things on ANEWS.

Fortunately, one of the beautiful things (and often one of the ugliest) about Anarchist News is the comments. And an anonymous author has already replied at length to the William Gillis text along with many more well thought-out bits of commentary to be found on the site and in the long comment forum. Curiously, what really grabbed my attention was the attack on The Anarchist Library project for having published these bad texts. Before writing your call out, I wonder if it’s ever a practice to first try to engage those in question privately, maybe have a dialogue before going full public? I don’t recall seeing any texts by pinche ITS on the library since 2014, although related hanger-ons and similar topics is perhaps the problem? To the reader, these are more anarchx years of ITS and not related to the much more recent bad news that isn’t published there or on this site. Sorry, I forgot you already addressed this point in your text. Do you know who else is still published on the library? Michael Schmidt!!! GASP.

Although, not a lot of texts were ever submitted by Schmidt, it also turns out he really didn’t write many parts of “Black Flame” (wink wink, nudge nudge) and you can still find a text or two by him on the library. Does continuing to share text by Michael Schmidt mean the library is evil? Did you ever try asking them? I wonder what the response might have been... Dialogue with the people and projects you share affinity with, but also question and disagree with seems like a much more rationale approach to finding an understanding and possible solutions than writing reviews that fail to take into account previous replies. Then again, if all else fails – just make stuff up and go public like real anarchists in North America do said some comments from everywhere but North America.

Anyways, moving on into the other direction of all things ANEWS, we have the recent text “Perfect Black #2” by shadowsmoke where we find out that “One of the problems with anarchist discourse right now is that we tend towards being assholes with one another – or at least, it often feels that way.” I couldn’t agree more, and think this problem goes all the way back in anarchist discourse, as was there ever not a time? As the member of the collective that wrote the comment described by shadowsmoke as being unexpected and that made them feel bad, I’m sorry – but, at the same time what did you expect in writing such a critique? A non-response? To be clear, I think they are talking about what I wrote, but it could be the other comment by another member of the collective as well. In the end, nothing but support for being that force in the world that works to counter the tendency towards being assholes with each other and towards all hanging out doing the things we love, find fun, and worthwhile. This is what drew me into anarchist discourse years ago, continues to keep me here, and is nice to hear.

One quote that resonates a lot with me over the years is the opening quote from “Choosing Relations” by Liana Doctrines published in AJODA #63, which was then uploaded to The Anarchist Library. It says: “If there is one place that anarchists have the power to shape our lives to our desires, it is in our personal relationships. So why don’t we have all the community, solidarity, and lifelong affinity that we articulate so beseechingly?”

Probably because of ANEWS honestly...

Language as war (November 24th, 2017)

The exact same words we use to tell a story, also tell a story of their own. The idea that each war or conflict generates its own lexicon – some of it military, some of it political, some of it cultural, and from that vocabulary we define our own views and those of others about such conflicts is easily transposed into anarchist discourse; so ripe and full of its own wars, conflicts, and struggles. As Nietzsche wrote, “words dilute and brutalize; words depersonalize; words make the uncommon common.”

There are a handful of well-known anarchist thinkers who have written about language including John Zerzan, Noam Chomsky, Max Stirner, and some writers from CrimethInc. On anarchistnews dot org one can find the frequent commentator Emile discussing the finer points of languages impact on everything related back to certain stories, often ad nauseam. Moving only a few degrees away from this anarchist focus we can also find thinkers like George Orwell and Jacques Derrida who have had and continue to have a large influence on anarchist ideas surrounding language.

Orwell, never short on words himself wrote that “Our civilization is decadent and our language – so the argument runs – must inevitably share in the general collapse.” His book *1984* captures the decadent and depraved nature of what language and society can become. I remember curiously digesting this book for the first time back when I lived in Cuba under Fidel and passing it along to my friends there, where we would carefully discuss our lives in a place that often limited our own narratives. Of note, during Orwell’s time he wrote of meaningless words like that of fascism. He said “fascism has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies ‘something not desirable.’” Thus one is led to ask as Orwell did, “Since you don’t know what Fascism is, how can you struggle against Fascism?” Perhaps we need to be more specific in our definitions and naming, but as some have said the act of naming is also an act of domination. The prison of language is not so easily escaped.

Derrida and others see language as the origin of history. So the history of language is also the history of society. The origins of language exist within the struggle for power relations and this violence is closely intertwined and can be traced back in linguistic history. Humans are not only dominated by language, but also dominate by language. Perhaps now is as good as time as ever to thoughtfully consider the impact our words have on each other, if in civilization all meaning is ultimately linguistic.

Many years ago, someone I know asked me about how I would write instructions for nuclear disposal. It appeared easy at first, just follow the instructions of the scientists, of course. Then they reminded me of the English of Shakespeare’s time and before. How would you write instructions for someone to read 1,000 years from now? Perhaps this is easier than expected, but the point remains that languages transform and the remembrance of things past is not always what it appears to be.

We can also find various governments around the world writing about the ideas of language, like the January 2005 document from the USA Department of Defense entitled “Defense Language Transformation Roadmap”. In the document, the DoD classifies language as important as the latest weapon systems. They say that “warfighting in the 21st century will require forces that have foreign language capabilities beyond those generally available in today’s force.” A historic example of such ideas is that of the Navajo “code talkers” in World War II. The document goes on to state that “Language skill and regional expertise are not valued as Defense core competencies yet they are as important as critical weapon systems.” Here you can see that language is a tool as vital as the bombs dropped from up above on those using language to create their own narratives.

What is the solution to language as war, if any at all? Some have gone as far as creating an artificial language, like that of Esperanto. While I don’t think this is the answer or even a practical solution, it’s definitely worth considering all of the complexities of language when in dialogue, especially within the terrible community. As a parting thought, here is a note taken from the darkest of places - “In prison camps and torture blocks, the achievement of communication and recognition through an undetected note or an answered whisper is the first step in rebuilding the world.”

With friends like these... (December 29th, 2017)

It’s that holiday time of the year again where things seem to slow down a bit for a moment and we try and look back on the year in review. This has without a doubt been the year of the antifa and all the social media posts, podcasts, book reviews, and interviews are full of the pundits pontificating making and selling their latest books of concisely curated content.

One such writer who recently dropped their new book into the marketplace of ideas is Shane Burley, who describes themselves as a “filmmaker, educator, and writer”. Going alongside the book he published “Twenty-Five Theses on Fascism” via The Institute for Anarchist Studies which was shared as a story on ANEWS recently. Paul Z. Simmons wrote a response text and then Alexander Reid Ross wrote a rejoinder to Simmons, coming to the side and perspective of Burley. Among Burley and Reid Ross, Mark Bray also seems to be the other big name in writing about antifa, fascism, and the surrounding world of ideas for an anarchist audience. I haven’t had the time to digest the writings of Burley, Reid Ross, and Bray but as a fellow traveler (I mean, they’re anarchists right?), I’m sure there is a lot of good things to digest within their respective texts.

I’m sure there are also some things I may strongly disagree with. For example, ANEWS is directly called out by Reid Ross in their rejoinder text as being an infiltration point for “anarcho-fascist” tendencies because “fascism, in its earliest phases, relies on insinuating itself within subcultures and left-wing factions to grow, those tendencies must remain actively aware of these basics, or else fall prey to its machinations.” So basically, what I understand from this statement, because honestly it seems confusing enough on its own, is that the people behind ANEWS, which includes yours truly are in bed with “anarcho-fascists” or worse we are the “anarcho-fascists”...? Jesus. Well, thanks for letting me know. Taken another way, could not the exact same statement cover every single anarchist website/space in the world theater? What’s so specific about ANEWS that you really dislike? Be honest.

For one, I’m not sure I’ve heard a bigger oxymoron recently than the term “anarcho-fascist”. An anarchist that is a fascist? Well, I’m sorry but that just doesn’t make much sense similar to the much maligned and totally contradictory term of “anarcho-capitalist”. Perhaps, I’m taking things too literal in my reading and need to be more creative like you. Two, if these people who you are calling “anarcho-fascists” believe they’re anarchists (which they’re not), why are you giving them the benefit of the doubt by using their terminology? Three, why are you lumping ANEWS, which is a non-sectarian anarchist news site, into the likes of people we all despise? Why is it that the other “anarchists” hating on ANEWS so much also seem like the most partisan actors in everything they do and at the same time extremely popular? Is this how you sell books? 2017 could also be the year in review of anarchists attacking other anarchists, but I’m pretty sure that happens every year unfortunately. Not only is it sad to hear ANEWS and projects you work on and put your heart into attacked, but it’s also extremely

upsetting to see it being done by other so-called anarchists with an axe to grind. Critique is healthy, but this kind of mud-slinging is just lazy asinine sectarian capital P for Politics.

While I've never spoken personally to Reid Ross, I have had the overwhelming displeasure of having a private conversation with some other well known antifa writers, where I was absolutely shocked by their opinions of other very successful and popular anarchist projects (and I'm not talking about ANEWS anymore). I wonder if they know that their publisher AK Press has also published some other writers who we may deem bad? Among the handful, did you know that Noam Chomsky recently gave a bunch of money to Bernie Sanders? I recently learned that the Chomsky's co-writer of "Manufacturing Consent" Edward S. Herman who just passed away held some controversial positions on the Srebrenica [*sray-bren-nitz-ya*] massacre. Where is the outrage? This is mostly a tongue-in-cheek critique to make a point about the complexities of everything. I actually don't mind AK Press, but seriously this kind of drama is a huge turnoff for people coming into anarchism and those of us who have been here for many years, just tiring and a distraction to who the real enemy is.

Let's dig a little deeper and visit another controversy from some years ago that has recently been brought up on our Twitter feed. In George Ciccariello-Maher's 2014 essay for Roar Magazine entitled, "El Libertario: beware Venezuela's false 'anarchists'". He wrote:

"Not everyone who calls themselves anarchists are worthy of the name, and before revolutionaries in the U.S. or elsewhere re-post articles, translate books, or organize speaking tours, we should be clear what it is we are supporting. Especially in Latin America, moreover, we must be attentive to the thousands engaged in revolutionary anti-state activity that don't even call themselves "anarchists." To support middle-class, liberal anarchists like El Libertario is to be against the revolution, against concrete popular struggles of the Venezuelan poor, and even against anarchism itself."

Soon after, in 2014 longtime anarchist writer Charlatan Stew responded herein:

"In the midst of the flood of conflicting sources of information and analysis, one of the collective members of the new journal, "Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics", George Ciccariello-Maher, recently wrote an article titled: "El Libertario: beware Venezuela's false 'anarchists'".¹ It is not irrelevant that Ciccariello-Maher is an unashamedly Chavista government and "Bolivarian Revolution" supporter, as is clear from his book, *We Created Chavez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution*, and several articles and interviews. Reading what he writes it becomes clear that we cannot take him seriously as a significant critic of centralized rule from the top down, nor as an advocate of anarchist goals or methods of egalitarian self-governance from the bottom up. The article is meant to convince us of the revolutionary credentials of the state he supports by discrediting *El Libertario* in the eyes of anarchists and anti-authoritarians, and to convince us that those "false anarchists" are endangering this good state and the gains made through it."

In all of this, who do you believe? I can honestly say I'm not well versed enough in the Venezuelan space to tell exactly who is being the most dishonest here. Ciccariello-Maher is a pretty well-respected professor who just left their job and Charlatan Stew is a long-time writer who also seems to make some convincing points. I'm sure many people already have their minds made up and have chosen their side in the battle of ideas, between the good and bad anarchists. Obviously I have my research cut out for me. Maybe I'll write a book about it.

I guess that's 2017 for me. Welcome to the hate factory, where people on the same team treat their co-conspirators like the enemy. Of course, this is not everyone, but I must say it feels more and more prevalent nowadays, at least online, than the previous occasional snide comment in a meeting somewhere. Happy New Year everyone!

Abolishing the Borders from Below (January 26th, 2018)

One of my favorite books from 2017 was "No Wall They Can Build: a guide to borders and migration across North America". It intertwines insightful commentary on borders with explicit personal narrative wrapped up in that seemingly always beautiful graphic design that has come to be expected, from the CrimethInc. ex-

¹ Ibid.

Workers' Collective. It's a 200+ page turner that felt like one of those rare occasions where you almost read it all in one sitting.

It begins: "The border is not just a wall. It's not just a line on a map. It's not any particular physical location. It's a power structure, a system of control. The border is everywhere that people live in fear of deportation, everywhere migrants are denied the rights accorded citizens, everywhere human beings are segregated into *included* and *excluded*."

The border does not divide one world from another. There is only one world, and the border is tearing it apart."

Here in the USA, the government shut down, whatever that means, largely over the policies surrounding the border, immigration, and the ideals of those in power. What else is the border? "No Wall They Can Build" goes on to say:

"The border divides the whole world into gated communities and prisons, one within the other in concentric circles of privilege and control. At one end of the continuum, there are billionaires who can fly anywhere in private jets; at the other end, inmates in solitary confinement. As long as there is a border between you and those less fortunate than you, you can be sure there will be a border above you, too, keeping you from the things you need."

So, following along the lines of the age old question – what do we do? I like what the old magazine *Abolishing the Borders from Below* has to say on the topic:

"There is a justifiable need to abolish the borders between nations, societies, cultures and whatever else separates and defines us. In order that this process does not lead to the formation of new borders or other types of segregation, like those established by elitist institutions such as the EU, NATO or UN, it has to be done from below, by the people.

There is an enduring need to immediately abolish all states, governments and authoritarian institutions so that communities based on common values such as freedom, respect, cooperation and solidarity can be formed. These communities in turn can lead to the transformation of the world order into one based on the above mentioned values. In order to push that process forward with support for the development of the anarchist movement over the borders we have created ..."

Much easier said than done, as it will take revolution to realize all our of demands. One area of note and going back to the CrimethInc. writers is that: "we see that what is lacking is a widely accessible point of intervention that provides direct leverage on the infrastructure with which these raids are being carried out. People need a pressure point, a place that they can converge to go on the offensive." Certainly not a particular endorsement of any particular strategy, but these are conversations anarchists are having about things you hear in the mainstream media everyday.

And a parting thought, for such people who dream: "People who are motivated by guilt and shame rather than by love and rage will eventually disengage; people who are not fighting for their own lives will eventually give up. Always."

Guns (February 23rd, 2018)

In an unfortunate sign of the times, across the USA, schools and other workplaces are stocking up on trauma bags designed to help stop people from bleeding out after a mass shooting event. Gun companies on the stock market see their shares skyrocket as capitalists await the next big consumer gun rush as panic turns into fear that soon all the guns may disappear. In a widely reported, somewhat misleading factoid - since the new year, 2018 has been witness to 18 different events where a firearm was discharged in a school related environment. The disturbing trend of random mass acts of indiscriminate violence continues on year after year and with that the conversation about guns and violence cycles on via social media, dinner table debates, and the endless hum of the newsroom reels.

After the mass shooting in Parkland High School on February 14th, the conversation quickly shifted from the adults interviewing kids on television and asking them to describe the dead bodies they had just seen, seriously

what's wrong with people, to what the Republicans and Democrats in the government could do to solve the problem. While far from an expert on guns or the history surrounding these ideas of control, it seems that efforts in the USA behind gun control have always been racially motivated. The white supremacist history of gun control and the racial disparity of the proceeding outcome.

So really, what is the problem? Individuals and groups from all over the political spectrum have for years placed the blame on video games, music, and technology, to mental health and post-industrial civilization, and everything in-between. The not so clearly at times lines drawn in the sand, range from those on the left aiming for stricter more "common sense" gun control (but what about when cops kill teenagers?) and those on the right vying for more surveillance and security. The right wants to arm teachers, increase surveillance, metal detectors, "school resource officers" which is just a fancy name for having cops in schools, concealed carry, and basically turn education, already with so many other problems, further into the panopticon of real life jail cell doors. And finally, you have a large majority of the youth across the institutions of General Education energized into the polarization of this or that framework of "reform". If only the SnapChat redesign wasn't so terrible maybe these kids could steer themselves away from the two clear roads to nowhere. There is an old Cuban saying that says that, "the classrooms are like the jail cells" in reference to limited free speech there, people keeping track of any non-conformity, and the repression that follows if you don't fall into line.

All of these spontaneous new enlightened faces wanting to do something about their future, local organizers and #woke activists pushing forward alongside the barreling train of momentous outrage. An important question to consider from the last episode of "The Hotwire" inquired, what can anarchists do if protests coming out of this are all about gun control? Furthermore, how do we keep the conversation anarchist and put on our best anarchist public relations face?

Should Red Neck Revolt be organizing more pro-gun rallies? Obvious answer – but, if not, then what? And who? Should anarchists be open carrying in the places where such things are permitted, more than they already do? Of course, but that's easy for me to say here. I'm in a State that has one of the nations toughest laws on guns, so it's also a bit eye-opening to see anarchists open carrying at demonstrations in other far off places. An old leftist upon visiting New York City towards the end of the 19th century, said that anarchists on Sunday would not be found in the Church pews, but rather out "in the streets" target practicing and shooting their guns. Oh, how the times have changed! On the brighter side, various anarchist-orientated gun and self-defense clubs have existed over the years and have seemingly gained popularity recently with the election of Trump - with groups like Red Neck Revolt and "Trigger Warning" anarchist gun clubs springing up across the states. I'd be very curious to learn about anarchist gun culture outside of the United States of America, but I'm also afraid that perhaps there isn't much of one. After all, Americans really do love their guns. You can even 3D-print your own gun now, which really rings true to the anarchist idea of DIY.

In all, this editorial may be amiss if I didn't mention one very well known anarchist who has written and spoken extensively over the years on mass shootings - John Zerzan. They write: "The antidote lies in finding a basis for a renewal of community: moving away from the technified wasteland of ever more massified and dispersed society. We must not stumble on with what passes for political dialog, a discourse that addresses almost nothing of real consequence. The shocking scandal mounts and it is past time to look at what society is fast becoming and why." On another note: A recently published book called "Setting Sights: Histories and Reflections on Community Armed Self-Defense" edited by scott crow is a wide-ranging anthology uncovering the hidden histories and ideas of community armed self-defense, exploring how it has been used by marginalized and oppressed communities as well as anarchists and radicals within significant social movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Among the multitude of overwhelming things going on in the world, locally / internationally, with friends, family, loved ones, work, and enemies here is another potent subject rearing it's head towards the top for anarchists and their friends to think on, plan, discuss and move.

Viva la ilusión / Long live the illusion (April 27th, 2018)

Last week, on April 19th, Cuba made the headlines as a transition to power was passed from Raúl Castro to Presidente Miguel Díaz-Canel. Raúl Castro, handpicked their successor, and remains at the helm of the Communist Party; his son runs the intelligence services; and his ex-son-in-law runs the military's vast business interests. The Castro name is still on a great many things and the new Presidente Díaz-Canel has vowed that there will be no "capitalist restoration". It seems the government plan is increased Internet access, land reform, increased private economic activity, and getting rid of the dual-currency. Basically, as it is now this transition to power seems to just be the same old Cuba with some new names in charge. Government as usual.

It does however, mark an important aspect as the popular Cuban blogger, Yoani Sánchez wrote: "At least three generations of Cubans have lived only under the leadership of two men with the same surname. That uniformity is about to be broken on April 19 when the name of the new president will be publicly announced. Whether he maintains the status quo or looks to reform it, his arrival to power marks a historical fact: the end of the Castro era on this Island." Expectations in Cuba and abroad are low and a general sentiment of fatalism, that everything will continue to grind as it is now, as it was under Fidel and Raúl seem to be the biggest set of emotions on the island.

Meanwhile, the USA embassy in Cuba has been called a "ghost town" as it has found itself more than empty after the mystery illnesses effecting at least 24 USA diplomats there, prompted the USA government to cut staffing. Trump has continued a tougher stance on the country, by making it more difficult for individuals with USA citizenship to visit Cuba, outside of non-profit groups. Land of the free to travel anywhere, except for here (insert country name), and there (insert country name).

For Cubans living on the island, in order to make a living under the Marxist-Leninist State Socialist economy one can either work in the formal economy, the informal, or one of the few privately allowed businesses, like small restaurants and families who rent out part of their homes for travelers. One statement to sum up the situation economically for Cubans, is that taxi drivers can earn more money than doctors, so you have the doctor leaving their practice and on the way home turning into the taxi catering to the wealthy tourists.

The majority of Cubans make more money in the informal (grey and black market) and provide for themselves rather than those working formal State jobs. The most popular job in Cuba currently is helping distribute El Paquete Semanal or "The Weekly Package" as it was recently recognized as the largest employer on the island. What is El Paquete?

"Internet access in Cuba is heavily restricted. However, millions of Cubans still engage with digital content through an informal, pervasive, offline internet known as El Paquete Semanal or "The Weekly Package". Every week, a new version of El Paquete (EP) becomes available, and includes a one terabyte (TB) collection of digital content that is distributed across Cuba on external hard drives, USBs, and CDs. This collection includes a variety of television, music, movies, apps, educational programs, YouTube videos, magazines, and news, and costs between between 2-5 CUC"

2-5 CUC equals the exact same as \$2-5 US dollars, as the currency is fiat and pegged one-to-one with the US dollar. "Although EP is not formally sanctioned by the Cuban government, the network has been allowed to continue and thrive. As a result, it not only provides an alternative to state-controlled media, but also offers a way for Cubans to sustain their livelihoods [8]. This has led to thriving media-sharing practices in Havana, to the point that social gatherings often revolve around media-sharing" The Cuban practice of being inventors or known as "los inventos" carries on as they have turned the lack of information and Internet into the largest informal economic provider via human infrastructure. This is nothing new and after the Special Period of the 1990s, the informal economy has always had a greater share of economic activity rather than the official formal state economy. In many ways, I've always thought of the informal economy of Cuba as an extreme of capitalism, as people finding any way possible to provide for themselves and their families.

In terms of anarchists on the island, one widely reported space via Fifth Estate and their GoFundMe campaign is that of the Alfredo López Libertarian Workshop. Although news of this library and social center doesn't appear to be widely available for those living outside of Cuba at the moment. By nature of it being talked about in anarchist spaces, as a libertarian project in Cuba one always has to be careful of the State repression that is

frequently handed down to actors who oppose their authority. I'd be very curious to see how places like this exist in places known for repression of alternative ideas, especially that of anarchists.

Cuba, only 90 miles away from the USA, yet it seems like a completely different world. We would love to hear from more anarchists and their experiences surrounding Cuba. No' vemo asere.

Cuba Part II – The revolution is just a Che t-shirt away (May 25th, 2018)

In episode #61 of this podcast, the editorial covered some of the current happenings in Cuba, like the change of power and the informal economy. In this editorial we aim to take another look at Cuba, like some brief anarchist history, and what freedom of expression looks like there through the music and bits of culture.

First, let's dig into some Cuban anarchist history. Back in the days of Emma Goldman, around the late 1880s and 90s, the famous Cuban writer and revolutionary José Martí moved to New York City for a while and wrote about the NYC anarchists. Martí was not a big fan, but still wrote some intriguing commentary like how the anarchists would gather in the streets every Sunday morning to shoot their guns, while everyone else was at church. Moving along some years, we have Frank Fernández who wrote the authoritative book "Cuban Anarchism: The History of a Movement" detailing anarchism on the island. Then in 1959, as everyone knows - things change with the Cuban Revolution lead by Fidel Castro and sidekick Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who was a Stalinist, executioner, and bureaucrat.

In "Saint Che: The Truth Behind the Legend of the Heroic Guerilla, Ernesto Che Guevara" by Larry Gambone they write that:

Saint "Che is implicated in the destruction of Cuban anarcho-syndicalism, (and Trotskyism as well). Cuba in the 1950's was the scene of the last of the great Latin American syndicalist movements. Libertarians controlled many trade unions and were an important anti-Batista force. The anarchists had survived the Machado and Batista dictatorships but did not survive two years of Castroism. By 1962 the movement was down to 20 or 30 members, hundreds of others having fled into exile, imprisoned or executed. For anyone still harboring any illusions about Che's alleged libertarianism, the following quote should put this to rest: "Individualism...must disappear in Cuba...[it] should be the proper utilization of the whole individual for the absolute benefit of the community." Such an opinion on the individual was about as far removed from libertarianism as you could possibly get."

2018 in Cuba looks a lot different than the 1960s in Cuba. Today, we have small steps being taken like the recent opening of an anarchist library and social space there, funded by libertarians and anarchists around the world. Overall though, the government continues to repress and punish dissent and public criticism on the island. The 2018 report by Human Rights Watch details some of the tactics employed by the government, including beatings, public shaming, travel restrictions, and termination of employment. The prisons are overcrowded and prisoners often work long days, including scores of political prisoners being held there. Those who criticize the government or engage in hunger strikes and other forms of protest often endure extended solitary confinement, beatings, restrictions on family visits, and have been denied medical care. In terms of work, Cuba continues to violate conventions established specifically regarding the freedom of association, collective bargaining, protection of wages, and prohibitions on forced labor. While the law technically allows the formation of independent unions, in practice Cuba only permits one confederation of state-controlled unions, the Workers' Central Union of Cuba. One can only imagine what the future holds for this library and social space in Cuba, but is exciting to see.

Of note, the music scenes of hip-hop and punk rock music in Cuba are intriguing to look at when considering freedom of expression. Many of the popular artists push the boundaries of what can be said without getting yourself in trouble, although there are examples it happening. Porno para Ricardo was one such punk rock group that made the headlines for causing a stir. The group gets it's name for the Cuban law outlawing pornography on the island and one famous connoisseur named Richard, who kept getting in trouble for having porn. Cuban

hip hop also has a strong following and artists who have tested the prohibitions on free speech, directly talking about the difficult situation of living there. Over the years, especially more recently it seems that many of these artists have left the island.

Among, what some may call the Cuban counter-culture, you have one such group termed “los freakies” by the police and others. Think of it as the youth, the skater kids, punk rock, hip hop and those interested in alternative ideas. Back when I was on the island, one could visit the streets of 23 & G, also known as the Park of the Rock ‘n Rollers on the weekend nights and mingle with the large gathering of “los freakies” sprawled out down the street and eventually meeting the ocean at the Malecon, or walk-way along the ocean. Perhaps coming to anarchism in Cuba is much more rank and file, but the counter-cultures also seems very strong and full of energy. Like all things, it’s complex and not so easy to simply put into categories, as mentioned earlier, conversations at the Universities can be limited, but then again at the same time I knew an anarchist professor from Russia who would give talks to the students there. Maybe it’s a bit of who you are and how you say it.

Cuba is in a unique situation right now, hopefully these past two editorials have shone a little bit of light on a place often mysterious to anarchists in North America. Much more waits to be said, until then – cya later asere.

Sports (June 29th, 2018)

This week we are taking a closer look into the world of sports and anarchism. Across the newspaper headlines for the past few weeks has been coverage of the World Cup of soccer taking place in Russia. Outside of the USA and around the world, the World Cup is the biggest sporting event in the world and it’s game of soccer, the most popular sport.

It’s taking place in Russia this year, which has also been in the anarchist news headlines for repression of anarchists and dissidents there. It should be obvious that anarchists are against the spectacle of sports on this level – the governments, corporations, and corruption inherent in such things. One example of anarchist opposition to the world of sports comes from the text “The Olympics: a reflection of a society under capitalism by anonymous.” It says the Olympics are “little more than a display of nationalistic pride and flag waving by nations who co-opt efforts of athletes to further their own schemes.” And then the text calls for an “Anarchist Olympic games to be held in 2020. I’m not sure what events there would be (that’s another discussion) but they would be a games that will surely highlight mutual aid over competition, solidarity over nationalism, and equality over crass commercialisation.”

On the more anarchist playing field, sports have played an important aspect of radical culture. Recently in a very informal IRC survey of participants favorite anarchist sports they listed: sex, brick throwing, running down the walls, capture the flag and other neighborhood / city wide games (a la CrimethInc.), protest, attack, video games and antifa. Apparently, it was also mentioned that the Japanese have contests for flipping tables and book ripping.

Anarchist and antifascist football clubs are popular world wide, but especially in Europe it seems. The Situationist Asger Jorn came up with a variation of soccer called three-sided football, which is played by some. Other than Jeff “The Snowman” Monson of mixed martial artist fame, I’m hard-pressed to name any famous anarchist athletes other than perhaps Woody Harrelson in the 1990s movie “White Men Can’t Jump” - as Wikipedia lists him as an anarchist, although it also mentions that he supports the 9/11 Truth Movement. The Colorado Avalanche of The National Hockey League (NHL) takes home the award for sports team unknowingly having anarchist symbol as their logo. Curiously, in Fifth Estate #392 they published a text “On The Anarchist Origins of Golf” by Joseph Winogrand, which makes an argument for golf originally as an anarchist sport of sorts. Certainly the abuse of land, water-use, chemicals, corporate-sized tournament purses and exorbitant greens fees, its feigned air of exclusivity and aristocracy of golf today are far from these anarchist roots.

In the recent intriguing text “Maximum Potential” by Max Res they examine the idea of anarchists doing fitness. Accordingly, much of the current writing on such things is centered around the antifa crowd and they take a look at the Haymaker Gym in Chicago, which is an “attempt to create a radical culture of fitness and

self-defense.” The Haymaker thinks of the body as “the most intimate of material forces” and “as a tool for revolution, and strength as a means by which to change the world.” Max Res concludes that it is “worth further considering what anarchist fitness could look like when not motivated by revolutionary goals or a defense mentality.” Certainly these ideas of anarchists doing fitness and the relationship to sports is an exciting area to consider in the toolbox of anarchism.

Back to the news, the television channel flickers and the reporter reads the World Cup scores aloud. Colin Kaepernick still isn't on an NFL team yet, mostly for kneeling during the national anthem, which with backing from Trump, the NFL will now penalize teams for such actions. Meanwhile Kaepernick has been seen out supporting the IWOC, or the IWW effort behind incarcerated workers and prison abolition. NBA stars like LeBron James, Carmelo Anthony, and Chris Paul rally around social issues like Black Lives Matter and gun violence. The NFL “cares” and frequently puts in players and teams doing community service ops and has teams wear special military pride uniforms some weekends. The spectacle of popular culture and sports grinds on as your favorite player signs a multi-million dollar contract and even larger Nike shoe endorsement. CYA in the streets!

Bullshit jobs (July 27th, 2018)

It's been a pretty hot summer and with that has come a lot more time for catching up on some reading, away from the glaring sun. “Bullshit Jobs: A Theory” by David Graeber, is a 368 page book published this past May. It's a book filled with personal narrative, critique, and other tales of shitty jobs from people around the world, spliced together with Graeber's excellent story telling ability.

The book originally started off as an essay back in 2013 titled “On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs” published in “Strike!” Magazine. The reception to the essay caused such a stir that years later, Graeber has compiled everything into a tightly knit book examining bullshit jobs.

Of course, the critique of work is nothing new for anarchist thinkers. Some well known modern authors on the subject include the infamous Bob Black and their text “The Abolition of Work” that starts off by stating “No one should ever work.” The aesthetically pleasing design and writing from the CrimethInc. Ex-Workers Collective in their recent book titled “Work”. The 2016 book “Abolish Work: An Exposition of Philosophical Ergophobia” edited by Nick Ford and published by Little Black Cart, which also includes the original Graeber essay. To name just a few.

Have you had a bullshit job before? Probably. One of my favorite aspects of the book is reading other peoples stories about how much of a joke their job is and relating it back to my own experiences. I started working officially when I was 14 years old, but before that had known work as the chores on a small farm growing up. And to this day, I still hate it when upon meeting someone new, one of the first questions that people often ask is “what do you do for a living?” The identity of work and trying to stay alive in this world.

So, what do anarchists do for a living? And that's just the thing – everyone wanted to talk about what we spend the most hours of our waking life doing, slogging away at some workplace. How is yours?

“The reality of the situation first came home to me over a decade ago when attending a lecture by Catherine Lutz, an anthropologist who has been carrying out a project studying the archipelago of US overseas military bases. She made the fascinating observation that almost all of these bases organize outreach programs, in which soldiers venture out to repair schoolrooms or to perform free dental checkups in nearby towns and villages. The ostensible reason for the programs was to improve relations with local communities, but they rarely have much impact in that regard; still, even after the military discovered this, they kept the programs up because they had such an enormous psychological impact on the soldiers, many of whom would wax euphoric when describing them: for example, “This is why I joined the army,” “This is what military service is really all about—not just defending your country, it's about helping people!” Soldiers allowed to perform public service duties, they found, were two or three times more likely to reenlist. I remember thinking, “Wait, so most of these people really want to be in the Peace Corps?” And I duly looked it up and discovered: sure enough, to be accepted into the Peace Corps, you need to already have a college degree. The US military is a haven for frustrated altruists.”

“The pieces are all there to create an entirely different world history. For the most part, we’re just too blinded by our prejudices to see the implications. For instance, almost everyone nowadays insists that participatory democracy, or social equality, can work in a small community or activist group, but cannot possibly ‘scale up’ to anything like a city, a region, or a nation-state. But the evidence before our eyes, if we choose to look at it, suggests the opposite. Egalitarian cities, even regional confederacies, are historically quite commonplace. Egalitarian families and households are not. Once the historical verdict is in, we will see that the most painful loss of human freedoms began at the small scale – the level of gender relations, age groups, and domestic servitude – the kind of relationships that contain at once the greatest intimacy and the deepest forms of structural violence. If we really want to understand how it first became acceptable for some to turn wealth into power, and for others to end up being told their needs and lives don’t count, it is here that we should look. Here too, we predict, is where the most difficult work of creating a free society will have to take place.” - David Graeber & David Wengrow

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-david-wengrow-how-...>

A Brief Review and Prison Strike (August 24th, 2018)

Recently, I finished reading “Last Act of the Circus Animals” by two long-term political prisoners Travis Washington and Sean Swain. It is a work of fiction that is a portrayal of prison life as told from the perspective of the jailed, the zoo animals. There are talking tigers, panthers, elephants, and chimpanzees; and the jailers are the ringmaster, their workers, and the society of capitalism that surrounds them.

Originally, the text was a three-part photocopied zine from 2005 / 2006, but was recently published 10+ years later as a 171 page \$5 book by LBCBooks. The book tells the tale of the zoo or the prison and what that life encompasses for the animals living and working there. The animals go on strike, refuse to work and eat, are beaten and some killed by the ringmaster and their workers. The narrative is a lot of dialogue between the prisoners about their current situation, being locked up, what that means, and how to get free. In some ways, it reminded me a bit of “Animal Farm” by George Orwell with the talking animal narrative and some politics, but that’s about all. The book by Washington and Swain certainly holds up as a solid work of fiction, representational of how and what it is to be locked up.

The book has an intro by three different people including Anthony Rayson, Jeremy Hammond, and Comrade Migs. Jeremy Hammond, an anarchist super hacker writes from behind bars that:

The ““Last Act” tells the story of circus animals who unite and rebel against the Ringmaster in order to get to the “World of the Free”. On one level, it’s a statement against animal cruelty: that all life on Earth has been subjugated or exterminated for the exclusive benefit of human civilization, and that the vicious practice of zoos and circuses must end. On another level, the story is about capitalist society: the pyramid-scheme caste system in which ruling classes exploit and oppress us all, processing our blood, sweat, and tears into profits, and throwing us only enough crumbs to barely survive.

But most striking is its scathing criticism against mass incarceration. Human beings are treated like animals, having been kidnapped from the “World of the Free”, warehoused in cages and chains, forced to perform back flips and headstands, and subjected to the control-freak reprogramming methods of the Ringmaster.”

The “Last Act” is a nice read and anyone who wants updates from one of the authors can tune into the weekly anarchist podcast, “The Final Straw Radio” to usually hear from Sean Swain, which is often shared on this podcast as well.

Stepping away from the fiction of the book and into the real world, a nationwide prison labor strike has just begun with:

“Men and women incarcerated in prisons across the nation declaring a nationwide strike in response to the riot in Lee Correctional Institution, a maximum security prison in South Carolina. Seven comrades lost their lives during a senseless uprising that could have been avoided had the prison not been so overcrowded from the greed wrought by mass incarceration, and a lack of respect for human life that is embedded in our nation’s penal

ideology. These men and women are demanding humane living conditions, access to rehabilitation, sentencing reform and the end of modern day slavery.”

And taking from a mainstream media report from The Guardian, it says:

“The strike comes two years after the last major nationwide prison strike in September 2016 that saw more than 20,000 inmates refuse to show up for work across 12 states. That strike was co-ordinated out of Holman prison in Alabama, a state notorious for its overcrowded and dilapidated penal institutions, by a group of inmates styling themselves the “Free Alabama Movement”.”

It goes on to say:

“As inspiration for what promises to be a tough 20 days ahead, strike organizers are leaning on history. The nationwide action began on Tuesday on the 47th anniversary of the death of the prominent Black Panther member, George Jackson, who was shot as he tried to escape in the prison yard of San Quentin in California.

The strike is then scheduled to close on September 9th, the 47th anniversary of the Attica prison rebellion in upstate New York. In an echo of today’s protest, the 1971 Attica riot was also framed by inmates as a push for humane conditions and basic political rights.

But after four days of negotiations it ended in a bloodbath when New York’s then governor, Nelson Rockefeller, sent in state police armed with shotguns and tear gas. Twenty-nine inmates and 10 of their hostages were killed.”

Digging a little deeper into the history of the day, the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement (RAM) writes:

“To commemorate the first day of the prison strike, RAM announces the first Nat Turner Day this August 21st, 2018. It is no coincidence this is the first day of this year’s Nationwide Prison Strike and we couldn’t be more honored to participate in this historic moment.

On this day in 1831 the Nat Turner Rebellion began. Nat Turner and his band of 70 comrades traveled from plantation to plantation to slay their oppressors and free those they encountered along the way. This act of rebellion is an important precursor for our struggle today. The initiative of these brave people to risk their own well-being to free those held in captivity around them, speaks both to the militancy necessary for community defense and the selflessness of revolutionary struggle.”

And the date also has some anarchist history to it as well, as 91 years ago Sacco and Vanzetti were executed by the state for being anarchists. It resulted in massive protests that erupted around the world.

I leave you with a quote from Alfredo M. Bonanno, writing from Rebibbia prison in 1997:

“Prison is the most direct, brutal expression of power, and like power it must be destroyed, it cannot be abolished progressively. Anyone who thinks they can improve it now in order to destroy it in the future will forever be a captive of it.

The revolutionary project of anarchists is to struggle along with the exploited and push them to rebel against all abuse and repression, so also against prison. What moves them is the desire for a better world, a better life with dignity and ethic, where economy and politics have been destroyed. There can be no place for prison in that world.

That is why anarchists scare power.

That is why they are locked up in prison.” - Alfredo M. Bonanno, Rebibbia prison, March 20, 1997

Toxic Culture (October 5th, 2018)

Lately, I’ve been pretty fed up with people being terrible towards each other. In real life, over the Internet, and sold back to us as media to an ever more drama hungry society. If you let it, or pay close attention, this toxicity can permeate everything to its core and become almost inescapable, like a black hole set on repeat, sucking you in over and over again, it’s everywhere. This toxic culture is in part defined by Western society – especially in anarchist spaces, as anarchists the world over lament about the drama ridden, get nothing done, North American anarchist movement. Let’s take a closer look by starting with a definition - what is the virulent anarchist space of North America?

“A toxic anarchist space is a milieu that is marked by significant drama and infighting, where personal battles often harm the ideas of anarchism. Toxic anarchist spaces are often considered the result of toxic individuals or groups who are motivated by personal gain (power, control, fame, or special status), use unethical, mean-spirited and sometimes terrible means to manipulate and annoy those around them; and whose motives are to maintain or increase power, control, or special status or divert attention away from their shitty anarchist politics and misdeeds. Toxic anarchist individuals do not recognize a relationship to the beautiful idea of anarchy, for which they have mistakenly included themselves in. These same toxic anarchist individuals define relationships with other anarchists, not by affinity but by a clique of other terrible anarchists.”

This noxious cabal of the terrible community can look different depending on its location in the niche of North America. These relationships vary across places, from the vibrant anarchist city neighborhood to the much more rural and intimate forest garden, spread out in small towns across America, connected back to the city with IRL and AFK relationships. Need a brief refresher, just pick up “7 ways to help identify toxic culture in your radical community and relationships” at your local supermarket checkout, and with that I digress.

How did we get here, is this just another episode of Anarchy Radio rallying against everything? Willem Larsen writing in the 2012 text “Psychopaths in the Village” shares a couple of ideas on how we may have arrived in this predicament:

“It also happens that children, with fully felt emotions, with poor parenting and/or a toxic culture, can grow up ill-equipped to connect with others’ emotional experience. Psychiatrists call these people “narcissists”, and they may resemble psychopaths in every way (grandiosity, aggression, charm, tantrums, etc.) except one: they feel ongoing pain over their inability to create and maintain healthy relationships, losing contact with friends, spouses, children. They experience emotions; but they never had the chance to develop empathy.”

Meanwhile, in real life we remember reading “The Broken Tea Pot” and old AJODA texts from Liana Doctrines on relationships. So many of us, perhaps all of us, have arrived at anarchy by being forged in some kind of fire, in something that has made us angry. There we find an alternative and ideas for all the ails that plague society.

In “The New Nihilism” by Peter Lamborn Wilson, they write:

“At least ten times as much money now exists than it would take to buy the whole world—and yet species are vanishing space itself is vanishing, icecaps melting, air and water grown toxic, culture grown toxic, landscape sacrificed to fracking and megamalls, noise-fascism, etc, etc. But Science will cure all that ills that Science has created—in the Future (in the “long run”, when we’re all dead, as Lord Keynes put it); so meanwhile we’ll carry on consuming the world and shitting it out as waste—because it’s convenient & efficient & profitable to do so, and because we like it.

Well, this is all a bunch of whiney left-liberal cliches, no? Heard it before a million times. Yawn. How boring, how infantile, how useless. Even if it were all true... what can we do about it? If our Anointed Leaders can’t or won’t stop it, who will? God? Satan? The “People”?”

What about us? The anarchists. HUGS.

Road to Nowhere (October 26th, 2018)

Maps, a few hanging on the walls. Some homemade and some much more official. A few years back, at the local neighborhood bookstore in a sleepy college town, I found a book of maps and old archaeological digs. It was the tale of the intricate trinkets found of a previously unearthed society, older than the more well-known post-inhabitants of the region. I was a bit shocked to find such things about a place I had grown up in, a place that I considered to know quite well. This past brought me closer to the location and helped me see and understand it in a new way. You could take a walk and still see the archaeological dig pits from the study, slowly filling back in after all these years.

Years before that - A good friend, who I grew up with, amidst our conversations, we discovered that they had never been to one of these unique places, just 5 minutes from where we had spent most of lives. We visited shortly thereafter. Today, with the advent of social media, cell phones, and media shared instantaneously - I wonder if my friend would have found out sooner of such places.

Maps. Nowadays, usually if you hear of maps, one may think of boundaries, borders, states, nations, and oceans. Lines on a map. But what about a more anarchistic approach to the idea of maps, origins, and space? The anarchist tradition is richly steeped in geographers and related fields. The anarchist geographer of Elisee Reclus during the late 1800s, who also has a volcano named after them in Chile. From the decentralism of Petor Kropotkin during the same time period to the ideas around the 1960s of The Situations behind the *dérive*, or an unplanned journey through a landscape, usually urban, in which participants drop their everyday relations and “let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there.”

In the 1970s British architect and creative proponent of curious uses of space Colin Ward. To the late 1980s and 90s temporary autonomous zones of Hakim Bey. All the way up to today, with two popular anarchist geographers being Simon Springer, who recently authored the book, “The Anarchist Roots of Geography” and Alexander Reid Ross, a geography professor who also authored the book, “Against the Fascist Creep”. There is a cornucopia of popular examples of anarchists and their friends taking the ideas of geography and bringing them into the streets: the Freetown Christiania in Denmark, the Zapatistas of southern Mexico, La ZAD in France, Hambacher Forest in Germany, and Rojava and the Afrin region in Syria, to name only but a few of the more commonly known.

Close to home, one aspect of anarchist strategy I would like to see make a comeback are the ideas associated with the board idea of map making. Take for example, the Surveillance Camera Players, a group who used pranks or diverting bland or oppressive materials for subversive purposes. Bill “Not Bored” Brown, while not the best anarchist role model, had projects that mapped the surveillance cameras of popular neighborhoods way before the Internet 2.0 came along. There has to be some kind of app or something anarchists can design that would make it so easy to map these kind of things for other anarchists and our friends. This seems like a project that needs to make a comeback.

While the exact article’s name escapes me, Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed – during their more regular publishing escapades had a call-up of sorts to research the finer points of one’s location, with an excellent follow up article about the west coast. Alternative guides or disinformation guides from anarchists have recently been published at some USA universities, for new and returning students and those living in the area – think Pittsburgh.

It’s an exploration into do it yourself map making. The special locations like best skate spots, places of interest of historical note for anarchists, like graves, the old haunts of Emma Goldman, or other hangouts for travelers and those seeking (fill in the blank). Escape maps from your anarchist neighborhood, best places to take a nap under the trees, and bringing your everyday life further outside the reaches of capitalism.

It’s alright. We’re on a road to nowhere.

A general review of some things (November 23rd, 2018)

[or one of the 1,000+ reasons I’m an anarchist]

The midterm elections have passed (did you riot?), the meetups of friends and family - sharing food together are passing, and the snowy cold has blanketed much of the land here. Winter is here a month early and on the road outside, the cars warm with the toasty heater pumping hot air into the vehicle as many make that annual crusade to the temples of consumerism.

Walking through the maze of aisles and fellow spenders, you bring up your smartphone to help you check out a bit faster among the throngs, someone takes a selfie, and now you’re on the evening news as you walk out of the store with some crap that will be thrown out next year. Welcome to the spectacle. Or rewind to taking a walk through the city woods, if two words couldn’t be farther apart from each other, yet so refreshing.

Today is Black Friday, a new cultural holiday that celebrates deals on all things consumers find they need for happiness. As a relative non-participant in such things as bargain hunting, waiting in shopping mall lines for hours, clicking through the online inventory of such places, or watching the resulting depressingly sad YouTube videos of people fighting over the last 4k 60 inch television (why would you want to watch that?), I’m often left feeling like I’m not sure if I have anything to say; astounded. Although - nothing to say, kind of feels

good sometimes – like the Jack Kerouac zen of nothingness or putting that dialogue on the back-burner, while more significant ideas percolate.

It has been years since I've read an Adbusters, but in many circles this is still Buy Nothing Day, or for that matter everyday is Buy Nothing Day for anarchists, unless of course you are of the Hot Topic variety. Outside of the anarchist space, marketers and researchers of “cool” has termed tomorrow “Small Business Saturday” and Monday as “Cyber Monday”. That's like three days, of voting with your wallet. Did I mention the ANEWS Patreon? I'm kidding, there is no Patreon. The biggest joke, is again on the consumers – who probably won't see Black Friday deals like this ever again with government trade tariffs ramping up.

Trump jokes about the cold weather in regards to global warming, and many other things on Twitter, and I don't even follow them – this is just from friends f2f, their social media, and reported on in the media. California is still burning, with the “Camp Fire” 95% contained as of today (Friday), with the rain helping to dampen and smolder the remaining wildfires. 84 confirmed dead and over 800+ still missing, 13,000 homes destroyed, and countless other objects of civilization gone. Photos and videos shared on the news and social media depicted apocalyptic scenes, similar to ones you may see in the movies. Or possible anarchist communiques about burned out cars on ANEWS? Scoreboard check, shows the anarchists really getting trounced in the attack game vs. the wildfire. And, on the other end - anarchist mutual aid responses? As not one from or living in California, I haven't heard much, but I'm sure it's there. I'm reminded of Super Storm Sandy, Hurricane Katrina, and other events that have triggered an anarchist disaster response.

Further south in California, The Caravan has reached the border in Tijuana, with some smaller groups forking off as reported by the MSM. Thousands of miles away, I wish them luck and await the anarchist report-backs of the border struggle. There are so many things to be angry at in this world. These are only but a few, the news on a much larger scale, outside of the quiet neighborhood on a walk through the woods.

On relationship (December 28th, 2018)

The new year is only a few days off and with it we are wishing our bests to the year of 2018 as we wave so-long in the review view mirror. I'm not sure about you, but I for one welcome the new year, however picayune it may actually be. Party this January (pizza that is)!

The days off, reflecting on another year of life, of music, of texts, and projects seems like a nice way to round everything off. Create ideas and plans for the new year, for the coming years, although I'm not really sure if I have a five year plan as mentioned by some on this podcast. At least not something deemed such, more like a life project, where the years aren't that important, but perhaps that because I'll be an over-the-hill anarchist by then. Always in it for the long run.

This has been a year of many things, but for this editorial lets take a look and see what we can learn from some events that have happened over this past year, all culminating together last weekend or so. We're talking about relationships, exclusion, the shutdown of discussions, platforming and deplatforming, a lack of critical thinking, the cult of personality, and a dogmatic groupthink. We're talking about the life and death of Doctor Bones.

Dr. Bones was a relative new kid on the block these last few years, a proverbial “man from Florida” as the popular saying goes for the weird shit that often goes on there. They were a self-styled gonzo journalist in the likeness of Hunter S. Thompson, who quickly launched themselves into the limelight of egoism and the left. They had all the best friends from the most popular antifa writers to handful of loyal Twitter followers willing to pay him money each month via Patreon to help his living expenses. Obviously I'm doing something wrong.

Dr. Bones wrote desperate and offensive attacks against Wolfi, Little Black Cart, Anarchist News dot org, and friends that really made a name for them among people who are against those kind of things. Famously the “Blocked by Bones Club” on Twitter sprung up, of people who they would block who disagreed with them like the pinnacle of blissful ignorance or an ungrateful little prick who doesn't even have a 3rd grade reading level of critique.

They co-hosted the now defunct (love and solidarity, rest in power comrade!) “The Guillotine” podcast with a Maoist while trying to hype everything to the next level. Often careless of what they were actually saying or thinking, as in one breath they would praise antifa fighting against the alt-right and government and in the next breath all praise be to the State and government of Cuba. Laugh out fucking loud. What anarchist in their right mind could listen to this absurdity without calling out their support for El Comandante and Dr. Ché? Apparently, not enough as they became the larger than life, figure of radical left Twitter or whatever that means.

In the end, Dr. Bones wasn’t brought down by their ideas, writings, or political acts, but rather by the relationships they formed outside of their public appearance. The cult of personality all came crumbling down last weekend or so, as another Twitter user revealed their relationship to Dr. Bones for all the public to read and digest. Dr. Bones was found guilty of “to have been grooming one of our comrades for sexual favours as well as objectifying trans sex workers, drink driving and other assorted shitty behaviours.” - The Guillontine. Dr. Bones followed up by calling it quits, vowing to never write anything again, and basically deleted their website, Patreon, Twitter, and whatever else. The publisher of their book, Gods and Radicals, who they previously severed ties with over eco-extremism some months earlier also pulled all of their books from distribution(why not after the eco-extremism tirade?), along with various other anarchist-friendly bookstores around the USA. A quick search online today revealed that I couldn’t find their book for sale anywhere. Hopefully, it doesn’t become a giant commodity icon selling for hundreds and thousands of dollars down-the-road like the recent CrimethInc. children’s book from years ago, turned out to be.

On anarchist justice: we don’t wish to publicize crimes over the Internet and put people in danger, but how else could have this played out, could be a good starting point. Perhaps on a more local level, but the actors involved are States away from each other and quite frankly as much as I despised Dr. Bones before, I’d like to see less anarchists (and their friends) put up against the Twitter firing squad, although we may find it funny, as one wrote on Twitter - “if someone could collect Dr. Bones tears and put a hex on them for us.”

On a different scale, but related this sense of public call-outs played out recently in the Northeast of the USA, when a well-known anarchist organizer (think Black Rose Anarchist Federation) resigned from their job over allegations of sexual misconduct and emotional abuse to their former partners. Who knows what happened internally, (and thank you), but they just quit their job over some relationship stuff from the early 2000s and 2010s and got banned from a local anarchist hangout. Originally, it was publicized over social media and eventually made it to the newsprint of the local paper, the same week Dr. Bones quit.

On giving up so easily: Did it ever really matter to Dr. Bones? It doesn’t seem so, although from who they appeared to be, it seems like they’re simply acting out the social norms of their peers, and as unfortunate as it may be, this is what the majority of people do in these types of situations. Perhaps, this says more about the people who were Dr. Bones aficionados, rather than actual anarchists in it for the long run, but it is still intriguing, and hopefully a note taken. The way in which we build and destroy relationships, deal with drama and tragedy, is exactly who we are as anarchists. For some, it’s all they’ve ever known.

The Anvil Review

Quijote Against the World

(2009)

“it’s not like it used to be... nobody cares about change... it don’t matter...” – *My First Soul*, by Auld Lang Syne

Published during the Spanish Golden Age in two parts (1605/1615) *The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha*¹ by Cervantes has become one of the most famous books in the world and is considered by many to be one of the most respected fiction pieces of all time. The story relates an epic adventure taken on by two main characters, Don Quijote and Sancho Panza. Quijote goes off adventuring, lead completely by his horse Rocinante, who goes where ever it wants, leading Quijote and eventually Panza to fight injustice, reclaim the world, battle everything that is “bad”, and (for Quijote) win the love of his life [Dulcelina]. The entire book, originally written in Spanish is quite lengthy and full of misadventures depicting the frequent failures (perhaps great success?) during the early 1600’s, Spain. There are many English language translations, but perhaps one of the best (that I recommend) is by Edith Grossman, published in 2003. There are also, some abbreviated versions of the story, with the editors choice of parts – so this may be more advantageous for the time strapped or for those wanting to get a feel for the book. Setting up for a complete and in-depth review, would be quite the research project due to the books length and complexity – this is a greatly abbreviated review of the book, and by no means are all things touched on. There have been many reviews before this one, and maybe many more after. The overall purpose of this review is to briefly compare and contrast the ideas and attitudes of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza surrounding their thoughts upon essential materials vs. that of spirit.

First, I’d like to define a few things. The essential key materials are thought of as water, food, and rest – which lack thereof results in a deprived state and eventually death, they are the things you *really* can’t live without. Obviously on the other hand, you have non-essential material goods such as gold, silver, clocks, games/toys, ect. That aren’t truly necessary for survival. As for the spirit, one can consider it to mean belief in *something*, even if that something is *nothing*. Some more clear examples are things of the supernatural sort, like the belief in god, or even bits and pieces of ideas – like the existence of heaven and hell, ghosts, majik, and other oddities/occult. It is important to note and define these ideas because Quijote and Sancho each display varying characteristics and perspectives throughout the novel on these topics.

So, the story goes: Don Quijote begins reading books about the adventures of various 14th/15th century knights-errant and their “heroic” deeds. Quijote, who is an older man, begins to spend all his time reading, and literally cares for nothing else, other than those old tales about “saving the world” and “falling in love.” Food, water, and rest seem of little importance to him, and eventually his reading habits drastically change his life. He begins to sell his land and other property, in order to buy more books to read. After sometime, Quijote emerges from the obscurity of his house believing – that in fact, he is a knight-errant, and his mission is to save the world and win the love of his life. Imagine someone sneaking out of their residence, after weeks of reading, hiding away, and building the most absurd self-styled armor a la knights-errant, to confront the world with, kind of sounds like some *funny* friends you may know. Yet, in the beginning of the end, Quijote gallops, or

¹ please note that I decided to remain with “Quijote” instead of “Quixote” throughout the rest of the text, mostly because I prefer to leave names and locations in the original language / untranslated. Title originally in Spanish: Aventuras del ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha

more like meanders out of town unseen and hidden, with his most unlike battle ready horse – Rocinante², not to be seen in town until his uneventful, yet dramatic return sometime later. He has no clue where he is headed, as he just lets Rocinante blaze the trail of his life.

And so the story begins...

”The reason of the unreason that afflicts my reason, in such a manner weakens my reason that I, with reason, lament of your beauty.” (from *Don Quijote*)

Don Quijote wants to create a more moral world, a model of the human effort, one many may think of as a form of utopia. He has a very pastoral view of life and society, a living anachronism against the encroaching modernity of Spain. In many ways Quijote is confronting the more modern economic approaches and technology that was happening in Spain at the time, and suggesting something more simple (yet *crazy*). For example, look at Quijote’s so-called insanity. How did this happen? The invention of the printing press, which allowed him to buy and read all those books about knights-errant, seems to be the main source of his *insanity*. It was also this easier and wider distribution of print that ensured Cervantes, the author of Quijote, made little to no monetary gains by writing the book during his life. “Pirated” copies would turn up throughout the region, with even the second half of Quijote being written by another author. Which, in turn prompted Cervantes to actually write the second half of the book some years later, because supposedly he was very angry with this authors take on a sequel to his original work. It should be noted, that Cervantes actually created a fictional Moorish author/chronicler for Don Quijote named Cide Hamete Benengeli. And in many ways killed Quijote in the end, so no one else could ever write about his adventures again.

In making the author Moorish, it seems Cervantes reinforces the stereotype of the time, that anything a Moor does is probably not true. Therefore, making criticism of the book impossible, since it has already been refuted as utter lies. Clever in a sense, but more so it seems to begin to show some of Cervantes negative attitudes that were reinforced by society at the time [and continue to be]. Cervantes lived his life, one failure after another – first as a soldier being injured, then as a prisoner, and later as an “unsuccessful” writer who seems to have lead a rather difficult life. The book reflects these reoccurring themes of failure surrounding Don Quijote (maybe Cervantes?) as he fights the battle that can never really be won, because it isn’t *real*. It is sad, but it is also an unfortunate reality that many of us know all-to-well. Like the saying goes, “la vida es dura” (life is hard).

If we examine the idealism behind Quijote or what some have called *Quijotismo* (the movement of Quijote) it could be said that in many ways it is an idealism without respect for or sense of being practical. It is an ideal that doesn’t consider consequences or the irrationality of one’s actions. Quijotismo is most of all, a romantic idea or a utopia that is unattainable by the non-romantic *sane*, one can only truly realize it, if you refuse to identify between reality and imagination. At the heart, this ideal is created by the love Quijote feels towards Dulcelina, his *dream lover*. The love and companionship of Dulcelina is more important than food, water, and rest – something that perhaps dear readers are familiar with. Quijote refuses to realize that his love is imaginary, and that his love is perhaps not even interested in him. It is like he will never give up, trying to make the world a better place, yet deep down inside, what he just really wants is some love. Perhaps, Cervantes is again reflecting on some of his own life experiences.

² *Dialogue between Babieca and Rocinante A Sonnet*

B: Why is it, Rocinante, that you’re so thin?

R: Too little food, and far too much hard labor

B: But what about your feed, your oats and hay?

R: My master doesn’t leave a bite for me.

B: Well, Senor, your lack of breeding shows because your ass’s tongue insults your master

R: He’s the ass, from the cradle to the grave. Do you want proof? See what he does for love.

B: Is it foolish love?

R: It’s not too smart.

B: You’re a philosopher

R: I just don’t eat enough

B: And do you complain of the squire?

In the final chapters of the book Quijote returns to his home and with that some sense of what some may call sanity. In this way, Quijote becomes like his side-kick Sancho Panza, or the *Sanchification* of Quijote. Because while Quijote is for many, the raving madman throughout the book, Sancho always seems to act along much more practical lines. It is like Panza is the stable foundation for Quijote's rocking-and-rolling all night long party house, that will probably collapse when the dancing begins, or maybe end up puking in the toilet the next morning. On the other side of things, Sancho Panza starts to become like Quijote, or the *quijotification* of Sancho; in this way, the two characters feed off each other and become one another. Once home, Quijote writes his will and gives all his belongings to his family, and while he originally promised Sancho an island that he could govern in the beginning of the story, he now wants to give him an entire kingdom. Unfortunately for Sancho, Quijote doesn't really have anything to offer him, other than gratitude – not even a salary for his services. Just some (bad) advice maybe, and the memories to last a lifetime.

While, it seems this whole time, perhaps all Sancho really wanted, other than protecting Quijote from danger, was his island in the sun. It is not even clear if Panza knows exactly what an island is, other than some form of payment. In a high contrast to Quijote, Sancho represents everything that is some-what rational and thought out (or what many call being *normal*). Food, water, and rest are the most important things in life, along with knowing that you're going to be well-off tomorrow, the next day, and so on.

Even the infamous Bill "NOT BORED" Brown has wrote an essay on the subject Sancho Panza's priceless coinages which I will steal a quote from here (that is from an English translation of the book) regarding how Quijote recommends paying off Sancho:

"I think you're absolutely right, Sancho my friend [...] I can tell you, for myself, that if you'd wanted to be paid for those lashes which will disenchant Dulcinea, I'd have long since, and very gladly, have given you the money [...] Just consider, Sancho, what you might want, and then do the whipping and pay yourself, because you are guardian of my money [...] Add up what money you have of mine, and then put a price on each lash."

Quijote and Panza are two very different characters, yet at the same time they are similar in the fact that they both can create some pretty wild dreams and become one another. They each have a great effect on one another, like any friend may have on your daily experience, and while at first Quijote seems to be the only one struggling against everything modern – soon his friend joins him, although it is already too late for Quijote. He has already returned to the miserable grind of reality and material goods and will soon die.

Cinema

Among the many movies made about the book, Orson Welles's Don Quixote is one of the more intriguing ones to take a look at, one that truly deserves an entirely separate review in order to touch upon everything. For the purpose of this review though, I will only focus on one aspect of the film. In *Rolling Thunder: An Anarchist Journal of Dangerous Living* #6 (fall-2008), the following page appears:

[photo pending, lost somewhere over the depths of the Internet]

As you can see, there is the classic windmill imagery evoked by Don Quijote, however what is important to take note of is the text. Here is the text quoted from the image[sic]:

"The Most Beautiful Six Minutes in the History of Cinema"

Sancho Panza enters the cinema of a provincial town. He is looking for Don Quixote and finds him sitting apart, staring at the screen. The auditorium is almost full, the upper circle—a kind of gallery—is packed with screaming children. After a few futile attempts to reach Don Quixote, Sancho sits down in the stalls, next to a little girl (Dulcinea?) who offers him a lollipop. The show has begun,

R: Not enough. How can I complain despite my aches and pains if master and squire, or is it majordomo, are nothing but skin and bone, like Rocinante?

it is a costume movie, armed knights traverse the screen, suddenly a woman appears who is in danger. Don Quixote jumps up, draws his sword out of the scabbard, makes a spring at the screen and his blows begin to tear the fabric. The woman and the knights can still be seen, but the black rupture, made by Don Quixote's sword, is getting wider, it inexorably destroys the images. In the end there is nothing left of the screen, one can only see the wooden structure it was attached to. The audience is leaving the hall in disgust, but the children in the upper circle do not stop screaming encouragements at Don Quixote. Only the little girl in the stalls looks at him reprovingly.

What shall we do with our fantasies? Love them, believe them—to the point where we have to deface, to destroy them (that is perhaps the meaning of the films of Orson Welles). But when they prove in the end to be empty and unfulfilled, when they show the void from which they were made, then it is time to pay the price for their truth, to understand that Dulcinea—whom we saved—cannot love us.

- Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*

Leaving the actual text aside for a moment, concentrate on the author, Giorgio Agamben of the above quote for a moment. If one were to see the text in the *Rolling Thunder* journal (image above), you will see that the quote is attributed to the authors Brener and Schurz. To my knowledge, the truth is that the editor's of *Rolling Thunder* were duped into believing the quote was from Brener and Schurz. Perhaps, as the thinking may have went, if they knew it was really from Giorgio Agamben it may have not been published³. Not to get too far off topic here, but it is interesting to note that it appears at least to some extent, that another joke may have been played in return here (although, pure speculation). Recently, a new *Politics Is Not a Banana* #3 was released, however many have come to doubt that this new issue was actually created by the original folks involved in the journal, leading some to point fingers at the *Rolling Thunder* journal (CrimethInc.) folks. Whoever is it, or whatever the purpose – the humor and funnies are certainly appreciated!

Moving back to the actual context of the quote, the lovely titled “Six Most Beautiful Minutes in the History of Cinema” regards a clip of the unfinished Orson Welles's movie that was left out of early versions, but was included eventually later on in some versions. Overall, this cinema experience of Don Quijote is quite intriguing, especially when considered with the movie as a whole. In many ways, it is understand to be like the post-modern movie version of Quijote, instead of attacking ancient 16th century technology and society, he is battling 1940ish motorized scooters and movie screens. One interesting thing from the movie is some footage of a religious procession, framed along and sliced with footage of the Klu Klux Klan, which Don Quijote goes to attack. Overall, it is definitely worth checking, especially if you've enjoyed the book.

So what is the big deal?

Who knows, maybe this book may be of little importance to you. At times throughout it, I find it to be rather “fluffy” sprinkled with blossoming flowers that never end. Like, ever try reading some old Shakespeare alongside José Martí with some bananas thrown in. However, I do find some gems that are really good within the book for me. Perhaps, most intriguing – to playfully read the adventures against everything that life as we know it has become, to see through our imaginations, rather than with our misleading desires for the most trivial things in life. As someone wrote recently, the greatest thing of all is *saving the world!* A lot of the time, I find myself taking in and fully enjoying those moments of non-thought and thinking, where it has been shown that our brain is actually most active and full of energy. Don Quijote in a lot of ways, is the definition of tragic hero – even though I may disagree with what he actually fought against for the most part, (the Moors) and alongside (Christianity). Blame can be placed on Cervantes here, maybe not so much Quijote, after all he is just

³ “The editor of Rolling Thunder has expressed his disdain for the works of the author of the aforementioned essay, however, when the essay was sent to him under the name of a more palatable writer, it was prominently reprinted in the magazine.” – from *Life is Definitely Elsewhere-A Response to “Say You Want an Insurrection” [a Crimethinc. text]* [<http://www.anarchistnews.org/?q=node/10435> (this link has

a character. Cervantes wasn't exactly the most upstanding character, but still a tragic-hero in himself. It can be all be too confusing, seeing Quijote for nothing other than love, and against everything that might actually make sense – then applying some sort of reasoning to it. Quijote was certainly a radical in his time, just what kind of radical is up in the air...

Note: Originally published over at The Anvil Review http://theanvilreview.org/print/quijote_against_the_world/. This text has been edited slightly from that, in order to better reflect and fix some grammar & wording.

Jorge Luís Borges, Infinity, and the Internet

(2009)

Jorge Luís Borges, an Argentinean writer who is well known for his many short stories, some of which discuss such fantastic themes like dreams, libraries, labyrinths, god, and the less fantastic – see also, more real – like los gauchos (imagine Argentinean cowboys) and tigers.

Borges's works of fiction, intertwined with the metaphysical have made him one of the most well known writers to come out of the western hemisphere during the 20th century. For the sake of this review, we will look at the relation between Borges, infinity, and the Internet. Five different short stories by Borges which relate to these ideas will all be briefly mentioned; the stories include *The Aleph*, *The Library of Babel*, *The Garden of Forking Paths*, *Funes, the Memorious*, and *the Theme of the Traitor and Hero* [all available for free reading on the Internet at the above links].

First some background on why Borges may be of some interest to anarchist thinkers. When Borges was younger his family moved to Europe (1915-1921), where he was introduced to the avant-garde Ultraist movement in Spain. Ultraism can be described as being in opposition to everything that is thought of as Modernismo. Some have even compared it to Italian and Russian futurism, Dadaism, and French surrealism. In 1921 Borges moved back to Buenos Aires, where he started writing for and distributing *avant-garde* Ultraist leaning publications/texts. Often this would include him wheat pasting the texts (broadsheets) all over the walls of the city. Sadly, as Borges grew older, he drifted away and came to regret these ideas – even going as far as trying to buy all of the old texts in order to make sure they would be destroyed so no one could ever read them again. Like the maximum ultraists of today, who are 'waging a life-and-death war against consensus reality', I like to think of these younger days of Borges as some of my favourite. Honestly, we all grow old – it's just to bad some of us become grumpy as well.

That's very Borgesian of you to say...

It is thought by some that Borges was one of the first ever to write (and think) about the future of the Internet. While this may be a bit of a loaded statement, because it all depends on how you interpret things, it remains an intriguing idea. In his work's of fiction, he does this writing in a round-about way; often hiding these gems beneath the surface of the page. Borges wrote the above mentioned texts during the mid 20th century before the major developments of the computer and the Internet began to be dreamed of and developed.

In the 1960's with the creation of ARPANET, a project of the United States of America government (USA) whose aim was to create a network to aid communication. A common myth about the Internet, was that it was created to combat / defend against catastrophe - a silent spring - during the Cold War, however this tall tale isn't exactly true. Only later on, using the ideas from ARPANET, did the Rand Corporation start developing ideas about how to use the Internet as a weapon (nuclear fail-safe) in practice. While ARPANET can be seen as one of the original projects for developing what has come to be known as the Internet; Borges had only years early wrote about similar ideas – such as a library that is infinite, or a place/object where one can go to see everything in the world.

In 1949, Borges wrote *The Aleph* which speaks of "the only place on earth where all places are – seen from every angle, each standing clear, without any confusion or blending." With the aleph, we have a device in which one is able to see the entire world from one place, almost exactly what computers and the Internet have become for us.

since expired and the archive is currently offline)]

An idea – is only as good, as its inspiration

Before *The Aleph*, Borges wrote *The Library of Babel* in which he states:

Infinite I have just written. I have not interpolated this adjective merely from rhetorical habit. It is not illogical, I say, to think that the world is infinite. Those who judge it to be limited, postulate that in remote places the corridors and stairs and hexagons could inconceivably cease – a manifest absurdity. Those who imagined it to be limitless forget that the possible number of books is limited. I dare insinuate the following solution to this ancient problem: *The Library is limitless and periodic*. If an eternal voyager were to traverse it in any direction, he would find, after many centuries, that the same volumes are repeated in the same disorder (which, repeated, would constitute an order: Order itself).

For Borges, the library is the universe and it is beyond count. It is composed of an indefinite number, perhaps even infinite, number of galleries. One can imagine, the Library of Babel being a place where you can find all the texts and works from the entire world – often organized in such a way, that makes it impossible to find what you are looking for. In 1894 Oscar Wilde quipped, “It is a very sad thing that nowadays there is so little useless information”.

According to *The Economist* (Feb. 27th, 2010):

Wal-Mart, a retail giant handles more than 1m customer transactions every hour, feeding databases estimated at more than 2.5 petabytes – the equivalent of 167 times the books in America’s Library of Congress. Facebook, a social-networking website, is home to 40 billion photos. And decoding the human genome involves analyzing 3 billion base pairs – which took ten years the first time it was done, in 2003, but can now be achieved in one week.

they go on later to say:

Quantifying the amount of information that exists in the world is hard. What is clear is that there is an awful lot of it, and it is growing at a terrific rate (a compound annual 60%) that is speeding up all the time. The flood of data from sensors, computers, research labs, cameras, phones and the like surpassed the capacity of storage technologies in 2007. Experiments at the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, Europe’s particle-physics laboratory near Geneva, generate 40 terabytes every second – orders of magnitude more than can be stored or analyzed. So scientists collect what they can and let the rest dissipate into the ether.

How does this library compare to what we know of today as the Internet? Of course, it’s enormous - have you ever heard of a yottabyte? Some have said that it is currently too large to imagine – but to get somewhat of an idea, as of 2010 not even all of the computer hard drives in the world combined would equal one yottabyte of data [are we there yet? - *message from 2013*].

In another short story, *Funes, the Memorious* Borges writes about a person who after falling from a horse and seriously injuring himself, finds that he is able to remember everything. How do we push the limits of our mind, our imagination, and our passions? In a sense Funes’s brain becomes more computer-like with his ability to remember things, and perhaps even machine like. Or is it more human to expand upon our ability to do things we once thought impossible? Is it true that we only use around 10% of our brain? And, *what if* we figured out ways to use more? Would we be that much smarter? More powerful? Is that what we want? For Funes, it seems the ability to remember everything turns out to be a curse.

There is actually a condition called Hyperthymesia, with four *confirmed* cases in the world. It is defined as an individual who has a superior autobiographical memory. For instance, in the case of Jill Price – her memory has been characterized as “nonstop, uncontrollable, and automatic.” Supposedly, she became aware of her ability at age 8 (1974) and since 1980 can apparently recall everyday. Like Funes, Price sees this more as a curse, than something positive.

Ghost in the Shell

In one of the more well-known short stories by Borges entitled “The Garden of Forking Paths”, the comparison between the ideas within and the Internet have been made many times before. When we browse the Internet, there are many different paths to see and perhaps follow, leading in the end to a distinct destination (or none at all). It has been mentioned elsewhere, that Borges arguably invented the hypertext novel from this short story; along with the fact that hypertext is one of the main concepts behind the World Wide Web.

What does it say about free will if we are able to choose different possibilities like this while using the Internet or *in real life*? In another short story by Borges entitled *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* it relates a fiction of characters who are all acting out a predetermined play (in a sense). History is seen as a combination of repeating themes, which is to say there is no free will. Interestingly enough, with the further development and exploration of computer technology, perhaps we may be able to study the idea of *free will* more closely. Arguably, computers are much better at processing large amounts of data, and doing millions of mathematical formulas over short periods of time - although recently the human mind has been shown to harness incredible power as well. While Borges doesn't exactly write of chaos theory and non-linear dynamics it - having digested his other works it is something that is presumed.

Borges wrote a lot of different texts – the majority of which are short stories. Some have even criticized him for only writing short stories, believing that it takes more from an author to compose longer novels. However, the profound themes and different subject matters in his stories seem wonderfully woven together. And honestly – after all, who doesn't like being able to read a story in 20 minutes or so, and have it leave thoughtful ideas churning, that never seem to be at rest. Also, I have chosen certain stories over others, more fantastic ones, and as a writer it can be easy to manipulate these ideas. With that, I hope it is possible to see that I'm not trying to say Borges invented the Internet, however it is possible to see the inventors of the Internet reading Borges.

**author's note:* this text was originally written in Spanish, and then translated back into English (the author's first language) with a lot of tinkering, as well as a much need revision of grammar/vocabulary, thus making this text – pretty much, brand new. It was originally published on May 23rd, 2010 at *The Anvil Review* http://theanvilreview.org/print/jorge_luis_borges__infinity__and_the_int... This version has also been edited to fix errors and the problems only time can show.

Keepers of the Fire

(2011)

The Strait: Book of Obenabi. His Songs

From the pen of Fredy Perlman

Black & Red, Detroit. 1988

399 pages, \$6

The Strait by Fredy Perlman is a two-volume manuscript remembrance of the world changers. It is the songs and stories of colonization and resistance in what has come to be known as the Great Lakes region of North America as witnessed through the eyes of not only its humans, but the animals, trees, and everything living. There are two volumes of the book, with volume one being the story of how things came to be, and volume two being the resistance. Sadly, only volume one of the book was completed (a works in progress) when Fredy Perlman passed away in 1985.

Lorraine Perlman documents volumes one and two of the book in *Having Little, Being Much: A Chronicle of Fredy Perlman's Fifty Years*, giving an eye-opening look into some of the unpublished material and providing an intimate view of Fredy's ideas. It seems that the two volumes were not long from being completed and one wonders if they will ever see the light of day again (or where they are). Prior readers of Perlman, can think of *The Strait* as being the narrative form of *Against His-tory, Against Leviathan!*, yet going deeper. Or, if you want to compare and contrast it to his other narrative *Letters of Insurgents*, you can think of it as the story of what came before *all that*. Actually, Fredy intended this, and his plan was to present himself as the translator of Robert Dupré's manuscript. In 1851 Obenabi told (or sang to) Dupré (his nephew) these stories after they

had both been jailed for opposing railroad construction across Michigan. Dupré's great-grandson Robert Avis is Tissie's cousin, who is friends with modern day "rememberer" Ted (the printer). Sabina is also the image of capital for volume two. And if that list of characters was too much for you, just wait till you try and read the actual book. Thankfully, also enclosed in the book is a fold out map that is around 24 inches long and 11 inches wide of all the characters in a "family tree" format.

The incredible list of characters and happenings throughout the book can be difficult to keep track of, but come together as the story is woven together. Many parts of the book are graphic and the reality faced by the original inhabitants from the Invaders leaves nothing out. It's not all violence and rage though, as it also winds through the lofty descriptions of nothingness. While it's considered fiction, the book parallels many historical events and story-lines, retelling the tales of loss, destruction, and searching for hope in the Great Lakes region.

The world changes – the names and language, the places, environment, and the everything inhabiting it: changed. It was like nothing before or as Noam Chomsky stated: "*The Strait* is like a more in-depth, more critical and regionally focused *A Peoples History of the United States*, but just without so much of a people fetish."

In *Having Little, Being Much* Lorraine Perlman wrote a magnificent introspective of the book, spilling the inside details on the book. Her writing is insightful and full of some interesting tidbits, even if you haven't read the book yet - but are a Perlman reader. Here is part of the song:

In his notes Fredy wrote messages to himself about the crucial importance of the story being "oral." His goal was to emerge with a song. He was surely aware that the hundreds of characters would not make the story easy to read, nor would the avoidance of the Invaders' system of dates make the chronology obvious. But this story, emulating its oral predecessors, could not have recourse to the European establishment's dating system. Births, deaths, plagues and battles correlate events described by Obenabi and Wabnokwe, the narrators of Fredy's story. As setting, he chose the place in which he was living; the title of the work is the English translation of "Detroit."

Here is some information about the seemingly never-ending list of characters in the book from Lorraine that will give a little more justice to the cast. Pay extra close attention to one of the names towards the end.

The epic Fredy created *needed* all the individual characters. From his own experience Fredy knew that resistance to domination takes many forms. The choices made by a free people, individuals neither domesticated nor fettered by the dominators' own ideology, fascinated him. He tried to put himself in their situation, hoping that their responses might help in his own efforts to resist. From fragments, he rounded out a personality and created a world of richly diverse women and men. Although some characters are taken as archetypes of their milieu, they never are mere representatives. Before choosing names, Fredy made for each "people" a list of names he had found while reading about their past. When a dictionary of words was available (as in *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan* by A.J. Blackbird), he constructed original names. Many characters have European names in addition to the descriptive appellation given them by kin. Although never mentioned explicitly in the finished story, Obenabi also answers to Benjamin J. Burr-net, Wabnokwe to Rebekah Burr-net. Some historical characters who spend long periods among Rootkin have non-European names. Thus John Con-err is known to Obenabi exclusively as Bijiki. The Labadie family figures prominently in events on the Strait and in Mishilimakina; Baptiste, Antoine (Le Sauteur) and Paulette appear as Bati, Lesotér and Pamoko, respectively.

Coincidence? John Connor is also another character that was first mentioned in the 1984 now-classic *Terminator* movie. He is the leader of the future resistance against Skynet, and while the book's character may be a little different – it seems a little too ironic that a movie character is also named after him (plus countless others).

Perlman always a lover of languages and a speaker of four (FOUR!), conducted the characters throughout in their respective language. The commentary is that of life experiences and everything that comes with living

in a world that disappears right before your eyes. Not often has something vanished so quickly, replaced with that of the illusion of a different society. Asked if it is all a dream, the dreamer continues their waking rest.

I dissolve. There's only water. Water with a dream in its depths, like moon's reflection, a liquid yolk wrapped in a watery blanket, a seed in a womb, a dream that's roused whenever sun's yellow hair caresses or moon's cool tongue licks the water's surface and makes it ripple. (p. 22)

Health is a world without Invaders; they love power and hate life. Stories of destruction and the spread of smallpox covered blankets with complete regions burned over and heads scalped is the slow spin into chaos that erupts from invasion. It becomes appallingly routine, almost so much that it seems everything is forgotten. Maybe this is the wrong sentiment, but the world changes so fast, that often it is hard not to forget. Or is it the things we only choose to forget? Lets talk about where we live and sometimes how we forget.

a great fear: they who for ages had celebrated and sung and recorded their event-filled trajectory feared that soon none would remember it, soon no living person would have ancestors who had followed that path, soon there would be no memory of Eastbranch Rootkin ever having existed. (p. 210)

Some of the most memorable scenes from the book are the dream lodges that the youths escape to. And thinking about who you are, not thinking at all, or simply using it as excuse to get out of responsibilities. Visions, illusions, animals, and some solitude deep in the woods - dreaming. Trying to figure out who you are could have never been more relaxing. And then, contrast it with this description of the Invaders religion, which could plainly be described as "no fun at all".

My fear made me listen carefully to everything the Robes told me: the earth where my ancestors lay was hell, the forest was the Devil's lodging and animals were his creatures, festivals to regenerate the earth were orgies; enjoyment of earth's fruit was evil, we originated in sin, our lives were a painful burden, our salvation was death, and after death we would be regenerated, but not all of us, only those who had believed the Word - that's why we had to seek guidance only from the carries of the Word, the Blackrobes. (p. 42)

Peace and happiness have vanished. And, what if things had turned out a little differently? Is this too ridiculous to ask? Volume one leaves it at *that* and *then* some. The story feels incomplete, yet finished - maybe just like this review. The works were never intended to stand alone, perhaps that is why reading it is a little strange some have mentioned. And as winters blanket encompassed the night and the air became still, they listened to the sounds of the woods hollowing, and in the distance, the whistle of an oncoming train.

He told the Invaders that human beings weren't made to languish in prisons of their own making. He told them no animals crippled and stunted its own kind, and no animals embarked on a war against any and all creatures that were unlike itself. He warned them that any who embarked on such a war would turn the very elements against them and would gag on the air, be poisoned by the water and be swallowed up by earth. (p. 303)

Fredy Perlman at the Anarchist Library: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/category/author/fredy-perlman>
The Strait in *Having Little, Being Much*
Originally published at *The Anvil Review* <http://theanvilreview.org/print/keepers-of-the-fire/> and posted here with some major fixes & editing.

Anonymous
Stalking the Earth
a collection of data, past and present - distilled. composted.

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