Those Mischievous Elves of Lore

The Legend and Legacy of Earth Liberation

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With Spritely Grins

The modern animal rights and environmental movements have roots extending as far as the modern world, itself. The Earth Liberation Front's (ELF) Beltane communiqué obviated as much: "We take inspiration from the Luddites, Levellers, Diggers, the Autonome squatter movement, ALF, the Zapatistas, and the little people—those mischievous elves of lore" (ELF). In this chapter, we will look at each of these configurations, situating them within a *longue durée* that helps refine our understanding of the ELF and its historical place in a complex and often problematic tradition of trans-Atlantic social movements. Such a genealogy of the ELF will reveal a historical lineage of struggles against the state, religious repression, industrial exploitation, and capitalism that contains both right- and left-wing tendencies. To understand the complexity involved, we must gain greater insight into those forms of struggle that the ELF sought to emulate—from peasant insurgencies to autonomous networks—and their socioeconomic composition, as well as their geographic importance. Returning to the modern environmental movement through the lens of such archival analysis, we will discover the ideological paradigms involved in ecological direct action and the ways that the far-right compromises, co-opts, or deploys them on their own terms.

As the site of the origins of the Industrial Revolution, England perhaps boasts the earliest opposition to industrial civilization. Yet to investigate such origins, we must return to the prehistory of industrialization, even prior to the advent of capitalism and modern world systems. One can get a sense of British life before the Romans through Strabo's commentary: "The forests are their cities; for they fence in a spacious circular enclosure with trees which they have felled, and in that enclosure make huts for themselves and also pen up their cattle—not, however, with the purpose of staying a long time" (1988, p. 496). The lives of Ancient Britons tended to be nomadic and the Irish even wilder in the eyes of Strabo, who described them and Iberians as "man-eaters" in an ironic foreshadowing of the fear of "Indian cannibals" prominent among those who colonized the Americas.

For the pagans of the pre-Roman era, the festive spring holiday of Beltane held the sacred properties of renewal and rebirth. Located at the midpoint between the equinox and the solstice, usually around the first of May, Beltane celebrations usually involved a "Maypole" around which merry revelers would dance and sing. Amid the food, wine, and celebrations, pagans believed, the boundary between the natural and supernatural would disappear. Out of the recesses of the world—the springs and caves—the mischievous, mystical Fae or faeries (also fairies) might emerge, for better or worse.

Often synonymous with fairies, the elves of Ancient Britain held powers unknown to man and typically used them against those who would settle into dormant and domesticated livelihood. Beautiful and seductive woodland spirits and nymphs, elves had magical powers and caused illness to livestock and person alike—if displeased. Humans would loathe to fall under an elf attack, elf disease, or elf-heartburn, according to Anglo-Saxon texts like the *Leechbook* (c. 950) and *Lacnunga* (c. 1050). If afflicted

with elf-juices, "his eyes are yellow where they should be red. If you want to cure this person, consider his bearing, and know of which sex he is" (Jolly, 1996, p. 163). To ward off elfshot and heal potent magic, peasants would keep "rotund little shapes with spritely grins" as charms (p. 137).

In Icelandic tales, elves descend from matriarchal divinities—specifically, Eve's efforts to conceal her unwashed children from God (Ashliman, 2004, p. 118). According to an Icelandic tale, a farmer's sheep went missing, and his hands went out to find them. Fed up with waiting for their return, the farmer happened upon a mysterious lake, the dwelling of Valbjörg, an elf-woman. Beautiful and rich, she offers him the same bargain as his hands: stay and marry her or be murdered like them. The farmer accepts her proposal, and lives with Valbjörg learning elvish magic for three years. Before Christmas, the farmer appears in his father's dreams, instructing him to come to their elf-home on Christmas Eve with a well-trained priest. His father abides, and seeing Valbjörg holding their baby offers a Christian blessing. Valbjörg recoils in horror, throwing the baby down on the bed and running for the door, only to be caught in the arms of the priest and subdued. With Valbjörg's elven spirits exorcised, she forgets magic and embraces the Christian community (Bryan, 2011, pp. 182–183).

Mysterious and powerful, the elves exist in hidden spaces, different dimensions that open with the unlocking of clues, fetishes, charms. Their invitations can beckon from the woods, but hold dangerous portent. With the coming of Norman Conquest in 1066 and the transformation of England into a colonized state of new castles and roads, elves became all the more subversive. The mischievous German house-spirit, Hödekin ("little hat"), may have made his way up to England, joining Robin Goodfellow (aka "unsettled" Puck) to become Robin Hood of Nottingham Forest (Lee, 1908, p. 1152). Such elves, spirits, and fairies of the medieval times indicate complex subcultures of vagabonds, forest dwellers, and adventure seekers engaged in unrest against both lord and domestic peasant alike. Abiding by a kind of playful and dangerous individualism, they played tricks on wayward travelers and kept townspeople in their place.

Ther Ben No Fairies

Perhaps the elves helped townspeople watch over their communities while also keeping the forested wilderness the domain of outlaws and refugees. Yet with the seriousness of the Crusades and the Black Death sweeping Europe, a new class began to emerge. Those who fought in the Crusades returned with booty from their plunder of the Eastern Mediterranean and sought to continue the war against heretics like the Cathars and Waldensians within Europe. Grounded in the enclosures of the commons, the burgesses put down the old legends of the past in pursuit of a mechanical worldview. As Chaucer wrote,

In th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthur,
Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
All was this land fulfild of fayerye.
The elf-queene, with hir joly companye,
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede,
This was the olde opinion, as I rede;
I speke of manye hundred yeres ago.
But now kan no man se none elves mo,
For now the grete charitee and prayeres
Of lymytours and othere hooly freres,
That serchen every lond and every streem,
As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,
Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,
Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,
Thropes, bemes, shipnes, dayeryes—
This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes. (1903, p. 576)

Chaucer's Wife of Bath laments that the prevalence of holy friers, mendicant priests wandering throughout the countryside, as well as the bourses of the early stock exchanges and the burgesses, themselves, rid the world of its spiritual character. The Wife of Bath's despondence indicates further a connection between women and the patriarchal repression of peasant livelihoods that seemed healthier and happier in hindsight.

The depopulation of a third of Europe caused by the Black Death (1346–1353) would lead to increased hysteria surrounding the persecution of heretics, while the greater power of an organized peasantry against the landlords "stiffened people's determination to break the shackles of feudal rule" (Federici, 2004, p. 44). Vagabonds and outlaws joined with former soldiers, farmers, urban artisans, and even sectors of the burgher class to train their pikes on the nobility. This condition only worsened the nobility's hatred of peasants, articulated in stories like *Despit au Vilain*: "For they are a sorry lot, these villeins who eat fat goose! Should they eat fish? Rather let them eat thistles and briars, thorns and straw and hay on Sunday and peapods on weekdays" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 175). The equivalent of the poor person on food stamps buying smoked salmon at the grocery store, the medieval commoner was seen as spiritually untamed, overstuffed on luxury foods, lazy, and drunken.

From the French Jacquerie of 1358 to the Revolt of the Florentine Ciompi in 1378 to the English Peasant's Revolt of Watt Tyler and John Ball in 1381, peasants and poor laborers rose against the hierarchical landscape from urban to rural. The Jacqueries issued from a working class "who had begun with a zeal for justice, as it had seemed to them, since their lords were not defending them but rather oppressing them, turned themselves to base and execrable deeds," according to *The Chronicle of Jean de Venette* (Venette, 1953, pp. 76–77). Into the mouths of the Ciompi, Machiavelli places these

words: “Strip us naked and we shall all be found alike; clothe us in their garments and them in ours, and be assured we shall seem noble and they the reverse; poverty and riches being the only causes of our disparity” (1906, p. 189).

As the commons rose up in revolt against feudalism, “the figure of the heretic increasingly became that of a woman, so that, by the beginning of the 15th Century, the main target of the persecution against heretics became the witch” (Federici, 2004, p. 40). The elves and their elfshot (arrows) would become the instrument of the witch, and she a symbol of tremendous class struggle shaking Europe of the feudal yoke through clandestine insurgencies jam-packed with all the techniques and tools of everyday resistance and breaching through the surface in dramatic and bloody wars (Hall, 2005, pp. 32–33; Van Meter, 2017). Cries for equality leveled at both crown and altar erupted into the 16th century but went unfulfilled, often with grave consequences. During the Friulian cruel Thursday of abundance, the poor actually stripped members of the wealthiest Italian families naked and dressed in their clothes, dragging their mutilated corpses through the streets as the town raged in riot and revolt. Such macabrely carnivalesque episodes signaled the early transvaluation of the sacred and profane that would become identified with the Protestant Reformation of Zwingli, the Hussites, Calvin, and Luther.

Witches and heretics would burn alike, while the burgesses hedged their bets between religions, political affiliations, and heresies, using witch trials as a means of subduing the ever-present threat of revolution. Hence, the peasant revolts that proceeded into the 17th century retained a crucial tension with the Reformation’s highest leaders. If Thomas Müntzer’s declaration, “The people will be free. And God alone will be lord over them,” signaled the confluence of peasant and Protestant revolt, his calls for equality drove Martin Luther to condemn him as a heretic (2010, p. 2). Similarly, although Calvin’s *Sermons on the Last Eight Chapters of the Book of Daniel* brought the French Huguenots to assert the Sovereignty of the People against Richelieu the Catholic monarchy, his continuation of the persecution of witches reassured the bourgeois that his doctrines would keep their hegemony over the peasants (Holt, 2005, pp. 78–79).

You Dissentious Rogues

The increasing division between burgesses and peasants only worsened with the complexity of religious schism. Predicated on the dual operation of colonialism and enclosures throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, the capitalist system launched the historical trajectory of the bourgeoisie while ruining the traditional livelihood of the peasants. Those who could enclose and profit from the commons had greater capital with which to invest and benefit from colonial expeditions, global trade, and the bourses of Northern Europe. Concomitant with the conversion to Protestantism, increased colonization of Ireland, and the expansion of the putting-out system through the Tudor

period, commoners raged throughout the British Islands (Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000, pp. 18–19).

In an Ireland embroiled in unrest that would culminate in thousands of soldiers joining Tyrone's Rebellion to oust the British colonists by the end of the 16th century, "almost every large wooded glen bordering on the Englishry held a nest of human wasps, the Irish 'wood-kerne,' who lived by robbing the neighbouring colonists," according to one historian of Irish forests (Hore, 1858, p. 149). Speaking on their tactics, historian of these times, Fynes Moryson, described how "Ulster, and the western parts of Munster, yield *vast* woods, in which the rebels, cutting up trees, and casting them on heaps, used to stop the passages" (1735, p. 370). In the English Midlands, increased enclosures frustrated the populous to the point of rising up en masse and pulling down the hedges and fences dividing up the commons. In response, Shakespeare took up his quill, issuing a warning to peasantry and aristocracy with the words of failed Roman military demagogue, Coriolanus: "What's the matter, you dissentious rogues, / That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion, / Make yourselves scabs?" (Shakespeare, 1999, p. 967).

As with Shakespeare's Puck or the description of Queen Mab by Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, the English of the Tudor and Stuart dynasties saw fairies and elves as representing, unleashing, and manipulating dangerous erotic urges. A student of magic, Elizabeth's successor James I penned the *Daemonologie* in 1597, a three-volume tome reflecting his obsession with repressing the phairies, sprites, and witches. Those who live as the royalty of the forest draw the sacred away from the sovereign and produce an upside-down law that James compares to "counterfeits God among the Ethnicks" (King James I, 2008, p. 44). As European colonialism expanded to Latin America and the Caribbean, the fairies and elves emerged in these new lands, often tied to indigenous spirituality and sexuality. Explorers like Amerigo Vespucci brought back tales of "Indians" who "live amongst themselves without a king or ruler, each man being his own master" (Federici, 2015, p. 351). To wit, those Puritans wishing to escape the Catholic Stuarts fled as far as the so-called "New World" to establish the first English colonies, taking with them a host of prejudices against nature, witches, and the savage.

Despite the Stuarts' interest in spiritual combat, a strong secular current beginning with the Tudors continued through the reign of James I. Solicitor General Francis Bacon labeled dispossessed men and women the "seed of peril and tumult in a state," insisting on the production of an orderly system of hospitals to destroy the plight of beggardom (1868, p. 252). Political theorist Thomas Hobbes would agree that such an industrious social system would encourage discipline: "men would be much more fitted than they are for civil obedience" if not for witches and superstition (1651, p. 11).

Though King James would prove adept at repressing the peasants, his successor Charles I fell to the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell, which fought alongside the Protestant peasants organized as Diggers and Levelers. Those armies kept true to the precedent of the Peasants War of the 14th century, returning to that old demand of

equality and the slogan, "When Adam delved and Eve span / Who was then the gentleman" (Morris, 1828, p. 228). Popular tales of outlaws and rebels like Mol Flanders featured gender ambiguity and sexual dissidence and took on the fairy tale quality of that spritely Robin Hood (Defoe, 2011). In 1651, the people defeated and decapitated the monarch, yet Cromwell's grip on power only tightened. With Cromwell's son failing at sovereignty, Parliament restored the Stuart dynasty to the throne by inviting Hobbes's former pupil, Charles II, to return and rule, which he did in 1660.

Although resistance against Charles II remained significant, it often followed the leadership of the rising bourgeoisie, which came to rival the small nobility in power and prestige. Implicated in the Rye House Plot to overthrow Charles II, John Locke fled England to exile with other English and Scottish radicals, allegedly engaged in plotting Monmouth's Rebellion, and committed himself to outlining a schema for a Republican form of governance associated with propertarian rights (Ashcraft, 1986, pp. 416, 463–464). While Locke's work became incredibly influential among radicals throughout the North Atlantic—particularly the Carolina colonies for whom he would write official Constitutions—his language of equality referred to a burgeoning ruling class oriented toward property and levied against that tradition of popular revolt that found its bearings in the commons.

The transition of class struggle from peasants against lords to bourgeoisie against nobility came, in part, as a result of religious conflict. Rather than simple suppression of the spiritual community, Catholics or Protestants sought to crush peasant lore or co-opt it to raise greater armies and draw peasant affinities toward their side. For their part, peasant supporters on either Catholic or Protestant side often hoped for little more than the cynical dream of gaining a greater franchise upon victory. Yet the deeper logic of colonialism is what kept them poor, regardless. It is no coincidence that, during this period, whole forests of timber would be felled for the British fleet and Empire—particularly in Ireland—with the double effect and explicit intention of denying shelter to insurgents and paying for the debts incurred by the bourgeoisie's frivolities and excesses.

In a letter to Reverend William Mason dated September 3, 1773, English politician and man of letters, Horace Walpole, mused on the situation: "When the forests of our old barons were nothing but dens of thieves, the law in its wisdom made them unalienable. Its wisdom now thinks it very fitting that they should be cut down to pay debts at Almack's [casino] and Newmarket [racetracks]. I was saying this to the lawyer I carried down with me. He answered, 'The law hates a perpetuity.' 'Not all perpetuities,' said I; 'not those of lawsuits'" (1906, p. 500).

A Shred of Black Crape

Largely through the Lockean understanding of commons as wasted lands waiting for exploitation and capitalization, the colonization of the US interior following the

Revolution of 1776 deepened and the institution of slavery enabled the development of European capitalism into a new "industrial revolution." While the bourgeoisie scrambled for the reigns of the French Revolution of 1789, peasants and the working poor took heart in the Rights of Man, influenced by Thomas Paine and the egalitarian current within the Revolution. Comprising Luddites, weavers, and conspiratorial revolutionists, a broad-based movement swept England at the turn of the 19th century, drawing from both revolutionary egalitarianism and the people's movements against the Stuart monarchy during the 17th century, which in turn relied on the tradition of peasant wars dating back to John Ball and Watt Tyler.

As peasants and workers thronged the streets, they flew the black banner not as the banner of a specific, honed ideology but an expression of the immiseration and struggle of the poor against displacement, starvation, disease, and stigma. During the Gordon Riots of 1780, anti-Catholic chauvinism mixed with workers' resentment, guided by the red and black flag flown by popular leader James Jackson (Thompson, 1966, pp. 71–72). A loaf of bread trailing a black ribbon came to signify peasant rebellion—for instance, amid protests against looming war with Spain in 1798 when someone shattered the King's carriage window either with pebble or bullet. During one 1812 women's march, historian J. F. Sutton describes "sticking a half penny loaf on the top of a fishing rod, after having streaked it with red ochre, and tied around it a shred of black crape, emblematic...of 'bleeding famine decked in Sackecloth'" (Sutton, 1880, p. 286; Thompson, 1966, p. 65). Becoming the symbol of poor people's movements in their horizontal, grassroots, and communal form, the black flag, imbued with the sacred tones of sackcloth, represented the fearsome specter of "anarchy," plague, and riot.

Anarchy became the watchword for the riotous people of Europe. Yet with new generations of Romantic poets and artists from Shelly to Wilde to Morris came renewed interest in ancient fairy tales and popular insurrection, and the term "anarchy" became more versatile. In 1813, Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley penned a fairy tale about "Queen Mab," the fairy queen, rejecting the nations and authoritarian principles of industrial civilization. "Nature rejects the monarch, not the man," Shelley wrote, establishing his visions of a natural society peopled by those who scorned obedience in the name of the genius of truth (1822, p. 29). After the massacre of workers during a demonstration in 1819, Shelley responded with the famous poem, "The Mask of Anarchy," describing anarchy as the violent force of the ruling class: "On a white horse, splashed with blood; / He was pale even to the lips, / Like Death in the Apocalypse." In the final stanza, Shelley calls on the people: "Rise like Lions after slumber / In unvanquishable number— / Shake your chains to earth like dew / Which in sleep had fallen on you— / Ye are many—they are few" (Shelley, 1841, p. 231). Shelley shared his vision of a workers' revolution with his father-in-law, William Godwin, a philosopher inspired by conservative Edmund Burke who "provided the most coherent and comprehensive articulation of anarchist ideas around the time of the French Revolution" (Graham, 2016, p. 15). Soon, workers and intellectuals on the continent, like P. J.

Proudhon, began to embrace the notion of "positive anarchy" as an alternative system that utilized the critique of representative government in support of ordinary people (Graham, 2016, p. 35).

Against the cynicism of the "dismal science" and the "ordered society" anarchism embraced popular upheaval and free association but faced an irreconcilable crisis of industrialism. Yet as the double-edged meaning of the word implies, anarchism and its poetic image of a prerational world offered a glimpse of a future that could take reactionary or egalitarian directions. Proudhon, for instance, retained sexist and anti-Semitic tendencies despite the clear leadership role that women took in forwarding the cause of the working class. In some ways, the world of anarchy and myth became a link between the reaction and egalitarian movements that would be constantly interrogated and engaged with over time. In other ways, the eradication of myth held the same quality.

Did anarchism mean the destruction of the industrial system or its expropriation? Could anarchists overcome representative parliamentarianism and transform it into a new, popular system, or should anarchists return to a preindustrial state? Most social movements fell somewhere between the two extremes of industrial utopianism and rural anti-industrialism. When in 1848 the Chartists took to the streets of English cities and towns, their songs raised the memory of the 14$^{\text{th}}$-century Peasants Revolt: "For Tyler of old, / A heart-chorus bold, / Let Labour's children sing" (Buhle, p. 43). While Bakunin helped develop the collectivism that would inspire many early syndicalists in the 1860s and 1870s, his sensitivity to nature might be seen through his friendship with Élisée Reclus, a noted geographer and anarchist who rejected the binary categorization of "civilized" and "savage" (2013, pp. 215–216). When in 1886 the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions chose Beltane, the first of May, as the beginning of the eight-hour workday, they enfranchised the popular celebration within the heart of the US working class, or, *mutatis mutandis*, the US working class in the world of myth and wonderment.

It was a motion toward the movement's development and fertility. While Pyotr Kropotkin and Ricardo Flores Mágon embraced peasants as leading figures in global revolution at the turn of the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century, like Godwin, they also demanded the modernization of food production necessary to further develop civilization (Mágon, 2005, p. 85). May Day also signified, to some, the refusal of work and the spirit of sabotage and vagabondage. Although Emma Goldman certainly expressed support for the syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World in the early 1900s, she remained a bohemian outlier more focused on issues of feminism and *Mother Earth*, which was the name of her periodical. Similarly, the Industrial Workers of the World championed free time over labor, romanticizing the lifestyles of the tramp and hobo admiring nature while hopping trains across North America (Rosemont, 2003).

Facing the rise of jingoist nationalism throughout the United States and Europe, anarchism's romantic streak extended to an international rejection of war, racism, and imperialism. Decadent poet Oscar Wilde wrote fairy tales that he had learned from

his father, a medical doctor with a penchant for the spiritual world, with an ardor gleaned from his mother, a powerful player in the Irish nationalist movement. Waves of mendicant European mystics, like anarchist Gustav Landauer, fled cities and abandoned "civilization" as prophets searching for a simpler connection to nature and the universe. Paris became a hub for Chinese anarchists, while Indian anarchists integrated in radical left organizations from California to France, and on the subcontinent peasant hools (insurrections) collapsed the space between the vagabond and the rebel (Guha, 1999, p. 15, 154; Ramnath, 2011, pp. 65–67, 78–79). Some took the internationalism of decolonial struggle to mean drawing from ancient spiritual texts and stories from India to Central America. For some, the movement toward ecology against urban conditions manifested a nationalist return to blood and soil (Biehl & Staudenmaier, 1996). For those who hewed closely to the tested principle of equality, it held a close connection to the rejection of imperialism and capitalism, as exhibited in the aftermath of World War I, when Landauer participated in the overthrow of the government of Bavaria and the establishment of the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic of 1920.

The Branch of a Fir

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Marxist-Leninism wielded significant power in workers' movements around the world, overwhelming with its serious materialism that sense of play and wildness associated with "superstition." Yet one can trace an influential fusion of the critique of capital and embrace of nature from the Bavarian Soviet Republic to the academic work of the Frankfurt School, beginning two years later with the creation of the Institute for Social Research (Jacobs, p. 2). Joining Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxism and Idealism, the Frankfurt School addressed sexual repression and industrial efficiency as crucial to the mechanisms of capitalism. Influenced by Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and a school of phenomenology called Existentialism growing around a professor named Martin Heidegger, members of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt identified alienation as central to the crises of the modern world through which the individual feels out of joint with time and purpose. Though they identified Protestantism with the movement of the bourgeoisie vis-à-vis the Industrial Revolution, the Frankfurt School offered new philosophical approaches to archaic myths and legends.

In the words of Frankfurt School thinker Theodor Adorno, "occultism is the metaphysics of dunces." For Adorno's metaphysics, the spirit could be distilled to something essential to thought—perhaps what fellow Frankfurt Schooler Walter Benjamin would describe as "profane illumination, a materialist, anthropological inspiration" (Adorno, 1978, pp. 238–244; Benjamin, 2005, p. 209). Benjamin linked such illumination to the codex of law and reason, on the one hand, and a response of "mythical violence" to it, on the other. In an ancient system whereby the fates bind humanity to law, the human spirit wills its independence. Through the "divine violence" that follows, universal

forces unbind the laws of history and the world returns to the liminal space between reality and the supernatural (Benjamin, 1986, p. 294).

Benjamin's "profane illusions" might be seen throughout the writings of his Frankfurt School comrade, Ernst Bloch (2006), on eschatological, visionary, and prophetic strains of Christian revelation from Joachim of Fiore to Thomas Müntzer, and maintained direct connections to contemporary French avant-garde art movements against Catholicism and industrial rationalism—particularly Surrealism. Just as Russian Futurism emerged from the embers of the Symbolist "mystical anarchist" tendency, so had Surrealism joined the legacy of Romanticism, Dadaism, and other continental art movements seeking to challenge the narratives of Christianity, civilization, and modernity. Surrealists like Jacques Vaché and Andre Breton took profound interest in alchemy and magic associated in the poetry of Apollinaire with elves and witches, as in the text *L'hérésiarque et Cie*—"And everywhere, all round him, the elves of the *pouhons*, or fountains that bubble up in the forest, answered them..." (Green, 2005, p. 198; Palermo, 2015, p. 116; Rosemont, 2008a, p. 180). In his book *Nadja*, Breton depicts the fictional Madame Sacco as a *clairvoyante* and writes of "magnificent days of riot called 'Sacco-Vanzetti'" during which the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle "seemed to come up to my exception, after even revealing itself as one of the major strategic points I am looking for in matters of chaos, points which I persist in believing obscurely provided for me, as for anyone who chooses to yield to inexplicable entreaties, provided the most absolute sense of love or revolution are at stake and that this, naturally, involved the negation of everything else" (Breton, 1960, pp. 152–153). Breton disrupts the historical connections between places and times, insinuating the mythical violence of visionary poetry within everyday life. Despite the energetic spirit of revolution adopted by the Frankfurt School and Surrealists, the "heretical" interwar critique of industrial civilization and magical fascinations popular during the 1920s were never "owned" outright by the left.

Heidegger, himself, joined the Nazi Party, while the "conservative revolution" advocated by Ernst Jünger included a direct "critique of civilization" as stifling for the soul of the individual. The Frankfurt School ruthlessly criticized Carl Jung for deploying archaic tropes from mythology to justify the Nazi regime, while former Dadaist, Julius Evola, mutated the spiritual ideas of René Guénon into his own racist and anti-Semitic creed, calling for warrior elites to usher in a new spiritual imperium. The rise of the Third Reich in 1933 and subsequent conquest of France in 1940 forced "degenerate" left-wing movements like the Surrealists into exile, as the Nazis advocated a völkisch blood and soil movement and championed pseudo-spiritual ideas like those of Evola. However, the scattering of the seeds of revolution would only produce more vital, hybrid movements from Mexico to Algeria to New York City.

Perhaps the most popular theorist of the Frankfurt School, Herbert Marcuse, adopted a particularly libertarian mass political position linking the critique of industrial civilization to the overthrow of capitalism and decolonial struggles in the Global South led by various revolutionary Third World movements (Castro, 2016,

p. 323). After the defeat of the Reich in 1945, the Frankfurt School developed a critique of the "authoritarian personality" tacit within the "pre-fascist individual" as an outcome of modernism, not a deviation from it. For the Frankfurt School, liberation from the sexual repression of everyday life under industrial civilization actualized the critique of capitalism. Because modern industry produces a decadent system of structural inequality, overproduction, and waste, Marcuse asserted, even the Soviet Union succumbed to its own form of commodity fetishism (1969, p. 254). The solution between the West and East became libertarian communism, the abandonment of bureaucratic systems, and the celebration of regenerative play.

We Were Like Elves

Alongside the Frankfurt School's critiques, and in similar relation to Heidegger's philosophy, the French Existentialist movement grew to tremendous popularity during the 1950s and 1960s. Also emerging with roots in the interwar avant-garde, Existentialism threw civilization into question by problematizing the content of the individual as a subject. "We were like elves," philosopher Simone de Beauvoir recalled. "Our life, like that of all petits bourgeois intellectuals, was in fact mainly characterized by its lack of reality" (Bair, 1990, pp. 155, 186). In fact, Existentialism provided another phenomenon for intellectuals and revolutionaries all over the world to engage in new ways of living and experiencing the world. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, Being-for-others manifests the predicate of true existence lived in accordance with freedom and against alienation (Catalano, 1985, pp. 124–125). The subject of alienation in the modern world taken up by the Frankfurt School and Existentialists recurs also in the work of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, whose explorations of the urban environment and the critique of everyday life became tremendously important for a new generation of radicals emerging in the postwar period (Butler, 2012, p. 25).

In 1957, a group of Lefebvre's students created a small, avant-garde circle called the Situationists who produced films, art pieces, and tactics for resisting the patterns and procedures of quotidian repression. Contemporaneously, a host of intellectuals dissenting from the Structuralist ideology prevalent within France's institutions of higher learning buttressed the need to destroy the underlying logic of industrial civilization manifested in the alienating symbolic structures of everyday existence. These tendencies linked in the 1960s with widespread protest against the Vietnam War and in favor of Civil Rights and a strategy of Thoreauvian "civil disobedience"—an apparent direct reference to and inversion of the aforementioned Hobbesian resistance to nature.

The Port Huron Statement at the inception of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) incorporated grassroots, nonhierarchical organizing, while groups as varied as the Yippies, Chicago Surrealists, Black Panthers, and Black Mask shared similarities with and/or drew inspiration from a variety of sources—from the Surrealists and Existentialists to the Situationists and the Frankfurt School (Hahne & Morea, 2011, p.

46, 152–153; James, 1973, p. 99; Rosemont, 2008b). Meanwhile, Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King and the Conference on Racial Equality were mutually informed by the anarchist–pacifist Bayard Rustin, as well as the non-violent tactics of Mohandas Gandhi, who in turn took influence not just from Thoreau or traditional anticolonial resistance but also international anarchism in the figure of Russian critic of industrial civilization, Leo Tolstoy (Cornell, 2016, pp. 165–167, 220). Toward the later part of the 1960s, gay men founded the Gay Liberation Front to advocate for sexual diversity in society, later taking on the identity of "Radical Fairies" to both expropriate the slur "fairy" and to articulate a form of subjectivity alien to modern, rational heteronormativity (Thompson, Roscoe, & Young, 2011).

By 1968, an intellectual synthesis of the economic, ecological, and philosophical rejection of industrial civilization in its imperialist form contributed to a broad-based revolt against oppressive structures around the world. The massive unrest taking place in the United States, France, Czech Republic, and England, to name a few places, during the wave of strikes, riots, and insurrections of 1968 carried over to Italy the next year, when a wildcat strike at a Fiat plant ignited a "hot summer" of strikes and factory occupations. Amid this mass movement against not just the company bosses but the control of the Communist Party and trade unions, a new movement of Autonomism emerged. Rather than mobilizing around key organizations like the Party, people organized in sites of everyday resistance—their homes, neighborhoods, factories, public spaces. They openly opposed capitalism as well as fascism and the forms of repression tacit within capitalism, including the development of new properties and increase of rents amid poor living conditions and the plenitude of available buildings and land lying empty and unused.

The Autonomist movement soon became contentious. Fascists attempted to clandestinely enter and distort the movement through a so-called "Strategy of Tension" inspired by fascist occultist Julius Evola. According to this strategy, terrorist attacks on civilian infrastructure would directly challenge the machinations of everyday life, thus drawing people closer to the state and further from the left (Bull, 2008, p. 19). The other side to the Strategy of Tension, however, was the attempt to draw people toward an ecological subculture beyond left and right, faithful to one another as Italians rather than political actors. Using the language of Tolkien and old tales of fairies and elves, Italian neo-fascists sponsored a two-day music festival called "Hobbit Camp." The festive atmosphere provided a break from ordinary views on fascism and the "Years of Lead" brought on by the Strategy of Tension, thus providing an important foray into attempts to exploit the autonomist milieu from a green and archetypal "third position" (Forlenza & Thomassen, 2016, p. 232).

Autonomism spread across the Alps to a new generation of leftists in Germany. Mobilizing through networks of squatters and decentralized groups against the reemergence of fascism and weapons-grade nuclear power, the German Autonomists generated new tactics (for instance, wearing all black and donning masks to maintain anonymity) as well as an ecological concentration (Katsiaficas, 2006). This new movement, which

the ELF would later call the "Autonome squatters movement," deployed their tactics in the struggle against fascists. However, the growing green movement also contained right-wing elements associated with the blood and soil ideology, perpetuating the ongoing conflict between right and left over issue-based movements and especially ecology (Lee, 2000, pp. 214–219).

Earth Night Outs

To defend the environment against the ongoing encroachment of highways throughout England, activists embracing this growing, horizontalist counterculture began to create long-term encampments in the countryside, blockading construction companies in what became known as the "Anti-Roads Movement." The decentralized, autonomous, and leaderless Animal Liberation Front (ALF) formed in the 1970s from a group of hunt saboteurs, vandals, and arsonists dedicated to taking militant direct action in defense of animals (Newkirk, 2000, p. 61). British anarchist punk bands influenced by Situationism and Autonomism, among other movements, celebrated and propagandized such movements—particularly Crass, who inveighed against war, and Conflict, who penned lyrics in favor of animal rights.

Yet this period also saw the deindustrialization of much of England and rising working-class resentment, accompanied by the growth of fascist organizations like the National Front. Punk and reggae bands came together to oppose racism through an outdoors music festival called Rock Against Racism, joined at first by a group called Crisis. However, the members of Crisis became disillusioned with punk and the left, drifting toward affiliations with fascist ideologues. The new musical genre of neo-folk drew from the same vein of Hobbit Camp, seeking a palingenetic desire for the rebirth of an organic, ultranationalist British spirit. By the mid-1980s, an officer of the Official National Front named Troy Southgate developed a new "revolutionary nationalist" group promoting the strategy of "entryism." Naming the ALF specifically, Southgate called on ultranationalists to join ecological and otherwise autonomous movements, steering them toward fascism or dismantling them from within (Macklin, 2005, p. 318).

Meanwhile, across the pond, anarchist groups like the Movement for a New Society helped organize a large antinuclear network called the Clamshell Alliance in 1976 through non-violent praxis taken up by decentralized networks of cooperative collectives that abided by vegetarian, free-love lifestyles and egalitarian, consensus-based decision-making processes (Cornell, 2011, pp. 41–42). As Movement for a New Society grew in the Northeast United States, environmentalists frustrated with large conservationist nonprofits and federal regulatory agencies produced a new group called Earth First! in the Southwest.

Explicitly organized along "anarchic" terms, Earth First! developed chapters throughout the United States united in taking direct action to stave off the deforestation of roadless areas and the destruction of habitat by mining and development, as

well as dams, power plants, and hazardous agriculture. Though the catchphrase of "No compromise in defense of the Earth!" helped EF! grow manifestly, the group's non-hierarchical organizing strategy was compromised by cultural divisions between those who designated themselves "Rednecks for Wilderness" hostile to "urban issues" and those coming from the antiwar and antinuclear countercultures whom they deemed too "politically correct." Power struggles ensued over the direction of EF!, and in the late 1980s, the conservative faction began to abandon the group as the groups identified with the West Coast and supportive of prolabor feminist utopianism gained hegemony (Tokar, pp. 141–145).

Inspired by reports of a new group called the ELF, which had emerged from the anti-roads movement to form the basis for EF! in England by the early 1990s, the *Earth First! Journal* called for weekly "Earth Night Outs" where elves and fairies would sabotage logging equipment and developments. Though the "Earth Night Outs" resulted in relatively small-scale financial impact, EF! abandoned them in favor of alternative nonviolent tactics like forest occupations consisting of "treesits." The language of "elves" and "fairies" identified radical imagination as transgressive against the mechanization of the mind brought about through the works of Descartes and Locke, Hobbes and Bacon. Rather than understand "elves or unicorns" as real, the figures of fantasy came to symbolize deeper imaginative readings of reality, time, space, and order (Graeber, 2009, p. 521).

When a timber company committed an arson in the Warner Creek area of Western Oregon in order to begin logging old growth, EF!ers hastily created a temporary forest occupation to halt logging. They gradually constructed a permanent camp fortified by walls from which activists could launch incursions against equipment and block roads using slash piles and rocks not unlike the Irish brigands of the 17th century. As treesits grew more permanent, and occupations like the Minnehaha Free State developed across the United States, a new conceptualization of earth liberation emerged. Deriving in no small part from the inspired occupation of a liberated, indigenous territory in Chiapas, Mexico, by a small guerrilla force known as the Zapatistas, EF!ers began to locate their positions within the ambit of the "free state." Against the logics of industrial man, clock time, and work, free states could become sites of practical decolonization and rewilding.

With the Zapatistas' emphasis on solidarity with indigenous peoples, those engaged in "free states" attempted to return to natural relations between human and environment held within ancient pagan spirituality and premodern social organization. Much of these efforts held the stain of colonial prejudices, but issued from genuine intentions to serve the land and be good stewards of it, as well as healing the centuries-deep wounds of genocide and slavery (King, 1996). After police brutally closed Minnehaha, the Warner Creek occupation, and others with pepper spray and pain compliance holds, some angry participants decided to take the tactics of anonymous sabotage to more significant levels.

Rage and Action

The ELF of the United States was thus born through a combination of movements, influences, and ideals. In their first communiqué, the ELF acknowledged this openly, doffing their proverbial cap to everyone from the Diggers and Luddites to the Autonomen. While EF! debated the goal of dismantling industrial civilization, the ELF openly called for the total destruction of industrial civilization through a growing wave of massive arsons and sabotage. Another central influence for the ELF, green anarchist John Zerzan found inspiration in the writings of Heidegger and the Frankfurt School, viewing not simply industrial civilization but agriculture as the manifestation of human alienation from nature (2008, p. 17).

Though Zerzan's influence actuated environmental direct action, particularly among the green anarchists of the Pacific Northwest during the 1990s, he also inspired reactionary traditionalists like Russian fascist Alexander Dugin and Southgate. For Dugin and Southgate (and Evola before them), civilization describes the modern world against traditional cultures that carry the true spiritual and linguistic content of a place and those whose ancestors first cultivated it. Like Hobbit Camp, Southgate joined with English green anarchist Richard Hunt to launch a Heretics Fair in attempts to draw members of the green community toward fascism. Although it was not as prominent a feature as with the early green movement of Germany and EF! itself, the ELF had a small portion dedicated to a twisted right-wing ideology identifiably approximate to Southgate's "national-anarchism." Two participants, Nathan "Exile" Block and Joyanna "Sadie" Zacher, lived on the fringes of overlapping alternative and fascist subcultures in which an interest in the occult mixed with Scandinavian black metal and the adoration of Charles Manson. Block would later create a Tumblr account dedicated to esoteric fascist imagery and quotations from figures like Jünger, Heidegger, and Evola (Ross, 2017).

Yet for the Radical Fairies and the autonomous movement peopled by squatters, punks, and other misfits, the fairy world remains a liminal world of escape against everyday repression. The world of elves and fairies provided a "space of exit" for radicals hoping to unsettle the conditions of history and industrial development, but it would prove elusive as ever (Grubačić, 2014). To unlock this concept of the "space of exit" it might help to draw an analogy to popular film. Suggesting the power of fairy tales as vehicles for escape, Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* reveals the inner world of a girl caught up in the merciless forces of Generalissimo Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Despite or perhaps because of her unfortunate connection to the encroaching fascism, the girl gradually becomes enraptured by the fairy world of magic beyond the cold, authoritarian mercilessness of the Franco regime—a world populated not just by fairies but by antifascist guerrillas as well. Similarly, the anarchist collective Crimethinc.'s children's book, *The Secret World of Terijian*, tells of children who live on the outskirts of a forest falling under the ax. They find a bulldozer sabotaged with the word "ELF" scrawled on it and develop a fascination for the magical world of

elves as it exists within the unknown depths of the forest. The fairy world could also reemerge publicly as an act of protest, as when the Radical Faeries joined the 2005 protests against the G8 in Gleneagles, Scotland.

Between the years 2004 and 2006, after more than five years of trying, the FBI ensnared the ELF in a massive operation named Operation Backfire, which activists called the "Green Scare" (Potter, 2011). However, the ELF's rhizomal structure spread throughout Latin America where actions have continued. In Chile, where a strong left and powerful student movement exist, the ELF have claimed a number of actions against developers, construction firms, mining companies, and banks. In 2009, activists in Uruguay called for a conference of ELF and ALF supporters but called it off after a visit from Interpol. Across the Panama Isthmus, in Mexico, the journal *Rabia y Accion* (Rage and Action) emerged to support political prisoners, disseminate anarchist ideology, and provide accounts of direct action (Rabia y Action, 2010, p. 78).

Although *Rabia y Accion* provided a format for merging political prisoner struggles with the earth liberation movement, other groups have challenged that solidarity. The group Individualidades tendiendo a lo Salvaje (ITS—Individualists Tending Toward the Wild, 2013) presents open opposition to all forms of "collectivism," insisting on "indiscriminate violence" against industrial civilization amplified by the prospect of collateral damage (Jacobi & Tepetli, 2016). ITS does not differentiate in their hatred of the political right and left, launching attacks against both (Individualists Tending toward the Wild, p. 72). "Nature is the good, Civilization is the bad," they proclaim, yet they appear puzzled at the same time: "we cannot conclude that Nature-Civilization are concepts that have credibility in time and space" (p. 54, 56). Their answer: to denude the world of spirit and restrict it to its absolute material base, while strangely reasserting the Manichean binary of nature and civilization, because "the best duality would center itself in morality" (p. 56). It is only because ITS's moralism happens to be sophistry that their notion of "Civilization" simply mobilizes the "reality" of "nature" fully realized and reified.

ITS's justification for sending letter bombs to groups like Greenpeace or murdering women for being civilized betrays the material consequences of such a paradoxically mechanistic attitude corresponding to "natural laws," since "everything in Wild nature has an order and because we say that we obey this order and these natural laws" (pp. 67, 96). Of course, they do not seem to notice or mind that the naturalization of "non-harmful authority"—especially vis-à-vis the return to a traditional family under "natural law"—characterizes colonial absolutism backed by bullets and bombs (pp. 95–96).

That their feint toward traditional, indigenous communities dissolves into an intransigent indifference toward "strangers" should not surprise anyone, regardless of their pretensions to quasi-rational moral instincts. What is frankly astonishing is that ITS actually seems to believe that such callousness stems from an individualist rejection of "unnatural" altruism and not a particular kind of estranged incoherence (p. 179). ITS fulfills its own Oedipal egomania, attacking what they claim to defend using ratioci-

nation without reason while standing firmly on the anti-left, reactionary side of the ecological struggle. Their inane efforts at and critical relationship to Unabomber-style revolutionism (something like a "revolutionary traditionalism") would draw most of society toward a strong state rather than a long lineage of libertarian and egalitarian ecological and economic movements.

Another similarly senseless eco-group emerging in the United States following the worst of the Green Scare sought not only to provoke mass terror, but also to destroy the entire edifice of industrial civilization through a prolonged, militant campaign compared to the Allied "extermination bombing" of Germany during World War II. Calling itself Deep Green Resistance (DGR), this group grafts the history of anarchist organizing during the Spanish Revolution onto promises of a future egalitarian society following a race war concomitant to the collapse of industrial civilization. Foreseeing the effects of civilizational collapse they hope to bring about, DGR's leading writer Derrick Jensen predicts, "We will see an increase in violence against people of color.... My answer for people of color is, learn to defend yourself and form self-defense organizations" (Jensen, Keith, & McBay, 2011, p. 452). While criticizing the völkisch movement and various militant left-wing groups of the Vietnam War era, DGR promises to produce a feminist community aligned with natural hierarchies based on age and sex. For this reason, DGR rejects transgender people as the misogynistic reconstruction of patriarchal gender roles. Like ITS, DGR envisions a materialist lifeworld stripped of superstition, yet they support the Women's Liberation Front's efforts to join Christian dominionist group, Focus on the Family, in resisting pro-LGBT legislation and flirt with blood and soil ecology, suggesting that their proximity to white nationalist groups is not coincidental; they are actually representative of a deeply reactionary aspect of ecological thought that has existed at least since the 19th century (Matisons & Ross, 2015).

Other groups like Rising Tide, Radical Action for Mountain People's Survival, and remaining, persisting Earth First! chapters continue the struggle against oppression in all forms and have contributed to social mobilizations from Occupy Wall Street to Black Lives Matter. As long as industrialism represses people's basic needs and desires, social movements from every sector will continue to find the magic in expressing their power and establishing autonomy. As autonomous resistance proceeds in powerful formations against the frightful horizon of climate change, the revolutionary transformation of everyday life seems not only increasingly possible but also necessary.

Conclusion: We Must Listen to Poets

In this chapter, I have attempted to draw out the historical tradition of the Green movement that inspired the rise of the ELF, the critical role that the ELF held in advancing the struggle against industrial civilization in practical terms, and the ideological complexity tacit within that tradition, itself. From the Peasant Wars to the

Protestant Reformation to the inchoate proletarian class struggle to the emergence of autonomism, social movements issue from cries against repression and destruction, yet also carry contradictory currents that reproduce the power dynamics they hope to destroy. The enemy, once attaining a specific identity, is too often located within, thus causing a self-destructive cycle of animosity and terror.

My hope is that the international movement for liberation from exploitation and oppression might continue through the current, tragic epoch of reaction into which much of the world has plunged, but cautiously, and accompanied by knowledge and understanding of the potential pitfalls of radical organizing. Direct action in the short term bodes long-term implications that must be understood strategically and from the spirit of egalitarianism rather than individualized and alienated animus toward humanity, in general. That means that vulgar materialism provides as much of an obstacle to intellectual growth as does any class or clear-cut.

Finally, civilization is a reflexive and relative concept that must be contextualized in terms of colonialism and domination, as well as liberation, mutual aid, and community solidarity. To totalize particular subjects is to lose sight of their dynamic relation to other subjects, producing unbeatable enemies and risking mutually assured totalitarianisms. Hence, the struggle against the oppressive structures of industrial civilization must present viable alternatives, offer imaginative, though reasonable, solutions, and inspire not only agency among participants but general cogency among those seeking to foster similar sustainable and adaptive systems.

We have yet to find a proper remedy for the ailments of modern society that has not run aground on state repression or self-destruction (or both). Perhaps there is an intellectual technology we continue to develop that will bring about our collective empowerment against oligarchy and the greed that feeds it. Until then, we do still have fairy tales. Perhaps "those mischievous elves of lore" still play in a surreal landscape or through some hidden, trans-dimensional flight. Perhaps they will return with a little conjuring. To quote the luminary philosopher Gaston Bachelard, "The hidden in men and the hidden in things belong in the same topo-analysis, as soon as we enter into this strange region of the *superlative*, which is a region that has hardly been touched by psychology. To enter into the domain of the superlative, we must leave the positive for the imaginary. We must listen to poets" (1994, p. 89).

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