



# THE PAPER

EDITION ONE  
APRIL 2011

[www.wearethepaper.org](http://www.wearethepaper.org)

SCREW US  
AND WE  
MULTIPLY

## EDITORIAL

We follow rules, we obey laws, we adhere to social codes. At other moments we disobey the law, we break and bend the rules, we act outside of norms. In order to know when to obey and when to dissent and how to do these things together, we need to talk about our fears and about the things that scare us, the things that keep us apart and paralyse our ability to act. The intention is not to dwell in the comforts of fear, but instead to see what alliances and ideas emerge when we politicise the experience of fear. It is from here that we can confront fear with disobedience.

'Certain words are like battlegrounds: their meaning, revolutionary or reactionary, is a victory, to be torn from the jaws of struggle' (The Invisible Committee). Words which used to be ours have been stolen and stripped of their meaning... peace, safety, freedom... to the point where they have come to mean their exact opposite. They are used, along with their twin opposites - extremism, terror, tyranny - like switches to turn on and off our fears: are our universals under threat, is our safety at risk? Some words are to be relinquished, some destroyed, some remain to be reclaimed. Hijacking meanings has been a successful strategy of queer movements the world over; queer, fag, tranny have successfully and joyfully been co-opted.

The production of this edition (as with the previous ones) has not been smooth. From the struggles in Wisconsin, we found the slogan 'screw us and we multiply.' Some

of us like the words on the cover, while it made others cringe and argue: what about the rape implications or the reproductive justice irony? We will have no choice but to multiply as abortion rights come under attack. 'Screw us and we multiply' is full of latent fears, it reeks of domination and control. Yet on the cover, in the context we find ourselves in, it is being turned against itself, as an expression of power, courage, a 'we dare you' in unlikely circumstances. By exploring fear and desire we are reminded that all is performance, and that the act of conscious performance reveals that which has come to be naturalised. Screw us and we multiply can be read as the disobedient re-capturing of meanings acted out as a dangerous play.

Unsurprisingly, the language superimposed on our movements finds resonance with the (neo)-liberal buzzwords used to appease or worry the 'public'. The movement is strictly 'anti-cuts' (we're fighting for a strictly defined piece of ground), it is composed of (a minority of) 'students' (young and idealistic, who will one day learn the meaning of a balanced budget) and, of course, who have been the cause of much 'violence'. Violence, perhaps with its antonym 'peaceful', are the most fraught with hypocrisy of all these trigger-words. With that carefully crafted story, the boundaries of our political imaginaries are fixed, and crossing the frontier will result in punishment. It is made crystal-clear: step out of the authorised march route, break a window, take over the roof of a

nexus of power, and we will make you pay. Apparatuses of fear, from kettles to horse charges to the methodical judicial hunting down of 'dangerous elements' are there to keep the fear alive and the story straight. Disobedience begins with hijacking that story, the space between here and our future is the battleground.

In the next edition (Edition Two) we examine 'numbers' and consider value and measure; what counts, who counts and how we count. Numbers are used to mystify and to distance us from the workings of power. We are interested in value, its measure and understanding how and when (our) values differ.

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Send your letters, drawings, reports, articles or photos for the next edition by 13 April

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Printed by Hato Press in support of The Paper  
[www.hatopress.net](http://www.hatopress.net)



## Correspondence

Letters and news from down the road and across the water made its way to us this month. Find The Paper online at [www.wearethepaper.org](http://www.wearethepaper.org)

I don't know who this Dave Riddle character thinks he is, but he seems blissfully unaware of his reproduction of neo-liberal ideology in his naive defense of post-Keynesian 'workfare' social policy. Is this supposed to be a radical left-wing paper? Perhaps you should pass on a copy of Michel Foucault's 'Birth Of Biopolitics' to Mr Riddle before allowing him to put pen to paper again. In this text, Foucault updates the critique of capitalist ideology for the era of late capitalism, an era in which the concept (and subject) of 'human capital' is invented to allow the organisers of labour efficiency (i.e. the ruling class) to extend their control into the whole of human life. In this way, the volunteer becomes the 'self-entrepreneur' - the worker who must work on themselves to create value for potential employers - and succumbs to late capitalist ideology (i.e. neo-liberalism) in their enthusiasm for free labour, in order to invest speculatively in the diminishing possibilities for a future career.

/ Ken Rodley - Goldsmiths University

Since the start of February 2011 the following organisations have signed up to the pledge, "We the undersigned commit to refusing to participate in compulsory work-for-benefits placements. We want volunteering to remain just that!". Unite LE/524 Branch / Hackney City Farm / Shiny Ideas / Unite LE/785 Branch, / Staff Shop (Unite), Friends of the Earth - England, Wales and Northern Ireland / Campaign Against Arms Trade / Kilburn Boycott Workfare / Arts Against Cuts / Precarious Workers Brigade. Please contact [www.boycottworkfare.org](http://www.boycottworkfare.org) if your organisation or union branch will sign the pledge, or for more information on the campaign.

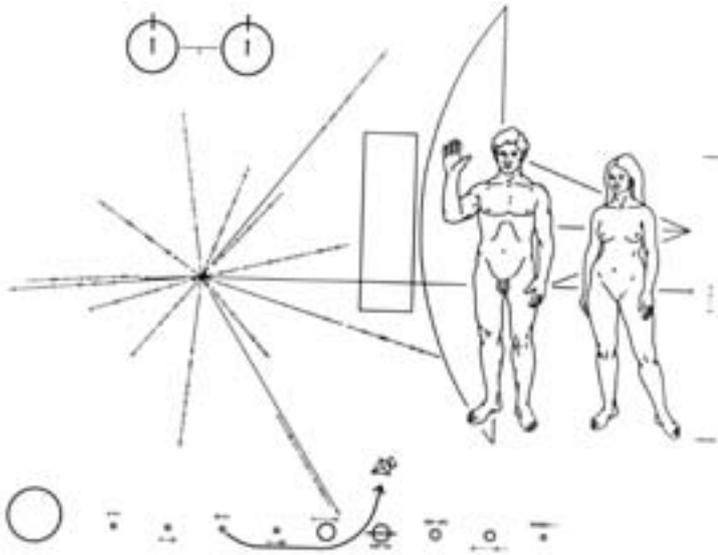
### Statement by the 300 migrant hunger strikers.

The struggle is complete. With the documents in hand and our heads up high, we return to our homes and our work vindicated, after 44 days on hunger strike. The struggle continues. The announcements for an 8-year limit and the increase of

work credit as prerequisites for the issuing and renewal of residence permits must become law immediately. The struggle is the only option. The struggle against the daily exploitation and racism's walls, the struggles for the legalisation of all migrants with no prerequisites, for equal rights between local and foreign workers, for a life with values and dignity, these are our next steps. Together with the anti-racist and migrant movement we will walk along this difficult path, the path of struggle. The struggle unites us. With the documents in hand and the head up high we salute and wish farewell to everyone who supports us. To the people in solidarity in Greece and all other countries in the world, the doctors and their colleagues, all who stood by our side in these days of the hunger strike, in all days when our lives and our deaths demanded vindication and freedom. See you at the struggles!

I just wanted to let The Paper know that it has taken hold across the channel. I took it into a French prison with me as part of my English tutoring and it was well received by my Algerian student who thought it was a great English teaching tool! In solidarity.  
/ Anon - Paris

## Too much news in the world? Lets make some more!



*A timid trade union movement that would only march from A to B has not yet learned the media politics of Millbank or Tahrir*

We all cross swords on what we're fighting against, but what do we want to rally for? This is an invitation to counter the 'news' of the now with forecasts for alternative futures.

JOHN HUTNYK

If only this rally were not just today, and not just from here to there - but all day, all month, and everywhere, all the time. Radical democracy to replace the 40-hour (let's face it, often 60+) work week and the boredom/grim tedium of struggling to pay rent, to survive precarity, ducking and diving, constrained by rules. We could make it different. Say: step one, all senior management incomes (corporate heads, bank bonuses, tax evaders, military budgets, piggy-polly perks etc) to be redistributed as a democracy premium to allow all people to be involved in all decisions, all the time. The permanent forum of the Festival Hall as an open-access debating chamber. The budget of the Royal Household deployed for the National Health Service, and the Palaces made into hospices or welcome centres for refugees. Draft legislation on the abolition of the Trident nukes as the next order of business; thereafter, no colonial bombings abroad and free (and more!) public transport at home. Breakout meetings to propose alternatives to roads - not just cars, the entire road system to be rethought. Also, housing - communal luxury-squatting in the meantime, and a shuttle bus service to the daily demo... things like this, at the very least.

I know the idea of a permanent debating forum is a bad dream for some, but given the current bland waking nightmare of now - the continuous drip-feed of non-informative news coverage, the fake choices, spray-on TV tans, and our false

participation in plastic democracy™ - well, its just not fit for use, is it?

Critical support for the organisations and all that, but a timid trade union movement that would only march from A to B has not yet learned the media politics of Millbank or Tahrir. A smashed window or a traffic jam is not news, but a rallying cry - and if there is no alternative but the tweedledum and tweedledum of parliamentary illegitimacy, such a trades union movement has set its sights too low. Indeed, it has already capitulated, when we could do so much more. I would not rush to say 'you can't kettle chaos', but talk of feeder marches, breakout groups, the situ-diagrammatic imaginings, the (en)closures of Oxford Street, the counter-mappings, the myriad blocs - this bodes well as a fractal Party form.

As yet, the protest march 'against cuts' has not articulated a sufficient alternative - the political and social reorganisation that would end militarism and the arms sales that fuel it; that would reverse the devastation of the planet that comes with allegiance to outmoded technology, such as the combustion engine and its oil; or the dangers of the nuclear industry and opportunistic energy corporation initiatives to build on fault lines, in volcanic areas, or without due regard to renewables; undo the neo-colonial market imperative that returns food scarcity to the very regions that provide abundant foodstuffs for the bourgeois tables of Europe and the 'developed' west; against obscene detention and incarceration

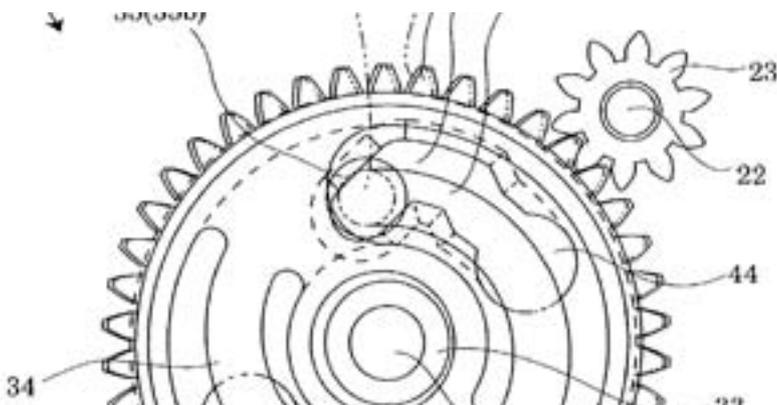
as punitive, racist population-cleansing, starting with the incredibly high proportion of Black Americans in prison in the USA, and the disproportionate working class population imprisoned in the UK, give or take a few white-collar criminals caught out in an expenses scandal or done for perjury; refusing opportunist use of 'human rights' as an ideological club to beat the non-West, while at the same time selling arms indiscriminately and pontificating about war as humanitarian intervention whenever a Western 'leader' needs a 'legacy' issue, pace David 'Desert Rat' Cameron; also: reparations for slavery, colonialism, sexism and homophobia (as democracy credits, seats in the front of the bus, agenda items of choice).

This list goes on. No expenditure on State visits, Freedom of Movement for all (restrictions on capital movement, a planned economy, a reserve fund for relief). Oppose all nationalisms, parochialisms, jingoisms... A NASA Mission to Mars, what bullshit! Instead, more engaging movies, romantic dramas about ageing communists, Regime Change on the Jedi Planet (the conservative clerics deposed) or The Bourne Conversion (to communism). For a political and popular culture that is not a festival of death. For a Life Extraordinary.

No to marching in lines.

Yes to running wild in the streets - we can sit down afterwards and work out how to do it all differently, again and again, that too can be fun. We just have to ask what is required to win a life like this, and more? What politics? What organization? What movement? More than a mere 'like' or 'retweet', or a one-day dawdle. Diagram this.

## Strike Together, March Together



The 10 November demonstration kick-started the biggest student revolt since the late 1960s. It also inspired the Universities and Colleges Union to ballot for strike action over jobs, pay and pensions. *Mark Bergfeld* from the Education Activist Network reports on the strike.

At first sight, the UCU strike may have seemed very 'economistic' but in the context of the government's assault on students it transformed into one about defending access to education and opposing the government's neo-liberal agenda. Lifting the cap on tuition fees has allowed the market to rip through the higher education system. Scrapping the Education Maintenance Allowance, and refusing to pay fees for those who want to learn English and are on income support, hits the vulnerable. The wholesale privatisation of the sector is the end game.

Lecturers in Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) have suffered from years of casualisation and marketisation – forcing colleges and universities to compete in a race to the bottom in the quality of education provided and wages and

conditions for workers. FE has the second highest proportion of hourly-paid workers in the country (the catering industry has the most). Lecturers in HE are pitched against Vice-Chancellors who have just awarded themselves a 20% pay increase. In short, our lecturers are at the forefront of the struggle against their bosses and ConDem austerity!

As no other trade union called a national strike in the run-up to the monster TUC demonstration on March 26, the UCU strike is a beacon of hope in the wider trade union movement. It shows how we have to fight back if we are to beat the Tories and break the Coalition. The battle cry is strike together, march together.

The UCU strike made the possibility of student-worker solidarity a concrete reality and hopefully will not only inspire lecturers to take further strike action but also other

public sector workers who are under attack. Lecturers need to secure victories over their specific issues. But they also need to link up with other public sector unions to coordinate strike action. From here on, we could see industrial action and strikes of council workers coinciding with university occupations. Or a postal worker's strike coinciding with highschool walk-outs. Action that focuses on specific disputes and demands is the way to win. This can create the conditions for victory in defense of education and public services.

At the TUC Congress in 2010 the cries for coordinated strike action grew louder and louder. Yet we haven't seen any national strikes whatsoever. No one group can fight the Tories and their friends by themselves. We need to fight together. The lecturers have paved the way for coordinated strike action, and herewith also for a general strike which can break this Coalition and grind the system to a halt.

<http://educationactivistnetwork.wordpress.com/>

## Den Plirono - I won't pay!

A widespread movement against austerity in Greece is alarming governments and making markets tremble.

SASKIA FISCHER

The tactic that's so threatening to the IMF, the EU and the Greek government? A simple refusal to pay. Since the IMF-EU austerity plan was launched last May, average Greek salaries have shrunk by 20 per cent and unemployment has soared to 15 per cent. Neither figure captures the violence such changes inflict on those with the lowest incomes.

It started as a protest against road tolls. In Greece, by paying these fees, drivers fund the private companies who build and are supposed to maintain the roads.

This system violates the Greek constitution which prohibits private entities from blocking the free movement of people. The protests started in late 2009 in the outskirts of Athens with a roadblock at the toll booths that waved drivers through without having to pay. They are growing in strength, and every week or so, coordinated roadblocks are held around the country. It is estimated that 30 per cent of truck drivers refuse to pay the tolls.

These actions are exposing the absurdities of the legal system. In a growing number of cases, to comply with the law, the police have been forced to press charges against

private bus companies and toll operators for illegally detaining people who refused to pay the fare.

And the refusal has spread. When bus fares were increased in Thessaloniki, people organised themselves to take the bus together in groups, refusing to pay the hike. They engaged in basic and effective sabotage: breaking the ticket machines on buses. Some did this by blocking the cash slots with bubble gum. In Athens, people covered the underground toll machines with plastic bags. On 19 March, a mass free train ride was organised from Edessa to Thessaloniki to protest route closures and fair hikes. Next up, people are planning to extend these actions to other spheres. Their sights are set on refusing to pay the increasingly unaffordable utility bills.

## Lines in the campus sand: lecturers across picket lines



In Edition Zero of The Paper, Morten Paul asked 'what do academics do, when they go on strike?'. The answer offered by one of his professors was that 'they use the time to work on their research'. The answer offered by other academics, it seems, is that they cross picket lines, strike break and carry on regardless.

### ANONYMOUS

The Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) undertook strike days in England, Wales and Scotland between 17 - 24 March against attacks on pensions and higher education more generally. Yet some colleagues crossed picket lines and taught planned lectures and seminars.

These colleagues regard themselves as 'critical' theorists, they lecture on the damage wrought by neo-liberalism and have made careers on the back of their 'radical' positionalities. They are paid up members of the union. They have no

strategic problem with the strikes. The (ridiculously poor) reasons they offer for strike breaking is that they feel 'obliged' to students, that they didn't want to 'let them down'. They are unable to bridge their theory with practice, in the simplest of ways.

These emotional and affective responses, as cowardly as they are, reflect a bigger process occurring in higher education: the marketisation, commodification and instrumentalisation of knowledge, degrees and the university, in which students become little more than consumers, apparently enraged when they can't access *thethingtheypaidfor*.

Yet conversing with students in class, little information had been communicated to them about the strikes. Placed in the context of the broader attacks on higher education and public services and within the module under study, they were not angry with lecturers. They understand the assault we are all facing. Most of them simply asked the best way that they could support lecturers.

Traditional strikes may not be the most effective form of protest in the current moment. We indeed need to re-imagine our strategies to organise when our workplaces no longer resemble those around which industrial unionism was based. This doesn't mean smashing solidarity, scabbing and crossing picket lines. It means working together, with colleagues and students to imagine alternatives and engaging creatively, in solidarity, with all of those working and learning, within the walls of the university and beyond.



## Fear that Stops Thinking

LES BACK

*The Germans were over this house last night and the night before that. Here they are again. It is a queer experience, lying in the dark and listening to the zoom of a hornet, which may at any moment sting you to death. It is a sound that interrupts cool and consecutive thinking about peace. Yet it is a sound – far more than prayers and anthems – that should compel one to think about peace. Unless we can think peace into existence we – not this one body in this one bed but millions of bodies yet to be born – will lie in the same darkness and hear the same death rattle overhead... the guns on the hill go pop pop pop and the searchlights finger the clouds and now and then, sometimes close at hand, sometimes far away, a bomb drops.*

/ Virginia Woolf

Britain is a bombed and bombing culture. This is captured in the opening of Virginia Woolf's essay *Thoughts on Peace in an Air-raid* written for an American symposium on women in the war in August 1940. As part of the recent graduate Collective Futures symposium at Goldsmiths we took these insights for a walk along the New Cross Road. Pausing at the house of Barnes Wallis, inventor of the 'bouncing bomb' immortalised in the 1954 film *The Dambusters*, to read at the curb side extracts

from W G. Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction*. The plaque on Wallis' former home makes no mention of his deadly inventions or the raids or attacks on the Möhne, Eder, and Sorpe dams in the Ruhr area that resulted in the drowning of close to 2000 people. Drifting down the street the group including students from all over the world stopped by the Rising Sun café to hear a reading from Virginia Woolf's essay in the 'bomb print' of a V2 rocket that killed 168 people in 1944.

The readings evoked the shared human frailty of the civilians who died in Hamburg, Berlin and London. The sound of the bombers and the sawing noise of the propeller plans above, as they chopped the air induced fear in those waiting below hoping to dodge the deadly cargo. More than this, the thought of imminent death damaged the ability of those waiting in the dark to apprehend what was going on. "At any moment a bomb may fall on this very room" she writes. "One, two, three, five, six ... the seconds pass. The bomb did not fall. But during those seconds of suspense all thinking stopped. All feeling, save one dull dread, ceased". Virginia Woolf concluded that it is for this reason that fear and hate are sterile because these affective states limit the capacity to sense and make sense. Her essay is of enduring significance because it foregrounds the impact of fear, hate and war on the education of the human sensorium. The fact that Britain, and London specifically, is a bombed landscape

is at once ever present within the popular culture and yet at the same time grasping the significance of this history is allusive. Where Virginia Woolf's essay is such a valuable resource is how it foregrounds the way in which fear damages the imagination and our ability to act.

"Directly that fear passes, the mind reaches out and instinctively revives itself by trying to create" she writes. "Since the room is dark it can create only from memory. It reaches out to the memory of other Augusts – in Bayreuth, listening to Wagner; in Rome, walking over the Campagna; in London. Friends' voices come back. Scraps of poetry return. Each of those thoughts even in memory, was far more positive, reviving, healing and creative than the dull dread made of fear and hate."

The sound of the bombs falling haunted Virginia Woolf. She never lived to see a future beyond them, committing suicide at the end of March, 1941. Some blamed her death on her experiences during the air raids. She could not create anew in the future but only within memory's realm. We need to find ways to repair the harm that hate and fear inflicts upon our ability to see, hear and understand. This is what Woolf refers to, from the darkness of the air-raid shelter, when she argues that these affective states are sterile and unfertile; here there can be no space for growth, development or nurture.

## Fear and Precarity

LAURA SCHWARTZ

Most fear is banal, everyday and relentless. Some days I fear the cops and the fascists. But most days I just fear not being able to pay my rent, not having a job next year. The dreary fear that comes with only having just enough money to get by is the kind that the majority of people have always had to live with. In the last few decades, however, the precarious working conditions blossoming under neo-liberal economic regimes have distilled this kind of fear into its purest essence and made it the defining narrative of many people's lives.

Will my employment contract be renewed? The funding for my job removed altogether? Will I get my next 'free-lance' gig? Will my landlord kick us out so he can raise the rent again? Such anxieties do not exist externally to us but enter our bodies, determining the very kinds of people we are. The education and qualifications we so carefully acquire are not experienced as enriching, but as safeguards and barriers put up to protect us from something worse. Far from releasing us from the conservative social rhythms of

Fordist modes of production, precarity has made us even more disciplined and risk-averse. We work extremely hard. We rarely say no to our boss. And we make cruelly rational economic decisions about what kind of families and relationships we can 'afford' to have.

But although this kind of fear can often seem totalising in its ability to determine the way we live, in certain moments (of political urgency) it can simply melt away. The explosion of student protest early this winter for once brought our personal production lines grinding to a halt. Politics stopped being, just for a moment, something to be efficiently fitted into busy work schedules and became a thing to live inside of. For revolutionaries whose practices had been formed under the cosh of neo-liberalism, the 'liberation' about which we so often spoke became tangible for the very first time.

Yet the release could only be temporary, for the fears generated by economic insecurity have a material basis that cannot be simply wished away. If we want the nightmares to stop, we need to do better than valorise

the rolling-stone revolutionary subject – he who cares nought for how the next gas bill gets paid. If precarity has anything to teach us it is that freedom requires security and that feeling brave is also about feeling safe.

Our fragilities need to be approached not as individual weaknesses to be brushed aside or overcome, but as offering the potential for alliance and movement building. We know what this might look like in the abstract: collective resistance to house evictions, unemployed workers unions, food co-ops and community childcare being only some of its more obvious forms. But to take the first steps requires a subtle and extremely tricky mental shift away from our individualist and productivist approaches to 'doing' politics. Paying closer attention to the social relations generated within our collective projects is not necessarily about slowing down, but it is about rejecting the market orientated obsession with immediate outcomes. Rather we need to find a way to move together, as slowly or as quickly as possible, to create a sustainable response in this moment of political urgency.

## In the Bosom of Fear



BUE RÜBNER HANSEN

**F**ear can be quite a warm and comfortable place to be. It might not seem like it when we fear arrest in the kettle, when we fear losing our job or fear being snubbed by a stranger when we ask for the time. But it can be a safe haven compared to the overwhelming anxiety we sometimes feel at night, when what drains us of energy during the day seems meaningless at best.

What are fear and anxiety, and how do they shape who we are? It seems clear that fear and anxiety are related but not the same. Fear is always determinate, it has an object, it is a fear of something, of losing our job, of not making it, of rejection or ridicule. Fear, even if it is unfounded, is inherently meaningful. If there was a bogey man under the bed, you'd be quite right to fear him. Fear is a part of a system of meaning.

Anxiety is indeterminate and has no concrete object. Anxiety is the affect proper of the collapse or breaking up of meaning. If the fearful fears to lose, the anxious is uncertain of what there is to be lost or gained. What is lost in anxiety is meaning itself. We fear unemployment, but become anxious when we find unemployment unlivable and employment undesirable.

Some will say anxiety relates to nothing (like a fear of the unknown). But this is not just any nothing – it is an insistent and relevant nothing. Like the noise of silence, it shouts at us, and cannot be ignored.

When we are anxious our world of meaning cracks or crumbles, we are face to face with

the possibility of giving direction to our whole existence. Anxiety is the point of our emergent and yet indiscernible desire, the moment before we cross the line and find ourselves establishing a new space of meaning and practice – or before we return to the bosom of fear, to the security of the law-abiding and timid.

### The escape into Fear

How reassuring it is then, to have something to fear when the alternative is to face the meaningless in our lives and our society (and in the oh so many cheap fears they have on sale!). In this way the fear of something can be a postponement or placeholder for anxiety. If this is so, our task then is to distinguish between fear-as-placeholder-of-anxiety and fear-plain-and-simple.

When we don't tell our boss to shove it, when we stay out of Millbank, or when some were too fearful to show their soles to Mubarak, there are two dimensions to fear.

On one hand we fear something real and concrete – the risk of being sacked, or pushed onto the tarmac, hands tied behind our backs, then locked up in a cold cell, charged and abused. On the other hand, our fears may be quite groundless or exaggerated. When we stand together in solidarity, in workplaces or unions, or when we are thousands together in disobedience, they can't simply sack or arrest us all (or they risk the rage of us all). When we fear arrest we calculate our actions in relation to the law and in doing so we submit ourselves to the system of legality. Whether or not we break

the law, we somehow act as if we're guilty, as if we are being watched. They don't need to use force when we use the force of our own fear on ourselves – or against each other. These fears too often amount to escapes for us, masks of our anxiety. They give us an easy escape from the disturbing feeling that there is no sense to their system of meaning and law and from the arduous task of finding ways to live beyond it.

### It happens...

When we create new spaces and ways to live and struggle, fears will still be there. Some fears will be dissolved as we stand together with courage, when the police and public opinion turn out to be paper tigers. But other simpler fears will still be there; fear of the concrete threats to our livelihoods and bodies, to our solidarities and collective experiments. This kind of fear has its own intelligence, the intelligence of self-preservation and strategy, a fear that helps us navigate between courage and care.

When we turn our backs on the fear that controls us, when we stand with those who've left the suffocating bosom of fear, we face anxiety, the moment before the event. It is not merely a question of courage, but of setting our own 'laws', our own meanings and practices. It happens when we stop using the fear of arrest, loss and ridicule against ourselves. When we start to say: we do this not because it is legal or illegal, proper or provocative, but because it is right.

# Wisconsin: The Struggle Against 21st Century Wage Slavery

The return of struggles against wage-slavery in the US makes for some strange alliances, and introduces an entire generation to the inspirational education of the extended strike.

GEORGE CAFFENTZIS

## Wisconsin and the 'bad surprise'

Many predicted that the financial crisis beginning in 2007 constituted the end of the neo-liberal phase of capitalism in the US. The trajectory from Lehman Brother's collapse in September 2008 and the mid-term elections of 2010, however, revealed a different story. As in a horror movie, homegrown US neo-liberalism wearing a tricorne hat of the 'Tea Party' has been revived in the US at least. Instead of being stabbed in the heart, neo-liberalism seems to have been rejuvenated by a fresh infusion of blood and money.

But a worse 'bad surprise' of the crisis has been the US working class's lack of political response against the trillion dollar bail-outs and tax breaks for big capital, the billion dollar austerity budget cuts, and the millions of foreclosures. There was a hope in the anti-capitalist camp that the crisis would be the ignition of a new cycle of struggles. But the collapse of strike activity in the US in the crisis was a decisive negative indicator (however problematic the number of official strikes is as a measure of proletarian militancy). There were only 21 major strikes (i.e. involving more than 1000 workers and lasting more than one day) in 2007, 15 in 2008 and 5 in 2009. This was almost a non-response to the attack on wages and working conditions that transpired in the last few years and in comparison to (a) the last period of intense crisis in the US, 1975-1984, when there were on average 179 major strikes per year and (b) the immense strike/riot/revolt wave that has engulfed other parts of the world (from Greece to Thailand to Bangladesh and to North Africa) in the last few years.

There is certainly no inevitability about this lack of response, for no strict negative correlation exists in US history between the unemployment rate and the number of strikes. Workers, though prudent, are not like their namesakes, robots (and even the robots rebelled in Capek's 1921 play

R.U.R.). Just because the unemployment rate goes past 5 per cent doesn't mean that workers will all crawl before their bosses. Needless to say, the decade of the 1930s is a glaring counter-example to the correlation of unemployment and passivity.

Given this bad surprise, the recent explosion of demonstrations, walk-outs and state-building occupations in Madison, Wisconsin in defense of 'workers' rights' has justifiably stirred the hope of many anti-capitalists. Is the struggle in Wisconsin a sign that the US working class is finally joining with workers in the rest of the world in saying 'basta' to the machinations of capital and demanding another 'out' to the crisis besides the re-imposition of what was called 'wage slavery' in the 19th century, i.e., the condition that exists when waged workers are legally prohibited from collectively negotiating wages and work conditions?

## Taxes versus Wages

The legislation that ignited the struggle in Wisconsin is cleverly meant to cause deep divisions in the ranks of the state police, between state police and other state workers, between 'state' workers and workers in the 'private' sector, between workers in 'white' states like Wisconsin and 'black' states like Illinois, between the US working class and the world proletariat. For example, police officers and firefighters were cynically exempted from the anti-worker rights provisions of the bill. So the average cop is forced to confront a dilemma: "should I abandon my fellow unionized workers (teachers, clerical workers, etc.) as I'm being tempted to do or should I express my solidarity with them and suffer the consequences?"

The Budget Repair Bill was presented as a piece of fiscal legislation to eliminate the budget deficit and requires state workers to increase their payments to their health and pension funds. That was to be expected, but it also prohibited state worker unions to negotiate with the government around issues concerning working conditions and wages (beyond adjustments for inflation).

I.e. the law prohibited negotiation over issues that were standardly in dispute by imposing a 'gag order' on unions. This 'gag order' aspect of the legislation spoke directly of a return to 'wage slavery' and was the ignition point of the demonstrations and passions of the remarkable days of rage in February and early March 2011 that often paralleled the explosions in Tahrir Square in Cairo.

The legislation has the support of collective capital that in most cases is anxious to relieve itself of the 'burden' of the costs of the reproduction of the working class (now concentrated in two major programs, Social Security and Medicare). The class war can be partly characterised as an attempt of one class to palm off the 'hot potato' of this cost to the other. The capitalist class in the crisis has been especially interested in putting this onus on the working class (especially the state workers, who are now the most organised sector of workers). The formula for corporate bliss has been concocted in Wisconsin: corporate capital is excused from taxation on profits while any expression of state workers' collective power is criminalised.

But Republicans like Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker have been chosen not only by capitalists to run the state (though he does fawn over wealthy capitalists like the Koch brothers). He and many other state officials were elected in 2010 as 'Tea Party' candidates. The 'Tea Party' presents itself as 'revolutionary', but its activists' attack is not directed against 'private' capital (and for wages) but it is directed at the state (and against taxes). Though not the majority of the Tea Party cadre, there are many workers who support this politics. They seem to assume two axioms concerning power relations in the 21st century: (1) any effort to 'soak' capital and capitalists is a lost cause - i.e. the 'rich' are too powerful and too mobile in a globalized world to confront - and (2) the bulk of beneficiaries of 'their' tax money are other workers they deem 'undeserving,' i.e. poor youth, black people, 'illegal' immigrants, etc.

'Tea Party' proletarians combine inter-class despair with intra-class hatred. Together their axioms prompt them to conclude that they cannot win on the wage front - working class solidarity will always wither in the face of capital - and so the only basis for any kind of change in their incomes and life chances is through a reduction (or at least



a diminution of the increase) in taxation which is driven up, according to them, by the demands of the 'undeserving' poor and the 'lazy and corrupt' state workers, since they see state workers' wages as simply 'their' taxes in another form. Property is not theft for them, but taxes are!

### Wisconsin: a poor terrain for capital

Why has Wisconsin become the site of such a strong resistance to the revival of wage slavery in the US? Such questions are not easily (if ever) satisfactorily answered. But just a couple of facts about the terrain and class composition of the struggle there might be of use, especially for our comrades in England.

The location of the Wisconsin state capital, Madison, is a small city of 235,000, but it is also the home of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with 40,000 students, 2,000 faculty and tens of thousands of workers. Though there are exceptions, university students, who are now facing debt slavery, are materially interested in escaping wage slavery as well; hence they have become immediate allies of the state workers. The students also are in opposition to the austerity budget regimes like Governor Walker's that are increasing their tuition fees. The proximity of the state house to a huge university meant an army of student 'foot soldiers' living minutes away made it possible for masses of people to quickly respond to tactical shifts in the balance of forces.

It is also important to note that the Wisconsin state population of five and a half million is 90 per cent white and 5 per cent black (with the bulk of the black population in Milwaukee far away from Madison). This means that the beneficiaries of state money are most likely white people like most

taxpayers, hence short-circuiting the racist presumptions that underlie all discussion of state 'welfare' expenditures in the US.

This has put the neo-liberal right in a confrontational stance in a difficult terrain that is largely in control of the opposition (i.e., though the Republicans were in official control of the levers of government – the 'public space' – the actual state house has been turned into a 'common' by the opposition during much of the struggle). So secure has been the demonstrators' control of the physical terrain of the state house that the standard efforts to send in agents provocateurs with the usual bag of tricks seems to have been rejected by the police, given the lack of 'incidents' reported.

If the Wisconsin showdown of the neo-liberal Tea Party governor with the state worker unions was to be an update of the PATCO-Air Traffic Controllers' strike for the 21st century, with Walker reprising Reagan's Union-busting role, then this is backfiring. The resistance it is generating is already slowing down what was to have been a blitz of anti-public worker union legislation throughout the US this spring.

### The score-card: Is Wisconsin a turning point?

In one sense, of course, the passage of the Gag Order Bill on 10 March 2011 appears to be the victory of the Governor Walker's approach. But from another perspective, it is a decisive defeat. Remember, the legislation had two components: (1) various budget cuts; (2) a 'gag order' on issues unions previously negotiated, as well as a number of other classical right-wing anti-union provisions (e.g., the elimination of automatic dues check-off and yearly recertification). Walker called the legislation, SB 11, 'fiscal' and insisted that the reduction of union power was a fiscal measure as

were the budget cuts. That is state workers' unions' power is an economic matter as far as the state is concerned. But here Walker was hoisted on his own petard, by being clever by half, he did not count on the Democratic legislators, emboldened by the mass demonstrations in the state house, fleeing to other states and robbing him and the Republicans of the quorum that is required in order to pass any fiscal bill in Wisconsin. By splitting the second part of legislation from the first - i.e. stripping the original bill of its blatantly fiscal aspects – Walker's administration admitted that the revised bill was a political bill and that the attack on workers' rights was not simply the product of financial prudence. Thus he confirmed the arguments of the protesters, for by changing the rubric of the legislation from 'fiscal-economic' to 'political,' he admitted that either the original bill or the revised one was duplicitous.

The consequence of this 'shell game' does not have merely legal ramifications. The initial confrontation in the new battles against wage slavery in Wisconsin that the bill has provoked has had a tremendous effect on activists in the state. Remember, I mentioned the pitiful number of strikes in the US in recent years at the beginning of this piece. The main consequence of this inaction has been generational: most young workers have not had the experience of being on strike for long periods of time and have not had of experience of collectively risking their livelihood in a struggle. Governor Walker's intransigence has unleashed the huge and, most importantly, repeated demonstrations, the occupations of the state house in the face of threats of arrest, and the continuous mobilization in Madison that has developed a cohort of young now experienced activists who will be important in the cycle of struggles against wage slavery spreading across the country.

## An end to the occupation

### Complicity, Duplicity, Monstrosity, Let me count the ways. A numerate response to the apparitions of neo-liberal confinement.

NIC BEURET

**1.** The violence comes in waves of shock, panic and terror. As the waves crash, outrage emerges as the universal emotional condition: so commonplace as to become another affliction like an obsession with the weather. People are outraged about what is being cut and from whom. Others are outraged about occupations and property damage. With baton charges and things thrown from roofs. People are outraged about the complicity of the TUC, the duplicity of the Liberal Democrats and the so-called self-interest of students and public sector workers.

**2.** Outrage flies in all directions, creating a numb sense of brutality. There are two faces to this brutality. It is productive of both our ability to solve the twin crisis of profitability and governance and to their policing of our labouring bodies.

**3.** But outrage gives us no special insight: it is mere reaction. So it must be put to one side. We need to see why our struggles, actions and protests have invited the intensity of violence that they did. We must look to what the theatre of baton charges, horse charges and late night imprisonment meant.

**4.** The police are not merely an agent of repression. The idea of the police evolved from a set of practices broadly concerned with the conduct of the population in market towns in the 16th century. In the moments before the dawn of the industrial revolution, when the working classes of Britain were still coming into being, the police were fashioned into an instrument capable of maintaining the people of the nation in 'good order'. To be maintained as economically productive bodies, part of a nation, as opposed to troublesome and disobedient bodies arrayed collectively against both the merchants and state.

**5.** This implies a second function: the maintenance of the nation's productive forces in relation to other nations. The police enact violence within the nation to bring peace without. They maintain the

nation's productive forces so as to maintain an equilibrium and make possible an economic system that spans a world.

**6.** To ask what the police mean now, what their violence is in aid of, means asking what a productive population looks like today. What specific population is needed to maintain both the European project and a world-system in the midst of crisis.

**7.** At first glance we can see the work of violence is confused. The police are uncertain as to their role. We can see that our rulers are divided, unclear what next steps to take. The contradictions, inconsistencies and errors all speak of a confusion of rule. The continuation of Thatcher's project is by no means the only option for those that govern us: it is just all that they can think to do. It is a stuttering, ad-hoc process, but no less real for it.

**8.** This stumbling neo-liberalism further divides those bodies that labour with hope, those who have access to wealth and social mobility from those who do not. The ever-shrinking aspirational class stand in contrast to the increasing number of those without aspiration or potential. The apartheid society grows as cancer.

**9.** Aspiration and hope operate to discipline the behaviour of those governed bodies that are yet to benefit from the neo-liberal order. If their aspirations are met then the government is legitimated and their acquiescence is procured. Civil society needs no policing.

**10.** Beneath civil society exist the ever-swelling ranks of the excluded. Their numbers grow as neo-liberalism organises a scarcity of hope: an austerity of future. The boundaries of civic life retreat and the so-called squeezed middle are the most recent bodies cast adrift.

**11.** Those excluded are both inside society yet outside civic life: they are an necessary residue. An included exclusion. A monstrosity. They are the source of terror and fear: of moral panic and perverse neo-Victorian fascination. Characterised by the pity, anger and terror they invoke.

**12.** Monstrosity must be confined. Its conduct directed. It is the excess of bodies and under-waged labour that makes possible those forms of labour most profitable to the neo-liberal regime of accumulation. Without nannies, Pret-a-Manger temps and drug dealers there is no finance industry, no creative classes, no productive elite.

**13.** The monster must be conquered. But its conquest is always doubtful.

**14.** To contain and confine the monster - this is the role of the police. They manage those that must serve in order for the professional class to produce. They contain the excessive life that cannot be allowed to find expression. The police then, manifest themselves as a continuous occupation: their right is that of conquest and their technique that of commandment.

**15.** Their role then is to manage the decline of those who but yesterday were to rise to take their place amongst civil society, and fulfil their aspirations. They are to contain the animal spirits of the governed. The colonies come home.

**16.** In a colony, forms of punishment are inseparable from forms of productive labour. Confined. Immobilised. Commanded. The colonies come home. Low waged labour, precarious, without progression and with debt beyond hope of repayment. The ASBO and the kettle both match the labour to be performed. Workfare, zero hour contracts and temp work: these are the punishments of the excluded. Once we look, we can see clearly how our confinement allows others to move. How our servitude makes possible their freedom.

**17.** And what of the maintenance of Europe and the world-system? Here we find the police serve as little more than window dressers, maintaining the appearance of an ordered society of well mannered debtors.

**18.** We live in a world of appearances and expectations: a regime of debt, speculation, and expected returns. We live in a world viewed as an investment opportunity and managed risk. Here, in this world, the police maintain the appearance of a productive population, entrepreneurial,



able to work the double shift and always pay its debts. The appearance maintains the flow of capital, the expectation of return.

**19.** What is vital is that it appears as though investors will get their money back. The much spoken of end of neo-liberalism has failed to come to pass. We are still governed by its logic of debt and prospective return. Our inept rulers with their clueless grins maintain the project because they have no other.

**20.** So the police contain the disorder because if it is not contained, it might seem as though we are uncontrollable. Order will be established in the streets solely because it must appear that the streets are ordered, so that shopping can continue safe from... something monstrous. The project must appear to continue apace or the flow of capital that sweeps up precarious lives and puts them in motion to generate profit

will dry up. If it stops moving it ends. The function of debt – its centrality to accumulation – demands the appearance of future return.

**21.** But this containment is precarious. The proposed intensification of the neo-liberal project is an experiment; the ruling class is not certain of the method with which to proceed. We can see their confusion with the half efforts, U-turns and disagreements publicly aired. They do not know if their methods will succeed in restoring a measure of profitability and growth. Our strategy then is simple. We must be uncontainable. We must disobey. To render payment uncertain: future returns impossible. We must disrupt the smooth flow of investment, speculation and return. We must be an uncalculable risk.

**22.** This will not come from isolated moments of rebellion. Our exodus

from servitude must be sustained and our insurrection continuous. We must refuse to pay our debts as well as their commands. We are the body in the street that refuses to move. Resisting an occupation means organising a base from which to refuse. We have no independence if we cannot maintain our bodies and our rage. We have an excess of life, of capacity, but no means to put them to use.

**23.** We must therefore, wherever possible seize the means of reproduction. In doing so we break the flow and refuse to allow ourselves to be kept busy in our bit part roles. Truly monstrous, we must make them fear our disobedience. By not only our actions but also by taking that which we need to make our own lives beyond the wage.

## A revolution against neo-liberalism?

'ABU ATRIS'

**T**wo observations about Egypt's history as a neo-liberal state are in order. First, Mubarak's Egypt was considered to be at the forefront of instituting neo-liberal policies in the Middle East (not un-coincidentally, so was Ben Ali's Tunisia). Secondly, the reality of Egypt's political economy during the Mubarak era was very different than the rhetoric, as was the case in every other neo-liberal state from Chile to Indonesia. Political scientist Timothy Mitchell published a revealing essay about Egypt's brand of neo-liberalism in his book *Rule of Experts* (the chapter titled 'Dreamland' – named after a housing development built by Ahmad Bahgat, one of the Mubarak cronies now discredited by the fall of the regime). The gist of Mitchell's portrait of Egyptian neo-liberalism was that while Egypt was lauded by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund as a beacon of free-market success, the standard tools for measuring economies gave a grossly inadequate picture of the Egyptian economy. In reality the unfettering of markets and agenda of privatization were applied unevenly at best.

The only people for whom Egyptian neo-liberalism worked 'by the book' were the most vulnerable members of society, and their experience with neo-liberalism was not a pretty picture. Organised labor was fiercely suppressed. The public education and the health care systems were gutted by a combination of neglect and privatization. Much of the population suffered stagnant or falling wages relative to inflation. Official unemployment was estimated at approximately 9.4 per cent last year (and much higher for the youth who spearheaded the January 25th Revolution), and about 20 per cent of the population is said to live below a poverty line defined as \$2 per day per person.

For the wealthy, the rules were very different. Egypt did not so much shrink its public sector, as neo-liberal doctrine would have it, as it reallocated public resources for the benefit of a small and already affluent elite. Privatization provided windfalls for politically well-connected individuals who could purchase state-owned assets for much less than their market value, or monopolise rents from such diverse sources as tourism and foreign aid. Huge proportions of the

profits made by companies that supplied basic construction materials like steel and cement came from government contracts, a proportion of which in turn were related to aid from foreign governments.

The political economy of the Mubarak regime was shaped by many currents in Egypt's own history, but its broad outlines were by no means unique. Similar stories can be told throughout the rest of the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, Europe and Africa. Everywhere neoliberalism has been tried, the results are similar: living up to the utopian ideal is impossible; formal measures of economic activity mask huge disparities in the fortunes of the rich and poor; elites become 'masters of the universe,' using force to defend their prerogatives, and manipulating the economy to their advantage, but never living in anything resembling the heavily marketised worlds that are imposed on the poor.

*This is an excerpt from an Al Jazeera opinion blog post that can be found in full here: <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/02/201122414315249621.html>*

## Re:Generation

*This is an edited extract from Moments of Excess, a Free Association anthology published by PM Press.*

### THE FREE ASSOCIATION

There's a great clip on YouTube (<http://tinyurl.com/lubwkq>). A young man at a festival is performing a crazy freak-out, oblivious to anyone and anything apart from the music. After a while he's joined by another reveller, and the pair start dancing together, circling around and responding to each other's moves. But the real turning point comes when they are joined by a third: a private routine becomes a public event, open to everyone. One, two, three more people join in. Then another half-dozen. The momentum is unstoppable. Whooping and screaming, people start running in from all directions and within minutes the field is transformed into a mass of whirling bodies.

It is a brilliant demonstration of what makes a 'movement' move. On screen you can actually see social relations beginning to shift in a way that resonates with bystanders; they pick up the theme and make it their own in a glorious process of innovation and acceleration. By the end of the song the audience has been utterly transformed: it is energised and expectant, searching for a new opportunity to express itself. Indeed the event will leave traces even after the festival has ended.

Social movements have a similar dynamic. But they don't just consist of moments of resonance; they also include periods of dissonance. They can find themselves unable to move as their once novel issues, ideas and practices become saturated and lose their purchase. At such moments, if they are to expand further or continue to move, they must displace their limits and change shape. If the organisational experiences of

past generations are mechanically repeated, then new potential is obscured. A movement must be given room to move.

### Dance Stance

On 23 November 2010 while student protests were taking place across the UK, there was a march, several thousand strong, through the city of Leeds. Unusually, the march contained many school kids, sixth-formers and college students, in addition to university students and staff. This novel mix produced an exciting, militant and disobedient atmosphere, which culminated in the spontaneous occupation of a building in Leeds University. A lecture theatre was soon filled with over a thousand people, along with a portable sound system and a projector that showed rolling news. A large group of youth danced raucously at the front while the whole room erupted into wild cheering each time the news showed footage of a student demonstration. The atmosphere was edgy, almost out of control, but utterly electric.

Unfortunately this remarkable scene lasted only two and a half songs before some veteran student activists switched the music off. A small argument ensued: the sixth-formers wanted the music back on, while others shouted them down. The undergraduate activists, who had control of the microphone, argued that 'this has to be a serious occupation', and wanted to draw up a list of demands to put to the university. After an ill-defined vote it was announced that those who wanted to continue dancing could go outside, although the sound system was never turned back on. Within an hour people were proposing the election of an occupation steering committee. This sparked an interminable and bad-tempered

debate but by this time the excitement and energy had gone—along with 80% of the people.

It would be easy to score cheap political points from this tale, but it was, in fact, a very difficult situation. The original feeling of unity masked real divisions, and as things broke down complex dynamics of class, race and gender emerged. This wasn't necessarily a bad thing: it simply meant this was a moment of real movement. The protest had brought together people who might usually be antagonistic or at least wouldn't have encountered each other with such a sense of shared purpose before. Perhaps the mistake was to mechanically impose a model of organisation that didn't recognise the novelty of the situation. The student left had a firm idea of what a student occupation should look like and they knew the sort of organisation that could bring this about. But while that model might have been appropriate for previous occupations, this one was different. It had, at least initially, a very different composition. Many of the sixth-formers and younger teenagers were not used to the culture and expectations of the students left and were alienated by the introduction of layers of bureaucracy. In response the undergraduate left turned in on itself, excluding those that didn't resemble themselves.

### Talkin' 'bout my generation...

Social movements come into being by creating problems; or rather, movements form as they make specific issues into problems that must be addressed. The particular shape or logic of that problem can affect the initial composition of the movement, influencing potential participants, natural allies and apparent antecedents. Many recent movements have formed around problems that might lead us to expect youth to be the dominant

## Research Project

### SASKIA FISCHER

Okay, I'm ready for part two. No. No wait.

Let me get myself a drink, if I can find anything. Can't drink the water here, it's poison. So it's the little pink or purple freckly potions instead. 'Less your slick enough to get your hands on a bottle of the real thing. Think I've put them in one of the crates back here. Ooh, my back! Snapped, did you hear it?

All right. Can you hear me okay? Don't like this side of the room, except my chair's here. It's been drafty ever since they removed the containers from the far side of the lot last year. Proper wind corridor it's become,

with exclusive access to the back of my neck! Ugh, the pink flavoured ones really are disgusting. Like a sugar coated plastic doll. Oh, I forgot, would either of you like one? Sorry, not used to company. No? Ok.

Alright, yes. Yes, now I'm ready. Ask away.

Work? I work at a production plant. Well, the kind that produces things, clearly! What kind of things? Well, parts you know, in metals, plastics, sometimes foams. That wasn't part of the job description, to dream up uses for the parts. That's someone else's work, and I was never in that league. I'm part of the base. There are about 30,000 of us at the plant, mostly at my level.

But then after the crisis, things changed. The hours got longer and the pay shrank. They

started giving us coupons valid only at their stores and we drank what we had left. TV ads changed, it was all dreamy women on drugs. People got sick and many died of drink and tension. Oh and big groups stormed the supermarkets I remember, arms linked, we got our dinners. And there was a whole wave of those seeking out distant country cousins. And there were riots. Not just in this city, all over the world. The hungry threw rocks and the rich bolted their doors. And after a few reassuring and manly statements, governments stopped talking.

Wait. Wait wait wait wait wait a minute. Do you have any money? I could really do with a couple thousand. I'm a tired old woman as you can see and I struggle, every



political category of our time. Indeed many commentators have tried to play up an inter-generational tension between the post-war baby boomers – who ‘have had it all’ – and contemporary generations who must now pay the costs.

In Greece, for instance, the uprising of December 2008 was sparked by the police murder of a 15-year-old. Many identified the underlying cause as the disenchantment of the ‘700 euro generation’; so-called because few could envisage ever earning more than this subsistence income. There’s a similar dynamic in struggles around climate change, as the time lag between the emission of carbon and its effects pushes the costs of climate change onto future generations. And some of the most exciting recent struggles have been against the neoliberal reform of universities, with student movements emerging across Europe and the US. In the UK many of us from older political generations have been inspired by the students’ anger, energy, and willingness to take risk and experiment.

Yet movements move precisely because they exceed the specific issues of their emergence. As one problematic becomes saturated, movements shift to another as they seek to generalise themselves. The UK student movements have not defined themselves primarily in terms of youth – the experience of the Leeds occupation shows how a political generation cannot simply be based on shared age. Indeed one of the most unexpected effects of the last few months has been the re-emergence of class as a legitimate way of talking about politics. In France, the recent wave of protest has drawn inspiration from the ferocious

2006 struggles against the CPE (the *contrat première embauche* or first employment contract), which primarily affected the young. But the 2010 revolt was actually sparked by pension reforms, uniting young and old alike. In Greece, the struggles of the 700 euro generation have since become generalised, as savage austerity measures have lowered living standards across all ages.

### Big Youth

Is there still a special connection between radicalism and youth? One recent commentator, ignoring the much more difficult conditions of contemporary students, has argued that ‘Students are always first – energy, time and lack of children make protest easy.’ But our present idea of ‘youth’ is a relatively recent invention. Its creation coincided with the post-war boom, full and stable employment and the birth of rock’n’roll. The teenager was created as someone who was different – not yet a full part of the labour market, although old enough to be a consumer. The period of growing up and moving away from school and family life is a time of risk, play and experimentation. But discipline has to be imposed. Workers have to be made. Old values (which might have been based on love and sharing) have to be unlearned and replaced with the values of the labour market. Where there’s no workplace, the neoliberal state steps in, unleashing harsh regimes on the unemployed, and disciplining students with a reduction in funding and increasing levels of debt.

But if youth is a socio-political category encompassing those without a stable place in the economy, the current crisis is threatening to make youths of us all. The neoliberal deal was based on displacing any antagonism as far into the future as possible. Rising house prices were used to compensate for falling real wages, and a credit-fuelled consumer boom in the global North has filled our homes with an endless parade of things. All that has now gone, taking with it many of the ways we thought we’d protected ourselves. The future has been blown wide open. And the things we thought had given us solidity are revealed to be nothing but commodities or empty dreams. In moments of crisis, just as in moments of excess, the world we inhabit is shown to be a poor substitute for life..

*“Driven to admit that there is, perhaps, some tension in society, when perhaps overwhelming pressure brings industry to a standstill or barricades to the streets years after the liberals had dismissed the notion as ‘dated romanticism’, the journalist invents the notion that this constitutes a clash of generations. Youth, after all, is not a permanent condition, and a clash of generations is not so fundamentally dangerous to the art of government as would be a clash between rulers and ruled.”*

*/ from The Floodgates of Anarchy by Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer, as quoted on the back cover of the Clash’s first single ‘White Riot’ / 1977*

More information at [www.pmpress.org](http://www.pmpress.org) and [www.freelyassociating.org](http://www.freelyassociating.org).

day, for my crumb and shelter. It’s no life. I remember my grandmother. Lived down the road from us in a small brick house. Heating and electricity. And healthy too, not a bag of aching bones like me. And all this, this luxury of health and security, paid for by the authorities! Well, through our work actually. Anyway, will you give me some money? Or coupons? I’d settle for those. Buy an old woman a bit of peace and security, to pad her last years in this jungle of concrete and steel. Now where’s that phrase from? Never mind. So, can I have some money? NO?

Are you crazy? Not now? Okay. Later. I won’t forget. Later, yes.

All right, all right, I’ll tell you. But my patience is thin, remember that. So. One

day, it all stopped. The papers shut down, media evaporated. You turned on the TV and got no signal. You asked your neighbour and they gave you a worried look. Only the old posters were left, and they soon got ripped down. So it was just us, the government and the companies. And how could we know what they were planning? It was an incredible time. In the streets and at the plants, it was pure panic. Especially amongst us, amongst the base. The bosses didn’t look too worried, which only raised our suspicions. So then those of us who knew about these things, about electronics and digitals, we started to try and build our own networks up again, because those had been taken down too. Also you started to see hand printed, or more often hand written papers, circulating in the streets.

Always half hidden, you’d find them at bus stops and tucked in little stacks behind bins. They were full of crazy rumours, and plans and notices about meetings. What, are you leaving? What?

So soon? No. But there’s a whole part of the story I haven’t gotten to yet. An entire era, there were good times too, energy. You don’t have the time you say? Listen, I took a day off work for you. An entire day’s wages that is, that I would’ve spent buying food, because Monday’s wages always go toward food. And now you’re off. Just like that. As you appear, magically from the ether, so you vanish. Bloody bastards. I’m on the edge of my. I’m on the edge of. Wait. Where’s my money? Wait, before you leave, my money!

## The Marquis de Sade in London



In the face of the self-hatred of the superego tyrant State, the irony of Sade's rules might undo the trap.

FRANCESCO SALVINI  
& VITTORIO BINI

*I am exactly what you see - the mask proclaims - and everything you fear is behind.*

/ Elias Canetti

On this island, when you deal with politics, first of all you deal with rules, absolute rules. It looks like rules were there before everything else. You either obey the State, or you need to be ready for punishment. If you don't pay the bus ticket, sooner or later the controllers will trace you back and it will be to your cost. A fearful scenario. In other terms, the political space in Britain is an absolute space where the only choice, a double-bind, is between subjection and martyrdom.

We are facing a Sadist State that deals with radical political action by generating fear - kettling people, identifying or stalking, or threatening you by social exclusion. Sometimes even radical social movements seem to mirror these mechanisms. As if they love to be the victims of this monstrous version of the Marquis de Sade.

However, the absolute opposition between the one who obeys and the one who transgresses is a deception. It aims to condemn us to impotency. Fear then is a by-product of this deception. We are left alone in the middle between two opposites, forced to choose obedience or face exclusion. Inclusion or punishment.

But rules can be changed, they are nothing else but a social convention. Rules shape reality, but life could become something else. To escape this tyrant, we should find a way to break apart this absolute conception of Rules.

The problem is not one of fear itself, but how we face it. Fear in itself just makes us

aware of risk and danger. Often its effect is paralysis - or, worse, cynicism - which is the choice of one who is conscious of risk and, because of fear, steps onto the side of Power.

Beyond cynicism, other tactics and strategies do exist. Strategies look powerful at first sight, but they can be tricky. What is our alternative strategy to challenge the Sadist State? Can we challenge a set of absolute (and wrong) rules with an alternative fulfilled and consistent model? At the end of the day, wouldn't we just find ourselves locked in another absolute world (hopefully with the right rules)?

The practice of Sade in the end of the 18th Century can be seen, as Gilles Deleuze has it, as a critique of the Absolute State and the Absolute Revolution in France. The irony of Sade comes from a concrete experience of the pre-revolutionary period: he was still in prison when the revolution occurred and, during the post revolutionary Reign

of Terror, he was so critical of Robbespierre that he was eventually locked up again. In this context the critique of Sade, his irony, lies in building a revolutionary world with new rules, new institutions... but most of all with new tyrants. Where the only hope of being happy is either to be a tyrant or find pleasure in your punishment.

Here, we might also find a different escape route for facing our fears: we won't subdue. We don't want either to be the new tyrants nor the new martyrs. At stake there is another possibility: we can change the world being aware of the irony of Sade - conscious that when we invent new institutions, when we set new rules, there will be new limits to experiment, new tyrants to overthrow. At stake is the possibility of building a social force able to invent something new. A constituting power able to challenge all tyrants, and overcome everyday its own limits. It is not about conquering the Palace of the Tyrant, but about finding the thousands of ways to tear off the masks of power, to show that the Palace of Rules is just a house of cards.

**Before law there are order and discipline, before a social code there is a set of values... before and around all that there is ideology.**

There is a clear distinction between rules and what is beyond rules (meta-rules). The hierarchy and consequent process of determination is clear. Meta rules define the conceptual framework in which rules shape reality.

Both meta rules and rules embed a contradiction between certainty and uncertainty. Certain is the meta rule, uncertain is the law subject to interpretation. Or the reverse: uncertain is the meta rule, certain is the law which implies sooner or later a form of punishment.

In any case, the imperative as a result of this double contradiction will still be present in the form of impediment. But the certainty of meta-rules is only apparent. They are an illusion,

an induced collective perception. Induced by ideology.

What is a meta-rule then? Democracy, order or discipline are concepts opened to an endless processes of redefinition and analysis. Their meaning is hard to fix. They seem to be impenetrable hence apparently not challengeable.

Liberal ideology bases its power upon the impossibility of fixing the meaning of its meta rules. We follow rules, we obey laws, we adhere to social codes. But no-one is able to truly interpret or justify the meta-rules that root them. Rupture can break this convention, showing the origin of power and its emptiness. The little kid says what should be evident to everyone: the king is naked. The little kid challenged not the rules or ideology, but the meta rules.

# What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?



*At the time I always thought of it as a factory. A factory that produced illusions that satisfied clients' desires*

ALICE SPENCER

## Part one: It's a long way to the top

I started working in a brothel called Top of The Town. I rang up the number listed in the directory, went in for an interview and I started the next day. I told management a fictional story about being a single mum, but gave my real name, address and age. I was 23. My working name was (is) Alice Spencer.

Top of the Town was an old brothel. You can feel the time dragging past you as you walk through it. Red carpet and red velvet are everywhere, as are mirrors; one is constantly on display, reflected ten times around the room. At the time I always thought of it as a factory. A factory that produced illusions that satisfied clients' desires. A business that dealt in fantasies and flesh. The red velvet of downstairs is contrasted with the fluorescent lights and lino floor upstairs in the 'girls' room', the place that clients never see, the place that belongs to – and better signifies – the women who work there. Work shifts were eight hours long. We were not allowed to leave before the end of a shift. If you did then you would not get any more shifts. We were not even allowed to go outside to get meals or take a walk. These rules were enforced even though we were not considered to be employees; instead we were 'independent contractors' who paid a shift fee in order to work: twenty dollars for the first shift of the week, and five dollars every shift after that.

Most Friday and Saturday nights there are over 30 girls working. Negotiations between clients and girls occur in the downstairs bar and clients choose which (if any) girl they would like to take upstairs. With eleven rooms you never really have to wait that long for a room. Clients paid the house for

what is called 'room rental'. In reality this is 60% of the total fee paid for the service, the girl gets the other 40%. After the house has got their fee you are allocated a room. From there you ascend the stairs with the client and once in the allocated room you negotiate your fee. Standard fees apply for bookings depending on time length.

## Part two: Time and companionship

A colleague in the industry in London recommended the agency to me and I liked the look of their website. I telephoned the number advertised on the website and spoke to Lisa, the owner of the agency. I introduced myself as Alice, mentioned my friend's name and after hearing my statistics of young, platinum blonde hair, 34-26-36, Lisa requested that we meet for a coffee (read: interview).

At the interview she explained the terms and conditions of working for her. She made me sign a contract (which I signed with the name Alice) that stipulated the rules of her agency. 'Working for her' is not how she would explain it; she sees herself as an agent 'representing us girls'. Due to the legal situation in the UK she sells 'time and companionship'. What consenting adults then do in private is not her business – or so the story goes. She agreed to take me on her books. She told me I needed to get professional photos taken to be put on her website. I have my face blurred to protect my identity and sanity. The prices of bookings are listed on the website and are determined by time.

For the purposes of work I rent a room in a 'working flat' in the centre of London. It costs £1000 per month. As a result I am available for what are called in the industry 'in-call' bookings. In-calls are bookings where the client comes to you. An out-call

is when you go to them. In London this is most likely to be a hotel room. A one-hour in-call costs £200, a four-hour in-call costs £450, and an overnight booking is £1000. I receive 70% of the total amount charged. It is my responsibility to collect the money from the client and to send Lisa her 30%. Failure to send her the money results in no more work.

To receive work from Lisa you need to sign on. This consists of sending her a text message informing her of your availability for the day. Signing on does not guarantee you work, rather it means that when clients call she includes you in the list of girls that are available. Lisa conducts all negotiations with clients and arranges all bookings. Lisa sends a text message when she has a booking. *2hr in-call @ 6pm can you do it?* A reply that you are available confirms that the job is on. The client is given the address of the flat and (usually) arrives at the time arranged. Money is exchanged for a service and after the time allocated the client leaves. The only difference between in-calls and out-calls is that with out-calls I arrive at the address given, at the agreed time, and somehow make it past the hotel staff using various props (such as an overcoat or glasses) and mannerisms so as to not appear as a sex worker, and the up to the room.

**As workers in the sex industry we are often denied a voice, we are considered only passive victims, we are taught to be ashamed of our work, we are made invisible by discriminatory laws that illegalise our work and us, and we are spoken for and about but rarely are we allowed to speak for ourselves. As migrants even more so. Sometimes our voices are not heard even amongst each other because we don't speak the same languages.**

[www.xtalkproject.net](http://www.xtalkproject.net)

EROS

If, as old Willy said, “all the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players,” then maybe the most radical and most subversive thing we can do is to break the suspension of disbelief; to point out, if only for a mere moment, that we are only playing parts constructed by the narrative, and not essential to the player. It is when we make the conscious decision to

perform that we come to an awareness that we are always performing.

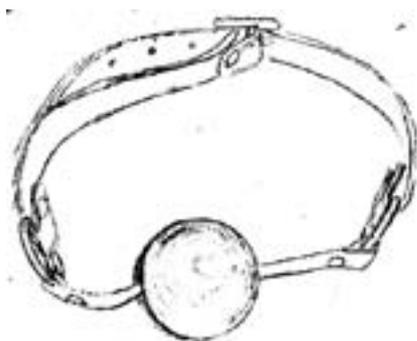
Maybe that was a bit of a dry way to begin a D.I.Y guide about BDSM. Most people’s immediate associations with bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, and sadism and masochism include latex fisting gloves, handcuffs, masks, leather, chains, and riding crops. True, these things can all be part of play, but as props in the

pants-down-panto that is BDSM. The core of BDSM is to expose the fact that power in sexual relationships is just a script. With that in mind, my voyagers in the land of kink, before you blow your hard-earned wages on a brand new hooded spandex full body binder sack or a fancy set of nipple clamps, you should probably think about a few things.

### 0. Consent is Key

Explicit consent (because there is no other kind) is the most important part of any playing you do. If BDSM is the process through which we reveal the performative nature of power in sexual relationships, then consent is essential to its nature. Without consent there is no real reveal of performance, only its repetition; power isn’t engaged, only enforced. The first part of this is communication, about what the play will consist of, and what everyone involved is comfortable with. The next parts are all also communication. This can be difficult when a play involves gagging, a rape roleplay, or any other situation where simply saying “stop” or “no” won’t work. This is why it is important to establish a safe-word or gesture for any participant to put an end to play. This must be respected, once one player no longer consents anything that happens afterwards is rape.

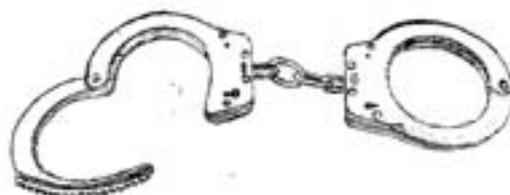
Now that my disclaimer is out of the way, on to the kink:



### 1. Create the Play

This is where you can let your imagination run wild. Do you want to get fisted by a Mistress in leather while licking some Bear Daddy’s boots? Do you want to roleplay, and live out that fantasy involving David Cameron, Barack Obama and a latex maid’s uniform that you’ve always had?

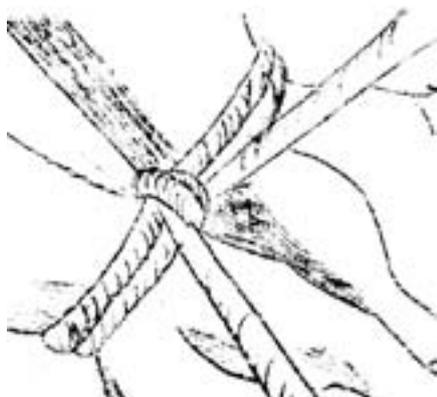
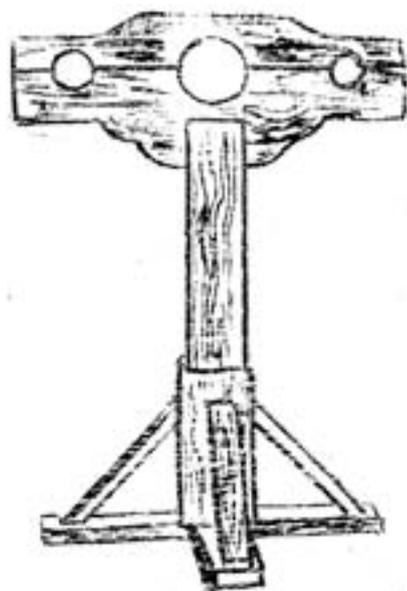
This is your chance to act out your fantasies, to experiment with new things. Maybe you’ve always been in control in your relationships, and this is your chance to get handcuffed and ball-gagged, and let someone else call the shots; or maybe you’re used to being bossed around and just want to fit someone for a cock-cage, and give orders; maybe you want to re-enact the power dynamics of your relationships to come to an understanding of what goes into their construction. If you want ideas, browse the massive wank-bank that is the Internet, it’s full of ideas.



### 2. Figure out How

Now come the logistics, the big important questions. What tools and toys will you need? How many people will need to be a part of the play? What kind of knot should I use? How much lube will be necessary?

There are an unimaginable number of things involved in the full spectrum of play, and there simply isn’t room to tell you how to do them all, but chances are you aren’t the only person that wants to do whatever kinky thing it is you want to do, so do what all the yuppies are doing, network. Go to seminars, shops, and clubs, go on forums, rent books and videos, get a fetlife.com account. People in the BDSM scene are friendly, and always willing to introduce someone to the scene. Ask around, you’ll find someone who knows how to safely tie up an entire person and suspend them from the ceiling, while leaving their orifices easily accessible, or whatever else you might need help with. These are people who are coming to an awareness about sex, they won’t judge or exclude you for your fantasies, that’s the whole point.



### 3. Go Ahead and Get Off

Gather what you need — whether that is fifteen people, three buckets of liquid latex, padded walls, bondage tape, and a set of engraved cock-rings; or just yourself, a glove, a bottle of lube, and a Kate Bush album. Once you’ve got it all, communicate about consent before, after, and during, and go to town. Have fun. This is sex, enjoy it. Resist empire with democratic sexual congress. Just go wild, safely. Remember to clean up afterwards, you want fond memories, not stubborn stains.

### 4. Keep Playing Around

Now that you’ve begun deconstructing sex you can really start to play around with it, stay in the scene, do some things you thought you’d never do, some things you thought you couldn’t do, and some things you’ve never heard of before. Flip the sexual script on hegemony, because when you refuse to let silence stand in for consent, you can make loud your cries of dissent, and when you claim the power to decide what fucking is, you can know when you’re being fucked.