

Transcription

University of Minnesota Press podcast

Episode 41: A field guide to a nonfascist life at the end of the world as we know it.

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(intro music)

Will Conway:

This book can act as a really unique kind of inauguration of a call to begin to take seriously the motions of subversive opposition.

Violet:

It's a timely book in a very untimely way.

Jose Rosales:

So this is a guerrilla guide to refusal. And so when you move through this tripartite illegalist history, it's very clear as to the stakes of the refusal but also what are the requirements.

Andrew Culp:

“Capitalism defeated traditionalist societies because it was more exciting than they were. But now there's something more exciting than capitalism itself: its destruction.”

(intro music fades)

Andrew:

Hello. My name is [Andrew Culp](#). I'm so excited to invite others for a conversation today on my recent book, [A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal](#), published with the University of Minnesota Press in 2022. It's part of a longer series of works that I've completed including an earlier book on Deleuze, occasional work including cybernetics, radical theory, other forms of philosophy, and currently also releasing a video project called *Machines in Flames* that's a collaboration about a militant group in the late '70s and '80s in France asking questions of the archive and destruction

and I'm currently working on a project on hacker culture right now and I'm joining everyone today from Los Angeles also known as the occupied lands of the Tongva.

Violet:

Hi I'm Violet. I don't really know how to describe myself. I guess I've long been a fan of Andrew's work since *Dark Deleuze* came out. Also a reader of [Hostis](#), which Andrew is involved with and yeah I've long been looking forward to this book. I am situated in India. I think this book especially has been interesting in light of all the events that have happened over the last few years like the global insurrections that took place in 2019 and then the pandemic and then the shifts that have happened and it also speaks to the kinds of impass we face today so in that sense it's a really well I was going to say it's a timely book but maybe in a Deleuzian sense it's an untimely book. So yes, I'm really looking forward to discussing the book.

Will:

Hi I'm Will. I'm a graduate student. I work primarily on the philosophy of disability and the later works of Michel Foucault and the relationship between abnormality and receptions and perceptions of anarchy and social order. I've long been interested in Andrew Culp's book (and) work; I'm excited for this conversation precisely because I think Andrew uniquely taps into the problem in radical political theory of grappling with movements of divergence of error and their relationship to the contemporary problem of biopolitics in a sort of second-order cybernetic world. So I'm excited to speak with everyone.

Jose:

Hi, my name is Josie Rosales. Pronouns they/them. I've known Andrew for a while, friend/collaborator/accomplice; we also share some editor responsibilities for *Hostis* and just happy to be here to have a conversation with Andrew's second book because it was a unique experience to chat with you I guess throughout the writing of the first one and so this is gonna be interesting.

Andrew:

It's so exciting to have everyone here today because we've sort of known each other in a variety of roles. At various times we've all been very online and very not online and so it's great to have this conversation online but hopefully spilling out into the world and taking on various manifestations beyond just a conversation. Would someone like to start?

Will:

Yeah for sure. I feel like one place to start is this book is coming on the heels of what was considered in many Deleuzean circles in the American academy as relatively controversial. This of course expands the scope by quite a bit. But you're maintaining this sort of complicated relationship with Deleuze scholarship even in just the introduction, right? There are parting shots at quite a few of the folks who we would consider today to be like maybe the vanguard of cosmopolitan political philosophy. Maybe before we get to our individual interpretations of the text because I think that they're all very fascinating. Maybe one way to open this discussion would be, like, what is the central problem of contemporary attempts to apprehend this post-68 radical theory and why do you think that so much of the work on cybernetics has fallen into a kind of strange affirmation in contemporary assemblage theory?

Andrew:

Yeah I suppose I can jump in, but I'm also just as interested to hear everyone's diagnosis of what they see to be as central problems today and the way in which the book perhaps raises some but that we all find our own paths through. You know, in some ways the book very much is about post-68 theory. But I think that there's a way that it's been neutralized or even domesticated by the academy. It was turned into a career area, a research area, a way for individual people to carve out a profile or even a small perch within very hierarchical elitist institutions to sort of forward their own individual interests. And so for me some of it is a return to initially the conditions that drove this thinking. Of course, [May 68](#), but before May 68 there's also the question of Algeria, there's the question of people's liberation movements, there's the explosion of the cultural forms of gender and sexuality that would come in and through and after 68 as well.

And so it means major figures that I engage even in the introduction include Jean Genet, but they also include Guy Hocquenghem. They move through a sort of what I call subtractive communism that has nothing to do with the party or the state and it's about thinking how those conditions have shifted and changed and where we are today. So I suppose the opening even is this diagnosis that cybernetics and its differential metaphysics really does describe so much of how social theory and social thought, governance, movements themselves seem to operate and it's become a very convenient diagnostic system that people use but it's kind of become a little too convenient, especially if we look at its proximity to its rise within public policy as a response to the race riots of the 1960s to the forms of military warfare that are dominating right now. In some ways cybernetics is an explanation for why Ukraine is currently succeeding where Russia is not because they've adopted a much more autonomous form of war fighting that cyberneticians helped embed within US Western and NATO war doctrine for decades now and so when we get to the specific questions of the people we care about which you know will just state this very plainly. We care about abolition, black freedom struggles, queerness in all of its forms but particularly where it's made criminal or illicit forms of sexuality. and the anarchist's refusal of all forms of identity. We're now at this moment where we can reassess the failures and the successes of people's liberation movements and use that as a new framework for understanding the challenges we face today.

So I would say that that's a basic framework for not only the book, but I think a lot of what I've been teaching and talking about and the resources that I've been reading recently. But I'd love to hear where everyone else is situated too because there are perhaps different corpuses and archives and problems and issues that are really motivating their thought, that they see being woven through the themes and the approaches of the book, which is by no means meant to just present a single approach.

Jose:

In terms of a general impression of the text, one of the things that struck me was the kind of cumulative effect of what happens when you write a history of a political tradition. Let's say like illegalist anarchism or different forms of kind of direct action and anti-state anarchist politics or anti-colonial struggles or groups like [Bash Back!](#) When you go through these histories in light of specific structural transformations; meaning not just shift in the composition of the capitalism of reproduction from Fordism to post-Fordism, not just financialization, but the reconfiguration of a

state that's adequate to ensure "order" and "security" through cybernetics, through this new logic of control. Given those histories in light of this emphasis or this criticism of the various ways cybernetics has yet to be understood to be the structuring dynamic of people who identify with these traditions or are heirs to these traditions. It kind of produces this not necessarily melancholic but it's a quite different tone, I would say, than [Dark Deleuze](#). Like, *Dark Deleuze* seems like it was written in one evening (I know it wasn't), but it moves at a pace that is fast but not unrigorous. And this one moves fast and it's not unrigorous, but the result is a kind of portrait of a series of struggles. I guess overall as a reader it strikes a slightly different tone than *Dark Deleuze*; it's necessary insofar as you want to be critical about the object of your analysis. Um, that said, the traditions also that you bring in are great insofar as you know you're probably listed as a Deleuzian at least for Anglophone readers. But you know in the very beginning we have Johann Most, Lucy Parsons, we have the Haymarket markers, and this is all about, you know, propaganda by the deed. And that situates things historically in a moment where illegalist anarchism is in its ascendancy and it's just about to meet over a century-long series of defeats and oppression and repression. That moment begins this—in my mind this is how I formulate the book to myself as I was reading, is that it's divided into three parts and each part is an illegalist history of something. The first being an illegalist history of the abolition of capital and state, and an illegalist history of sexuality. So if Foucault has *The History of Sexuality*, that part would be *The Illegalist History of Sexuality*; and the third is just the illegalist history of bodies. Meaning chattel slavery, settler colonization, colonization, and the national liberation struggles and anticolonial struggles that would come in response to that. And so this throughline of illegalism is at least there in some respects. But the reason why I said the tone is a bit different when contrasted with cybernetics is that what you're left with—and I think it's not a paternalistic gesture. It's not ah, this kind of distanced Adornian kind of, you know, "ruthlessly critical but we can't do anything about it" kind of thing. But it really drives home the point which is just necessary for anyone invested in liberatory politics. It emphasize emphasizes the point that anyone who identifies themselves as, in some way, an inheritor of these traditions, whether it's black radical tradition, anti-colonial struggles, illegalist anarchism—some version of these have at various points in their best moments been an internationalism. These are various configurations of internationalism. But what you have by the end of the book, by analyzing forms, the most recent configurations of power, is that you have a series of tactics, maybe even strategies, devoid or divorced of not just presently existing global movement (there's no global communist movement, etc.), but there has yet to be some semblance of an internationalist framework and that the internationalism that has replaced that is the international of, you know,

capitalist peace or, you know, a resurgent tsarism in the form of Putin to reassert a new form of global peace. That for me was the not necessarily shocking, but it really stood out in terms of this is a gorilla guide to refusal. And so when you move through this tripartite illegalist history, it's very clear as to the stakes of the refusal, but also: what are the requirements? If there's going to be a politics of refusal at least how does it answer certain questions or renew traditions that it inherits and yet cannot be effective without.

Violet:

That was pretty amazing, what Jose was saying, like all of it. I think as far as this particular book is concerned, it is very different from *Dark Deleuze* in the sense that *Dark Deleuze* felt like a response to a Deleuzian academia that kind of nurtured and really neutralizes thought whereas this to me is a very partisan book. It's a book meant for partisans who are engaged in the struggle right now. I think Foucault once described his work right after *Discipline and Punish* was published, he was an artificer and whatever he writes is meant for a siege, a wall, or a destruction. And so this book to me feels like it's in the same lineage, like it's doing the kind of cartography of our modern [politicalization] and providing us with the tools and weapons to be able to proceed with respect to the roadblocks that we've encountered. And it also points out the ways we cannot perceive the ways that already bring us back to the same point from where we started. I think Jose put it in a very brilliant way that the running through all these chapters is that they are essentially illegalist histories. They're criminal histories, they're histories looked for in the underground and spaces of fugitivity and not the official history of historians or positive political projects. So I think that's really important. And now just to go back to what Will was saying earlier about Deleuze in affirmationism in academia, I think what Andrew said regarding cybernetics is really important. I think he said something in the chat that cybernetics is often a solution and search of a problem, and the book has some time for a technical fix; I think in a strange way the visual of the word offered by cybernetics matches up with the vision of, ah, we see certain people who at least claim to be Deleuzians. Like we know Negri's camp, etc., who also envision communism as this sort of network that ultimately integrates everyone and runs on the basis of some global citizenship and in a way like this integrated whole, this unitary system that has absolutely kind of a seal of all the holes and somehow manage to—there's a section of the book that describes this really really well, how the social is first cut up and then through these processes of self-organization based on environmental inputs; the social is kind of reconstituted higher up and in a way it seems like it's almost autonomous. And what it is is

essentially the pure administration of things and which ironically was also Engels's vision of communism wherein the government of men would be replaced by the administration of things. So for me this book is not only a book for partisans, it's a book that has a very partisan vision of communism which is at odds with a vision of communism that is ironically the cybernetic vision of the world itself.

Andrew:

I couldn't state it any more beautifully than people have so far. The book itself doesn't do any deep genealogical or historical work, though I do have a project where I'm slowly working through some of this, but I think that we're picking up the right strands, where, let's say utopian socialism of the nineteenth century is very much about this post-enlightenment rationalist blueprinting of the right world. There still is a strain of anarchism still strongly indebted to all of this, everything from Fourier's phalanxes and planned communities to digital solutions to questions of voting or of representation and large meetings and sort of councilist approach. And I just don't have much time or appeal to this and I'm really going back to that very early notion of the "Arkhé" (ar-KEE) that we know from the archive but it's also a deep Mycenaean word, actually it's pre-Greek, about authority, command, being able to say something and have it immediately enacted in the world; and anarchy that refuses to appeal to any sort of authority. So that means not doing things in the name of the people or of true democracy or any of this. It really means a world without any of those appeals. So that takes us to a very different vision of anarchism, roughly the topic of the first section, but especially when we get to issues of sexuality. It's not about finding the space, creating a logistical logistical structure to make visible or even affirm particular sexualities. It really is about this underground force of sexuality as something that's always scrambling the codes, of something that is dangerous, that's perverse, that's illicit, and to really continue the force behind it. And even more so in the third section which is in many ways about blackness but it's just as much about aesthetically what doesn't show up, what exceeds the security camera footage, what will never show up when you circulate the image of police violence. What can we do that's not about appealing to the putative innocence of a subject who didn't deserve it, which would then thus apply that others do, instead talk about the very means of civil society that we've built up, and outside to it. This means that it's not prefiguring any particular new world. So it means it's also a departure from that slogan from the anti-globalization movement that people are, you know, planting seeds of the new world, that they're creating a world where many worlds are possible; and instead it's really

indulging this moment that Jose and I have been talking back and forth for almost a decade now, this this fun turn of the phrase. It says: "Another end of the world is possible," to really understand these sort of deeper passions, this move towards anger, these desires for getting revenge on the people who make us work in such exploitative situations or that are committed to white supremacy in their core, and I suppose that means this project isn't for everyone but it does mean that we've all found each other because we share these feelings and these desires on a certain level, and that's really what the project of this subtractive communism is as well. It's about finding others who share these deep desires, these sort of perverse fugitive criminal anonymous moments, and to give form and force to them.

Will:

This giving of form and force is precisely why I think this book is particularly unique in its relationship to the archive. So what I find so fascinating about it is that, for example, Violet was talking about the relationship between these historical undercurrents and figures that are in Foucault's work. But they manifest almost primarily as figures to be captured, right? Whether it's the vagabonds and the punitive society, the disabled children in psychiatric power, and abnormal are the levelers and the diggers in society must be defended and they give us an account of the present. But what I think this book does that is so interesting is while it does talk about co-intel military manuscripts on how to handle insurrection subversion, it posits itself through the motions and eyes of these figures who have to dwell in the metropolis. It doesn't steal from the archive that has to control and command the forces that redirect bodies but instead, it sees the archive *in* these movements. So in a certain sense, it has this sort of dual relationship to being a partisan book of genealogy. But what I think it has going for it that is extraordinarily rare in political philosophy is that it *begins* with a refusal of power. Which then allows it to say, okay, what can I then say about truth? What can I then say about the political? What can I say about the antipolitical or opacity? It doesn't begin with a relationship to truth that then says, okay, what can I speak to power, how can I depose power? It refuses the absolute necessity of having a discussion with power and I love the way in which you say like this book has no time for that. And in that sense I think it has a particularly contemporary relationship to the archive that it's building up and the practices within those archives, right? The anonymizing of victims of police surveillance and police violence. The tactical use of anonymity immediately as a practice and also both a weapon in the construction of this underground current. It's not a royal science of political opposition. It's the opposite of that and I think for that reason this book

in some ways can act as, I think, in some ways a really unique kind of inauguration of a call to begin to take seriously and honestly the motions of subversive opposition that manifest not in the everyday, but in the gray night of political control. Because we we can talk about these figures throughout history like, you know, the refugees. Or the figure of the scoundrel that [Farge and Foucault](#) and Deleuze and others find in their [work with the GIP](#), but they're always going back to the royal document. They're always going back to the *lettres de cachet*. They're always going back to some means of violence. But what we find here is the location and identification of whether it's illegalist violence or subversive anarchist queer violence that manifests from the other side. So in many ways I think this book could be called *anarchaeological*. Which I think is a rare assertion.

Jose:

Thank you, Will, that's a lot—I won't not be commenting on everything that you just said. It reminded me of two things; for the second part of the book on criminality: that it's largely dedicated to a history of the criminalization of sexuality and specifically homosexuality and specifically queerness. There are chapters within that part that are a bit longer and you have a sustained engagement with Preciado, which I thought was really just kind of the best intro of the pitfalls and virtues of *Testo Junkie* as experiment, as helping himself to the name of Marcos but saying that is a deep privatization of *subcomandante* that Marcos's name as a Spanish person. Saying that as the figurehead of an indigenous movement in Mexico. I thought those passages were spot on and also reminders because there were parts of that book that I didn't remember as so problematic. So Preciado. It was funny throughout that section there is this figure that I kept thinking, um, Chris Chitty's (rest in peace) recent publication of *Sexual Hegemony*, which is the unfinished PhD dissertation that he was working on. You see Santa Cruz and it was edited by Max Fox and it was put out and his text is—Max Fox had a pithy formulation of to bring together or to return the history of sexuality to a history of property. And the book does an amazing job, even though it's incomplete, at kind of mapping out what that would look like and really posing the question: Why, at a certain particular period in certain histories and nation-states, is it advantageous for a state to grant rights? Legal rights, visibility, representation to historically marginalized communities? But specifically on the basis of their sexuality. Their anti-normative sexuality. And the book is largely focused on same-sex practices. The book is the perfect kind of marriage between Foucault and Marx that people have wanted for a while. So in some way when I was reading the second part, you could have done reconstruction or like

giving your own genealogy, but really with Chitty's publication it was almost a thing of, it's true to this theme of the guide and this conceptual persona of the guerrilla. How does one navigate certain terrain, a certain condition of struggle and condition of production and a condition of oppression and a condition of how you become a subject? It's one of these moments, I think, that really pay off because as you're saying, Will, throughout Foucault's entire work there are these figures that he latches onto and they're always the surplus. That they're the surplus, the marginalized, they're the excluded, or they're the included excluded, or they're the medicalized. You know, whatever wraparound has the power defines a certain moment or a certain regime, the most excluded, most marginalized, and the most surplus, and most superfluous in society are the ones who engender it, embody it in a very material way. In a weird way I think the theme of a guerrilla guide or guerrilla philosophy that you're trying to build throughout the book, which is predicated on what you call the underground, really comes out again here in the second part especially in light of thinking of how Foucault treats the subjects of power in his works. And there is the kind of well-known criticism of Derrida, well, you know the thinker who talks about institutions of power and has never said anything about the university. And of course Foucauldians could say, well, Derrida only can talk about the university and doesn't really have a stake in institutions of power. But that's almost a false problem and really it is a thing of how do you capture the not just lived reality, how do you narrativize, but how do you actually develop an actual theoretical framework that accounts for what it is the self-activity of surplus groups. So surplus population. Another way of saying this, you could say these are three illegalist histories of surplus population, how to manage and control surplus, and especially with the emphasis on cybernetics it really drives him the point, especially with the third part on blackness and opacity, James Boggs's quote, he's writing this in the early 50s: We're not headed to a world of full employment but full unemployment. He's saying this in the beginning of industrialization and automation, that the future is the future of full unemployment. And so that's true, if Boggs is right to any degree, and you know it seems to be the case that historically at least there's reason to believe that the most exaggerated version of that isn't going to happen, is not faded, but some tendencies, some current of that is being played out before our eyes. Then all the more it becomes a question of how do you theorize from the position of or as that subject position or in alliance with or as an accomplice with the history of surplus populations.

Andrew:

Thank you so much for that. I think the one thing that we haven't really commented on yet is the form of the book. So it begins with a real substantive theoretical setup. Like a large introduction that really sets the framework. But the three large sections that make up the body of the book are actually in bite-size segments, some of them a little bit longer, a lot of them a little bit shorter, and I conceive of them as things you can read on the go while you're on the bus or on the subway. If you're not only like going to work but also on your way to a rally or a demo or somewhere maybe you wouldn't even tell anybody you're going, and that's an opportunity to insert or interject various forms of life into the project where I can do a variety of modes of writing. Sometimes I'm working through literature. Sometimes it's popular film. At other times it's just a collection of slogans. Maybe we can use this opportunity to pull some quotes not only from the book itself, but you all have created such a generous list of notes that you took while reading the book and so maybe we can just read some of these passages too as a sort of collage, as it were, of influences, of inspirations, and create a paratextual environment of sort of layering on top of some of the themes we've discussed so far. So maybe I'll jump in by starting with, on page 23 in the Introduction I close out a section by simply giving a whole page of slogans that I think speak to the force of this partisan account for partisans, this sort of not yet world but of this intersecting series of struggles that don't always look like they're working together, but in fact make up this fabric of resistance in all of the holes that are opened up through this sort of new cybernetic world that we're in. So I look initially as we talked about to the turn of the century, which is to say 100 to 150-year-old classical anarchists who had the fiery slogans:

“Free the Class War Prisoners!” (International Workers of the World);

“That which is maintained with blood and fire through blood and fire shall fall!” (Ricardo Flores Magón);

“We are at war . . . but it isn't a war against another nation, but a never-ending war within our own country” (Marie Equi);

Just maybe sort of we're seeing a resurgence of this right now when people are trying to triangulate how to deal with Russia and it's the No War But Class War. And then also:

“Everything that is beautiful and great is achieved by the dangerous march of humanity, and always against God, masters and government” (Virgilia D'Andrea);

Then I move on to the New Left, who constituted themselves in a time of global wars, creating a sense of independence through exclamations like:

“Art is dead, burn the museums, baby!” (Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers);

“Bring the war home” (Students for a Democratic Society);

“Be a marginal, be a hero,” graffiti and chance from Brazil in 1968;

“Piece now” (Students for a Democratic Society National War Council);

“The Indian Wars are not over” (Leonard Peltier Defense Committee);

Or newer strands that really sort of take up these same notions in our current moment:

“ACT UP, fight back!” (ACT UP);

“No justice, no peace,” which really congeals around the Los Angeles riots in 1992;

“They only call it class war when we fight back” as the class-war anarchists say;

That we're in the midst of a “fourth world war” (Subcomandante Marcos)

“Be gay, do crime” (Bash Back!), which I'll say has been graffitied all around the neighborhood I live in within the last few months and I see my neighbors complaining about it on Facebook and I laugh;

as well as “Stonewall was a riot” (Bash Back!);

And then an insurrectionary one I've been hearing from my friends in Olympia say “We're here / we're queer / we're anarchists / we'll fuck you up,” “hands up / shoot back,” and “we cannot accept defeat / half of us are packing heat,” which maybe is a little over the top, but I think gives us a feeling of where things are going. And perhaps where things have already been in a lot of other places. So maybe I can invite some of you all to find some of these other quotes to create this sort of woven paratextual collage.

Violet:

I have a pretty big one. It's from page 160. I'm just going to read the whole paragraph out because I think it's worth it:

Abolition reminds us that the Common is not a “good” form of biopolitical production that can be wrested from unscrupulous hands, any more than are plantations, prisons, or the

police. As Tiqqun can see, the project of abolition is set against those who desire “an incestuous relationship with imperial pacification” that can be identified in those fawning over fantasies of “biopolitics without police, communication without spectacle, peace without having to wage war to get it” (Tiqqun, *This Is Not a Program*). But just as importantly, on the level of strategy, abolition also contends that forces of domination will not be defeated through a grand dialectical negation. Rather, abolition offers a different definition of communism whereby the Common is the shared efforts of those who oppose this world. Its coordinates are determined through an “ethic of civil war.” Its struggle is not an antagonistic battle against any particular institution, but a diffuse warfare against the biopolitical fabric of subject positions that hold the world in bondage.

Yeah I just wanted to read it out because I think that just gets the stakes so magnificently, right? So I just wanted to read that out. I have the whole thing simultaneously underlined and highlighted because it's so good.

Jose:

There are two I had in mind. But I remember in the conversations before this one leading up to this, there was this suggestion from you, Andrew, of bringing in quotes from things that we were reminded of when reading your text. And one is on the trap that lays in wait when you do this kind of urban guerrilla game of a politics or an insurgency through images. It's not just an arm struggle on the ground, but the cultivation of the media persona of *guerrilla* and how that circulates. So there's that and also there's one on refusal and it's from Blanchot's early writings; Blanchot kind of articulating the necessity for refusal to be uncompromising. It's categorical and later on in these political tracks that are from the same period he's writing a letter to someone responding to a letter. So it's a question about his relationship to his Jewish identity and he says:

By what I mean by this refusal, this communism without errors/literary communism, all of this is ultimately leading up to a position or trying to articulate the fact that even us who were once slaves, exiled, you know, itinerant; even if we're now free, it means we're not free until those who are oppressed are free. And when the Other is free, we can't say we are free. It's just that now we can say that we're not enslaved.

And so he has this kind of unflinching commitment to this level of refusal which ties into . . . there were passages where you engaged with an essay on self-abolition written from the perspective of someone writing as a white person and what to do as someone committed to abolitionist politics with the privileges and with everything that comes with being white in spaces of revolt, insurrection, etc. I'll read the passage on the image and this kind of duplicitous nature because I like the practices of how to look at images that come up in the third part as well. So this is from Claire Fontaine and it's an essay where she's looking at this Red Brigades photo of the kidnapping of Idalgo Macchiarini; he's manager of this Sit-Siemens factory and it was the first kidnapping that they did and he was released like 30 minutes later, but it went "viral" for that time. So she writes:

The doctrine in the middle ages analyzed in *The King's Two Bodies* teaches us that the monarch is a body natural and a body politic. Together indivisible and that these two bodies are incorporated in one person and make one body and not diverse bodies, that is, the body *corporate* and the body *natural*.

And so moving on she says, so for the Red Brigades, they thought that they could reverse this understanding of if you murder the physical body you can murder the symbolic body. Meaning if you eliminate the physical iteration of power, then you can eliminate the symbolic residual effects of power. They thought that this practice could take the place of a pedagogy. And it needed a pedagogy without "striking one to educate a hundred." This is what was written on the placard that was around this person's neck. So one can read the slogan in the famous 1972 photograph of Idalgo Macchiarini, the man who will be freed a few hours later. He looks to his left in the direction of a rifle barrel pointing to his temple, and to his right another rifle barrel is set against his cheek. A sign hangs from his neck where one can read "Red Brigades" on the first line, and lower down:

Hit and run. Nothing will go unpunished. Strike one to educate one hundred. All power to the armed people.

The prisoner here is no one. He is an example because he is the object of an exemplary gesture and a subject of a new education: that of the change in the struggle and the balance of power to a thoroughly radical "testimony" through life and this is how she formulates it:

Not a just image but an image of proletarian justice.

And so that's how she presents this and the reason why I thought of this is because the figure of the guerrilla here isn't uncritical as it appears in your work and, really, you do a good job of making sure that it's not proposal for guerrilla warfare, or some rehabilitation, some crude rehabilitation. But how to what to do with that history? Insofar as we are the inheritors of that history. And so it comes with certain problems and so this is the last paragraph which kind of problematizes the figure of the urban guerrilla. And she says:

This revolutionary pedagogy of exemplarity brings with it the fact that we no longer see, properly speaking, the singular human that the entrepreneur represents, but we are called to see capital incarnate. In reality we should not see what we see in this photograph: the frightened look. The man whom one imagines bound or handcuffed beneath the sign, his body hidden by the words. For the unveiling machine supposed to educate a hundred poses the same problem as all other methods of education. Above all, those with an emancipatory goal. One always sees in them something other than what they mean to show. And what one looks for in them is first and foremost the means of emancipation from this education itself. Thus the photograph poses a problem. It stages the same myopia of interexchangeability normally applied to the bodies of the exploited, but here used on the bodies of those in power. It is a mirror that multiplies the blind spots. The threat of the weapons makes the physiological body shine forth and blots out the abstract body of power.

Will:

I think I'll try to return back to the text, and one thing that I find really fascinating—and I know we've discussed this already at length when it comes to certain desires to govern the revolution and attempts at apprehending the cybernetic in a supposedly revolutionary way to create groups that through what you'll call the logic of the disjunctive inclusion, which we get from *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze's metaphysical treatise that was also his doctorate d'état, and *The Logic of Sense*—I'm going to just take one sentence rather than a long paragraph, which is just going to be—it's actually outside of the section that deals with the metaphysics of escape and the metaphysics of divergence, but I actually think speaks to it really powerfully. Which is:

Ultimately, guerrilla war is a clandestine operation premised on the power of escape, which serves the decisive element in asymmetric warfare.

Which is this idea, to me, that a politics of the multitude that we've seen proliferate in response to the works of Roberto Esposito, Antonio Negri, and even contemporary works on body and voice and the multitude, is an inability to leave forms of life as that which fracture into free play, an inability to allow free play, and I believe guerrilla logic allows for an actual deposition of the problem of constituent politics. That the dream of a biopolitics without police is simply the dream of police, of an apologetic of the police, to allow for the policing of the revolution to continue. And I think that this book does a remarkable job of utilizing this logic and, in a sense, participating in the same intimation or gesture that we sort of find in insinuation. Because this book does not take the same route as, say, [This Is Not a Program](#) or the [Introduction to Civil War](#) or even [The Cybernetic Hypothesis](#), where Guattari's later works must be dragged out and shown for their for their complicity in a particular cybernetic disposition towards democracy. Instead, it allows these aporias to stand front and center, and for my work, this is a problem that has absolutely plagued the biopolitics of disability. The most lauded texts, the most lauded individuals in disability studies are those who at the end are always attempting to prove a universality in the Common that reifies productivity among aberrant bodies that, in a sense, simply just inaugurates the same processes that we see, starting up from the physiocrats in the eighteenth century of finding and producing problems; the definition that Andrew gave of cybernetics as a technicality in search of a problem is, for me, the absolute problem that sits at the heart of a lot of simple forms of just cybernetic governance, even when they're oriented in such a way to produce what they think is a sort of unified and peaceful political constituency. So for me, that one sentence spoke out to some issues that I try to grapple with.

Andrew:

Absolutely. And there is this challenge where identity has always been a strange category for me as someone who started reading Deleuze quite young, who's getting out of this sort of Hegelian dialectic of recognition. But it's not something that I want to completely get beyond and sort of tell people that that's just identity politics. I think that the constitched-of elements that make up identity are interesting resources. Sometimes they're also bearing the weight of a history that we're looking to throw off. And so something like, let's say, race, while absolutely

being a scientific creation of the era of colonialism, is not just some empty illusion or construction that needs to be ignored as if it's either to be reversed through some sort of material process or accommodated for as it's often done through things like anti-discrimination law.

Jose:

I just want to interrupt really quickly. There is an amazing tweet that I saw maybe six months ago that's making the same point and someone said, Yeah, you know, my apartment's a complete social construct but I still have to pay rent [*laughter*], and I was just very grateful to that person because that is exactly the logic of this social construction of race or whatever of yes, it is socially constructed, and the person that it applies to is taxed in some way. They pay a penalty.

Andrew:

One thing that I do in the introduction to the section on blackness is I go to this essay about negative identity politics in which it says: how do we find these places where we are situated and mine them for resources to work and to still keep the vision of liberation and struggle in our mind rather than just sort of representation, accommodation, neutralization to make things irrelevant. And I'll note that it's tough. It's tough. It's so easy to get burned out. So I don't want to overemphasize the necessity for struggle at the expense of people who just need to survive. But there needs to be a logic of transformation. There needs to be theory of transformation. And I think so many of us no longer have one. I think that's one of the major problems that I see that I've been addressing in this work in particular. That so many people have given up on theories of transformation and all they are willing to do at this point is co-option, reform, accommodation. And so one of the histories that I find is through mental illness so not exactly disability but absolutely related to disability, and it's this group Socialist Patients' Collective. And they disappeared. But they are at the height of this escalating period in Germany. Some of them would go on to join the RAF or some of these other armed groups. And their slogan was "Make illness a weapon," and their formulation was that capitalism made us ill and there's this sort of like grand dialecticism to it that maybe we should be suspicious about but capitalism made them ill so that means that they need to deepen and lengthen the illness because it's something that capitalism cannot properly accommodate. It wants us to work. It wants us to be productive. It

wants us to be able to treat that illness so we can go back and be contributing members to a society. So instead they push the other side of the dialectic and they say, well, if it wants us to do all of these things, let's go the other way. We'll be unproductive. In fact, unproductive to the point in which it becomes a problem. In all of these formulations of problems, the women's question, the quote/unquote "negro" problem. The idea here is not to stop people from being a "problem," but it's to actually increase the problem. How do we become a problem? And so let me just quote this, um, from an art piece that came out of the anti-globalization movement that I have an ambiguous relationship to. It's a little too hip. I note that it's too hip in the book. But I think that it gets at this attempt to create a theory of transformation out of the material we're working with so it's quite important. So it's from this film [Get Rid of Yourself](#) by Bernadette Corporation. You can find it online.

They say, "another world is possible." [*They* in this ambiguous sense. But also *they* as in the anti-globalization movement at the time.] But I am another world. Am I possible? I am here, living, stealing, doing cocaine, subtracting myself from the bad movie of urban love stories, inventing weapons, elaborating the complex constellation of my relations, building the Party. They say "another world is possible." But we do not want another world, another order, another justice: another logical nightmare. We do not want any global governance be it fair, be it ecological, be it certified by Porto Allegre. We want THIS world. We want this world as chaos. We want the chaos of our lives, the chaos of our perceptions, the chaos of our desires and repulsions. The chaos that happens when management collapses. Capitalism defeated traditional societies because it was more exciting than they were, [that's the theory of transformation. It was more exciting.] but now there is something more exciting than Capitalism, itself: its destruction.

So maybe that's the take-home of the book: to create something more exciting than this impossible, intolerable, terrible world that we find ourselves in and imagine the way in which that might be a new way through.

Violet:

That was amazing. I just want to build off of what you're saying about transformation. Let me just find that quote. I think it's, again, in the final chapter, Communism at the End of the World, where you talk about reappropriating space. You also talk about how biopower depends on

dispossession, on separating people from their primary means of subsisting. And that's how it's able to make us dependent on the state and how life outside the state becomes an impossibility. Like bringing this back to the issue of transformation. What can we do today? I think one of the major problems we're facing precisely is that many of the means that are needed to simultaneously live and struggle together are out of our reach and whenever that problem has come up, there are always these other groups. Well, we could just broadly call them the governmental leftists who would basically want us to limit our political horizons to voting for insurgent electoralism or whatever. And getting the right representatives in, but since we are beginning from the presupposition that our refusal is uncompromising, how can the underground grow its strength in terms of appropriating these resources that are so necessary for our survival and that have been kind of taken away from us? What kind of strategies can we look forward to in that regard? That's what I wanted to ask.

Jose:

Before Andrew or anyone offers an answer, Violet, I just wanted to ask: I thought your opening comments were very good and apt of like what happened before the writing of this text. So the first version of the complete text that I saw that went through so many changes that, you know, this is a new thing, that I looked at the Foreword again. And the last time I edited it was maybe sometime in 2019 and I was writing about Hong Kong and Chile and so it really is a book that has lived in this pre- and then current pandemic context at least in the global north. There was a huge amount of reporting on the farmer strike and this dispute between the Modi government and farmers and agriculture workers. And of course the way it was portrayed was through very legalistic means, that there are three principal laws that this dispute is over, but aside from that the images were fantastic. There were roads that are entirely closed down but people had everything they needed. They had foot-washing machines, they had tents, they had food. It was the closest thing to the Paris Commune—I mean okay, fine I'm being a little facetious, but to your point—how to reproduce your life and how to reproduce a struggle begins from being able to reproduce your life in a struggle. Obviously you shouldn't be the totality of that logic. That's how you end up in this self-cannibalization of a group. Given the kind of historical framing or the metric of, you know, Chile, Hong Kong, the cycle of struggle, which presented a really interesting moment where it was exciting to watch the recomposition of lines of struggle, alliance, solidarity, internationally speaking. And precisely because up until then, really as, whatever, the moment of the 60s and 70s was huge and important. Everyone inherits something

from that. But the critical aspect of that inheritance is that you only inherit problems. Autonomy isn't a principle for action. It's a problem that is presented to you and so it's still unclear whether that's a form of organization. Is it a form of struggle? Is it a historical tradition? Etc.

Violet:

I just want to answer some of the questions Jose raised. There are definitely some things we could look forward to in the farmers' protests in terms of these things having strategic value in terms of reproducing our lives. There are definitely food kitchens that were set up and almost everyone was welcome to enter those food kitchens and what was really amazing about this strike was it was mostly of a legalistic character. Though there was one moment where they kind of broke off from that and I'll just come to that. But it was mostly of a legalistic character. But we also got to see a very sustained low-intensity struggle that lasted over a year even during the pandemic when there were lockdowns, etc. So the farmers were kind of like unstoppable. They just kept going on and on and at some point the media just stopped reporting about them because the idea was they would go away if they received no media attention but they just kept on and on and on until the government had to relent. It was about these farm laws which would further corporatize the agricultural sector. So there was one interesting period of break within that, I just want to mention that, which was 26 January 2021, which is Republic Day here in India, when some sections of the farmers broke off from the official protestors and walked to the Red Fort in New Delhi and the whole march took a more insurrectionary character. Busses were vandalized, etc. And that ultimately led to the government accusing the farmers of being anarchists on live TV, and then the farmers' representatives said that, no actually these are bad apples who have come from somewhere else and they don't represent us (those who are like the official trade unions). And this is something that we've been seeing for a while now even during the Shaheen Bagh protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens. Before political opposition, the official political opposition, took up the protests, there was almost these spontaneous displays of rage and fury in the streets, tires were burned, and people were occupying spots, and it was a liberal opposition that kind of really suppressed this protest. Because they were like, "You have to, you know, engage in civil protests. You can't do this" and so these people were like, again, picked out, identified as bad examples. There was a Muslim scholar named Sharjeel Imam who suggested a blockade basically in a city, which is kind of important for the economy, and then he was denounced as an anti-national by the government, and then the Left, the liberals, etc., I mean the governmental

left who have officials in the Parliament, the liberals, etc., basically said that, “Well, we do not agree with him but we support his right to free speech,” which amounted to nothing as he got in prison and, yeah, that’s been a recurring problem over here. That there’s this huge grip of legalism and official political organizations on protests, whichever sectors it may come from, which kind of always neuters them. But hopefully we are getting to a point where the anger and the frustration, the daily humiliations, rage that is building up with overflow, and go beyond the grip of these official political representatives and there will be something else, something better, to look forward to.

Andrew:

I'd be curious to hear other scene reports or images that people might associate with the perspectives presented in the book. Of the earlier introduction that Jose mentioned, it actually did a tour traveling through a few of these sites. It began with the question of camouflage which actually took us to the ZAD in France near Notre Dame des Landes where there's been a agricultural and anarchist environmentally based resistance to the development of an airport for almost fifty years that was finally canceled (or Macron said he canceled—I'm not sure if he made it permanent) but every year or two they would send in about a thousand riot cops to try and clear the forest where these people were squatting and preventing the development of an airport. And there is this heightened escalation of tensions around 2018 or 2019 where people just started using the land itself against the riot police you know because they're all geared up and they've got their clear shields and their face masks that they're trying to use and people just started throwing mud and other natural earth on them and it completely blocked them and prevented them from being able to clear it once again, in addition to farmers dedicating their tractors to blocking roads and things like that. And then I went to what was going on in Palestine at that time, too. There was an uprising where people were just storming a few fences. And of course there's this sort of obscene question of the aesthetics in the line of sight that happens there where not only are there encampments of IDF and other forces literally shooting down on the people at the fence. But there are even people who set up and (in) scaffolds to watch it unfold as if it was just like a gross terrible show. So this spectacular element. But in the midst of it, there was this remarkable moment where people were carrying tires to just light these enormous fires that would obscure the whole line of vision that would allow people to create a new sense of collectivity and within it I found these striking images of a woman in black who had to be old enough to be the mother of a bunch of the teens who are you know like throwing rocks

and other things that people do at this type of event. And she almost seemed to sort of become the smoke and become the fire. And I think a little of this was a little too “new materialist,” which is why I moved beyond it. But I think it captured the politics of material in a way that I wanted to, too, that in many ways gives the sense of a struggle of this subtraction of this illegality of not exactly creating a new world but of having these other forms of struggle that are completely unintelligible and rejected by the Leninists and the social democrats and the party politicians all alike. Wondering: what are other moments or other images that struck people as they were reading; either ones included or ones that were conjured up that ran parallel.

Jose:

Actually just the thing you said about the march to return, the great march to return. It's funny that you mentioned that. Even from the beginning of the text when you separate out or analytically distinguish between the possible reference for the term *guerrilla*: is it an actual armed individual? Part of a cell? Is it a tradition or is it a framework or what are we doing here? And by virtue of it being a framework for this text that at least commits it to something that's other than just taking up arms. A struggle can look other ways and actually the pitfalls of armed struggle remain the pitfalls of armed struggle. And so to each their own mistakes if they want to repeat that faithfully. But the great march remains fascinating because maybe six months ago, eight months ago, I was doing this very intensive rereading of all of Edward Said and he has an intro to this book called [Confronting Empire](#) by a renowned famous anti-colonial theorist from the global south, Eqbal Ahmad, and he was longtime friends with Edward Said and Edward Said has this story where he says that Yasser Arafat asked Eqbal Ahmad to visit him in Beirut—this is before the 1980 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon—and so Edward Said and Eqbal Ahmad go and actually when Eqbal Ahmad gets there he takes a tour, a survey, of the southern region of Lebanon where Israel would eventually invade and he came back with a full report and said, Look, you may have people on the ground but what are you going to do about their airport? And Yasser Arafat's like, Oh, you know, doesn't really take it seriously. And so the thing that was interesting about this is the accumulation of these kinds of experiences for someone like Eqbal Ahmad led him to propose to Arafat, in place of this: What if you organized a march? Just, you know, a march to the border? You know, peaceful. You know it's very Martin Luther King, very civil rights. He's not trying to be innovative. He's not trying to say, Oh, this is something new that's never been done. It doesn't have the pomp and circumstances on the spectacle. It doesn't have the mythology that's being created around the figure of someone who's marching. And of

course it was never implemented. It was striking to see that happen so many decades later, but also striking in terms of longevity and efficacy. That a suggestion like this, decades later, has such an impact and so then it at least makes you play the counterfactual game, which I think any good kind of reader of history, you have to ask the question that if it was done in that context in that moment, would the strategic impact have been greater than it was, you know, in 2018? These experiences led him to try to encourage Palestinian guerrillas to not fetishize weapons. And even Edward Said's like, It's this thing that you do, you just shoot a gun in the air to celebrate. But even just that gesture was indicative of a tendency—and this is kind of what Deleuze calls “the Leninist break,” where Marxist–Leninism or Maoism or Trotskyism becomes a catechism and becomes ossified. You have to say certain phrases, speak a certain way, etc. So that was something that came up as I was reading it and so I'm glad that you brought up the great march to return because throughout the text I kept thinking of Eqbal Ahmad as this kind of correlate from the global south. You know this itinerant but insanely sophisticated theorist, strategist, and someone who's who just had an insane amount of time to spend with people. And having those experiences be rich, epistemically rich, for the construction of theory.

Will:

One example I really appreciated was what we find in the weaponization of what the white spectacular economy of exposure. This idea—and violent reality—that whiteness lays claim to blackness insofar as they force it to participate in the spectacle in such a way that violence on black bodies becomes media that can be filtered through and consumed by and for the strengthening of white identity politics. And one thing that I really loved about the way in which you then utilize the politics of opacity is you show that this fetishization of exposure, this desire to attest in the name of whiteness that one must become white or disappear the weakness there is this strange fear of the disappearance that in fact, there's this horrifying element of whiteness that disappearance becomes the object of absolute anxiety and what the project of selectively anonymizing protesters that are worthy in the name of the project to be anonymized and leaving white bodies to be exposed to systems of surveillance shows the absolute limit of this desire to never disappear. That the most counter-revolutionary figure here is the citizen. That always wants to be present in the Agora and speak in its name and speak through its whiteness. I think that example there, for me, this question of a very particular kind of reversal through weaponization was something that I've always found particularly fascinating and is a current in so much work that is fundamental to what you're discussing in the text. What it makes me recall

a little bit about this question of immediate reversibility is the tool prison riot, right? There's this popular—I've not seen it. It's done by HBO or whatnot, so I'd imagine it's not that remarkable, but there's this upcoming documentary on Attica that mentions the tool prison riot and what I found so fascinating about the depiction of tool that comes from popular media is that it is this external attack on prison wardens on the administration of life in France at the time. But what the GIP, what Deleuze, Foucault, Genet and others see is a proof of intimate relationships between different sensitivities that can then—very particular nodes in the execution of power—be reversed. Right? Turn the prison cell into a barricade. Turn the mechanisms that are meant to keep individuals inside the prison *that which keeps the wardens out*. And it's these moments of immediate reversibility through intimate knowledge of subjection where one subjection becomes a weapon whether it's the hysteric who exposes the psychiatrist as a performance artist who can't particularly identify this or that entity of an ailment that keeps the hysteric confined; or the disabled subject who throws their body underneath the wheel well of a bus in protest of a regime of penalized confinement; these moments in fugitivity that's always in relationship to a reversibility of the weakest nodes of empire is, I think, what makes this text—you know, it's not a transhistorical assertion, right? You make this clear in the first chapter that the cybernetic order has changed and for that reason the disposition of the guerrilla must change, but there is this kernel that shares a reverberation across all these examples in all of these extremely minor ways that show major incompatibilities and problems for empire. So for me that guerrilla technique spoke to so much of what we've seen come out of radical political movement.

Andrew:

Absolutely. There's this ongoing ethical challenge of how do nonblack people interact with radical black thought and the black radical tradition and I think you really hit the nail on the head about how in part, it's about political strategies, complicity with whiteness, and to learn that there's another way even if it's not to imitate or try and set yourself on the same path as blackness. Fanon was certainly not the first person to acknowledge this but in his [The Lived Experience of the Black Man chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*](#), he notes that the black man has no ontological resistance to whiteness. And then he later on, sort of describing the psychic condition of this, says that he feels trapped between nothingness and infinity. And so I rework that through an aesthetic paradigm where I say that blackness gets trapped between hypervisibility and withdrawal. Where we know about the hypervisibility of blackness from the

way in which culture consumes blackness, puts it on display, from everything from minstrelsy—which, I actually go through older ideas of where forms of protest from five hundred years ago in Europe, white men, poor white men usually, would dress up like black women in order to conceal themselves and to play black for a day but it allowed them to do a form of class revolts and get away with it. But then also that the only forms of visibility that are available to blackness then to get the attention of well-meaning white liberals is to have their death on constant display. To have it circulated through the Internet. to have a whole emotional libidinal economy of empathy and care that someone like Saidiya Hartman so usefully diagnoses and challenges within scenes of subjection. And so I think with our own version of political struggle, as you note, it doesn't just have to be the critical side. It can be the other one which is to say, *What does it mean to play with disappearance? What does it mean to accept absence? What does it mean when withdrawal becomes a strategy?*

And we have plenty of images of this. We have fugitivity. I'm thinking here of Robin Kelley's excellent work in [Race Rebels](#), of forms of black labor resistance where certainly you can't organize a union to get legal representation if you're not even a human. So how do you use song, how do you use dance, how do you use other forms of cultural politics to organize and to even not make it intelligible—where it's the point. That's a form of cultural guerrilla warfare that James C. Scott so wonderfully does in his work on the [hidden transcript of resistance](#) that Kelley appropriates. But then it's also the guerrilla whose strategy is to not appear. To strike quickly and then to disappear. And so it's not to say that we should become guerrillas again; it's failed in most circumstances or it's sort of pushed to its limit, but to find out ways in which this strategic withdrawal or this non-appearance or this other form of selective engagement is really the strategic conditions that we have to engage today and to not go into it naively to think that it's in everyone's best interest to simply appear in their Agora, get counted, and then things just sort of work out in our favor. Because we're in a system of power that thrives off our exploitation and domination and we need to be looking to other resources to know how to move forward.

Violet:

I just wanted to comment because you brought up the chapter on being trapped between withdrawal and hypervisibility. I think this also goes back to an earlier theme of the book: visibility and opacity, like, opacity itself as a gesture of refusing is a feeling that runs throughout the book from the Introduction to the end. And one of the really interesting points you bring up is

the anti-Black history of disability. For example, the “lantern laws,” and how [Édouard] Glissant makes the point about unknowability, being too against anti-Blackness or even colonialism. I just want to get some further thoughts regarding the stakes of making the world completely transparent. A lot of supposedly progressive political projects also based themselves on the idea of transparency, including those who have been up until now excluded. For them the problem is there isn't enough transparency, right? So if there would be enough transparency, everyone would become included and I think there's a really powerful quote in this chapter on being trapped between withdrawal and hypervisibility where in a statement to the Humboldt Forum, Hartman and Christina Sharpe say:

How do we attend to Black Death? A question we must return to again and again, since our suffering to the degree that it is recognized, is [pornotropically] exploited in the service of rehabilitating anti Black and colonial institutions . . . Don't use our death, our suffering, our lives and our work to regenerate your projects. Don't turn our flesh into gold again. We do not consent to this.

So I just wanted to know your thoughts on the stakes of this, on fighting visibility as this force of domination that subjects us.

Andrew:

Maybe I can very quickly say that—he's not a very fashionable thinker these days—but I'm still very inspired by Homi Bhabha's psychoanalytic reading of the ambiguity of the native from the perspective of the colonizer. And how the colonizer believes their own liberal project of rational scientific legibility or knowability enough to be nervous about the native to the point where even if the native makes themselves completely transparent, there's even the supplemental remainder of them thinking that the native could simply be playing along. And that this ongoing anxiety that there might just be something else that they'll never know that's always sort of in the background, to me always seemed like a much more exciting case than that of someone like Judith Butler, who, in the play or in the movement of performativity and its ongoing iteration just seems to be a sort of serial performance, where for Bhabha it's this deep anxiety that shows a sort of weak spot and the incompleteness of the colonial project. And so I would say that in the end transparency is never possible. It will never completely get there. Even though there's this immense drive toward transparency, it's also some of the weakest portions of the forms of

power that rely on it. Just think about this obsession with *big data* or *quantitative reason*, that it's always looking for new information. It always thinks that there's something hiding outside it or behind it or somewhere else. It's never really certain and it's always open to amendment and so I think that this is precisely the space in which people can and will always hide and it's where [*The Undercommons*](#) or even so much of Fred Moton's work on the cultural politics of blackness or him drawing on the work of Nahum Chandler on the paraontology of blackness like I think this is precisely the point that deserves investigation, can continue being worked out. It's not a solution because it's like a topological hole that can never be filled. But I think it's that outside there that can be productively exploited. Sorry if I'm speaking in sort of abstract theoretical terms here. But I think that that's the direction that the question absolutely took me in.

Jose:

Just to follow up on and kind of extend some of your comments, Andrew: I mean it's almost now a kind of well-known offside seemingly maybe for-younger-generations-of-theory-people-in-academia, like a performance of rejecting recognition, rejecting the master slave dialectic. Citing Kwame Ture, "If the United States had a conscience, it would listen to black people. But the United States has none," etc, etc. And so meaning that the positions seemingly or maybe for some loses its critical edge. But as you were speaking I was reminded of a few things, and Violet, the passage where there was the Saidiya Hartman quote that you read out was spot on. Recently there was a memorial held in Queens, New York, by a South Asian, East Asian group called Red Canary Song and they were having a memorial for the six Asian women who were slain in the shooting in Atlanta. One of the speeches or the eulogies or these like commemorations was emphasizing the point that the person whose name that we were all kind of saying, their death wasn't inherently political. They didn't live to die for this cause, which raises the question (and this ties into the Saidiya Harman point) which raises the question of what is the relationship between the history of the oppressed and desires for transparency and visibility—obviously, restitution. Sure, that's fine. But restitution desires for recognition are contingent, are incidental to the construction of being oppressed. Meaning the aim for visibility isn't inherent prior to the moment of exploitation, and it becomes a path, one path, that has been criticized towards seeking justice. That leads me to a second point: I don't know how long it's been, maybe it's been a year and I have to check, since the civil war in Myanmar (Burma) has broken out and very early on when things started getting heavily militarized and protesters who were just there every day on the streets started fleeing to the

rural countryside and then training to become soldiers, there were a few groups who started social media profiles and continue to maintain them throughout the course of the war, and one of them wrote in a night of just kind of being frustrated with the situation, said, "If we lived in a just world, you wouldn't know my name. There's no reason for you to know who I am, and yet this is what we've been reduced to." To visibility, to transparency. To an image, your name, that circulates and gets tied to a place. Then you know it can be framed as well. There are two peoples disagreeing or who have seemingly equal rightful claim to a piece of land, which is again how every kind of dispute whether it's Israel/Palestine, Pakistan/India, anytime there has been a partition or carving up of the world by former colonial powers, this is kind of the dominant framing of two sides, equal in strength, equal in right to claim what they're claiming. But all of that is to say that the kind of proclivity of the text for opacity is in some way a better replacement, or it was more refreshing than let's say just another criticism of the politics of recognition, of respectability politics. I mean there's an entire bibliography. But it does kind of follow, it's consistent with this attempt of theorizing or giving consistency to the actors and agents and their desires, with respect to whatever type of subject of power they are made to become.

Will:

Maybe I'll start the in-closing nature of the comments. I think the one thing for me that this text has allowed me to navigate is to identify where and why the politics of divergence and the politics that allows for a proliferation of free play of forms of life always finds itself ensnared in systems of political revolution that are simply trying to inaugurate new forms of cybernetic control, right? So there was that great comment that was just made by Jose, where it's kind of hackneyed now to oppose the politics of recognition, right? But instead what we end up finding is and instead what we need to do is take up vibrant materials or a new materialist perspective of politics, which then of course inaugurates the control society as that which opposes the historical system of sovereign identification and the perpetual ceremonies of power that come with it. So what I think is helpful here is this book forces its readers in a very partisan manner to come to terms with divergent strategy. I think this book enters into the discussion of what spreading anarchy and living communism can look like in these moments that often look like flashes in the pan but actually gesture to a shared opposition.

Violet:

I guess I'll just extend Will's point. It's a timely book in a very untimely way. Because we are in a situation right now where it seems to me that there are two broader left camps that are visible; I mean, usually they are (the two broader visible left camps). One is like a very reactionary left camp that there's recently been this magazine called [Compact Magazine](#) named after a German neofascist journal that's being headed by Žižek and Nina Power. Which is all about like in the face of let's say the "society of control" and neoliberal governance. It's filled with this reactionary longing to go back to the old forms of classical liberal governmentality, the strength of the family, the nation, the homeland, etc., a strong social democratic state. And in opposition to that we have a left that is more broadly agreeable, but that is a bit too toothless and ends up just too easily aligned with positions of control society that simply doesn't go far enough. It remains trapped within the dialectic of recognition in the end. This book really shows a way out of that impasse, either some form of progressive social democratic reformism or a more reactionary social democratic reformism, these two broader left camps that are usually found online. But also I think this book is untimely in another way because what is broadly our camp on the left, which is like the non-governmental left, has been having a lot of troubles in recent times with the pandemic—everyone's positions are all over the place. So I think this book kind of sets our priority straight and kind of remaps the terrain in a way that will help us to actually move forward instead of just digging ourselves into a deeper rabbit hole and missing out on the stakes of the struggle as they present themselves. So yes, that's all I want to say. I hope everyone will read it.

Jose:

That just reminded me of one last, tiny follow-up. The figure of the guerrilla sometimes implicitly suggests themes of conspiracy, conspiratorial communism, which is a phrase that both Andrew and I have used in the past for *Hostis*. It appears in *Dark Deleuze*. And of course there's the recent publication in French of I guess you call it the "conspirationist" manifesto. There is an act of historical equivocation with this conspirationist manifesto that for all intents and purposes doesn't contribute to the argument at work in Andrew's book and definitely isn't how that type of language was used prior to the publication of that text. Meaning the tradition of a conspiratorial communism comes from particular conditions, a struggle, where it is illegal, it's outlawed to form a political organization under the banners of socialism or communism, etc., and so hence to advocate for conspiracy in that sense is to advocate for illegalism. And so this gets tied to Blanqui, etc, etc. However, this newer text seemingly just straightforwardly affirms a certain

discursive logic of statements, meaning conspiratorial statements, and says that we will just affirm this as the new terrain in which statements and actions will be issued. And so the difference being a tradition of conspiracy coming from the fact that political revolution is subject to criminalization and is rendered illegal and as opposed to a tradition that seemingly has cited itself with just the oldest conspiracy, *if there's a secret cabal, they're probably Jewish, and they run the world* and now you can supplant it if you're in France with Islamo-leftism, which is the new reactionary term to scapegoat, marginalize, and criminalize, etc. And so recently there have been a few anti-fascist groups in Léon that have been dissolved by Macron, and this was done by virtue of implementing a law that was supposed to be used to encourage quote unquote “deradicalization.” And prior to this anti-fascist organization in Léon were two Palestinian solidarity organizations and one Muslim cultural community, just a cultural community for Muslim people in Léon, subject to this dissolution.

Andrew:

Thank you so much, everybody. So in the spirit of echoing what Jose said, not to try and expose some conspiracy but in fact to sort of *become* it, maybe I can end this podcast with the same words that I end the book with, which are from Nanni Balestrini's [*The Unseen*](#), written in the aftermath of the autonomous period in Italy, which itself had a tragic ending and in the ending of the book is equally tragic with the main character in jail. Formally, the book has no punctuation and so that's something to sort of consider as it's being read and we'll see how well I do with it.

in the evenings after supper there's a strange silence we no longer call to one another
from our cells you can see the blue rectangles of the spy-holes uniformly lit up by the
reflections from the television sets you can only ever hear the same monotonous rise
and fall of music mingled with voices the ceiling is patterned with the beams of the yellow
floodlights cutting through the huge window grid pinning you to your bed you're inside an
enormous tin of sardines squashed pressed together you're inside a sealed tin
hermetically soldered shut what is there outside this tin who is there outside what are
they doing what are they doing now why do they go on doing things doing all the things
they're doing without me where am I what am I which is my face now that I have left is
my face here crushed flattened squashed

I broke the mirror with a leg of the stool I threw all the pieces down the toilet I flushed it I flushed it five six seven times I kept on flushing it staring at the black hole of the toilet that black circle where the water rushed down I put my hand inside it then deeper down to feel the bottom I put my head in it I pushed my head down but it wouldn't fit it wouldn't go through the hole to come out somewhere else to see out to see where I am where you are when we were a thousand ten thousand a hundred thousand it can't be true that there's no one outside it can't be true that I feel nothing any more that I no longer hear any voice any sound any breath it can't be true that outside there's only a vast cemetery where you are can you hear me I can't hear I can't hear you I can't hear anything any more suddenly floodlights cut through the darkness they fill the cell with light

when the opaque morning light slid through the bars and the window grids things in the cells regained their usual banal ordinary appearance we began again to think and imagine how we could see how we could make ourselves seen outside that prison that was becoming a cemetery the place of greatest silence

(extro music fades in)

where no message no voice no sound passes in or out any longer we looked at the problem of how to regain communication with the outside world and we decided to launch new protests to break that deadly silence we began by beating the bars during the night we'd agree on the time for this at exercise we had no watches we had no alarm clocks but we could see what time it was on the television sets that were kept on all night.

Thanks.

(extro music fades out)

This conversation has been lightly edited for clarity.

[A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal](#) is available from University of Minnesota Press.