The Anarchist Review
of Books

Issue #4 Summer/Fall 2022

Video still from Locus Sacer by Doris Hakim 2018

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About the Cover

Study for Three Figures in a Room by Kent Monkman. Acrylic on panel, 20" x 16" 2018

Kent Monkman is an interdisciplinary Cree visual artist and a member of Fisher River Cree Nation in Treaty 5 Territory (Manitoba). Known for his provocative interventions into Western European and American art history, Monkman explores themes of colonization, sexuality, loss, and resilience—the complexities of historic and contemporary Indigenous experiences—across painting, film/video, performance, and installation.

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Video still from Locus Sacer by Doris Hakim. 3¼ minutes 2018

Doris Hakim was born in Nazareth to a Palestinian father and a Greek mother, and went to a Jewish school which played a significant role in her artistic quest. Jerusalem has two significant walls, a religious one—the Wailing Wall—and a secular one—the Separation Wall between Israel and Palestine. The wall has become a tool, a visible barrier to separate groups of people. "Locus Sacer" overlays the two, pointing to the abuse of religious, political and psychological power.

About This Issue

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

We bring you this issue as nine judges in a dictatorship of the rich, have decided that a document written two centuries ago with feather quills will determine what kind of air people breathe, when they can give birth, and, in the wake of their deeply polarized nation's 247th mass shooting of the year, that more people may carry hidden guns.

None of those decisions were a surprise. No one watches footage of police waiting outside a third-grade classroom while a man inside kills children with a military weapon; or watches footage of police arresting anguished parents as they attempt to get inside that school; or reads that online fundraising projects are how these people will pay for medical care and funerals, and thinks to themselves that the function of the State is to protect.

The Nation State is a fiction, given the depth of the environmental crisis, given the reality of the ruling classes, their unchecked consumption and boundless rights to land and movement, given the hegemony of capital. That it is a fiction doesn't mean it will disappear into thin air if we stop believing in it. On the contrary, it is the State's fictional nature that anchors the beliefs of fascists and tyrants and bolsters their faulty logic through mystification, just like the millennia-old texts used to create the story of man's dominion over women, animals, land, and language.

We know what's at stake when these stories are elevated into the canon—seamless justifications for slavery, genocide, and extinction—and we don't use the expression All Power to the Imagination lightly. Every conqueror who gazed at a shoreline, every shooter who pictured his future glory, every billionaire who schemes an escape from the planet they helped ruin—they all employ that power.

We have become creatures of atomization, of metadata, of systems governed by existential threat, of the profit of few to the detriment of billions, of the calculated and unchecked division of people into ever more polarized categories: sick and healthy, men and women, young and old, gay and straight, cis and trans, legal and illegal; of cooptation and erasure of subcultures, of representation mistaken for equality and of the meaningless pursuit of likes. We come from small towns, housing projects, and suburbs, pushed every year farther from the gentrifying cities, we come from prison cells, and Walmart checkout lines, from active shooter drills, from anxiety, from calls to police while calling for an end to the police, from the fires and floods and destruction of our only world, from all who are made less by the unchecked greed of neoliberalism, all who face the debasement of begging for eleventh hour salvation from corporations who pushed us to the point of eradication and now aim to profit and amass power by selling us a technological solution.

If we are to hold on to our autonomy, our humanity, our smallest sense of community we must get outside the algorithms and communications structures that ensure our isolation and division, and the institutions that support and replicate the hegemony of the ruling elite. The future is also a fiction, an as yet unwritten story, that we can only dream and write together.

In this issue Jessica Lawless talks with Sarah Jaffe about love and labor, Steven Thrasher reveals the reach of the carceral state during COVID, Carrie Laben reviews Kun Li Sun's Begin the World Over, Cynthia Cruz muses on Genet, crime and resistance. D.G. Gerard reviews C. Russell Price's incendiary new collection, Glynis Hart writes about the origins of abortion as a property crime, Ranbir Sidhu dreams big in the wake of A. Patwardhan's films, Anne Elizabeth Moore takes us to Time Zone J and French cultural critics Gilles Dauve and Lola Meiseroff show the next generation how it's done.

ALL POWER TO THE IMAGINATION

Cara Hoffman, July 2022

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

The Anarchist Review of Books is collectively produced by Ananda Brutvan, Ben Durham, Cara Hoffman, Carrie Laben, Charlie Hix, D.G. Gerard, Marc Lepson, Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, N. Masani Landfair, Nick Mamatas, and Yasmin Nair.

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Sparks

Curated by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

"There is no good strategy in a rigged game. There are only new ways to lose."
—Melissa Febos, *Girlhood* (Bloomsbury 2021)

"I can't get ahold of a reader and slap them silly, so my next best thing is to write a book that does."
—Rabih Alameddine, on Between the Covers with David Naimon, January 19, 2022

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—Susan Steinberg, *Machine* (Graywolf 2019)

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—Claudia Rankine, speaking at BookPeople about *Just Us*, September 17, 2020

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—Edgar Gomez, *High-Risk Homosexual* (Soft Skull 2022)

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—Terese Marie Mailhot, *Heart Berries* (Counterpoint 2018)

"What would it be like, to treat our bodies more like pets than like pests?"
—Carly Boyce, in *The Care We Dream Of: Liberatory and Transformative Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health*, edited by Zena Sharman (Arsenal Pulp 2021)

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—Dan Berger, on Twitter, March 10, 2022

respectability was the first form of
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—Caren Beilin, on Between the Covers with David Naimon, April 19, 2022

Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore *(mattildabernsteinsycamore.com) is the author, most recently, of* The Freezer Door, *and the editor of* Between Certain Death and a Possible Future: Queer Writing on Growing Up with the AIDS Crisis.

Cages

The Liberal Carceral State

Steven W. Thrasher

One day in August 2020, I logged on to the *New York Times*'s coronavirus tracker, which, among other factors, displayed how many COVID-19 cases could be traced to institutions. Besides a pork-processing plant in South Dakota and a chicken plant in Iowa, fifteen of the seventeen institutions on that date with a thousand or more coronavirus cases traced to them were jails or prisons. Six of them were located in California, three in Florida, two each in Ohio and Arkansas, and one each in Tennessee and Illinois, including Chicago's Cook County jail. The governors who could have reduced these incarcerated populations with pardons to stop the largest clusters of COVID-19 in the nation were Republicans and Democrats alike. The viral danger had nothing to do with whether a state was "red" or "blue." And if one were to trace the responsibility for the deadliest institution of them all on that day—San Quentin State Prison in California, where about twenty-five hundred people had tested positive for coronavirus and twenty-five had died of it—it would lead to the door of Democratic governor Gavin Newsom.

That very same month, more than 350 fires raged out of control across the state Newsom governed. While ash fell on Oakland, non-profit organizations and mutual aid networks struggled to get N95 masks to vulnerable people before the smoke triggered asthma attacks or other lethal breathing problems. But the masks were already in short supply due to COVID-19. The same day, Cal Fire told the press it had no way to treat all the flames burning throughout the state, because for years it had been relying upon incarcerated firefighters to smother such blazes. These workers earned as little as a dollar per hour, and their criminal records kept them from becoming firefighters once they were released. And because California's prisons were among the most powerful COVID-19 hot spots in the nation, so many firefighters were sick or under quarantine that there weren't enough available to fight the hundreds of fires. It was a moment in which America's twin epidemics of incarceration and COVID-19 entered into a three-way race with the global pandemic of the climate crisis.

This was a disaster of the Democrats' making. Governor Gavin Newsom, a darling of Gay Inc. since he'd supported same-sex marriages as mayor of San Francisco in 2004, slowly began releasing some incarcerated firefighters in the summer of 2020. But he could have done so months or years earlier. Many of them were eligible to be firefighters for the same reasons their release dates had been moved forward: their model behavior. If Newsom had released them *before* COVID-19 spread in prisons, when activists had first begged him to, they could have gone home to their families, where they would have been far less at risk than in prison. If he had then pardoned them, they could have been called to duty not as enslaved workers—people convicted of crimes are legally enslaved under the Thirteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution—but as crisis-ready firefighters.

But Democratic policy in the Golden State had long been to incarcerate people needlessly. In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that California had to reduce its dangerously overcrowded prisons by granting early release to people convicted of nonviolent offenses. Then–California attorney general Kamala Harris sued in 2014 to stop these court-mandated releases. By using cheaply paid, enslaved firefighters, California was saving one hundred million dollars a year, and Harris's office argued that it would be too "dangerous" to let these firefighters go—not because they would pose a danger to their communities, but because it would be "a difficult fire season" without enslaved labor.

California wasn't the only state using enslaved labor during the corona-virus pandemic. During a shortage of hand sanitizer, then-New York governor Andrew Cuomo bragged about bottling it in Empire State prisons, and Texas paid incarcerated workers just two dollars an hour to move the corpses of people killed by COVID-19.

Offshore by Jenny Polak. Wood, chain-link, barbed wire; poetry by local people who are or have been incarcerated, printed on canvas and found fabric, stitched into 50 pennants. 2021

When Harris accepted her nomination for the vice presidency the same week her home state burned, she said there was "no vaccine for racism." This made me think about how, as attorney general, she *could* have released the kinds of prisoners who made excellent firefighters years before. If Newsom then pardoned them and taxed Silicon Valley, they could have been paid fairly as *free* firefighters as they rebuilt their lives during the pandemic. This would have granted some protection to the families of incarcerated people (and to all Californians facing wildfires). It also would have protected them from viral transmission in prisons.

Instead, in the legacy of Bill Clinton, the policies enacted by Harris and Newsom effectively kept them locked up. As a result, many of the firefighters were infected by coronavirus and kept from duty—which fanned the flames of climate change outside the prison walls as wildly as the virus burned inside its walls.

These Democrats' reliance on enslaved labor in a way that increases and harms the viral underclass is just a symptom of the wider disease of neoliberalism. During the first year of the coronavirus pandemic, Newsom and Cuomo were governors of states that were home to Hollywood, Wall Street, and Silicon Valley, some of the wealthiest tax bases in the nation. Both governors enjoyed majorities or supermajorities in their legislatures and could have significantly raised taxes on their wealthiest citizens, who only got richer from the pandemic. Instead, they largely condemned their poorest residents to viral immiseration, poverty, and even death—especially those behind bars.

In a fiery 1988 speech called "Why We Fight"—a reference to the U.S. propaganda war movie of the same title, directed by Frank Capra—cinephile and ACT UP activist Vito Russo said of AIDS, "We're so busy putting out fires right now, that we don't have the time to talk to each other and strategize and plan for the next wave, and the next day, and next month and the next week and the next year." He added that, after things calmed down, "we have to commit ourselves to doing that. And then, after we kick the shit out of this disease, we're all going to be alive to kick the shit out of this system, so that this never happens again."

Russo died less than two years after giving that charge.

In the decades since Rafsky and Russo spoke up and died, it has become no easier for liberals to hear about their role in the carceral state that reproduces a viral underclass. This reckoning has been especially painful in a queer context, where it should be better considered. Yet, a quarter century after Rafsky confronted Bill Clinton, a trans Latina activist interrupted the first Black president—and her critique was unwelcome in a room of Democratic queer and trans folx.

In June 2015, Jennicet Gutiérrez, an undocumented transgender activist, was invited by the group GetEQUAL to be their guest at a White House LGBTQ Pride Month reception—but with a caveat: they wanted someone willing to interrupt President Obama about his immigration policies. Sometimes called the "deporter in chief," Obama had expelled more immigrants from the nation than any president in U.S. history.

Gutiérrez had mixed feelings. She'd been excited when Senator Obama "ran on a platform that was going to give immigrants within the first year of office some path to legalization or reform" and was enthusiastic when he'd been elected in 2008. "But obviously," she said, the promised immigration relief "didn't happen." Well into Obama's second term, queer and trans Latinx people were still losing their lives in his deportation machine. People Gutiérrez knew would disappear, be locked in cages, and then be shipped across the border.

Gutiérrez accepted GetEQUAL's invitation, and on June 24, 2015, she entered the East Room of the White House. As the president was saying he was "hopeful about what we can accomplish" for the civil rights of LGBTQ Americans, Gutiérrez yelled, "President Obama!"

Heads turned away from President Obama, at the front of the East Room, and toward the woman shouting at him.

"Release all LGBTQ detention centers! President Obama, stop the torture and abuse of trans women in detention centers! President Obama, I am a trans woman. I'm tired of the abuse."

"Listen, you're in *my* house," Obama said (even though the White House is the people's house, not any president's), as many in the crowd cheered loudly. "As a general rule, I am just fine with a few hecklers," he said, to much laughter, "but not when I'm up in the house!" Vice President Biden grabbed Obama's shoulder and laughed.

(At this moment, Gutiérrez was thinking, *Am I going*

to get in trouble? Am I going to get arrested? Will that give the government a reason for me to be deported? Especially since she had an arrest record, I find the courage of what she did almost unfathomable. In my one and only day reporting at the White House, I stood in the Rose Garden while a white immigrant blogger from Ireland yelled at Obama for being too soft on immigrants, and he was *not* led away by guards—and I found just reporting next to him almost unbearably anxiety-inducing.)

It looked like everyone—apart from the co-director of GetEQUAL who'd accompanied and invited her, a Black woman named Angela Peoples—was laughing at Gutiérrez as she was escorted out. No one offered her any support. She sensed that there was a "disconnection of priorities" in the crowd, as if the things happening to her and her community weren't important to LGBTQ politicos.

As long as I'm doing okay, she imagined the gay revelers were thinking as they laughed, *we can wait for this undocumented trans woman not to be so rude*.

But the reason Gutiérrez was interrupting the festivities was no laughing matter. When she spoke up to the Black president who was very popular with the gays, she was thinking of people like Victoria Arellano, who had died of AIDS in immigration custody in 2007. And she was thinking of people like Roxanna Hernandez from Honduras and Johana Medina from El Salvador, two trans women who would later die from complications from HIV in ICE custody in 2019.

She was speaking in the spirit of ACT UPers like Bob Rafsky. But she spoke long after Gay Inc. politics had mostly moved away from taking an interest in the viral underclass. In 2003, one of my close mentors, historian Lisa Duggan, coined the term *homonormativity*. It describes a gay "politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption." Homonormativity is a politics in which well-to-do gays ignore the carceral reality of how, according to research from the Williams Institute published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in 2017, the "incarceration rate of self-identified lesbian, gay, or bisexual persons" is "more than 3 times that of the US adult population." Under homonormativity, queer sexuality isn't discriminatory—as long as you have the bank balance to be a Democratic donor and the skin color to avoid being housed in a cage or on the street, that is.

Although HIV had once threatened many of the older gay men in the room, the politics cheered at the White House that day were homonormative and unconcerned with how HIV/AIDS and incarceration were harming the broader community in terms of viral risk and violence. Unlike some members of ACT UP from back in the day, the gay politicos in that room in 2015 had given up the dream of universal health care, settling for the crumbs of health coverage for a lucky few through same-sex marriage. Most at that reception probably had access to medication to treat or even prevent HIV if they needed it, and they didn't want to be associated with people at risk for viruses.

To them, viruses may have meant *dirty people* who used drugs, had sex for money, or were locked up behind bars, perhaps awaiting deportation.

"Oh, you're the trans woman who interrupted the president! That was so brave!" the trans Latina activist Lorena Borjas told Gutiérrez when they met at a conference for the first time, just a few months later.

"She was just so full of love and admiration and respect," Gutiérrez recalled, "and totally agreed with what had to be done at that moment."

The most effective organizers around viruses and the conditions that fuel them understand, as Frederick Douglass put it, that "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will." Being friendly with the powerful isn't an effective strategy for liberation.

Bob Rafsky understood this with Clinton.

Jennicet Gutiérrez understood this with Obama.

Zak Kostopoulos understood this when he marched against cops.

And Lorena Borjas knew this every time she walked into a lawyer's office with her cart, trying to get a human out of a cage.

Liberalism has built into the law many of the vectors that drive viral transmission, especially via the carceral state. This must be undone if we are to reduce the trauma of our current and future plagues, expand access to prophylaxis, and mitigate the trauma of social death.

***Steven W. Thrasher**, PhD, is a professor of journalism, queer studies and public health at Northwestern University. This piece was adapted from his debut book* The Viral Underclass: The Human Toll When Inequality and Disease Collide, *a* Publishers Weekly *top 10 Current Affairs Book, published this summer by Celadon Books (Macmillian/Holtzbrinck).*

Daring Imagination

Shawn Miller

Against Borders: The Case for Abolition
by Gracie Mae Bradley and Luke de Noronha
192pp. Verso 2022

Against Borders: The Case for Abolition might just as well have been titled *Against Nation-States*. The authors—de Noronha is an academic, Bradley a grassroots campaigner and NGO veteran—note that "[c]itizenship is central to the legitimacy and authority of nation-states." If nation-states go by the wayside, the concept of citizenship becomes superfluous, as does that of the stateless migrant. Abolishing bordered nation-states would thus "ensure the destruction of these deadly binaries" of citizen and non-citizen.

A driving idea of *Against Borders* is that what is bad for the migrant ends up being bad for the citizen, as well, which is why the ability of the modern state to surveil the population—to make people legible as "workers, taxpayers, conscripts, criminals and migrants"—is so treacherous. To the extent that modern technology increases the state's reach into private lives—a phenomenon that has only increased during the COVID-19 pandemic—it should be resisted. After all, "we know from historical experience that the list of those who fall foul of government is rarely fixed for long, and has a habit of expanding."

National borders "produce many of the social harms they claim to prevent, including loss of life, inhuman and degrading treatment, and rampant inequality." Borders also "fail to address the conditions that shape migration processes in the first place—global inequalities, the dispossession of lands and livelihoods, climate breakdown—and they render people on the move vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and abuse." Abolition of border controls, rather than their reform, is a moral imperative that "requires that we challenge all the social structures underpinning their permanence."

In The 22nd Century Ghosts N Goblins Walked In This Land by Sedrick Chisom. Oil, acrylic, spray paint, and watercolor pencil on tiled sheets of paper glued to canvas 2019

Though the authors do not offer a blueprint for what comes after national citizenship, they do an admirable job of attempting to explicate the concept of abolition, which is "a revolutionary politics situated within wider struggles for economic justice, racial equality and sustainable ecologies." Elsewhere, they write that abolition is "a transformative political philosophy, an organising tradition that can help us chart a course out of our unfolding end-times." They borrow from the work of prison abolitionists such as Mariame Kaba and use André Gorz's concept of non-reformist reforms, which are "those measures that reduce the power of an oppressive system while illuminating the system's inability to solve the crises it creates." They quote Critical Resistance admiringly, writing that "[o]ur goal is not to improve the system; it is to shrink the system into non-existence."

The authors deserve credit for hazarding specific non-reformist reforms and contrasting them with standard issue reforms characteristic of liberal politics. For example, they take up the idea of granting immediate amnesty for all undocumented migrants, which they consider to be merely reformist. A non-reformist reform would be to "reduce the scope of immigration enforcement so far that a person would enjoy the same rights—to work, access to essential services, and so on—as a citizen or person with regular status, without having to be formally recognised as such." Granting amnesty keeps the system intact; ending immigration enforcement shrinks the system to nothing.

Achieving non-reformist reforms "requires dreaming and imagining, and then using these visions to orientate us in the present." This is done in the book in two sections of what might be called speculative fiction; one is a future dystopian fantasy that shows where we will end up if we keep borders and nation-states, and the other is a more hopeful vision of life where family, labor, and livelihood are radically different from current conceptions. A telling detail of this latter world is that, in it, "Flying is a mode of travel used almost exclusively in emergency...As the forest fires raged and the seas crept up, flying became more or less taboo, even before the Councils formally abolished them in climate mitigation." Effectively abolishing air travel may seem unthinkable as a practical proposal, but we can imagine such a future. And the simple exercise of imagining can transform how we think of, and act in, the present. If we are to abolish borders, the same daring imagination will be required of us all.

***Shawn Miller's** work has been published in the* Montréal Review, Bookslut, the Sacramento News & Review, *and elsewhere. He teaches philosophy and lives in Oakland.*

From Time Zone J by Julie Doucet

Fuck Panels

Anne Elizabeth Moore

Time Zone J
by Julie Doucet
144pp. Drawn & Quarterly 2022

Besides the wealth inequality and death toll that is its eventual outcome, a major downside to living under a political economy designed to support certain voices and squelch all others is the repetitive, bland vapidity that cultural products tend to accrue, all relaying similar stories, all utilizing recognizable characters, all conveying the basic message that it is right and just that certain people have power, that starvation and illness among those who don't is natural, and that media and art should comfort and ease and repeat, endlessly.

Depending largely upon how prized our own voices would appear to be under such a system, consumers of culture are either soothed by this message or alarmed at how easily a generation can be seduced to malaise and self-harm. A century ago, member of this latter camp Virginia Woolf suggested that a tedious redundancy was strangling culture and warned us to let women take up the pen once in a while. When little had changed fifty years later, Valerie Solanas called the same stale mundanity "fucking boring" and suggested we kill all the men to end it for once and for all. Still it lingered.

Then in February of 1990, a young woman in Montreal, Canada dreamt that a naked man interrupted a picnic with friends and cajoled her into putting his member in her mouth. Under her pen, his penis resembled a crinkled, buttery croissant. Was it a metaphor for the baked-in appeal of the patriarchy? A veiled reference to the francophilic gender norms she operated under? A symbol of the hypersexualizing and masculine forces dominating her chosen field of comics at the time? You bet. And she bit it right off. Delicious!

Following the release of *Dirty Plotte* #1 in 1991, the Drawn & Quarterly-published version of Julie Doucet's self-published comics series, the horrible sameness that had vexed generations of artists began, at least in comics, to dissipate. The endless stream of hand-drawn stories about usually white and usually straight cis men's frustrations, fantasies, desires, and endless proclivities—with occasional hateful forays into the stupid, nameless throngs of hot or not women who got in their way—were all offset, first a little, then a lot, by an autofictional character whose name was also Julie Doucet. Monstrously feminine, hilariously precarious, never entirely distinct from her environment but somehow always able to regain narrative control, the character Julie took shit, yes, relatable shit: she listened to and felt bad for men, who hurt her emotionally and, far too frequently, physically. But she also dished shit out: she used men for her own pleasure, cut them on the page (hat-tip to Solanas), and then, most outrageous of all, simply become one of them, whenever that seemed like fun, just for a while. The artist Julie Doucet was so fucking talented. Under her inks, readers saw—felt—the world of stories, the real world their creator inhabited, and the dreams these worlds fueled, change. Do you understand? *The world changed.*

Yet that political economy, we can just call it capitalism, did not. Nor the voices granted entitlement under its auspices, which only grew more numerous, more desirous, and more self-assured as the century waned. Around the start of the new millennium, Julie Doucet the character had chewed off enough cock, donned her own, gotten bored. Julie Doucet the cartoonist was tired of being cast as an oddity, an object of desire. Tired of playing a role she had not created, and sick. Her worsening health crisis was described in her comics but tends to be overlooked by the able-bodied and ignored by those who read her work to fulfill sexual want. Sick and tired of comics, Julie Doucet stopped publishing consistently, and publicly swore off her formerly daily practice of drawing new ways for women to inhabit the world. Capitalism had won. Repetitive blandness crept back in.

Even people who don't read comics grasp the particular constancy of the medium: The Marvel Comics Universe, only one example, is no longer confined to newsprint. Men in tights now prance across all our screens, big and small, but the writers are still mostly white, mostly cis men, mostly straight, and mostly invested in upholding status quo. For this they are well compensated, in money and further opportunities to tell new stories, about an increasingly diverse cast of market-tested characters that they continue to create and control.

Imagine however an alternate universe, set in a different galaxy than the MCU, subject to previously undocumented forces of nature, orbiting perhaps a grand, glowing moon but lacking laws of gravity and object permanence. A place where your iron might speak to you, and where you can levitate to the toilet, hovering above it, menstruating into it, not because you find bloodshed unpleasant but because you do not like to clean. This shadowy, indistinct realm was only visible from Earth for a brief decade or two at the end of the 1900s—nothing, really, in geologic time. Indeed time works differently here, unfolds strangely, not linearly, but wrinkly and gauzy, so that things that happened long ago appear to be happening again, or seem to have happened quite recently. Stories previously relayed are recast, set up differently and considered for wholly unfamiliar reasons. New elements are brought to the fore, unforeseen dangers highlighted, novel joys sought. This place—or is it an era?—is removed from Earth's reductive time zones, unimaginable to the hordes of earthlings whose escapist fare is the MCU, despite that this place is just as well developed, just as thoroughly envisioned, and just as colorfully peopled as anything stamped out by Marvel Studios. Welcome to *Time Zone J*.

The narrative of Doucet's new comic follows a middle-aged Julie recalling a youthful relationship with an unnamed man, a soldier in the military, whom she meets in the now-unthinkable manner of through the mail. The two become infatuated in letters, but when they meet, it is awkward, and when they enter a relationship, it is uncomfortable, and from there it goes south quickly. It's a relationship we've read about in her work before, here told completely. Yet the narrative of *Time Zone J* is not its subject, for what the book is about is the slipperyness of time itself, and aging, and the particular ability of the middle-aged to understand with clarity the impetus of youth. Without nostalgia, keenly aware of her tendencies toward romanticism, Julie Doucet offers us here a brief peek at the ever-expanding universe she created and peopled in the 1980s and '90s, which through her own neglect has become overgrown, entrenched, and very weird. Now, though, she can show us around in full awareness of her own authority over line and subject.

The book is drawn on one side of a seemingly continuous scroll of newsprint, creased and tucked into the binding, which serves two purposes: 1) the narrative literally unfolds in an endless stream, in which past and present intermingle, who cares, and 2) fuck panels. Panels are for those who want to master time, to parcel it into distinct moments, to choose from the full wealth of lived experience which elements deserve enshrinement and which do not. Panels are not for those who want to give time its due, who appreciate what has passed and take joy in the current moment.

Significantly, Doucet has dropped the autofictional conceit of previous works and entrusted readers with her real lived experience, buried a layer or two under what she was willing to dig up for us on the page a few decades back. Her work has always been based on the events of her life, but the intent of books like *My New York Diary* and the stand-alone strips from *Dirty Plotte* were to entertain. *365 Days*, a well-edited diary collage comic from 2004, was a visual experiment as well as a good story. But *Time Zone J* is memoir in a more traditional sense. Like all good memoir, Doucet's recall is sharp and not terribly flattering. The story's focus is not on the events of her life, but on the way one relives the events of one's life. How and why do stories ever get told?

It's profound subject matter for

Doucet's public return to the form of comics, done on her terms, set in her electrifying graphic style, only improved with years of inattention. The story, too, is no less sexy, weird, raw, heartbreaking, frustrating, or jankily told than anything she did in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. But in *Time Zone J*, the past is also the present, so mourning lost time becomes impossible. We are simply now what time has shaped us into. What will we do next?

Those of us with voices unprized by this political economy—women, immigrants, folks with disabilities, people of color, queers, the chronically ill, and far too many others—become frustrated when young by not seeing ourselves in the media and art that teach us about the world. We demand representation or coverage, agitating to be perceived and therefore to be understood to exist and therefore to remain alive. But these are struggles for the young, and lead most often to the increased representation of young people.

Those of us old enough to have gone un- or underrepresented for a long time, decades or half-centuries or more, suffer the added loss of not being able to watch ourselves age in the media and art that teach us about the world. Many—often, women—opt out of cultural consumption entirely at some point because it simply stops applying to our lives. Unpredictable forces have entirely overtaken our bodies, like menopause or heart disease, and we begin to feel secretly banished to an alternate universe, governed by undiscovered laws of nature.

This is the universe of *Time Zone J*, the work of a cartoonist in her prime, suddenly fully mature before our eyes. It is a nearly singular work in the world of comics, not only for Doucet's stature (she just won the Grand Prix de la ville d'Angoulême, the top prize for comics awarded since 1974 to only two women before her) but for its clever sting, its dazzling style, its easy mastery—and simultaneous dismissal—of the comics form.

Doucet has always been adept at capturing the ambivalent desire to embrace one's femininity in a world both hostile to it and in constant flux about everything else. *Time Zone J* adds to this offering the delight and wisdom of the passage of time, some two decades after the form was renounced. The intent however is not to mourn lost years, but to remind us that the repetitive, bland vapidity plaguing media and art still exists. Perhaps we are all better equipped now to finally eradicate it.

Anne Elizabeth Moore *is the author of* Unmarketable *(The New Press 2007), the Eisner Award-winning* Sweet Little Cunt *(Uncivilized Books 2018), and* Gentrifier: A Memoir *(Catapult 2021). She is the former editor of* Punk Planet, The Comics Journal, *and the* Chicago Reader.

Out of Order

Genet, crime and the *passage à l'acte*

Cynthia Cruz

> If I am nothing but what I
> am, I am indestructible.
>
> —Jean Genet, *The Criminal Child*

For Genet, crime cuts the marginalized subject from bourgeois society. Repressive prisons, juvenile homes and other penal institutions, Genet argues, create a barrier, protecting the criminal subject from society and its values. Attempts to rehabilitate only make entry into bourgeois society easier. Rather than a program of rehabilitation, Genet argues for more discipline, more punishment. Thus, in *The Criminal Child* Genet writes of juvenile delinquents,"I don't want to invent any new plan for society to protect them." Any such system of "re-education" he argues, would only deprive the children of "their violence, their vigour, their virility." Punishment as a means to protect the criminal, through discipline and violence, enforces and hardens the criminal mentality. Such punishment protects and preserves the criminal characteristics, making the subject indigestible to society.

The act of crime, for Genet, demarcates the space between the subject and society: by marking the subject as criminal, and making them an enemy of the state. Passing through the act of crime, alters the subject's very being.

An act of crime, then, can be understood as a form of resistance, an act that serves to separate the subject from the overwhelming and indeed, annihilating, ever-present force of society. The crime act successfully cuts the subject off from society, in a sense, freeing them from it.

What Genet's concept of crime speaks to is the crisis of the bourgeois world. Though we speak of crises (financial crises, recessions or depressions) as if they were aberrations, crisis is inherent to capitalism, as Marx wrote in *Capital*, "Crises are never more than momentary, violent solutions for the existing contradictions, violent eruptions that re-establish the disturbed balance for the time being."

Genet refers to the act of theft and the criminal world as being "the reverse of the customary world." The criminal world he is describing is a world within "the customary world." When he engages in an act of theft, Genet enters a secret, other world. In *The Thief's Journal*, he writes:

> And what happens during a burglary? When I have broken the lock, as soon as I push the door it thrusts back within me a heap of darkness, or, to be more exact, a very thick vapor which my body is summoned to enter. I enter. For a half hour I shall be operating, if you to our life. It would be broken, this block of absence that you are going to become.

Interior by Marc Lepson. Oil on canvas 2021

> I am alone, in a world which is the reverse of the customary world. My heart beats loudly. My hand never trembles. Fear does not leave me a single second.

For Genet, the act of crime can be understood as both an instance of acting out and an instance of *passage à l'acte*. By engaging in an act of crime the subject is saying no to society and also attempting to exit the symbolic order.

Crime can be understood as an encounter with the real: it propels the subject directly into the world, "the place where the real bears down." When Genet describes the act of crime, he describes the act as a dropping back into a void, "Of their own volition, or owing to an accident which has been chosen for them, they plunge lucidly and without complaining into a reproachful, ignominious element, like that into which love, if it is profound, hurls human beings." Indeed, the passage to the act marks the subject's exit out of the symbolic order and, at the same time, their radical rejection of the big Other. This void, external to the subject, is not unlike the void of death Genet describes in his essay "The Tightrope Walker":

> Look: to surrender yourself better to Death, to make it live in you with the most rigorous precision, you will have to keep yourself in perfect health. The least illness would restore

It is death, he is describing, and yet the death Genet speaks of is the death of the self, the ego. This death is a becoming nothing, an emptying out of the self. Similarly, in his essay "On Alberto Giacometti's Studio," Genet describes the relationship between the artist and the object and the process of emptying one's self of the self in order to enter the void of the object:

> This capacity to isolate an object and make its own, its unique significations flow into it is possible only through the historical abolition of the one who is looking. He must make an exceptional effort to divest himself of all history, so that he becomes not a sort of eternal present, but rather a vertiginous and uninterrupted passage from a past to a future, an oscillation of one extreme to another, preventing rest.

In both instances, the subject—through the discipline of solitude—divests themselves of who they are—everything that makes them different from others including their personal history—and enters a void, what Genet refers to as "the other universe," a world radically apart from society. The move Genet suggests is one where the subject who he calls the criminal must remove themself from the world of appearances. He must rid himself of this attention to the visible world and retreat in solitude. And, perhaps especially, because it is an emptying out of the self, this act allows for the possibility of a communal.

Though seemingly paradoxical, Genet's return to the self, a move that frees the subject from their ego, this remove into solitude, is a means of cleaving the subject from society. There, in the void of their interior, they can see the world, society, from a distance—now that they are separated from it—and from this distance they can nourish what separates them from that society. This space away from society, this emptied subjecthood, this death, is what Genet denotes as the criminal mind. Here, emptied of the self, aligned with and living among other outcasts (the poor, unemployed, ill, the proletariat), there might just exist the possibility for something entirely new to appear.

Cynthia Cruz *is the author of six collections of poems. She is also the author of* Disquieting: Essays on Silence. The Melancholia of Class: A Manifesto for the Working Class, *an exploration of Freudian melancholia and the working class, was published in 2021 by Repeater Books.*

The Object by Matthew Frame. Ink on paper 2021

DOPE Fiends

A conversation with Dog Section Press

Marc Lepson

With titles like *Abolish the Police*, *Great Anarchists*, and *Post-Internet Far Right*, London's Dog Section Press publishes cleanly designed, accessible primers of anti-authoritarian strategy. DSP also publishes a quarterly taboid called DOPE, full of timely articles on social and political thought and action. DOPE is distributed widely in the the UK in large part by people who are homeless.

ARB: What is Dog Section Press and what was the idea behind DOPE?

DSP: Dog Section Press is a worker-owned cooperative that has been publishing seditious literature since 2016. We actually started out making short books and then decided we wanted to do something more regular, so in 2018 we came up with DOPE Magazine—a sort of journal of anarchist ideas and art, published quarterly.

We knew that newspapers are one of the few things that you don't need a license to sell on the street in the UK, so we decided to offer bundles of it to homeless people near our office in Whitechapel, London. It's funded through subscriptions and our Patreon—we don't carry any advertising or receive any institutional funding—so we give DOPE out to sellers for free, and they get to keep 100% of the proceeds from sales. We see it as a form of mutual aid and direct action.

And it blew up, basically. Our first issue was 1,000 copies and four years later we're now printing 30,000 copies per issue.

ARB: Who puts it together? Is there a big production/distribution team, or is it a DIY affair despite the scale?

DSP: It's very much DIY despite the scale. There are four members of the Dog Section Press cooperative, and 3 of those mostly working on DOPE. It's basically the same amount of editorial/organisational labour to produce 1000 papers as it is to produce 30,000, but then the extra work comes in the distribution. And that's where it's actually much bigger than 3 or 4 people, because there are so many people helping us to get it out there.

ARB: You distribute through a network of radical bookshops, social centers, homeless organizations and independent volunteers. Can you talk about the process of building these networks and creating solidarity among diverse groups?

DSP: Our office is based above Freedom Bookshop, London's premier anarchist bookshop (which is associated with Freedom Press, founded by Charlotte Wilson and Peter Kropotkin, amongst others). So this was the natural place for us to start distribution from – Jack London wrote *People of the Abyss*, about Whitechapel and the East End, in 1903 and honestly it's not that different today.

We then reached out to other radical bookshops around the country and comrades in various towns and cities, and that's how we've managed to get it out beyond London. It sort of depends on the location and the time/enthusiasm the local volunteers have, but it's really taken off in some places. Bristol is our second biggest distribution location, and this is down to the dedication of the crew at People's Republic of Stokes Croft.

To be honest, it's quite hands off—we let local groups have autonomy over how they want to distribute. Lots of them are already working with homeless comrades—Food Not Bombs groups, for example. But we try to visit the groups in person as much as possible, and we're about to have our first online meet up for distribution volunteers.

ARB: Who are the folks who sell DOPE? Is there a typical profile, or do people have a wide range of backgrounds and experiences?

DSP: In London, at least, it is mostly homeless people—but there's a diversity within the homeless community, from rough sleepers to people who live in hostels, to squatters and sofa surfers.

But we always say it's for 'anyone who could use a little solidarity', and there are a range of people who come and pick it up—it's just anyone who could use some no-questions asked cash in their pockets. There are people who've been selling it consistently from the start and then there are people who come and go when they need a bit of money.

ARB: DOPE recently published a piece by Leah Cowan about deportations in the UK. In your interaction with vendors are you seeing connections between immigration policy and homelessness?

DSP: So, in the UK we have what's known as the 'hostile environment'—government policy that is designed to be as cruel as possible to deter immigration. And a few years ago, this saw established homelessness charities working with the Home Office to deport homeless people without the correct immigration status—which is totally fucked, of course.

Obviously, the hostile environment means that it's more difficult for some people to access employment, and some of those people have found that selling DOPE is an option for them.

ARB: The content of DOPE is pointedly anarchist, anti-capitalist, pro-organized labor, anti-authoritarian. Do you hear opinions from sellers about what's in the magazine? What kinds of reactions do they get while selling on the street?

DSP: One of the nice things is that we've never put any conditions on people selling the magazine, nobody has to sign up to anything or agree with our manifesto or anything. But vendors do read it and we've sort of organically had all these political conversations with them, and they talk to people they're trying to sell it to about the ideas published in the magazine. Some of them won't use the word 'anarchism' because it's taboo, but they're still having conversations about anarchist ideas.

I heard from one vendor who told him someone read and came back for a refund because he didn't agree with the political content. The vendor was cool with that and gave him his refund. He said it was a point of pride to do that, because he doesn't want it to be just a charity thing or "posh begging". Of course, not everyone agrees with everything, and some people will just want some money—and that's totally fine—but I think a lot of people are proud to be involved with something that has some meaning.

We give DOPE out to sellers for free, and they get to keep 100% of the proceeds from sales. We see it as a form of mutual aid and direct action… Our first issue was 1,000 copies and four years later we're now printing 30,000 copies per issue.

ARB: Aesthetically, DOPE has this fantastic, dynamic street style. How did it come about—was it an evolution or baked in from the start? Tell us about the art. How do you see the role of art/design in the context of DOPE and in relation to the writing?

DSP: We've always tried to make it a beautiful object that anyone can appreciate—so it deliberately has a relatively clean aesthetic. The vast majority of people who buy it are random people in the street, so we didn't want it to be too 'scene' or even 'movement'. There is absolutely a place for the photocopied zine and we've all got a lot of love for that culture, but we're trying (and probably sometimes failing) to do something different.

That said, we're fairly hands off with our art commissions, also. So, every issue we give the covers to a different artist and ask them to fill the space—we're happy to give feedback but we've also never suffered from giving people autonomy over what they create.And sometimes the covers that we're not so keen on, end up being the most popular—and vice versa.

ARB: Any advice for folks who are starting their own publishing/distro project?

DSP: We're obviously supportive of radical publishing projects and we've quite often given people advice to get started, mostly on practical things like where to print, distribution etc., and we're always happy to do that. We want there to be as many people as possible making and spreading radical propaganda.

Other than that, please believe that we are not experts—none of us has a background in publishing or anything—and can only really give advice based on our own experience. But maybe that is also the best advice: get experience. Start doing it and then keep doing it and keep doing it.

***Marc Lepson** collaborates on art direction and design for the* Anarchist Review of Books.

This Shit Sucks

Jessica Lawless talks with Sarah Jaffe

Work sucks. We've barely scraped by under disaster capitalism for a while now. During the Great Recession once reliable professions such as working for a newspaper or being a college professor became low-wage, precarious employment. Income gaps are creating bigger racial divides while more billionaires than ever flaunt their wealth. A key takeaway from the on-going COVID-19 pandemic is that we're tired of it. Pew Research reports that 47 million people left their jobs in 2021 because of low pay, no childcare, healthcare, or paid time off, shitty schedules, disrespect, and no path for advancement. People who stayed on the job, organized. Between October 2021 and March 2022, the National Labor Relations Board received a 57% increase in petitions for union elections.

Sarah Jaffe's, *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (Hurst 2021), reads like a feminist punk anthem for our times. Jaffe sheds light on some of the most common jobs women, queers, and femmes have—K-12 teaching, non-profit, domestic work, retail, and non-tenured professors—skewering the myth of an equitable relationship between labor and love. There is an exceptional chapter on art—the connective tissue throughout my work life—that unpacks the systemic impossibility of earning a living solely as an artist. Jaffe gives convincing evidence that debt and the inability to create a safety net are not the result of individual shortcomings but capitalism working as designed.

As a union organizer, I wanted to talk to Jaffe about the labor movement. I work for a union that is doing its best to create socially just working conditions for the members we represent as well as for the staff. This isn't true of most unions, which notoriously treat their staff horribly. At my last job, I was expected to work 60–70 hours a week while on a year-long probationary period. Co-workers were fired the day before Christmas. A single mom without childcare was let go because she brought her daughter to work on a Saturday. My staff union filed grievances over patterns of racism against Black organizers, over gender pay gaps exasperated by ageism, and over gender discrimination in promotions. Homophobia and transphobia ran rampant and reports of sexism and sexual harassment were countered with "toughen up, it's just union culture."

Friends working for other unions have the same stories, including anti-union campaigns against staff unions. Like all abusive relationships where love is coercive, it can be dangerous to expose the truth. *Work Won't Love You Back* gave me trust in Jaffe to navigate a conversation together about the unquestionable importance of the labor movement, and the questionable practices of labor unions as employers.

Organized labor's origins weren't, "Jobs are pretty cool, we should just make them a little bit better." It was, "This shit sucks. This is not a way to live. We want to limit the boss's access to us as much as possible."

Jessica Lawless: You conclude *Work Won't Love You Back* with the idea that "Capitalism's greatest trick has been to convince us that work is our greatest love." What's possible if we upend that belief?

Sarah Jaffe: Everything. Organized labor's origins weren't, "Jobs are pretty cool, we should just make them a little bit better." It was, "This shit sucks. This is not a way to live. We want to limit the boss's access to us as much as possible." The labor movement has conceded this basic premise about work and what we're seeing now is people frustrated about more than working conditions; people are pissed about work itself. Unions are struggling to catch up with this generalized anger that's growing because things keep getting worse.

JL: There's been a dramatic turn in our relationship to work, the economy, debt, all of it, from the Great Recession, to the economic disaster that has come with the Covid-19 Pandemic. If we imagine an abolitionist feminist future, what is work?

SJ: A world that devalues people who don't or can't work is the same world that has left people in prisons and nursing homes to die of COVID. This world doesn't care what happens to people who produce for capital. We have a hard time imagining a different world because we've been hammered so aggressively over the last 40 years with the idea that work is where we find meaning, how we contribute to society. Realistically, jobs that are the most productive, the most useful to society, are often the ones that we don't assume people love. Sanitation workers, are doing important work. Especially during a pandemic. If somebody doesn't pick up the garbage, we all get sick. Nobody thinks that's a dream job, or is meant to have their identity wrapped up in that job. But that work needs to be done.

JL: So, in the future, there's work to keep basic functions of society going, but work isn't our identity or proof of our worth to self and others?

SJ: Right. You know that Marx quote you can fish in the morning, hunt in the afternoon, and criticize after dinner. I love that! We are a combination of things that are work and not work. It's not that we wouldn't ever do something considered work. In my socialist utopia, we'll all do a trash shift once a month, as a contribution to a world that is less miserable. We'll make the garbage picking-up less miserable. Working with friends, telling stories and gossiping while cleaning the bathroom. The freedom to do things at our own pace. This difference is important.

JL: What about love?

SJ: If we think about our emotions and our connections as potentially disruptive to the entire system, the boss not caring if you die but you caring if your co-workers die is a material analysis of human emotion. This is what led to the first union at Amazon. Co-workers creating a vehicle for that care. Which is the corniest thing I've ever said about a union. But it's true. Capitalism wants to turn us into robots. The perfect worker is productive and nothing else. Our external desires and connections and needs get minimized through hyper-surveillance. The minute humans become disruptive, they try to replace us with machines. COVID has shown us the boss doesn't care if we die. Before, I would have been laughed at for saying this. But now I've got interviews with people from the last two years saying over and over again, "They wouldn't give us PPE, we had to work anyway. We're essential workers, but we're expendable." This is part of the system.

JL: One of my favorite phrases floating around when I lived in Oakland at the height of Black Lives Matter organizing was similar—"Solidarity is the new I love you." At the same time, love being a safe idea is challenging. The history of love, both romantic and familial, includes instances of violence, distrust, trauma.

SJ: I spend a lot of time beating up on the family as an institution at the start of *Work Won't Love You Back*. The first half of the labor of love ethic is family love, the work that women do in the home and all the ways that that work is gendered and ends up being toxic. The second half of the labor of love ethic is artistic labor, which is the equivalent of the way we are taught to think of romantic love. That you're supposed to lose yourself in it, which also ends up being toxic. I always go back to the Margaret Thatcher line, there's no such thing as society, there are individual men and women and there are families. She's saying if you don't want to be completely alone, go make a family. If you don't have a family for a variety of reasons, then you're just fucked. When COVID cuts you off from all the other ways that we build communities and experience love, the result is a whole lot of damage. Solidarity is a counterweight to that. Our existence doesn't hang on whether one person loves us. Solidarity is having a community of people who value our existence whether or not they personally love us.

JL: If solidarity can cut through the violent and manipulative aspects of family and love, is it possible to have a labor movement that supports abolishing trafficking and incarceration?

SJ: Labor history includes state violence against unionists we forget about—Eugene Debs sent to jail for criticizing the war, the Haymarket martyrs being executed, people were shot, stabbed, run over by cars, lynched for being organizers, for being on strike. Amazon fighting labor organizing is a form of state violence. Amazon makes more money providing surveillance services to the US government, the Israeli government, other governments that do awful things to their populations, than it does in the warehouses where workers are organizing. In Bessemer, Alabama I interviewed union staff who said they have never seen a company so integrated into the local municipal system. Amazon could get cops on site whenever they wanted. They got a USPS post office box installed to intimidate workers mailing ballots--this was one of the main reasons the first union election in Bessemer was overturned. They got traffic lights changed so workers weren't stopping at the red light where organizers were waiting to talk about unionizing.

I'm doing a series on labor and the supply chain issues for my podcast, *Belabored*. I interview Laleh Khalili on her work about the similarities between ship labor and carceral labor. Workers get stuck on ships because of immigration laws, because they have to have highly regimented papers in order to get off a docked boat. There is an internationally racialized hierarchy on the ships. The captains are white Europeans, the mid-level workers are South Asian, the entry level crew are mostly Filipino. This is structured on legacies of colonialism.

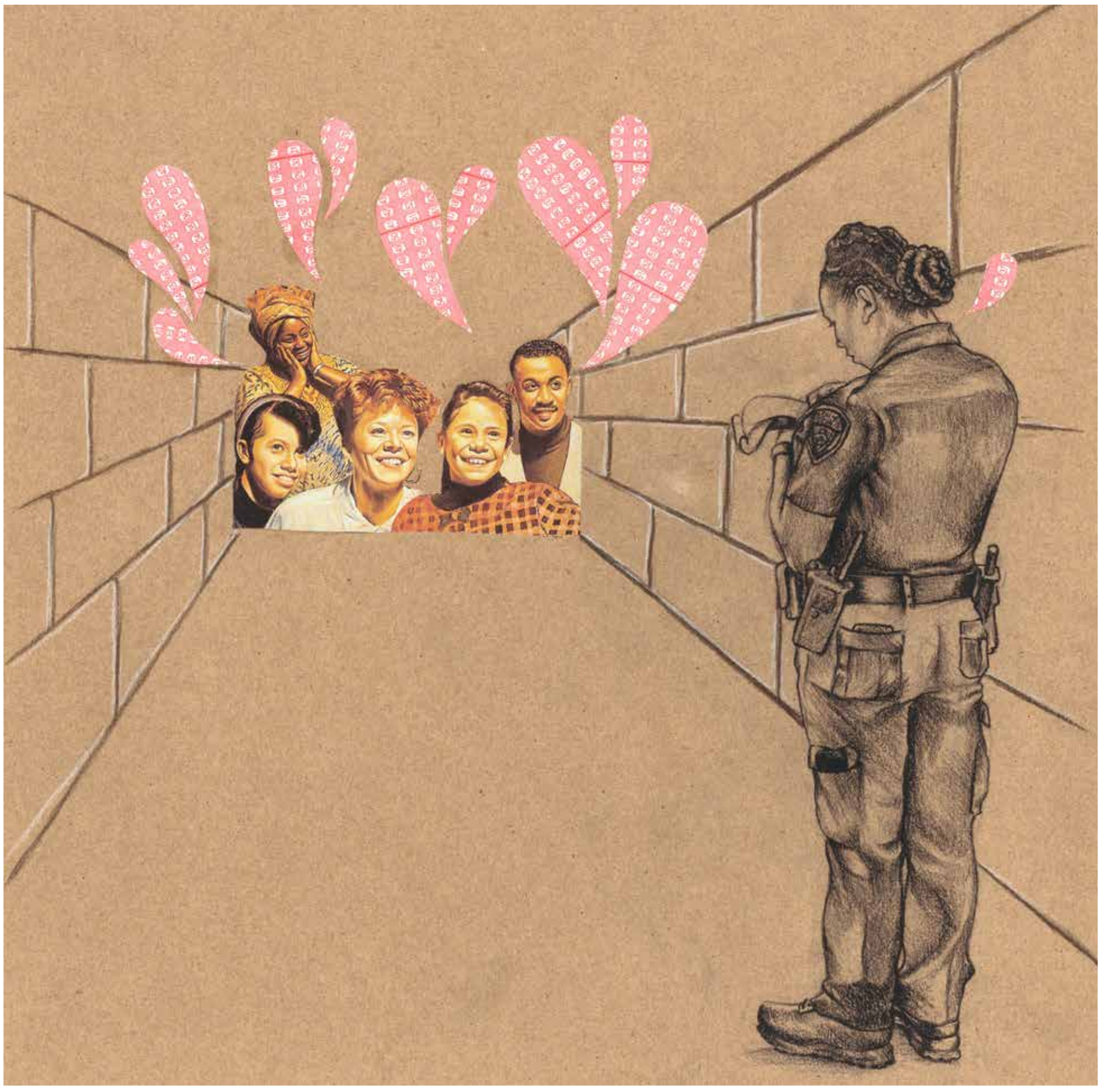
Parts of the labor movement still think we shouldn't talk about anything other than bread and butter issues. They're just wrong. The history of colonialism made those shipping routes in the first place. Colonialism allows Filipino workers to be paid a fraction of what the white European captain or the white American captain are paid. Deregulated labor makes outsourcing to garment factories in Bangladesh possible, where thousands of workers, mostly women and girls, have been injured—even killed—in factory fires, in collapsing buildings. Without understanding the history of exploitation and violence that got us here in the first place, Labor is going to miss so many questions we need to answer.

JL: That takes me to my personal billion-dollar question. Unions are notoriously horrible places to work. The managers of unions, the leadership tasked with changing working conditions in this country, often reinforce and create harm for the union staff, who are workers. There's a fundamental hypocrisy in the labor movement that isn't being broadly addressed. What do we need to do to change this?

SJ: This is why I wrote the chapter about nonprofits. The issues are connected. It's the expectation of sacrifice. "We just have to work a million hours right now to overthrow capitalism, we'll fix sexism and racism later." Honey, what do you think capitalism is? Capitalism tells us success is working harder than everybody else. When everything is crisis all the time, we sacrifice people. This is racialized and gendered and classed. Who can devote themselves singularly and entirely to work? If you are a single mom, at some point you have to go home to take care of your kids. But everyone needs to be able to take time off, everybody needs to be able to be a person. No one can work hard enough to singlehandedly win a campaign. Good organizing is going to determine the win. That means the organizing has to center people from the rank and file, people who are single parents, Black, formerly incarcerated, trans. People coming from experiences dealing with bullshit from multiple angles. The Combahee River Collective statement is still the solution to not sacrificing anyone. If we ensure that Black trans women are safe in the workplace, those protections are going to make everybody else safer. Histories of exploitation matter and are connected. I don't think we win until the labor movement takes seriously its responsibility to all workers.

Jessica Lawless *is working on a book about the collapse of higher education and the possibility for abolitionist unions, titled* Cultural Capital Doesn't Pay the Rent.

Sarah Jaffe *is a Type Media Center fellow and an independent journalist covering the politics of power, from the workplace to the streets. She has written for* The New York Times, The Guardian, The Nation *and many other outlets.*



Cul de Sac 1 by Shellyne Rodriguez. Mixed media 2018

Detail of Re-enchanting the World by Małgorzata Mirga-Tas. Textile Installation 2022

At The Heart of The Work

Nicholas Gamso

A series of murals by textile artist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, currently on view in the Polish Pavilion at the 2022 Venice Biennale, depicts the lives of the Roma people, the largest ethnic group in Europe. The Roma, who have been subjected to abuses and expulsions for centuries, were, in Poland, forced into state-run settlements by the soviet-aligned government in 1964.

The murals are a loose narration of this history. They show caravans on horseback alongside scenes of contemporary life in a Polish settlement. A man tends a garden, a group of women talk while hanging linens. There is a funeral procession and mourning rites, music and dance, children in the company of animals. The cycle is titled "Re-enchanting the World."

Mirga-Tas assembled the murals from old garments and scraps of cloth, which she gathered with the help of women from her own Bergikta Roma community in Czarna Góra, a settlement in the Tatra Mountains. Each of the murals' figures comprises a patchwork of varied patterns and textures, with details like facial features drawn in black ink onto unbleached linen fabric. Several figures, based on specific members of Mirga-Tas's family and community, are shown sewing together the very panel on which they appear.

Each day the Polish pavilion alights with curiosity. Curators have scattered a handful of wooden armchairs around the room, inviting viewers to study and admire the work. The audience finds pleasure and even surprise in the experience, fulfilling Mirga-Tas's wish to "create a magical world, subjected to constant 're-enchanting,' which becomes a kind of refuge for the audience."

Mirga-Tas installed additional fabric panels on the pavilion's façade, softening its fascist-era austerity and projecting the exhibition's enchantments into the surrounding world. A series of looping paths leads from the pavilion to a large park on Sant'Elena, overlooking the lagoon, full of Venetians relaxing on the grass and taking in the sun.

Silvia Federici, whose recent book, *Re-Enchanting the World*, was a touchstone for Mirgas-Tas, describes the life of nomadic and indigenous communities through reference to the commons—a well of collective social and material resources that constitutes "an already present reality." The commons is always there, beneath the realm of visible politics, in friendships, families, informal social relationships, and stewardship of the land. Yet the commons is also endangered, and must therefore be protected and supported with "new strategies, new alliances." Federici explains:

> A mine is opened threatening the air that people breathe and the water that everyone drinks; coastal waters are drilled to extract petroleum poisoning the sea, the beaches, and the cropland; an old neighborhood is razed to the ground to make space for a stadium—immediately new lines are drawn. Not only communities but families are restructured, often along opposing lines, for the danger faced has a consciousness-raising effect and calls for everyone to take a stand and define one's principles of social and ethical behavior.

Federici alludes to dangers that should be obvious to anyone living on this planet: abuses to the land, the abandonment and persecution of minority populations. Mirga-Tas is working with these realities in mind. Her pursuit of an enchanted world makes sense in the shadow of a world dis-enchanted by capitalism.

Art can play a role in both dis-enchanting and re-enchanting the world. At the Venice Biennale, works from seemingly every culture are gathered together in a panorama of global diversity, yet they are also, plainly, stripped of territorial context and displayed to a select public of art consumers. The resulting world-picture allows for moments of enchantment, such as the experience of viewing Mirga Tas's work, even as it engages in banal, highly destructive commercial culture.

Mirga-Tas's murals allude to another space of art—an un-representable realm of cooperation and exchange. One could argue that these activities are at the heart of the work, while the finished murals are better understood as a minor outcome, traces of a process now passed. Perhaps this is the interpretation Mirga-Tas desires, as the murals, if one looks closely, reveal their stitches and seams, each scrap of fabric outlined as if to evince a loss of context, or location, and to illustrate a process of repair.

There are conceptual benefits to reading the murals in this way. We can reverse the order of importance between the work's status as a finished object and the processes which brought it into being. Such a shift could also mean asking if the spectators in Venice are unable to see the real work. Perhaps this would prompt us to question the very notion of a discreet artwork or a professional art practice, as well as to question the act of spectatorship.

Yet there is a striking contradiction that presses through. Racial and gendered divisions of labor, spaces of extraction and uneven development—these are also invisible to the Biennale's audience. One could not speak of the modern world without their existence.

For Federici, this contradiction expresses a "crisis of reproduction." Given the widespread devastation unleashed by capitalism, she suggests, the field of reproduction must itself be politicized—it must become a part of political consciousness. To a re-enchant the world will require telling stories of communal life and sharing strategies for repair. It is not enough to abolish capitalism— politics, too, must be transformed.

Over the years, a number of curatorial projects have sought to explore new forms of political community beyond the Nation State. Examples include an unofficial Roma pavilion in Venice in 2007 (for which Mirga-Tas was the principal artist) and an exhibit by seventeen contemporary Palestinian artists, which ran simultaneously with the 2022 Biennale. These interventions were not sponsored by any government, nor were they were they alibis for globalization. They were means of expressing solidarity through the pleasure of artistic creation and aesthetic connection.

Pleasure, Federici observes, is worth keeping and tending as a part of the commons, whether it's the pleasure of friendship, sex and romantic love, community ritual, or nature. Art is also a form of pleasure; a kind of commons, as Mirga-Tas suggests by putting her work into dialog with the Palazza Schifanoia. The great frescos of Schifanoia consist of surreal allegorical tableaux, supposedly conceived as efforts to escape or to avoid boredom through the experience of art (literally *Schivar la noia*). They invite viewers to contemplate mythological stories, the passage of time (each panel represents a month on the Roman calendar) and, as in Mirga-Tas's work, depictions of communion with an endangered natural world.

Boredom and dis-enchantment are not the same—though it is easy to see how boring it is in a world where people, places, animals, the whole ecology of life no longer matters, and where all is overwritten by commerce. To look is not enough. We must try to look in ways that transcend our degraded condition, and to embrace the wonders and pleasures that make life worth living— pleasures which belong, as a commons, to no one.

***Nicholas Gamso** is the author of* Art After Liberalism *(Columbia, 2022) and is associate editor of* Places Journal.

These Are The Breaks

Fractures and escapes in the fiction of Yevgenia Belorusets

Tallulah Griffith

Lucky Breaks
by Yevgenia Belorusets
112pp. New Directions 2022

The convergence of fiction and documentary can become messy. As harrowing news emerges of mass graves in Bucha, verifiable testimony against Russian soldiers is increasingly vital. When it comes to documenting the lived experiences of this war zone, however, Yevgenia Belorusetst *Lucky Breaks* presents truth as something in the making.

Belorusets—whose previous work on queer, unemployed and traveler families was exhibited at the 2015 Venice Biennale—layers the voices of 'ordinary' Ukrainian women, interweaving photo series and written vignettes. It remains unclear how much of each interview is remembered and how much imagined. Meaning, the book seems to say, is cumulative, made possible only by the build-up of these impressions. First published in 2018, *Lucky Breaks* is set against the fits and starts of Russian and separatist violence which has plagued Ukraine since the 2014 Revolution of Dignity. Though the conflict casts a palpable shadow over the text, Belorusets takes as her focus not the men-at-arms but the mysterious or mythologically charged stories of women who are tarot readers, prophetic dreamers, and modern-day witches.

Destroy, Preserve, Destroy, Preserve...(Mountains) by Tanya Hasitings. Mixed media 2021

Throughout, the magical unsettling of everyday life recalls a tradition in Russian literature of 'defamiliarization', of making the mundane strange; the unreal qualities of these stories are the method by which Belorusets grapples with the subversive power of the women she interviews. A midwife on the Kharkiv borderlands who delivers babies with an oven glove seems to straddle the boundaries separating nations and planes of existence: she is cast as centuries old and freckled with stardust, and her mitt juts out from her "black hole of a window". Another reads horoscopes to determine who may safely venture outside, gesturing to the chaotic demands of fate and the apparently arbitrary nature of the shellings. There's the florist in Donetsk who is familiar with "exotic, barely existent words" and thereby tied to the vast mythology of plant genuses; she is herself described much like a wildflower, unnoticed and delicate. Though the flowers may be downtrodden and the forests of the borderlands ravaged by war, Belorusets reminds us that these women's voices will not be wiped out: "witchcraft is forever".

The surreal qualities of the book also offer an affecting account of trauma. Objects and people overlap in these women's narratives which are so often discredited for their ambiguities. In Kyiv, a refugee braves the rain to rescue an umbrella which she cares for like a sick relative; in the same city, a woman finds that on International Women's Day she is no longer able to walk. She becomes "a living monument", testament, perhaps, to the fact that a day of celebration does little to transform her lived reality. A man throws her a bouquet which is described quite literally in terms of a bone thrown to a dog, and is eerily echoed when another chance encounter later results in a man throwing not flowers but a punch. Another woman mends her favorite shirt and sticks herself with the needle; the two bleed as they are stitched together. In wartime, there are "women left to litter the road". There's a harrowing meditation on the object nature of the wounded body, or the thingness of words which cannot change anything.

It is women, the book tells us, who possess the ability to make sense of seemingly irreconcilable things. A forest-dwelling aunt who tells a fairy tale is "explaining, without saying anything coherent". Men seem to have no such power. One Olga Petrovna delights in transforming teapots into fans, but finds that she falters under the gaze of the male waiter.

Men feature very minimally, but their intrusions are notable. Though these scenes are also absurdist and darkly witty, they serve as a reminder of the nation's relentless demands for war and work. One Ukrainian soldier is said to have "married war", seemingly to have something to commit to, and a former bank manager takes work as a "stalker", leading guided tours to destroyed buildings. Given that the ruins Belorusets opens up once belonged to women, and that women are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises, it seems only appropriate that the stalker's work is named in terms of gendered crime.

Rarely when reading a book have I been so aware of turning a page as something like peeling back a layer. The intent to unravel dominant historical narratives is emphasized by the book's many beginnings—a photograph with no surrounding text, a preface and a pre-text note all crowd the front matter before the author throws us into her first story, which opens "at the center". Here, a woman is described as an 'annotation', like the marginalia scrawled into the history books as an act of defiance.

These circuitous beginnings lay out the evasive and ephemeral quality of the book, which resists any single authorial voice. The preface insists quite strangely that a much better foreword had already been written but was irrevocably lost, and—as in the rest of the book—the author is placed in a conversation where her voice is quickly indistinguishable from the rabble. Throughout, the mike is passed from speaker to speaker, among relatives and friends of friends, like a photograph.

Guiding us through these oblique entry points, the author asks us to look askance in order to see what's on the periphery. The enduring and elusive power of the women in these stories make for a hauntingly urgent book. Quietly contending with the horrors of war, Belorusets clarifies that "There are no explanations. But the next story might make some things clearer."

Tallulah Griffith is a writer and artist living in London. She writes about social justice and has been featured in Wasafiri, the Oxford Review of Books, *and* Tate magazine.

Like an Atom Bomb

Nick Mamatas

The Doloriad
by Missouri Williams
240pp. Macmillan/Holtzbrinck 2022

Nearly everyone looks forward to the end of history. The Communists do, of course, as do many an anarchist—what happens after anarchy is achieved and the state is kaput? (This is a rhetorical question. Don't write in.) Neoliberal technocrats famously attempted to summon history to its end, only to be confronted by religious populists of various stripes, all of whom anticipate this or that telos that'll put them up top and the rest of us down down down on the bottom. Popular culture is the same: nearly every dystopian fiction or zombie film or world-go-blooey bit of business contains a theme of uncomplicated joy: now that we are unburdened by history, we can do whatever we like! Shoot our neighbors, hang out in a starship while wearing a jumpsuit that never gets messy, flip out and do some violent propaganda-by-the-deed on the baddies, you name it.

But not in *The Doloriad* by Missouri Williams. This novel depicts a truly hopeless circumstance. History did not end, it ground to a halt. A small family, most members of which have experienced genetic damage thanks to incest, live in the ruins near a city in what was once the Czech Republic. The titular Dolores, legless and speechless, is sent off in a wheelbarrow to marry into another family, but crawls back home to continue her life as the target of infinite abuse. If she doesn't qualify as a scapegoat, it is only because the other children, constantly coupling and conniving, attacking and retreating, are in near-identical straits. One sibling, Jan, spends much of the book screaming as he slowly dies. What's there to do about that but nothing, and laugh about how there is nothing to do?

There are adults, and they seem to hold some sort of authority, at first. The Matriarch can make demands, and she controls when everyone gets to watch recordings of her favorite TV show, the peculiar philosophical sitcom *Get Aquinas In Here!* There's a schoolmaster (he can read!) who occupies some of the time of the children. Perhaps the marriage the Matriarch arranged for Dolores was a sham. Perhaps there is indeed nobody else left in the world.

The Doloriad hints at story, but it is not really "the matter of Dolores." Instead, Williams employs a kind of low omniscience, drifting from character to character, past to eternal present, not only between scenes but within them, and also within marathon sentences of eight or more clauses. Some fill an entire page. Language is degenerating in the setting, thanks to the world having ended, and the few words the schoolmaster and some of the other more intellectual characters can still wield are multiply repeated and always italicized. They're like fingers clutching the tiniest handholds on a crumbling cliff face. Not even Aquinas and his sheep sidekick are of any use, even when they intrude more directly into the narrative—italicized as we lack any better word for the experience of reading it.

Is the book any good? It's brilliant, in the way a nuclear explosion is brilliant. And as the real end of history will one day be, it resolutely refuses to be a good time.

***Nick Mamatas** is the author of several novels, including* Move Under Ground *and* The Second Shooter, *and short fiction in* Best American Mystery Stories *and* The Year's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy. *His essays and reportage have appeared in* The Smart Set, Clamor, In These Times, Village Voice, *and many other places.*

No I.D.

Lola Meisseroff in conversation with Gilles Dauve

***Gilles Dauve** is a cultural critic, historian and teacher. Also a part of the 68 uprising, his new book* Your Place or Mine: a 21st Century Essay on (Same) Sex *is published by PM Press.*

***Lola Miesseroff** is the author of* Voyage en Outre-Gauche*, she was a member of the French activist group Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action (FHAR) and part of the Paris 1968 uprising.*

The FHAR was a collective who's activism focused on anti-capitalism as a necessity for sexual liberation. Their belief that everyone could use their body as they saw fit, was inherently part of a working class struggle.

Gilles Dauve: How did you become a part of the Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action (FHAR)?

Lola Meisseroff: In April 68, I told my parents I was done with the university. In 67, I had already read *On the Poverty of Student Life*, then at the beginning of 68, I read Debord, Vaneigem, Marx. If I had been asked to define myself, I would have answered I was an anarchist in complete agreement with situationist ideas. In May 68, I joined the action committee in my small town, and became close to a fifteen year old boy named Christian, the younger brother of a school friend. Christian was unashamedly gay, he had no idea how same-sex was repressed. which is odd because he was the son of a bricklayer, and brought up in a strongly Stalinist environment.

GD: Can you talk about your own sexuality at the time?

LM: In Marseille, we practised group sex, completely unplanned, nothing to do with orgiastic bacchanalia. Everyone simply went with everyone, homos and heteros combined. It was uncontrolled and cheerful sex, tender and friendly. In the autumn of 70, ten of us moved into a 3-room Paris flat: two bedrooms and a room which was reserved for those who wanted all-night discussions. Other similar flats appeared; everyone met and mingled, we talked till dawn, we went to demos, always as a group. Those were days of sparkling ideas, debates, action and sex. And our friends were particularly involved in fighting for the end of the repression of homosexuality. Just as we took part in the fight against the repression of women.

GD: Was it the women's movement that got you involved in FHAR?

LM: In 1971, a woman friend invited us to a meeting of the Women's Lib Movement. The whole group went, but the boys had to stay in the café next door. Three of us walked in, all girls, with a boy friend. We said: Sorry, but, as far as we're concerned, we live as a group with boys, some are gay, others aren't, we don't separate ourselves from the boys to fight these battles.

They said: We stand for gender non-mixing.

I wouldn't say we were pleased. Then we heard absurd statements from them like: "I am a Lesbian by political choice," And I cried out: And not for pleasure, you idiot!?

So when we heard about the birth of the FHAR, we rushed in headlong. We threw ourselves body and soul into this struggle. What attracted us was that it was not a homosexual liberation front, but a homosexual front for revolutionary action. We thought the same about Women's Lib. We were sure that the existence of Women's Lib was important and good, if it worked within a broader range of activities, i.e. that it was gender-mixed. Similarly, we thought the existence of the FHAR was important and good, if it was also gender-mixed.

GD: Mixed in the sense that it was also open to non-gays?

LM: That's right: open to all walks of life. At the time, we moved into a flat on rue Charlemagne: lots of people would live there or come to sleep, and the place became a sort of annex of the FHAR. This was where I met the young man who later became (journalist and activist) Hélène Hazera. The FHAR had district committees, so we created the FHAR Marais committee. Our place developed into an awful mess where people debated, smoked pot, where the district committee held its meetings and actions were prepared…We proclaimed our sexual freedom. In short, we were engaged in permanent provocation. We fucked in public places. Marais was a working-class neighbourhood where you heard Yiddish on every street, we had no idea that the area would morph into a hub of homosexual commodification.

GD: What actions did you prepare?

LM: Creating havoc in the gay ghetto, demanding people get out of the closet. One day, we heard that gay-bashing was taking place in the Buttes-Chaumont park. Some of our friends went. Suddenly gay-bashers were faced with a troop of screaming fairies and the homophobes got beaten. That was fine. Bashing gay-bashers. Just as we enjoyed acting as "agents provocateurs" in relation to the gay ghetto.

GD: The FHAR has this reputation of very messy general assemblies, which doubled as pick-up and fuck places.

LM: I can't remember anyone fucking while a FHAR meeting was in progress. But we had fun, it was quite festive, let's face it.

GD: Why did you leave the FHAR?

LM: Because we quickly ran into people who liked to boss others around. Petty bureaucrats who knew how to manipulate a meeting in a way that a lot of things were already decided in advance. they started being invited to art galleries, to socialite events, which we objected to: this was like going back to the ghetto. My friend Jacques Desbouit went to an art opening and wrote on the paintings: "Fags are vandals". We started acting scandalously.

We joined forces with what later became the Gazolines (whose tactics were camp, humor, make up, overturning police busses). And we started protesting. They didn't do things by halves.

GD: Were there other theoretical divides in FHAR?

FAHR in the streets. May 1, 1971

LM: We witnessed the rise of a discourse that described homosexuality as inevitably revolutionary, as if by nature, and bisexuality as inevitably "recuperated", a cop-out. So the polysexuality perspective went down the drain. We explained that we weren't interested in fitting into the category of a specific sexual orientation…and that Nazi fags did exist, didn't they! Our communal flat became a meeting place and a discussion centre, extra-FHAR, extra-organisation, extremely active.

GD: Sorry to be pompous, but what about class struggle?

LM: For us that was part and parcel of our activity. There was no separation between life and what could be called our political activity. We formed a collective. Wherever we worked, we were involved in struggles as soon as they occurred. In the post-68 situation, everything was being challenged. And (in spite of our anti-work stand) we had to work and were active in the work-place, taking over the floor of companies. We also did a lot of shop-lifting, we did "free check-out" actions. We helped abortions to take place, we provided shelter for very young people, one who'd run away from social services, another from a seminary, we housed homeless people. Daily life was a big issue.

GD: How do you look back on those years? And how do you perceive all that's happened since then: the gay movement, LGBT groups everywhere?

LM: I see the rise of identities developing and closing in on themselves. The very notion of "the homosexual as revolutionary" was already an identity category. But we could not predict it would grow into a general identity regression. LGBT groups are born out of separation and maintain separation: they cut off class struggle from the dimension that I'd rather call daily life, the liberation of life. Little by little, people have given up on class struggle. If that's what sexual struggles turn into, I lose most of my interest, and so do my friends. From the time when it became a divided—and divisive—struggle, whether it's the category of women, gays, whatever, now a racial category, I couldn't be part of it.

As transgender person Hélène Hazera—I mentioned her earlier—keeps repeating on Facebook: "Let's get our priorities right. The plight of migrants matters more than the binary vs. non-binary issue." She still supports class positions—which does not prevent her from being deeply involved in the fight for transpeople's rights. I agree there are several fronts of struggles, but I'd rather not have them separate. To me, it's like going back to the ghetto.

GD: And finally, whatever rights or better rights we get, they're guaranteed by the State.

LM: Of course. As for us, we expect nothing from the State! So we don't fight for rights. There's something highly positive in Gay Prides in so far as they express a rejection of the shame and stigma, but for me a Gay Pride that only

gathers gays—and all sorts of LBGTs—or in the best of cases LGBTs plus their friends…I've never taken part in any of them. Besides, their music sucks.

GD: That's a matter of taste.
LM: The gays and their friends, they say. Though they present it as something open, it still remains within the borders of that particular fight. If people do not shout "Down with sexual division!", "Down with wage-labour society!" to me it's meaningless.

GD: That's asking for a lot.

LM: Indeed, I'm asking for a lot, but...An LGBT front against capitalism, I might agree with that. A front for the liberation of LGBTs doesn't interest me. I've always held this position, and I wasn't the only one. My gay friends did not define themselves as gay, but as fighters among us, who happened to have an additional repression to face, one that certainly made their situation worse, but one to be fought as we also fought my repression as a woman, or my repression as a worker. It all connects. And what I've learnt from the Situationist International is to oppose separation, I did and I still do. Which does not imply that I disapprove of partial struggles, I understand why they exist, but they play a counter-revolutionary role.

GD: I'd say non-revolutionary.

LM: Non-revolutionary, OK. But they can turn counter-revolutionary when they put forward democratic demands that have to be approved and implemented by the State, so democrats end up supporting the State. Even if they initially act for good reasons. Take the example of transpeople's struggle for IDs: I fully agree that we must support the right for them to have identity documents consistent with who they really are, and therefore to update their IDs, that's necessary, but basically I am against identification and IDs. It's the same with demos for undocumented people that demand "IDs for all". My friends and I, we were shouting: "No IDs for anyone!", "Down with IDs!". There's a logic there.

GD: I agree, but that leaves you in a minority position.

LM: Of course. As we've always been. But there are times in history…I remember the Paris demo in 1996 after the police had violently expelled several hundreds of illegal immigrants who had taken refuge in Saint Bernard's Church near Montmartre. In protest, thousands demonstrated in support of the immigrants. We marched to Vincennes in a spontaneous demo, and when we started shouting "No IDs for anyone!" lots of people took up the slogan, including immigrants who understood the logic of what we were saying: End all borders, end official records…Everyone can make out what it means. It's not because we're a minority that we must refrain from saying what is difficult to express. And then others can join us, as they did on that particular day, as they do in times when something real is happening.

Blast Off

Raymond Craib

Last year, billionaire Richard Branson eked out a meaningless 'victory' over billionaire Jeff Bezos in the race to reach the outer edge of their respective egos. Their space race made for good copy but there was and is little at stake other than bragging rights. No one will be colonizing Mars anytime soon. The reality is that while the uber-rich playboys play astronauts, with a check drawn from public coffers, a more troubling space race is underway. Inspired by the fictions of Ayn Rand and the frisson of Burning Man, Silicon Valley techno-libertarians look to exit existing nation-states. Not content with tax havens, gated communities, and outsized political influence, they now wish to build their own private states modeled on corporations. The sovereign nation-state, would be replaced by a "service provider" into which consumers opt in and purchase only the services that are core to libertarian concerns: militarized property protection.

Contemporary exit strategists are interested in more than merely walking away. Rather, they envision the emergence of a whole series of micro-countries which would produce their own legal and political systems and would compete for citizens, much as companies compete for consumers, by reducing the transaction costs of opting out of one polity and of opting into another. One could think of them as literal'market places and this is a political project which applies the language of market choice, and the assumption of competition as the natural form of social relations, to government under the guise of anti-politics and personal liberation. "Don't argue. Build." advises the Startup Societies Foundation website. And the place where ground is being broken? Honduras.

On a planet on which most land and water is under some form of sovereign state control, exiters faced the dilemma of where to build their new countries. Traditionally they have pursued one of two options: the high seas or countries in which they seem assured of a generous reception. The efforts to colonize the high seas have been led most recently by The Seasteading Institute, initially funded by Silicon Valley iconoclast Peter Thiel and directed by Patri Friedman, the grandson of free market fundamentalist Milton Friedman. Engineering and legal issues have constrained their optimistic visions of individual seasteads bobbing around the ocean and so they recently turned their sights instead to French Polynesia in the hopes of creating a "seazone"—a kind of ocean special economic zone—in a Tahitian lagoon. Opposition by islanders to tech-bro colonization brought the project to an abrupt end in 2018 but the seasteaders are, for lack of a better word, resilient and continue to look for sites to colonize.

Some seasteaders came ashore in the hopes of tapping into opportunities arising in Honduras. There, after a 2009 military coup d'etat, the possibilities for private, autonomous cities looked bright. The new regime looked favorably on such projects and forced changes to the constitution to allow for the creation of such cities on Honduran territory. Touted as "special economic zones," such cities would enjoy near-sovereign autonomy on land ceded to international investors by the state. A host of adventure capitalists (mostly white and mostly male US social conservatives and hip tech libertarians) soon descended, vying to plant the first fencepost. Despite their self-righteous clamor about "freedom," none of these investors balked at doing business with the corrupt and illegal regime of president Juan Orlando Hernández. Just the opposite. In 2015 The Seasteading Institute invited Hernández to a San Francisco event entitled "Disrupting Democracy." This was not just a case of tone-deafness. Libertarians may crow about freedom but they have a long history of doing business with authoritarians. Milton Friedman himself was an advisor to and defender of Chile's dictator Augusto Pinochet. In Honduras various schemes came and went with little success. The closest libertarians came to building their free private city was on the island of Roatán. The project—Roatán Próspera—is backed by a motley crew of mostly white and mostly male US social conservatives, tech libertarians, Brexiteers, and venture capitalists. Its future looked bright in 2020 but with the electoral victory of Xiomara Castro in November 2021 the tide turned again against the exiters and the RP project's future is uncertain.

Pantheon (Meeting) by Chuck Webster. Ink and shellac ink on handmade antique paper 2018

Castro's opposition to these projects is shared by many of her compatriots. It is easy to understand why. Despite the hoopla that sells these projects as advances in freedom, development, and decentralization, with promises of increased security and well-being, such experiments have little to offer most Hondurans. Once installed, free private cities would be immune from the popular will, making them permanent and extraterritorial spaces on Honduran land. Meanwhile, Hondurans continue to flee the violence that only worsened after the 2009 coup. In a grimly ironic inversion, migrants end up as "extraterritorials" elsewhere, in spaces where no legal status is provided them, while in their home country, a bevy of foreign investors and settlers create an extraterritorial space granting themselves extensive autonomous legal status.

The free private city model is the next logical step in the privatization of governance via the mechanism of property. The private cities planned for Honduras will not be free. They come with a real monetary cost of investment or purchase. They would not be open to all and there is no right for one to simply join. Immigration would be restricted and wealth is a basic determinant for membership, so much so that even advocates for the idea admit that such cities would resemble clubs more than countries or cities. Once the sales pitches and the visioning statements, the freedom squawk and the Ayn Rand quotes have been duly digested, we are left with a barefaced truth: "free private city" is another name for an expansive, private country club in someone else's country. The promotional literature that extols libertarian exit often reads less like innovation in governance and more like ideological cover for a rudimentary and age-old practice—land- and water-grabbing—wrapped in the trendy language of disruption and decentralization. The result of these new forms of territorial exit will not be an opt-in borderless world of entrepreneurial abundance but a world of hardened borders, privileged excess, and collective scarcity.

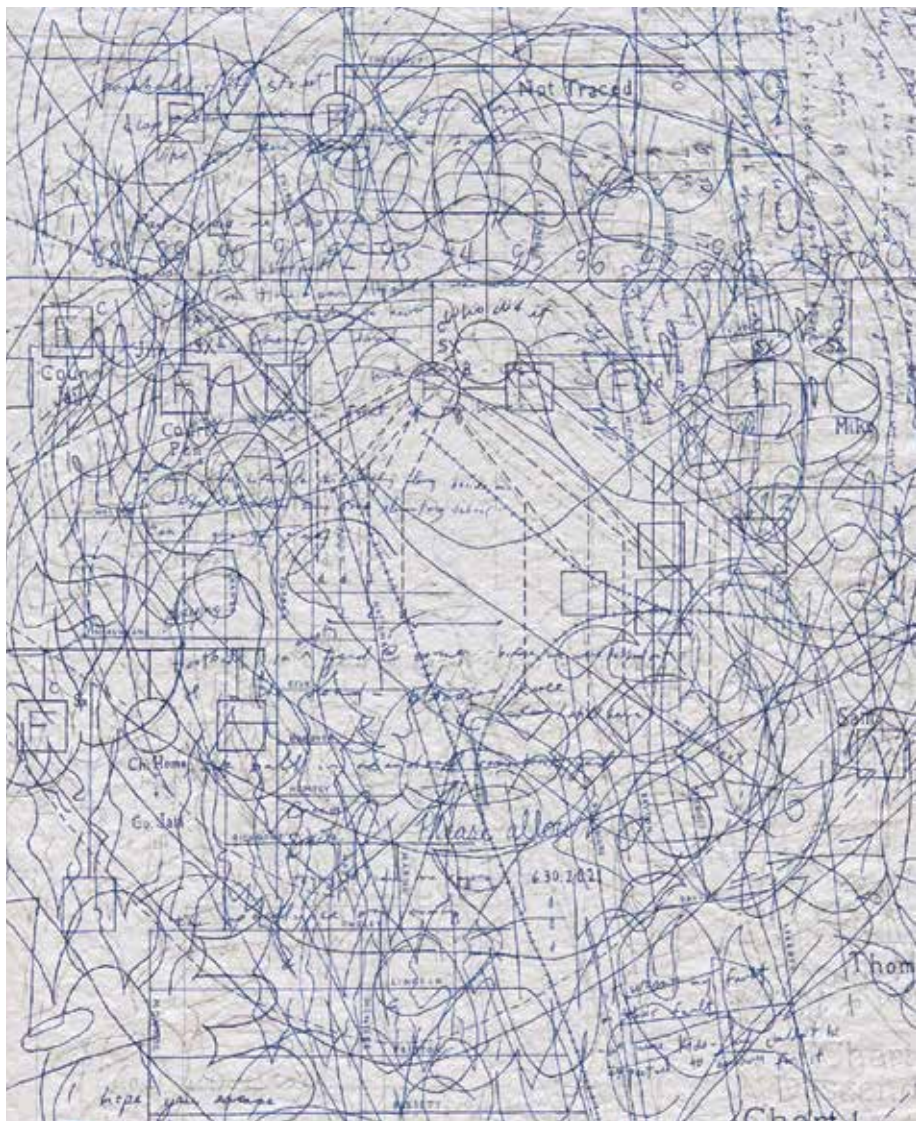
Repugnant as they are, the astral fantasies of Richard Branson, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk are a distraction. The space race that should garner our attentions is unfolding on our planet now, in places where generations of colonizers and imperialists, speculators and grifters, have always gone in order to get territorial purchase on their private dreams: Central America and the Caribbean, the island Pacific, and the high seas.

Raymond Craib *teaches in the Department of History at Cornell University and is the author, most recently, of* Adventure Capitalism: A History of Libertarian Exit, From the Era of Decolonization to the digital age *(PM Press, 2022).*

Nightfall

Thanasis Stamoulis

Thanasis Stamoulis (b. 1978) is a Greek writer based in Athens, Greece. He has written three books, *The Shadow on the Tree* (2016, nominated for the Anagnostis Prize), *Ab Ovo* (2018, nominated for the Klepsydra Prize), *The Echo of the Birds* (2021, nominated for the Anagnostis Prize). His work frequently deals with the under-represented working classes and communities at the fringes of Athens, away from the rapidly gentrifying center. His writing is driven by a concrete, modernist aesthetic, influenced by the poetics of Herta Müller, which eschews ornamentation and resists easy classification.



I hope you escape by Ben Durham. Ink and graphite on handmade paper 2021

Ⓐ

Giota looks at the cheap mosaic living room floor. She can see dozens of faces staring back at her. She takes a drag of her cigarette and wonders whose faces.

These are the faces of the people who lived in this apartment before you, her self responds. Will the same happen to mine, she asks. Yes, her self says. I don't like it, she says. It's shocking how easily faces are imprinted in the memory of a house, even when they are left abandoned, they still remember everything, her self answers.

Giota stands by the window, it is closed but the curtain moves. Behind the thin, dirty fabric she can see the park. She blinks reflexively, and doesn't want to admit that her whole life, these thirty-three years, could easily fit within its borders. The cigarette burns her lips, her hand takes it and drops it to the floor. What do these faces know of the late nights, the dirt on my shoes, the bench, the men, and my high heels which no longer click on the pavement, she wonders and draws the curtain aside. The lights of the city dance on her eyes, the paved streets, the thousands of yellow lights; on her iris dances a shattered landscape. Then she turns to the park. It's the same there, too. Furrowed tree trunks, branches naked, drifts of dry leaves around exposed roots. There's fewer and fewer people passing through these days, she thinks, and remembers the time when she was a kid and played in a park too. Back when they were all friends, and didn't know that one of them could already be a future enemy. She believes there's an explanation for all of it. Poverty, she thinks, because the kids don't play outside as they used to. Poverty won't let them. It forces them to crystallize the privation of their parents and to grow old before their time. She looks at her reflection in the glass. It's been days since she put rouge on her cheeks, since she painted her eyes black and her lips red, and so her reflection looks like a scared child living in a spectral dream.

It's been days since you went to the park, her self says, and Giota thinks that the voice wants to drive her once more out to the street. I know, she says hesitantly. Have you lost your appetite, her self says. My appetite's okay but the fear won't let me, she says. So it's the fear, her self asks. Yes, the fear, she says. What are you afraid of, her self asks. Better ask Who are you afraid of, she says. Okay then, who are you afraid of.

The men without jobs, Giota says, and remembers the last time she went to the park, when the men without jobs tore her dress and pounced on her. And each time one of them came, he said You fucking whore, and instead of payment he threw a handful of dirt in her eyes.

What scares me about those men, she says, is the way they treat other people, the way they turned from victims into culprits, she says and watches her breath fog the glass. She wipes it off with her palm, she thinks that a person who's alive and covers their tracks resembles those travelers who go from one place to another with half-empty suitcases; her body twitches, the apartment feels both too small and unbearably white. She carefully notes all the knick-knacks she has bought with the money she makes satisfying men's indecent or decent desires. Despite the fact that, this is certain to be one of the last times she will set eyes on them, she doesn't feel a thing. She is sure that if she leaves for the far-off country (like Ilias asked her to) she will have many more. And all of them brand new, all of them exquisite. The thing, though, is whether she can trust Ilias. There are times she feels she can and other times she can't. Perhaps it's him, the way he approached her, their swift acquaintance, maybe she is scared that he likes to create needs and impressions for both of them.

It feels like ages, but she can recall, albeit with fear (she always felt that memory is a path we walk without knowing where it will lead), both the time and the place of their meeting: she first laid eyes on him three weeks back. The truth is that she noticed him because he looked out of place, because instead of coming to ask her to wander the paths of the park, he stood apart and watched her for a whole week as she sat at the same bench every day, as she crossed her legs and let her smooth thighs show, as her hungry eyes scanned the city looking for the next one, as she took them by the hand, tenderly, almost motherly, and led him deep inside the park, the way she straightened her dress and pulled the dried leaves out of her hair when she came back.

You ought to be scared of him, her self told her one night, but she paid no mind.

Ilias came to her at the start of the second week. He said that he only wanted to talk. At first she thought it would be a waste of time, but she humored him. For the next three nights, Ilias sat with her and they talked until the early hours of the morning. And the next day she found that she was living in anticipation of their meeting, in anticipation of listening to stories from the far-off country which often managed to mute her sadness.

On the fourth night he asked her to dinner. The vein in her throat started pounding, the words knotted so tight they couldn't come out. Finally, she nodded yes. They sat at a table in the back. Despite the fact that the people there knew who she was, or better yet what she was, she didn't care. On the contrary, she was thrilled, she was thrilled by the fact that a man (a man she genuinely liked) treated her with respect. When they finished their meal, Ilias started talking to her again about the far-off country. After a while, he said that he had a house waiting for him there, a house with a garden. It was then that she noticed that whenever Ilias mentioned the house with the garden his face changed, it became grim and rigid like the faces of the silent men in the park. But she didn't tell him this. And when he asked her to go with him, she said nothing, she just bowed her head and stayed there mute and motionless.

Ilias finally broke the silence and said, Please come. His voice had taken on an imploring tone. She raised her head and saw his eyes gleaming, she saw her own solitary soul reflected in them.

It's not easy for someone to leave everything behind for a land where they know neither the language nor the customs, she said.

He shrugged, That's not how I felt when I left to go there.

She lit a cigarette and looked at Ilias behind the veil of smoke, she tried to bring to mind a word to describe those people who, while they have everything, act like they have nothing. She didn't find the word she was looking for but that didn't stop her. You left, she told him, because you wanted to, it's not the same. Ilias was at a loss. He started talking about the far-off country again. She had heard it all before, but still appeared to be listening intently. Inside her, though, her body had started to fear him, as if her vital organs felt when he finished talking, his voice would attack them.

Leaving your old life behind is what's important, not the reason for doing it.

She pulled her hand away. She wanted to ask him, What do you mean, but said, I think we should go.

Ilias said yes and walked her home.

At the entrance of her apartment block he leaned in to kiss her, but her hands kept him away and his lips stayed parted.

The next few nights, Ilias didn't show up at the park. But she was afraid maybe he was right in front of her and she couldn't see him, that her silence had turned him into a stranger. She remembered all the things he said to her and wondered whether this was what other people called love.

What you're looking for, her self told her, is not love but that feeling of security he provides, but she still felt restless; a few nights later, Ilias came back, very drunk, and sat beside her on the bench. He started speaking with a faltering voice and his eyes were turned to the sky. Or better still: he was talking to

himself with his eyes turned to nowhere. The men crossing the park were staring at them with spite, because deep down they knew that Ilias was paying her with a coin they had never held. A coin of hope. Are you coming, he asked her at the break of dawn. She nodded yes without a moment's hesitation. Then she lit a cigarette and sat back. She felt the back of the bench digging into hers, and smiled mirthlessly. Had Ilias asked her how she felt, she wouldn't have been able to find a single word to tell him, because they all struck her as arbitrary and cheap.

Time passes and darkness gathers outside the window pane. Giota can no longer see the benches or the trees; the park is a black void. From the street came an innocent laugh. Giota leans forward but can't see who it is that possesses such innocence. She opens the window and feels the cold on her face, her eyes fill with tears. But she doesn't yield, she bends over the sill and sees down on the sidewalk a girl wrapping her arms around a boy's shoulders. She can't see their eyes but she is certain that one's gaze submits to the gaze of the other. Life knows best how to exact revenge from those who have betrayed it, she thinks and wipes the tears running down her cheek with the back of her hand; a sigh escapes her and she closes the window. She looks around in despair, everything around her smells of old things and dust. Then she remembers all the sacrifices she made to keep this apartment, to have a place to come back to. She hears her mother's voice in her head telling her that she is a stupid slut and after all this time she hasn't anything to say on the matter. This doesn't mean that she agrees, she just can't fight her anymore. She considers calling her mother and telling her that she's going away, that she found a man who wants to spend his life with her, words to camouflage misery into love. She won't do it, though. She suspects that her mother would see right through her, she would know that Giota isn't going anywhere with this man. Maybe someone else in Giota's place could believe she would find salvation with Ilias at her side, and seize the opportunity. But not her, Ilias would merely grant her the opportunity to leave her old life behind, not start a new one. If she goes with him, she will find herself again in an uninhabitable a place. Only this time the place will be foreign, she will have to speak in a foreign tongue, she will have to approach the foreign and make it her own. But she has no time left for mistakes. Every approach seems forbidden to her.

Giota glances at the clock on the wall, it's almost midnight. She goes to the kitchen looking for her face on the mosaic floor. She can't find it, though.

It's still early, her self says and she nods.

She opens the door to the kitchen and turns on the light. She takes off her slippers and opens the door to the small balcony over the dismal narrow courtyard. She feels the darkness and quiet on her face, she listens to her breath as it matches her heartbeat. She takes a step forward, as if the courtyard is calling her. She grips the railing, her face softens, her eyes turn stubborn and calm. And because her desire to escape won't subside, she bends over and gazes down, into emptiness. Her breath escapes her mouth and falls from the balcony. It's a short fall and ends with silence. She shakes her head in disappointment, she hasn't learned anything new, she can't bear the idea that she passed her whole life trying to fight against indifference, against the fact that poverty shut her out once and for all from the life that was allotted to her. Although she knows she's overreacting, she feels very tired, she doesn't have the strength to rationalize her fear.

I feel so old, she tells her self. Too old, her self asks her. So old that I don't know how I can make it until tomorrow, she says. Then do what you think is right, her self says. Is that what you think, she asks her self. At some point we are forced to do all the things we wanted to and had been putting off. I've given others what they expected of me, and I'm scared to pursue my own wishes. When you get used to this process, it's a different fear, her self says.

Giota feels inside her the noise of the city, the noise of the park, finally subside, and lets her fingers slip from the railing. As she falls through darkness, she lifts her hands and moves her fingers, like an old pianist who dreams of a time his hands were gliding free along the keys, back when his melodies washed away some of the pain that life's disasters caused. It seems unthinkable that she had to come all this way to hear the sound of truth.

Translated from Greek by Panagiotis Kechagias

Panagiotis Kechagias (b. 1978) is a writer, editor, and translator based in Athens, Greece.

ARB DIY

Weird Luck

It may seem odd to refer to a homebrew webcomic as a "throwback", but after the emergence of Webtoons, Tapas, and several other heavily commercialized webcomic sites, *Weird Luck*, written by Nick Walker and Andrew M. Reinhart and illustrated by Mike Bennewitz is a throwback to the days of effusive DIY spirit and internet radicalism. A science fiction/fantasy setting the pair have been writing about for over thirty years, *Weird Luck* is a webcomic and an expansive prose "universe" about the Reality Patrol and its attempt to deal with individuals who experience the titular "Weird Luck" and its influence on reality, and causality.

Find the comic at weirdluck.net and the prose at autpress.com.

ARB: First I have a background question in re the future of the strip: Is there some kind of ironical/critical thing going on with the Reality Patrol?

Nick: Oh hell yes. The Reality Patrol does some good—saving worlds from being consumed by eldritch horrors, and that sort of thing—but the bottom line is that it's a vastly powerful interdimensional military/intelligence/policing organization accountable to no one... the way I think about the Reality Patrol is that they're the CIA pretending to be Starfleet.

Our true perspective on the Reality Patrol is more readily apparent, at this point, in our prose fiction. In Andrew's prose fiction, the Reality Patrol are explicitly antagonists—fascistic villains whose violent attempts to impose their own brand of top-down order put them at odds with Andrew's anarchistic protagonists.

For the webcomic, we decided to take this theme even further. Our protagonist, Special Agent Tyger Sojac, is still entirely in the idealistic stage when the comic begins. Tyger is a Reality Patrol agent stationed in a city called Tal Sharnis. Reality is particularly unstable in Tal Sharnis, on a metaphysical level, and at this point Tyger still sees the Reality Patrol as the city's benevolent protectors.

ARB: The webcomic is perhaps the greatest new form of the 21st century. Why did you decide to start one?

Nick: We've both been comic-lovers since early childhood. I always wanted to make comics, but it's a hard field to break into. I grew up in poverty with drug-addict parents, and spent a lot of my young adulthood homeless and just struggling for survival, so I never had enough stability in my life to launch any sort of professional career in comics.

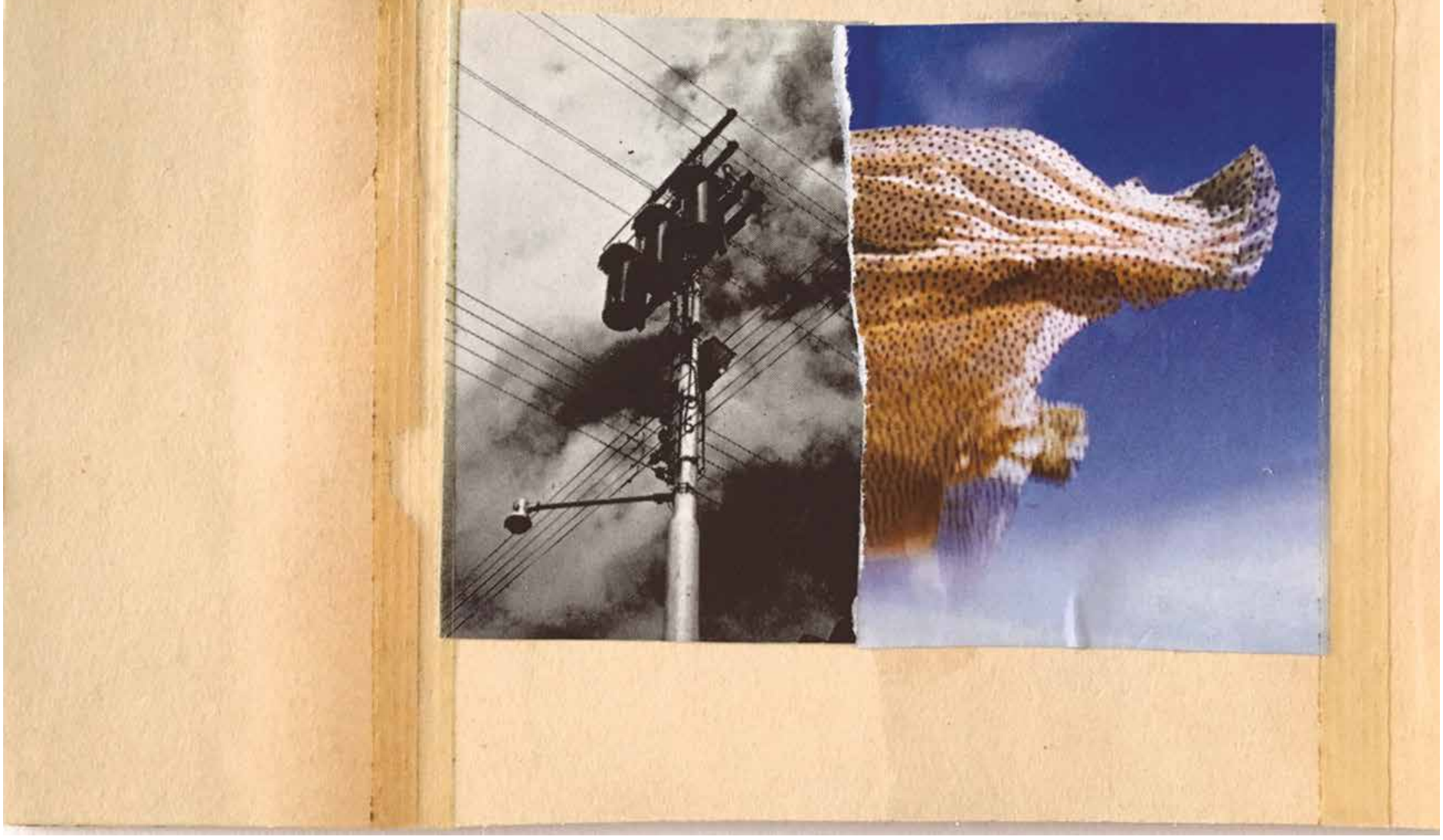
But then webcomics came along—an entirely DIY medium where there's no industry gatekeeping. And webcomic creators have complete autonomy when it comes to content, to a degree that's extremely rare in the comic publishing industry.

Of course, it wouldn't have come to fruition if Andrew hadn't also had this prior connection with our artist, the brilliant Mike Bennewitz, who'd been looking a long time for a story that resonated with him enough to be worthy of his talents.

ARB: How do your beliefs, political or metaphysical, inform the comic?

Nick: I'm much less of a political thinker than Andrew. As a queer autistic trans woman, my own political engagement has focused largely on queer and neuroqueer activism. That stuff informs the comic in ways that aren't subtle at all: the comic's four most central characters (Tyger, Bianca, Max, and Smiley) are all queer and neurodivergent, each in a radically different way.

Andrew: I'd go so far as to say that I don't believe an institution like the Reality Patrol (or Starfleet, or a police department, or whatever) can be a force for good. No matter the intentions of the individuals involved or how benevolently designed its policies may be, that sort of institutionalization of power is intrinsically harmful in multiple ways. And not just because of corruption or "brutality" or abuse of power. Such an institution's mere existence is fundamentally disempowering and dehumanizing, not only to almost everyone outside of it, but also almost everyone in it as well. Institutions also prioritize their own persistence over anything else, such as gauging how much harm they do; with vanishingly rare exceptions, it's intrinsic to the form of an institution that, within its walls, its own continuation is a foregone conclusion.



Listen For It II by N. Masani Landfair. Collage on paper 2020

Piece by Piece

Richard Allen May III

Black Collagists: The Book
Edited by Teri Henderson
234pp. Kanyer Publishing 2021

> Black is beauty
> In its deepest form,
> The darkest cloud
> In a thunderstorm.
> Think of what starlight
> And lamplight would lack
> Diamonds and fireflies
> If they could not lean
> against Black
>
> —From "What is Black?"
> by Mary O'Neill

The introduction to Teri Henderson's *Black Collagists: The Book,* states: "Collage is the most democratic and dramatic form of art making. Discarded materials—often magazines and books are arranged into meaningful compositions, and then attached with some form of glue." This simple description of discarded materials rediscovered for their intrinsic value is also a metaphor for the art-historical reality—the omission of Black collage artists—that brought into existence this much needed and long overdue text.

The art canon gatekeepers consistently celebrate the same individuals while simultaneously excluding people, who in the face of insurmountable odds, continue to create; Black folk are members of this marginalized group. Additionally, the art-making practice of collage in many popular art history survey texts has historically been a footnote; one paragraph to maybe two pages or an index reference with a few examples, in contrast to lengthy discussions of painting, drawing, printmaking and sculpture.

African American art history texts have followed in step with this error, contributing to a myopic perception of collage art. While there have been a few books on creating art using collage as a technique, the African American contribution is often rendered invisible or minimized by solely highlighting Romare Bearden. As a corrective, I strongly recommend Henderson's publication.

Black Collagists' historical essay by Laurie Kanyer interrogates the commonly held belief that modernism's Pablo Picasso and George Braque are the inventors of collage. The book reframes its origin by citing the scholarship of Freya Gowrley, who documented examples of collage works dating back to the late 1500s. Additionally, the essay offers brief biographical perspectives of artists of color who have worked in collage including Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, Louis Armstrong, Betye Saar, Benny Andrews, David Driskell, Lorna Simpson, Deborah Roberts, Kara Walker and Mickalene Thomas.

Danielle Carter's Essay, "Beyond the Cut and Paste: Black Artists and the Collage Aesthetic", further expands the boundaries to include digital collage.

Beginning with the Instagram feed *@blackcollagists* that morphed into an enormous community, a public record of Black artists working in this style was established that gave birth to *Black Collagists: The Book*, building on the Doug and Laurie Kanyer Art Collection. The book features 50 established and emerging artists occupying the planet from such places as Italy, Bermuda, Cuba, New York, Portland, Oregon and Nigeria. This survey is a baptism into a rich Black aesthetic reminiscent of the School of AFRICOBRA (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists) who honored Black is Beautiful with transformative art directed at Black people throughout the diaspora as described in Wadsworth Jarrell's *AFRICOBRA: Experimental Art Toward a School of Thought* (2020).

Black Collagists showcases the genre's broad range of subject matter, conceptual approaches, and visual styles. In *Free Your Mind* (2018) and *Josephine Baker, The Cipher* (2019), Chelle Barbour references Black femininity, while Adolphus Washington points to the historical memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in *A People's King* (2021) and to Black massacre in *Tulsa 21* (2021). Evita Tezeno celebrates Black companionship in *On a Sunny Day* (2020) and Helina Metaferia commemorates in revolutionary style queen royalty with the *Headdress Series.* N. Masani Landfair's *Mixed Signals* (2020) is an abstraction of square and rectangular earth tones that reminds viewers of the fluid, flowing nature of Black history.

Black Collagists: The Book also serves as a catalyst for additional surveys discussing African American artists not mentioned in this first volume. For example: New York's Kay Brown, whose collage *The Black Soldier* (1969), simultaneously affirms the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and adopts a critical stance toward Black men being drafted to fight in the Viet Nam War; John Rozelle of Chicago, whose abstract paint and collage work expands the boundaries of mixed media; L.A.'s Michael Massenburg, whose *Nineteensixtyfive* (2004) addresses revolts in Black urban areas stemming from economic exploitation and police brutality. And Dr. Patricia Jessup-Woodlin. Her collage and assemblage on wood, *Ancestral Reclamation*, honors the royalty of Black women with its frontal Ebony queen image surrounded by a halo of pyramid ascending cowrie shells.

This publication gives the next generation of artists an aesthetic reference point. *Black Collagists: The Book* is a must have for anyone seeking to understand the relevance of this technique and the rightful place of Black artists in the canon.

Originally from Chicago, ***Richard Allen May III*** *is a lecturer for the African American Studies Department at California State University, Fullerton. He writes for* Artillery *and teaches Art History online for Bowie State University in Maryland.*

Both Sides of Silence

Heather Bowlan

Palm-Lined with Potience
by Basie Allen
104pp. Ugly Duckling Presse 2022

Banana [_____] / we pilot the blood (The 3rd Thing)
by Quenton Baker and Paul Hlava Ceballos
90pp. The Third Thing 2022

Virgil Kills
by Rolando V. Wilson
282pp. Nightboat Books 2022

It's pretty unfashionable to get down with Lacan these days; that probably has something to do with the whole project of psychoanalysis, i.e., grounding the unconscious/subconscious in Eurocentric, elite, misogynist dogma. But I happen to think that Lacan had one theory with real radical potential, moving beyond his earlier concept of jouissance (essentially, ecstasy or "excessive vitality") into feminine jouissance.

Briefly: There are experiences that are impossible to put into or contain with language—they break through the symbolic order (i.e., language) and into what Lacan called the Real (i.e., all of human experience that can't be captured in language). This category of experience is what he termed feminine jouissance. The symbolic order—language as we're taught it, the limits of written and spoken communication as they're regulated/enforced—is/has been a White Dude enterprise. So as Lacan conceived it, feminine jouissance was a concept to cover the inexpressible.

In Lacan's original conception, probably unsurprisingly, these experiences were those of (white) women, the group most obvious to him as not (white) men, and who he conceived of as absolutely Other, with all of the problematic connotations of that term. Women could never be "whole" within the symbolic order, and so their experiences would always exist outside of it. And so I'd like to take liberties with this theory, especially given the expansion and complication of what constitutes *feminine* since Lacan outlined feminine jouissance in the early 1970s.

For writers (humans!) living in what we might consider the liminal space of capital-S-Society, the idea of breaking through, of rejecting narrative, linear order—written language, even—might offer new opportunities to access and document the complexity, nuance, and viscerality of our own negated, rejected experiences. (After all, even Lacan viewed language acquisition as a more or less traumatic experience.)

Three new collections actively engage in this testing and rupture of language and literature, pushing the Real into focus, each with a distinct approach and energy.

The boundaries between texts are explored in *Banana [_____] / we pilot the blood*, two poetry collections joined into one book, threaded together by common themes of imperialist trauma and other intertextual strategies, including visual art and critical reflections by other contributors. In *Banana [_____],* the approach is collage from (literally) hundreds of texts, and in *we pilot the blood,* erasure is the method, with both challenging the elision of experiences by dominant, colonial narratives by using those narratives as their starting point.

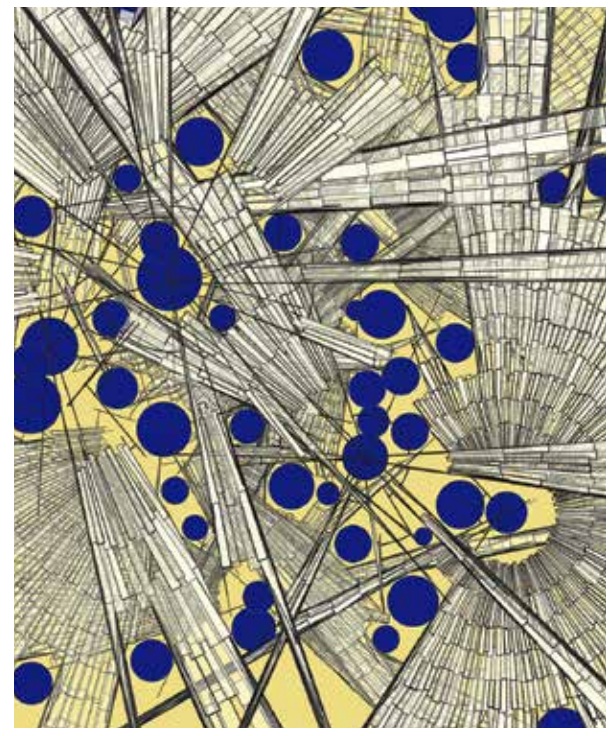
Ceballos's weaving of historical texts, first-person accounts, and more, results in a new document, centering the experience of banana workers, their constant and active resistance. In one sequence, the repetition of the word "banana" shifts the poem into the space of litany, with its insistent reminder of the product that is privileged above the stories being shared, inserting itself into the poem, dominating the poem, with a footnote to a source text for every line:

> to banana
> be banana
> a banana
> domesticated banana
> object banana
> overripe banana
> as banana
> an banana
> empire banana

The poem is paired with fragmented images of banana workers always presented out of context, as slim vertical strips for example, with faces never visible and just enough context to understand the image as representing a person, who is then reduced and reduced, to a hat and a bunch of bananas, or a strip of leaves with the worker completely absent.

It's not an exaggeration to call Quenton Baker's project, *we pilot the blood*, a stark contrast to *Banana [_____]*. Rather than the accumulation of language and imagery in rejection of a predetermined narrative, nearly all of every page in *we pilot the blood* is blacked out—not nearly, but clearly with a marker, clearly done by hand. The result is, as the critic Christina Sharpe points out in her remarks, that some words are partially visible, so there is no "clean" revision or true erasure of the past.

The starting document is a Senate document on the 1841 revolt of enslaved Africans on a ship named



Places of Conflict by Kenny Vaden. Generative R 2022

Creole. Perspectives of the participants in the revolt were not included in the public record, but with the erasures, Baker rejects the official record to expand and complicate the meaning of the event.

The heavy silence of the blacked-out space amplifies the handful of words, often isolated on their own lines or even corners of the page, so that the spare language—and all that's unsaid—points to the unspeakable and unknowable of the revolt. On one page,

> wreck of our pleased hands
> facing on the page opposite:
> they could not kill the sunrise in me.

Reducing this moment to horror, hope, bravery, desperation—the text won't allow it. The silent/silenced black space absorbs any simple explanation or dismissal. To quote the critic Christina Sharpe, who reflects on each of these projects in the book: "The poets' labor is toward the imagining and revealing and making visible and tangible… something else."

The book itself must be inverted and started from opposite covers to read the separate texts and accompanying remarks, with the result that the collections don't seem to lead one to the next, as with an anthology. Instead, Hlava Ceballos and Baker's projects stand alongside each other, making use of the object of the book itself to reject elision or conflation as "political texts."

We're certainly invited to find points of convergence or difference, perhaps most overtly by the same two (similar but distinct) paintings by Torkwase Dyson (from her *hypershapes* series) marking the beginning and end of Christina Sharpe's essays for both collections. As Sharpe remarks, these paintings, also exploring liberation, weren't composed in response to either text, but selected by her to resonate with them ("vector and foil"). Again, a kind of collaboration by association, sharing space rather than privileging one narrative over another.

Poetry and visual art share space, too, in Basie Allen's debut collection, *Palm-Lined with Potience*, which explores the various spaces and relationships grounded in growing up on the Lower East Side, meanwhile using the space of the poem to ensure the reader is engaged and invested beyond the language on the page.

Periodically throughout the poems, lines, tangled lines, and parabolas appear next to or within the text, inviting us to draw connections or infer complications. Take the semicircle curving around the text of "The Origin of White Guilt"—emphasizing the solipsism evoked in lines such as "sprawling air like salt-fire flames crying / onto an oily coal for atonement."

Or the vertical line straight through both pages of "Elegy," gesturing towards a permanent division, a striking out, while the poem itself is full of those prosaic, corporeal moments that come with intimacy: " I hate / you think lotion does / the same thing as lube"

The poem references and pays homage to other writers and artists and musicians, from Ma Dukes to Frank O'Hara to the Fugees to El Lissitzky to Cy Twombly, poems reaching beyond the page to create a web of invisible dialogues. And in "An Ongoing Portion of Colored Numerals," Allen uses color as reference points to push against being defined or othered by race, evoking at first "gelatin silver," then "less soft velvet yellow," finally "dried bird-of-paradise brown…" moving the reader beyond colors that might be clearly described with language to the margins of written description.

Perhaps the most constant and most intriguing extratextual experiment involves an ever-present symbol, a circle with shading. It could be a celestial body, a totem, a cylinder; its presence has no stable connotation, and in fact, there's a poem pushing against any tidy definition, "An Answer for Jimmy Symington":

> it is here
> where I have learned
> to write on both sides
> of silence—

Perhaps Ronaldo V. Wilson, in *Virgil Kills*, is writing on both sides of silence. In this book of stories, the line between lived and dreamed experience is deliberately blurred, as characters, locations, timeline, and Virgil's self-perception—as a Black Flipino man, as a gay man, as a writer, as a professional success—are constantly in flux. In the fluidity of the dream state, this is both an internal and external instability.

> *I think it makes sense.* This is something Virgil would like to say, in all honesty, to himself, but it seems that this is too often complicated by his experiences, layers of which sit atop one another.

Identity as a shifting point of reference weaves through the stories—we might call them reveries, remnants, vignettes, litanies. Casual and deliberate racism among Virgil's colleagues in the writing and academic communities, and with his lovers, all a shifting group thanks to the transience of an academic path, connect back to past memories of an equally transient childhood, a haunting evocation of disassociation as defense mechanism. Focus on the details, identify the referent, avoid the moment.

It might almost be too cute to talk about feminine jouissance in connection with *Virgil Kills*, since the ineffable is in many ways the throughline, particularly in the context of sexual encounters and the limits of connection. Sex isn't the point of the protagonist Virgil's wanderings, but it's a keystone.

Virgil relentlessly analyzes events as they happen and returns to them again and again; often presenting new information, or shifting signifiers (family members, in particular Virgil's father, have an abundance of names depending on the memory). The result is a disorienting and compelling collection of scenes and momentary epiphanies.

> What is the difference between the outside and the inside of the dream can only be explained in the pitch darkness that fills the room in the vision of blue and black. Menacing, this threat manifests as black, nylon luggage, and in it, power cords, flash drives, and speakers that shake as he looks at them. These things are not permanent, yet they are there. What in this material is his? What surfaces does he own?

The impermanence, the incompleteness of language—recognizing the limitations, toying with or violating them—offers opportunities for readers to expand our ideas of written art, of whose writing is art, of how we accept and reinforce categories that we are given as we sift through experience to find what's real (or Real). These three books will challenge you, or at the very least remind you, to consider the boundaries you're given and who gave them to you.

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

Right to Carry

Glynis Hart

> Perhaps progress for all human life could be more readily realized if we were to treat abortion as a problem to be solved rather than a moral issue over which to condemn others. As gratifying as the emotion of moral outrage is, it does little to bend the moral arc toward justice.
>
> —Michael Shermer, Scientific American 2018

Ending an unwanted pregnancy with herbal remedies was widely accepted throughout history and through the 19th century in the U.S. However, as the medical profession grew in power, doctors formed associations that lobbied for changes in the laws. They outlawed midwifery and abortion, which was defined as expelling the fetus after quickening (around the fourth or fifth month, when the baby can be felt moving). Although many people now view an anti-abortion stance as part of Christian religious beliefs, the Bible does not forbid abortion.

Since property is the basis of rights in U.S. law, as well as the English Common Law upon which it is based, it is useful to view abortion as property crime. The fight for freedom of women, children, the poor, indigenes and people of color has been a centuries-long resistance to the efforts of those who designate them as property and exert control over their bodies. For example Black women enslaved in the United States secretly practiced birth control to keep from bearing children into slavery.

Writing for the conservative think tank The Cato Institute, Roger Pilon summarizes: "Property is the foundation of every right we have, including the right to be free... much moral and legal confusion would be avoided if we understood that all of our rights – all of the things to which we are 'entitled' can be reduced to property."

"Coverture," which traditionally made all property in a marriage the husband's property, included in that property the body of the wife, who could not bring rape charges against her husband:

> The husband and wife became one—and that one was the husband...Because they did not legally exist, married women could not make contracts or be sued, so they could not own or work in a business. Married women owned nothing, not even the clothes on their backs. They had no rights to their children, so that if a wife divorced or left a husband, she would not see her children again.
>
> —Catherine Allgor
> *Coverture: A Term You Should Know*

Historically, the term "abortion" referred only to a fetus in the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. Now that medical knowledge allows for multiple interpretations of the beginning of life, anti-abortion lobbyists seek to reinstate coverture, extending their control over the process of childbearing far beyond what the Founders could practice. Scott Pruitt, infamous as Trump's corrupt EPA head, in his career as Oklahoma state senator twice introduced a bill that stated: "It is the intent of the Legislature to act to preserve and maintain the due process rights and interests of fathers with respect to the property interest such fathers possess in a fetus. Specifically, the courts of the United States have routinely determined that the fetus is considered property under the United States Constitution. Moreover, such fetus, as property, was jointly created by both father and mother and as such the courts have consistently acknowledged the property interest of the father in such jointly created property."

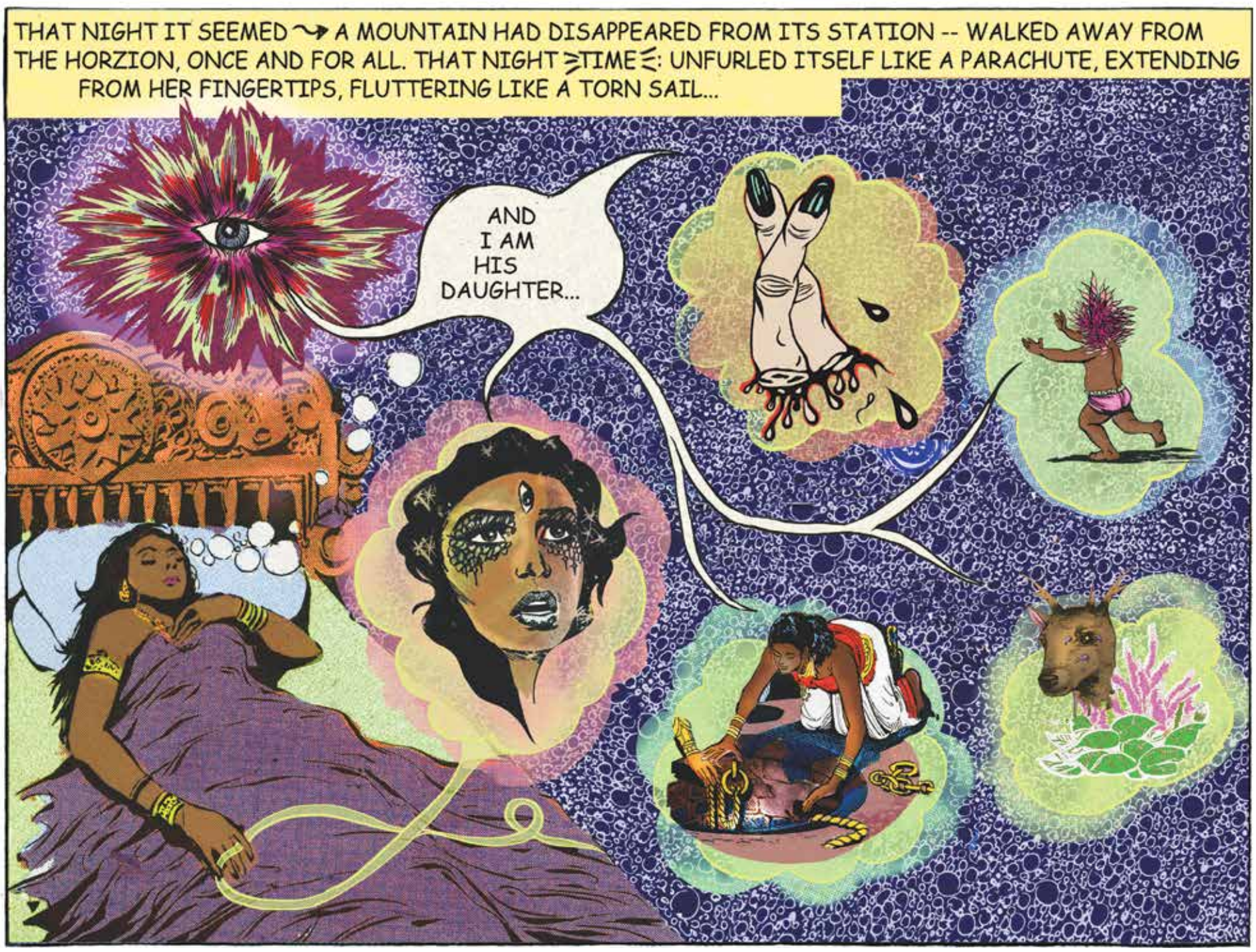
Considering abortion as interfering with a man's property rights, however, misses the point that it is the State that finally decides all questions of property. The State's intrusions upon a person's bodily autonomy is in no way restricted to government control of women's medical procedures; it always reserves the right to seize a person's body and dispose of his or her life. Men who fail to register with the Selective Service face up to five years' imprisonment and fines of $250,000; states execute the imprisoned; police forces are empowered to carry out extra-judicial killings, and government agencies control the lives and legal status of foster children, prisoners, immigrants and prisoners of war. Where state agencies intrude upon the homes of those receiving social services, the Supreme Court has denied the Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure.

At least one legal scholar has suggested a defense of abortion rights based on property law.

Rebecca Rausch, at Seattle University School of Law, suggests reframing Roe v. Wade "in the language of property, and specifically a woman's property right in her uterus. Assuming arguendo the anti-choice tenet that the fetus is a person from the moment of conception, this article sets forth an argument that the fetus is an unwanted trespasser in the woman's uterus whom the woman has a right to eject." Rausch argues that grounding abortion rights in property rather than the right to privacy and the 14th Amendment puts women's autonomy on a sounder legal footing. ("Reframing Roe: Property Over Privacy")

However, from an anarchist point of view the concept of property itself is the problem, in that property creates a relationship between owner and owned that is inherently oppressive. Anarchist ideals are based on traditional, non-feudal human villages, and create in practice voluntary associations of people for mutual care and protection. Imagine if citizenship were based upon a person's ability to care well for oneself and others, rather than on the possession of property. Such a praxis would hold as its highest aim the health and happiness of human beings as individuals and in community. It would naturally support each person's bodily autonomy, and could recognize without hysteria the fact that sometimes the kindest thing one can do for an unborn child and its mother is not to bring it into the world.

Glynis Hart *is a writer, journalist and editor who has received awards for agriculture, sports and editorial writing.* ~~*She is personally responsible for slanting the mass media to the left.*~~ *She lives in New Hampshire.*



Multiverse Dreaming by Chitra Ganesh. 2021 Courtesy the artist and Gallery Wendi Norris.

Do it Again

Carrie Laben

Begin the World Over
by Kung Li Sun
260 pp. AK Press 2022

Alternative history is an inescapably political genre. Whether in the hands of radicals, reactionaries, or nominally mainstream writers, it requires at least an acceptance that the present order is not inevitable. *Begin the World Over* by Kung Li Sun, the latest work of fiction in AK Press's Emergent Strategy Series, is a fine example of the genre that takes as a starting point the revolutionary ferment and thwarted potential of the 1790s.

It's perfectly possible—in fact delightful—to read *Begin the World Over* as a straightforward adventure story. Romance, acts of bravery, family drama, set-piece battles, humor all have their turn on the page. The characters are well-realized and engaging, and those borrowed from history provide pleasing moments of recognition and strangeness. The plot moves forward briskly.

That does not mean, however, that a more analytical reader will find only fluff. *Begin the World Over* avoids one of the more common and damning pitfalls of alternative history, a simplistic Great Man theory of world events. Although James Hemings starts off holding the role of protagonist, he is no action hero, no warrior or politician. Neither, however, is he a passive bystander present merely to provide the reader with a point of view. As in our own universe James is a chef, trained in France to satisfy Jefferson's ego and desire for social status [Perhaps you've heard that Thomas Jefferson introduced macaroni and cheese to North America. Naturally, that was James.] He's a bit of a sensualist, with a taste for alcohol that tends towards excess. But he understands how to use his gifts to help his friends and the cause they all believe in, and he's brave enough to do so. The more overtly revolutionary Denmark Vesey moves in and out of the narrative, having traded his role as a pastor for one as a pirate in one of the text's more striking alterations. Romaine-la-Prophétesse, with her ambiguously supernatural prophetic powers and entirely natural ability to inspire and lead, assembles a mass movement that is full of individuals in full possession of personhood, not an army of pawns, clones, or drones.

Historical figures don't get to have all the fun. Two apparently invented characters, Red Eagle (a trans man of the Muscogee nation) and Mary (a Black woman formerly enslaved by Andrew Jackson), take a larger share of the focus as the book goes on. The union of these two characters—who begin as rivals in a horse race and end as lovers and comrades—fulfills one of the deepest historical fears of colonizers in what is now the United States: a whole-hearted alliance between Native and Black people, dedicated to gaining/preserving their freedom in the face of an oncoming empire. At no point, though, do they feel like symbols.

Like many alternative histories, *Begin the World Over* has a nod to our own world tucked inside the narrative. Instead of a text-within-a-text (as seen in *The Man in the High Castle* and *Fire on the Mountain*) this comes in the form of a simple hunch: Red Eagle perceives, at a critical moment, that in worlds where he and the other major characters never met the forces of oppression represented by the likes of Andrew Jackson, Thomas Jefferson, and Charles Pickney might have won out. This acknowledgement—that the key to liberation is active solidarity driven by friendship and love, across racial, cultural, and national boundaries—forms the emotional and thematic core of the novel. And this suggests that the better world possible in the pages of the book is still possible now.

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

Viaticum by Tammie Rubin. slip-cast, handbuilt, and extruded porcelain, glaze, plasti dip, and wood 2014

Squatting Monuments

Agnes Borinsky

LOTE
by Shola von Reinhold
384pp. Duke University Press 2022

You could tell the story this way: a queer Black woman, aesthete, researcher, living a life both lush and precarious, happens upon traces of an ancestor of sorts, a modernist poet, also Black. She goes looking for her—and finds her. In my way, I've itched for a version of that novel before. There's the hunch that establishing an archive might help establish me.

But there's something about projects of queer biographical recovery that tend towards fixity, towards foundations, toward literal correspondences. And *LOTE,* the novel Shola von Reinhold has written, doesn't fix, doesn't found, isn't literal. It shimmers, it slips, it extends.

Mathilda Adaramola, dressed, when we meet her, in "eBay lab diamonds, silver leatherette and lead velvets," is volunteering in the National Portrait Gallery archive in London, and happens upon a photograph of Hermia Druitt. Hermia quickly becomes one of Mathilda's Transfixions. Tranfixions for her are mostly historical figures, but they are also a form of sublime intoxication, and trans-temporal reciprocity. There is a feeling of "not only recognising, but of having been recognised."

The suspicions and caprices of various white people soon squeeze Mathilda out of the archive, and out of a home. Mathilda applies impulsively to a residency in a European town called Dun, knowing only that Druitt spent part of her life there. It's a Hail Mary. Mathilda is broke and the residency promises a bus ticket, housing, and a stipend. She gets in, to her shock, and arrives to find that the Dun Residency is culty and oppressively austere. It's oriented around a theorist, Garreaux, and something called Thought Art, and it's very white.

What follows is almost a mystery novel. Who was Hermia? What became of her? And will Mathilda manage to get some answers before the oppressive glare of the Thought Artists swallows her senses? Before the residency directors realize she can't stand Garreaux, take back her stipend, and kick her out?

Heather Love, in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History,* writes about the ways queer figures of the past resist us—especially when we want to understand them within a particular contemporary framework of political agency. Mathilda chases her Transfixions to "exhume a dead beautiful feeling, discover a wisp of radical attitude pickled since antiquity, revive revolutionary but lustrous sensibilities long perished." But what, exactly, is the nature of that revolution? Hermia Druitt may have been Black and queer, and she may have written poetry, but she wasn't marching, or striking, or burning down buildings. No, she was going to parties with a bunch of white, recherché faggots. The question of whether Mathilda's Transfixions have her worshipping, in bell hooks's words, "at the throne of whiteness," hangs over the novel. Can a Black person be an aesthete? Aren't all the images of Beauty inherited from European modernism white? Mathilda—and in turn, Von Reinhold—respond by remapping the tributaries of Western art history. It's thrilling and wildly persuasive.

LOTE isn't just a lesson in art history. It might seem focused on historical recovery, but it is ultimately a story about living in the present, and about Escape. Mathilda works to uncover a record of Hermia Druitt and insists, at the same time, on her own ability to slip away. In the last stretch of the novel, I feel the plane fly low—skim deep and familiar pains of friendship, loneliness, the limitations and heavy materiality of existence, of the body. A late chapter is only three sentences long:

> That winter, we sorted the wheat from the chaff, binned the wheat, and made ambrosia and nectar from the chaff. That winter, we fed on Style, having flambéed Substance with a bottle of cherry liqueur and a dramatically dropped match. We had no need of substance, we'd had our fill of it.

In a book of long sections, of meticulous and vivid sensory elaboration, the empty space around this one is painful, shocking. It reminds me of the weird passage in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* where the narrator describes an eight-year period as a storm in which "the ship was lost, the crew perished," but refuses to tell us what actually happened. The narration itself defies the facts of the suffering it invokes. To narrate the suffering would render it spectacle, and make it definitive. This is a book that knows material struggle, but refuses to center it, because the material struggle says nothing about what she wore, how she lived, the exquisite iridescent wake she left behind her.

An act of recovery is never simple, just as an act of naming never is. The ways in which Garreaux's history and Hermia Druitt's converge are chilling, and they bring into relief the violence that lurks in the work of archiving. But just as Mathilda ducks the terms offered, with responses that "did not quite match the questions," Von Reinhold refuses to figure oblivion, and fantasy, as inherently inimical to revolution. She finds a different path.

Mathilda steals blankness, and swaps in Blackness. She neither avoids nor reclaims the monuments of the past; she squats in them, knowing that they have always been hers.

***Agnes Borinsky** writes prose and makes theater. She lives in Los Angeles.*

I Dream of a Faggot India

Ranbir Sidhu

Reason
216min. Anand Patwardhan 2019
Jai Bhim Comrade
189min. Anand Patwardhan 2011
War and Peace
135min. Anand Patwardhan 2002
Father, Son and Holy War
120min. Anand Patwardhan 1995
In the Name of God
75min. Anand Patwardhan 1991
A Time to Rise
39min. Anand Patwardhan
and Jim Munro 1981

Distributed through patwardhan.com

There are boys, right now, sitting in movie theaters in India jerking off to a woman being raped. Not only boys, but young men, old men, middle-aged men. It's a communal act, male bonding in the relative anonymity of the dark. Gang rape by proxy.

In a scene halfway through Anand Patwardhan's 1995 documentary feature *Father, Son and Holy War,* the camera lingers on painted cinema hoardings full of violence and blood while we listen to young men discuss the new "Indian Rambo" movie with its "bombs and good weapons." The voices switch to talking about the short dresses women have started wearing. There will be more rapes, they say, many more, like the ones they watch in movies. If they came across a woman being raped, they'd join in, why not, they'd be eager. That's when they begin to laugh. One of them says all he thinks about is jumping into the screen when a woman is being raped, it tears him apart he can't join in. All he has is his hand. It's the next best thing to raping the woman on screen.

At the opening of *Father, Son, and Holy War*, Patwardhan says he planned to make a movie about religious violence, but after he began filming realized his real subject was the crisis of manhood in modern India. In early scenes, Hindu rioters talk about the joy they feel from burning Muslim stores and attacking Muslims. A charred, blackened body lies in the middle of a street at midday, everyone walking around it, the surrounding stores gutted. What's important, the rioters say, is to make Muslims feel fear, and keep feeling fear. This isn't their country, it's a Hindu country, in the eyes of the rioters. Every few years, the stores must burn, the bodies must burn, the fear has to be kept up, the slow march to the death of a secular India kept on.

There are far too many men in India who find rape glamorous, who find violence against any person they consider an other glamorous. And yes, Indian women too. Screaming for the murder of Muslims, the mass rape of Muslim women.

Patwardhan's movies of course are about much more than the ugliness of men, Indian or otherwise. At their heart they chart the rise of toxic Hindutva, or Hindu fascism, amid broader forms of religious fundamentalism, its history and spread across the nation, and its constant attacks on the secular and multi-ethnic and multi-religious foundations of the Indian state.

As recently as December, 2021, Hindu religious leaders gathered in Haridwar in northern India where for three days, in one fiery, podium thumping speech after another, they called for the genocide of the 200 million Muslims in the country. These were not fringe figures, but leaders intimately connected to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, and strong supporters of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Swami Prabodhanand Giri, president of the right-wing Hindu Raksha Sena, called extermination the only "solution" to the problem of Islam. "We must prepare to either kill or be killed," he said, adding, "Every Hindu must pick up weapons and we will have to conduct this cleanliness drive. There is no solution apart from this." Despite repeated calls from opposition parties, Modi refused to condemn the event.

Ruin XVII by Joe Houston. Oil on canvas 2021

That same week, at another quasi-religious event in New Delhi, saffron-clad followers took a Nazi-style oath in which they pledged to buy weapons and exterminate Muslims with the goal of building a pure Hindu Rashtra, or Hindu nation. If every Hindu in that room murdered as many Muslims as they could, the speaker promised, the job would soon be done. In April, 2022, after multiple complaints, New Delhi Police concluded the event did not constitute hate speech or a call to genocide, but simply a call for Hindu self-protection. Another Hindu religious leader, Bajrang Muni Das, recently called for the mass rape of Muslim women, and only recanted after his arrest, claiming he was misunderstood.

In Patwardhan's latest, *Reason*, an almost four-hour litany on right-wing Hindu violence committed against social and political activists (including threats to kill the filmmaker) and Muslims in the name of Hindutva, Patwardhan paints a picture of an unhinged and murderous religious right that has moved to the center of much of Indian life. In one scene, on a hot Mumbai night, supporters of the extremist organization the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or RSS, gather under a statue of Shivaji, the medieval Hindu leader, and sing, "We must fight for religion, to establish the supremacy of god, create chaos everywhere, to thrash or sink the country, to establish religious rule." A follower of the RSS, Nathuram Godse, was the man who murdered Mahatma Gandhi, and to this day, Hindu fascists celebrate Gandhi's assassination on what they call Bravery Day. A temple has been erected to Godse in Madhya Pradesh where he has begun to be worshipped as a god.

Patwardhan traces many of the roots of this violence in his 1991 movie *In the Name of God* which follows a BJP political convoy through northern India as it tries to make its way to the centuries-old Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodha, a place many Hindus today claim is the birthplace of their god Ram. There are hundreds, maybe thousands, of spots in and around Ayodha that claim to be Ram's mythical birthplace. The idea that it was the Babri Masjid finds its origin in a rumor circulated in the 19th century by the region's colonial British rulers. It was an effort to sow enmity between Hindus and Muslims as part of their "divide and rule" strategy for domination. The Babri Masjid was ultimately demolished by a political and religious mob in 1993, and today's ascendant BJP has begun work on a massive Ram temple to sit where the mosque once stood, bringing together in a single edifice the colonial overhang of British rule, the tortured Hindutva reimagination of Hinduism as a religion of strength, and the BJP's fascist political project.

For many on the right, Mahatma Gandhi remains such a deeply emasculating figure, whose idea of political non-violence is so disruptive to their psyches and their vision of a muscular, in their words non-sari wearing, India, that they not only cheer his murder but overcompensate by celebrating a militant, nuclear-armed India that is willing and capable of annihilating its enemies. In Patwardhan's 2002 movie *War and Peace* he traces India's rising militarism and pride in its nuclear arsenal. Throughout, the language of misogyny, violence, homophobia and domination become intertwined with fears of emasculation and male inability to perform sexually. Here India's crisis of manhood leads not to a few dozen, or thousand, Muslims being murdered, but to a nation tipping headlong into its own identity crisis, terrified it might be seen as effeminate on the world stage. At an election rally, Pramod Mahajan, an advisor to then BJP Prime Minister Vajpayee, tells a cheering crowd how after the 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests every Indian student abroad will no longer have to hide the nation's name in shame. "The whole world now knows where India is!" he shouts, "Pokhran India! Nuclear India!"

Patwardhan is more than a chronicler of the evils of the modern Indian state. He is equally an activist in his own right, and throughout his movies he follows many of the individuals pushing back against the rising tide of fascism. In *War and Peace*, we travel with a peace march to the site of India's nuclear tests, and later with an Indian peace delegation to Hiroshima. His 2011 movie *Jai Bhim Comrade* traces the life of B. R. Ambedkar, a champion of Dalits, or untouchables, and one of the founders of the modern state, while 1981's *A Time to Rise*, made with Jim Munro, documents the attempts by Chinese and Indian laborers in British Columbia to unionize and transform dire working conditions. In moving scenes in Reason, activists travel among remote villages where they re-enact the death of Socrates and sing songs in praise of a rational, inclusive and democratic India.

I wonder often where our indignation in India lies, our genuine and necessary fury, not right-wing rage that takes as its targets Muslims and lower castes and all who refuse to swear allegiance to their version of Ram and Hindu Rashtra, but the average Indian's rage at such an ancient and complex religion being hijacked by extremists, a nation being forced to reject its roots and founding principles, a people being told to deny ideas of softness, ideas of difference, ideas of basic reason. The complacent Indian middle classes are just that, suffocating in their own materialist aspirations, building ever stronger gates and higher walls against the world beyond, hypnotized by recreations of a miniature West within the confines of their armed compounds. And often quietly, or not so quietly, cheerleaders of the new fascism, happy co-conspirators in the unmaking of a democratic, liberal Inida, walking side-by-side with the RSS or BJP or Sanatan Sanstha or any number of other goons. When a Muslim tailor in Ahmedabad

is set on fire there are respectable accountants and doctors and lawyers and engineers in Noida and Gurgaon and the towers of Mumbai quietly getting off on the violence of his death.

I spend my days imagining a different nation. I dream of a faggot India, a femme India, an India unafraid to wear a sari, a butch yet effeminate India, a soft-bellied, leather dyke, limp-wristed androgynous India, a whorish India whose doors are open to all, whose bed is never empty and is always welcoming. I dream of India as lover, as muse, as sweetheart, I dream of India without borders, without walls, without the screams of caste insults, an India without men who rape and women who call for murder, an India that is not Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Buddhist, an India that is all of this and more, an India proud of its atheists and anti-nationals, of its subversives and its freaks. I dream of a proud cocksucking India, an India on its knees giddily going down on the world, a pleasure-giving India, India as example, as light to the planet, a blissful, recumbent India that's forgotten in its opium haze that it's even a nation. A borderless, casteless trans India that drifts between identities, religions, histories, mythologies, more idea than place, an orphan and exiled India as home, India as cry in the dark for a better, more fair world.

***Ranbir Sidhu's** novel* Dark Star *will be published later this year and his books include* Deep Singh Blue *and* Good Indian Girls. *He is a winner of a Pushcart Prize among other awards and his work appears in* Conjunctions, The Georgia Review, Fence, Zyzzyva, The Missouri Review, Other Voices, Vice *and* Salon. *He lives in Athens, Greece.*

ARB Poetry

LOVE POEM

Tatiana Luboviski-Acosta

I, / an intellectual / once loved someone pure of heart / who let their car get towed away. // The vein that connects / my heart to my mouth / is a ribbon tied around a bomb. // I was joking when I said / that I knew how to read. // My vote was cast / for kissing by the light / of a cop car on !re. // My mother tells me that / a garden is a prison. // She was beautiful, with a face / like a melting candle; / and I'm sure well loved, / and well documented. // I know my father had nightmares / of limbs of soap / hidden among tall grasses. // There is carnage in this empty lot. // I cemented my banks / against the burning plain, / and drank the wine / that flowed from the wounded hand. // All day / and all night / in complicated love. // I loved someone / who loved the spirit in the sky, / so I tried / to fall in love with the sky.

Tatiana Luboviski-Acosta's La Movida *is published by Nightboat Books.*

ARB History

Instructions for an Insurrection

From the Situationist International 1960

If it seems somewhat ridiculous to talk of revolution, this is obviously because the organized revolutionary movement has long since disappeared from the modern countries where the possibilities of a decisive social transformation are concentrated. But all the alternatives are even more ridiculous, since they imply accepting the existing order in one way or another. If the word "revolutionary" has been neutralized to the point of being used in advertising to describe the slightest change in an ever-changing commodity production, this is because the possibilities of a central desirable change are no longer expressed anywhere. Today the revolutionary project stands accused before the tribunal of history —accused of having failed, of having simply engendered a new form of alienation. This amounts to recognizing that the ruling society has proved capable of defending itself, on all levels of reality, much better than revolutionaries expected. Not that it has become more tolerable. The point is simply that revolution has to be reinvented.

This poses a number of problems that will have to be theoretically and practically overcome in the next few years. We can briefly mention a few points that it is urgent to understand and resolve.

Of the tendencies toward regroupment that have appeared over the last few years among various minorities of the workers movement in Europe, only the most radical current is worth preserving**:** that centered on the program of workers councils. Nor should we overlook the fact that a number of confusionist elements are seeking to insinuate themselves into this debate (see the recent accord among "leftist" philosophico-sociological journals of different countries).

The greatest difficulty confronting groups that seek to create a new type of revolutionary organization is that of establishing new types of human relationships within the organization itself. The forces of the society exert an omnipresent pressure against such an effort. But unless this is accomplished, by methods yet to be experimented with, we will never be able to escape from specialized politics. The demand for participation on the part of everyone often degenerates into a mere abstract ideal, when in fact it is an absolute practical necessity for a really new organization and for the organization of a really new society. Even if militants are no longer mere underlings carrying out the decisions made by masters of the organization, they still risk being reduced to the role of spectators of those among them who are the most qualified in politics conceived as a specialization; and in this way the passivity relation of the old world is reproduced.

People's creativity and participation can only be awakened by a collective project explicitly concerned with all aspects of lived experience. The only way to "arouse the masses" is to expose the appalling contrast between the potential constructions of life and the present poverty of life. Without a critique of everyday life, a revolutionary organization is a separated milieu, as conventional and ultimately as passive as those holiday camps that are the specialized terrain of modern leisure. Sociologists, such as Henri Raymond in his study of Palinuro, have shown how in such places the spectacular mechanism recreates, on the level of play, the dominant relations of the society as a whole. But then they go on naïvely to commend the "multiplicity of human contacts," for example, without seeing that the mere quantitative increase of these contacts leaves them just as insipid and inauthentic as they are everywhere else. Even in the most libertarian and antihierarchical revolutionary group, communication between people is in no way guaranteed by a shared political program. The sociologists naturally support efforts to reform everyday life, to organize compensation for it in vacation time. But the revolutionary project cannot accept the traditional notion of play, of a game limited in space, in time and in qualitative depth. The revolutionary game—the creation of life—is opposed to all memories of past games. To provide a three-week break from the kind of life led during forty-nine weeks of work, the holiday villages of Club Med draw on a shoddy Polynesian ideology—a bit like the French Revolution presenting itself in the guise of republican Rome, or like the revolutionaries of today who define themselves principally in accordance with how well they fit the Bolshevik or some other style of militant role. The revolution of everyday life cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future.

The experience of the empty leisure produced by modern capitalism has provided a critical correction to the Marxian notion of the extension of leisure time: It is now clear that full freedom of time requires first of all a transformation of work and the appropriation of this work in view of goals, and under conditions, that are utterly different from those of the forced labor that has prevailed until now (see the activity of the groups that publish *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in France, *Solidarity* in England and *Alternative* in Belgium). But those who put all the stress on the necessity of changing work itself, of rationalizing it and of interesting people in it, and who pay no attention to the free content of life (i.e. the development of a materially equipped creative power beyond the traditional categories of work time and rest-and-recreation time) run the risk of providing an ideological cover for a harmonization of the present production system in the direction of greater efficiency and profitability without at all having called in question the experience of this production or the necessity of this kind of life. The free construction of the entire space-time of individual life is a demand that will have to be defended against all sorts of dreams of harmony in the minds of aspiring managers of social reorganization.

The different moments of situationist activity until now can only be understood in the perspective of a reappearance of revolution, a revolution that will be social as well as cultural and whose field of action will right from the start have to be broader than during any of its previous endeavors. The SI does not want to recruit disciples or partisans, but to bring together people capable of applying themselves to this task in the years to come, by every means and without worrying about labels. This means that we must reject not only the vestiges of specialized artistic activity, but also those of specialized politics; and particularly the post-Christian masochism characteristic of so many intellectuals in this area. We don't claim to be developing a new revolutionary program all by ourselves. We say that this program in the process of formation will one day practically oppose the ruling reality, and that we will participate in that opposition.

Untitled (Isolation Series) by Erin Houghtaling. Paper collage 2020

Leaving The Rest To Burn

The poetry of C. Russell Price

D.G. Gerard

Oh, you thought this was a date?!
by C. Russell Price
136pp. Northwestern University Press 2022

Oh, you thought this was a date?!, the first full length poetry collection by C. Russell Price, is a book about falling in love during the apocalypse. Price, originally from Glade Spring, Virginia, crafts poems that rise from a landscape of vacant parking lots and unharvested cornfields in a broken world where friends and lovers are survival. It's not a world without joy.

The book is a cemetery of memories. Price digs up injustice from the past and demands acknowledgment. Their poems are full of references to the dead and the diminished: friends lost in tragedies, family estranged, and people so deep in their own suffering that there is little hope for change. When Price decides to bring a person to life within a poem, the characterization is highly specific, lively, humorous, and often conflicted. Feelings of love cannot be untangled from bone-splitting anger. But Price pieces together a beautiful heritage from familial wreckage; taking what works from the cultural landscape of their childhood and leaving the rest to burn, instead of throwing it all away to pursue a rootless existence. In "Fetch the Boltcutters" (a poem that first appeared last summer in *ARB*) they write:

> The night I made myself a bridegroom to the doomsday I took my dead grandfather's name,
> all the rotted limbs branch out like an acceptable eyesore. I'm taking everything back.

Here love and anger don't have to be ripped apart, but are accepted as painful and inseparable.

Oh You Thought This was a Date?! also connects the suffering of the land with the suffering of the people who live on it. In some poems, images of the abused body are connected with images of the exploited earth. This technique of linking violations points towards capitalism as the culprit. In other poems, connections between the body and the earth are a source of uncomplicated joy. As in the poem "Apocalypse with Eyeliner". Here interconnection is not idealized, demonized, or ignored; it simply is.

> My body: a shoebox of histories
> it never wanted.
> The night you beat me
> I became a highway-
> lined wildflower field.
> When the plane covers me
> in an insecticide cloud,
> I turn into toxic honeysuckle.

This theme of interconnection extends into familial life. They examine the dysfunction in their family through the lens of intergenerational trauma, and sympathize with ancestors who suffered through hunger and disease. But sympathy is not dismissal, and Price does not ignore the spectre of familial abuse. They explore what it means to be raised by people who abuse or accept abuse, and what we can become despite connections to that lineage.

Price writes for people who understand, but they do not lose track of how their work will be perceived by outsiders. At times, they directly tease the reader by naming stereotypical expectations before disregarding them. As in the poem "Ritual":

> Tape these pages from your front door
> to the front door of the closest financial institution.
> What? Were you expecting a church?

In a world where classist stereotypes go unquestioned and queer identity is increasingly commodified, this helps to bolster the work against the possibility of commercialization.

In this vision of the apocalypse, nature surges forward to claim the wreckage that humans have left behind. And after an exploration of their lineage, Price states their desire to end the family line. There is joy and pain present in both of these endings. In the first pages of the book, Price provides a definition of the word "apocalypse" that includes "a relief". These endings are apocalypse as that relief; a vital and radical change.

When you are the end result of centuries of trauma, you will suffer, but if you are lucky, you might get the chance to improve things. Price never gives up on imagining better ways of living, through relationships and rituals. Every poem says, "Fuck you. I am going to thrive."

***D.G. Gerard** is an activist, student, and bookseller based in Berkeley, CA.*