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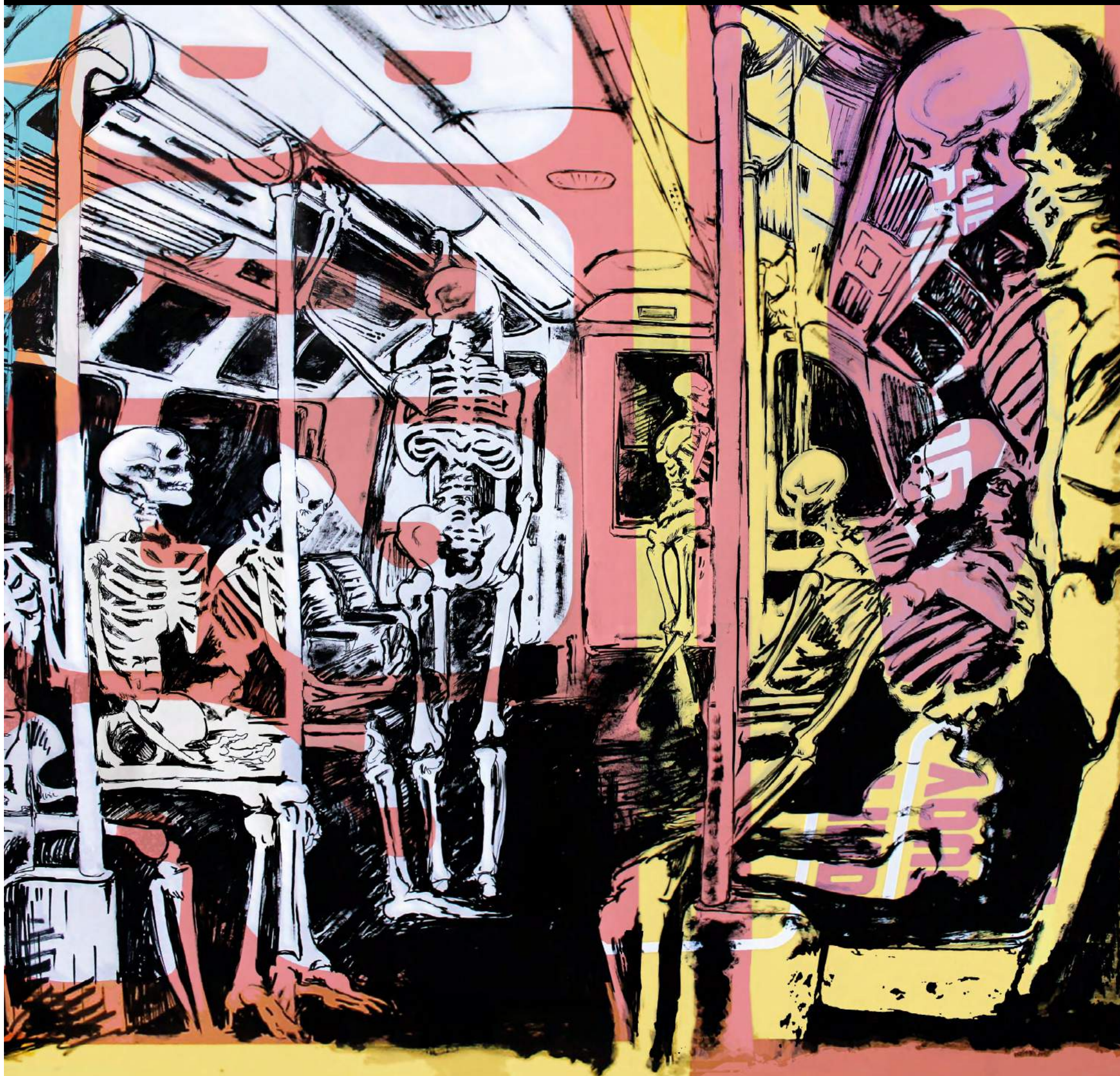
MAGAZINE

2018

02

SUMMER

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First Published in London 2018 by Dog Section Press
Printed by Sharman & Company

ISSN 2515-9011

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“Intellectual property is a legally fabricated monopoly, confining culture and science, and violently depriving the poorest and most marginalised from access to critical resources. The fictions of copyright and patent are despotic attempts to monopolise the mind; outrageous constraints on intelligence and creativity; and a destructive protectionist scheme for the profit of power.” **Stinney Distro**



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NO ADS, NO MASTERS

By Hogre & Double Why

July 10th, 2017, around 10.30 AM.
Central Police station, Rome.

Double Why: I am being interviewed. They are asking me about a phone call that was made a week ago from my cellphone. Hogre and I called the webmaster responsible for the management of the website hogre.it (now offline), after he had been interviewed by Digos.

Digos is an Italian law enforcement agency charged with investigating sensitive cases involving terrorism, organised crime and serious offences such as kidnapping and extortion. They know we were responsible for the ad takeover that happened ten days ago and has created scandal among the conservative and Catholic circles. Seems like they have taken the situation quite seriously.

Since Double Why and Hogre are pseudonyms and are not related to any real identity, the investigation started from what they could find online, and that was the webmaster’s data. He decided to “collaborate with justice” – as he told us on the phone – and so he did, giving the cops my number. I understood they were serious when my mother called me worried as hell because the police came looking for me (in Italy the sim card is necessarily related to a real ID). And that’s why I’m here in the Digos’ office, after having gone through a dress-up pantomime to look like a regular citizen, answering with bullshit stories to their bullshit questions.

July 10th, 2017, around 1:00 PM.
Small internet café in Quadraro neighbourhood.

Hogre: Luckily the webmaster didn’t know my last name. Too often people are using their real identity on social networks. I’m writing to some friends involved in the ad-take over and tagged in many incriminating posts to urge them to change their account names.

The poster that I’ve drawn was entitled “Paedophile Jesus” by the press. It depicts a man with caucasian features and a visible erection under his tunic, standing in front of a praying kid. It caused a more violent reaction in public opinion than its subject matter: the accusation of paedophilia against Cardinal Pell, arrested two days before the posters were out in the streets.

On the morning of 1st July, a politician from a right wing party saw the posters and, as he believed it to be an authorised communication, asked for the Mayor’s resignation. Great reaction. After that I was contacted by the national newspaper La Repubblica for an interview. I spent a whole hour explaining the meaning of subvertising, arguing for the destabilising aspect of satire.

The journalist replied that it wasn’t possible for them to publish that information, but they will write something about these facts anyway (I call it censorship, don’t know about you). The article they came up with caused a wave of moral panic and the beginning of our trouble with the law.

2 PM. Quadraro.
Double Why: Coming out of the police headquarters, I decide to go looking for Hogre. They’re not in the internet café where they’re supposed to be. I start panicking.

Before I could get home, I am arrested by a police officer who takes me back to the central police station. I’m thinking, Porca Madonna. And I wasn’t thinking about the notorious pop singer: Porca Madonna is a popular expression rooted in the Italian language and it refers to the virgin holy Mary. The Madonna has a key role in Italian culture, representations of her are everywhere, from the corners of the streets to the highest examples of pictorial art. Sadly, if we investigate the reason for this popularity, we find it’s all reduced to her role of mother. Mary’s function in the gospels is merely of a fecundated uterus. The poster I’ve drawn showing two lesbian Madonnas, who have control of their lives and bodies, reverses the historically passive role given to women, so explicit in the virgin Mary’s story.

After four hours, I am released with a charge of aiding and abetting. I guess they finally started to figure it out.

3:30 PM.
Central Police Station.

Hogre: A police officer is going bananas because I’m keeping a No Comment attitude even though they have all the evidence against me: records from CCTV cameras, the witness of my (ex-)webmaster – they even got me while I was connected to my email. The police chief complains because he says he’s wasted too much time (a week has passed since that infamous phone call) “for such a stupid case”.

That’s how I finally find out what my charge is: Article 404 of the Italian Penal Code, “offence to a religion”, which means blasphemy. I laugh. Digos are not supposed to investigate this kind of offence. If they are doing so, it’s because of some higher pressure.

Porco Dio (translated as “God is a pig”) is a rich expression, rooted in the Italian language, with many levels of meaning. You can use it to describe your feelings when you get hurt, when you are late, when spaghetti are overcooked, or if you are under arrest...

You also can use it to insult the imaginary figure of an old, white man with a long beard, who lives on a cloud, the ruler and creator of the whole universe. Perhaps God is just an idea, to brainwash us into the hierarchical organisation of life. Maybe he is as imperfect as the creatures he creates, who believe he is thinkable. Maybe he also has to die. Actually it looks like he has been dead since a century or more. If this expression and all its multiple, colourful and glittered definitions are still forbidden in Italy, it’s because of the Vatican. To be more accurate: Blasphemy Laws come from the “Lateran Pacts”, the accord struck between the church and the state at the time of Mussolini.

5.15 PM.
Double Why’s home.

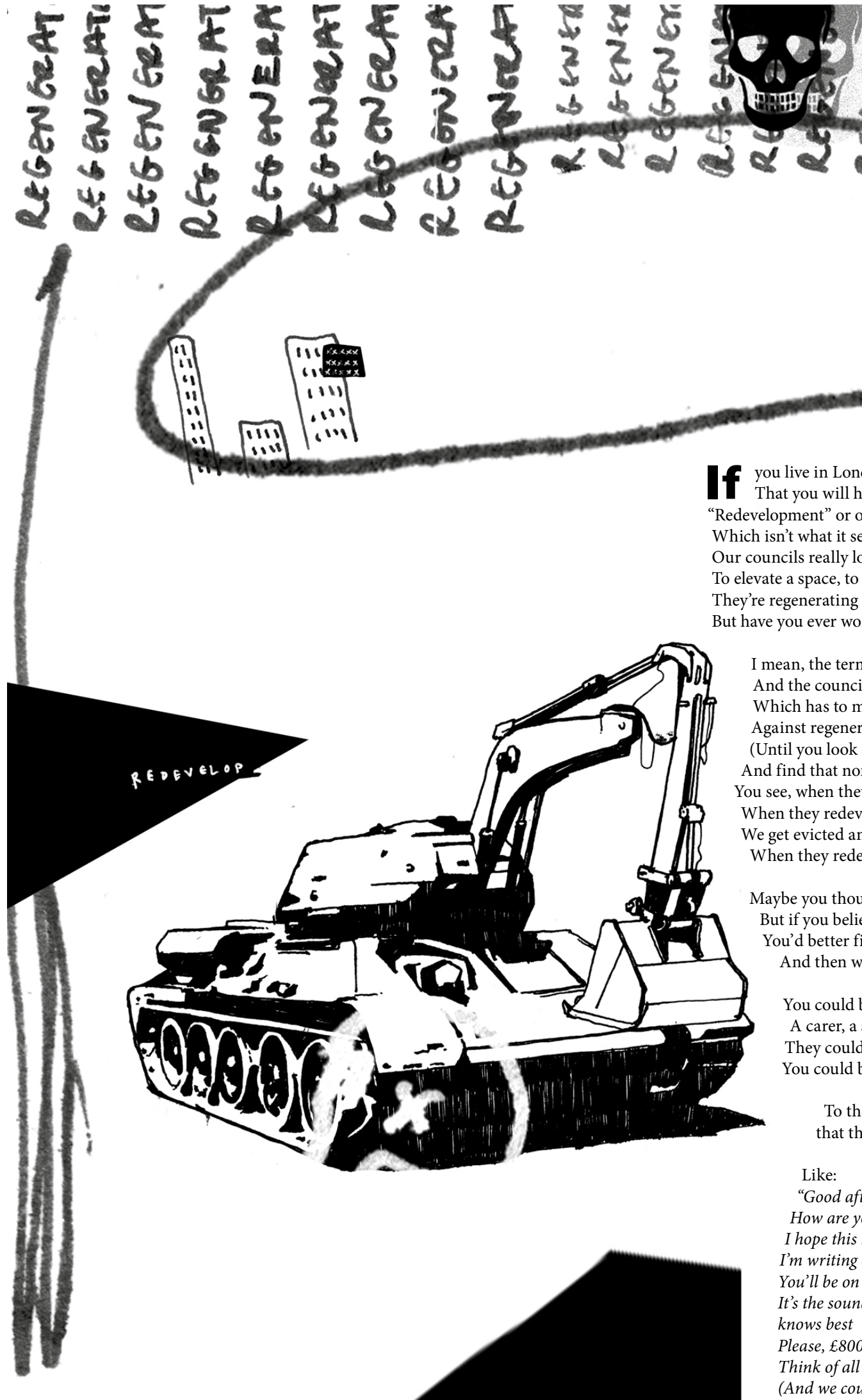
Double Why: Hogre’s sister is calling me. She is doing her shift at Caritas (“the charitable arm of the Italian Bishop Conference”) and was surprised to see Hogre in front of her, escorted by a tall, fat cop in plainclothes. She was even more surprised when they asked to borrow her keys to their flat. This will avoid the front door being broken and subsequently repaired at our expense, Hogre quickly explained to her. I think about the days before, all the time we spent cleaning out Hogre’s house of everything that could be used as evidence. That means anything with the Hogre tag on it, and that means tons of drawings, stencils, posters, years of work – most of it thrown out in the rubbish bin.

Around 5.30 PM.
Hogre’s home.

Hogre: Using a special protocol called “suspicion of possession of weapon”, the police search my room. They can’t find much, but still they seize a few things – a poster and a screen-print. This is the Society of the Spectacle, where the appreciation or condemnation of a symbol can determine the fate of a whole empire, and a drawing can be considered a weapon.



Hogre and Double Why are artists and outlaws.



ESTATE OF WAR

By Potent Whisper

If you live in London, there's two words - most recently - That you will have likely heard more and more frequently: "Redevelopment" or otherwise known increasingly as "Regeneration" Which isn't what it seems to be... Our councils really love to just regenerate a place! To elevate a space, to regenerate estates They're regenerating London in abundance as we speak But have you ever wondered what these words actually mean?

I mean, the term "redevelopment" implies a type of progress And the council make it sound like a beneficial process Which has to make you wonder why there's been so many protests Against regeneration on estates, it makes no sense (Until you look at the evidence from previous developments And find that none of these "benefits" actually benefit the residents) You see, when they redevelop homes they also redevelop rent When they redevelop rent, then we develop debt We get evicted and shifted out of ends When they redevelop bricks, we have to redevelop friends

Maybe you thought you knew what 'redevelop' meant But if you believe that we develop, please develop sense You'd better fight for us or you'll be redeveloped next And then we'll all be redeveloped til we're redeveloped dead

You could be a sister, a neighbour, a parent, a mother A carer, a saviour, a friend or a brother They couldn't care if you bled in the gutter You could be dead, cos to them you're a number

To them, you're just the amount of money that they can sell your home for.

Like:
"Good afternoon £800,000,
How are you, £800,000?
I hope this letter finds you well... it's worth £800,000
I'm writing about your property, I'm sorry but you've got to leave
You'll be on the street but to me, £800,000
It's the sound of progress, it's a scary process but council always knows best
Please, £800,000
Think of all the other houses we could build when yours is down
(And we could get them forking out around £800,000)

But you can come back... for £800,000
But please don't be sad if you lack £800,000
Because whenever you're feeling down and out
Or looking for money down the couch
Remember that to me, you're worth £800,000.

Yours sincerely,
Councillor Matthew Bennett."

But Matthew Bennett's a big man, plus there's big plans in the pipeline Our tube will get a nightline, the food is getting quite fine Everybody wants to live in Brixton, it's the high life! So smashing our homes to dust has come just at the right time...

Now, admittedly, I've got a biased background I've stood and seen my best friends have their houses smashed down I'm already angry, and anger clouds reality So let me detach myself and just look at the "facts" now:

Cressingham Gardens Estate. South West London Three hundred houses and the council wanna crush them Each house has around a three person count So that's 900 people who stand to lose their house

The council explain that the estate needs work And over one third of properties need a refurb (Because they left them to decline, which happens all the time You'll be quite surprised if you do some research)

Now a full refurb will cost 7 mill - it's nothing But the council have announced that they can't afford that Despite having received a hundred million pounds in funding And despite having collected rent for forty years before that

So, instead of spending 7 million on refurbishments Which they've already said they have available *now* They wanna smash the houses down, build around the same amount And that's gonna cost £110 million

But according to the council, this all makes sense Cos they intend to build 27 extra homes at council rents

Hahaha... yeah They wanna spend £110m, on 27 extra houses While there's a housing crisis and the waiting list has thousands That's not efficient or sufficient, why do we allow it When it only serves to benefit developers and councillors?

But you know what... even if residents could afford to move back What makes the council think they'd even want these new flats? Not everything that's new is necessarily improved The council just assume that they'd even wanna do that

They forget that in these homes people raised their families These walls have shared their happiness and faced their every tragedy

They forget that a home is a community, a neighbourhood And no amount of "new" could make me feel the way my neighbours could

They forget that, the difference between a home and house That a house can't be made a home fover any one amount They forget about the elderly who've spent their whole lives here They've got a right to stay here, they've got a right to die here

It's sad to be said, but it has to make you wonder Whether they "forget" or just care more about a number...

Maybe you thought you knew what 'redevelop' meant But if you believe that we develop, please develop sense You'd better fight for us, or you'll be redeveloped next And then we'll all be redeveloped til we're redeveloped dead.

We just want a place to live, that's what our estates are for It's time to fight, to try and survive. We're living in estate of War.



Potent Whisper is a rapper, spoken word artist and community organiser. The Rhyming Guide to Grenfell Britain is available on Dog Section Press.

<http://www.potentwhisper.com/>
<http://dogsection.org/press/grenfell-britain>



ARM THE HOMELESS

by Matt Broomfield

1993: media in Columbus, Ohio receive a press release from a group styling itself Arm The Homeless (ATH). They announce they'll be collecting money through a network of mall Santas, and "distributing donated firearms and ammunition to local homeless people".

Outrage flares from the local to the Associated Press, to CNN and talk-radio blowhard Rush Limbaugh's nationally-syndicated show. "What he is proposing would endanger the community," rages the head of a local homeless shelter. "I'd like to have him come down here and talk about what the homeless really need to lower their vulnerability - access to shelter, medical care, food and hygiene."

Arm The Homeless out themselves as university hoaxsters a day later.

That the hoax was perpetrated by university students is significant – there is a deep divide between the 'mainstream' revolutionary left and those who are actually most vulnerable in our society. (This chasm yawns more colossally in the slogan's most famous iteration, scrawled on the guitar of multimillionaire Rage Against The Machine singer Tom Morello.)

As the Black Panthers' 'Minister for Information', Eldridge Cleaver came closer than most to actually arming the homeless. His words offer caution against hasty demands made on behalf of those most-marginalised in our society by the rest of us: "There are those who are all too willing to do our thinking for us, even if it gets us killed."

We are not (yet) arguing for wholesale distribution of lethal firearms to street homeless individuals. Nor are we trying to do their thinking for them. What we are arguing is that any revolutionary programme must centre rough sleepers, homeless people, vagrants and bums: among those whom Marx dismissed as the lumpen-, or ragged-, proletariat.

In Marx' earlier works, 'lumpenproletariat' simply describes the irreconcilable scum of the earth – "vagabonds, discharged soldiers... pickpockets, tricksters... tinkers, beggars." Unlike the virtuous, hard-working proletarian, they can never achieve class consciousness, and their only significance is that they will likely "sell out to reactionary intrigues" and be used to beat back revolutionary movements.

We see this appropriation of the lumpenproletariat by reactionary elements occurring in a debased, post-modern sense in popular discourse today. Stripped of all agency, invariably figured as white, straight and British, often as "discharged soldiers", the homeless are used as a rhetorical tool to gainsay support for refugees – a social formation clearly figured as revolutionary by the establishment, whatever their assimilationist intent.

But in *Capital*, Marx comes to a firmer understanding of the lumpenproletariat as part of the "the reserve army of labour", the un- and under-employed masses left hunting for work or starving as capital becomes concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

This progression in Marx' thought resonates in today's distinction between rough sleepers in particular and the homeless in general.

In 2012's *the Communist Horizon*, Jodi Dean follows Etienne Balibar in leaving aside the proletariat as a static class in favour of "proletarianisation" as a dynamic, something continually being done to struggling and marginalised people by capital.

Only about 10,000 of the 300,000 homeless people in London are actually sleeping on the streets, for example – precarity is a watchword of the era, and those who've lived sofa-to-sofa or in squats or B&Bs know how close the street can seem.

Dean concludes by discussing the Occupy camps as a vanguard moment where a self-willed class she terms "we as the rest of us" broke the consensus of communicative late-capitalism. Of course, Occupy then collapsed into over-horizontality, impotency and disarray – Tom Morello's vocal support notwithstanding.

If Occupy ever did establish a break in capitalist consensus, it was literally through members of the precarious classes – students, workers, activists, in messy intersection – entering into a condition of voluntary "lumpenness", becoming ragged and unwashed, camping out on the street.

Yet I've spoken to Occupy organisers who note that the presence of increasing numbers of *actual* street-homeless people in the camps hastened their demise, bringing with them ethical responsibilities the camps could not bear, along with harsh media attention.

Here, homelessness takes on a charged potential – radical in one moment, counter-revolutionary in the next. A truly revolutionary vanguard will be strengthened, not weakened, by "lumpen" street homeless joining its ranks.

The Black Panthers actively sought to build their base from among the lumpenproletariat – "we began, as always, by checking around with the street brothers," Huey P Newton writes in his account of the Panthers' formation as an armed check on police brutality. He's not talking about the street homeless necessarily, but the unemployed, often criminalised under-society of the "Black American ghetto-dweller" is not so very far away.

Guns were the most visible way the Panthers armed the 'street brothers', a means to command attention and show the party were "more than talk". But as Bobby Seale makes clear, "Revolution is not about shootouts... revolution is about the need to re-evolve political, economic and social justice and put power back into the hands of the people."

The majority of their income always went into their "survival programmes", health clinics, educational opportunities and free-food distributions. We are talking about "arming" in a broader sense than merely dishing out guns, about direct empowerment from the street-level up. Our political movements must offer breakfast first and talk of revolution second.

An ideology of arming the homeless and precarious, of empowering them with the skills they need to enact meaningful resistance to capital, finds one endpoint in the squat. I know former street-homeless addicts who've come up through squats and ended up heading crews and cracking buildings on their own, providing shelter to rough sleepers currently in the same tough spot they were in a couple of years before.

More specifically, we can look at America's National Union of the Homeless, which used squatting and criminal direct action to win 24-hour intake in city shelters, the right to vote and public showers (by holding "bathe-ins" in public fountains). Co-ordinated squatting of federal buildings across multiple cities won housing provision for hundreds of members.

Like the Panthers, they used criminality as part of a broad social programme, deploying "lumpen" skills and activities toward a socialist end.

Rough sleepers are an embodied threat to the precarious working classes under capitalism, even as they embody capitalism's failures. Spiteful campaigns framing begging as a "criminal behaviour" seek to establish them as a class outside, not contiguous with the virtuous working poor.

It's a false narrative, taking rough sleepers as an excluded "other" even as labour casualisation and precarity are pushing every worker into contingency. As J. Moufawad-Paul writes, whether we acknowledge it or not we are all becoming part of the lumpen "reserve army of labour".

"Now the papers are going to call us thugs and hoodlums," Panther Bobby Seale said. "But the brothers on the block, who the man's calling thugs and hoodlums for 100 years, they're going to say: 'Them's some out of sight thugs and hoodlums up there! Who is these thugs and hoodlums?'"

Two decades later, the NUH's discourse deliberately targeted precarious workers with slogans like "you are only one paycheck away from homelessness".

When "we as the rest of us" next come together on the street, we must be prepared to centre and support those whose world we are encroaching on: hoodlums, "street brothers", rough sleepers. Their presence should not be a hindrance or a distraction, but serve to make our demands unavoidable.

Through deeds and not words, we must claim them as our own, providing an answer through socialist programmes – and drawing on criminalised skillsets to socialist ends.

Under the pavements, the beach: lying overlooked on their cold surface, an army capable of tearing them up.

Matt Broomfield is an award-winning poet, writer and activist. On An Execution Morning – his fictional account of a real squat eviction in London – is available on Mount Analogue Press.



BEYOND THE THIN BLUE LINE

by Alex S. Vitale

The US is experiencing a crisis of policing, though it is a crisis of legitimacy more than one of budgets. A parade of damning videos of police violence has undermined support for the police in many areas, especially poor communities of colour. In response, police supporters have mobilised in support: displaying “thin blue line” flags, yard signs, and bumper stickers. As in the UK, the image itself emerged within police ranks as a symbol of internal solidarity and focused on fundraising efforts to support the families of officers killed in the line of duty.

This symbolism, however, has morphed into an ideology that places policing in direct opposition to its critics. It has become a defensive bulwark against claims the American policing has become increasingly invasive, aggressive, and biased. In response, thin blue line supporters routinely claim that it is the police above all who make places safe. They have used this symbolism to call for a raft of new laws designed to further shield police from accountability on the theory that only unfettered police power is capable of producing public safety.

This is a dangerous perspective because it posits that the only mechanism capable of reducing crime is the use of the state’s most coercive institution: The police. Embedded in this is the idea that the poor and disaffected will only respond to punitive state action in the form of arrests and the use of force. This is a deeply conservative idea that views large swaths of the public as inherently dangerous and incapable of managing their own affairs without the constant threat of police action.

This same logic has led to a huge expansion of police power in the US as police have been given dominion over more and more aspects of daily life. As we experience cut backs in social services, housing supports, health care, and education funding, we have expanded policing to manage the consequences. Police are now a huge presence in American schools, are a major conduit for the provision of mental health and substance abuse treatment services to the poor, and increasingly manage those that sleep rough and have addiction problems.

It has been exactly this expansion, in the form of simultaneous wars on drugs, gangs, crime, immigrants, and disorder that have badly damaged the relationship between many communities and the police and given rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. Eric Garner was killed in New York for selling loose cigarettes, Walter Scott was killed in South Carolina after a traffic violation, Alton Sterling was killed in Louisiana while selling CDs. All were poor men of colour struggling on the margins of the economy.

There is a real risk that the UK may be moving in the same direction. Reductions in public services are placing similar pressures for police here to fill the gap. As mental health services become less available, local police end up having to be more involved, often in violation of laws that require people to be taken to a “place of safety” when instead they end up in a police lock-up. The number of people sleeping rough has increased every year for the past 7 years.

The recent increase in knife crimes raises similar issues. A police centred strategy to dealing with knife crimes is unlikely to be effective. It fails to take into account the real motivations for this kind of violence and the fact that the mostly young people involved are largely imperious to the implications of potential long-term penalties. In addition, these communities are almost totally lacking in services to help young people deal with the trauma of violence and abuse that many have suffered – a clear precursor to future violence.

Ironically, much of the violence is tied to the fact that despite extensive police efforts, many young people do not feel safe and carry weapons as a form of protection, leading to even more violence. Intensive police harassment of these young people is more likely to breed resentment, in communities where mistrust of the police is already rampant, rather than cultivate a sense of safety.

Even if such police suppression efforts were to be successful, they come with significant negative collateral consequences. Young people caught up in the courts and jails face very poor prospects. They are more likely to be further removed from education and work and have much higher rates of future offending.

Here in the US, many communities are turning away from a police-led strategy and are embracing public health and community-based initiatives that work with young people from a space of mutual respect and care rather than harassment and criminalisation. A recent study in New York City showed that neighbourhoods with well-funded community anti-violence efforts had dramatically greater reductions in gun violence than similar neighborhoods without such services. These so called “cure violence” programs work directly with young people at risk of carrying, using, or being shot by guns. Outreach workers come from the community and are known to these young people and thus act as “credible messengers” for their calls to end the violence. Young people are also offered trauma counseling and employment schemes.

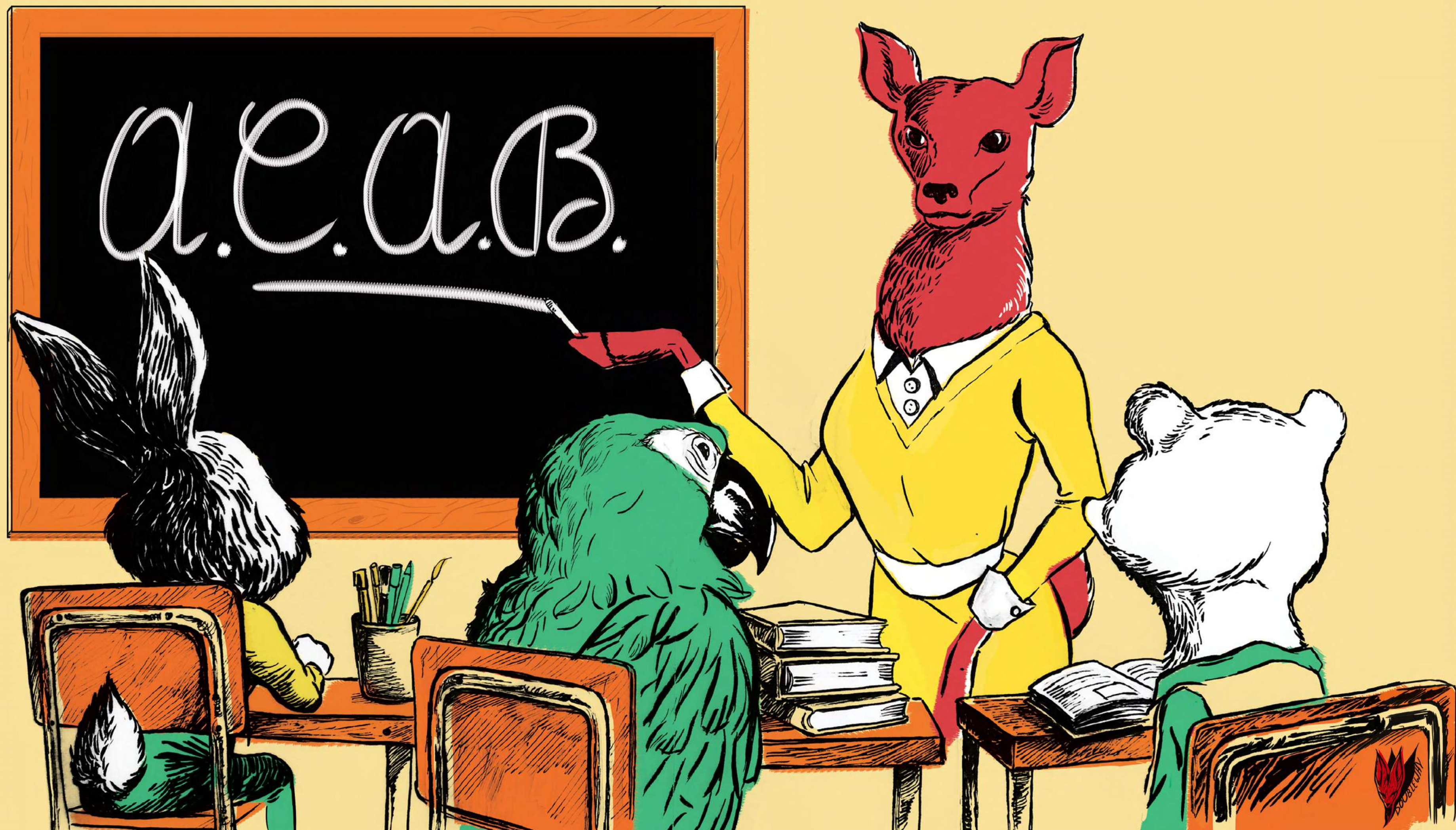
The UK has similar initiatives. The 4Front Project in London works with young people in distressed communities, where knife crimes occur, to break the cycle of trauma and violence and give kids a hand up rather than criminalise them.

These kinds of programs are not a cure all. Ultimately, we need to address the structural forces that produce entrenched racialised poverty, insecurity, and hopelessness that drive street violence. One thing we know, however, is that turning the problem over to the “thin blue line” is not the solution. Bringing back “stop and search,” utilising high tech “predictive policing” systems, and creating aggressive knife crime units continues the logic that the solution to community problems is coercive and punitive state power.

There are alternatives.



Alex S. Vitale is Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College in New York City. He is also the author of *The End of Policing* (Verso).



Overthrowing Vendidos, Authority and the State

by The Ovas

Overthrowing Vendidos, Authority and the State (The Ovas - formerly known as the Ovarian Psycos) focus our work on mobilising the community to address pertinent issues through the use of bicycles. The popularity of the bicycle allowed us to engage with women that were looking to change the status quo and remove the stigma of women riding bikes.

We collaborated with several women of colour groups to host bike rides to “heal ourselves and the community physically, emotionally and spiritually.” We also held vigils and workshops, presented at schools, community centres/gardens, and public spaces in an effort to uphold our mission and vision. Our largest annual project, Clitoral Mass LA, had the participation of 300+ women identified bike riders. Lastly, through our most important project, La Conxa, a community space in the neighbourhood of Boyle Heights, we worked with and hosted a variety of events by and for the community. The many topics covered included: domestic violence, homeless youth, police brutality, workers rights and more.

Within the 8 years of organising in Boyle Heights, OVAS have picked up many skills, experiences and hood-education that will only help us to continue to develop politically and make sure we are always passing down the knowledge to our elders and youth. We see the importance of staying principled and militant and cutting out all the whack shit.

We see anything that comes from academia as a misrepresentation of our struggles, as working class people of colour. In our communities the role of academia usually plays out through the work of non-profits. Non-profits have a variety of contradictions within the community that they work in. One of the contradictions comes from them engaging in charitable work that by default is very top-down. People with degrees are seen as the people with the answers to the problems in the community.

The decisions as to where money goes and what projects get worked on get made from the higher-ups who are disconnected from working class families. Even when they come from the same communities, they do not actually give a fuckin’ shit about addressing the roots of the problem.

We know from organising in the community that these issues are generally seen in left spaces too. These same folks will also argue that one can lead a revolutionary lifestyle as the answer to injustice.



If only we could read enough books, go to enough workshops, and decolonise our minds, then all our problems would be solved.

Ultimately, we find no unity with these organizations or individuals because, even though we agree on the toxicity of the current system and state, our aim is not to reform the country through wishful thinking and/or ignore it and think it will disappear on its own. The only solution we see in ending all forms of injustice is by working alongside our communities and organising to *literally* overthrow vendidos and the state.

Right now we are meeting our community where it’s at. We uphold autonomy and continue to use our skills to offer programming out of our community autonomous space. We feel our community has the capacity to build outside of state funding and fight towards liberation. We use forms of popular education programming to continue to offer a political analysis to the masses. We want to empower ourselves and our community to find answers outside of institutions and the state. This is what we The Ovas can offer as of now in this current time of class warfare.

We continue to operate out of La Conxa and we engage the community through our current projects: (1) Letters to Our Homies (2) Clinica Popular (3) For the People Propaganda (4) Guerrilla Theatre (5) Hood Rantz: Open Mic (6) Self Help Raps for Kids (7) Arming Ourselves Against Patriarchy: Creating The Women’s Defense Unit (8) Political Prisoner Letter Writing, (9) Mas Puta (Propaganda Utilizada Tacticas Anarquista), (10) Platos, Platicas y Politicas, (11) Tapp—Tactical and Physical Preparedness, and (12) Radio La Conxa.

We still host monthly Luna Rides through our newly formed Psycho Brigade and continue to work with a variety of organisations throughout Los Angeles. Most importantly, through our rooted, anti-displacement work here in our community of Boyle Heights we continue building solidarity with various collectives under the coalition work of Defend Boyle Heights.

In the current context of Boyle Heights, we see gentrification and the displacement of our communities as a primary site of struggle. The community worries about rent increases, evictions, and having no time with the family because they are forced to overwork themselves to meet their basic needs. We should not live under these conditions, but we do because in this society everything, including our homes, is a commodity. In this site of struggle we work in solidarity with our community to make sure that they are not displaced by greedy slumlords and capitalists. We are wholeheartedly against charity as a tactic or a solution. No one is coming to save us, we will fight ourselves through solidarity and action.

We have to put the power back in the hands of the community and away from do-nothing post-modernists. We can only do this by working with the community primarily and building up their leadership. Our tactic is to meet the masses where they are at, so that they guide us in our actions. They will be our leaders and we will be their people’s army. To us, self-care is being dedicated and disciplined comrades fighting towards the liberation of working class people of colour by any means. When we say fuck postmodernism we are essentially saying fuck some dead-end solutions.



This work will never be about us as individuals and will always be about the people and our liberation. Our politics will stay in command and continue to be disciplined as we work towards building up the people’s army. Fuck postmodernism. Fuck vendidos. Fuck identity politics. We encourage everyone to put down the dead-end solutions and start building with the immediate community. We must start to build up our power as a mass. We may not even see the results of that work in our lifetimes, but we gonna die psycho, principled and dedicated.

13 Principles of Struggle

As an Ovarian Psycho, I give my word/palabra to live my life with my feet firmly planted on my pedals, with mad heart for my sisters, my hood and my people and with my spirit always rebellious. As part of the Ovarian-Cycle Brigade I am dedicated to making appropriate moves in an effort to:

1. Maintain a brave space by and for marginalized womxn of colour,
2. Encourage autonomous, models of community organizing and actions to address oppressive power structures.
3. Centre our political analysis and community action to align with current struggles towards liberation.
4. Define our own course of development so that we are always serving the people first; not for social/capital gain.
5. White supremacist power structures are central organizers of violence oppressing womxn of colour and our communities of colour, while also recognizing that brown people are vendidos too.
6. Support coalition building between other anti-capitalist collectives/circles/individuals specifically when politically aligned.
7. Understanding that criticism and self criticism is essential to better serve the people. (kill your ego)
8. Shared leadership development and decision making is rooted in the rotation of roles and shared labor is mandatory.
9. Recognize, resist and dismantle the power of co-optation within our movements. FUK APOLOGIZERS & Fence straddlers
10. These principles must be upheld not only in our action but in the practices within our own working circles and beyond core membership.
11. Intergenerational organizing is a fundamental guiding practice. Always recognize the needs from the elders to the seeds. The doñas and the babies, from the cradle to the grave!
12. Recognize that any and all federal or state funding come with puppet strings very difficult to detach and almost that much more impossible to manoeuvre with. We firmly believe in our communities capacity to build without the aid of the state, for the purpose of building outside the state.
13. All of us or none.

Para todxs todo o nada para nadie

Vendidos def: All Americans of Mexican descent (Chicanos) who have sold out their culture in favour of Anglo American culture; the Mexican equivalent of an Uncle Tom.

The Ovas are a womxn of colour bicycle brigade based in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. <https://ovarianpsycos.com/>

ON SOLDIERING

by Joe Glenton



I served in the British Army from 2004 to 2010. My career was, as one fellow veteran pointed out, short, shite and treasonous. My soldierly endeavours, another suggested, make me “the nation’s favourite disgrace to Queen and Country.”

While both of these observations are undoubtedly true, it is also right to say that before I became a barrack room lawyer, I was both a keen soldier and a keen observer of soldiers. The war changed all that.

The facts of that change are recorded elsewhere; what I can offer here are some of the facts of living life as a military worker during that period. I have not set out to moralise about the innate (some would argue necessary) thuggishness of military life, just to explain what happens.

It should be noted that a military career is made up of distinct phases, including recruitment, military training, deployment, and so on. I have touched on these but chosen to focus on the lived experience of being a soldier in the British Army in barracks.

Recruitment

There is a scale upon which all recruits to the modern professional armed forces sit in terms of their motivation for signing up. One end is ideological, the other economic. A few people join primarily because they believe that the British military goes about the world righting wrongs, or is centrally concerned with protecting the British way of life. The rest of us join for the money.

In the recruiting office various carrots are dangled by the dusty seargants – pay, advancement, travel, education, driving licences, chicks-will-dig-you – as you make your way through interviews and tests. When these are done you go to an army camp for ‘selection’ - two days where you undergo physical tests and a medical.

If you pass selection you are given a start date for basic training. Before this date you are formally enlisted. Myself and three navy recruits were brought before a burly marine to take our oaths to the Queen. On a table before us was an enormous leather book, which he said was the contract. He asked us if we wanted to read it; we said no, stuttered our promises, and were from that point effectively the property of Her Majesty.

Training

Known in the UK as Phase 1, the military frames the 12-15 week process as being about military education and instilling the values to make civilians into soldiers.

Years on I can recognise that it is about reprogramming a person through threats of violent discipline to a, instil loyalty to the military gang, b, remove the barrier to killing, and c, ensure obedience to orders without question. These aims are not in every case fully-achieved but the process normally gets a recruit most of the way there, and has lasting impacts. It has been said that most of the psychological, moral and spiritual damage done to military personnel, or at least a key part of it, is done not in warfighting but in training.

As one former soldier turned social worker pointed out to me, much of what takes place in training and in the field army, would be considered domestic abuse in any other setting.

Immediately after basic training recruits undergo Phase 2 training to learn their trade. Infantrymen spend more time being cold and hungry; technical trades like aircraft technicians and the like start their sometimes years-long courses; chefs cook; mechanics learn to fit things onto vehicles; and so on.

My Phase 2 was unremarkable except that it was at Deepcut, a bleak Surrey army camp famous for recruit deaths. Within six months I was posted to my first unit: 13 Air Assault Support Regiment based in Colchester.

Here the differences between training and the field army became clear and the actual rhythms of a military worker’s life become more obvious.

Field Army

There are a minority of soldiers of all ranks who have fully internalised the lessons of training. An opposing minority don’t really care. The rest treat the army as a job, and in many ways, despite all the camouflage and saluting and the fact that not eating breakfast is a crime under military law, it resembles simply that.

Outside of operational deployment and guard duties the army worked an 8am til 5pm day – before retiring to married quarters for those with spouses or, as in my case, battered old accomodation blocks with four- or five-man rooms.

While outwardly the military likes to suggest that it is busy and action-packed the truth is that, for most trades within the army, often very little is going on. This is partly because many military jobs, not surprisingly, are active only in wartime. The rest of the time is spent in various forms of training, skiving in the block, generally being bored and doing menial jobs like weapon cleaning, checking vehicles, stock-takes and so on. In most units in my brigade there would be an early finish on Fridays when the regiment was at home.

In my unit there were two Squadron (think of squadrons as departments) physical training (PT) sessions a week, one Regimental PT session and Wednesday was sports afternoon. Dress was generally full uniform but with army issue trainers instead of boots. Particular units dedicate time to particular sports – I spent two whole months exclusively on boxing training because my regiment had a reputation for winning tournaments.

Being ‘on the biff’ is common for those who are either genuinely injured or are sick of doing PT. Up to a quarter of my first regiment would regularly parade seperately with their sick notes (biff chits), as the rest of the unit gathered for a run or speed march.

Monday morning’s was a Sergeant Major’s parade and inspection and, I soon learned, the only day you had to have well-ironed kit and reasonably polished boots. One day a week and before major leave periods there would be mass cleaning of the accomodation or ‘block jobs.’

Bullying and intimidation remain common currency but these could be avoided by not being a ‘mong’, by being ‘switched on’, ‘playing the game’, and being a ‘good lad.’ If you salute the right people, do what you are told and engage in some degree of banter and drinking then you will be left alone, at least in your own sub-unit.

Minor breaches of discipline, which happened all the time, drew a range of punishments. ‘Extras’ or extra guard duties were common. Show parades, wherein an offender had to appear in very smart uniform at awkward times of the day, were also often used.

It was still the case during my time that offenders would be offered a choice between an official punishment, which would go on your report, and physical punishments like a quiet punch in the head.

None of this is to say the army was without joy. You quickly develop a black sense of humour and the ability to find fun in anything to a degree that can be suppressed upon your return to society but never removed. There is ample opportunity, even encouragement, to drink to excess, pursue women, get into fights with rival units, and other tomfoolery.

The military, and military training, is a unique space in society where threats of violence, actual violence, the constant use of shock and fear – through shouting, posturing, physical punishments and lack of sleep - to ensure obedience, are not just tolerated but seen as essential to the functioning of the military.



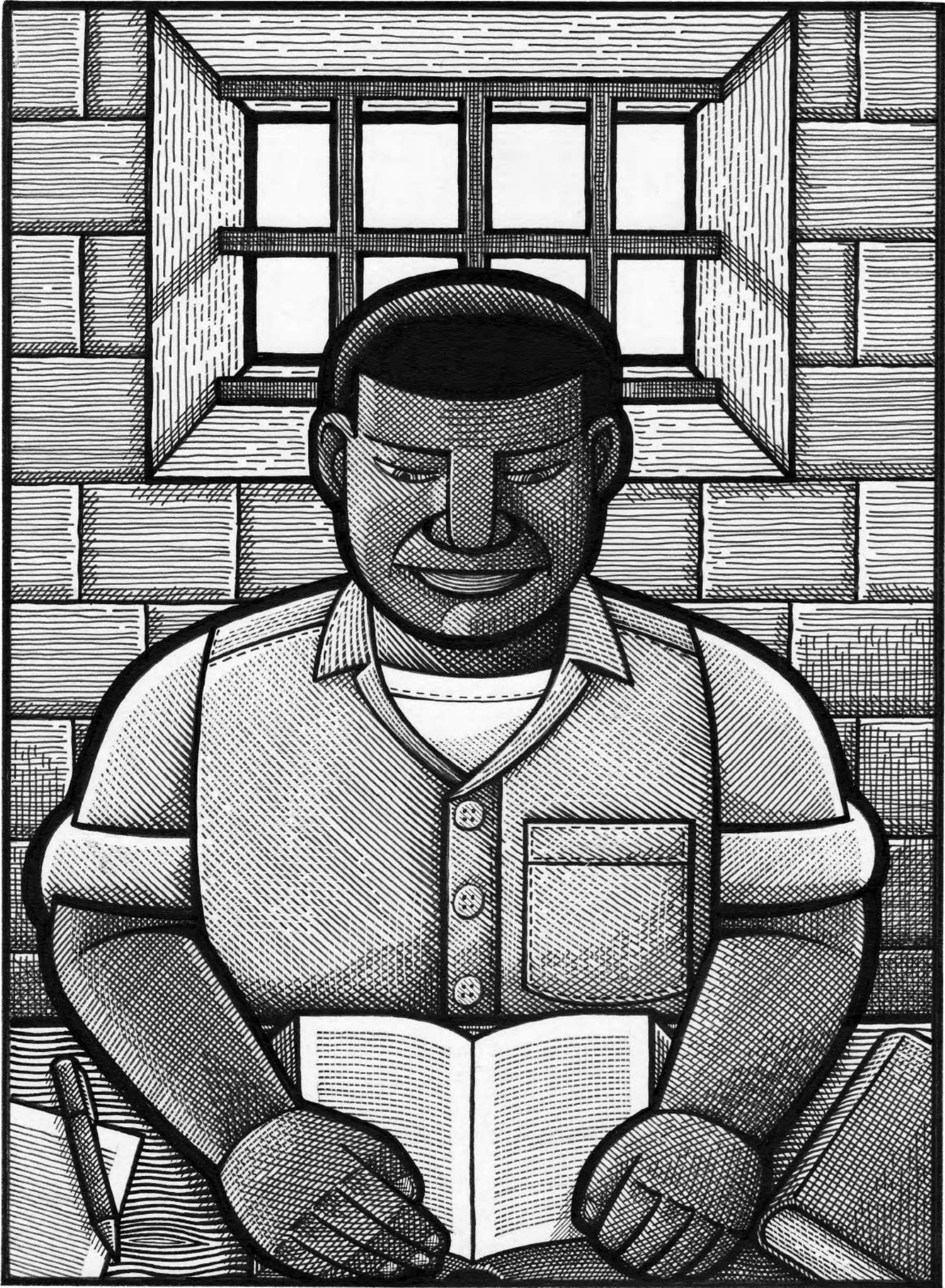
forming the end product: a soldier. The military use none of these terms and publicly accept nothing of this reality, routinely describing the process as merely ‘robust’.

Combining that enviroment with a complete lack of unions, economic democracy or class representation and Britain’s professional military is the Tory dream of labour: a cowed workforce that can be subject to more of less arbitrary punishments, with little oversight or opportunity for appeal, as and when it suits the master.



Joe Glenton is the nation’s favourite disgrace to Queen and country, a member of Veterans for Peace, and the author of Soldier Box (Verso).

<http://vfpuk.org/>



BOOKS BEHIND BARS

By Luke Billingham

Haven Distribution has been sending books to prisoners since 1996. Our founder and Chair, Lee, started our work by packing and sending out books from his North London flat. Now, 22 years later, a few things have changed: we're based in the East of London not in the North, we've got a small ramshackle office, and we're run by a handful of volunteers, rather than just the one. Other than that, though, much has stayed the same: we're still guided by the simple purpose of sending books to as many prisoners as we can.

We now send around 2000 books a year, and we've sent at least one or two books into every adult prison in the UK. We get books into prisons in two ways: we purchase and send in educational books for prisoners who are studying courses, and we have catalogues of free books (donated to us by publishers) from which any prisoner can request books. Over the course of our history we've sent tens of thousands of books into prisons, and have supported hundreds of different courses, ranging from carpentry to criminology, from mathematics to motor mechanics.

The “book ban” and access to books in prison

In 2014, then Justice Minister Chris Grayling infamously instituted what became known as the “book ban” – restricting what could be sent into prisons in this country, including books. It attracted enormous criticism, and did not last long. It's now been a few years since the ban was lifted, and there's far less conversation about books in prison. There's a danger that some may assume all prisoners can now get hold of whatever books they want, which is far from the case. Firstly, not all prisoners have family or friends who are able and willing to send books in for them. For instance, a prisoner at Wandsworth recently wrote to us after receiving some books, saying: “I cannot tell you how much it means to be able to receive the books. I have no family in the UK so your books mean so much to me.”

Secondly, prison libraries – the main source of books for the vast majority – vary greatly, and they do not always have a good range of books, especially educational books. One inmate said to us recently in a letter: “The library provides books but usually they are damaged or just pulp fiction that is of little educational value”. On top of this, more expensive non-fiction books are usually reference-only, meaning they can only be accessed during inmates' very limited time in the library.

The prison rules state that inmates should have a minimum of half an hour's access to the library every two weeks, but in many cases they get even less than that, particularly when there aren't enough officers to accompany them.

“Library access is very erratic and prisoners who work hardly ever get to visit the library” – another recent letter. Particularly if you're studying a course, limited access to the library and the lack of course books can cause huge difficulties. In this context, receiving books from us can have a significant impact on prisoners' time inside.

Three ways books can make a difference in prisons

1. Aiding (self-)education

Most books we send in are educational books, in response to specific requests from individual prisoners. With prison education budgets tight, we provide a vital resource for prisoners' study, particularly given the limitations of libraries. We have good relationships with prison tutors across the country, who often arrange the applications for their students so that they can receive course books they'd otherwise have no access to.

Courses in our prisons are being affected by officer shortages: a prison tutor recently told me that around 40% of their classes were being cancelled due to a lack of officers to accompany prisoners to education. If prisoners have books from us, which they own and can have with them in their cells, they can continue their studies whatever the state of the library, and however much they are kept from attending classes. They can pursue self-motivated, self-education, often the most transformative form of education there is.

Prisons are diverse places, in many ways, and books are one of the few things that can almost match the diversity of people. Literacy levels in our prisons are, on average, very low. Reflecting this, our most popular books are dictionaries, and we frequently receive letters highlighting the role our dictionaries have played in helping prisoners learn to read and write. There is also a significant population in our prisons who do not have English as their first language. We send in lots of bilingual dictionaries, helping prisoners to both progress in English courses and communicate on the wings. One letter from the Isle of Wight recently said: “Thank you so much for getting my dictionary for me. It is my pleasure because I need it always so I am feeling confidence with the dictionary. As you know English is my second language. I am very happy. Thanks.” Perhaps less well-known is the fact that there are also plenty of prisoners studying undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. There is great intellectual and academic potential in prisons, and books are a crucial tool for helping this potential to be realised.

A man in Full Sutton wrote to us last year: “I have recently commenced my penultimate study module towards my BSc (Hons) Criminology & Psychology with the Open University. You have previously provided me with numerous books that have assisted me with my study... These have both been invaluable and helped me greatly.”

2. Supporting personal progress

Our Radio 4 appeal tells the story of Peter. He had been a serial re-offender, caught in the cycle of crime and imprisonment. Eventually, through a prison education department, he began voluntary work giving housing advice to other prisoners. He found out about Haven, and ordered books to help him in his work, and to assist him acquiring the relevant qualifications. The dictionary and Citizen's Advice Guide that we sent him were the first books he'd ever owned. They helped him to get an NVQ Level 3 in Advice & Guidance, and on release he got a volunteering placement with St Giles Trust, and pursued a law course to specialise in housing.

Prisoners are often facing the most difficult time of their lives, and books can be an important source of strength for some. We received a letter from HMP Elmsley last month, saying: “If ‘knowledge is power’ then you have surely empowered me, at a time in my life when I have never felt more helpless.”

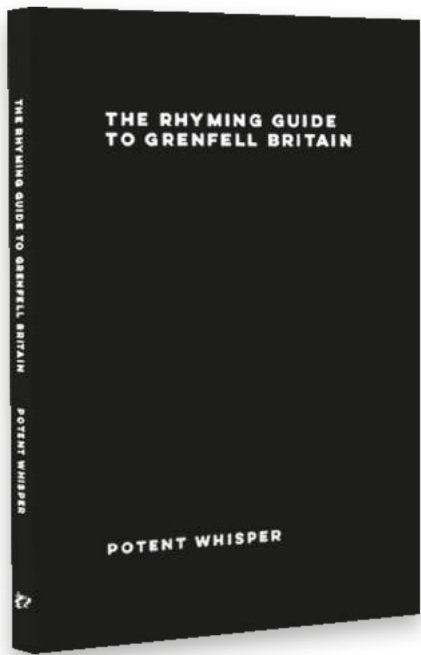
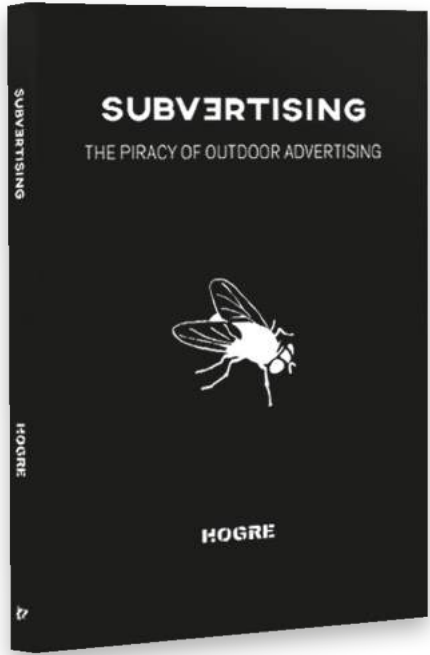
3. Prisons in crisis and bang-up

The disgraceful state of many of our prisons has attracted media attention over the past few years – overcrowding, riots, drugs, suicides, violence, escapes. There were more suicides and deaths in custody during 2016 than in any previous year on record. There was an average of nearly 70 assaults in English and Welsh prisons each day that year. In light of this, books can seem trivial. In many ways, these problems are of course more consequential and more urgent than books. But it's important to remember the overall effect of these issues: they make it harder and harder for prisoners to have a safe and productive time in prison. In a more practical and concrete way, they also mean more and more prisoners are spending longer and longer banged up in their cells. This makes it vital for prisoners to have something meaningful and beneficial to do during their time locked up. Few things can be more meaningful or beneficial than self-education, and there's no tool more effective for that – at least within a prison cell – than books.

Luke Billingham is a trustee and volunteer with Haven Distribution <http://www.havendistribution.org.uk/>



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Liverpool Anarchist Bookfair
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Manchester Anarchist Bookfair
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Nottingham Radical Bookfair
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INTERNATIONAL BOOKFAIRS

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New York Anarchist Bookfair.
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Montreal Anarchist Bookfair.
<http://www.anarchistbookfair.ca>

BOOKSHOPS

Five Leaves Bookshop, London, NG1 2DH, England. <http://fiveleavesbookshop.co.uk>

Freedom, London, E17ZX, England. www.freedompress.org.uk

Housmans Bookshop, London, N1 9DX, England. <http://www.housmans.com>

Hydra Books, Bristol, BS2 0EZ. www.hydrabooks.org

Just Books, Belfast, BT1 1FJ. <http://belfastsolidarity.org>

News From Nowhere, Liverpool, L1 4HY, England. www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk

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Ernst Kirchweger Haus, Wielandgasse 2-4, A-1100 Wien/Vienna, ekhaus@med-user.net

Hausmania, Hausmann BA, Hausmannsgt. 34, 0182 Oslo, www.hausmania.org

Het Fort van Sjakoo Bookstore, Jodenbreestraat 24 1011 NK, Amsterdam, www.sjakoo.nl

Kafé 44, Tjarhovsgatan 46, Stockholm 11628, <http://kafe44.org>

Klinika Squat Centre, Prague, <http://451.cz/klinika/english>

Leoncavallo, Via Watteau 7, 20125, Milano, www.leoncavallo.org

Majkällaren, Spånehusvägen 62A, Malmö, Sweden.

Red Emma's, 800 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21202 www.redemmas.org/

La Rosa De Foc, Calle de Joaquín Costa, 34, 08001 Barcelona, Cataluña 08001. www.facebook.com/libreriarosadefoc

Sale Infoshop, Orebitská 14, Prague 3 – Žižkov, 13000 <http://sale.451.cz>

Schwarze Risse in Kreuzberg Gneisenastr, 2a 10961 Berlin, <http://schwarzerisse.de>

Sto Citas, Radical Bookshop, Gundulićeva 11, Zagreb, Croatia. www.stocitas.org

PUBLISHERS/DISTROS

AK Press USA & UK
akpress.org / akuk.com

Dog Section Press
dogsection.org

Stinney Distro
stinneydistro.wordpress.com

Active Distro
activedistribution.org

PM Press
pmpress.org

Crimethinc
crimethinc.com

Hostis
<http://incivility.org/>

SOCIAL CENTRES/RESOURCES

1 in 12 Club, BD1 2LY, UK. www.1in12.com

56A Infoshop, SE17 3AE, London, UK. www.56a.org.uk

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, EH7 5HA, Scotland. www.autonomous.org.uk

Black Cat Cafe, Hackney, London, E5 8HB, UK. www.blackcatcafe.co.uk

Blackcurrent Centre, London, NN1 4JQ, UK. www.blackcurrentcentre.org.uk/

Cowley Club, Brighton, London, BN1 4JA, UK. www.cowleyclub.org.uk/

Glasgow Autonomous Space, <http://glasgowautonomous.weebly.com>

Kebele Social Centre, Easton, Bristol, B55 6JY, UK. www.kebelecoop.org/

London Action Resource Centre, London, E11ES, UK. www.londonarc.org

SUMAC Centre, Nottingham, London, NG76HX, UK. www.veggies.org.uk/sumac/index.php

Warzone, County Antrim, BT2 7JHN, Ireland. www.warzonecollective.com/

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ISSN 0251-5903

