On a Road to Nowhere: Reconsidering Utopia

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I've had utopias in mind lately—they tend to take up more of my mental space when the world seems to be getting bad and worse. Utopianism can be a frustrating topic to broach: discussions of utopianism are often dominated by a utopian/dystopian dichotomy, pitting prescriptive utopian futures against self-fulfilling dystopian ones. In a relatively recent republication of Thomas More's *Utopia*,[1] contributions by speculative fiction writers China Miéville and the late Ursula K. Le Guin present more complicated constructions of this dynamic, further reflected in their fiction and criticism. Miéville challenges us to approach the future with an attitude of "undefeated despair,"[2] fashioning new worlds from the ruins of the old. Le Guin has left us—particularly writers and artists who might strive to follow in her footsteps—with the utopian task of imagining genuine alternatives. Her 2014 National Book Awards speech, which has since become pseudo-manifesto, appears to us as both prognostication and appeal:

> Hard times are coming, when we'll be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now, can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and can even imagine real grounds for hope. We'll need writers who can remember freedom—poets, visionaries—realists of a larger reality.[3]

Hard times have arrived, the work of the future is here now, as we lay asphalt in particular directions. Will our roads lead to nowhere, the no-place of utopia? Or is the utopia, the good place, within reach?

Miéville has said that "we *live* in utopia; it just isn't ours."[4] He points out that the good life of More's *Utopia* was created on the backs of others, through conquest, slavery, and domination.[5] We need not look far to find the utopias of empire, of colonialism, imperialism, and genocide; or

fascist utopias of eugenics and "master races," of sanctified utopian identity set against a demonized Other. I am not wholly convinced that these really are utopias; to me they seem like dystopia in utopia's clothing. Can the good life be truly good if it is founded upon the suffering and oppression of others? But, if we take More's text as a cornerstone of utopian literature, then we must admit to the foundation being more than a little cracked. Perhaps we should not be building on such shaky utopian foundations at all?

We live, however, in cataclysmic times, where the need for utopian thinking has been reasserted with great urgency. Miéville observe that when faced with catastrophe, some of us capitulate, and may even seem to long for annihilation, to embrace the apocalypse.[6] In opposition to this resignation stands the utopia of technoscience: the bedtime story that technology will save us, which we tell to excuse ourselves from necessary social and political change. The latter approach is a case of what Miéville calls "bad hope"; he offers instead that "we must learn to hope with teeth."[7] Borrowing from John Berger, he advocates for an attitude of "undefeated despair":

> . . . "despair" because *it's done*, this *is* a dystopia, a worsening one, and dreams of interceding *just in time* don't just miss the point but are actively unhelpful; "undefeated" because it is worth fighting even for ashes, because there are better and much, much worse ways of being too late. Because *and yet*.[8]

Miéville's apparent pessimism does not denote a primacy of realistic rationalism against utopian idealism, but rather asserts that blind optimism in the face of ruin is a form of denial we cannot afford. His position implies that bad hope is an escape hatch that undermines resistance.

Le Guin has similar ideas about the notion of utopia as "technofix."[9] She refers to the idea that automation provides us with the possibility of removing burdens and integrating the old with the new, the mechanical with the humane.[10] We then end up with issues of design. Who gets to program the future?[11] Is it Musk, Zuckerberg, Bezos, and Thiel? Amidst the wholescale devastation of the planet, are we to dream into being their capitalist enclaves on man-made islands,

or Martian colonies?[12] Le Guin sees this approach to automation as a "brilliant update of an old science-fiction theme: the world where robots do the work while the human beings sit back and play."[13] We are to become aristocrats of the robotic world. Not all of us, though. These approaches don't fundamentally change More's formulation: that utopia must be built on someone else's back, at someone else's expense; work is to be offloaded elsewhere; and the dynamic of domination and subjugation is never altered.

Marx anticipates the possibility of mass automation in his "Fragment on Machines" from the *Grundrisse*.[14] Automation is meant to reduce workload—which it does, but not for the benefit of the worker, only for the benefit of capital. It minimizes labour in order to maximize production. Marx perceives that automation has the potential to supply material conditions for emancipation, but under capitalism results in the maximal exploitation of the worker. Both (machine and worker) are appropriated. Since labour time is retained as the measure of wealth,[15] the result is precarity: capital creates "disposable time" but simultaneously transfers it to surplus labour.[16] It is disposable time, however, that constitutes the basis for genuine wealth. Free or disposable time provides for a transformative process that changes the subject. Work is not simply production: work is time, work is life spent, life appropriated. Work is that which organizes time. It engenders freedom, or its lack thereof.

Work is, therefore, a primary means by which we define ourselves subjectively and are gauged by others. In *The Problem with Work*, Kathi Weeks characterizes work, beyond the goal of meeting economic needs, as a means of attaining status and of regulating behaviour. It is disciplinary, and noncompliance is punishable in various ways, with enforcement serving to protect property rights.[17] The inclination to contribute, to make things better—the utopian drive of work—is co-opted for the purposes of capital. Work becomes both "classed" and gendered;[18] and

not only gendered, but what Donna Haraway calls *feminized*, where it is absorbed into what she terms the "homework economy,"[19] or reproductive labour. Combined with unemployment caused by mass automation,[20] this process results in making a large proportion of humanity invisible. We end up with a "bimodal" society: a technological elite on one side, and everyone else confined to the homework economy, controlled by "high-tech repressive apparatuses ranging from entertainment to surveillance and disappearance."[21] A dystopia, to be sure, one we seem to be utterly invested in furthering.

Weeks' critical approach is thus based on the refusal of work as a vital component. The refusal of work is "the call not for a liberation *of* work but a liberation *from* work";[22] it is a call for freedom. Weeks asks us to try to envision circumstances that are not, in some way or other, dictated by work, that do not enshrine work and productivism as the ultimate measure of value. Weeks reveals the challenges we face in trying to conceptualize non-work: that much we might point to as exemplars, in art, or leisure, or enjoyable activity, is suffused with unacknowledged working, with an orientation toward productivity.[23] Her take on utopianism does not advance the prescriptive blueprint, but rather emphasizes the "utopian demand"—which is not just a reform, but a transformation.[24] What makes the demand utopian is that it encompasses the possibility of a different way of life.

Weeks presents two specific utopian demands: Universal Basic Income (UBI) and reduced working hours, specifically a 30-hour work week.[25] These ideas are both present to some degree in More's *Utopia*. His utopia is not possible without the abolition of property and the redistribution of wealth, since property is deemed to result in inequality—though as previously mentioned, his definitions of inequality are more than a little inadequate.[26] His utopia also includes the 6-hour workday.[27] No unnecessary work is to be performed; people work enough to provide for their

needs, so that leisure or non-work time can be maximized.[28] This is consistent with Marx's view of disposable time as measure. Important to both is the recognition of the value, to any vision of human flourishing, of time spent on activities not constituted or framed by some form of work. That these ideas are just as relevant now as they were in 1516 speaks to the stability of some utopian ideals through time, since they address human needs. That they have not yet been realized speaks to the intractable problem of domination. Nonetheless, they persist as utopian demands.

The introduction of a UBI or the reduction of working hours would not serve to eradicate capitalism, but could, at the very least, alter people's circumstances enough to open up possibilities for more fundamental change in social and economic relations. Utopian demands give us room to breathe, to think, and to contemplate. This room is largely in time: free time, personal time, shared time, and common time. Demands address the component of fear that paralyzes us. They are, as Weeks says, "at once a goal and a bridge."[29] And they can result in immediate, tangible successes that need not embody demoralizing reformism. They are concrete actions that overlap and interconnect, coming together to form the necessary scaffolding for future building work.

The danger here—which Weeks acknowledges—is that, without a broader vision, we can end up myopic. Our demands become diminished, are converted from utopian demands to conventional reforms, because that is what seems achievable. They become goals in and of themselves, blunted and withered. Referencing as example historical struggles in the feminist movement, Weeks points out the problem of "Left Retreat": as circumstances become increasingly dire, we retreat.[30] Our accomplishments are eroded, and we retreat further. Under threat, we can become possessed by a meanness of spirit, fighting to retain even small victories. There is a narrowing of vision. If utopian projects are construction projects, then they seem to be meant for times of peace and plenty. When under threat, in crisis, our tendency is to constrict, to restrict;

these are self-preservation strategies. But with the civilizational threats we are facing, a simple truth is becoming more and more apparent: we must change, or die. We are left with the frightening prospect of needing to remain open while simultaneously under threat. This is why we need not only immediate utopian demands, but to retain a larger utopian horizon; what Miéville calls "that further, the utter, unsayable."[31] Though we can keep in mind buildings, cities, worlds—and the roads to enter them, of which there can be many—we must also accept the element of the unknown, and perhaps unknowable. It is openness and uncertainty that yield unforeclosed possibilities.

Here, I would like to turn to Ernst Bloch, who Weeks relies on for her analysis of utopian theory, and his idea of utopian consciousness. Bloch's utopianism centres on his conception of the *not-yet*: looking back to the past, but also reaching into the future, through anticipatory illumination.[32] For Bloch, this anticipation is part of what composes reality, where our dreams and wishes for the future enter the realm of possibility as "a real possible wish-fulfillment landscape."[33] This is more than the Disneyfied fairy tale idea that a wish can come true; it is the claim that we have modes of thinking, some not altogether conscious, that enable the creation of new realities from that which currently exists only as tendencies and opportunities.

Bloch thus makes a distinction between abstract and concrete utopias, with concrete utopias based on this idea of the real-possible.[34] Utopias should be possible, able to be configured from our present and future circumstances. But they also require what Weeks calls "rupture," the ability to imagine, or at least open up space for, a future that is profoundly unlike what we have and know.[35] Bloch sees reality as encompassing a "network of paths . . . of dialectical processes that take place in an unfinished world," and insists that the future cannot be schematized as this would inhibit present "future-bearing" capacities.[36]

Even with this resistance to formalization, Bloch sees the future as, to a certain degree, expected, as the building of "a house . . . that would be bright and friendly for all human beings."[37] Speaking of the nonsynchronous utopian function in cultural heritage, he states that "the future assumes a heritage that has become classless as legitimized and concretized from what had been lacking and anticipated until then"; this future heritage will be framed from "the knowledge of what is missing."[38] That which is lacking or missing brings attention to injustice, but also to desire. The utopian function addresses both needs and wants, and Bloch's anticipations are indicators, signs pointing in particular directions.

But expectation can be ensnaring. Despite the piling up of evidence to the contrary, it seems to continually come as a surprise to the left that we experience so many defeats. We are hopeful lovers who see in our prospective partners not who they are, but who they could be. There is a strong, defining sense among leftists—perhaps utopian, or merely self-righteous—of the world as it should be, as it is becoming (but too slowly), in a matter-of-fact kind of way: a sense of the inevitability of the world moving toward what is already present as potential. The forces of reaction then appear to be pushing against the inexorable, Sisypheans who are somehow unaware of their own antiquation.

Miéville recognizes this in his position on "left optimism" as the source of "bad hope."[39] He contends that what we need is "left humility" and "the death of left know-it-all-ism."[40] It would behoove us to take the idea of bad hope seriously, accepting that things can, and often do, go terribly, horribly wrong. That some things are not fixable. That some things which *have already happened* are not fixable. That we really can't put Humpty back together again. But this easily becomes another expectation. An educated one, based on experience, and also a means of delineating prospective futures. Are we to become mired in patterns of domination and oppression,

trauma and victimization, repeating them because they have become what we expect? Miéville's answer is that "the best kind of pessimism is a pessimism that attempts to disprove itself."[41] We don't get to give up, no matter how bad things seem, no matter how much reality deviates from the ideal. The worse things get, the less we can justify absolving ourselves for desertion. There are things that need doing. There is work to be done.

Which is not to say that we are out of options, fists thrown up at the sky in angry, desperate futility. There are histories, some yet unknown to us, full of people who have thought and fought for something better; there is a present full of people doing the same. There exists a lattice of propensities and potentialities that can result in various futures, and these are available to us through a utopian consciousness. In the way I am using it here, utopian consciousness refers not to one plan, but a collection of plans, ideas, and experiments; not one creator, but many creators in communion with one another non-synchronously, beyond the limitations of time and space. I use the term "communion" because it indicates a process deeper than mere transmission of information: it is a sharing. I take this idea of communion from Le Guin. In her essay "On Operating Instructions," she describes the process of reading as a kind of communion between minds; an imaginative process, but a real one nonetheless.[42] If author and reader are two minds in communion, then many authors and many readers—past, present, and future—are in communion, developing a utopian consciousness which we can navigate. I must impress that this is not a metaphysical concept. It involves a reservoir of thoughts and experiments that is available to us, along with its currents and eddies. It is real, even though it does not have a specific location other than in human minds, although there are physical locations and instantiations denoting points of access. It is minds connected over and through time and space with the hope of imagining and creating a better world.

This utopian consciousness could be described not as Bloch's house, but as a kind of home, with a closer resemblance to his network of paths. What is a home without a house? It is relationships. As Le Guin describes:

> Home is imaginary. Home, imagined, comes to be. It is real, realer than any other place, but you can't get to it unless your people show you how to imagine it—whoever your people are. They may not be your relatives. They may never have spoken your language. They may have been dead for a thousand years. They may be nothing but words printed on paper, ghosts of voices, shadows of minds. But they can guide you home. They are your human community.[43]

We tend to focus on the ideas themselves, often individually, but not necessarily their connections and the relationships behind them. These connections together do not form a blueprint—blueprints are for projects, impelled from demands. Utopian connections form a kind of map, consisting of roads that go both forward and backward, in many different and sometimes unexpected directions. They are not roads to nowhere, to the no-place of utopia; they are roads *in* nowhere that can lead to specific places, places that are real-possible. They are fragments, islands, flotsam and jetsam, wayward thoughts that coalesce. The collective of utopian consciousness is these fragments as they coalesce—it is seeing the forest for the trees. Out of this we can also start to see themes and nodal points that remain relevant—as some of More's demands are, five hundred years later.

In terms of theoretical approaches to this idea of utopian consciousness, there are a few suggestions I can make for interesting roads to follow. Bloch's network of paths does seem to prefigure network theory; but network-type theories can easily lean toward technocratic constructions, which makes Bloch's insistence on dialectics crucial. Work in Science and Technology Studies (STS) such as Latour's actor-network theory or modes of existence could be helpful in counteracting these tendencies. Isabelle Stengers emphasizes joy as a mode of existence, involving "thinking and imagining together,"[44] with knowledge arising from multiple, interstitial sources and "convergences."[45] Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* is relevant, with its conception of a

world that "might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."[46] Her concept of the Chthulucene extends this integrated and relational view, invoking what she calls the tentacular aspects of the human and nonhuman, of "living-with" and "dying-with" as part of "making kin."[47] These ideas of kinship and being-with are represented broadly in the field of multispecies ethnography.[48] Some utopian and speculative narratives also explore these kinds of perspectives, of relatedness and affinity, of porous borders and identities, of uncertainty, of co-creation; both Miéville and Le Guin do so in their fiction, in different ways.

It seems to me, though perhaps quite simple, that what most people want when they picture a better life is a reduction in suffering. This can be extended beyond one's own suffering, to encompass the suffering of others as well. It appears as common sense that utopia should have, as a foundational goal, the reduction of suffering; this is as good a starting point as any. It could be seen as a fundamental utopian drive, more so than the idea of the good life. One makes things better *by* reducing suffering. Critically, this must also be combined with the recognition of the inherent value of life in order to avoid the twisting of this concept into genocidal final solutions. In order to create the utopia that is not dystopia, we need something akin to *utopian rights*. In addition to human rights, we can consider more extended formulations, such as Bolivia's law of the rights of Mother Earth, and other laws giving rights to the natural world and ecosystems,[49] or recent laws in Québec and New Zealand regarding animals as sentient beings,[50] which reflect Haraway's articulation of kinship and affinity. And we have seen from previous and current incarnations of UBI that one of the most immediate effects is the notable reduction in suffering that comes with the security of having one's basic needs met.[51] This is one of the strengths of the utopian demand: that our conditions right here, right now, can be made less burdensome. If one

critique of UBI is that the easing of burdens creates complacency, it can also be said that alleviating some of the hardship of the individual, atomized struggle for survival creates openings for collectivity and solidarity.

I would like to come back once again to Miéville. He brings up the image of Benjamin's angel of history,[52] looking back to the past, to catastrophe, to rubble and ruins. But Benjamin's angel also includes notions of recovery and repair. Miéville takes from this a mode of salvage or bricolage, of repurposing and remaking, scavenging and fabricating something new from the detritus that surrounds us; a "strategy for ruination."[53] To misparaphrase Nietzsche, what doesn't kill us forces us to adapt. Utopian work may consist of reworking what we already have, not as a whole but in parts; and doing so imaginatively, with courage and defiance. If we are to go on in the hard times of dystopia, scrabbling for scraps, then we had best listen to Le Guin and remember freedom.[54] Remember to connect to those who have, are, and will be thinking and acting to make things better, to make an alternative—not one of perfection, nor salvation, but something livable. A home.

Notes

[1] Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Verso, 2016). This is edition of More's *Utopia* includes an introduction and essays by China Miéville as well as essays by Ursula K. Le Guin.

[2] China Miéville, "October: The Revolution of 1917," (address, Town Hall Seattle, Red May Seattle, Seattle, WA, May 25, 2017).

[3] Ursula K. Le Guin, "Ursula K Le Guin's speech at National Book Awards: 'Books aren't just commodities,'" *The Guardian*, November 20, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/20/ursula-k-le-guin-national-book-awards-speech.

[4] China Miéville, "The Limits of Utopia," in Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Verso, 2016) 24; Miéville, "October," Red May.

[5] China Miéville, "Close to the Shore," in Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Verso, 2016), 5.

[6] Miéville, "The Limits of Utopia," 21.

[7] Miéville, "The Limits of Utopia," 24; Miéville, "October," Red May.

[8] China Miéville, "A Strategy for Ruination: An interview with China Miéville," *Boston Review*, January 8, 2018, https://bostonreview.net/literature-culture-china-mieville-strategy-ruination.

[9] Ursula K. Le Guin, "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be," in Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Verso, 2016), 164.

[10] Le Guin, "A Non-Euclidean View," 183.

[11] Le Guin, "A Non-Euclidean View," 183.

[12] "Man-made islands" is a reference to The Seasteading Institute, originally backed by Peter Thiel, who has since reconsidered, but has purchased a considerable acreage in New Zealand to retreat to in climate catastrophe. See Kyle Denuccio, "Silicon Valley Is Letting Go of Its Techie Island Fantasies," *Wired*, May 16, 2015, https://www.wired.com/2015/05/silicon-valley-letting-go-techie-island-fantasies/; Mark O'Connell, "Why Silicon Valley billionaires are prepping for the apocalypse in New Zealand," *The Guardian*, February 15, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/15/why-silicon-valley-billionaires-are-prepping-for-the-apocalypse-in-new-zealand. Elon Musk has published a paper with his ideas for a Mars colony: Elon Musk, "Making Humans a Multi-Planetary Species," *New Space* 5, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1089/space.2017.29009.emu.

[13] Le Guin, "A Non-Euclidean View," 183.

[14] Selections from the *Grundrisse*, commonly referred to as the "Fragment on Machines," in Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin associated with New Left Review, 1993), 690-712.

[15] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 706.

[16] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 708.

[17] Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 7, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394723.

[18] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 9.

[19] Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 38, https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.5749/minnesota/9780816650477.003.0001.

[20] Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto," 41.

[21] Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto," 44.

[22] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 26.

[23] Kathi Weeks, "The Problem with Work," (panel: Time, Work, Domination, Seattle University, Red May Seattle, May 28, 2017).

[24] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 176.

[25] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 32.

[26] More, *Utopia*, 67-9.

[27] More, *Utopia*, 81.

[28] More, *Utopia*, 86.

[29] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 222.

[30] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 184.

[31] Miéville, "A Strategy for Ruination."

[32] Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 73.

[33] Bloch, *Utopian Function*, 75.

[34] In Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 195.

[35] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 196.

[36] Bloch, *Utopian Function*, 155.

[37] Bloch, *Utopian Function*, 58.

[38] Bloch, *Utopian Function*, 58.

[39] Miéville, "October," Red May.

[40] Miéville, "October," Red May.

[41] Miéville, "October," Red May.

[42] Ursula K. Le Guin, "On Operating Instructions," in Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Verso, 2016), 215.
[43] Le Guin, "On Operating Instructions," 213.

[44] Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 156.

[45] Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times*, 21.

[46] Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto," 15.

[47] Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 2, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373780

[48] This includes Haraway and others such as Anna Tsing, Deborah Bird Rose, and Tim Ingold.

[49] See John Vidal, "Bolivia enshrines natural world's rights with equal status for Mother Earth," *The Guardian*, April 10, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/apr/10/bolivia-enshrines-natural-worlds-rights ; Kevin Lui, "New Zealand's Whanganui River Has Been Granted the Same Legal Rights as a Person," *Time*, March 16, 2017, https://time.com/4703251/new-zealand-whanganui-river-wanganui-rights/.

[50] See *The Canadian Press*, "Quebec bill calls animals 'sentient beings' and includes jail time for cruelty," *CBC*, June 5, 2015, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-bill-calls-animals-sentient-beings-and-includes-jail-time-for-cruelty-1.3102399; Sophie McIntyre, "Animals are now legally recognised as 'sentient' beings in New Zealand," *The Independent*, May 17, 2015, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/animals-are-now-legally-recognised-as-sentient-beings-in-new-zealand-10256006.html.

[51] Observed in the Mincome experiment in Manitoba in the 1970s, as described in: Wayne Simpson, Greg Mason, and Ryan Godwin, "The Manitoba Basic Annual Income Experiment: Lessons Learned 40 Years Later," *Canadian Public Policy* 43, no. 1 (2017): 85-104, https://umanitoba.ca/media/Simpson_Mason_Godwin_2017.pdf. See also the initial reports from a recent basic income pilot project in Ontario, canceled by the Ford government: in Laurie Monsebraaten, "From 'barely surviving' to thriving: Ontario basic income recipients report less stress, better health," *The Star*, February 24, 2018, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/02/24/from-barely-surviving-to-thriving-ontario-basic-income-recipients-report-less-stress-better-health.html; Mark Gollom, "Ford government ditches basic income pilot project before data landed, researcher says," *CBC*, August 3, 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/basic-income-pilot-project-ford-cancel-1.4771343. The rapid but short-term, Canada-wide implementation in 2020 of a form of basic income as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), though imperfect, did show that a UBI is feasible, improving individual conditions of suffering and also protecting the public good (in this case, by enabling public health measures meant to slow the spread of infection). See Jamie Swift and Elaine Power, "How COVID-19 and CERB Proved That Basic Income is Not Only Possible—It Works," *Canadian Dimension*, April 30, 2021, https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/how-covid-19-and-cerb-proved-basic-income-is-not-only-possible-it-works.

[52] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007).

[53] Miéville, "A Strategy for Ruination."

[54] The abuse of this term has been used to justify all kinds of atrocities, one of the most current being anti-vax rhetoric that undermines the concern for others necessary for public health during a global pandemic. It is obvious, under these conditions, that freedom needs to be defined not only as freedom-from, but as freedom-with.