

FIVE YEARS///

Fragments for an antifascist
newsletter 22/02/2020

Five Years was founded as an organisation in 1998. From the outset Five Years intention has been to maintain a long-term working context and physical environment guided by principles of organisational co-operation, while supporting the sometimes conflicting drives of creative autonomy, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. To an extent it has functioned as a form of sustained research into whether individual or collective artistic agency, and dissenting perspectives on cultural production, can be supported in an open and non-competitive structure. Functioning without individual directorship or regular funding, operating across zones of marginality and precarity, its continued existence is as much about its ethics as its activities, which have a symbiotic relationship to one another. Five Years defines itself as an artists' organisation rather than an artist-run organisation: its purpose is to facilitate, support and make public its members' projects and by extension the projects of those artists invited by its members to contribute to the programme - the physical gallery space is a shared resource, a tool rather than a showcase. Five Years' intention is not to play a secondary or supportive role to the commercial or established institutional sectors, as a 'springboard' for so-called 'emerging' artists: it has endeavoured to create an environment where investigation and artistic development can be sustained over long periods of time with relative autonomy. We decided to approach the production of this newsletter in an equivalent way - as the starting point for a self-critical framework within which members will gather research and reflection on anti-fascism and the psychology of Fascism itself, what is or makes a subject fascist, from a personal perspective. Foucault's introduction to *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, has been a point of reference to relate to in this enquiry. The material presented here comprises personal narratives alongside a series of critical questions on what it means to self-constitute as a group and collective in relation to the complexities of our era's inescapable neoliberal dynamics. As such, being intrinsically related to the rise of a complex fascism which is overlaid into modes of neoliberal conduct within the Institution, there has been an 'unheimlich' dimension to its emergence, beneath an indistinguishable mask of the familiar. Our contexts in turn have mutated, developing a complicity as a sort of pre-ambule for the fascist life to bear fruit. Adorno's administered society becomes encoded in the puritan, fearful awe towards new master figures of power such as the curator, who gets followed with a suspect fervour, becoming the sole executor of paradigms which can't be contested. This necessity, that 'all ought to seem' fair, as in Machiavelli, when it is *not*, stages an appearance of fairness as *simulacra*, which hides extremely cold, power/authority based, and ruthless, self-preserving politics of narcissistic relations.

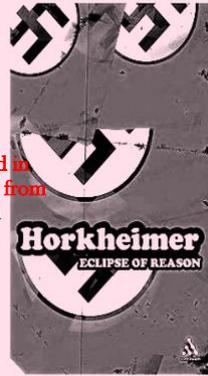
When I hear Monika talking about her clinical experience, it is not only academic theories of fascism that begin to appear inane; the very idea of producing a critique of them seems equally trivial. In fact, the whole effort would be superfluous if we had a convention for understanding and behaving, a way of listening that sensed the significance of all this for the theoretical pronouncements we deliver from on high: children committed to psychiatric care, who articulate in the language of the "deviant" or the dumb a whole system of disabilities that make up this life and who carry that system about with them in their own helplessly rebellious bodies, expressing it in images that compel any viewer to perceive their sickness as a superior form of innocent wholeness, though their bodies are said to have "broken down." When she tells me of contact, true contact with lightning and rolling thunder, of the production of an intimacy through the feeling and exploration of distances - an intimacy that is not consuming, distance that is not far away - a place where caution is a beautiful word, related to foresight and to a feeling for the reality of a suffering that wishes for change but is caught in impulse and double bind, I think then of the studied or hectic nonchalance of all those (myself included) who are striving to combat fascism here and now, but are blind to the experience of the nonfascist... at this point, the sentence seems to want to continue, "I begin to despair" (but this is the reality of a frozen semantics, not, in the end, of any feeling I might have).*Monika Berger - a child psychologist referred to by Theweleit here in the context of her guidance and input during the writing of the book.*
Klaus Theweleit (from *Male Fantasies Vol 1*)

*My body grew-up with Fascism and Fascists in Franco's Spain: I can say that I am a subject totally familiar with its intrinsic abuse and the specifics of the fascist ethos, merged with a retrograde superstitious relation to Catholic religion and Catholic rule, which was established and implemented via the military class, the police and the school. When I was 12 years old, a priest told me to get out of the church and that I was The Devil. Two years later, after being persecuted and abused by some teachers at my college, I decided to put an end to all that. It was 1974 and I left school forever. In 1977 Franco died, and Foucault wrote an essay about how Franco remained undead. Today many of us in Catalonia suffer, seeing that what many older people had been saying is true: Fascism never left and fascists are out and up and running. For someone who knew so intimately the smell and terror of fascism as a quotidian reality, the evidence of newer forms and shapes (shapeshifters?) of being fascist is terrifying. Nights of pale terror and nightmares of new parades of peoples all screaming and chanting, waking up to the reality that those were actually happening out there on the streets. But not as the uniformed white supremacist, rather those who I have to work with, unleashed before me. It came, and there it was: a mutation between us, as some got swept up by a sort of inner fascism, a hyper narcissism that opened the cracks for all this bestial energy to be awoken. Defamation, anger, cancelling culture without proof, social media viral post-truth and colder relations. At the same time, a passion and gut feeling of fight or flight and speedy desertion of signalled names. People who once had been our friends. Learning how curators in positions of power dare to say out and loud, that I am "crazy", without the least remorse in their discriminatory souls. Is it not the most nazi-fascist way of being, the one that assumes superiority and entitlement? Discrimination on the basis of class, or race, physical and mental ability. How they despise women who suffer from a nervous disposition. I felt as Antoinette/Bertha, from *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, once felt - the hypersensitive, out of place Creole, who suffered the shock of cultures. Then I realised that Adorno and Horkheimer were so right and that Foucault also saw it coming. Hannah Arendt too wrote about the preamble to Nazism starting as just a social mood and small gestures in the bourgeois salons of intellectuals between the culture stars in Berlin or Paris, and perhaps in England this happened too. I feel it and it's happening here between us, here in the realms of the art-world, worst without most of us noticing the shift, the thing.*
No Spain No <https://kv53139.blogspot.com/>

Microfascisms



Miss Rofia Lintorn-Orman dressed in British Army uniform. Photograph from National Portrait Gallery collection dated circa 1916.



This person is of average height but slender build. He possesses a certain angularity of gesture and gait, a performative sharpness modulated by a soft voice and a tendency to look downwards rather than straight ahead. Over the seven or eight weeks in which I sat across from him in a continental philosophy class, he spoke clearly about his wish to rescue fascism from the opprobrium heaped upon it by historical Marxism. If freed from this kind of propaganda, it might be recognised for what it is, allowing for its potential reinstatement into 'respectable' discourse. As popularised by Mussolini, fascism was primarily an economic system he said.

Questions raised about the exact nature of the system failed to elicit much insight. Similarly, while fascism in itself was not responsible for Hitler's actions, who could

say how many people really died in the Holocaust? The evidence simply wasn't there, he argued, and such statistics as existed had to be regarded with scepticism. What methods were used to determine the scale of the Holocaust? How reliable were they? How free of perceptual bias? This man, who presented himself with an old fashioned air of courteousness, of politesse, was a Trump supporter. In him, he saw a personification of the spirit of transgression, a man more than capable of laughing in the face of mere moral righteousness, of harnessing heterogeneous capacities, of evoking ubermensch capabilities... Only he didn't use the last word of course. He didn't really need to. Google this person, and lengthy trails of invective stream out against him, the result of a minor brush with art world notoriety following a seemingly pro fascist public intervention a few years ago. I knew nothing of this at first, but later, reading some of his online posts, I discovered that he claims to be against fascism, to be motivated by little more than the desire to defend free speech, alongside, no doubt, a contrarian desire to provoke the left/liberal tendency to no platform opinions they oppose. At the very least, this man seems to embody an element of what theorist Ana Teixeira Pinto calls the 'fascist curious', a trait held in common with members of the alt-right and Neo-Reactionary movements, whose aestheticised regard for fascist thinking comes coupled, in this case, with an unsettling underplaying of the real world implications of life under a Fascist regime.

Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between macro, or State level fascism, and the psychoaffective domain of microfascisms. These latter are tendencies that lurk largely unacknowledged in all of us, and which, according to Guattari, are scattered everywhere within the social realm. Operating on a personal, collective and mass level, they form an unconscious bedrock of aggression beneath the surface of societies, emerging as regimes of power through modes of reciprocal engagement with the State. They are, they say, what make fascisms so dangerous, since even professed activists will fail to recognise the enemy within. A couple of other minor encounters may perhaps serve

to illustrate these entanglements. About fifteen years ago, a temporary employer invited me to stay for a weekend in a small town outside Paris. A long term Liberal Party activist, she somehow needed me, and any friends I cared to bring along, to make up the numbers at a rally in support of an Iranian opposition party whose name I never discovered. Over the course of several hours, we sat on an open playing field beneath a sweltering sky, watching rows of people standing in formation, singing anthems with fierce conviction, brandishing large green, white and red flags, while it dawned on me slowly that the spectacle I was witnessing might be more than mere spectacle... Later, in the courtyard of our hotel, an elderly man, also British, white haired, made a bee line for me. Instantly, he launched into a monologue about the need for population control, the necessity of cutting down on the breeding potential of intellectually deficient people. Caught off guard, I tried to answer him, but to no real effect. And then it struck me that he'd targeted me for a reason, and that reason was written on my face, in a script he thought he understood, but which, in fact, he could barely begin to decipher.

Years later, on a bus heading towards Central London at about twelve o'clock on a midweek afternoon, I sat across the aisle from two men in their thirties. Leaning into each other, they spoke, in loudly aggravated tones about a widely reported incident at a New Year's Eve celebration in Berlin when large numbers of Middle Eastern men, some described as refugees, had

moved stealthily through the crowds for the purpose of sexually harassing local women. The reports had been lurid in their condemnation. The men made their disapproval plain. And then one of them abruptly changed tack, stating clearly - Anders Breivik had the right idea. It took me a moment to register that the person he spoke so highly of was the same far right fanatic, who in 2011, had slaughtered 69 Norwegian young people at a summer camp on the island of Utøya. The man's companion murmured his assent. I swivelled round to gape at them, half willing them to notice me. But they didn't. Nor did they lower their voices. They kept on talking, while the bus, impervious, meandered on its way. So how to go about combatting these fascisms? By examining our own complicity with them? By forming protest groups on or offline? By coming together to analyse texts, stage interventions, make work that embodies a radical spirit of inclusivity? Five Years aims to make a long term project of this task...

8. In short. Can our action be made apparent not in the content of the texts nor in their forms, but through their relations? That is, the necessarily disharmonious ensemble that they constitute. In practice.
9. This discontinuity can be made effective through nonclosure? Opening a search for a more radical way of speaking that is situated outside discourse?

Joint Enterprise: A (Possible) Five Years Constitution.



We need to put in words how we are constituted. This thing needs to be written. All (possible) inputs have begun. And so now, if we gather them, we can work upon (them). We are trying to demonstrate what we need to cover. All that we ask is that we all try to give some kind of formulation to this. We are fully aware that these five sections might not be the best way to go about our purpose, but we strongly feel that whatever format you use addresses the following issue of identity, education and community.

1) Who are 'we'? / 'How' are 'we' constituted?

Is Five Years a free association of artists, audiences and producers?

2) Is Five Years a not-for-profit organisation committed to the maintenance and support of art and artists? Are Five Years' aims to produce a framework whereby the practising and reception of art might be undertaken as a voluntary and autonomous

activity? [Plenty to discuss here?]

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4) What is the method of doing (the methodology or ethos)?

Does Five Years operate under the principles of co-operation, equality and solidarity with democratic procedures underlying their decision making?

5) What 'impact' / 'effects' do 'we' aim to produce?

Does Five Years aim to operate as an educational and community minded organisation (with education understood as the emancipatory realisation of potentiality and community understood as the free movement and distribution of singularities)? [Again, plenty to discuss...]

If Five Years were to be supported what is it that would be supported in real terms?

Do 'we' act as a meeting place for ideas, art-works and people, facilitating different and heterogeneous individuals and networks that in turn constitute a number of different communities and publics? 'We' put these themes forward as they emphasise how 'we' understand 'our' organisation to operate within the terms of an artworld, on the experience of many of 'us' as within art institutions as educated/educators and how art as a 'good' is often framed as educational - can 'we' formulate this beyond 'gallery talks'? and finally community - if 'we' are a community of practice - how can this be named? 'We' tentatively ask 'you' to have a stab at responding. Or put together 'your' own version of things. Then 'we' can construct a beginning from this...

Next interventions and projects

*Workshop at Archway Library coinciding with the
Islington Festival of Storytelling*

*An antifascist reading group session in the
library. Saturday 21 March from 2-4pm. Which will
be followed up with an evening film screening in
Five Years space*

Contemporary works

*1. Extract from The New Faces of Fascism: Populism
and the Far Right, Enzo Traverso, Verso, 2019 in
which he discusses his notion of contemporary
post fascism as a counter to traditional versions.*

*2. There is also Lights in the Distance by Daniel
Trilling, Pan McMillan, 2018 - about the Refugee
Crisis and the EU, although this would be better
during the proposed Islington Refugee Week.*

Classic texts:

*3. The Mass Psychology of Fascism, Georges
Bataille*

*4. An extract from Hannah Arendt - The Origins of
Totalitarianism or similar text interventions and
projects*



<http://fiveyears.org.uk/index.html>



Simone Weil in Barcelona as miliciana for the CNT

Binding Principles

Image description: Miss Rotha Lintorn-Orman dressed in British Army uniform. Photograph from National Portrait Gallery collection dated circa 1916.

The background is soft and fuzzy, in contrast to the woman staring directly at the camera. The slightness of her frame is also at odds with the severity of her military garb. Her left wrist holds back a crease of greatcoat fabric, hand resting on hip as if challenging those who would judge her for lacking in femininity. The soft background lends no other clues of where this has been taken. Bournemouth. London. Serbia. No matter. It is her decision to record the fact of her military service at the age of twenty one. An androgynous figure with cropped hair, she looks out from the photograph demanding our attention. The gaze outward is clear and direct, confrontational. I've had looks like this from women in clubs before. Not 'fight me' but 'fuck me'. I'm interested in the macho posturing. Presumably she is mimicking the martial appearance of father and grandfather before her, both old warhorses. Her body language speaks not of gendered lack but of privilege; of upper-middle class entitlement. I have read somewhere that before this coming of age moment her adolescence was committed to the service of the Girl Scouts, a proto-military organization founded by her mother. It is easy to blame our mothers for our troubles. In the Scouts she develops an early predilection for uniforms. Indeed, is rarely seen *not* wearing a uniform thereafter. I'm interested in whether this regalia is *her* identity, *her* politics, a desire to align herself to a collective through costume. An alignment with order, hierarchies, conservative values, service to King and country.



Henri Troppmann goes from his sick-bed in **Paris to Barcelona** during the **Spanish Civil War** in time to witness the first Catalan **General Strike**. He is torn between three different women, all of whom arrive in the city at that time. One of them, Lazare, is a Marxist Jew and political activist, who is preparing herself for prospective torture and martyrdom at the hand of **General Francisco Franco's** troops if she is captured.

Simone Weil is Lazare in the novel, G.Bataille account is quite biographic and is a haunting presence knowing her story in Barcelona.

Her cross-dressing marks her out for many as a cranky spinster. Cross-dressing. Does that even exist anymore? I do want to like her butch-ness, but I am struggling with the arrogance of her glare. Really, she could care less what people say of her. What she does care about, as she discovers in the years after being invalidated out of the army with a nasty case of malaria and post-traumatic stress disorder, is in keeping Britain free of Communism. Her diary records a moment of epiphany, experienced whilst digging her vegetable garden; she saw the clear and present threat to her ultra-conservative values being undermined by the rise of trade unionism and the Labour Party. Her vision of Britain, of being overrun by foreigners and Marxist-Leninists, is combined with her own, personal, frustrations; the mind-numbing tedium of civilian life, of gardening, of her own repressed sexual desires. Seeking shared-values and solidarity she places an advertisement calling on other like-minded women to join her in forming a para-military association. Her mother financially supported the formation of her anti-communist league that, in many ways, resembled the mother's own nascently fascist Girl Scouts. It was run along military lines with uniformed regiments of women drilled and skilled in Ju Jitsu and other survival techniques. The mother cut her off when tales of her daughter's self-medication through alcohol, drugs and orgies became too prevalent to ignore. Artist collectives are surely bound together by such things as solidarity, cooperation, and shared ideals. This text is coming from within such an organization. I'm interested in artists who choose to work together and how individual and collective identities within that alliance are represented and made visible. What are the limits of that association, the unspoken terms of engagement? What binds us and what breaks us? We come together at openings, at closings, through sexual liaison and breakup, through education, over drinks, over tasks, over costs, by email, by necessity, in galleries and workshops, in protest, in rooms that are common and sometimes free. We feel part of a union until the point at which our collaboration no longer functions for the good of all or one.

Lintorn-Orman was the first female leader of a British political party. Hers was the face of the British Fascisti, an overtly fascist organisation that predated Moseley's British Union of Fascists.

Maria Ginesta, a 17 years old Communist in action during Spanish Civil War in Barcelona



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