

ISSUE 13 2022

counterfutures

LEFT THOUGHT AND PRACTICE AOTEAROA

Renters United!

Te Peeke o Aotearoa

The Habilitation Centre

Narrative Absurdity

Black Study and Communist Affect

Combating Online Racism

The Revenge Economy

Wealth and Power in New Zealand

Politics of Futility

13

Counterfutures is a multidisciplinary journal of Left research, thought, and strategy. It brings together work from across Aotearoa New Zealand's Left, aiming to intervene in, and inaugurate, debates about how to understand and influence our society, politics, culture, and environment.

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Contents Overview

Organising in the New Zealand Rental Sector

ROBERT WHITAKER & GEORDIE ROGERS with NIC GUERRERO

Launching in 2015, Renters United has sought to build a movement to push back against landlordism in New Zealand and secure healthy and affordable homes for all renters. Organisers Robert Whitaker and Geordie Rogers discuss the organisational and campaign strategy of Renters United, the search for crux issues around which meaningful reform can be built, and the importance of telling renters' stories.

The Native Lands Acts and Te Peeke o Aotearoa

CATHERINE COMYN

An excerpt from Catherine Comyn's forthcoming book, *The Financial Colonisation of Aotearoa* (ESRA, 2022). The Native Lands Acts of the 1860s and 1870s are read as the colonial weaponisation of credit, enabling the division and seizure of Māori land. Against this, the founding of Te Peeke o Aotearoa in 1885 presented an exclusively Māori alternative to colonial financial institutions, reasserting Māori economic autonomy and threatening to weaken the fabric of the colonial project.

The Habilitation Centre Ideal

LIAM MARTIN

An analysis of the 1989 Roper report traces out the genealogy of the 'habilitation centre', from its development in the United States to experiments in Aotearoa New Zealand. With the Labour government attempting to reduce the prison population, does the habilitation centre offer a model for decarceration or for the expansion of penal confinement?

On Tristan Tzara and Steve Bannon

BRYCE GALLOWAY

Absurd art has tended to find greater currency during periods of intense socio-political unrest. Does this thesis still hold in the face of today's accelerating online narratives and divergent internet realities?

Black Study and Communist Affect

ANISHA SANKAR

Engaging with the work of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten and examining the influence of their ideas in Aotearoa's undercommons, Anisha Sankar highlights the political potentiality of 'black study' as a mode of already-existing communism. Here, the distant liberatory horizon gives way to the embrace of relationality and being-for-others in the present.

Online Graphics and Racism in Aotearoa New Zealand

JENNY RANKINE

While it is widely known that racism is endemic in online spaces, enabled by the structures of social networking sites, little research exists on how to effectively counter everyday racism online. The results of a wide-ranging and detailed experiment with developing and disseminating anti-racist graphics highlight the importance of systematic political-meme creation by social-justice groups.

The Revenge Economy

FAISAL AL-ASAAD

Through a reading of Max Haiven's *Revenge Capitalism*, Faisal Al-Asaad highlights the centrality of debt as a principle of social and economic life. An engagement with the institution and philosophy of utu is called for as a means of transforming destructive capitalist debt relations and abolishing today's revenge economy.

Wealth and Power in Aotearoa New Zealand

GEOFF BERTRAM

Review of Max Rashbrooke, *Too Much Money: How Wealth Disparities Are Unbalancing Aotearoa New Zealand*. A masterful overview of the available statistical information on the size of wealth holdings and their degree of concentration in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Utility, Futility, Counter-Utility

TIM CORBALLIS

Review of Neil Vallely, *Futilitarianism: Neoliberalism and the Production of Uselessness*. Futility as both dominant structure of feeling and fulcrum for political action in the twilight of neoliberalism.

Contributors

FAISAL AL-ASAAD

Iraq-born writer and researcher based in Tāmaki Makaurau. His work is in critical and social theory, with a particular focus on race, settler colonialism, and racial capitalism, and his PhD was recently completed at the University of Melbourne.

GEOFF BERTRAM

Studied geography at Victoria University of Wellington, economics at Oxford, and taught in the Economics Department and its successors at Victoria University of Wellington from 1976 to 2009. He is now a senior associate at the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies.

CATHERINE COMYN

Researcher at Economic and Social Research Aotearoa and PhD student in International Political Economy at King's College London. Her work is centrally interested in intersections of finance capital and colonisation, and possibilities for their overcoming. She is the author of *The Financial Colonisation of Aotearoa* (ESRA, 2022).

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Senior lecturer at the Centre for Science in Society, Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. His work includes novels (recently, *Our Future is in the Air*, VUP, 2017), collaborative artwork, and research on the political aesthetics of the sciences.

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JENNY RANKINE

Born in Adelaide on Kaurua land; has lived in Aotearoa New Zealand for more than 40 years, tangata tiriti. Activist and researcher on feminist, lesbian/queer, and anti-racism issues. PhD, member of Kupu Taea: Media and te Tiriti research group.

GEORDIE ROGERS

Rental activist in Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

ANISHA SANKAR

Chennai-born, Te Awakairangi-raised South Indian Tamil living in Pōneke. She is a writer and researcher who studies the contradictions of colonial capitalism.

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Activist and designer in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Co-founder and former president of Renters United.