

# The “Wild” as Will & Representation

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The activities of forest and mountain, *the outdoors* as their enthusiasts say, have been experiencing a kind of boom for some time it seems. So many people in the mountains, the woods, in courses ranging from climbing to hiking, from camping to "survival" (that terrible word from a TV show...) are blooming.

At the same time we hear a lot of talk about the ethics of going to the woods and mountains, what is right and what is wrong, springing up from the custodians of truth (and those guys are everywhere) and new-agers in climbing boots. However, following this "rediscovery" of the "wild", problems have been created in relation to overcrowding of the mountains and woods on the one hand, with all that that entails, and on the other the development of a dangerous tendency to transform the "wild" and make it more accessible and appealing to the nomadic masses moving from the city for longer or shorter periods, weekends or holidays, to breathe "fresh air".

**So more and more places are springing up that are tending to transpose the city environment – measured and calculated – into environments that had perhaps instead maintained its particular characteristics unchanged for a long time, to a different degree from place to place. And so the "wild" becomes a domesticated offshoot of the city, which in the case of mountain villages means a distortion of the place to spots of wild renovations or new construction at the limit of (and beyond) the eco-devastation monstrosity.**

The plaudits that one hears from many quarters about the repopulation of some mountain areas [*using the example of Italy*] are just the delighted cries of those who manage to get some extra money in their pocket (directors, house owners and building speculators in boots), **but the mountain is still dying, just like the countryside of the plains.**

Knowledge and skills, local traditions and dialects are being lost, sacrificed on the altar of usability and saleability. Obviously I don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, there are some interesting situations that attempt to recover a more direct relationship with the environment around them, but the mass trend, unintelligent and brute, is to seek to extend city life to the countryside, mountains, forests...

## **Organisational food for thought**

For those who decide to break with the metropolis-centric system that society is increasingly imposing, to move permanently to "depressed" areas like the countryside or the mountains, problems are certainly not lacking.

If abandoned houses can be occupied – and that is desirable – and the same goes for land for cultivation, one of the points remains how to recover the resources that

we cannot self-produce, like fuel for possible means of transport (individual or in common), a dental visit, a purchase (where you cannot make do otherwise...), of shoes, or clothes, etc...

One way to address the relationship that, like it or not, exists with capital and the market could be to organize with those in solidarity, sharing skills and tasks, thus creating a strictly horizontal and self-managed network of micro production which invest part of their time and their skills using exchange where possible and if entry into the market is partly necessary, dividing earnings from any sale in the local markets of products and artifacts with all those participating in the group.

Groups of recycling and reuse<sup>1</sup> that lengthen the life of products, both for their own use and for any exchange or sale, self-production groups, etc... which obviously should not have rigid forms but interchangeability among themselves, thereby socializing skills and dexterity. Obviously that cited above can only be food for thought, at best useful to the debate and certainly not exhaustive compared to the complex problem of the organization of existence outside the metropolis and commercial circuits.

## **Environmental devastation, indifferent beneficiaries**

As we said it looks as though the "wild" has entered the daily lot of many, touching various sensitivities that they have been squabbling over in public debates, websites and forums, ethical issues and methods of how to frequent the natural environment or not, rumour upon rumour about those who shout their dedication to the forests and mountains the loudest (anathema for those who drop litter on the path – something actually execrable – or take wood for their campfire), all devoted body and soul to their dear nature, so you'll never hear these new Thoreau's<sup>2</sup> say a word about the environmental devastation that is truly crippling the countryside, woods and mountains.

To listen to interventions, or read pages and pages on forums about the incivility of those who dirty part of the forest, and not hear a word or read a line about the destruction coming from the biomass [*power plant*] in Pollino, quarrying the

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<sup>1</sup> Capital has realised the potential of these practices, so that the same corporations recover their own products to be "thrown away" and then readjust them – the term used is "recondition them" – and sell them at "second hand" prices.

<sup>2</sup> ed. – Henry David Thoreau, influential early (Euro-)American naturalist. In his later years, he moved away from his earlier pacifism with his statements in support of a group of slavery-abolitionists (Thoreau himself participated in the 'Underground Railroad' for fugitive slaves) who seized a federal armoury in 1859 to arm a slave revolt before being overwhelmed in battle 36 hours later, preceding the American Civil War.

Apuan Alps<sup>3</sup> or the high-speed train [*ed. – see 'The Maximum That Our Abilities Allow'*] for example, is delirious, all the more as to talk about it means to attract the antipathy of many, where at best you are accused of fanaticism. Imagine then if you decide to point out that there is an abyss between a paper towel on a bush (which personally makes me very angry) and thousands of cubic metres of concrete, just as there is between a couple of cut branches and a biomass power plant that will eat quite a few more trees...

Obviously this kind of attitude is not surprising, and is ascribed in all respects to the habits of behaviour that we have seen above with respect to the way of living the mountain as *an extension of the city*, and by city I mean **not only the physical space that it occupies, but also the ideological system underlying it and the mental structures and cognitive consequences deriving from it.**

The scope of the defence of territory, for the "citizen", is always ascribed to the private channel of opinion (and this is obvious if you compare the number of those who complain about a littered path and then how many actually deal with it and go tidy up), opinion which moreover submits itself to a whole series of situations that lead to chatter either remaining such, or at least never putting in question the system as the crux of the matter.

If it is true that the wild is set to become an offshoot of the town, domesticated, raped, then the "love" of the "citizen" will be no more than the use of a "service", which as such can be replaced when it is no longer available.

**In this optic, defence of the wild simply becomes a request for a better service, adapted to the expectations of those who benefit from it, like the many others who come and go, maybe substituted by other urgencies of the moment.**

Alongside this we must then place the habit of never questioning the assumptions of so-called "progress", convinced that any "innovation" is functional to the improvement of our living conditions, all helped by our domestication to accept, substantially, (and often without even realising, head down and as a natural condition,) the imposition of those "in charge".

The defence of opinion of the wild is therefore something *private*, at least as long as the "public" is not putting its hands on it.

Then there are those who do not accept the choices of power passively (for various reasons, not least individual economic interest), but still without questioning the general structure of dominion and decide to struggle by entering into dialogue with the managerial authorities, so deploy all that is "legally" possible to stop – for example – the construction of 'x' power plant... resulting, in the vast majority of

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<sup>3</sup> ed. – A 'protected' national park in northwestern Tuscany, where the mountains are blown apart for marble quarrying for industrial manufacturing – ending up in household abrasives, soap, and tubes of toothpaste – polluting the air and waterways.

cases, in spending years and money in an endless dispute that brings nothing but frustration and a lovely new installation.

## Individuals who resist, the importance of a defence that is also attack

Fortunately, there are also individuals who, freed from the shackles of compliance, rebel against the presumed inevitability of the choices of power and oppose themselves to devastation in a direct unmediated way that there cannot but be when the stakes are the destruction of the world around us (be it a forest, a mountain or whatever). Refusing to submit to the dictates of capital, whoever opposes the devastation to some extent also plays a hand in attack, showing that you can fight, that the famous grain of sand *really can jam the machine*, and that if you consider something important, *you carry it through to the end*.

The repression of dissent in defence of the interests of power is obviously strong in such cases, and as I write, I can only think of Remi [*ed. – see **Radical Scavengers Come Out of the Woodwork***], the French fighter killed by the police of the transalpine government while he was opposing the construction of a mega dam at Testet, which was to serve to feed crops of GM maize, but military repression is not the only one where whoever does not bow down faces massacre.

In addition to the social rejection created around the "violent" ones that protect trees there is also often the open hostility of the drawing room environmentalists who, in those meagre defences, see on the one hand their chatter render sterile and outdated, displayed in all their superficial useless by concrete acts of resistance (to paraphrase an old song, the truth hurts...); and on the other, being, as written above, only users of power, see most of the assumptions on which they base their certainties being challenged: certainties of slaves, that's true, but certainties nevertheless and therefore to be defended.

The tragedy of the battle, the impossibility of mediation between the two parties, means that the fighters of the earth are hopelessly alone with those in affinity with them, except in rare cases where their paths and actions meet and establish a dialectic with other realities that, at that moment, decide (more or less instrumentally) to embrace some type of practices.

But the radical defence of the wild not only runs the risk of being crushed by military repression, in some cases it also runs the more devious one of being reabsorbed into the concertive logic of power when its action binds itself to that of other actors who may share the stage with them but have substantially different objectives and not only: the loss of autonomy, and therefore radicality, is a danger

that also lurks behind concepts like the *quantitative* myth of the struggle, that is the mythicization of *the mass* as an insurgent/revolutionary actor.

**Where the battle for the earth becomes a search for consensus, the revolt against devastation becomes *politics*, and politics is nothing but conciliation and compromise, concepts that should burn along with the machinery with which they want to devastate the earth, not go out the door and come back through the window of hysteria of participation.**

We certainly do not want to relegate those fighting for the earth to cosmic solitude, but also we do not want such important issues to be substantially sacrificed or even watered down by bourgeois concepts like mass and majority, moreover – if we really want to think in such terms – we cannot know, as if it were evident, whether a bulldozer that burns has less impact than the “popular” struggle than a march of 60,000 people that takes place while the trees fall... In this perspective, the best thing would be to continue straight along the road of direct defence of the wild, not disdaining also to reason with others on the basis of affinity (which is much more dynamic and interesting than speeches aimed at creating movements of “a thousand souls”), in which, it having become less to their sensitivity to swallow their frustration, are generally precisely those who from the barricades glimpse a radically new world.

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