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Otherworlds Review #6: Always Coming Home

The Otherworlds Review

February 9, 2018

**February 2018 · Sun in Aquarius · Full moon and total
lunar eclipse in Leo**

I am not a progressive. I think the idea of progress an invidious and generally harmful mistake. I am interested in change, which is an entirely different matter.

– Ursula K. Le Guin

I approached the confines of death, and having trod on the threshold of Proserpine, I returned therefrom, being borne through all the elements. At midnight I saw the sun shining with its brilliant light; and I approached the presence of the Gods beneath, and the Gods of heaven, and stood near, and worshiped them.

– Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*

But as always we refuse to despair. We are aware that many comrades are searching for possibilities

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to attack the enemy and forge ties with other rebels through the spreading of anarchist ideas and struggle proposals, in a time and space that abandons all political spectacle. It is probably the most difficult path, because it will never be rewarded. Not by the enemy, not by the masses and most probably not by other comrades and revolutionaries. But we carry a history inside of us, a history that connects us to all anarchists and which will obstinately continue to refuse to be enclosed, either within the 'official' anarchist movement, or in the armed-struggle-ist reflection of it. Those who continue to refuse to spread ideas separately from the ways in which we spread them, thus trying to exile all political mediation, including the claim. Those who don't care much about who did this or that, but connect it to their own revolt, their own projectuality which expands in the only conspiracy we want: the one of rebellious individualities for the subversion of the existent.

– *Letter to the Anarchist Galaxy*

January ended as it began, with a full moon, a so-called “blue moon,” a luni-solar calendrical anomaly. But this time there was also a total lunar eclipse, with the nocturnal Sun in the sign of the divinized wheel-turning, water-bearing youth Ganymede and the blood-red Moon in the golden feline kingship of Leo. A herald to the fall of wicked kings and the apotheosis of revolution, the turning of the wheel, always coming home.

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On January 22, 2018, Ursula K. Le Guin passed into the spirit worlds. But as a writer, she had always held the key to those worlds and more, and had brought many little glimpses of those worlds through those doorways into ours, each a tiny mirror. Although she did not name herself an anarchist, she said that

our power to manifest as total freedom. “Your life is your life. Know it while you have it. You are marvelous. The gods wait to delight in you.”

Hymn to Aphrodite

Ursula K. Le Guin

*Venus solis occasus orientisque, Dea pacifica,
foam-borne, implacable, tender:
war and storm serve you, and you wear
the fiery tiara of the volcanoes.
Young salmon swimming downriver
and the old upstream to breed and die
are yours, and the fog-drinking forests.
yours are the scattered emerald half-circles
of islands, the lost islands. Yours
are the sunken warships of the Emperor
and the slow swirl of pelagic polymers.
The moon is your hand-mirror.
Mother of Time and daughter of Destruction,
your feet are light upon the waters.
Death your dog follows you down the beaches
whining to see the breakers break
into blossoms, into immortal
foam-flowers, where you have left
the bright track of your passing.
pity your fearful, foolish children,
O Aphrodite of Fukushima.*

To belong is unrelated to “rightfulness” in the context of the galaxy. To belong is predicated only on the daily decision to commit. To belong is to be welcomed and nourished. To belong is to ask “Do I welcome? Do I nourish?” The networks we keep will thrive or dissolve along these questions and answers, the commitments to commitment. To belong is to answer “I am welcomed, I am nourished here.” The anarchist galaxy is always celebrating a birthday.

Don’t be mistaken. Where there is no rule, no law, no leader there are as many warriors for freedom on as many planes willing to defend the galactic power of our circular-eternal comrades. We are without time but keep close watch. There are certain enemies. The slave traders, the missionaries, the soldiers’ soldiers.

It’s the same old theme. Violently, capital corrupts the calm. Happily, capital demands unwelcome, confusing warmth with performance of warmth. Beware the long arms of misdeed, greedy ego steeped in routine, beware sameness, stagnancy, stories. Beware the police, the presidents, but also the slow death of reactionary compulsion, of colonial poisons, of worshipping powers who are higher than human but from a sketchy species of god, borne of fanatic accumulation, of false and empty, liberal ritual.

Galactic anarchism honors overlapping constellations. Lasting anarchist tradition honors difference and radiates wealth beyond measure. There is always more. We know the free life as hard won and won and won again. The free life is a threat, caged and robbed of the expansive galaxy. However, the attempts to eradicate the fires of freedom are as vain as the captors and their jealous gods. Once the way is opened, it is only choices along the way that keep the path clear and bright. As anarchists we choose to live. We commit to purging the occupation of our blood. We see death as a myth. We find cages empty. We recognize borders as fiction. We know life as an ongoing vessel for all the power in the universe. And we know

she would be honored for us to bestow that name upon her, she named anarchists such as Goldman and Berkman among her ancestors of inspiration, and, most importantly, she understood and respected and gave voice to the first and foremost of our mysteries: “What is an anarchist? One who, choosing, accepts the responsibility of choice.” A simple idea, but it contains profound and beautiful multitudes within it.

First, “the secret is to really begin,” as the authors of *At Daggers Drawn* once wrote. Choosing is an action, a beginning, an opening, the acceptance of the invitation of insurrection. Like most animist and polytheist traditions and in contrast to modern religions and ideologies, anarchism places more emphasis upon correct practice than upon creedal belief. And one can only truly learn and cultivate relationship through experience, which requires action.

Second, the ends are contained within the means. Classical anarchism has always been based upon the proposition that to achieve a stateless society, one must use stateless means. That is the core of our tradition. It is an ethical position rather than an ideology, a recognition that each of our actions is and must be a microcosm, that our deeds embody our desires. It is the operative principle of sympathetic magic, the same principle that makes it possible to stab a poppet with a needle and cause someone to fall sick, and to pull out that needle and heal them.

Le Guin put it well in *The Dispossessed*:

We know that there is no help for us but from one another, that no hand will save us if we do not reach out our hand. And the hand that you reach out is empty, as mine is. You have nothing. You possess nothing. You own nothing. You are free. All you have is what you are, and what you give. You cannot take what you have not given, and you must give yourself. You cannot buy the Revolution. You cannot make the Rev-

olution. You can only be the Revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere.

The Revolution is a spiritual process of becoming, not an object, not a thing. It is alive, because we give it life. Every rock thrown is an empty hand reaching out for another hand to meet it, every rock a tiny sphere containing our inner worlds inside it and manifesting them into the outer world, a child of the earth and a new earth in miniature. The very heavens send pieces of themselves hurtling through the window of our atmosphere, blazing as meteors. We are but their mirrors below.

And last but not least, we accept responsibility for our actions, our choices, and the work ahead of us. The *Otherworlds Review* is not trying to write propaganda or platitudes, but mysticism. We see the abyssal crisis of hopelessness and nihilism that is consuming the world, we feel it too.

Whiteness

Ursula K. Le Guin

Meditations on Melville

i

Whiteness crossed the continent

a poison fog and where it went

villages were vacant

hearths and ways forsaken

Whiteness with greed and iron

makes the deep seas barren

Great migrations fly daylong

into whiteness and are gone

The ace of wands, the essence of fire, at once the flowering branch and also the torch in the night. Warmth and light. Creation and destruction. The first and the last.

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What does it mean to belong to the anarchist galaxy? A pack of wolves and eternal life. First, you should know it's a galaxy of miracles overall. There is nothing unmiraculous about the gifts we tend to. The gifts we are given as dreams and visions of freedom, the gift of intensity. The dream of freedom is a gift that has been put in our care. It's a galaxy of miracles. Action as well as stillness. Conflict and calm. Belonging to vast possibility as well as belonging freely, serenely to oneself. It is, daily decided, commitment to commitment. "Today, I choose to be as free as possible. I am open to the sensory relationship I have with freedom and unfreedom alike. I smell the beach. I taste chemicals. I recognize you, the other self orbiting me. I notice the hollow call of power. I sense the multiplicity of selves that I embody. I feel the fear of scarcity creep into the dreams of abundance that I cherish. I am willing to engage with life from the angle of freedom."

The galaxy is composed of recovered memory, it is living, dead and circular. Spheres of celestial mysteries are dense and constantly deepened. For example, a death of a comrade temporarily slices through the carefully woven web. Next, we find our visions possessed, our ancestors in even closer conversation. Reflections of reflections of generations of generations of fights for freedom through time emerge alive in this time: memories begging to be met.

Fated connections are guided by as many dead hands as live ones. Through the various dimensions and manifestations, imagination also flows through the galaxy, mending where holes erupt. Opening doors, barricading others, getting our attention, tripping the fuses, alerting and possessing, showing the way.

folks – wherever there is a strong and maintained felt sense of shared identity and belonging, there is a hearth. And hearth-keepers are at the front lines of keeping our people alive. Hearth-keepers check in on friends going through rough times, provide crash space for at-risk community members, organize fundraisers for needed services, and do the emotional labor of a community. Hearth-keepers provide physical, emotional, and spiritual healing for the wounds of living in a world that isn't always safe for "our kind of folks." Hearth-keepers keep our loved ones from losing hope; hearth-keepers hold hope for our communities. In pooling resources and holding hope, we keep one another alive.

We cannot emphasize enough the need for balance and containment. Our very survival demands that we find ways of being comfortable without recourse to space heaters or the couple-form. Old wiring can be overloaded. An untended fire can burn it all down. Sometimes burning it all down is the last defense. This is the lesson of the Petroleuse: the hearth keeper with nothing to lose.

*Prayer Candles,
House Spirits,
Hospitality,
Boundaries,
Conspiracy,
Intention,
in all things.*

•••

ii

*Whiteness in its righteousness
bleaches creatures colorless
tolerates no
shadow*

iii

*People walk unseeing unseen
staring at a little screen
where the whiteness plays
an imitation of their days*

*Plugged in their ears white noise
drowns an ancient voice
murmuring to bless
darkness*

We cannot fight the hopelessness head on. But we can keep on re-weaving meaning into our lives, even and especially as what was woven before frays, we can reach out to the spirit worlds for allies, we can honor our ancestors, we can tend our hearths, we can keep the black flame burning, we can keep on doing what needs to be done, we can keep on putting one foot in front of the other, we can keep on beginning. Anarchism is still, somehow, a spiritual practice of hope even when the future promises none.

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My House

Ursula K. Le Guin

*I have built a house in Time,
my home province. Up in the hills
not far from the city, it looks west
over fields, vineyards, wild lands
to the shore of the Eternal. Many years
went to building it as I wanted it to be,
the sleeping porches, the shady rooms,
the inner gardens with their fountains.
Above the front door, a word in a language
as yet unknown may perhaps mean Praise.
Windows are open to the summer air.
In winter rain patters in the courtyards
and in the basins of the fountains
and gathers to drip from the deep eaves.*

Anarchism, like other immigrant currents which have survived under this civilization, is a home-based tradition. Yes, we have a discreet exoskeleton of bookstores and social spaces and other brick and mortar hustles, but the real heart of the anarchist current is in the home. Taking the feminist commonsense about the personal and the political as a point of departure, we understand all the spaces we cultivate as containers for unfolding potentials. If even the invisibilized aspects of our lives are up for contest, then the home remains crucial toward our survival and the transmission of the lessons we have learned over the passing decades of experimentation with wielding the anarchist fire.

In the freakishly cold winter of this empire, the black flame is more necessary than ever. It warms our sense of belonging and our capacity to dream. And yet a fire alone, unprotected, uncontained, is a dangerous thing. For it to grow and endure; for it to

be the precondition of a way of living, the flame must be held in a hearth. A tended flame can do tremendous things, can fill a home with the warmth to provide refuge and shelter to those in need of healing and desiring new schemes. The revolutionary art of hearth-keeping opens the door to an archipelago of little worlds wherein the anarchists practice for the cataclysm that is already here.

Where do we eat? Where do we release? Where do we create? Where do we conflict? Where do we build trust? Where do we detox? Where do we confide?

Many have commented that the struggle for space is the horizon of the coming social contestations, (a quick survey of the socio-spiritual desertification of the gentrified cities or the climactic shifts heralded by the extraction economy confirms this) but space is only worth struggling for if we have the life force to fill it; if we have the social-energetic-emotional-spiritual capacity to really hold it. Whether squatted or rented, owned or occupied, forested or in the cities, the anarchist homes are testing grounds for our experimental praxis. Projects and techniques perfected for years therein can be brought out to other ruptures in the accepted uses of space. Any commuuard can tell you that the kitchen is the heart of any occupation; that a strength of a camp is in its sacred fire.

River Devora writes:

Hearth-keepers are revolutionary. Hearth-keepers create and maintain community, including for those of us who may have been barred or expelled from more mainstream communities or from our own families of origin. Hearth-keepers weave together and lovingly maintain identity, around all manner of axes. There are mythic (and sometimes literal) hearths at the heart of queer communities, punk communities, pagan and polytheist communities, and all manner of communities of fringe and outcast