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Rainy Fascism Island

How to characterize this period post-crash, or post-post-crash if we assume that the measures taken (austerity, the destruction of the welfare state) have largely been set in motion, if not completed?[1] The deliberate shifting of blame that saw the public sector punished for the crimes of the private allowed various other modes of the dis- or rather misplacement of resentment to be mobilized. The targets are the same as they ever were – migrants, the un- or underemployed, those in need of help or support – but, given that the structures that enabled help and support had largely been dismantled even before "austerity" measures were imposed, there seems little left to attack. Those outraged by people receiving benefits, or those telling people to just get a job, must know that what meager benefits there are do not support a life, and that in many places there simply are no jobs to get. But nevertheless, resentment remains, or at least, somehow, a fantasy version of it can be mobilized such that resentment acts as a kind of looping device, self-nourishing and ever-expanding. What should we call this state of affairs? How best to identify it, in order to redirect or dismantle its energies?

The first element of the post-post-crash could be described as a "post-political antipolitics." Both UKIP (the UK Independence Party who won the European elections) and Britain First (a British National Party splinter group who have almost half-a-million Facebook likes) are explicit in their opposition to politics and politicians as such: those in power are simultaneously elite, out of touch, corrupt, indifferent to the plight of the "British" person (not-so-veiled code for white, Christian, capitalist or entrepreneurial, property-owing, xenophobic). Existing politics on this model is complex (read Brussels "meddling" with rules and regulations), bureaucratic, hypocritical, and lethargic. It matters not at all that the opposition to this has no content at all – UKIP famously have no manifesto in the usual sense of the word, only their stated opposition to Europe and immigration fronted by a collection of members who invariably say something racist, sexist, ableist, or homophobic in public and promptly resign (or often not). Their leader, Nigel Farage, a former stockbroker who narrowly avoided death in a light aircraft crash during the 2010 elections, seems to have based his entire campaign on ensuring that there are hundreds of photographs of him drinking pints of ale in pubs whilst looking like he's just told an offensive joke to some creepy mates.

Thus institutions end up filled with those who want nothing more than to destroy them – the European Parliament a shell stuffed with people shouting about how pointless it all is and

Harold Edgerton, *Bullet Through Banana,* 1984. Dye transfer photograph, Wilson Endowment Purchase.

how the whole thing should just be abolished. It is consequently possible to imagine every existing institution occupied by those who most want it abolished – prisons are already such a place, or schools, perhaps – but the banks are not yet filled with anticapitalists. To imagine a world in which prisons, asylums, and holding centers were not run but destroyed by those whom they seek to capture is to rethink the principle of institutions as such: Why *do* these places exist? In whose interest do they continue to exist? What would it take to negate them, forever?

The battle over space, or rather the false image of space peddled by those who seek to mobilize the energies of post-political antipolitics, is the second central element of this period. It is an old story – "we" are running out of room, there are too many people here already, resources are "scarce." This is not a position confined to the center-right and far right of course, as it is also the "logic" of all the major parties: immigration is a "worry" for all of them, because it is *supposed* to be a "public" worry. But beneath the continuities lie subtle shifts in rhetoric and policy that replace one public – that of a people who welcome immigration, who themselves migrated to Europe decades ago or more recently – with an imaginary public that is always against those it deems to be "other."

"Public interest" and the "public good" in the legal sense particularly used in immigration law has seen a worrying alteration in its usage. Prior to 2007, a foreign national convicted of an offence could challenge deportation on the grounds that banishment would not be conducive to the public good, where the public good is imagined as a collective whole where someone has a role or a relation, to labor or family or community. Since the UK Borders Act of 2007, however, if someone is convicted of an offence and has served at least twelve months, their deportation is "automatically deemed to be conducive to the public good and the Secretary of State for the Home Department is obliged to make a deportation order." Thus the UK public becomes a direct proxy for the state, rather than a space where the population resides. A friend of mine was recently polled regarding her political preferences. Asked whether she was interested in immigration, she said "yes" before quickly realizing that this would mean immigration would be registered as a "concern," rather than something she actively supports: thus public interest in immigration is simply seen as the interest in reducing or eliminating immigration. There is no room for any other "public" response to the question. Immigrants and asylum seekers themselves simply do not count as the "public" in such a world, either spatially, temporally, or politically, hence their ostracism as nonpersons in internment camps, and their silencing as residents. Antipolitics vies with politics to compete over who can come up with the most restrictive policies, who can claim to have stopped the most people, or who will act the "toughest" in the near future.

The possessive relation to space – "Britain's too small!" – represents the bizarre position of speaking on behalf of the land, as if the land was something that had some kind of central tie to identity, as opposed to something owned and divided by private interests. This land isn't your land, and if it were you certainly wouldn't need to speak on behalf of it. One of the many implications of the Occupy movement was the way in which it sharply revealed the absence of public space: there was nowhere to go, nowhere in fact to "occupy," no matter how many tents were put down. Meanwhile, libraries are closed, rents skyrocket, and no new social housing is built. Those responsible for landgrabs are ignored in favor of blaming those who have the least relation to space of any kind.

There is nothing really new about much of this, apart from the rapidity with which the directed and stage-managed misplacement of resentment happens. Those who are the most privileged believe that they, above everyone else, are the true victims, suffering from a lack of sovereignty, a lack of enjoyment: the last people who should be begrudged are the first to be hated by those who have the most. The aesthetics, too, are the same as they always were: Britain First, who seek to "lobby, cajole, expose, demonstrate, and organize on behalf of our beleaguered people" against the supposed threat of "militant Islam," are covered in lions, flags, soldiers with stupid hats. UKIP is all pound signs, Churchill, pints, and Cadbury's chocolate purple. Animals are always being cruelly slaughtered by religious others, rather than being killed in a nice British way, one supposes. It is the aesthetics of the rural pub, where Farage feels most at home, of the "Keep the Pound!" sign in a field somewhere in a shire. It is the fantasy that Britain is primarily rural – UKIP's election video features an angry sheep farmer – despite the fact that more than 80 percent live in urban areas and agriculture contributes 0.5 percent to GDP. It is Britain imagined through the lens of feudalism, with modernity disappearing under the muddy crunch of Wellington boots marching to a brass band on the way to church, or perhaps to see the Queen flap her wrist about. It is the Britain of secret courts, of unpopular wars, of mass surveillance, of wiretaps and undercover police officers, of complete unaccountability for deaths in custody, of political prosecutions and the violent crushing of

protest, of institutional sexism and racism, of "British values," of private schools, of food banks, of passport checking and "routine" stop and search, of security guards and processions for the war dead, of the mawkish worship of children and animals, of money flowing through the city but never from it to anywhere else.

The feudal shire that is Britain, or rather England, has never gone away. The financial class governs as it always did, just with fancier technology, like *Lords of the Rings* meets Fruit Ninja, an app that the prime minister, David Cameron, according to one aide, spends a "crazy, scary" amount of time playing. All these people go to the same schools, the same universities, have the same slave-owning, land-pilfering ancestors. They all know each other and visit each other's country homes, where they hang out with journalists and celebrities to reassure each other that the world belongs to them. The shire is home, where money and power begin and end. To abolish Britain would be to abolish the shire and everything that follows from it.

The fatalism of this feudal financialization – the idea that however inoperative, destructive, and untenable the continued reduction of all value to economic exchangeability might be, it is the only way – fuses all too easily with the regressive antimodern sentiments of ultranationalists everywhere, where money meets malice and patriotism meets the property market. In the era of post-political antipolitics, where the Futurists' dream that libraries would perish is speeding up, it is resentment that congeals and sticks. Time and space didn't die, as the Futurists imagined. They were merely sold off. Banks live on as if in some perpetual present, propped up eternally by the state, less zombie than Zimmer-frame capitalism. All else can perish, if it can no longer be asset-stripped or mined for the antipathy of a public made cruel by the myth that it is the one who suffers at the hands of those who have no weapons.

A video of a fox hunt played backwards would show the fox chasing the hounds arse-forwards, with posh people on horses running for their lives. I hope they do.

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The phrase that serves as the title of this piece, coined (most likely) by someone on Twitter in 2010, possibly Huw Lemmey or whoever @piss_wizard is, perfectly describes contemporary Great Britain.

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