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*Various Authors*

# Willful Disobedience Volume 2, number 8

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## Helping out WD

I presently send out substantially more copies of Willful Disobedience out to friends and reviewers for free than to paid subscribers. This is all paid for out of my pockets. So I can always use donations of cash and stamps for the project — particularly stamps. I would also appreciate it if interested folk would keep an eye out in their local papers for stories about particularly creative acts of revolt, vandalism, sabotage, bank robberies and so on. These need not be consciously political acts as long as they show some imagination, some creativity. At present, the information I get about acts of revolt all involves politically conscious activity, but much more significant from a revolutionary perspective are the daily acts of revolt carried out by individuals in response to the misery of their daily lives, so any stories of this sort would be highly appreciated. Mail or e-mail them to the addresses on the back cover.

# Contents

A Few Words .....	5
The Responsibility for Repression .....	7
And After Quebec? .....	9
A Question of Privilege .....	11
The Merchants of Life <i>by Val Basilio</i> .....	15
The Walls of the City <i>by C. G.</i> .....	21
Against the Logic of Submission: Beyond Feminism, Beyond Gender .....	25
Criminal Passion .....	29
And When Cops Kill .....	31
Ya Basta(rds)! .....	33
A Bridge Too Far .....	33
News .....	35
Against the Man Project .....	37
Helping out WD .....	39

## Against the Man Project

On March 21, about a thousand villagers stormed and occupied the site of a huge dam being constructed under the name of the Man Project in the Dhar district in India. This project has already disrupted their village life, and they are being forced to move. Though the government promised to provide the villagers with a new place to continue their existence, it has done nothing to carry out this promise. Nonetheless, it has proceeded with the building of the dam. The occupation was intended to shut down construction until real compensation is received. But capital cannot tolerate the closing down of its projects by those it exploits, so it was no surprise to learn that police arrived quickly and forcibly arrested a large number of the occupiers, manhandling those who were most outspoken.

Of course, the idea that the government could recompense these villagers, simply finding them a new place to carry on their lives is a pipe dream. The Man Project is only one of thirty large dams being planned by the Narmada Valley Development Project. If this one alone is displacing 17 villages, consider how many villages will be displaced by the other 29 projected dams. Capital must expand in order to survive, transforming everything on the earth into tools for its projects and destroying that which it cannot transform. So there really is no place for these villagers in the plans of capitalism. At best, demands made to the state will put off the inevitable. The struggle against the dam and against displacement needs to evolve into a struggle against the present social order. The occupation, as direct action, indicates the possibility for this struggle to move beyond demands to attack against this order. And our acts of solidarity can reflect the totality of our own struggle against the present existence.

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (April 4, 2001) — About 200 undocumented immigrants rioted at a remote Australian detention center. They pulled down internal fences, cut holes in other fences and burned two buildings down. This happened about a week after 40 detainees turned makeshift weapons against staff in protest against the return of three detainees to the Middle East.

ANKARA, TURKEY (April 11, 2001) — Protesters attacked cops with stones in the capital as more than 130,000 people in several cities rallied against the government amid a financial crisis that is causing further immiseration for the exploited.

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA (April 6, 2001) — During a protest against a Business Forum preparing presentations for the FTAA meeting, bank windows were broken and McDonald's and other multinationals had messages left on them. At the Sheraton Hotel where the Forum was taking place, protesters attacked the cops and the barricades with rocks and Molotov cocktails and lit firecrackers.

EUGENE, OR (March 30, 2001) — Unknown individuals set fire to over 30 SUVs at the Romania truck lot at about 3am. Damage is estimated at between \$700,000 and \$1,000,000. An anonymous communiqué was issued a few days later claiming the action as an attack against these environmentally destructive vehicles.

VIRGINIA (Late March, 2001) — Individuals using the name Earth Liberation Front (ELF) drove steel spikes into trees in the Northern Neck timber tract. They left signs throughout the 300-acre tract warning loggers of the spikes. The action was taken in the hope of stopping the logging in this area.

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK (April 24, 2001) — Unknown persons attacked the Swedish embassy with stones, bottles and paint bombs just three days after cops in Sweden viciously attacked an anti-EU demonstration with dogs clubs and other "anti-crowd" weapons.

## A Few Words

The reasons for eradicating every form of rule can be enumerated repeatedly to infinity without inspiring a single act of revolt. The fact that this civilization, built on domination and exploitation, is really just a clock-work march toward death could just easily move one to give up or fall into the logic of emergency that so easily leads to the acceptance of band-aid measures and dependence on the experts of the ruling order. All the lists of the excesses of exploitation, of environmental destruction, of specific acts of repression and so on remain in the realm of the quantitative, and thus continue to be based in the methodology and mentality of the economy and the state. Therefore, they provide a fine basis for the specializations of the various leftist movements seeking a more just economy, a more democratic political order, a mere change in institutional structures, but the anarchist impulse, the hatred of every of every form of rule, the urge to destroy the totality of a civilization based on exploitation and domination clearly has its origin elsewhere.

In the heart of a riot one can catch a glimpse of the spirit of revolt without a price. It is there in the glee of the looter who, when asked how she felt about stealing, replied, "Nobody's stealing. It's all free today." It is there in the festive atmosphere in the midst of battle with the forces of order. Here the economy has been eclipsed. The self-sacrifice and veneration of survival that define the leftist schemes of participatory democracy and counter-institutions to guarantee that the revolution happens with as little upheaval of people's daily lives as possible are nowhere to be seen. Life has broken out in its fullness for a moment, provoked most often by shared rage, and the rioters are willing to risk their all at that moment, not out of a sense of sacrifice to any cause, but in order to embrace the quality of a moment of real life. However, in the moment of the riot this is not a conscious and willful decision, but a spontaneous irruption that will burn itself out if it doesn't become more focused and conscious, if it doesn't begin to transform itself into an insurrection against the present existence.

What happens in a riot that creates the festive atmosphere is the temporary opening of possibilities that do not normally exist within the present social reality. That reality has momentarily broken down and the love of life, the desire for intense and passionate existence, has rushed in. It is a realm of dream in which everything seems possible, in which rage has mixed with joy, in which the desire for revenge has blended with the desire for a completely different way of life. And such dreams can only exist in revolt against the ruled and quantified survival imposed by the social order.

The anarchist (and here I do not mean that brand of leftist whose careful calculations have led them to the ideological stance against authoritarianism and statism along with all the “isms” on their revolutionary balance sheets) makes a conscious decision to embrace this fullness of life against all odds, to refuse to count the cost, choosing rather to rise up against economy in all its forms. She will not sacrifice his life – not even for the grandest cause – but will rather gamble it joyfully on the chance that all of life might be transformed in accordance with her dreams.

If not based on such a decision, anarchism is merely another political ideology. But starting from this choice to grasp life in all its fullness, our projects of revolt can be carried out with a passionate intelligence capable of analyzing the world and our activity in it on the basis of our desire to be the creators of our own existence. This passionate intelligence appears in riots, but it only develops as a tool for revolution when coupled to a projectual will. From this willful joy in life, this willingness to bet one’s life against all odds in hope of total freedom, the hatred of all rule is born, and with it the project of destroying this horrific civilization.

## News

ROME, ITALY (April 10, 2001) — At 4 am, a bomb blast damaged the fourth floor office of the Institute for International Affairs, a think tank and institute promoting Italian-American relations. No one was hurt. I have no information about who carried out the attack.

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK (April 3, 2001) — Angry protesters attacked the German embassy at 1:30 am to express solidarity with those who tried to stop the Castor transport of nuclear materials in Germany. They spray painted slogans on the building and hurled red and green paint bombs at the front.

BERLIN, GERMANY (March 21, 2001) — Unknown people smashed dozens of windows at a railway building in the early morning in protest against the resumption of nuclear waste transports through Germany. Eighty windows were broken and messages painted criticizing the transports. Not surprisingly, the Greens condemned the action. After all, they now share power.

CORVALLIS, OR (mid-March, 2001) — Students and alumni of Oregon State University targeted three test sites where genetically engineered poplar and cottonwood trees. They ring-barked or cut down 90% of the trees at OSU’s site at the Peavey Arboretum. They eliminated 60% of the trees at OSU’s tract near the Half Moon Bend of the Willamette River. They cut down every tree in a test plot at OSU’s Agricultural Experiment Station in Klamath Falls, Oregon. A total of over 1200 genetically engineered research trees were destroyed in these actions.

MILAN, ITALY (April 3, 2001) — Arsonists attacked a grain storage warehouse in Lodi belonging to Monsanto. They set fire to soybean and maize seeds. Seed bags were open and other acts of sabotage were carried out. Monsanto is well known for its involvement in the production of genetically engineered seeds.

on the bridge. Frustration was creeping into the activists who were prevented from getting to the front by 'Ya Basta(rds)!' crowd control. You could hear the police ordering the crowd to disperse, smell the tear gas, see the smoke and even feel the droplets from the water cannon without being able to confront the police and bring about a meaningful outcome to a mass gathering of people who had traveled here to shut down the IMF. And all because some people had decided for you that this was to be a non-violent protest.

Eventually when I got to the block of Ya Basta! activists they were spectacularly dressed in gas masks, helmets and white water proof macs stuffed with bedding to provide padding. The action at this stage waxed and waned with scuffles breaking out between single activists and police. Brief charges at the police with their own barriers were the most effective tactic 'allowed' but it was never going to move the police tanks. During the actual confrontations with the police, non-Ya Basta! people were not allowed to come back. The police finally did retreat all of five meters but did not seem particularly interested in arresting anyone. For more than two hours the 'White Overalls' were pushing up against police lines, but the bridge was thoroughly blocked by the armored police vehicles and it proved to be too difficult to break through to the Conference Center. They eventually left the bridge and joined up with the other marches on the way to the Opera House.

So it really did seem like a waste of resources (two or three thousand people) by Ya Basta! to try to boss the march into contradictory attempt to get across the bridge that they were never going to win. In the end the march was neither peaceful nor violent but rather a liberal 'Non Violent'.

## The Responsibility for Repression

"Why is it when faced with potentially severe repression we go all fucking liberal?" – Do or Die #9

Over the past few years, state repression against those who question the current social order has intensified. This can be traced to two significant factors: changes in social relationships that have made it unnecessary for the democratic state to disguise its repressive nature and a growing resistance that is increasingly using methods of direct attack rather than petition and negotiation.

In the United States, these attacks against the projects of capital have been largely centered on projects that infringe upon and destroy wild areas, exploit animals or involve the development of genetically engineered organisms. The methods used in these attacks are generally fairly simple, using materials easily accessible to anyone, and are applicable to a wide variety of situations. It should, therefore come us no surprise that the state would try to suppress this tendency through criminalization and repression.

It is in this context that two bills before the Oregon state legislature can be understood. One of these bills would apply racketeering and organized crime laws to acts of sabotage against logging activities, animal research and the like if passed. The other would apply hate crime laws to illegal actions taken against environmental destruction or capitalism. If these laws are passed it would be possible for a person convicted of breaking a window, spiking a tree, sabotaging a piece of equipment or liberating animals from a laboratory to as much as 25 years in prison as a racketeering hate criminal.

This is also the context in which a recent raid on a punk house party in Portland, Oregon and the subsequent police harassment against punks on the streets, in which cops will question those stopped about their relationship to anarchism, can be understand. If anyone who might consider acting against the horrors of this society can be frightened into submission through harassment, it makes the job of the state easier.

When repression starts to hit close to home, it is easy to forget who is responsible for it. We have been well trained to see those that the state labels as criminals as such, and so it is easy to make the mistake of blaming those who have taken the path of illegal revolt for the repression we experience. But those who revolt are never to blame for repression. The state, and only the state, holds this responsibility. The aim of state repression is precisely to frighten people away from active revolt. If we succumb before repression, holding ourselves back and calling on others to hold back out of fear, the state has succeeded. In the face of state repression, it is necessary to attack more intelligently and more fiercely.

## Ya Basta(rds)!

*(I have chosen to reprint this piece from Do or Die #9, because it confirms what I have heard about Ya Basta! from Italian comrades. The group is not anarchist, nor is it anti-authoritarian in practice.)*

On [September] 26<sup>th</sup>, the yellow march was led by an Italian group called Ya Basta!, who have made quite a name for themselves by dressing up in white overalls with lots of padding and protective armor and taking on lines of riot cops in this 'Michelin Man' get-up.

About five hundred Ya Basta! people were in front, followed by another two thousand or so activists from various different groups such as the PKK, Basque separatists, Spanish anarchists, unionists and international socialists.

Ya Basta! might have looked impressive in their white overalls and pads, but not so much to the people who were told off and attacked because they were carrying sticks and were prepared to fight the police on their own terms and not on those of the Ya Basta! bureaucracy. Moreover, on the way to Namesti Miru they constantly told off people for not walking in line, and then attacked others who decided to smash a MacDonalds with the excuse that it was spoiling their media image. It was becoming clear that Ya Basta! is a hierarchical organization with visible 'leaders' and spokespeople.

Ya Basta! originates from the social centers of Italy. They were first formed during the collapse of the Eastern bloc when a large section of the Italian autonomia movement started reconsidering their ideas on class struggle and communism, etc. Although the crude Marxist-Leninist approach to class and capital has been abandoned, it seems certain organizational characteristics still remain.

## A Bridge Too Far

The march was flowing forward to the tune of whistles, drums and shakers when it all stopped because Ya Basta! had decided to hold an impromptu press conference in front of the police blockade



is inevitable when the exploited revolt, and those who only want a clean, safe revolution will always be disappointed that when the exploited revolt they don't play by the rules. In the face of the ongoing attack of the ruling order, it is better that the exploited classes rise up against the outrages of power and make mistakes than that they continue to passively suffer them. This rioting in Cincinnati was an uprising of life against the imposition of death by the ruling order. It is time that anarchists developed a projectual basis for intervention in such situations and this means moving out of the safe enclaves of the anarchist subculture. Otherwise we will remain ineffectual cheerleaders.

## And After Quebec?

As the political leaders of the American nation-states met to plan the newest trade agreements in Quebec City, protesters converged to disrupt the proceedings. Months in advance the city authorities had seen to the construction of a huge fence with the aim of keeping the protesters as far away from the summit meeting as possible.

From nearly three thousand miles away, it isn't easy to know exactly what happened. The myriad accounts from journalists, the varieties of leftists and reformists, anarchists and black bloc participants, etc. present a chaotic and frequently fuzzy picture of events. It is clear from the outset that there were those who were determined to destroy the boundary made by the fence. People climbed on it shook it and breached it in a few places. Police tried to protect the fence with huge amounts of tear gas as well as rubber bullets. Some of the protesters fought back using stones, sand-filled bottles, hockey pucks, molotov cocktails and the tear gas canisters that the cops had shot at them. Some of the people who broke through the fence attacked a bank and property of a few multinationals, but most of the violence was concentrated in the ongoing battle between cops and protesters.

It is important not to have illusions about what went on. While an active minority of the protesters made it clear that they held no illusions about having anything to communicate to those in the summit and instead put out the effort to disrupt business as usual, a large number of the protesters were there precisely to have their cause heard. While these delusional do-gooders were quick to complain about police excesses, they were equally quick to distance themselves from those who were ready to fight the cops and attack the institutions of capital. Some even went so far as to do the cops' work for them. As one woman put it: "It was the protesters not the police who controlled the crowd." The specifics of this control were manifest by the nonviolent protesters who stepped up to protect a bank from the attack of protesters who were more clear about their hatred of capitalism.

Once again the question needs to be examined: what is the project behind the summit-hopping and the ongoing street battles with cops? It is obvious by now that as anarchists we have little in common with a majority of the protesters who are full time activists with an agenda that challenges little. In fact, the anti-globalization movement is largely interested in reforming capital, not destroying it in order to transform the world, so we can expect to find ourselves perpetually confronting other protesters as well as police — they are not our allies.

Summit-hopping can easily become a substitute for struggling against capitalism and the state in one's own life. The summits are spectacular focal points that can draw attention away from the daily confrontations with capital as one attempts to reappropriate one's life in the face of its domination. Without an ongoing project of struggle aimed at the disruption and subversion of the social order wherever one confronts it, these summit protests are mere momentary irruptions. With such a project, the question becomes one of whether these summit protests can be useful in moving one's project of ongoing subversion forward and, if so, how. Every act of revolt has my solidarity, but I want to see these acts become more intelligent and focused, more clearly and consciously insurrectional.

## And When Cops Kill

On Saturday, April 7, Steve Roach, a cop with the Cincinnati police department, killed Timothy Thomas, a 19-year-old unarmed black man was running from him. He was the fifteenth black person killed by Cincinnati police since 1995. Though protests started out in the normal fashion, by Monday evening they had escalated into rioting. Protesters attacked, looted and burned shops, devastating a particularly noxious and intrusive yuppie enclave. Cars and cops were attacked with bricks and stones. Andy Noguiera, a cop who was “trying to quell disturbances”, was shot. The assailant fortunately got away, but sadly the cop was unharmed.

On Thursday, as the rioting continued, the mayor declared a curfew, calling for peace and an end to the violence. These hypocritical sentiments were echoed by self-proclaimed “religious and political leaders of the black community”. Of course, such calls are absurd in light of the blatant social war that ruling class is carrying out daily against the poor and black people of Cincinnati and throughout the world. The rioting was an expression of rage against this ongoing oppression. We must recognize that calls for peace in such a situation are nothing more than attempts of the ruling class to hide their social war under the guise of social consensus. This should make it quite clear whose side all political and religious leaders are really on.

Unfortunately for the ruling order, its armed flunkies seem to prefer open warfare. On Saturday, April 14, police attacked a funeral march for Timothy Thomas without any provocation. They fired rubber bullets and small caliber shot randomly into the parade of about 500 marchers, hitting and injuring some of the marchers. This should make it very clear that we are talking about a war that has been declared by those in power against all the exploited and excluded.

The purpose of this war is precisely to suppress revolt. So the uprising in Cincinnati must be recognized as an act of courage. No doubt there were excesses throughout these days of rioting. This

state to disguise its repressive activities. By the standards of the state, the passion for revolt has always been a criminal passion. In the struggle against state repression, we must, therefore, embrace that greatest of all crimes: freedom.

## A Question of Privilege

One hears a lot of talk about privilege in anarchist circles these days. “Male privilege”, “white-skin privilege”, “first-world privilege and similar phrases come up regularly in discussion, but with no real analysis to back them up, as if everyone should understand exactly what is meant. And, indeed, it is not so difficult to figure out what is meant by these phrases. Their clear implication is that if the oppression and exploitation one suffers in this society is not as intense as that which another suffers, then one is privileged relative to that other person. But such a conception of privilege is useless from an anarchist and revolutionary perspective. It only has meaning in relation to the reformist concept of equality before the law, which is always equality of exploitation and oppression. For those of us who have no interest in rights, but rather want the freedom to determine our own lives and so find the only equality worth pursuing to be equality of access to all that is necessary for determining the conditions of our existence — that is, for those of us for whom the destruction of the social order and the revolutionary transformation of reality are the essential first steps toward making our lives our own — a very different concept of privilege must be developed.

We live in a class society. This has been true since the accumulation of wealth and power into a few hands gave rise to the state and capital. The few who rule determine the conditions under which everyone exists, institutionalizing social relations that maintain and expand their control over wealth and power. The ruling class structures these relations in such a way that the survival of the exploited classes depends upon their continued participation in the reproduction of these relationships, thus guaranteeing the continuation of class society. Thus, it can be said that the ruling class structures social relationships in such a way that the continued reproduction of society will always privilege the ruling class and its needs. In any class society — thus, in any society in which the state and the economy exist — only the ruling class can be truly said to have privilege.

But the ruling class does not impose itself upon a passive populace. The history of class society is always the history of class struggle, the history of the exploited trying to take their lives and the social conditions under which they exist back in order to determine them for themselves. Thus, it is in the interest of the ruling class to structure social relations in such a way as to create divisions within the exploited classes that cloud their understanding of the nature of their struggle and of their enemy. The ruling class accomplishes this through various institutions, identities and ideologies such as nation, race, gender, occupation, sexual preference and so on. It is not hard to see how the ruling class uses these structures for its ends. It grants people in specific social categories particular “privileges” defined in terms of that category. But being granted a privilege by those who define your life on their terms is not the same thing as having privilege. This becomes especially clear when anyone who is not of the ruling class steps out of line. Their so-called privileges can quickly disappear.

Furthermore, these “privileges” granted by the ruling order to people in certain social categories among the exploited actually do amount to nothing more than a lessening of the intensity of exploitation and oppression experienced by these people relative to others. Thus, men are less likely to be sexually harassed and assaulted than women and tend to receive greater compensation for the same level of exploitation at the job. White people are less likely to be harassed by cops or to be charged with felonies for victimless crimes and sentenced to years in prison than non-white people and find it easier to get a job. Heterosexuals generally do not have to worry about being beaten or ostracized because of their sexual preference. The list could go on, but I think the point is clear. All of these so-called privileges are nothing more than a minimal easing of the conditions of exploitation experienced by people in these specific social categories. They are intended to convince these people that they have more in common with their exploiters than with those not granted the same “privileges” and to convince the others that their real enemy is not the ruling class, but rather those granted a less intense level of exploitation.

## Criminal Passion

Over the past few years, liberals, progressives and those claiming political leadership over various minority “communities” have successfully campaigned for “hate crime” legislation in a number of states. This legislation has been promoted in the name of providing state protection for minorities, but, as with all laws, these laws are actually intended to protect the state and that particular minority that is the ruling class. Certain recent events make this quite clear.

This past March, James Cosner, a Native American who has been involved in radical activity for many years, smuggled a sledgehammer into the San Jose, California city hall and attacked a statue of Columbus. His blows broke off the legs, one arm and part of a scroll held by the image, and also left the face pitted. He didn’t stop until three uniformed cops with guns drawn came through the front door of the building. At this point he surrendered. This public act of vandalism was clearly an expression of violent passion. The role played by Columbus in initiating the genocide against indigenous people on the American continents cannot help but enrage those who hate domination and oppression. But James Cosner’s action was an act of vandalism, destruction of an inanimate object. By charging him with a “hate crime”, the prosecutors have turned into a major felony. This should be no surprise though, when one considers that his attack was not simply on a statue, but on an icon, a symbol used to uphold the American state mythology. This mythology must be protected from the rage of those kept down by the social order.

Along similar lines, in Oregon, the legislature is voting on whether to expand hate crime legislation to include acts of environmentalist and anti-capitalist sabotage and vandalism. If this bill passes it will add years to the sentence of anyone convicted of committing such an act.

Hatred of the state and of the ruling class has always been illegal. The application of laws against hate crimes to acts of revolt simply makes what is implicit in law explicit. The fundamental changes in the structures of exploitation make it unnecessary for the democratic

defiant revolt — one that springs from a strong will and a refusal to back down. If our desire is to destroy all domination, then it is necessary that we move beyond everything that holds us back, beyond feminism, yes, and beyond gender, because this is where we find the ability to create our indomitable individuality that rises up against all domination without hesitation. If we wish to destroy the logic of submission, this must be our minimum goal.

In this light, moralistic calls to recognize one's own privilege and give it up are meaningless. They serve no purpose in the creation of a revolutionary project aimed at the destruction of all rule. As we have seen, the so-called privileges enumerated in the mea culpas of guilt ridden radicals are really nothing more than means for constructing social identities that serve the ruling class by producing artificial divisions among those they exploit. So if we want to move the revolutionary project of destroying all rule and privilege forward, then our task is not to give up some phantom privilege that has never really been our own, but to expose and move beyond the artificial identities that smother our individuality and cripple us in our battle against the ruling order. Since only the ruling class truly has privilege, the destruction of privilege will only occur when we destroy all rule.

mainstream feminism) only serves to underline the illusory nature of the “sisterhood” they proclaim. Though there have been attempts to move beyond these limits within the context of feminism, this specialization has been its defining quality for three decades. In the forms in which it has been practiced, it has failed to present a revolutionary challenge to either gender or domination. The anarchist project of total liberation calls us to move beyond these limits to the point of attacking gender itself with the aim of becoming complete beings defined not as a conglomeration of social identities, but as unique, whole individuals.

It is both clichéd and mistaken to claim that men and women have been equally oppressed by their gender roles. The male gender role does allow a greater leeway for the assertion of one’s will. So just as the liberation of women from their gender role is not a matter of becoming more masculine but rather of moving beyond their femininity, so for men the point is not to be more feminine but to move beyond their masculinity. The point is to discover that core of uniqueness that is in each of us that is beyond all social roles and to make that the point from which we act, live and think in the world, in the sexual realm as in all others. Gender separates sexuality from the wholeness of our being, attaching specific traits to it that serve the maintenance of the present social order. Thus sexual energy, which could have amazing revolutionary potential, is channeled into the reproduction of relations of domination and submission, of dependence and desperation. The sexual misery that this has produced and its commercial exploitation surround us. The inadequacy of calling for people to “embrace both their masculinity and femininity” lies in the lack of analysis of the extent to which both of these concepts are social inventions serving the purposes of power. Thus, to change the nature of gender roles, to increase their number or modify their form, is useless from a revolutionary perspective, being nothing more than mechanically adjusting the form of the conduits that channel our sexual energy. Instead, we need to reappropriate our sexual energy in order to reintegrate into the totality of our being in order to become so expansive and powerful as to burst every conduit and flood the plain of existence with our indomitable being. This is not a therapeutic task, but rather one of

a social category. Within mainstream politics, this project consists of gaining rights, recognition and protection for woman as a recognized social category under the law. In theory, radical feminism moves beyond mere legalities with the aim of liberating woman as a social category from male domination. Since male domination is not adequately explored as an aspect of total domination, even by anarchy-feminists, the rhetoric of radical feminism frequently takes on a style similar to that of national liberation struggles. But in spite of the differences in style and rhetoric, the practice of mainstream and radical feminism often coincide. This is not by chance.

The specialization of radical feminism actually lies in the cataloguing of wrongs suffered by woman at the hands of man. If this catalogue was ever completed, the specialization would no longer be necessary and it would be time to move beyond this listing of wrongs suffered to an actual attempt to analyze the nature of women's oppression in this society and take real, thought-out action to end it. So the maintenance of this specialization requires that feminists expand this catalogue to infinity, even to the point of explaining the oppressive actions of women in positions of power as expressions of patriarchal power, thus freeing these women from responsibility for their actions. Any serious analysis of the complex relations of domination as it actually exists is laid aside in favor of an ideology in which man dominates and woman is the victim of this domination. But the creation of one's identity on the basis of one's oppression, on the victimization one has suffered, does not provide strength or independence. Instead it creates a need for protection and security that eclipses the desire for freedom and self-determination. In the theoretical and psychological realm, an abstract, universal "sisterhood" may meet this need, but in order to provide a basis for this sisterhood, the "feminine mystique", which was exposed in the 1960's as a cultural construct supporting male domination, is revived in the form of women's spirituality, goddess religion and a variety of other feminist ideologies. The attempt to liberate woman as a social category reaches its apotheosis in the re-creation of the feminine gender role in the name of an elusive gender solidarity. The fact that many radical feminists have turned to cops, courts and other state programs for protection on the practical level (thus imitating

## The Merchants of Life *by Val Basilio*

(translated from *Diavolo in Corpo* #3)

Thirty years ago, a Belgian situationist — whose decayed radical subjectivity is now in an advanced state of decomposition — noted in his most famous work that: "Power, if only it were human, would be proud of the number of potential encounters it has successfully prevented."

One of the encounters that was avoided according to the suggestive proposition of the author was that of the French anarchist Albert Libertad with the Italian artist Giorgio di Chirico. The former — burning his identity documents — the latter — drawing heads without faces. Both are understood as denouncing the operation of organized annihilation carried out by the social order in its confrontations with the individual. Better not to have a name or a face than to be a mere reflection of social conventions. The refusal of the identity that is assigned to us by the state is the first step to affirming our individuality. Starting from completely different experiences and presuppositions, the anarchist and the artist had arrived — each in his own way — at analogous conclusions.

But this play of affinities never came together and the encounters missed on the terrain of the reappropriation of our existence does not stop at this single case.

Anyone who might be interested in curbing the process of commodification that is transforming all of our life into a vast supermarket — where adventure is booked in a travel agency, the appetite is satisfied with pre-cooked meals ready in five minutes, creativity serves only to decorate advertising posters and play consists more than anything else of operations of exchange — will certainly find the correspondence of aims between deeds and persons from the same era, but different continents, interesting.

Argentina, 1927. Here, as in many other parts of the world, the night of August 22 is a night of vigil. On the plaza and in the houses, thousands of people are waiting. They wait to find out if the United States has effectively executed Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti,

the two Italian anarchists accused of robbery and murder and condemned to death on the electric chair. Never had such an act produced so many repercussions in the world. Arrested in May of 1920, the two anarchists were tried and condemned in July of the following year in spite of the alibi that excused them and the numerous witnesses brought forward by the defense. An impressive campaign in favor of their liberation was begun through out the world involving thousands and thousands of people with very different ideas. In Argentina as well, protest demonstrations, meetings and direct attacks were not lacking: against the US embassy, against the monument to Washington and against American enterprises such as Ford. And, of course, the initiatives in favor of the two anarchists multiplied with the approach of the prophetic date.

The dawn of August 23 found thousands of people still awake, thronging the newsstands in order to read the morning papers. The news flowed from mouth to mouth between the general disbelief and dismay. The law had won. Sacco and Vanzetti had been executed. The announcement of their murder would provoke protest demonstrations everywhere with clashes and incidents. In Argentina, a general strike is called by the central workers on this day. People pour out into the streets as incidents break out on all sides. The names of the two anarchists have become a symbol of the struggle against the outrages of power throughout the world.

This is the situation in which a businessman from Buenos Aires, one Bernardo Gurevich, head of the tobacco firm "Combinados", gets the idea to put a new brand of cigarettes on the market at an economical price intended for the workers. In order to draw attention to the product and attract sales, Gurevich has the brilliant notion to call the cigarette "Sacco and Vanzetti". The business initiative is not appreciated. Speculating on the death of the two anarchists? Mingling the smoke of their bodies burnt on the electric chair with that of cigarettes? Transforming the tears shed for their death into ink for fattening a bank account? Enclosing the rage of others between the dusty lids of a snuff-box? Making an advertising gimmick of the symbol of the struggle against the state? On November 26, 1927, a powerful charge of dynamite destroys the establishment of "Combinados". The attack is attributed to the same anarchist who

## Against the Logic of Submission: Beyond Feminism, Beyond Gender

In order to create a revolution that can put an end to all domination, it is necessary to put an end to the tendency we all have to submit. This requires that we view the roles that this society imposes on us with a cruel and penetrating eye seeking out their weak points with the aim of breaking through their limits and moving beyond them.

Sexuality is an essential expression of individual desire and passion, of the flame that can ignite both love and revolt. Thus, it can be an important force of the individual's will that can raise her beyond the mass as a unique and indomitable being. Gender, on the other hand, is a conduit built by the social order to constrain this sexual energy, to confine and limit it, directing toward the reproduction of this order of domination and submission. Thus, it is an obstruction to an attempt to freely determine how one will live and relate. Nonetheless, up to now, men have been granted more leeway in asserting their will within these roles than women, a reasonable explanation for why more anarchists, revolutionaries and outlaws have been men than women. Women who have been strong, rebellious individuals have been so precisely because they have moved beyond their femininity.

It is unfortunate that the women's liberation movement that reemerged in the 1960's did not succeed in developing a deep analysis of the nature of domination in its totality and of the role played by gender in its reproduction. A movement that had started from a desire to be free of gender roles in order to be full, self-determined individuals was transformed into a specialization just like most partial struggles of the time. This guaranteed that a total analysis would not be possible within this context.

This specialization is the feminism of the present era that began developing out of the women's liberation movement in the late '60's. It does not aim so much at the liberation of individual women from the limits of their gender roles as at the liberation of "woman" as



was held responsible for other dynamite attacks in support of Sacco and Vanzetti, namely Severino di Giovanni. The damage caused by the explosion is huge. That very day, the businessman who came up with the original idea decides to withdraw the brand of cigarette called "Sacco and Vanzetti".

France, 1930. About a half a century has passed since the publication of the Chants of Maldoror by Lautreamont, a book which has subsequently been greeted as "the most radical book of all western literature". This book had gone through many changes of circumstance and might have been destined to fall into oblivion if it had not attracted the attention of the surrealists who get the credit for the recovery and recasting of its author. Already in the spring of 1919, even before building the surrealist movement, Andre Breton had edited the publication of the Poesies of Isadore Ducasse (Lautreamont's given name). In 1927, another surrealist, Philippe Soupault, had edited the first edition of the Complete Works, which would stir up a hornet's nest of controversy. The surrealists would make a kind of precursor, an extreme model, of Lautreamont. For the young in search of a new existence, the work of Lautreamont had nothing to do with literature. The torrential imagination of the "man of Montevideo", his iconoclastic fury, could only constitute an incitement to revolt, the overcoming of this world, an affirmation of one's individuality. Lautreamont sits at Sade's side on the peak of the Black Olympus of the surrealists.

Thus, it is not at all surprising if they don't seem to take pleasure in the news of the imminent opening of a new Parisian nightspot, the "Bar Maldoror". The shopkeeper enterprise wanted to make a menu of Evil, to serve blasphemous imprecations at its tables. It wanted to satisfy the customers' stomachs rather than consume them with doubt. It wanted to quench the fire that burned in the throats of the clients rather than set it to their hearts. It wanted to make people pass a pleasant evening rather than making them all go into a rage. It wanted to make many instead of overturning the world. It was too much.

Already, a few years earlier — in that same 1927 which was shaken by the news of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti — the surrealists had sent an open letter to the committee for the reconstruction

of a monument to the poet Rimbaud (a monument that had been destroyed during the first world war) in Charleville, the city of his birth. In that letter, one could read: "Hypocrisy extends its dreadful hand toward the people that we love in order to make them serve in the conservation of that against which they have always fought. It is evident that we are no longer deceived about the range of such enterprises of confiscation, we do not alarm ourselves ore than is necessary at your shameful and habitual maneuvers, persuaded as we are that a force of total fulfillment animates everything that has truly been inspired in the world against you. To us it matters little . . . that some profit is drawn from the most subversive intelligences, since their marvelous poison will continue to penetrate into the minds of the young in order to corrupt or expand them." Three years later, this literary outpouring of fatalistic wrath would fortunately give place to an action stripped of aestheticism. At the opening of the "Bar Maldoror", Andre Breton and his comrade were there and the completely laid waste to the place. The owner had no choice but to change the name of his business. The name of Lautreamont was saved from the slime of commerce.

In the face of this determination to prevent money from realizing its commerce over individuals desiring only to see it disappear, in the face of this strenuous defense of the spirit of revolt against the assaults that have come from the shopkeepers' spirit, in the face of these vigorous attacks against mercantile logic, chance does not dwell on how much separated the protagonists of these actions. It is better to leave all the pathetic demands for improbable property rights to the militant and artistic rabble. It is enough to know that, in spite of appearances, the communicating vessels of dream and action have met on the terrain of hatred for all commodification, even if only for a moment. It doesn't matter what it is: the memory of two executed comrades, the work of a writer, the taste of a meal, the natural environment, an idea. That which is from the heart is an expression of life. And it is never too late to recall that life cannot be reduced to an object of commercial exploitation. It has no price, it only has the claim of having a meaning. Today we are so thoroughly surrounded by commodities, adapted to the act of perpetually putting our hand in our wallet in order to get what

to impede this inevitable transformation of the totality of the urban environment into a prison that has been immersed in the electronic for sometime, filled with typical prison slavery like rape, sexual extortion, the exchange of favors that ends up being more important than monetary exchange.

At any place in the city, at any hour of the day, millions of urban prisoners watch the same things on television as those prisoners who have been sentenced in a trial and those who are held in custody awaiting trial. The judges themselves do the same, cheering in the same way for a goal by their soccer team.

Today all urban space is watched, controlled, patrolled, feared, distrusted, perpetually threatened. In the name of security, it has gradually reached the point of the creation of an absolute technological-military prison. One can say that this long war will only cease in order to abandon its place to a kind of monstrous prison as an extreme form of "necessary" protection. And this is happening under a democracy that tries to appear powerless, under the egalitarian rhetoric with which it cloaks itself, to prevent — since this is what it wants and needs in order to conserve itself — every city of its dreams from becoming a maximum-security prison space (thus without respite) where the circulation of individuals increasingly resembles the circling of the prisoners round and round that courtyard with the high windowless walls where the poor exhausted footsteps resound in cadence.

Have we really emerged from the courtyard of Newgate? Have we completely given it up, or only taken that marked pajama to the laundry?

The edenic model inspired the providential inclusion of parks — which in name still carry the memory of Paradise (park is a contraction of paradise, Persian *pardesh* =garden) — in the emerging urban hell. These parks would later be degraded with the name of “green zone”. But what did these deceptive patches of paradise really change anyway? The urban glade (avenue or public garden) is not forest, freedom, refuge, free play of the spirit among lives different from the human; it is nothing but human images and, in an increasingly brutal manner, human images signify that which we most abhor: walls that enclose and constrain, jail.

The new prison construction (less somber, sometimes more breathable) was begun by the fascist regime (experimentally, in small cities) in order to reduce the distance between city and prison, destined to form a single, compact, totalitarian poison. We see the prison of Orvieto, built in 1936, the year of the greatest fascist triumph, no different from the Italian Bar, the University of Rome or any youth hostel . . . But the model totalitarian city, with urban envoys lined up in exchange for liberation from malarial anopheles, was Littoria (Latina) where the prison, built in 1939, is an anonymous service building, a true and proper outpost of the future outskirts. And a modern condominium on the outskirts endures widespread prison conditions. From the ground floor to the penthouse, the cooking is the same everywhere: spaghetti — steak — salad — dessert, just like in a regular prison.

The difference is that the family in the condominium doesn't throw away much food, preserves the leftovers, cooks with more intelligence. The prison, like the barracks or the hospice, wastes a great deal and cooks the same things in a vile manner. No one would ever lick those plates, so often returned full.

Among the traits of liberal democracies at the beginning of this century, this marvel still exists: though specific prison conditions may change in any possible way, in the unstoppable degradation of life in common and of sociality in general on the outside, in the abandonment of the city to degenerative cities, nothing can be done

is already ours, that nothing seems to touch us any more, nothing seems to come from our hearts. One cannot be filled with love for a plastic wrapped object. We remain with only our indifference, every emotion in us extinguished. When all human expression has been brought back inside the boundaries in which commercial exploitation is possible, when nearly nothing that could not be an object of lucrative activity has survived, when the amount in one's bank account is the best calling card, it is time that brutality takes the upper hand over indifference and resignation.

Christ drove the merchants out of the temple with violence. We know his reason: only god had the right to establish the price of life.

Contrarily, what happened in Argentina and France during these years cleared the board of both the merchants and the temple. It is only a question of taking the advice of a German philosopher and starting to stretch out a hand.

## The Walls of the City *by C. G.*

(translated from *Diavolo in Corpo* #3)

Prison is only apparently the exception to the rule: crime given vent to or innocence punished is in fact the totality of society where everyone punishes each other for the offense of being there and where anyone who thinks is pierced this question at least once a day: “Why have they put me here? What have I done?” and the terribly obsessive desire for escape is just like that of prisoners. Maybe even more intense.

The evolution of the penitentiary system with the construction of so many new spaces for punishment has a significance beyond that of “more humanity and reeducation” rather than retributive suffering. The distance, the separation between the city and its prison – which has always been very great – decreases, because the inhabitants of the city increasingly resemble (through work, family, universities, hospitals, discotheques, theaters, stadiums) prisoners of a model prison who are granted occasional leaves (weekends, holidays, “white” weeks) with the obligation of returning on specific days with no room for error.

Even the “promenade” is a mirror of the city within the prison and of the prison within the city. The people guarded on their pedestrian islands, enclosed by flowering bushes as walls, going sadly and monotonously in and out of shopping centers, loaded with useless but obligatory purchases. The people watched by video cameras in the shops and outside, forced to pass through metal detectors to enter a bank, constrained to stamp a railway ticket, whispering at every instant that ignoble secretion of personal identity that is the fiscal code, invention of the gulag. Do you believe this is very different from a prison?

I can see the courtyard of Newgate – where the prisoners in pajamas march around in rows in a circle in the famous Dore incision – once again every time I walk through any pedestrian island, special project of mayors preoccupied with having an aromatic aroma, an edenic glade, within the immense urban prison they administer.