

To Reach Out And Touch One Another

Collected Reflections on Quarantine

Salish Sea Black Autonomists



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Touch One Another**

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Quarantine

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Introduction

Quarantine isn't coming to the US, it's already here. Like everywhere else It does not arrive as a social peace treaty but comes crawling from the decaying corpse of the welfare state as a monstrous racial policing apparatus. Prison has never been a singular place but a particular collection of techniques of social control and that is most apparent under the logic of quarantine where every good citizen is both, and happily we may add, captive and warden. What this says for physical prisons is even more grim as they are transformed into the most pure expression of capital: workhouses where prison slaves manufacture our hand sanitizer¹ and PPE² so that we may live, and on the flip side mass graves, human warehouses packed to the brim under hostile conditions, a fertile field for both the virus and their captors to run wild³.

Crisis is here, as it always is, and it doesn't put a hold on all the other crises unfolding, it just both obscures and amplifies the intensity of them. Still the police are executing black people in the streets, still riots are breaking out⁴, still black people are enduring and dying from medical neglect⁵. Still, still still! We are struggling and suffering and dying – and now the old ways of holding together the social peace reveal themselves for what they are – absolutely nothing. Reforms, inclusion in institutions, 'community policing', and paltry hand outs mean fuck all, just as they ever did but even more so now. Even what they offer us now is more insulting than anything: a paltry, one-time, 1200\$ that will maybe cover one or two months of rent, and only for some of us at that^{6,7}! All the promises of our masters turn to dust in our hands.

The state recognizes what's going on and what's falling apart and in order to ensure it's continued existence is using the logic of quarantine to wage all out war against the entirety of the social body to ensure social cohesion. The life giving and death giving institutions of the state – the police, the medical industry, the carceral institutions, the military – are working overtime now. But where other technique of capital and governance have failed and *are now* failing to absorb the social body into it's logics, *health* and *pandemic* have mutated into one sinister, paternalistic technique of governance that has managed to absorb the social body into the nation and the economy. What's healthy for the *nation*, what's healthy for the *economy*, is healthy for *us* because we are them. With this one trick the social body has become a weapon wielded against itself. From discourses willing to sacrifice more vulnerable people for "our" collective health^{9,10} (that of the nation and the economy), to neighborhood snitches calling the police on those vio-

¹ www.washingtonpost.com

² www.news5cleveland.com

³ www.nytimes.com

⁴ www.nbcnewyork.com

⁵ www.theguardian.com

⁶ www.kob.com

⁷ www.cnn.com

⁸ www.cnn.com

⁹ www.theguardian.com

¹⁰ www.whitehouse.gov

lating the imposed rules of ‘social distancing’.¹¹ How long before those neighborhood snitches become neighborhood shooters enforcing a hardened border of social distance? Everyone knows behind the walls of our healthy neighborhood are the hoards of sick *others*...

The good (white) citizens are snitches and law followers, the rest of us are disease ridden threats because we are irresponsible and must go to work, must go out to buy groceries, because we long to feel the sun on our skin or the embrace of our friends and loved ones. And when the storm clears, all these new divisions, new powers, new roles will remain and intensify as recessions turns to depression and the states forceful triage only create new insurgent populations out of those deemed ‘non-essential’ to the health of the economy and the nation.

But wherever new forms of social control solidify, there is a social (or anti-social) reaction to it. The impulse towards freedom, towards being together, *to be in commune with one another*, is a strong one. Our only hope now – against the ‘expertise’ of our masters – is in one another & our communal bonds. Together we must elaborate a practice of care and revolt that strengthens our social bonds. We must deepen our ties to each other, and in doing so sharpen our tools of analysis and our knives of attack. As a small step in this direction we wish to share the thoughts, analysis, and reflection of those on lock down who are dreaming, like we are, of a quarantine break & of a life worth living.

Salish Sea Black Autonomists,
Spring 2020 In Lockdown

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¹¹ www.walesonline.co.uk

Against Quarantine

Angela Mitropoulos

The genetic identification of a novel strain of coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Wuhan, China, in early December 2019 appears to have entrenched a recourse to quarantine measures around the world. Wuhan, a city of over 11 million people, has been placed in a lockdown, borders have been closed, and a number of governments have instituted selective travel restrictions and prohibitions based on citizenship and legal status—including suspending visas to anyone with a Chinese passport.

NCoV—since renamed as COVID19—is a serious health issue, particularly for those already suffering from chronic and respiratory diseases. The effectiveness of quarantines, however, is doubtful, raising the question of what value there is to quarantines if it's not public health.

There is political value in the quarantine for those who implicitly believe biological-racial purity is a condition of health, but there is also financial value in substituting a social approach to health and illness with a selective, nationalist model conducive to the development of patented treatments and private health insurance.

For some, the quarantine rationalizes xenophobia and calls for ethnonationalist separation. The United States government has imposed a travel ban—or, more accurately, significantly expanded its obsession with restricting the movements of nonwhite people. Drawing on a long history of anti-Chinese sentiment, the Australian government has prohibited the entry of noncitizens from China and proposed to transport Australian citizens—many of whom will have traveled to China to celebrate the New Year with relatives—directly into a period of confinement at the immigration detention center on Christmas Island. While major hospitals on the mainland are equipped to handle serious diseases and pandemics, the island detention center is not—and so, if anyone quarantined develops the disease, they will have to be flown to a major city hospital for treatment in any event. The effect of these policies on some 200,000 students (a proportion of whom are returning from China for the new academic year in Australia) is unclear but will be enormous. Some universities around the world have mandated a period of dormitory confinement; others—such as UC Berkeley—issued advisories implying that xenophobia was an understandable response (since retracted under pressure).

As with the extralegal approach pursued by the Australian government, the Philippines government has proposed the use of military facilities on Caballo Island and Fort Magsaysay as quarantine zones. The Russian government has moreover threatened “the deportation of foreign citizens if they have such a disease.” This use of citizenship status as a proxy for detecting COVID19 is likely to ensure noncitizens avoid seeking treatment for associated symptoms—and it is, in any event, unclear how deportation might minimize the spread of the virus.

These practices highlight what Howard Markel describes as “quarantine’s aggressive potential for harm.” The harm is— as Markel suggested in his history of the treatment of East European Jewish immigrants in New York at the end of the 19th century—exacerbated for those who happen to find themselves on the “other” side of a quarantine border; its spread cannot be restricted along

those lines because a virus is neither synonymous with a group of persons nor can it be identified by a passport.

While the World Health Organization declared COVID19 a serious health emergency, it advised against closed borders as an effective means of handling the virus. It warned that “closing borders was probably ineffective in halting the transmission of the deadly novel coronavirus from China and could even accelerate its spread,” in part because punitive approaches make it that much more difficult for health workers to treat cases and track the spread of diseases.

Immigration detention emerged from the intertwined histories and techniques of quarantine confinement and prisons. For most of the 20th century, the use of the *cordon sanitaire* (or “sanitary cordon”) as a public-health measure had largely disappeared—relegated to agricultural protocols at airports and ports but otherwise lingering as the metaphorical accessory of racializing policy—as I discuss throughout my book *Contract and Contagion* (122, 131–332).

The reappearance of the *cordon sanitaire* since the late 20th century has occurred at the intersection of a number of changes. It has reemerged after decades of a decline of social understandings and treatments of health and disease—or, the privatization of health and the socialization of disease. Further to this, the development of genome sequencing and bioinformatics has made it possible to identify new strains of virus; yet while genetic identification may be important in the development of treatments for some diseases, the ability to identify and map new strains does not imply some postmodern quickening in rates of microbial mutation. And, not least, the resurgence of far-right politics around ethnonationalism and anti-immigrant sentiment have given credence to the fantastical idea that biological purity is a condition of health and life.

In what follows, I want to underline four interconnected points: First, claims that quarantines are effective in containing the spread of viruses such as COVID19 or improving rates of survivability are debatable. The general view is that they are counterproductive.

As for the aesthetics that bolster the apparent urgency of quarantine measures: Mathematical models of contagions might furnish dramatic, speculative visualizations of fractal spreads that are able to be restrained by the presumably solid lines of national borders—but they are not real-world, field-tested exercises. Similarly, the terms and numbers used to describe emerging transmissible diseases have become intense conduits of misinformation, as with the reception of the basic reproduction number, or R_0 . Treated by researchers as a useful but provisional numerical estimate for developing hypotheses about rates of infection, the initial circulation of one such R_0 on social media was greeted as if it were evidence of an unfolding apocalypse. Moreover, the use of non-symptomatic proxies (such as nationality) as a means of detecting COVID19 was briefly promoted by the publication of a report which suggested that asymptomatic transmission was possible, but that study has “proven to contain major flaws and errors,” and wrong in its conclusions.

Measures other than quarantine have been found much more effective in preventing widespread contagion. In a lengthy review of the research on the comparative effectiveness of a number of measures (short of vaccines and antiviral drugs) to prevent the transmission of respiratory viruses—screening at entry ports, medical isolation, quarantine, social distancing, barriers, personal protection, and hand hygiene—the use of surgical masks and regular hand-washing emerged as the most consistently effective set of physical interventions. The review also found that the medical isolation of symptomatic patients was important but that “global measures, such as screening at entry ports, led to a non-significant marginal delay.”

As one scholar from the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security has put it, “no one should think that there won’t be more cases” simply because there is a travel ban.

Yet even if one were to grant the dubious assumption that the transmission of diseases might be halted (or meaningfully slowed) through territorial restrictions on people’s mobility, the genomic identification of a new strain of virus— while accelerated by the introduction of automated genome sequencing—would invariably occur subsequent to its appearance. In any event, expenditure and focus on quarantine restrictions tend to represent a redirection of resources away from measures likely to be more effective in both the immediate and longer term.

That is, quarantines often exacerbate viral dangers, because they foster the illusion that the isolation of a virus is synonymous with (or achievable through) the territorial confinement of groups of people, whose confinement is determined not by whether they are symptomatic or diagnosed with a disease but by a purportedly preemptive measure that uses nationality and geography as a proxy for exposure.

Second, the resort to quarantines draws on the biological-racial understanding of nations as discrete organic entities and prevents or displaces a social understanding of health and disease. Quarantines promote the imagination of a conflict between the preservation of presumably well-defined biological categories (the human, the family, the nation, the race) and the viral proliferation of boundary-blurring contagions.

It is however doubtful that humans could have evolved without the species-jumping, recombinant action of bacterial genetics transmitted through viral infections. More to the point, all vaccines involve the modified administration of an infection, and immunization is only effective at the largest (rather than national) population scales.

While some media attention has focused on Wuhan’s “wet markets” as the scene of species jumping, the privatization of health care and the socialization of ill-health remains largely ignored as a contributing factor in both infection and mortality rates. As a recent study shows, just over half of those infected with COVID19 in Wuhan’s Jinyintan Hospital had prior underlying chronic illnesses—such as cardiovascular or cerebrovascular diseases, respiratory-system diseases, or malignant tumors.

Further, China’s public health-care system was dismantled in the 1980s. This occurred during a period of rapid, fossil-fueled economic changes—and precipitated an enormous rise in (untreated) chronic illnesses, in particular respiratory, cardiovascular, and cardiopulmonary diseases, in a city with some of the worst air pollution in the world. Its air quality has an annual average PM2.5 concentration of over 120 μ g/m³. Bg/m³. By way of comparison, the WHO stipulates an annual average below 10 μ g/m³. Bg/m³, above which total, cardiopulmonary, and lung- cancer mortality have been shown with more than 95 percent confidence to increase.

Around 97 percent of the deaths presently attributed to COVID19 around the world have been recorded in Wuhan. China’s decentralized, commercially oriented health system and the lack of health-care coverage have, in all likelihood, worsened the impact of any single disease—as some have argued they already did during the SARS outbreak.

It may be that the recent construction of dedicated hospitals represents an effort by parts of the Chinese government to expand health-care and insurance coverage— albeit under the administrative control of the military. Which is to say, it is also part of the evolution of a system in which increasingly precarious populations can only access what should be routine health care through their involvement in experimental emergency procedures—which may or may not increase their

chances of recovery, but in which they bear most of the risks of (eventually) patented vaccine or other drug or biotechnical developments.

Meanwhile, the shares of a U.S. biotechnology company, Gilead Sciences, spiked after reports that it would be launching a trial of its antiviral drug (remdesivir) on some 270 patients in China who developed mild to moderate pneumonia after having been infected with COVID19. The WHO recently advised that there is as yet no evidence for the effectiveness of antiviral treatments. Some treatments may yet prove to be effective. But at present they are experiments, speculative endeavors that leverage desperation and are oriented toward the growth of private markets in patented drugs. Moreover, while the open sourcing of data is crucial to health care, there are few if any impediments to its mining for commercial products at a consequently lowered cost.

As a consequence of these and other mutually reinforcing systems, there is a broad financial value in substituting a social model of health and disease—which involves a complex understanding of disease transmission and the factors that contribute to illness and mortality rates—with a reductive model amenable to private insurance, the subsidized development of patented drugs or treatments, and the continuing externalization of the downward risks of harmful industries and practices that contribute to ill-health and mortality. Third, therefore the combination of the declared emergency, quarantine confinement, and lower regulatory standards significantly diminishes the cost of human drug trials and inflates the value of and market for patented drugs. There is commercial value for biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies in (speculations on) the development of patented vaccines, antivirals, or broad-spectrum antibiotics through the spatial delineation and immobilization of a cohort of research subjects.

Indeed, the collapse of public health care in China was accompanied by the introduction of a system in which hospital administrators were permitted “to profit-earn from new pharmaceuticals and medical technologies (after strong lobbying by the relevant multinational corporations), with salary bonuses for the staff involved.” There are a range of industries and practices that can leverage quarantines for gain—the military, detention or security contractors, and those organizations that combine these things with quasi-medical emergency response teams.

As it happens, the Australian government has required anyone interned at Christmas Island to sign a waiver—presumably one that indemnifies the government and the private contractors who manage the facility in the event that internment results in infection or other health issues. In other words, the quarantine on Christmas Island will be little more than a means of observing people who are confined for the average time that it takes COVID19 to incubate—if, that is, the virus is present among those detained. It is difficult to see how this exercise might be distinguished from the techniques that would develop a virus among a group of test subjects, whose progression could be mined for data—given that anyone who falls ill, in any way, will have to be moved to a large hospital on the mainland for treatment.

Fourth, and finally, there is political value—for some—in forging a seeming consensus around the purported necessity and urgency of authoritarian population-control measures and restrictions on mobility, one that both is grounded in and fosters the stigmatization of groups of people through a territorial- national, and therefore racialized, association with a disease. By way of a summary, this recent history of quarantine measures does not exactly replicate the *cordon sanitaire* of earlier centuries. The practical importance of virology in the development of the biomedical and pharmaceutical industries means that quarantine zones are not outside circuits of value, even while the quarantine acts as a means of segregation. The contemporary quarantine represents a merger between the authoritarian governance of populations and the facilitation and

growth of private, selective health-care infrastructure. Given the importance of nonselectivity and scale to public health, nationalist approaches to health are more accurately described as a way of privatizing public health by other means.

Third Time Lucky

Anonymous

We're in Lockdown. Stay at home, we're commanded. Only that which is most necessary for economic survival is permitted, but it is never stated of whose survival they speak. Even then we're greeted by processions of police riot vans – lights flashing, show of force – informing us that we have to go home. Going about the minimum of daily activities is a danger to public health. It's already been said in Italy that it's amazing how quickly we forget: what it's like to speak to a stranger, to touch someone, to encounter an unexpected moment amid the concrete drizzle of capital. The workhouses and temples of consumption are open but the shelves are almost bare. We have a social responsibility, they say. The healthcare system cannot cope and it is us that has to save it. Did someone say something about funding?

An invisible enemy. The stuff of apocalyptic films. The cause is not important, it's just the flu after all, but the response is crucial. We are not measuring the number of deaths but the capacities of power. Swine flu and SARS failed to take the world by storm but they've nailed it this time. Everything that came before was a mere prototype for the finished product: a perfectly intangible terror that demands our complete subservience. It's as though *The Handmaid's Tale*, in all its controversial success, was a warm-up before the main act.

The supposed reach and severity of the Corona Virus is almost a mute subject. What's important is who is going to take benefit, how, and who pays the price. The capitalist economic system is built on investment, but this time it's starving itself ready for a rampage. When this is all over, when our glorious benefactors have saved us from near ruin and we welcome back with open arms a depleted economy that was fucking us before 'the pandemic', we have to think where we will be. Waves of migrants washing upon even more hostile European shores. Solitary confinement becoming the prisoners' permanent state. G4S quietly clean up after the morning matinee as we're distracted by the charade in the main hall. Physical human interaction reduced to an Orwellian suspicion whilst the spectrum of human emotion is expressed through WhatsApp's preset sticker selection. Facebook's laughing as Instagram's rewriting history with all our rebellious quotes.

#COVID19 quarantine diary, Day 3: Squealers call the cops to report people who dare to meet outside.

Riot Turte

Wuppertal. Germany. March 19, 2020. The third day in quarantine. Its terrifying that more and more people demand a full lockdown on social networks. Squealers call the cops or other authorities to report people who dare to meet outside.

I did my daily phone call with my doctor today and told him that I have to cough more but my fever is still very low (37.8 Celsius). All in all I am okay.

With the risk of starting to repeat myself more and more, I am more worried what is happening outside of my prison apartment. In social networks squealers are calling to report people who are still meeting outside. Under the hashtag #Ausgangssperre many even demand a full lockdown in Germany.

As I live alone, I didn't see anybody for three days now. A few comrades organized new cigarettes, which was a real moral boost. Thanks! Others are offering support too. So yes I am okay, BUT its getting harder and harder to be in quarantine. And when its over the German state probably started enforcing a lockdown. I am pretty sure that the neighbourhood where I live will be full of cops. Many people here are not best friends with the state and they know that.

Its getting harder and harder not to go outside and meet people. Quarantine attacks my head in a severe way. The fact

that I feel sick might have give it a boost. Who knows? Fact ist that this is a bad situation. I think a lot about the kids I work with and people who are suffering from depressions. What will a full lockdown do with them?

A full lockdown? No. I already wrote yesterday that many people are forced to continue to work in factories and other businesses. But with a full lockdown they will not be allowed to go out and sozialize after work. Its only allowed to infect, or to get infected during work. The Euro must continue to roll as much as possible.

I also worry a lot about the squealers and the calls for a lockdown. Many of these people are ready for fascism, including parts of the left. We have a lot to do in the coming weeks, months and years and its going to be a difficult and hard struggle.

Riot Turte, March 19, 2020

Land of the Living Dead

Vidar Lindström

March 24, 2020. The whole world is in crisis mode. Stock prices are falling. The pandemic is spreading. States are forced to use authoritarian measures to gain control, while the full antisociality of the market economy is becoming apparent. So much, that the finest neo-liberals are now easily talking about nationalizations to make up for the damage to their image.

We are now supposed to take the rap and lock ourselves up more or less voluntarily in our own, far too small, four walls. Flatten the curve means, optionally written together with hashtag in front, optimized for social media propaganda. A collapse of the health care system is to be countered, so that we don't have to decide who dies and who doesn't, like in Italy. Sure, avoiding contacts, washing hands properly, observing the rules for sneezing and coughing to minimize the risk of infection makes perfect sense and a complete lockdown even makes sense in a situation like Wuhan, where the virus had already spread so massively that the only thing that helped was to completely close down the area to avoid throwing a country with almost 1.4 billion inhabitants into chaos.

It is necessary to slow down the spreading and therefore prevent mass gatherings. Also the shops should close and only the most necessary supplies should be kept running. But in order to prevent the value added and the entire capitalist world system from collapsing once and for all, the factory halls will remain open and millions of people in Germany will continue to go to work every day. Hundreds and thousands of colleagues crammed together in offices and factory halls, working without this work benefiting the now so vital areas. So we are expected to shut down our entire social life while the government continues to keep the breeding grounds open?

So who is acting irresponsibly now? People diligently denounce their neighbours in social media, and leftists are playing along with the whole game. Instead of making massive demands for factory closures, compensation, secure jobs, etc., they diligently denounce people and unquestioningly share and spread state propaganda. A large part of the left is just getting rid of its social task. We in the fight against the virus, the nation united, against the "Volksschädlinge"¹. This does not give hope for a left offensive in the crisis, and we need it urgently, because we remember: where within a crisis the left leaves space, the reaction will be widespread and it will be brutal.

The whole nation is crying out in panic stay at home and social distancing, because otherwise our elderly will die in rows. Social distancing: a mantra of neoliberalism, which has destroyed all solidarity and participation in society. How is that actually supposed to work in a refugee shelter? Oh yes, right: By finally showing the actual purpose of such shelters. They are internment camps, nothing else. The same is true in the prisons, this repugnant system of revenge that tries to domesticate all those who cannot or do not want to afford the normal participation in social life. The crisis exacerbates the exclusion and denunciation against all those who do not conform

¹ Volksschädlinge. In the so-called fighting time of Adolf Hitler's NSDAP party this term was used to describe "traffickers and usurers" and from 1930 the term was also used for alleged traitors to the Nation. en.wikipedia.org

to the godlike figure of a German citizen of order. Then just stay at home, where depression really takes over. Where do the homeless people go who are now being taken away? You don't really know, like in dystopian science fiction.

We just have to save the elderly. Everyone has to make sacrifices. That's pretty shameless. The old people who languish in institutions because nobody wants to deal with them. Everyone who can no longer be part of the value chain is simply mercilessly cast out and now they want to save them. Poverty pensions, social exclusion etc... It is obvious that the concern for the elderly is hypocritical. Those who have run down and privatized the entire health and welfare system want to pull our legs. In our society, the elderly have always been nothing more than the living dead. Their fate was decided long ago. Who really wants to save them, does not only rely on mass testing (which has proven to be the most effective), but should finally start fighting against the whole inhuman system of usability. If we allow the rulers to make the state of emergency the norm with their mendacious talk, we will all share the blame for a situation in which all opposition will disappear. Anyone who then opposes will be able to be declared an enemy and hunted down unchallenged. In the end, this will not help the old people, nor anyone else. The class struggle from above finally needs consistent answers from the working class if they are not to pay the entire crisis debts again.

Interruptions

Biblioteca Anarchica Disordine

There is nothing new about social life taking place at a distance. For a long time now people have been persuaded that the best way to communicate and relate is through the use of a device. Prostheses of the human being, the smartphone and its like, have transformed the way of being together, of being informed, learning, communicating, writing and reading.

The next step is the robotization of living, technique pervading every place, every aspect of daily life. An overcoming of nature and the natural in favour of artificial beings and places. Such a scenario needs no social life, it does not need relationships, feelings, thoughts, it only needs order, discipline, regulation, machines. Maybe Dominion is trying to take a step forward and use a health problem, the spread of a virus, to reach generalized regimentation at least, the rest will then take care of itself. Science fiction comes to mind, but States have centuries old instruments to draw on without having to resort to the unknown.

The social distancing imposed by laws prohibiting kisses and hugs and the suppression of most social activities, recalls states of emergency in which the rules of social life are imposed and must be obeyed so as not to run up against getting charged or being arrested. And indeed the establishment of red zones and checkpoints, limitation of freedom of circulation, obligation of home isolation for those coming from areas considered infected controlled by police, but above all the ban on gatherings, i.e. public meetings, is the police management of a health problem. Not surprisingly it is foreseen in the ten rules recommended by the Italian State to avoid the spread of the virus that in case of fever the *carabinieri* must be the first to be contacted. But *states of emergency* are also the measures provided for in situations of conflict or insurrection, as happened recently in Chile.

The State decrees by law that citizens are its property and it can dispose of them as it sees fit. States of emergency are not imposed for health reasons or the population's welfare, but to make rules become introjected, to instill discipline. And indeed, the surest way to obtain obedience is to spread terror, fear. Create anxiety and panic, continually divulging data, making everything sensationalistic and exceptional. Frightening is a practice of war and torture as well as of government, and States are specialized in this too. And war has forcefully come back into vogue after being removed and cancelled out for many years. Today the war is here, indeed everywhere. Heads of State are declaring themselves at war against a somewhat singular enemy, a virus, but their real adversary or target is not that, it is their very subjects. For this reason the issue at stake, perhaps the most important, is to keep critical thinking alive without downplaying anything. Having, arm in arm with the Economy, industrialized and devastated nature and desertified thought, now feelings are being cancelled out. No kisses, no hugs.

However, if Dominion wants us totally dependent on it, if the State cancels social and in part also economic life, that means that we don't need the State. That we can self-organize our initiatives, our forms of education, our economies, our leisure. And also in this case we don't need to resort to science fiction but to experience, memory, our will and courage.

The prisoners fighting in the Italian prisons that this state of emergency would like to see buried alive are showing a way. That normality be interrupted, yes, but by revolt.

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Inequality Does Not Go Into Quarantine

Bruno Social Centre

At this difficult time, we too are faced with the need to counter the advance of the Coronavirus epidemic (SARS-CoV- 2). Our responsibility as individuals who become communities therefore requires us to rethink our activities in order to safeguard collective health: some may continue to be carried out safely, others will have to be remodelled, others will have to be suspended.

On the contrary, our questions cannot cease, we cannot help but reflect the world around us and the situation we are experiencing, breaking it down and bringing our magnifying glass to aspects that are sometimes submerged but at the same time crucial.

Democratic Epidemic

The Coronavirus epidemic is spreading regardless whether rich or poor, black and white, atheist and believer, selfishness, borders, walls and all those artificial constructs that our imperfect society has erected to separate the powerful from the poor. Our thoughts, of course, go to those who have become ill, with particular attention to the elderly and those with previous illnesses that complicate the course of the disease.

However, if it is true that the contagion is “democratic”, the same cannot be said about the socio-economic repercussions of the epidemic and other present and future consequences.

Which house?

The government intervened in the management of the emergency with restrictive measures on mobility, social and economic life of people. However, we would like to stress that the so-called “I stay at home” decree inevitably and a priori excludes those who do not have a home, those who do but are facing eviction orders, those who are in prison or detention facilities for migrants in heavy overcrowding and in hygienic- sanitary conditions that during an epidemic look like dustbins ready to explode (in the last few days fourteen detainees have died during the riots that followed the hold on family visits).

But the housing issue is not the only factor of precariousness: entertainment workers, self-employed, freelancers, workers employed in activities that have found closure are paying a very high price because in their case that “I stay at home” is equivalent to an inevitable “I stay without pay”.

Finally, let’s think about the ongoing claims and strikes of those who can’t afford to say “I stay at home” because the production (and the show) must go on even if it means working without guarantees and some precautions.

For the umpteenth time a crisis situation is being paid for above all by the last: the poor, the exploited, the precarious, the migrant, the homeless, those who risk no longer being able to access

even low-threshold services, and being deprived, as a result, of the only meal or the only warm and safe place from which they could benefit.

Question of Priority

The result of decades of cutbacks in public health is clearly visible for everybody. In the twenty-year period 1997- 2017 the number of beds in public health facilities was reduced by 100,000, and the rationalization of spending has also gone from reaching a target of filling 80–90% of intensive care beds: only 10–20% of the beds are actually available in case of emergency.

And while sacrifices and new indebtedness are being announced to patch up the gaps left, NATO is preparing for a military exercise of continental proportions. As an exception to the mobility restrictions imposed to contain the epidemic, tens of thousands of military personnel will cross Europe from north to south. The European Commission has budgeted 30 billion euros for changes to “those infrastructures that are unable to accommodate the weight and bulk of military vehicles”.

Even on a local scale ambiguity reigns supreme. While the schools all over Trentino were closed, the ski resorts were open and at full capacity, all of which was advantaged and permitted by the weak position of the Leghista Fugattiana junta, which tried to guarantee the opening as much as possible, even trying to minimize the risks and the actual turnout (easily contradicted by the photographs taken). The government was forced to announce its closure, but also in this case, trying to dilate the time until Fugatti found himself overtaken even by the central government, which anticipated its closure, reiterating that this operation could not wait any longer.

Ordinary Emergency

We have seen that it is possible to block an entire nation, impose a curfew, prevent movement, close schools, offices and public facilities, use the army to control city borders. Let us not consider the legitimacy or legality of the restrictive measures put in place these days, justified by the current situation, but they cannot and must not become the basis for a new “normality”.

In the recent past, specific emergency measures have been completely metabolized and internalized in political, legal and social terms in our country over the years. The so-called urban daspo, initially designed and applied to combat stadium violence, is now widely used as a repressive weapon against movements, the poor and ordinary people who jeopardize the phantom “decorum”. In the same way, Article 41-bis, although it provided the possibility of suspending the normal rules for the treatment of prisoners only “in serious emergency situations”, has in fact been the handhold to increase the escalation of repression and limitation of freedom for prisoners.

Given the precedents, it is necessary to state that in the long term public health is not defended by the army, the police and prohibitions, but by guaranteeing access to essential public services and income for everybody and by adequately funding public health and research. It is social justice, not the restriction of freedoms and the society of control, on which the “return to normality” will have to be built.

#BrunoNonsiCaccia And Not Even Close

The concepts of solidarity and self-organization are inherent in our DNA, so no one can and should be left behind. We will, in fact, continue to pursue our practices even if they are remodelled or reinvented as may be the case.

The power that characterizes us and characterizes our entire community is also contagious and will certainly not perish.

The Impetuous Germination of Anarchy

Pampa Libre Cell (FAI-FRI)

“...Light in the Shadow
The enemy’s got to watch out
That only from that ancient place
The foundation stone could emerge
Which is spreading out of control
This land called
Our beloved America
And if necessary in the future
We will change the name.”

– Sergio Terenzi (el Urubu)

I. (A) Intro Mode

The handful of reflections that follow have come to us almost unintentionally. They are one more contribution to the debate on the issues that move us; a small stop on the troubled road we are now travelling. It is good to share visions about what worries us and throw them like a bottle into the sea... Perhaps they will serve to fertilize the sowing and/or sharpen the tools suitable to advance in the realization of what we dream...To all the warriors of praxis a sincere embrace from the region that fails to dominate (as they would like) the self-proclaimed state of Sargentino. May 1000 new rebellions flourish.

II. Of Beings and Deeds

We do not underestimate or mock the many ancient pagan cultures that are seeing, in these present times, the signs of an inevitable decline throughout the entire ill-treated and agonized blue planet that we inhabit. And we don’t dismiss it because (among other things...) beyond mysticism and conspiracies, the harsh reality shows us that this IS so. We feel the vertigo of the events in our skin; and we consider that it is a “self-fulfilling prophecy”. We refuse to look the other way as it would be alienating. The question is rather: what do we do?

The first thing is to make clear who we are. We are unbridled lovers of anarchy, beyond the “isms” and the multiple tendencies towards it, the objective is total liberation, or failing that, an always mutated and imperfect approach that brings us as close as possible to the beautiful Ideal. Always de-territorializing the struggles; and looking for the point of escape before the attacks of the enemy... Knowing that the solution to the problems that afflict us are in our hands, anyone can be one “David knocking down Goliath”. No need to feel defeated: before starting the battle!

The so-called insurrectionism is not something new, nor a suicidal option; nor a forward flight of a “late adolescent gang” without analysis of the situation condemned (beforehand) to not provoke chain reactions. It is a valid path that, in many corners of the globe, is exploding like gunpowder when it dries. The persecutions and arrests of *compañerxs* not only do not precipitate us to inaction and ostracism; but they also make us more firm in our response to other groups, which pass from indifference and cowardice, improving (and spreading!) new methods of confronting repression.

We have to assume that the confrontation we encourage is not a “bed of roses”; and be well prepared to bear its consequences..Many compassionate people have been seen to break down, as soon as they were kidnapped by the

henchmen of power. But also, there are those who became even more radical and combative since they were arrested; and from the dungeons they not only give us words and beautiful gestures, but they are also effective propagandists for others who, not knowing the Idea, embrace it in the prisons and (when released) join in the street struggles.

III. Contagiousness of the Revolt

The “feeling of helplessness” they think they have installed, among our affinities, is nothing more than that. It is up to us to turn it around; and to remember (especially important for us to remember) that what is falling apart, resoundingly, is YOUR system of world capitalist oppression. Meanwhile, what this humble writing is concerned with, is how to accelerate its fall; without succumbing or being dragged into the debacle... For there are no infallible formulas or manuals of use for all; we advance – by trial error – learning (with each action of attack and retreat) much more than we would from a thousand theoretical flings.

The more complex and overwhelming the “control mechanisms” become, the more weak points they present, if we know how to detect them. There we must direct the first blows making them collapse from their root when – and as – they least expect it. To give just two examples: the power lines can be sabotaged, creating the right conditions to perpetrate our additional attack... A single match, thrown in the right place, can set fire to a sea of machinery or installations, as has already happened on countless occasions. Imagination against power is the creator of its destruction!

It is true that we been quite correct, in recent years, regarding the proliferation of counter-information websites that publish, and translate, the increasingly numerous actions against targets of all kinds; and this encourages the unleashing of many more. Let’s try to make visible the claims of responsibility by internationalizing our offensives, since this makes us more aware of the achievements made in the Social War and, sharing various methods and tactics, we feed their reproduction. The (fluid) communication between us is healthy: let’s not renounce it...

If there is one thing that we are unquestionably and irremediably anarchic about, it is the deep conviction that the human will is unbreakable, and that everything that we propose with our hearts will find a way to materialize horizontally and harmoniously. A multitude of laboratories of metamorphosis are underway in many places. They are harassed in an obsessive way (as in the case of Exarcheia) but they resist and become even stronger. Power is paranoid by nature: it knows that we possess the most lethal weapons conceivable. That is to say, an arsenal of libertarian viruses that are a source of “contagion”.

IV. Against All Institutions

It is time to cry out loud that spontaneous and solidaritarian self-organization in the midst of the ruins of the Matrix, is not only possible but palpable, as we have always affirmed. And it's beautiful too. We are seeing it and living it among more and more enthusiastic participants, of different ages and origins, interconnecting the permanent conflict everywhere...The parties, unions and other traitorous- negotiating pests will not have any meaning when everything burns; and their dirty/execrable strategies do too. Neither social, nor unsocial, nor socialist, nor anti-social. More simply: SINGULAR.

No Utopian planning to protect the "future": we are that stubborn denial of the shitty present that we suffer; we have no idea what will come and we do not care, because in every place our accomplices will solve what is needed in the heat of circumstances. Our plan is that we have none — apart from blowing everything up — and not allowing the emergence of new institutions on top of the ruins that we are tearing down; because what history shows us is enough: they change the names, the discourses and the systems so that, deep down, nothing changes at all.

The Enemy? It is Fear. Fear of not even having in mind WHAT the enemy is, and not who he/it is... But let's explain it: it is the system's task, to make us believe that we are guilty of the evils that produce unhappiness. The most effective way to submit ourselves is to inject increasing doses of "mea culpa". Two thousand years ago, a Proto-Anarchist (Jesus Christ) literally tried to set fire to such an argument; and we already know how that story ended. The most impressive thing about the affair was how, in the West, they managed to mutilate his message, to the point of leaving it unrecognizable to most people. Political correctness makes us nauseous, because we are enemies of politics. The "neurosis of the good militant" does not concern us, since we are repulsed by the word military. Communisms lie dying. There is more and more talk in intellectual circles about the re-emergence of the anarchic. For them it is a "phenomenon to be dissected", another step to control and deactivate...To our liking they do not understand anything of what we are, because there is nothing to understand. Their fucking uni-versities don't capture our di- versities. And they'll be the stuff of fire too...

V. The Shipwreck as the Only Destination

Above all no dogmas, no castrating ideologies. Let alone to erect new churches (horror!) in the name of anarchy, but to build self-governing villages, or at least some TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zone) where we can experience ourselves as smiling, subversive micro-brotherhoods and sisterhoods.

In this way, we will be able to reappropriate the innocent magic of the human; a necessary step for the interweaving of loving complicities, which will prepare us and launch us fully into the attack, when the need to protect them becomes urgent. Or we can be hermits of the forest while they exist.

We enthusiastically encourage the emergence of similar experimental affinities, so long as they are spontaneous and furiously anti-hierarchical of course! We are also seduced by individual nihilism as an ingredient that enhances the acratia; if the "ariscous" singularities to the communitarian in a concrete time and place are perceived as such, since — however — everything is reversible and changeable; because that is what the freedom in which we affirm ourselves is

about... Things that are incomprehensible from outside our (*A*)*cracia* the more the proclamations of “freedom, equality and fraternity” that are repeated — the left-wingers — are hypocrites.

Now it's the turn of the anti-authoritarians to take (not to seize) the helm of history; and to sail pirate oceans of burning and irreverent passions to more non-power, always against the redirecting currents that try to pilot our tenacious, feline, psychoactive dreams. We bite off those ghostly “futures” of design that cannot be imposed upon us. We are everywhere. We are the nightmare of a pro-zombie civilization that bows down, day by day, digging its own grave. It is from there that our wild, untamed force feeds. From the remains of its total failure. We are anti-police poetry. And bombs of conscience. And incorruptible ideals. ACAB!, we spit on the walls. We're the 99%: let's not forget *compañerxs*, in \$hile (something NOBODY foresaw) there is a war going on, that is intensifying and bearing fruit. Let's support the brave warriors who give face to the combat by staggering the neoliberal leviathan that tries but fails to suffocate. That's what we wanted to talk about, we think it is important to support and spread the revolts in progress in solidarity; and at the same time unleash others rhizomatically. That is why we joined the BLACK INTERNATIONAL.

VI. Destruction is Urgent and Necessary

It is not superfluous to say goodbye — for now — to the allies all over the planet: we have abandoned all hope, waiting for a reaction from the abhorred submissive masses. We shit on the vanguard and on the rear. We act on impulse without any desire for egocentricity. The tired and intolerable speeches of the assembly platform have expired: they are dead letters! The adventure or... more of the same, *compañerxs*. And an adventure, means just that: to put your chest to the wind and, if necessary, to the bullets. So that, if we do not doubt it: OTHERS WILL CONTINUE TO ADVANCE...

Diversity is life and uniformity is death; repeat the ominous M. Bakunin as if it were a “psalm”. Winking sympathetically this time, we could well accompany his preaching. But when we are flooded with infinite definitions from academia that are intended to pierce, confuse and compartmentalize (instead of fuse) we tell them that anarcho- feminism/trade unionism/veganism/primitivism/etc does not convince us or recruit us... And neither does the philo-democrat hook “anti-capitalist/anti-fascist”. We are anarchists. Let's go back to biting like wolves...

Well friends, let's finish — and start — with this anti- lethargyian catharsis that, to tell the truth, was catapulted after a recent episode in which one of our people was about to be shot in his own house, which was raided without a warrant by some cocaine-snorting cops. We know that these things happen if we rebel and raise our voices when all seems lost. But don't fuck with us too much since we're loving and arming ourselves. Because individually, our lives are nothing. Because we are determined to follow the fight to the end: GO!

FOR THE CONSTANT THROBBING OF UNCIVILIZED DESIRES
FOR THE UNSEEMLY EXPANSION OF THE ANARCHIC GALAXY
FOR SANTIAGO MALDONADO AND ALL OUR FALLEN
LET THE NIGHT BE ILLUMINATED!!!
PAMPA LIBRE CELL (FAI-FRI)

After the Quarantine, the Flood

Natasha Lennard

Where we avoid each other, we can find our power, too.

“We are pressed, pressed on each other / We will be told at once / Of anything that happens.”

In this short stanza written in 1968, the poet George Oppen spoke to our current condition, now thrown into sharp relief by a pandemic.

When rushed, if not forced, into so-called “social distancing,” we should reflect on the standard proceedings of social proximity. At which junctions, through which quotidian flows, do our breaths and spits mingle and our individual bodies reveal their porousness? The subway, the airport, the office, the meeting, the classroom, the dance party, the restaurant, the conference and, at best, the protest. These are my answers, and they are the answers of a person who has been granted—by the vagaries of nationhood and capital distribution—the choice of distance and safe isolation.

The shelter, the overburdened hospital, the workplace with no sick leave, the no-option but public transit, the crowded housing project, the prison and the concentration camp—wherever bodies are reduced by force to just bodies, their porousness cannot be escaped.

It is, of course, in recognition of our mutual embodiment that those with the privilege to seal themselves off from COVID-19 should do so. But how quickly will we forget the (relative) ease with which we could withdraw our bodies from the frontlines of an onslaught, when so many could not? If it is *because* we see our potential for interconnectedness that we stay home, what will we do with that same potential, in plain sight now, when this virus has peaked and passed? Will we remember to fixate, as we do now, on the sites where we risk

finding each other and spreading something together: the subway, the classroom, the workplace, the meeting, the protest?

A woman in Italy was quarantined with her husband’s dead body for thirty hours. Airlines are flying nearly empty planes in order to protect their valuable routes and time slots. Prisoners in New York are forced to make a hundred thousand gallons of hand sanitizer per week, but they are not permitted to use it themselves because of its alcohol content. Trump, fumbling through prepared remarks, announced a National Emergency yesterday alongside a suite of public-private partnerships that the US will form with Google, Target, and Roche, to coordinate pandemic response efforts.

“We leak, we are contaminated, and crucially, we would not be ourselves in the absence of these perfusions,” the author Sophie Lewis once told me in an interview. But in theorizing what she calls our “wateriness,” she added, quite crucially, that “boundaries are very valuable, as groups whose boundaries have historically been disrespected know all too well. It’s just as important to grasp that the containers we use to conceptualize ourselves—family, kin, nation, self —aren’t natural or immutable.” A pandemic will highlight the ways we are or are not already bound, and for whom those binds and boundaries are chains and chokeholds.

Of course illness discriminates, and the lines of care which decide who is left to die are pre-drawn. Viral ontologies absent of social and political elements are failures because they do not describe what a virus is and does in the world. Scientists don't examine viral genomes under microscopes and viral particles don't become diseases (they don't enter the ontology of that which we call disease), until people get sick. As Donna Haraway put it, such scientific assertions are "made but not made up." Thousands of poor and oppressed can get very sick before a disease is said to exist. Just ask survivors of the AIDS crisis whether illness discriminates.

In recent days, I have seen a number of social media posts highlight what the state and businesses could do *for* people, if the political will existed. In Miami-Dade County, the police department has suspended all eviction actions. In Britain, where brutal austerity has been enforced as the only possible economic organizing principle for decades, the Bank of England agreed to unleash what the New York Times called "a torrent of money" into the economy. Amazon has dramatically (although still insufficiently) expanded its sick pay policy, to name only a few examples. But the logic of virus containment has not escaped the logic of capitalism: there's a reason that power will bend in the face of what it sees as a temporary crisis in order to keep capital buoyant in the long term. Mass disruptions caused by strikes and industrial sabotage tend to win fewer and slower concessions from power than the pandemic has brought about; bosses know that workers, unlike viruses, question their current containment under capitalism when its conditions are shown to be contingent and mutable. Stoppages and disruptions become uncontrollable.

To be sure, the concessions we are seeing power make in response to COVID-19 are nothing compared to the weight of totalitarian nationalist interventions and the pitiful failure to provide resources and aid for those who need it. One reason stated for keeping New York City schools open is that over one hundred thousand children are homeless and would not receive the two meals per day the school system provides them. There are over 250,000 vacant apartments in the city.

The title of the above-cited Oppen poem is "Of Being Numerous." I cribbed it for the title of my last book, having thought back again and again for some years on some lines: "Obsessed, bewildered / By the shipwreck / Of the singular / We have chosen the meaning / Of being numerous." In what ways are we numerous, enumerated, counted, uncounted, dividuated, enmassed, and divided? In what ways have we chosen to live this way, and in what ways is it chosen for us? In whose interests are lives thus organized; which powers does this serve? And what, indeed, is the *meaning* of our modes of numerosity? I apply these questions again now, from a warm apartment, with ample food and the ability to support myself materially as I type. In this moment, we have been asked to mitigate being numerous together. Solidarity in the pandemic, for those in my position, is situated in not making things worse; this we can choose. When this particular crisis has passed, we will once again convene in our numbers—"A populace flows / Thru the city" as Oppen reminds us. But there is only power in being numerous if we choose it. If we know where to avoid each other, we know where to find each other, too.

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Salish Sea Black Autonomists
To Reach Out And Touch One Another
Collected Reflections on Quarantine
March 30, 2020

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