

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



Terrorpop, a manifesto

Or, how to wield your free speech like a weapon
against the technofascists who are taking over
OUR internet!

Maddison Stoff

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Terrorism is a word which increasingly holds little meaning as we move towards the last years of the 2020s. When Luigi Mangione was accused of shooting a healthcare executive in 2024, the US state described it as an act of “terrorism”, even while a significant percentage of the working class celebrated it for what it really represented: a first strike from the wider population against the otherwise unaccountable billionaires and their supporters for their total disregard for everybody else’s lives for their own selfish reasons. Being against the genocide in Palestine has been described as terrorism and prosecuted accordingly. Even supporting centrist left wing parties, being trans, or being against fascism in general, have all been intentionally reinterpreted by our emerging neofeudal ethnostates as terrorist acts.

Clearly, it no longer describes mass violence intended to frighten or manipulate whole populations and describes instead whatever the despotic heads of states oppressing those same people believe it should be. Therefore, an increasingly

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large number of people can no longer actually say that we're against "terrorism" without damning ourselves for holding socially progressive views or being targeted for genocide by capitalist/fascist ideology.

There is no "true meaning" to the word terrorism to return to or fall back on. Meaning is and always has been defined predominantly by use, even before the billionaires took over our media ecosystem and began controlling it to pervert our consensus on reality to their benefit, and unleashed sycophantic, useless, delusion-maximising LLM software to further erode our ability to do anything about it.

We are living in a world where all traditional avenues to systematic change have been co-opted or declawed to the degree that even telling the truth about the world we live in, let alone working towards the girliepop* future that we'd otherwise be capable of building, has become increasingly impossible. We only ever get a break from everything that burdens us, no relief. The only thing that ever changes is our situation getting even worse.

Terrorpop and terrorpunk are two sides to the same coin, two art movements from historically opposite sides of the art-world emerging to respond collectively to the current moment. This also means that ultimately they're both punk sub-genres, taking on a slightly different framing with regards to their position within popular culture. Both are equally political, coming from predominantly independent artists. Much of the sub-text of these projects remains largely undocumented, for now: the nature of the panopticon we're living in is such that, even though terrorism is a word that holds no genuine meaning beyond an excuse for the government to murder or incarcerate the people it describes as terrorists, it's still dangerous – perhaps even counter-productive – to align yourself too loudly or directly with it.

The memory of the failed *War on Terror*, and the spectre of the real mass violence which it used to describe, still looms too

large in far too many heads to mean you'll get much sympathy if your state decides to make a personal example of you as a terrorist. Instead of that, how it tends to work is on a sliding scale of presenting certain kinds of imagery in a positive light that are associated with terrorism depending on how visible the artist is presenting it.

A music video with imagery of pipe bombs and riots, intentionally featuring a pop star with a socially critical and nihilist aesthetic, may be as classed as terrorpop, as is failing an audition on purpose to promote your own music in a way that points out what a capitalist charade the show that you're auditioning for actually is. Hiding counter-cultural messaging alluding to the need for revolutionary violence in an otherwise regular pop song is also terrorpop. It's intended to be mass culture aimed towards a mainstream audience with plausibly deniable, almost subliminal pro-social political messaging.

But terrorpunk tends to be more actively threatening and direct. I've seen it used online to describe two emerging literary genres, including the one I'm working on with Corey Jae which is cyberpunk, but focused specifically on anti-capitalist and anti-fascist violence. Our stories celebrate, rather than punishing or condemning, so-called "terrorists" as often-necessary catalysts for social change. The other, unrelated form of "terrorpunk" I've found online is a disability-led horror subgenre promoting personal empowerment through embracing the "irrational fear" that neurotypical and able-bodied people often feel of people who have disabilities, which is often used as an excuse to decenter and dehumanize us.

In both cases you could describe the genres as a form of intentional agitprop designed for a particular political end: a style of writing that I personally have been intentionally working on long before Corey Jae and I came up with the word "terrorpunk" to describe it. It seems to quietly becoming the zeitgeist, as more people are becoming aware that the traditional activist, economic, and political methods to make progressive

change increasingly have been turned into hamster wheels by our billionaire-backed ruling classes. Designed to keep us busy and divided, they will never make us free.

Terrorism is no longer unthinkable within that framework. It can't be, when the state defines it as everything that we already are just by existing. If you are a member of a marginalised group at all, by gender, race, or even class, you're either already a terrorist in (and target of,) the emerging neo-feudal ethnostates that the rich have planned for us all over the world. The term is meant to unify and galvanize us as a planet against fascism, both within our social mainstream and traditional counter-cultures: as fascism represents a universal existential threat to the survival of our species, and currently controls the propaganda-driven epistemology of the false reality of end stage (grift-economy,) capitalism we're forced to reside in until the world economy finally collapses.

Embracing your false status as a terrorist, and responding to it, even covertly and indirectly, like many of us currently feel compelled to do for our own safety, offers countless benefits to people who have been slandered by it without their consent. It can serve as therapy, or power fantasy. It can even help to plant a seed subconsciously in people's heads that certain types of direct action might be possible for them. It's sort of like the cultural equivalent to guerilla gardening. Since we know now how much propaganda has been used against us by the ruling class to mould the world into a shape that suited them, it represents an increasingly vital tool to fight against them, since most other methods have been funnelled into something more akin to controlled opposition to prop up the already-failed world capitalist economy.

Only art is free enough to take a stand, for now. If you'd like to see it stay that way, you should work a bit of terrorpop/terrorpunk into your process too. Attempting to be apolitical in a time of rising fascism turns your art into a tool to justify their ideology. You need to take control of it and turn your art

into a weapon to inspire social change instead, while we're still able to publish our own art online at all!

*girliepop is my own shorthand for a possible trans-femme led, anarcho-communist future I've recently began promoting from my Bluesky. Our alternative to comrade is "bestie". We have as little ideology as possible, and a fun, feminine aesthetic, to encourage viral spread over the internet while avoiding the attention of surveillance agencies by looking harmless and benign instead of militant or otherwise intimidating. It is, essentially, the direct inverse of our present society, a variant on what is often called "fully automated luxury gay space communism", but relying on nothing more than our current level of technology and communication to function. It runs entirely from mutual consent, demanding nothing but arresting billionaires to redistribute all their stolen wealth to fuel a global UBI program, (and hopefully a month-long world lockdown to finally eradicate the COVID-19 virus, while changing all jobs to be remote where we can,) and remove the toxic influence of conservatism (a memetic smokescreen thrown up by the billionaires to protect the economy that maintains both their power and existence,) and the wealthy from the world. Work is strictly optional in girliepop society, replaced by "play", ala Bob Black in "The Abolition of Work (1991)". We will run via the wish economy, ("forget what I need, give me what I want, and it should be fine!") aiming for a world where nobody is traumatized or desperate enough to want to damage, exploit, or abuse it. There will be no hierarchy and no borders. We will quickly work towards removing the need for currency too. The best part is, it's possible without violence, if we manage to get most people to play along! Feel free to adapt the idea for your local context too. It's very possible. More so than it's ever been before. But if we want to change the world forever, we'll need everyone behind us, all together. We'll also need to do it all at once! ☒☒