
Something gibbous in the night

Threads light around your room.

I have made it smell like smoked cold cuts

And eat in the every mirror delay

Trying to find the best light to photograph myself

And announce, selfish as a minister,

“Don’t I look good today?”

Smile, wrapped and flickering like candlelight.

Eyes and ears held up as some Potemkin terrace

Shivering along the ropes circling blackening fists

Hands colder than

Yesterday, I forgot your name.

Today I fucking vaped with God.

And

Experimented with beauty in the mould of a yew.

The monochrome filter is best.

And its three thousand egg shell rings

Swirl into the nostalgia in your father’s grin

He is reading to you at ten,

Horn rims held up

By a questioning bridge – the question

Scratching louder than Mrs. Washington.

Still

Too soft to be exhumed,

The borderline, carved with casket curls lodged

Down to the

quick,

Is bonemeal.

Lay low, and starve between every asymptotic hour.

Daniel Dawson

An Anarchist Perspective on the Panama Papers

The Panama Papers investigation into offshore tax havens reveals as much about the left around tax as it does the right. The mainstream left was quick to denounce the tax avoidance of the rich and powerful under the guise that unpaid tax is effectively money that belongs to us all as citizens.

Whilst tax pays for some things that are justifiable and necessary such as healthcare, refuse collection, schooling, state pensions and others, we should also note that it continues to pay for MPs, Government ministers, civil servants, a range of cops, the armed forces and those that torment benefit claimants. Not to mention the growing prison complex and a host of other exceedingly unpleasant environments, inspectors and enforcers.

For the parliamentary and trade union left tax is glorious. It reduces inequality and it allows the state to tame capitalism. For anarchists tax can indeed be noted as a useful tool in certain circumstances but it can also be seen as oppressive and helping to cement us in an unjustifiable system.

That doesn’t mean that we let the rich and powerful off the hook but our attack must be on the system and not simply on the specific rules of the system. Organising a massive march in London to highlight how the richest people can avoid paying their full share of tax is one thing. Turning up to work the next day so that the richest people can pay you a pittance is quite another it seems. At no stage has the mainstream left, through the Labour Party or a range of other organisations focused on the continual and full spectrum dominance of capitalism in our lives in relation to the Panama Papers. The people in a position to use offshore havens are the same people able to make laws, set pay rates for others and decide how tax money is spent. They are our bosses, our landlords, our politicians, our judges and our media barons.

Debating the rights and wrongs of tax rules is problematic. There are many people who will have paid cash in hand to a local worker at some point in their lives. There will be many people who have avoided tax by putting a few pounds into an ISA when they could. Obviously by raising the amount someone can put in an ISA each year to £20k the accounts have actually become very useful to the rich (who has a surplus of £20k a year?). What forms of avoidance are wrong?

And this is the crux of the problem: the debate caused by the Panama Papers is actually a debate about the finer rules that decide what kind of money is legitimate and what is illegitimate. It’s wrapped up and presented as being about principles but it’s about the justification of certain forms of wealth. What is desperately needed is a longer term vision, projected toward those outside our own little bubble, of a post-capitalism where public wealth and well-being isn’t dependent on getting tax from anyone.

FREEDOM

Spring 2016

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THE FIGHTBACK FOR REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

Women cannot be defined as people through capitalism. We are the ultimate worker: we are denied agency over our bodies and minds, we create more workers, and exist as entertainment and commodity for those in power. While poverty increases with profit, Islamophobia encourages people to cling to Western religion, allowing the state to further oppress women with the justification of medieval misogyny. There may well be an all-female cast of Ghostbusters, but as we speak women are self-inducing abortions, being imprisoned and dying.

Protest has broken out across Europe as the Polish government and Catholic Bishops have called for a total ban on abortions except in the case of incest and male sexual violence. This would make Poland, a country where it is already very difficult for women to access abortion, deadly. The news has also sparked action across Europe by anti-termination treatment bigots. To them, we are only vessels, we are husks.

The trauma and distress of facing arrest and risking your already incredibly limited freedom for the basic right of choosing what happens with your body is nothing less than persecution. The World Health Organisation estimates that self-induced and backstreet abortions result in the deaths of at least 200 women each day, over 70,000 women each year.

The fightback is intense and has never stopped. Autonomous German group Ciocia Basa formed in early 2014, works to facilitate women and people travelling to Berlin from Poland to safely receive termination treatment there. Offering advice, a place to stay, translation services, procedural information and more, their work is the epitome of activist action. Ciocia Basa told me:

“The law in Poland is very strict, and fundamentalists want to make it worse. The social climate around abortion has made it so controversial that doctors are reluctant to perform it even in [legal] cases and women are often sent from one hospital to another until it is too late. About 1000 legal terminations are performed yearly, while tens of thousands of women travel to Germany, Slovakia and Holland, they have illegal abortions in Poland or order pills online. The proposed law ... would also punish everyone involved in the abortion for up to 5 years. It would mean that each woman having a miscarriage, a natural one or induced one, would be under suspicion. The access to prenatal diagnostics would be limited, because discovering any deformations wouldn’t be a reason for an abortion anymore.”

Similarly in Britain, charity the Abortion Support Network helps



women travelling from Ireland to England to safely receive treatment, where seeking a termination is also punishable by incarceration.

Polish group Dziejuchy Dziequchom was borne out of this most recent attack on women by the Polish state, organising nationally with women of all ages:

“Girls join the ranks of women of all ages from across Poland, who differ in beliefs, but are all focused on one goal, which is the defence of women’s reproductive rights in Poland.”

Although countries label themselves as places which ‘allow’ abortions, they maintain the power dynamic that sees us asking permission from them, they assert their dominance by enforcing rigorous and demeaning interrogation. This allowance also operates across Europe under a system of tiers, whether the woman’s’ life is in danger, to what extent and how far along the process they may be and other benign measurements which exist to trample on any sense of agency women may have.

Ireland, Malta and Poland are not a world apart from the UK, to think so is totally naive. England is labelled as a country which will allow abortions based on economic and other factors. Worse still, as the NHS deteriorates you’re looking at Marie Stopes prices for an abortion, which are anywhere between £546 to £2,040.

We are pandering to the state if we argue for abortions in extreme situations – because of illness, because of abuse or any other factor. The only reason should be the decision made by the woman. There is no room for any other argument. The only way to ensure the safety and autonomy of women is to dismantle the state that exists to oppress us.

Jaan Quadrant

Glasgow's Tent Town and The Battle Against Homelessness

This is the story of Tent Town, a camp of protest against the problem of homelessness in Glasgow and the people neglected by Glasgow City Council.

Tent Town had two purposes from the outset: to shelter homeless people who had lost out on the closure of the Hamish Allan Centre and the closure of the winter shelter on the 31st of March and to make a clear statement to the Council: it is a disgrace that homeless shelters are closing while so many councilors live in luxury and comfort.

The camp itself began on the back of a 48-hour soup kitchen Op, Stock & Roll in George Square. There were up to 20 tents at the camp for homeless people to provide shelter and a gazebo where food was cooked and tea and coffee served.

Tent Town succeeded on the solidarity of volunteers, the contributions and efforts of some who stayed at the camp and the generosity of the people of Glasgow, and its visitors, who donated food, money and supplies.

That there was a camp in front of the City Chambers, a visual reminder of the problem of homelessness in the city, was clearly an embarrassment to the Council. So much so, that they attempted to evict the camp through the Sheriff Court. This in itself shows us that they are gutless and heartless bastards.

While the court case took place on the Wednesday, some of us remained at camp in case the Council and Sheriff's officers tried to forcibly evict residents. The initial court judgment gave residents of Tent Town 48 hours notice of eviction, although this was extended to six weeks upon appeal. The appeal was taken to the City Chambers and it was signed for by civil servants of the Council, so that we had confirmation that the Council had notice of the six week extension.

Given we had this six week extension, the long term goal of the camp evolved into helping residents to find accommodation and putting people in touch with action teams.

The CID appeared on the Friday and informed us that the Council was going to attempt to evict the camp, as per the initial 48-hour eviction notice, although the Council couldn't go through with the eviction until Monday.

The Sunday passed without event, yet the decision was taken to move the camp to the opposite side of George Square, simply because each side of George Square has its own postcode and thus making a new eviction process for every movement of the camp around the square.

On the Monday, the CID again came forward to inform us that the Council and Sheriff's officers were going to attempt to forcibly evict the camp. The police, on the other hand, said they weren't keen to evict unless everyone was in emergency accommodation. People from the camp then occupied the Chambers until councilors agreed to come and speak about the future of the camp residents.

This resulted in a heated series of meetings at The Hub on London Road, where the Simon Community agreed to house everyone or assist them in finding their way back home if they didn't come from Glasgow.

25 people were assisted into accommodation and 6 were helped back to Manchester, London and Northern Ireland.

Our ground was stood and we won; volunteers and residents together, we beat the Council and forced them to retreat on their neglect for the homeless of the city. It showed the people of Glasgow that they can make a difference by working together against authority and injustice.

Sound Thief (Glasgow Anarchist Collective)

Home is where the resistance is: Gentrification, Raids and the Housing Bill

It is summer but the housing situation is showing no signs of breaking from its political winter. With the Housing and Planning Bill looming, community groups and radicals have slowly mobilised for another defensive skirmish against the Tory city-village and its public order officers and propagandists. Londoners cross the old lines of geographical class on their way to work – balancing on the edge of new and punitive formations.

Their precarity could not be more evident. The marked resistance of the previous year – estate occupations or powerful but isolated riots against immigration raids – has its obvious remnants in the streets and estates of Elephant and Castle, Brixton, Stratford, Barnet and so on.

Resistance did not cease for the winter. Tenants and squatters have resisted evictions in Kilburn, Southwark and Mornington Crescent, among a host of others. Militants boarded up the Policy Exchange in quick retaliation against the Housing Bill.

A two-pronged attack, immigration raids have arrived with the property developers. Nearby to the East Street market where locals revolted against a raid in June last year, or Camberwell where a UKBA van was sabotaged this January, luxury blocks are springing up. The more we are told that our belonging is false or undeserved, the more our belonging is validated. The community pride march in Peckham in late February was able to take the issues of queer identity, anti-raids and anti-gentrification as synonymous and celebrate a varied mix of resistance as such.

Community has become like the global economy – no longer corresponding to a reality that consistently mirrors it. To the precarious workers building themselves out of London, community is neither here nor there but wherever resistance happens. An estate becomes my community when I know the streets better than the pigs do, when UKBA officers are unable to imprison people, or when mothers and sisters decide to squat instead of being moved. It is not a collection of familiar objects but a terrain pitted against invasive economic and state power.

In this age of cranes and racist vans especially, it is important that community is defined as confrontation to power. The reduction of resistance to gentrification down to the protection of this or that pub

or library condemns it to a dangerous conservatism. Pre-gentrification London exists only in the nostalgic minds of NIMBYists, old working-classists and local reformers. Their talk of 'old east London' or 'community assets' should be rejected with the same hand gesture. Neither were the poor housed very well in 1946 nor would they be under 'red-terror' Corbyn.

The politics of social housing cannot escape its democratic socialist origins. The anarchist criticism of class war austerity must affirm the possibilities of self-managed, collectively-run housing. The anarchist proposal must not be to 'defend council housing' but to realise these possibilities now. Where bailiffs or UKBA officers clash with people defending themselves and others, the realities of community become evident. They are not static histories, identities or locations requiring defence but the spaces in which resistance occurs and the informal relationship between people in resistance.

If the Housing Bill is passed without a glance, council tenants will be walking from production lines or telephones to the end of their tenancies in two to five years; travellers will wake to find bailiffs at their sites; association homes will be sold to private landlords through right to buy. Community is revolting against this or nothing.

Luke Harrison



Credit to Glasgow Anarchist collective for the image

NEW SOCIAL CENTRE OPENS AT FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

Those familiar with the Freedom building in Whitechapel will recall our Autonomy Club on the second floor. Thanks to the brilliant work of volunteers and DIY superheroes it has now reopened as DECENTRE following a fantastic refurbishment! Keep an eye out for events happening there this summer and beyond! If you're interested in hosting an event there or utilising this space please get in touch.

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